LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Attraction of Unity: Power, Knowledge, and Community among the Shuar of Ecuadorian Amazonia

Natalia Buitrón Arias

A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology of the
London School of Economics and Political Science
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, June 2016

1

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/ PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of approximately 100000 words.

Statement of use of third party for editorial help:

I can confirm that my thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by James Johnston.

Abstract

This thesis is about how the Shuar, a group of people living in South-Eastern Ecuador, create centralised political institutions. Over the last century, Shuar have experienced a rapid transition from a highly mobile lifestyle based on small, fluid, politically autonomous family groups to a sedentary life in large, nucleated communities. Owing to the decline of missionary involvement, the gradual loss of power of the ethnic federations, and drastic changes in the subsistence base, Shuar have also become increasingly reliant on state-derived resources, secured by their participation in electoral politics. Based on long-term fieldwork within a network of forest sedentary communities, the thesis explores how Shuar seek to organise themselves in order to live together peacefully and to benefit from public resources while keeping the state at bay. It shows how Shuar have acted creatively to institute new forms of centralised political association which enable them to suppress longstanding antagonistic relations while still prioritising personal and domestic autonomy. Through their management of sedentary communities and their appropriation of external institutions such as schools and government offices, Shuar effectively regenerate domestic wellbeing and valued forms of selfhood. At the same time, they create new political categories and individual identities. The interplay between everyday sociality and consciously created political collectivity reveals the importance of two contrasting but interlinked processes: the flexible shifting back and forth between centralised and decentralised social arrangements; and the emergence of increasingly formalised ways of organising collective life, along with inflexible forms of inequality that escape internal control. By showing how processes of institutionalisation can result in increased formalisation and stratification, but also in social fluidity and political improvisation, the thesis contributes to the broader anthropological understanding of state formation and the political imagination.

Table of contents

List of Tables and Maps

List of Photographs

All translations, pictures, maps, and diagrams contained in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise specified.

A mis viejitos, Liliana y Hans
In memory of Steve Rubenstein,

Acknowledgments

The story of how all of this began is too circuitous to tell in a brief note of acknowledgement. I would have never set out to do long-term research in Amazonia had it not been for all the support and wisdom that I have received from three people: Hans, Liliana and Steve. My father Hans first instilled in me curiosity for anthropology when, during a family meal, he mentioned that deep at heart he was an anthropologist. When a course was on offer in the last two years of high school, I decided I wanted to find out what my father meant and started on a path that has brought me here. I feel my mum's immense love and vitality every day of my life – it must be all the candles she's lighting at home so that everything goes well wherever I happen to be! An email from Steve Rubenstein reached me by pure chance when I was already preparing to do fieldwork in the Philippines. Anyone who met Steve probably knows about his intellectual generosity, his contagious passion and his persuasiveness, so nine months later I was heading for the Ecuadorian Amazon. He did not live to read this thesis, but I have never ceased to feel his guidance.

I could not have wished for better supervisors: Rita Astuti and Harry Walker. Rita has been unrelenting in her critique, moral support and patience – luckily the three always come together. We have spent entire afternoons discussing the exact thread of my arguments and thoughts. Rita's meticulous and sharp call for evidence, clarity and reliability in writing will be a lesson for life. Harry and I share many interests, so he has read my chapters with passion, and I have gained immensely from reading his work. As a good Amazonianist, Harry knows how to nourish his students' individuality in the spirit of mutuality. I thank him for pushing me to find my own voice.

I thank my other dad, Fabio, for his support throughout the length of my fieldwork and Sara, my *chiwira menor*, for keeping an eye on me at all times even if at distance. In Ecuador, the assistance and friendship of several wonderful people were critical as I was finding my way into fieldwork, but also whenever I needed advice and shelter. *Mil gracias* to Tania Macera, Jorge León Trujillo, Valeria Zeas, Connie Dickinson, José (Pepe) Pozo, Jenny Añasco, Luzmila and Maria Jempekat, and Roberto Minda.

My unreserved gratitude goes to all the Shuar people who took me on board. Where shall I start? Fieldwork was peopled with charismatic and ingenious individuals. From the beginning: Thanks to Santiago Utitiaj for sharing all your passion about the intricacies of doing ministerial work in bilingual education and for taking seriously my interest in receiving tuition in Shuar. To Raquel Yolanda Antun

A note on Shuar orthography

In this thesis I use what is currently the most common Shuar orthography – used, for instance, by the Shuar authors of the *Programa de Formación de Investigadores en Culturas Amazónicas (PROFOICA)* from the University of Cuenca (Ecuador). It it is a simplification of Shuar orthographies based on Spanish and developed by Salesian and Evangelical missionaries for use in teaching religion and in the bilingual educational system.

Vowels

Grapheme	Phoneme[1]	Allophone (main)	Pronunciation
a	/a/	[ã]	Spanish *a*
e	/ɨ/	[ɨ̃]	High central unrounded vowel, as in American English "roses"
i	/i/	[ĩ]	Spanish *i*
u	/u/	[ũ]	Spanish *u*

Consonants

Grapheme	Phoneme	Allophone (main)	Pronunciation
ch	/tʃ/		Spanish *ch*, or as in English "chat"
j	/h/	[ç]	Spanish *j*
k	/k/	[g], [kʲ], [c]	English *k*
m	/m/		Spanish *m*
n, (nt, nk)	/n/, /ŋ/, /ɲ/	[nʲ]	Spanish *n*, English *ng*
p	/P/, [b]	[pʲ]	Spanish *p*
r	/r/		Spanish *r*
s	/s/	[sʲ]	Spanish *s*
sh	/ʃ/		*sh* as in English "wish"
ts	/tˢ/		As in English "pets"
t	/t/, /ɾ/, [d]	[tʲ], [ʔ]	Spanish *t*; and as in American English when *t* comes after a vowel and before and unstressed vowel, as "get it?"
w	/w/	[ʋ]	English *w*
y	/i/, /ʝ/		Spanish *y*

Punctuation in Shuar follows the system used in Spanish, but without the double question and exclamation marks. The apostrophe at the end of a noun, as Antun', represents an unvoiced /i/.

---

[1] I use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Glossary of selected terms

arutam Immaterial principle, which in the course of visions induced by psychotropic plants manifests as an individualised apparition, usually an elder's spirit. It endows the vision-seeker with longevity, invulnerability, and vitality, among other potent qualities.

chicha Common Kichwa word for a beverage women make, usually with fermented manioc.

centro Minimum territorial and political unity of a Shuar federation, officially recognised by the state, equivalent to nucleated settlement or village.

minga A Kichwa term referring to a collective work party.

programa Public event consisting of a series of activities (sport, speeches, performances, etc.).

socio It translates as 'partner', among Shuar it refers to an official member of a *centro* and a federation.

uunt A term of respect for an ancient man, sometimes a great man of an endogamous area. Presently, it also designates Shuar elected authorities.

Acronyms

ADJOE *Asociación Protectora y de Desarrollo de las Tribus Jíbaras del Oriente Ecuatoriano*. Evangelical Shuar federation, founded in Makuma in 1962.

AIPSE *Asociación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar*. The evangelical Shuar federation that replaced ADJOE in 1976.

CECIB *Centro Educativo Comunitario Intercultural Bilingüe* (Bilingual Communitarian Educational Centre), the name of general education centres in Ecuador at the time of this research.

CONAIE *Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, the largest indigenous confederation of Ecuador.

CONFENIAE	*Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana*, the largest Amazonian Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador.
DINEIB	*Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe.* (Intercultural Bilingual Education Directory).
FICSH	*Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar*, main Catholic Shuar federation, founded in Sucúa in 1964. Presently the largest Shuar federation.
FIPSE	*Federación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar de Ecuador.* The evangelical Shuar federation that replaced AIPSE in 1996.
GMU	Gospel Missionary Union, founded in 1892 in the United States. It changed its name to 'Avant Ministries' in 2004.
IBE	Intercultural Bilingual Education.
MOSEIB	*Modelo del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe.* (Model of the Intercultural Bilingual Educational System), used by IBE.
NASHE	*Nación Shuar del Ecuador.* The evangelical Shuar federation that replaced FIPSE in 2009; presently the second largest Shuar federation and based in Makuma.
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics, evangelical organisation specialised in the translation of the Bible.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Prologue

'We have to create a new culture!' insisted Manuel heatedly. It was July 2012, a few months after I had started living with my hosts, Manuel, Carmen and their seven children, in Kuamar, a Shuar community of the piedmont forest in southeastern Ecuador. As often happened after attending a village assembly, that evening we sat by the fire in the thatch-roofed house and chatted about recent events and the issues addressed in the meeting. The conversation started with Manuel musing over the 'territorial issue': the Shuar population were growing and shortly there would not be enough land for everyone to live well in the forest. We also considered new facets of 'the problem of production', as Manuel and other villagers in Kuamar commonly referred to the importance of diversifying resources in view of the scarcity of game and the limited yield of the swidden gardens. Lightening the mood of the conversation, Carmen recalled the words of Torka, Manuel's father, who had once remarked: 'Young people must come up with ideas to produce new things that help us make money! But what can these be? Cars and airplanes have already been invented. Can we perhaps come up with another way of moving, of flying?' The image of the old man thinking up new ways of locomotion to make money amused us and so our conversation continued on the theme of invention. Soon my hosts turned serious again and found themselves pondering over more essential questions concerning the continuity of Shuar people in the current world. At this point Manuel's eyes lit up. An idea had come to him and he was eager to expound on it at length. In his view, the solution to the many problems facing Shuar people had to be found not in the new things that they could produce but, more fundamentally, in a new mode of organisation. The following is a summary of what Manuel said,

> A culture must be created. A new culture is necessary to put down our roots and to give continuity to the Shuar; to face all these issues. We cannot survive disunited, in conflict, fighting over shamanism and gossip, or just drinking manioc beer and waiting for things to improve. No, no, we know it well, these days we need paper [books, documents] and we need to study things! The ancients were strict and knowledgeable but we are not well-rooted in their teachings. For that we need to create codes. Also, we need to live with the new times. As I've said before, we need codes, the codes of communal living for the families to organise and live well together. Codes that say how Shuar must behave, what we have to do to live better, who can live here and what each family is going to do. Every family must continue managing its own things, but the codes and the representation must come from the community.

For Manuel, the new culture that Shuar should fashion for themselves is one in which living together becomes a matter of communal regulation. In his view, if every family were to preserve autonomy, then paradoxically this necessitated that the villagers also create codes to help them decide things collectively. That evening was the first time I heard someone explicitly refer to 'the codes of communal living' as 'a new culture'. However, while I was in the field, the idea that people should unite and regulate village life in order to solve common problems and achieve 'a better life' was so prevalent among Shuar villagers that it did seem to have gained something like the status of a 'new culture'.

What Manuel termed 'the codes', other Shuar people also called: 'plans', 'documents', 'resolutions', 'rules', 'norms', 'organisation', 'the law/s' or 'statutes'. Similar expressions that crop up again and again in my field notes are: 'to plan the community', 'to create organisation', 'to draft up life plans'. Miguel Puwanchir, one of the first Shuar bureaucrats I encountered in the city, introduced me to the problem in the following manner: 'We need to plan together for if we cannot keep the union and organisation of the families, then all that remains is conflict. Everything turns difficult and there is no progress.' Not long after this conversation, I was living in Kuamar where villagers continuously spoke about the importance of 'working together' and living 'in an organised manner'. All of the above expressions point in the same direction, they express a similar motivation: the idea that Shuar must come together, not just as a collection of individuals or a sum of families, but as a different kind of organised collectivity. This new way of living and coming together required concerted action grounded on some sort of common framework. The new way also meant doing away with some habits and customs that would otherwise perpetuate conflict and disunion, sorcery and gossip being the most common. Thus, 'to put down roots', as Manuel described the continuity of Shuar people, not only involved defending traditional lifeways, preserving a connection with the past, and building on the knowledge and strictness of the elders and their teachings. It also meant abandoning some of these past practices and being open to change. To create a 'new culture', Shuar must look to the future and consider what could be done better, including, importantly, how they might better organise themselves.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted over 20 months, this thesis examines this crucial issue of how Shuar attitudes towards collective organisation are changing. Using historical accounts and original ethnographic research, the thesis tells the story of how Shuar have become interested in and continue to work hard at creating collective organisation in the sedentary communities where they now live.

* * *

To appreciate the novelty and hard work involved in the project of community making described in this thesis, it is essential to consider that Shuar have long been characterised by precisely the absence of any such communal inclination or aspiration. If anything, Shuar have always been said to work in the opposite direction, namely to render impossible any form of formalised collective organisation and centralised political authority. Shuar are the largest group of the Jivaroan-speaking conglomeration distributed on both sides of the Amazonian border between Ecuador and Peru. Despite significant differences in theoretical approaches and empirical choices of study, all previous ethnographers have emphasised the remarkable paucity of formal institutions and the looseness and fluidity of Jivaroan social organisation. The literature points to at least three key Jivaroan features, which together appear to prevent the emergence of a sense of organic community, or any stable social grouping beyond the domestic unit: an entrenched ideology and practice of domestic sovereignty, a unique form of individualism, and a deep-seated confrontational ethos.

Take, for example, Philippe Descola's account of the Shuar's neighbours, the Ecuadorian Achuar, with whom Descola worked during the 1970s. In a piece describing the merits of the structuralist method for studying anomic societies without traditional societal institutions, Descola relates his initial bafflement at trying to apply 'our' idea of society to,

> a bunch of people who had no chiefs, no villages, no descent groups (...) *a bundle of individualities* who were uncertain as to who they were collectively and not particularly keen to ascertain it, who never acted willingly as a corporate group, and who spent a great deal of their time trying to kill each other (2010:209, my italics).

Approaching the matter from a Clastrean-inspired poststructuralist perspective, Rubenstein characterises the history of Shuar people until the mid-1960s as "a people's struggle against society" (2012:59). Indeed, when faced with the "minimalist" character of many social formations[2] in contemporary Lowland South America, regional scholars have been forced to abandon received anthropological wisdom with regard to "society" and "social order" (see below and also Kaplan 1977; Seeger et al. 1979).

---

[2] The literature differentiates between two broad kinds of societies found in Lowland South America: on the one hand, "minimalist" societies that have a loosely structured organisation (weak institutionalisation and absence of segmentation), composed of dispersed settlements (Viveiros de Castro 1992:2,6; Overing 1993a:192-193). On the other hand, societies that have corporate groups such as in North West Amazonia and the Xingú (Gê and Bororo), the latter also called 'dialectical societies' (Maybury-Lewis 1979), which have stratified or ranked political structures including clans, sibs, and moieties. For a comparison of the two, see Overing (1983). Viveiros de Castro & Fausto (1993) describe a continuum between Amazonian and Central Brazilian societies, and others argue that the differences between the two have been overstated (Gordon 2006; Brightman 2007).

Seeger, da Matta and Viveiros de Castro's landmark (1979) study of the symbolic dimension of social identity and cosmology in the region made a significant contribution to the understanding of the specificity of social formations in Amazonia. The authors argued that native Amazonian societies are structured in terms of symbols and substances associated with the construction of the person and the fabrication of the body rather than with the constitution of groups and the transmission of goods. A few years later, Rivière (1984) addressed for the first time the intrinsically amorphous, fluid and highly individualistic characteristics of Amazonian social formations. Building on Seeger et al.'s intuition, Rivière argued that the authors had overlooked another significant feature of the socio-political organisation of some small-scale Amazonian societies, namely the extent to which "the fabrication of the body and construction of the person is bound up with the reproduction of social formations" (ibid.:96). In Guiana, unlike the more stratified social groupings of central Brazil and northwest Amazonia, social forms coalesce around individual leaders and do not persist independently of the people who comprise them. Hence, individualism had to be seen as an attribute of the atomistic forms of social organisation of the region. Society in this part of the world, Rivière stated, "is no more than the aggregate of individually constituted relations, and accordingly societal and individual relationships remain of the same order and complexity" (ibid.:98). Even more than in the Guianas where an emphasis on co-residential community and prolonged physicality have been said to be particularly important (Rivière 1969, Overing 1975, Thomas 1982), Jivaroan societies represent a radical form of atomism due to extreme household dispersal (Descola 1994:8-9).

But while Jivaroan societies have been traditionally atomistic and dispersed, these characteristics no longer reflect the changes taking place in contemporary Shuar social organisation. In this thesis, therefore, I address the character of change in "minimalist" social formations by examining Shuar efforts to create forms of organisation that transcend or supplement understandings of society as a collection of individuals. The question I aim to answer is: What sort of society is created when "a bundle of individualities", to use Descola's expression, or "the aggregate of individually constituted relations", to use Rivière's, is reconfigured to create forms of association whose continuity and reach surpass the life and power of the individuals who compose them?

This study interrogates how Shuar come to desire integrated villages, political offices and suprafamilial institutions of authority, economic management and dispute resolution and why, despite the ambivalences, challenges and unintended outcomes they encounter in the process, many continue to believe collective organisation holds the promise of development for 'Shuar people'. How, I ask, do Shuar people go about organising, what they continue to perceive as a

collection of families or a household-based society, to generate a qualitatively different form of organisation in which authority lies with the collectivity? Taking the conversation with my hosts as a starting point, I enquire into the historical reasons, the more recent structural constraints, and the changing social imaginings, cultural orientations, and personal motivations that underpin Shuar interest in collective unity, organisation, and 'progress'.

In this thesis, I build on a longstanding interest of the Amazonian literature in how the construction of persons in everyday sociality and ritual practice is tied up with the production of specific social formations. I thus interrogate how new ways of organising sociality affect personhood and, vice versa, how new ways of constructing personhood affect the organisation of sociality. To achieve this, I recognise the Shuar's own desire to acquire external knowledge and power – intimately related notions considered essential for contending successfully with contemporary challenges. I explore what this desire reveals both about enduring ways in which Shuar try to achieve a certain kind of selfhood, and also about the new aspirations it nurtures and the changes it brings about in people's lives, including changes in social organisation. Similarly, while examining how the appropriation of village councils, political offices, and schools allows Shuar to experiment with collective governance, I also delve into the increasingly important role that self-objectifying cultural and ethnic reflexivity plays in the process of making collectivity.

Like many Amazonian anthropologists, over the years, Shuar have also pondered the meanings of society. Interestingly, however, for Shuar this reflective process has involved an enthusiastic appropriation of some of the external models of culture, society and social order that Amazonian anthropologists have taken pains to remove from their analyses in order to do justice to the specificity of Amazonia. Shuar, like many other native Amazonian peoples, have been involved in an active and self-conscious process of familiarisation with foreign tools and models of organisation: from mission settlements to state-sanctioned agricultural cooperatives to the community model subsequently propounded by pan-indigenous movements and the ubiquitous civic forms of association of the encompassing mestizo society. Thus, rather than ridding the ethnographic analysis of traces of external influence to discern the indigenous model, I try to grasp how Shuar conceptualise their model of communal living by paying attention to the ways in which they produce it on an everyday basis as they appropriate, refashion and combine a variety of endogenous and exogenous tools of organisation. Such an investigation requires a more thorough examination of 'appropriation' as a form of cultural creativity and social transformation, specifically in relation to widespread developments of historic importance that have taken place in the region more recently, topics to which regional scholars have devoted significant attention.

The rest of this introduction is divided into three sections. In the first section, I initiate a dialogue with selected theoretical approaches to the study of continuity and change in Amazonia, with the aim of spelling out the perspectives and contributions of this study to understanding the socio-political transformations of western Amazonian societies. Since this thesis is concerned with the production of collective organisation and communal living, in the second section, I return to the abovementioned difficulty of studying Amazonian social organisation by adopting classical models of social order, cohesion, and society and community. In doing so, I clarify my use of key terms and guide the reader along a theoretical path in order to approach the key question of how Shuar create formal institutions. In the third section, I set out the broad scene of my fieldsite, situating my own arrival within an increasingly complex restructuring of Shuar political praxis, and describe my affiliations and methodology. The final section provides an outline of the chapters to follow.

Between ontology and the teleology of the state: a third plural model

There are two paradigms with which contemporary studies of transformation in Amazonia critically engage: cultural ecology and acculturation studies. If the first depicted South American Indians as bounded and static cultural types irremediably constrained by the tropical rainforest environment, the second prefigured the cultural impoverishment of supposedly pristine Indian collectivities and their transformation into generic Indians when brought under the fold of "civilised" populations.

Against the assumptions of the first paradigm, archaeological, linguistic and ethno-historical evidence has revealed a pre-Columbian lowland South America composed of urban centres with pronounced social hierarchies and involved in wide-ranging exchange relations beyond regional, ethnic or language groups (Ferguson & Whitehead 2000; Heckenberger 2005; Whitehead 1994; Denevan 1992; Alexiades 2009; Hornborg & Hill 2011; Rostain 2013). Further, it has shown that the atomised, mobile and dispersed character of some – but by no means all – "minimalist" Amazonian societies is in some respects an artefact of a dynamic history, resulting from the complex and often-violent trajectories of interaction with colonial forces over several centuries.

More recent Amazonian histories are equally complex and dynamic. Over the past century, many native Amazonian peoples have experienced a rapid transition from a highly mobile lifestyle based on small, fluid, politically autonomous family groups to a relatively sedentary life in large, nucleated communities. These transformations have ensued from a gradual process of state formation, militarisation, and capital expansion in the region, which has

consolidated through the resettlement of migrant populations, the missionisation and territorialisation of native populations, and the development of agro-extractive frontiers. Scholars have documented how these processes of dislocation and incorporation into the state have engendered a reconfiguration of native models of territoriality and group identity whereby fluid social boundaries structured by cosmological markers are being increasingly understood as fixed and structured by geography and ancestrality (Chaumeil & Chaumeil 1983; Århem 2001; Rubenstein 2001; Rosengren 2003). Other research points to the growing bureaucratisation of indigenous authority and social life, as Amazonian peoples appropriate and transform the language of citizenship and the state's mechanisms of territoriality in order to defend their lands and participate in their national societies (Vickers 1989; Brown 1993; Santos-Granero 1996; Veber 1998; Rubenstein 2001; Killick 2008; Zent 2009; Erazo 2013).

The in-depth ethnographic knowledge of native social forms and a growing awareness of the dynamic nature of Amazonian history have led anthropologists to challenge the 'acculturation' paradigm and its depiction of Amerindian peoples as victims of colonial history who are unequipped to deal with change and alterity. However, although most regional scholars have questioned simplistic binaries inherited from previous paradigms, (e.g. primitive vs civilised; traditional vs modern), the theoretical approaches they have proposed to study change have engendered new interpretive dilemmas. It is possible to identify at least two broad analytical approaches: the first privileges the situation of interethnic contact and the broader socio-economic structures that impact on acts of appropriation, thus stressing historical discontinuities; the second places more emphasis upon "the indigenous logic of transformation" and conceptualises it as a process dictated by structural continuities.[3] Although the following labels do not represent equally well the positions of all exponents within each of these approaches and while none of the scholars whose work I review unambiguously espouses either of these approaches, for heuristic purposes only I call the first the "ethnicity" approach, whose exponents have found inspiration in the rapprochement of history and anthropology at the end of the 20th century. I call the second the "continuity" approach, bearing in mind that some, but by no means all scholars are influenced by structuralism. Let me begin with the first.

---

[3] The literature on social transformation in the region is vast, so I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive review but simply to flesh out some implications of prevalent analytical approaches in order to position my own approach specifically concerning village formation and Indian-state interactions. Of particular relevance to Shuar, there is a whole edited volume devoted to interethnic relations and cultural adaptations among Jivaroan and Canelos Kichwa populations (Brown 1984a) and several other works which specifically address cultural change in Ecuadorian Amazonia (e.g. Bustamante 1988; Whitten 1981, 2003; Trujillo & Cuesta 1999), including some publications by indigenous intellectuals (e.g. Almeida 1995).

Americanists influenced by the rapprochement of history and anthropology have found inspiration in the synthesis of global history (Wolf 1982), ethnic differentiation (Barth 1969) and the influential theorisation of "identity as history" (Sider 1994), to characterise sociocultural change as a process of creative, contested and ongoing ethnic boundary making. While emphasising the transformative impact of colonial history in South America, this analytical approach focuses on processes of "ethnogenesis" defined as "people's simultaneously cultural and political struggles to create enduring identities in general contexts of radical change and discontinuity" (Hill 1996:1; see also Whitten 1976). For these scholars, the idea of ethnogenesis offers a way out of essentialist portrayals of "peoples without history", an image that in their view has been carried over from the Lévi-Straussian notion of "cold" societies (Hill 1988:5; Hornborg & Hill 2011:18).

In contrast to this approach, much recent work on social transformation takes inspiration from Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach to kinship and myth in pointing to specific continuities, specifically in Amerindian cosmologies, which persist despite the transformative impacts of colonial history in South America.[4] The proponents of this "continuity" approach introduce the notion of "indigenous history" as an alternative to the "history of Indians". In their view, a focus on the "history of the Indians" implies embracing a European-centred view of history, which assumes discontinuity between the past and the present and privileges Western categories of identity, agency, and belief (Fausto & Heckenberger 2007:11-14). By contrast, a focus on indigenous history, by foregrounding the "Amazonian mode of transformation", reveals the importance of the body as a locus of change, shamanic practice as historical action, and the logic of "other-becoming" as a core Amazonian ontological premise guiding indigenous relations with alterity (Vilaça 1999; Viveiros de Castro 2011; see also Gow 2001).

The starting point for the exponents of this continuity approach is the idea that in many native Amazonian cosmologies "the inside and identity are equated with a lack of fertility" or incompleteness in such a way as to make the reproduction of native societies symbolically dependent on relations with the outside (Fausto 1999:934; see also Overing 1981:163-64). Building on this conception, which receives various glosses in the Amazonian literature including "openness to the other" (Lévi-Strauss 1991), "constitutive alterity" (Erikson 1986), and

---

[4] Both ethnicity and continuity inclined scholars examine how temporality and change are incorporated in indigenous discourse, landscape and ritual – what the former call "modes of historical consciousness" (see Hill 1988:5; Turner 1991, 1993) and the latter "regimes of historicity" (Fausto and Heckenberger 2007:4; Taylor 2007). However, they give different analytical priorities to internal versus external factors. They also diverge on their conceptualisation of consciousness, agency and even society. For a thorough review of the acculturation literature and the problematic assumptions of society carried over by the ethnicity framework, see Vilaça (2007:180-189).

"ontological predation" (Viveiros de Castro 1992:283-84, 1996), structuralist-inclined scholars argue that apparently dramatic ruptures and discontinuities produced through contact with alterity are in reality transformations that are fully consistent with indigenous cosmology (Vilaça 2009; Viveiros de Castro 2011).

If the ethnicity approach often centres on the process of colonisation and state formation across the Americas, which is analysed in terms of a dynamic of domination and resistance (Whitten 1985; Muratorio 1988; Rubenstein 2001), the continuity approach turns the narrative of colonisation on its head by depicting native Amazonians as the initiators of capture. In ethnographies of contact situations and recent engagements with the state, the continuity approach thus often shows how native Amazonians manifest a sort of ontological proclivity to being open to relations with a growing constellation of "others" – other indigenous people, mestizos and white people – (Albert and Ramos 2000; Gordon 2006; Vilaça 2010; Kelly 2011a-b). Rather than being captured in a dynamic of ethnic resistance, Amerindians capture others by familiarising them and making them into kin through practices of consubstantiality or by mimetically appropriating or cannibalising elements of their power (Fausto 2007; Santos-Granero 2009). Thus analysed, change always comes to be, and be seen, as indigenous tradition (Taylor 2007:233).

One of the strengths of the continuity approach lies in its methodology. By focusing on the topological transformations (in structure) that underpin change over time (Fausto 2007), scholars are able to identify logical variables and patterns that play a role in historical conjunctures. Nevertheless, by limiting the sorts of structural elements or themes that determine Amazonian personhood and ontology, this approach privileges some indigenous forms of transformation over others. For example, as I argue in this thesis, it downplays political and ritual contexts that do not necessarily operate in a shamanic key or in which people deliberately overshadow or reconceptualise the role of shamans in social life (Ch.4). Furthermore, while the principle of constitutive alterity is a central one in Amazonia, as I shall myself argue in this thesis, the assumption that Amazonian people are always capable of cannibalising historical situations can result in an overly triumphalist and abstract view of people's agency.[5] I believe that people's experiences of reduced control over relations with powerful outsiders, or their reflexivity about past failure, decline or contradiction may just as strongly motivate the desire for change or creative action in the present (Ch.3) (see also High 2015b:112; Course 2013:791). Moreover, as High

---

[5] Fausto & Heckenberger (2007:16) are certainly aware that this is a risk of this approach. See also Fausto (2012a:308; 2009:497). Recently, Vilaça has approached the question of ontological change following conversion to Christianity (2015a-b).

observes, an emphasis on continuity, especially when analysing processes of transformation, might leave anthropologists unequipped to understand how Amazonian peoples themselves embrace a sense of profound rupture with the past (2015b:110-11).

In some respects, the ethnicity approach has more successfully dealt with ruptures, contradictions and failures. Some recent research within this tradition takes inspiration from the work of geographers and anthropologists on state formation and indigenous politics in Latin America (e.g. Nugent & Gilbert 1994; Radcliffe 2001; Fischer 2009; Postero 2007; Perreault 2003) to examine the articulation of expanding states with the broad patterning of indigenous societies. Examining the socio-economic processes whereby egalitarian, small-scale societies are incorporated into the state (Ferguson & Whitehead 2000:xviii), these analyses highlight how the formation and deployment of different kinds of state power, including the power to incite desire for the market (e.g. Rubenstein 2004, 2012:68-70), go hand in hand with the multiplication of nested spatial-political-cultural boundaries at the local level. In this respect Rubenstein's (2001) research is of particular relevance to this study. Rubenstein sheds light on the ways in which the reorganisation of indigenous space, for example through the creation of sedentary communities, facilitates the creation of administrative hybrid bodies such as the Shuar federation, an ethno-political organisation which at once organises resistance to state encroachment and mimics the state's form and policies (ibid.:281-282) (see Ch.2). Erazo's research among the Napo Kichwa in Ecuadorian Amazonia (2013) develops a comparable argument with the notion of "territorial citizenship" (199). This body of work demonstrates the value of taking a broader view of indigenous-state dynamics by recognising that at least some forms of mimesis and symbiosis can stem from the specific properties of colonial situations rather than from bounded "indigenous" or "western" ontologies.

Nevertheless, an approach that takes colonialism and state formation as an entry point into indigenous processes of socio-political transformation also runs the risk of subordinating local social dynamics to a politics of state making. At times, research within this approach produces a teleological vision of change, by somewhat prefiguring a trajectory of transformation whereby centralisation, stratification and rule-making appear as almost inescapable outcomes (e.g. Rubenstein 2001:283). This tendency is most evident when researchers employ the language used to study states (or used by states) to describe local processes. A case in point is the adoption of a governmentality framework to understand the ways subaltern indigenous actors become agents of governmental actions, in the same way as do states and NGOs, by "rationalising and disciplining their fellow group members while enlisting them in projects of their own rule", as Erazo (2013:6) describes political processes in a Napo Kichwa community. The governmentality

framework proves its value in increasing comparability beyond Amazonia: the author is for example able to provide illuminating comparisons between the political processes of bureaucratised indigenous territories and a vast range of governmental action in Latin America and elsewhere. However, I wonder if the strong Foucauldian toolkit does not blind the researcher to alternative political imaginings that emerge when cultural dynamics widespread in Amazonia articulate with foreign notions of organisation.[6] Part of the reason why some authors resort to a the language of the state may lie in the fact that there is a tendency in this strand of Amazonian scholarship to portray socio-political change – especially when it happens in the direction of increased formalisation – as either driven by the state or non-governmental agencies or necessarily leading towards state formation. A key contribution of this study will be to show the significant extent to which Shuar are interested in 'formality', but how this leads them to creatively draw upon the legal artefacts and ideologies they encounter in a way that gives rise to systems of formal organisation different from those associated with the state they know.

It is interesting to compare the foregoing analyses with those produced within the continuity approach when analysing similar processes. An influential example is Gow's study of the centrality of schools and new sedentary communities (Sp. *Comunidades Nativas*) for the Piro of Eastern Peru (1991). Explicitly setting his study against acculturation and ethnicity approaches, Gow chooses not to give analytical priority to the history of the institutions that Piro appropriate. He also avoids drawing too sharp a distinction between the *Comunidad Nativa* and previous forms of social organisation, so as not to resurrect the distinction between traditional and modern peoples, instead choosing to privilege "native idioms". This analysis allows Gow to provide an insightful reading of Piro kinship in terms of an economy of memory and desire. The downside, however, is that by implying that "an ideal of the community" predates the institution of the *Comunidad Nativa* and by theorising community organisation as a transformation of other Amazonian systems, Gow is unable to problematise the extent to which new processes of institutionalisation in Western Amazonia can also work against native notions of community. In other words, an analysis that views transformation only through native idioms can risk downplaying the degree of adjustments and accommodations – that is, the hard work of adaptation – which people have to make to domesticate foreign institutions, and which they may not recognise or may leave unsaid.[7]

---

[6] For a critique of the governmentality framework in the context of environmentalist interventions in Amazonia, see Cepek (2011).

[7] For a useful critique of the idea that anthropologists should only be interested in reflecting "native voices" and "the native point of view" and emic models of sociality, see Hugh Jones (2013:33).

Gow's framework set an important referent for recent research on sedentary communities. As in Gow's account, recent studies emphasise an "openness to the other" and the creation of kinship as key principles of Amazonian social life while combining this insight with an influential strand of Amazonian anthropology that focuses on indigenous experiences of conviviality (Overing & Passes 2000). Linking these perspectives, such studies tend to trace most recent developments and contemporary appropriations to indigenous conceptions of the good life (e.g. Sarmiento Barletti 2011; see also Hewlett 2014). But while the pursuit of the good life is certainly key for many Amazonian peoples, I question whether it is right to assume that "convivial" values are reproduced unchanged while the livelihoods and individual pursuits of Amazonian people are dramatically transformed. In other words, I think it is important to interrogate the limits and contradictions that Amazonian peoples experience as they pursue a strategy of "opening to the other" as a means of furthering social continuity.[8] Two kinds of issues seldom explored in these studies thus come into focus: the first is the extent to which indigenous values, including those linked to ideas to the good life, such as the pursuit of autonomy or living well, may lead people to aspire to new social goals. I explore this in Chapters 4-8 where I examine how Shuar people appropriate village councils and new professions. The second issue is the extent to which the dispositions and desires that individuals cultivate as they incorporate new practices (e.g. behaving like a 'lawful' professional, selling rather than offering manioc beer in a festival, acquiring contracts with the state) can in turn redefine ideas of the good life "from the underside of practice" (LiPuma 2000:9).

By assuming that the adoption of all forms of alterity is always already presupposed in the indigenous mode of social reproduction, the continuity approach pays little attention to the micro-processes of selection and adaptation that lead to the indigenisation of alterity. Such micro-processes are the focus of what can be identified as a third approach to processes of continuity and change. While the scholars I have in mind are not part of a generally recognised analytical approach or "intellectual group" with an explicitly theorised contribution to change, their work can be distinguished from the other two approaches by a certain theoretical eclecticism and its balanced methodological and analytical attentiveness to both the exogenous and endogenous dynamics implicated in processes of transformation.

For instance, in her pioneering study of the introduction of schooling among the Waorani of Amazonian Ecuador, Laura Rival (1996; 2002) shows why the Waorani temporarily embrace nucleation around the school while highlighting the limits to the indigenisation of the school in

---

[8] When researchers recognise these contradictions, they tend to do so in a celebratory tone that alludes to the inherent cosmological dangers of appropriating alterity (see Gordon 2006:415).

Waorani terms. In other words, if her study highlights what is particularly Amazonian in the Waorani's eagerness to settle in school villages, it also demonstrates why the very "alterity" of the school and its own project of domestication, as exemplified in the attitudes of foreign schoolteachers, ultimately clashes with the moral economies of Waorani people. Similarly, while exploring how such clashes engender new indigenisations, much recent work also documents the weighty changes in ways of organising sociality that new socioeconomic engagements engender. Fisher (2000) for example documents the uncertainties and inequalities introduced as the Bakajá Xikrin (Kayapo) of Brazil connect their system of social reproduction to the extractive economy of the Brazilian frontier. Other authors illustrate how the unifying and centralising qualities of sedentary communities clash with native political philosophies even while their residents take on board some of these changes and enthusiastically fashion their own local forms of citizenship (Killick 2008; Walker 2013b; High 2015a).

Moreover, most of these studies demonstrate the value of examining in detail the histories and institutional logics inherent in new techniques of social organisation and governance beyond the specific meanings and functional correspondences that indigenous peoples assign to them. Walker (2015) for example shows that shamanic practice guides the Urarina deployment of new legal techniques. However, he also reveals that the latter are embedded in such different concepts of governance and conflict resolution that despite Urarina's best efforts to deploy them in their own terms, the domestication of law represents a departure from native Amazonian political ontology in the direction of Western understandings of the "social".

My own contribution to this literature will be to show that differences in moral economies and political ontology may lead to more than clashes, departures and absorptions. As Hanks and Severi suggest (2014:8), any typological schema premised on "ontologies" will face the problem of dealing with blends, particularly so in colonial situations. For this reason, the authors invite anthropologists to focus on the plurality of mental operations and fields of cultural knowledge that social actors mobilise as they continuously blend, grade or switch between different traditions or contexts of practice within and between societies. I take from this approach the possibility that the recognition of plurality may be particularly relevant to the study of how Amazonian people embark on the project of creating something new. This is because in many cases they are not simply seeking to grasp or engage with Western cultural wholes or ontologies, but also because the development of "the new" pushes them to draw on and experiment with a multiplicity of internal and external models at once. Furthermore, an outcome of such a project may itself be plural. So, in this study I am less interested in opposing political ontologies (following the continuity approach), or exploring the creation of new sociocultural boundaries (the ethnicity

approach), than in understanding how indigenous people produce internal diversity.[9] This project will show that differences in what we might take as political ontology or sociocultural boundaries can be extremely productive at the local level and can be exploited to generate forms of political practice in which there is significant improvisation within the indigenous system itself.

In an influential article on new patterns of leadership in Amazonian societies, Brown suggested that it is through "scrupulous attention to the small and fleeting skirmishes of everyday politics that anthropologists will find raw material for a deeper understanding of indigenous strategies for facing the world beyond the Amazon rainforest" (1993:321). While closely following those small skirmishes, I let my study be guided by the insight from Manuel with which I began this thesis: that the continuity of Shuar people in the contemporary world, both within and beyond the Amazon rainforest, lies in fostering new forms of collective organisation at the community level and beyond. How, then, does one study new forms of collective organisation in amorphous Amazonia? In the next section, I locate some of the conceptual tools that I will be using to approach the study of collective organisation throughout the thesis.

Thinking up the indigenous model of sociality

One of the most critiqued yet enduring sociological concepts is the notion of society as a sort of substantive grouping, the objective basis of collective representations, endowed with structural coherence and functional purpose. The endurance of this view of society undoubtedly relates to the legacy of classical sociological thought, with its emphasis on social cohesion and social order. However, as critics tell us, the intellectual concern with social order and cohesion reveals more about the cultural assumptions of modernist legal-political theorists than the societies the latter were studying. For instance, Roberts (1994:968) exposes the risks of a tendency among early legal and political anthropologists to address questions of social order by investing

---

[9] This approach is compatible with that of Hendricks (1988; 1993) and Greene (2009), two previous ethnographers of Jivaroan societies who have taken up the challenge of exploring ideological and sociocultural blends, although developing different theoretical frameworks and empirical questions. Hendricks employs a discourse-centred approach to study the blending of ideologies that takes place as Shuar elected leaders express competing political systems in political oratory. Greene (ibid.:24-25) explores how Awajun political activists "customise" – that is, make their own through acts of domestication that lead to practices of cultivation – the "abstract" condition of indigeneity that the "modern history of global capitalism continually imposes on them". With Hendricks's, this study shares a dual focus on political processes and the study of personhood through the lens of power and knowledge, while it shares with Greene's the interest in going beyond the domestication of external models to identify new practices of cultivation which Jivaroan people develop in the process. Nevertheless, this thesis develops at once broader and narrower foci. If compared with the former, it explores socio-political, institutional and economic transformations beyond linguistic ideologies. In relation to the latter, the thesis privileges the bottom-up emergence of concepts and practices over a focus on the encounter of the "local indigenous" with "global indigeneity". Like the Awajun activists studied by Greene, many Shuar activists are passionate about "talking to paper" and organisation politicking (see Greene 2009: prologue, chapter 5,6), but I have found it more productive to relate this passion to the at once more native and universal concern with the making of collectivity than to the abstract notion of global modernity.

cross-cultural normative frameworks with the attributes of state law. Similarly, Vincent observes that from the time anthropologists began to study politics, they have adopted an analytical toolkit derived from the ideas and debates of Enlightenment writers (e.g. community, contract, civil society, cosmopolitan, *habitus*, etc.) (2002:4).

Another enduring legacy of Western political philosophy is the opposition between the individualist-modern vs. collectivistic-traditional societies. In the former kind of societies, which originate in modern Europe from a union between capitalism and Enlightenment ideology, the individual is the touchstone upon which the collective construction rests. Pre-modern societies, on the other hand, are structured by unyielding hierarchies and the individual is absent, or at least has meaning only as an element in a greater whole that defines him entirely. So, alongside the modern notion of society as a sort of normative milieu within which autonomous individuals enter contractual relations, originated the notion of traditional community as a space of pure identification and communitarian oneness, the *Gemeinschaft* that Tönnies made famous and Durkheim then transposed into his own model of mechanical solidarity.

Some of the most significant contributions of late Amazonian scholarship to anthropological theory have been shaped in sharp opposition to both of these legacies. From around the 1960s, regional scholars began to note how problematic it was to apply classical concepts such as lineages, corporate groupings and ancestors, which anthropologists had used to explain "order" in non-state societies, to the largely amorphous and unformalised societies of lowland South America (Seeger et al. 1979; Thomas 1982; Overing 1989). A compelling critique was also launched against the conflation of leadership with coercive institutions predicated upon the relationship of command and obedience (Clastres 1989). Even more fundamental has been the denunciation of the very notion of society as a bounded, self-contained, normative and structured collectivity that transcends the individual on the basis that it is modelled on the secular government's hierarchical and hegemonic institutions of control (Williams 1983:293; Roberts 1994:979; Viveiros de Castro 1996:183; Rapport & Overing 2000:334;). While the last critique is not specific to Amazonia, regional scholars have joined other voices (e.g., Strathern 1988; Ingold 1994; Stasch 2009) in challenging the use of what they see as Western-derived notions of society or community, which project either normativity or unitariness onto the group life of small-scale, non-state, indigenous societies.

For instance, drawing inspiration from Strathern's critique of the domestic/public opposition, Overing (1993b) forcefully criticises Sahlins's influential theorisation of the "domestic mode of production" (1972). Overing challenges Sahlins's assumption that the autonomy of persons and small kin groups must be undermined before a polity can achieve the

public economic goal. Taking issue with the view that collectivity emerges only when the "petty, private self-concerns of the household economy" are overcome, Overing (ibid.:27) accuses Sahlins of conflating collectivity with the exploitation engendered by hierarchical "institutions of exchange and coercion" (Sahlins 1972:339). Proposing an alternative Amazonian version of the issues at hand, she asserts that "collectivity" for native Amazonians far from being associated with the constraints of relations of domination is itself "viewed as the means through which people can actively prevent" their establishment (1989:160). For Overing, Amazonians have a "collectivity of the intimate and informal" (1993b:22). To conceptualise the distinction, Overing prefers to use "collectivity" to identify "our" concept of coercive group life as expressed through social structural imperatives (through roles, statuses and juridical rules), and employ "collective" to define an Amazonian attachment to a "specific cultural and social way of being" (2003:6).

If documenting the specificity of non-coercive collectives has served to challenge the idea of the normative collectivity, the singular way in which some native Amazonians are known to organise collective action has offered a powerful counter-narrative to the idea of the homogeneous community bonded by "a perfect unity of wills" (Tönnies 1957 [1887]:37). A vivid illustration can be taken from Viveiros de Castro's description of the Arawaté's reluctance to "begin together" and act "*like* someone else", which leads the author to argue that "collective consonance" for this group of Amazonians involves a "sort of a resistance against legitimating [the social] body, organising it, moving it harmoniously" (1992:109). The problem for the Arawaté, he tells us, is not the "one so often imputed to 'primitive societies', to wit, how to find a space for individuality, constricted as it supposedly is by a theatrical world of obligations and roles. Rather, the problem is how to make, from these proudly inert monads that know no common measure, something resembling a society" (ibid.:110). Ethnographic observations that highlight the singular combination of personal autonomy and egalitarianism in Amerindian sociality abound in the literature, and what we learn repeatedly is that the assumption of homogeneity, unity and collectivism still frequently projected onto tribal or so-called traditional societies is misplaced in the region.

I have chosen to start with Overing and Viveiros de Castro because they identify two key issues with which I will be concerned – or more accurately, with which my informants are themselves currently concerned, namely, the creation of collective institutions (communal authority and representation) and the production of community-wide collective action. If, as I shall show (see Ch.5), the pursuit of domestic autonomy currently impels Shuar to cooperate in communities to harness external sources of wealth, the challenge they constantly face is how to "get together" to engender productivity for all without undermining the very autonomy they aim

to protect? From Overing's consideration of the issue, we can deduce an interesting twist to Sahlins's argument: for the Shuar, what is at stake is not how to supplant the autonomy of small kin groups but how to safeguard it in the process of generating "public goods". So what institutions do Shuar create in the process? And, if they indeed can draw on very little "social structure" in the conventional anthropological sense and they do not embody "a perfect unity of wills", what forms of collective action are Shuar capable of and happy to produce? These are the questions I will address in the chapters devoted to the sedentary community (Ch4-6).

Another reason why Overing and Viveiros de Castro's positions offer an interesting entry point to many of the issues I shall approach in the following chapters is that they represent by far the most radical defence of the uniqueness of Amazonian "collectivity" (or "collective") as an extreme form of egalitarianism. Interestingly, while both build on Clastres's anarchist political theory (e.g. Overing 2012; Viveiros de Castro 2010), they develop opposite views of Amazonian sociality. Overing (and her associates) emphasises intimacy and similarity ("the aesthetics of community") in highly localised, endogamous groups. In contrast, Viveiros de Castro (and other structuralist-inspired theorists) foregrounds separation and difference ("the logic of warfare") in affinal/meta-affinal inter-group relations. If the former concentrates on the convivial morals of consanguinity or the *gemeinschaftlich* aspects of Amazonian societies (1989:159; see also Overing & Passes 2000:13), the latter focuses on the cannibalistic logic of predation as the paradigmatic form of affinity or exchange in Amazonia (Viveiros de Castro 1993:184). The egalitarianism of the former view is theorised as emerging from the orchestration of individuals' "skills for social living" which enable them to continually expel from the local community the negative aspects of power – as embodied in rules, regulations, hierarchies, and formal structures (Overing 2003:5). That of the latter derives instead from the fragmentary logic of warfare, which counteracts "generalised reciprocity" (a fusion of local groupings and a superior sociological unity), or, what the author takes as its necessary implication, the centripetal concentration of power (2010:43).

In their different ways of explaining the persistence of egalitarianism in Amazonia, the above positions represent two predominant analytical styles which Viveiros de Castro has termed "the moral economy of intimacy" and "the symbolic economy of alterity" (1996:189). My position in this debate is similar to that of other scholars (e.g. Rivière 2000; Santos-Granero 2000) who resist such categorisation, in that I take conviviality and predation, confrontation and harmony to be two sides of the same coin, two contrasting if interdependent inclinations in social affairs. As I shall show, it is more fruitful to explore how these different tendencies may produce

distinct "cycles of sociality" – the expression is Santos-Granero's (2000:279) – which may manifest both domestically and extra-domestically.

Beyond the specific emphasis on conviviality and predation, a number of studies have moved away from the task of fitting Amazonia into a single model of sociality to provide evidence for variability. Building on the dynamic history of Amazonia I outlined above, these studies have revealed the recurrence of diachronic cycles of concentration and dispersion, expansion and contraction of native group life, which have given rise to remarkable variations in politico-ritual organisation and modes of production over time (for a review, see Alexiades 2009). Other scholars have revealed the flexibility of contemporary Amazonian social formations focusing on the developmental cycles of settlement formation (Henley 1982:127; Rivière 1984, 2000; Santos-Granero 2000; Rosengren 2000). Some authors have additionally shown that the search for a unitary framework of Amazonian sociality loses sight of the temporal cycles and alternations, the processual and political dimension of group formation and disintegration in Amazonia (e.g. Hugh-Jones 2013:363-64; Santos-Granero 2000:269).

In this thesis, I will also be concerned with revealing internal socio-political variability. My specific contribution to these discussions will be to show that such cycles or alternations continue to develop even – or perhaps even more so – when Amazonian peoples live in permanent nucleation.

In a recent piece devoted to a re-evaluation of "the gift" in Amazonia, Hugh-Jones regrets that an over-emphasis on "the aesthetics of community", equality, and the subversion of coercion has overshadowed the more positive and creative manifestations of individual ambition, inter-community trade and hierarchy in Amazonia (2013:364; see also Santos-Granero 2000:269). I would also add that while the model of collectivity premised upon war puts difference at the centre of sociality, it too risks overshadowing the significant extent to which Amazonian sociality may build upon and continuously produce important forms of civility (e.g. Hornborg & Hill 2011:15). What Hugh-Jones stresses in general of Amazonia is also valid for the Shuar; that is, that "wider, extra-community forms of sociality often combine trade conducted in a peaceable, "domestic idiom with various forms of predation" (2013:361). Indeed, perhaps one of the most useful contributions recent scholars have made to diversifying available models of Amazonian sociality is the identification of friendship as a kind of middle ground between consanguinity and affinity, or between conviviality and predation (e.g. Fausto 2012b; Killick 2009; Santos-Granero 2007).

In this study, I do not attempt to reveal other 'middle grounds', although an indigenous model of friendship will become relevant to understanding how Shuar interact with state officials

(Ch.5). Rather, I aim to recover the importance of formality for anthropological understandings of group formation. While much ethnography has documented a significant repertoire of Amazonian formal arts used domestically and extra-domestically, such as formal duels, ceremonial dialogues, formal trading partnerships, and a variety of conflict-solving mediation techniques available to leaders (e.g. Rivière 1971; Albert 1985:448,510-512; Urban 1986; Gnerre 1986; Surrallés 2003), my impression is that these have not been given sufficient attention in recent regional theorisations of Amazonian sociality. I take Jivaroan formal arts – including formal friendships, oratorical culture, and a variety of administrative technologies which Shuar keenly incorporate from the outside – to be vital "skills for social living" that are as important as "the informality and intimacy" that Overing identifies as the chief means by which Amazonian people create "collectives". As I intend to demonstrate, it is unhelpful to associate the use of formality with coercion and domination, or, equally, to conceptualise harmony as an important native social goal only when pursued through 'informal' or 'intimate' means.

The same can be said about the emergence of formal structures. My approach to examining Amazonian people's growing interest in formal roles, legal accoutrements and self-objectifying ways of representing cultural knowledge is to attend simultaneously to the wider histories in which they are embedded and their own dominant values and practices. Doing so, will lead me to interrogate how Shuar might understand the types of institutional life they are keen on developing – from impersonal roles to formal representation – the implications of which for Amazonian political philosophies and practice are still largely undertheorised. While letting the analysis be guided by Shuar's own practice of such techniques, I find some inspiration in research which explores the connection between everyday forms of civility, formality, ritual and the political imagination (Irvine 1979; Handelman 1998; Seligman et al. 2008). Indeed, when it comes to exploring the role of formality and formalisation in social life, I find it valuable to approach a different intellectual tradition that attempts to grasp their meanings and effects not only as forms of coercion but also as forms of social creativity.

Recent regional contributions have helped us move beyond an overly negative characterisation of power in Amazonia – that is, as something that needs to be ejected so as to effectively avoid coercion – highlighting the significant links Amazonian people draw between power and regenerative capacities, the life-giving techniques that enable everyday sociality (Santos-Granero 1993; Overing 2012:60-68; see also Descola 1988). To understand the enthusiasm with which Amazonian people have embraced some recent developments, I also propose to turn away from an exclusive focus on how they resist coercive power, but I do so in order to explore their understandings of productive power as embedded in changing

socioeconomic processes. It is by linking local notions of productivity and regeneration to the current political economy of the region that I hope to elucidate how Shuar today pursue wellbeing in a transforming economy. Hence, while emphasising the importance of creativity and fecundity, that of individuals' capacities and their "generative and productive power" (see Overing and Passes 2000:17), I also wish to draw attention to the fact that such personal abilities and powers are not always dissociated from or incompatible with notions such as status, role and even property. In sum, in understanding how Shuar create collective organisation, my ethnographic sense leads me to remain open to the possibility that, like us, though likely in very different ways from us, Shuar too may at times produce something different from fragmentary, intimate, and unformalized sociality.

A final word on terminology. There is no local equivalent for the term "collectivity" in Shuar and my informants do not use the abstract Spanish word *colectividad*. Collectivity is therefore an analytical term through which I try to capture the varied but persistent set of discourses and practices concerning social unity, harmony, organisation, but also division, conflict, and disorder.

I use the term "community" as a convenient translation for the Spanish term *comunidad* and the Shuar term *irutkamu* (see Ch.4), which my informants use to refer to the village membership group or the kind of "we" emerging from the relations established in Shuar villages. Given the lack of consensus regarding the use of the term community in the social sciences, let me clarify what I do not mean by it. I do not use community in the sense inherited from Tönnies to mean any form of traditional, sentimental, or more "naturally" developed form of social organisation, such as kinship, friendship and neighbourhood, which would then be superseded by more instrumental forms of association (Rapport & Overing 2000:64). The meaning of "village" is territorially circumscribed. It comprises the specific localities where Shuar have settled permanently and hold collective land titles (Ch.2). The Spanish term *centro*, which literally means centre, is what these villages have been called by missionaries, government officials, and prominently today by Shuar people. I thus use the term 'village' and *centro* interchangeably. Hence, if community is the sort of collectivity emerging from the kinds of relationships established in the village, the latter, or its equivalent, *centro*, is the territorial unit in which such relationships are primarily developed.

Fieldwork in the making

The central margins of Shuar territory

Most Shuar live in the *montaña* or high jungle: the easternmost foothills of the Andes and the uppermost fringe of the Western Amazon rainforest, between 400 and 1,200 m above sea level in present-day Ecuador.[10] According to the 2010 national census, approximately 80,000 Ecuadorians identify as Shuar meaning that they constitute the largest ethnic group in the Ecuadorian Amazon and the second largest in Ecuador (INEC 2011). Shuar are also the largest of the Jivaroan-speaking conglomeration consisting of several neighbouring groups that are culturally and linguistically similar – the Achuar (in Ecuador and Peru), the Shiwiar, Wampis (or Huambisa) and the Awajun (or Aguaruna) in Peru[11] (see map 1).
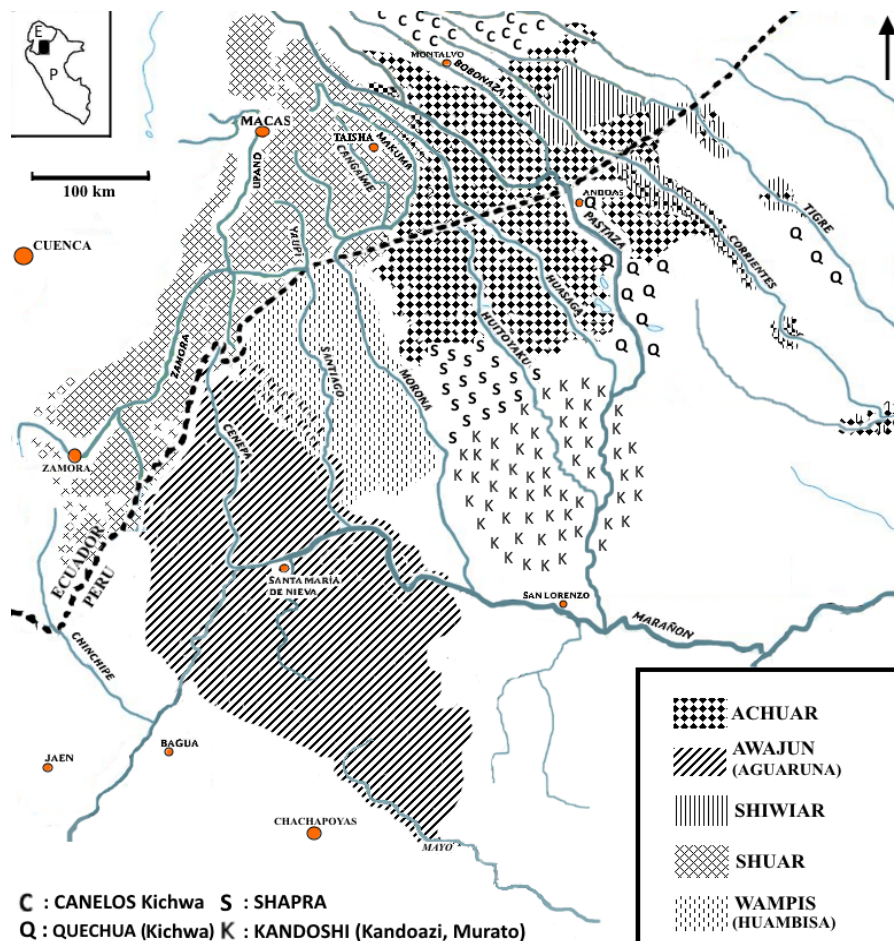
Map 1 - Approximate distribution of Jivaroan linguistic groups and neighbouring groups.
(Credits: Grégory Deshoulliere)

---

[10] Due to settler colonisation, since 1970, fractions of Shuar population have dispersed towards the areas of traditional settlement of other indigenous groups living in Northern Amazonian provinces in Ecuador: Kichwa (Villano); Waorani (Dayuma); Siona (Shushufindi); Secoya (Taicua); Cofán (Cascales and Chandia Na'en); Achuar (Kurints, Wasurak, Kurinua, Mashumpra, Patukmai, Kuchints, Kaiptach, Surich). Since 1941 there has also been a coastal enclave of Shuar living in Bucay, in the Guayas province (Juncosa 2005:26).

[11] The Jivaroan conglomerate are more generally divided into two blocs: the Jivaro proper and the Candoa, due to the linguistic distance between them. The second bloc consists of the Candoshi and the Shapra living in Peru (see Taylor 1998:187; Surrallés 1992).

Administratively, the majority of Shuar live in Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe, the most southeastern provinces of Ecuador located in *El Oriente* (The Orient), as Ecuadorians call the Amazonian region of the country. In these two provinces, the process of colonisation (see Ch.2) has given rise to a prominent geopolitical and to some extent sociocultural distinction between an interior and exterior Shuar territory. Though the difference does not exactly map onto a rural-urban dichotomy, there is a sense in which Shuar associate living far away from administrative centres with more traditional ways of living, usually defined through language and food habits. Compared to the Shuar living in towns, the Shuar of the interior, or of *adentro* (inside), are sometimes generically described as speaking more Shuar and eating more game.

Geography is central in the distinction between interior and exterior territories as these are physically divided by two imposing mountain ranges rising up to 2000m in height: the Kutukú, which borders the Upano River valley in Morona Santiago, and the Condor, which borders the Zamora River in the Zamora Chinchipe province. These mountain ranges effectively serve to create a relatively more inaccessible interior region. In Morona Santiago, the province where I conducted fieldwork, the importance of these geographical features in marking the distinction between interior and exterior is indicated by their use in local naming practices. Thus, Shuar of the interior are known as 'Transkutukú Shuar', meaning Shuar living in the interior southeast of the Kutukú; whereas the term 'Upano Shuar' (or *Muraya shuar*[12]) refers to Shuar of the exterior, living northwest of the mountains, in the Upano river valley, where two important settler towns, Sucúa and Macas, are located (see map 4, p.62).

---

[12] Literally, 'people of the mountains'. An expression used by Shuar of Transkutukú to call Shuar of the frontier, or the Upano Valley.
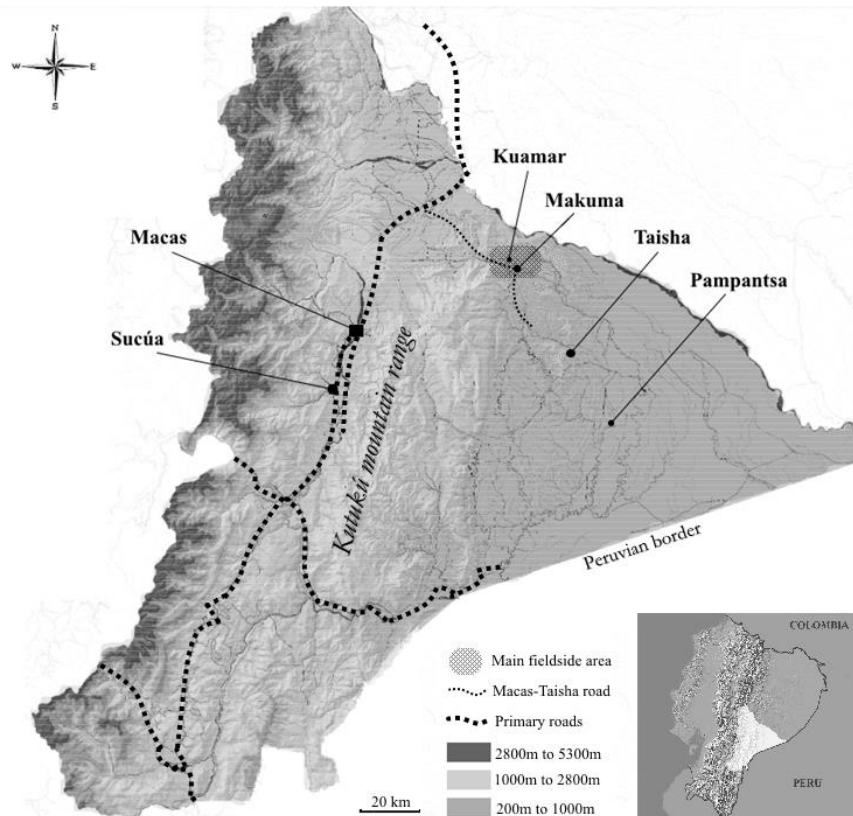
Map 2 - Fieldsites area (Morona Santiago province)
(Credits: Grégory Deshoullière)

Morona Santiago has a large self-identified indigenous population[13], but only a minority of Shuar people live in the major towns of Sucúa and Macas, which are populated by a majority of mestizo migrants from the highlands, referred to as *apach* by the Shuar. At present, most Shuar people live either in peripheral *centros* in the areas that surround settler towns or in *centros* located in the interior, some of which are still accessible only by airplane or canoe. Only in the interior do Shuar live only among themselves.

Although Shuar have a highly mobile and secondary emplacement in urban towns, they have nonetheless powerfully shaped these towns' geographies through their historical quest for political representation and empowerment. In Sucúa, one finds the headquarters of the most famous Shuar federation (FICSH - *Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar*), while in Macas, up until 2013, one could still find the headquarters of the oldest and second largest Shuar federation (NASHE - *Nación Shuar del Ecuador*).[14] But the federations are not the only institutions through which Shuar have gained prominence in regional landscapes and politics.

---

[13] The last official census (2011) recognises 48.4% of indigenous population in Morona Santiago. The total population of the province has 147,940 inhabitants out of which 62,630 are Shuar people. Other indigenous people in the province are Achuar (3,771), Kichwa, Cofán and Shiwiar (INEC 2011).
[14] Relocated to Makuma in 2013.

Pressed to defend their livelihoods and territories from the intrusions of an extractive state while also relying more and more on state resources, Shuar have increasingly participated in the electoral indigenous movement at regional and national levels. Since 2009, they have enjoyed unprecedented victories in the regional elections, placing Shuar candidates in the most strategic offices of Morona Santiago. The time of my research therefore coincided with an exceptionally strong presence of Shuar political leaders in the centres of government of the province. In fact, Shuar were literally governing the province: the provincial government and the Morona county hall (with its seat in Macas), the two most important offices, were in the hands of a Shuar prefect and a Shuar mayor respectively.

The strong presence of Shuar in government has accentuated a distinction between villagers and leaders that has existed at least since the creation of the federations in the mid-1960s. This distinction largely reinforces the abovementioned demarcation between the interior and the exterior. Shuar formal leadership is premised on the political distinction between, on the one hand, inner *centros*, known as 'the bases' (Sp. *las bases*), to which any successful Shuar leader must remain connected in order to maintain reputation and garner future electoral support, and, on the other hand, the leadership (Sp. *la dirigencia*) of the federations and local government. So even while administrative power is increasingly located in the towns of the exterior, the stronghold of Shuar power and territory is continuously reimagined and recreated as being 'inside': the core, the bases or interior where most Shuar live and which Shuar leaders are meant to work towards provisioning and protecting.

La dirigencia is composed of the various brokers and leaders (*uunt/uunt anaíkiamu*, Sp. *líderes/dirigentes*[15]) who occupy a multiplicity of interlocking informal and formal positions of power. The work of leaders is characterised by a continuous crossing of borders as they build and maintain connections between the offices of towns and the meeting points of inner territories. Likewise, villagers increasingly travel to towns to reach the offices of their delegates in government. But these distinctions and movements are not merely functional to Shuar political empowerment; they are also generative of continuous tensions and divisions among Shuar people. Access to institutional power has created competition and conflict between leaders and between leaders and villagers. This is the complex geopolitical landscape that I had to learn to navigate before I could make firm arrangements to conduct long-term fieldwork among Shuar people.

---

[15] In this thesis, translations from Shuar to Spanish and English are specific to the contexts described. Unfortunately, given space limitations, I cannot discuss alternative meanings.

While I did not arrive in Morona Santiago with a particular fieldsite in mind, I was certain that it needed to be a *centro* of the interior. I had set out to explore the interplay between Shuar social organisation and the novel institutional life engendered by state-derived institutions (specifically schools and their connection with *centros*) which were being actively appropriated and managed by Shuar people. My initial hypothesis was that an enquiry into the articulations and redefinitions of knowledge, power, and group-identity emerging from this interplay of social forms would foreground the transformative role of children and youths within Shuar society. To understand how people's interactions were moulded across social settings and the demands schools and village life put on children and parents, I thus needed to have access to *centros* and schools but also Shuar households and livelihoods in the territories in which Shuar were living most independently.

Finding my way into the interior proved more challenging than I had expected. I think it is useful to dwell briefly on the challenges I experienced upon arrival as this allows me to give a snapshot of the current complexity of Shuar engagements with institutional power. The dilemma in which I found myself was as follows. To conduct long-term fieldwork in Shuar inner territories I had to obtain formal authorisation from one of the Shuar federations. But while necessary to signal my respect for Shuar formal organisation, formal authorisations were not sufficient to guarantee safe-conduct into the interior, which required above all making informal acquaintances and being accepted into people's everyday lives. In order to make acquaintances in the interior, I first had to work through a complex and still opaque network of intermediaries. I spent the first two months discussing my research proposal with a few Shuar authorities and travelling to inner communities accompanied by some of them. My first contacts were for the most part well-educated Shuar who lived in towns working as functionaries in the national indigenous movement, bilingual institutions, the provincial government and at FICSH.

Despite all the travelling and negotiating with Shuar authorities, by the end of the second month, I still had not been able to prolong my stay in the interior. The reasons for this were manifold. While travelling accompanied by Shuar notables ensured I was not bypassing Shuar official representation, this came at the expense of being perceived as the friend of one particular individual and his or her family, and consequently, it was difficult to gain access to the rest of the village. In practice, therefore, by the time I reached the village, the supposedly helpful authority of leaders seemed to dissolve into the much more problematic field of local family politics. Additional difficulties arose because I was usually introduced to Shuar villagers as a student interested in the workings of bilingual education. As a result, villagers seemed to assume I was going to be working with 'Shuar professionals' (paid schoolteachers and functionaries) in the

educational institutes and state offices of the cities. Finally, the start of my fieldwork unfortunately coincided with the escalation of rumours about head-hunters and organ traffickers roaming in Shuar territory. The rumours had it that nasty gringos interested in making a fortune selling expensive *tsantsa* (shrunken head trophies) in their own countries, hired unscrupulous Shuar intermediaries, knowns as *corta cabezas* (Sp.), to capture people from their communities.

As is often the case in stories of fieldwork, my eventual stumbling upon a fieldsite owed a lot to serendipity. I met Manuel, the president of NASHE through Victor, a friend and anthropologist who had arrived in Ecuador around the same time as me and who was interested in doing research in the Makuma evangelical mission. Manuel was a somewhat atypical intermediary. Although he occupied an important position in a federation and thus spent a great deal of his time liaising with policy makers and development agents in towns, he had never finished secondary education and was still living in Kuamar, a *centro* of the interior Makuma area from where he originally came and to where he always returned at the end of his trips. While Manuel was conversant with the outside world, always intrigued by new knowledge and curious about the toolkit of anthropologists, he was also intimately embedded in and sensitive towards local life-worlds and political networks. As in many ethnographic encounters, mutual curiosity and respect enabled us to transform an early positive encounter into long-term collaboration and friendship. Two months after Manuel first invited me to visit his home for the anniversary celebrations of the founding of Makuma, I began living in Kuamar hosted by Manuel, his two wives and 14 children.

At this point, my transition into long-term fieldwork ran smoothly thanks to my hosts' acumen and a series of felicitous coincidences. During the anniversary of Makuma, Manuel took the opportunity to introduce Victor and me to the hundreds of villagers and leaders who were attending the celebration as 'two anthropologists and good friends of the people of the NASHE'. Manuel supported the claim that we were 'friends' by directly linking us to the history of defence of the NASHE territories. The reason he was prompted to do this has much to do with our first encounter. The first time Manuel and I talked, he asked me about my nationality and my motivation to work among Shuar people. On learning that I was Colombian, Manuel recalled a Colombian friend from old times who had worked with the NASHE. The friend was a forestry engineer who had been part of an inter-institutional coalition supporting the leaders of the NASHE (then called FIPSE) to present a constitutional appeal for Legal Protection that would prevent the oil companies Arco and Burlington from beginning extraction works in Makuma (Ch.2). The forestry engineer in question happened to be my father, Hans. 'So my friend Hans has sent his daughter to work with us!', 'So, like your father, you've come to work with NASHE!'

were the enthusiastic comments of those individuals who still remembered my father, upon hearing the news that I was going to live in the Makuma area.

Not long after this episode, my hosts and I agreed that in exchange for safe journeys and permission to do long-term research in the Makuma area I would volunteer to teach for a few days weekly in the Achunts high school, an hour's walk away from Kuamar (see map 3). To aid my work, Manuel, the director of the high school, and the president of Kuamar all provided me with official letters that authorised me to live in the area as 'a volunteer of the NASHE'. My research thus formally started under the aegis of the NASHE, though this was itself made possible by a serpentine history of friendships and collaborative networks.
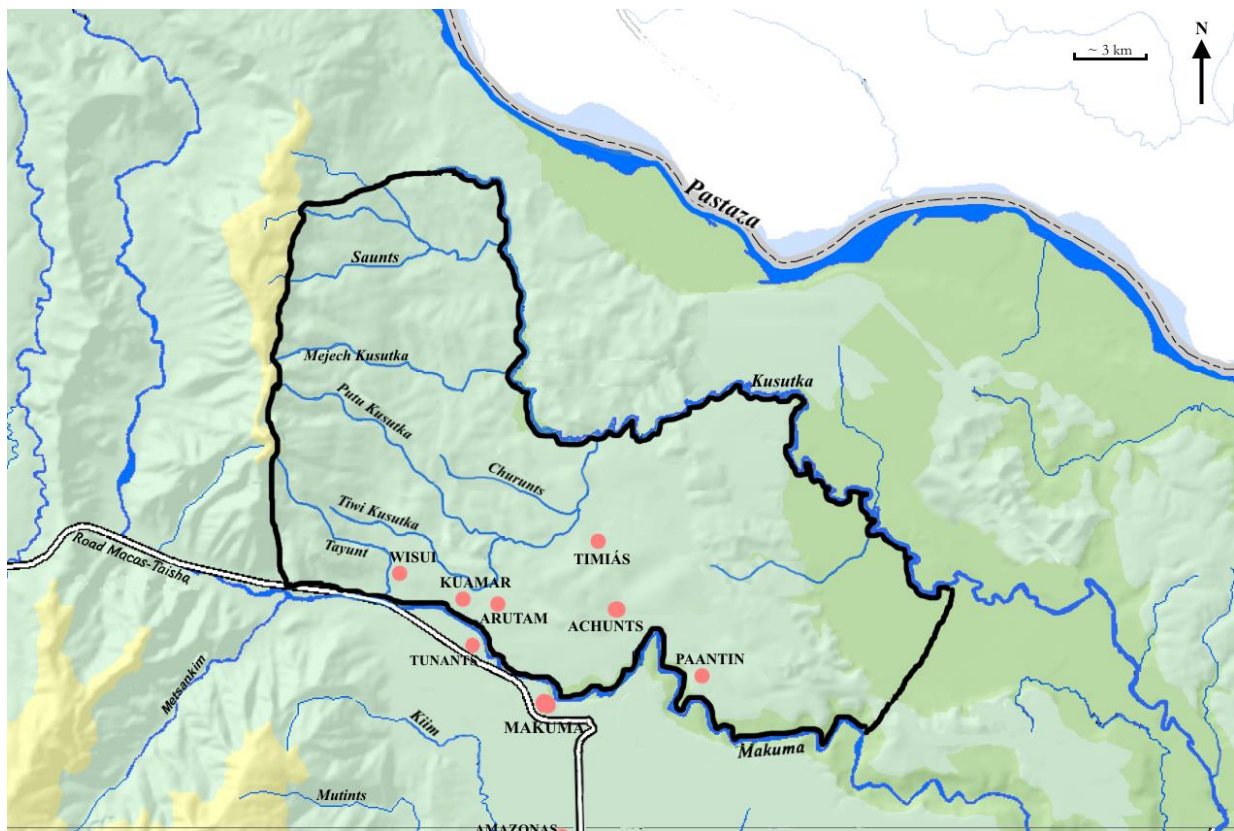
Map 3 – The association of Achunts with all its centros. *Achunts is also the name of an association of several villages of which Kuamar and Achunts (centros), are part. (Credits: Grégory Deshoullière)*

Living and working in Makuma

I lived in Ecuadorian Amazonia for a period of 20 months between October 2011 and June 2013. From March 2012 until June 2013, I lived in Kuamar, the *centro* I consider my permanent fieldsite. In addition, frequent journeys within a network of *centros* in the Makuma area, to other areas of Shuar territory, and to settler towns provided a broader context for my research and key sources of comparison (see maps 2, p.38 and 4, p.62).

Generally, my method involved participating in the everyday lives of those with whom I lived. In line with my interest in elucidating the expectations that underpinned everyday sociality in different contexts and the ways in which my informants dealt with a burgeoning institutional life in the interior, I sought to position myself within the household, *centro*, and the school. This was not particularly difficult considering that my hosts themselves asked me to volunteer at the school, and because presently the vast majority of Shuar of the interior live in *centros* and send their children to school. From early in my research I realised that the school was only one of various places implicated in the organisation of public life. An interconnecting network of kin relations, village and federation memberships, and government offices was shaping Shuar ideas of collective life. Many Shuar teachers, for example, aspired to occupy political offices and forwent their specific teaching duties to participate in the festive and political life of their *centros* as well as in Shuar-wide assemblies. Conversely, while high school students frequently stated that they were studying so as to be able to develop 'their communities', I was only able to understand how these interests played out in relation to other motivations and commitments by spending time with them in their homes and on shared journeys. As I became aware that formal education was just one part of a much larger project of self- and collective-fashioning, and that the scope and meanings of these needed to be understood in relation to what was happening on many levels simultaneously, my interest in how Shuar were appropriating the school gradually shifted priority. In terms of methodology, this led me to strive to balance my time between school, household and centro affairs, while ensuring that my opportunities for participant observation remained flexible and mobile. Being flexible and mobile brought important advantages. For example, I was able to accept last-minute invitations to accompany villagers and leaders to inter-local assemblies, travel with youths to visit their grandparents, and accompany teachers and students to a variety of inter-centro events and educational supervisors to their training workshops.

Unlike other Western Amazonian peoples as the Waorani and Ashéninka who show much reluctance to engage in excessive verbalisation and whose preference for informality make direct questions and inquisitive discussion difficult (e.g. Killick 2005:35; High 2006:30-31), Shuar have a flair for conversation and rhetoric. It would not be an exaggeration to affirm that much of what Shuar love in their lives has to do with speech. Whether in daily household visits, during chance encounters on the trails, or in an ever growing number of meetings and public events, my hosts seemed to be constantly engaged in conversation and in a variety of speechmaking activities. The fact that language was such an important part of social action meant

that I spent much time chatting with people and listening to their conversations and speeches in a variety of contexts.

Most conversations I had with people remained open-ended and unstructured, however. There were also limits to how much people elaborated spontaneously as well as to my capacity to prompt specific commentary. For instance, my informants showed a consistent disinclination towards speculating about the motivations and intentions of other people and at first purposely suppressed overt gossipy behaviour if I was around. Nevertheless, as I became more integrated into domestic life, this gradually began to change. Indeed, within the intimate discursive space of the household, my hosts and I often involved one another in joint intellectual journeys in which we discussed every day events (e.g. inter-household conflicts, public declarations in assemblies), extraordinary happenings that we had witnessed together (e.g. a violent deaths, political corruption), ethical and existential matters that preoccupied most Shuar people (e.g. how to fight illness, how to raise children, how to sustain polygynous families), as well as more obscure subjects (e.g. the relationship between visionary and godly power, if certain animals had soul, the sexual life of foreigners, the apocalypse, the manoeuvres of socialism against indigenous people).

What characterised these moments was the reflective and creative attitude with which my interlocutors approached the topics of conversation. In these situations, I was often reminded of Bloch's words to the effect that, just like us, villagers living in remote forests can very much become theoreticians in certain moments because their lives, not unlike ours, "oscillate continually between practice and theory" (2006, 2013:128). In contrast to the ritual-like propositions and neat cosmological explications one finds in the reported-speech cited in many regional ethnographies, I was often surprised by the idiosyncratic and fluid nature of some of the explanations that my hosts provided for all sorts of social phenomena. On the one hand, they readily showed their uncertainty about particular topics as well as a desire to engage in imaginative and tentative interpretations, while, on the other, they held divergent views about the same subjects.[16] I should clarify that I am not suggesting that Shuar people do not share an underlying ideology or system of cultural assumptions about the world. Rather, my point is of a methodological order. As much of what I have learned about Shuar sociality and cosmology has come from listening to and observing how my friends and hosts reacted to and elaborated on particular situations, I continuously made an effort to bear in mind the pragmatic and contextual cues that framed speech events when analysing specific opinions and interpretations (Bloch 2013:103).

---

[16] Brown makes similar observations stemming from his work among the Jivaroan Awajun (1986:50)

In the following chapters, I sometimes quote direct speech. Some of these quotations are taken from field notes I wrote soon after the events occurred, whereas others are taken from recordings of unstructured and semi-structured interviews, meetings and public events. Since the beginning of my research, some informants showed interested in my research and tried to contribute to it. Their contributions took various forms: requests to be interviewed, provision of documentation, and participation in history sessions. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, the period of my research coincided with a widespread and fervent interest in the revival of language and cultural practices, a situation that prompted much cultural reflexivity among many of my informants.

Many people I met had either written theses on cultural and historical matters or were interested in doing research in their own villages and had well-developed opinions about Shuar knowledge and tradition. This meant, firstly, that some of my informants understood very well what sociocultural research involved and therefore kept a vigilant or otherwise curious eye on my research, and, secondly, that we sometimes engaged in reflective conversations about the process of knowledge production and cultural issues more generally. I was also able to collect a large database of ethno-anthropological and historical research documents and interview teachers about their written work and their learning experiences and professional trajectories, which I sometimes use in the thesis.

Reflexivity was also a key part of my work at the high school where I was asked to teach social science methodology and English. I taught two to three days a week during a total of 6 months spread over two years: from April to June 2012 and from March to May in 2013. Within the classroom, I interacted with students aged 14 to 29 enrolled in the final three years of secondary education, who came from at least eight different centros. Initially, I feared that performing primarily as a teacher would impact the quality of my relationships with children and youths since teacher-student relations tended to be fairly hierarchical (Ch.8). Being familiar with some of the principles of participatory and critical pedagogy, I considered that my best option was to use my position as a teacher to destabilise the teacher-centred arrangement of the classroom and in so doing promote motivation and responsiveness among school youths. My solution was to turn the problem into a method and transform the classroom into a collaborative reflection on ethnographic research.[17] By introducing my students to the craft of ethnography, I was able to furnish the class with a common ground to learn about each other while doing

---

[17] In doing this, I drew much inspiration from the use that Bloch (2013:99-100) makes of scientific exercises and discussions among the Zafimary as he aims to put them in the position of academic psychologists and create spaces for group theoretical reflection.

research. This was also a promising way out of what had become a pervasive ethical concern at that point: I did not want to transform the classroom into a data-collection lab by using my position as a teacher. While I wanted to pursue my research, I also hoped that the students understood my goals and could be empowered to speak about what was relevant and interesting for them. In the course of teaching I familiarised the students with a variety of tools that I was using in my research (e.g. journal keeping, community maps, genealogical diagrams, ethnographic reading) while other techniques were specifically designed to respond to the different styles and thematic preferences of different groups of students (e.g. food diaries, dream drawings and narratives). In this thesis, however, I make very little use of the rich data generated inside the classroom as doing so would entail much more analytical work to unpack the methodological and ethical considerations involved than I have space for. Nonetheless, I feel it is important to mention this part of my methodology because it provided me with invaluable insights into the lives of children and youths which would be impossible for me to entirely disentangle from the rest of my analysis. From time to time, I intersperse the writing with children's and youths' drawings and narratives (most of which, however, were not generated in the classroom), in much the same way as Véronique Benei uses children's vignettes in her study of nationalism in India. That is, as "contrapuntal voices (...) providing an avenue for bestowing more visibility on children in the entire project" (2008:31).

I also video-recorded some formal meetings and public events with the consent of villagers, who frequently asked me to document the events and share the videos with them. During the last two months of fieldwork I transcribed and translated most of these speech events with the aid of two Shuar research assistants. I also maintained a friendly relationship with Norma and Jim Hedlund, evangelical missionaries based in Makuma during the time of my research. The couple had been living in Makuma since the late sixties and were extremely supportive of my research. Sometimes I visited them alone and other times I did so in the company of Shuar friends. These visits provided me with important knowledge about the elective affinity between family education and Christianity, the ways in which Shuar relate to white foreigners, the latter's sources of power, and the history of Makuma. In January 2013, I also spent a week at the mission doing archival research and discussing the documents I found with the couple.

Lastly, although it was not possible to get language tuition in England, I began to learn Shuar Chicham as soon as I arrived in Ecuador taking lessons from Santiago Utitiaj, a Shuar friend who worked at the Ministry of Education. Once in Makuma, I took some classes with Esteban Sandu, an elderly informant and long-time collaborator of SIL linguists, and I also benefitted greatly from the didactic materials produced by missionaries. Despite the fact that part

of my daily conversational exchanges occurred in Shuar, many longer, more detailed conversations and narratives were in Spanish. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, a local variety of Spanish is very much part of everyday communication among villagers living in the interior. Except for very young children and very old men and women, most of my informants were comfortably bilingual and spontaneously switched to Spanish in the course of everyday conversations. Switching or intercalating languages has become an important discursive style in everyday conversations and public speeches although it is also a pragmatic strategy to include interlocutors who do not speak or understand Shuar very well (e.g. Shuar individuals who grew up in the Upano valley, mestizo and Kichwa friends and spouses, mestizo state functionaries, anthropologists, etc.). Secondly, conversations in various public contexts (i.e. school meetings, classrooms) took place in Spanish by default with the intermittent use of Shuar to clarify or translate what had been said already. Thirdly, I was hosted in a multilingual domestic context: Manuel's second wife, Carmen, spoke Kichwa and Spanish to the children, Manuel spoke Shuar and Spanish to the children, and Manuel and Carmen only spoke Spanish to each another. The result was that the lingua franca when we all came together was Spanish. Nevertheless, knowledge of Shuar was vital to my research given that many political events took place primarily in this language and that people ordinarily switched back and forth between Shuar and Spanish.

For most of the time Kuamar felt extraordinarily quiet. After the last children had made their way to school in the morning, all one could see were individual women trekking to their gardens with their babies swathed on their sides and a basket hanging from their heads. Yet, by comparison with the common areas of the *centro*, the atmosphere inside the thatch-roofed houses was extremely lively, although quite intimate. Around the fire of the central hearth, children sat to do their homework, women fed their babies, and men drank manioc beer with their visitors. It was by taking part in this regular rhythm of intimate daily work and nocturnal conversations that I gradually grew familiar with my hosts' lives, their hopes and desires. I lived with Carmen, Manuel's second wife, and their seven children, though I also visited Targelia, Manuel's first wife, and spent time with her eight children on a daily basis.

While the insularity of daily living brought me very close to my hosts' lives, it created challenges when it came to widening relations beyond my hosts' immediate kin network. After the first month, I had met almost everyone in Kuamar and had amicable relationships with most household heads, who were all men, but I found it particularly difficult to develop more intimate and enduring relationships with other women and also with a few senior men in the community. Although I took every opportunity to participate in *centro* life, an impregnable veil of reserve and unease seemed to keep some women and senior men distant from me. As I gradually learnt,

what was problematic in their eyes was my unmarried status as a female adult and the fact that I was travelling alone.[18] Similarly, while in the household I was often in the company of children and youths, I found it difficult to explore their lives beyond the home, because the adults considered me their guest and interlocutor and, consequently, protected my adult status in daily activities and conversations. Adding to these difficulties was the pervasiveness of intra and inter-community conflicts and factional skirmishes. While Manuel had many allies and friends, as the president of the NASHE he was also continuously involved in disputes with rivals and would-be leaders intent on ousting him. By coming to live in his household, I risked inadvertently pushing away many of his political rivals and enemies.

Three events gradually transformed my status and eased my relationship with women, young people, and a larger network of people within and beyond Kuamar. The first event took place during the second month of my stay in Kuamar. Kasur, one of the sons of Manuel and Carmen, fell seriously ill while his parents were absent. My response to the event – enlisting the aid of a medical brigade to get a tetanus vaccine and carrying Kasur all the way to the doctors to get treatment – was particularly appreciated by some of the women who, as a result, no longer saw me as a total, nonconforming stranger but as a potentially reliable and caring person. The second event was the visit of Grégory, my partner, also an anthropologist who at the time was conducting fieldwork in another area of Shuar territory. Grégory and I had been together prior to my arrival in Kuamar so the fact that I had mentioned him but he had not come to live with me was regarded with some suspicion. After his visit, Grégory and I could be more easily accommodated within local adult gender roles, and consequently women became much more welcoming than before, occasionally inviting me, for example, to join them in their daily chores and sharing more knowledge and opinions with me than would have been otherwise possible.

The third event was the start of my time as a teaching volunteer. On the days I taught, I journeyed with youths from Kuamar to the high school. From the very first journeys, these periods of transit allowed us to enter a different modality of communication. Temporarily withdrawn from the contexts of daily interactions and enclosed in the privacy of movement, my young interlocutors seemed more relaxed and daring in my company, asking me direct questions and comfortable about answering mine in return. At the high school, I not only became acquainted with a group of schoolteachers and their families, but I also began to participate in

---

[18] The fact that I appeared to be single and 'lonely', that is, without family at my age (26) was considered strange and inappropriate by some people because I am a woman. Women are expected to travel with their husbands and kin only. There was only one other woman in the Makuma area who was also unmarried and had travelled from far, in her case, to teach in the Achunts High School. As will become clearer, my status as a teacher helped to normalise my status since increasingly more Shuar women are travelling for their studies or work.

school meetings with teachers and parents from Achunts and other *centros*. For the first time, people who had previously only heard my name in conversations were able to ask me questions directly: Why had I travelled so far to live among Shuar? Did I have a family? How old was I? Was I not afraid to walk by myself? Did I like living in Kuamar? Did I drink manioc beer? The fact that I was doing something useful at the school and could be relied upon to talk about a variety of issues without identifying with my host family's position by default gained me some sympathy among villagers from elsewhere who began to invite me to visit their households and *centro* festivals. People also began to differentiate me from the stereotypical *apach*[19] (the local term for Ecuadorian nationals): conceited, ill-spoken, disgusted by Shuar food and disrespectful of Shuar customs.

Two final notes. Both within and beyond Makuma my fieldwork was greatly facilitated by two other anthropologists who were conducting fieldwork in Morona Santiago around the same time as me: Victor (whom I have introduced) and Grégory. I visited Grégory in Pampants, a *centro* of the Tuutinentsa area (see map 2) on several occasions. These long trips and Grégory's field stories deepened my knowledge about the social dynamics of a very different *centro* from the one I was living in. Though also located in the interior, Pampants falls within the jurisdiction of the FICSH and has a Catholic history. It is also much older and bigger than Kuamar. Thanks to what I learned about the people of Pampants, I am able to draw more fine-grained and substantial comparisons in the chapters devoted to the *centro* (Ch.4-6). Finally a very important point, the observations in this thesis predominantly concern the Shuar of Transkutukú, therefore Shuar living in the interior, and specifically those living in the area of Makuma during the time I conducted fieldwork. Hence, the reader should assume that I am referring only to this sector of the population rather than generalising about all Shuar people when I write 'Shuar' without further qualifications. I make an effort to qualify and specify the differences when my statements concern Shuar living in other areas, such as for example in the frontier.

Chapter Outline

The thesis is divided into three linked parts:

Part I: (Chapter 2 – 3)

---

[19] In the field, Shuar oscillated between thinking of me as an Ecuadorian national (*apach)* and a Euroamerican white person (*inkis*). This is probably because I had a white partner, spoke English, acted like and wore clothes associated with foreign whites – all reasons to connect me with the *inkis*. On the other hand, I am Colombian, and my physical appearance, my local-sounding Spanish and the fact that I had previously lived in Morona Santiago are all a better fit with the *apach* profile.

The **first part** provides the historical and ethnographic background to understand two interlinked social dynamics that will be central in the rest of the thesis: collective organisation and domestic autonomy. In **Chapter 2**, I contextualise Shuar historical experiences with centralised institutions. Specifically, I consider the Evangelical mission and the cattle cooperatives, which gave rise to the federation and the *centros*, and the growing presence of the state at the local level. **Chapter 3** takes a reverse analytical strategy to foreground the significance of domestic autonomy. With the household as the centre of most everyday engagement, the chapter introduces the reader to the values and practices that frame good living, but also considers the threats and challenges Shuar see themselves facing in the present, and explores how members of the household frame their everyday efforts in terms of working towards a 'better life'.

Part II: (Chapter 4 – 6)

The **second part** of the thesis explores the *centro* as a local response to some of the problematics raised in the first part. It focuses on community living by probing into the socio-political, economic and ceremonial life of *centros*. **Chapter 4** describes what kind of institution *centros* are, exploring the mechanisms of membership and authority underpinning forms of communal organisation. Taking social conflict as a point of departure, the chapter illustrates how Shuar go about generating communal spaces of deliberation and 'tools of harmony' that enable them to emphasise common frameworks of action while avoiding fission. **Chapter 5** explores how villagers transform the *centro* into an institution of community representation that enables them to further domestic livelihoods through mediated access to state wealth and the challenges this strategy brings about. **Chapter 6** brings the previous two chapters together through the analysis of *centro* festivals showing how harmony and organisation are ritually re-presented as an ideal of social organisation fostering progress and unity. These ideological imaginings are explored in relation to the reconfiguration of sociality and alterity in the contemporary socio-political landscape.

Part III: (Chapter 7-8)

The **third part** of the thesis turns to the kinds of knowledge required to create collective organisation. Parts I and II of the thesis will have demonstrated how a literate pathway gains prominence at the level of the *centro* as formal positions of power and the manipulation of documents are used to create communal spaces and funnel external wealth. Additionally, it will have shown that an important way through which collective life is produced is the deployment of a set of public performances called *programas*. **Chapter 7** traces the emergence of the literate pathway through the history of education among Shuar. By exploring the rise of native intellectuals in charge of

running *programas*, the chapter analyses the creation of a 'scholarly' tradition, which promotes collective senses of belonging while creating a specialisation of cultural knowledge. **Chapter 8** explores how the school institution mediates understandings of collective organisation for Shuar villagers. It further examines the ethos of professionals and their role in programming communal life.

Chapter 2 – Antecedents of community life

Why do the colonists call [us] Shuar, Jivaro?
This is difficult to explain, but before the 1800s,
the *apach* [mestizo] and the *inkis* [white]
called us that before learning it from books.
In the old times, Shuar treated one another using the word SHIWIAR
and perhaps the colonists heard JIWIAR
so, in their pronunciation they might have called us Jivaro.
They also used to say that the Jivaro had tails
and that we lived only at war, shrinking skulls.

(Text written in 1995 by Felipe Sandu, Shuar of Makuma)

The 'Xibaro' first appeared in the Spanish written record in 1549, when they were described by the conquistador Hernando de Benavente as a group of insolent and dangerous Indians. Countless chroniclers then continued to perpetuate the legend of the bellicose and indomitable Xibaro. "They are people living free from the subjection of any ruler, although each is a partial subject to the chief under whom they join together to make war and rob and take the heads of their enemies (...)" reported Joan Pizzarro in 1582 (quoted in Stirling 1938:43). The term 'Xibaro' is Benavente's alteration of the indigenous word 'shuar' or 'shiwiar', as Felipe acutely suggests in the introductory quote. 'Shuar' in daily use, is the self-denomination of most Jivaroan populations (Achuar, Shiwiar, Shuar, Wampis, Awajun), and can be translated as 'human', 'person', 'people'. 'Shiwiar' designates the non-kin, intertribal enemies, usually people who speak a different Jivaroan dialect, so it brings to mind the head-hunting complex that gave notoriety to the Jivaro as warlike people over the centuries. The Jivaro's warlike rebellions against Inca, Spanish and Ecuadorian conquerors are well-documented (Stirling 1938:3-28; Harner 1972:17-32; Descola & Taylor 1981; Martínez-Martin 2005). However, the Jivaro's warlike reputation is based less on this resistance to foreigners than on the internecine character of their warring complex, which was long considered a sign of their extreme barbarity and misanthropy (Taylor 1994a). In fact, a few decades after its first use, the epithet Xibaro acquired the generic meaning of "brave, savage" and "wild rustic person" (Gnerre 1973:204; Taylor 1994a:76). As Taylor observes, few Amazonian societies have so vividly inspired the Western imagination, representing the very opposite of civilised social life and human nature (ibid.), "a sort of logical scandal bordering on anarchistic utopia" (Descola 1996a:16).

What mystified early observers was that a whole configuration of groups stretching from the southern shores of the Marañon River (in contemporary Peru) to the northern shores of the Pastaza River (in contemporary Ecuador), who understood each other's dialects and shared appearance and customs, could be united by no other rule than the centrifugal force of

permanent warring. The apparent cultural homogeneity of these peoples seemed all the more uncanny since socio-political unity was impossible to pin down. Yet precisely the singular features of this warring complex, consistently reported by chroniclers over the centuries, have allowed contemporary ethnographers to attest to the remarkable cultural endurance and resilience of a vast Jivaroan ensemble (Taylor 1994b:15). Colonial chronicles dating back to the 16th century describe patterns of endo-warfare, in the shape of intertribal head-taking raids and intra-tribal feuding expeditions, similar to those that characterised the internal dynamic of differentiation among the various Jivaroan tribes up to the 20th century. To ethnographers of the 20th century, the Jivaro thus appeared as a vast ethnic conglomerate composed of different tribes sharing distinguishable yet relatively uniform modes of social-territorial organisation, material culture, and internal patterns of social differentiation (e.g. Taylor 1985, 1998; Descola 1993; Hendricks 1993a:22).

This image of plurisecular continuity however stands in sharp contrast to the image of disruption and transformation that has emerged in the past fifty years. If most ethnographies of the Jivaro typically start with a description of their awe-inspiring history of survival despite five centuries of colonial attempts at enslavement, assimilation and evangelisation, they also note the tremendous havoc caused by the late phase of republican colonialism. If anthropologists have attributed the cultural stability of Jivaroan populations to the peculiarity of their social organisation, they have similarly foreshadowed the destruction of this very social organisation through 20th century colonialism. Taylor convincingly argues that the resilience of Jivaroan populations owes much to their pre-colonial adaptation to the conditions that became necessary to survive the epidemics and attacks induced by the colonial complex: social atomism, dispersion, economic self-sufficiency and exchange relations with buffer groups of "tame" Indians connected to the Hispanic system of *encomiendas* (1994b:23–27). Taylor further observes that even though Jivaroan peoples were intermittingly caught in the asymmetric debt-and-credit or *habilitación* system during the great rubber boom that affected the Upper Amazon region between 1880-1914, mestizo traders were unable to enslave them and so the Jivaro were able to conduct trade largely on their own terms (2007:143).

Despite this resilience, altogether 'softer' yet more intrusive kind of colonisation pursued through evangelisation, territorial encroachment and sedentarisation has taken over Ecuadorian Amazonia during the 20th century, as outlined in the introduction. A first sign of change resulting from this process has been the weakening of the inter-tribal networks that had historically connected the different Jivaroan groups as each of them has become integrated within the Peruvian or Ecuadorian national societies as independent 'nation' or 'nationality' with its own

indigenous federations and registered communities. Throughout this late period of colonisation, some Jivaroan nations, such as the Peruvian Awajun and the Ecuadorian Shuar, have actively participated in a process of ethnic affirmation whereby increasing emphasis has been placed on notions of political unification that previously had little relevance in this part of Amazonia.

One consequence of this novel emphasis on ethnic unity was the emergence of ethnic organisations such as the renowned Federation of Shuar centres (FICSH), which came about from the collaboration between Salesian missionaries and Shuar leaders in 1964. The FICSH and similar organisations in Ecuadorian Amazonia were created to defend native ways of life in the face of intensified settler encroachment, but they have largely gone about this within the framework of state-sanctioned colonisation laws.

When analysing the complexity of the articulations between indigenous and colonisers' interests manifested by the emergence of these ethnic organisations, previous ethnographers have tended to oscillate between radically different views of the organisations and the effects of late colonialism more generally. On the one hand, in some accounts, the federations appear as devices through which the Jivaro

> affirm their ethnic personhood by competing with the whites at their own game (...) by reproducing key aspects of Jivaroan tradition, most notably the link between positions of social power and the disposition to engage in antagonistic relations (Taylor 2007:145).

On the other hand, there are accounts that problematise how the federations give way to forms of self-propelled, irreparable, economic transformation (Descola 1982a) and contradictory modernising ethnogenesis (Rubenstein 2001).

An overarching aim of this dissertation is to bridge the positions of this conversation, the terms of which are reminiscent of the continuity versus ethnicity positions outlined in the introduction. The intention is to offer a way out of the modernisation cul-de-sac by developing a nuanced position that deploys longstanding continuities in a Jivaroan symbolic paradigm as an agentive explanatory device, while highlighting the indeterminate character and readjustments inherent in processes of socio-political and economic reorganisation.

This chapter begins this task by presenting the historical context of my fieldsite among the Shuar of Makuma, specifically in relation to the process of nucleation, a process whereby different clusters of autonomous kin groups formerly dispersed come to live together.[20] My aim is twofold. My first aim is to illuminate key historical antecedents of the *centros,* the workings of

---

[20] I use the term interchangeably with sedentarisation, although nucleation is slightly different in that it denotes more than the act of settling permanently. This is the term used in the first book ever written by the Shuar Federation (FICSH 1976) but also by previous ethnographers (Descola 1981; Rubenstein 2001).

which I examine in detail in later chapters in order to show that sedentarisation and the socio-economic changes that ensue from it do not follow a consistent and predictable pattern but can give rise to internal fluctuations and reorganisation. My account does not aim so much to recover 'the Shuar perspective' on transformation, nor do I focus specifically on how my informants interpret the past, though I address these topics at several points later in the thesis (Ch.3). Rather, by reconstructing the period of mission-led sedentarisation I aim to illuminate significant emphasis missionaries placed on the forging of 'community' through market production, and hence, on the conceptual relationship they helped to promote between 'living together' and the production of wealth. Conversely, by foregrounding the ways in which Shuar have responded to sedentarisation over time, I also throw light on how the pursuit of key values, such as the prioritisation of domestic independence and the aversion to economic and political inequalities have enabled Shuar to reconfigure their nucleated livelihoods from within. There are already several excellent historical and ethno-historical accounts of the Upper Amazonian region and of the Jivaroan conglomeration in particular (Descola & Taylor 1981; Renard-Casevitz & al. 1988; Taylor & Landázuri 1994; Taylor 1999). Therefore, in this chapter, I prioritise the ways in which late colonialism has affected the Shuar of Makuma who nucleated around the Evangelical Mission. The particular set of developments I will tackle here has received scant attention from previous scholarship, which has largely focused on the areas of Salesian missionisation and the Shuar federation that emerged from that experience (FICSH). By introducing the particular history of the institutional settings – *centros*, federation, state offices – that have emerged in the Makuma area, I contextualise a different experience of sedentarisation and the changing role of the NASHE, a Shuar federation that emerged two years earlier than the FICSH from the collaboration of the Evangelical mission called the Gospel Missionary Union (henceforth, GMU) and the Shuar of Makuma.

The second aim for the chapter for the chapter is thus to put the role of the NASHE in historical perspective in order to introduce the political context in which my research took place. The federation has played a key role not only in enabling socioeconomic change during the early process of sedentarisation in Makuma through the mission, but also in gradually forging a sense of Shuar ethnic unity in the face of conflict with the national society and the state. It was stated in the introduction that Shuar are heavily involved in public administration. By providing historical background to this, the chapter explores the origins of Shuar participation in electoral politics and allows us to understand the contemporary conflict-driven political interface between Shuar and the Ecuadorian state. This chapter thus lays the historical groundwork to understand the

institutional landscape in which Shuar are currently immersed and their interest in collective organisation and community making, which are presented in detail in later chapters.

The historical and contemporary situations in Makuma are discussed below in the second and third sections respectively. Before that, the first section offers a general overview of the pre-*centro* or pre-nucleated social organisation and livelihoods of Shuar people. This overview of the 'pre-nucleated' situation is necessarily somewhat brief and schematic because it is the contemporary, sedentarized livelihoods, social relations and ideological orientations of the Shuar of Makuma that are the primary focus of my discussion in the following chapters.

This chapter as a whole should be understood as a brief, but essential, introduction to key characters and situations of a plot that unfolds progressively in subsequent chapters. As a consequence, more detailed discussion of some topics touched upon here is deferred to later chapters. For example, while this chapter mentions different kinds of leaders ('great men', 'federation leaders', 'elected officials'), my detailed discussion of the topic of leadership is contained in Chapters 4 and 5.

Pre-*centro* social organisation

My discussion of Shuar pre-nucleated livelihoods makes use of the wealth of high-quality research concerning the pre-nucleated social organisation and livelihoods of neighbouring (Ecuadorian) Achuar. Although not specifically relating to the Shuar, I consider the use of this material to provide contextual information to be justified given the remarkable similarities among neighbouring Jivaroan groups (especially, among Shuar, Achuar and Wampis), which was noted above and which is the reason why ethnographers often refer to a pan-Jivaroan social organisation and ethos, even though each group has slightly different histories of colonisation.

The traditional Jivaro residential pattern is widely dispersed and mobile. Up until the 1950s and 1960s, Shuar lived in thatch-roofed houses spread out along the banks of rivers forming loose-knit aggregates of irregular size (10 to 20 houses), demarcated from other such aggregates by vast uninhabited areas (Harner 1972:77). Even within each of these aggregates, households constituted autonomous political and economic units and could be separated from their neighbours by distances that ranged between an hour's to a day's trip by foot or canoe (Descola 1981:620). Periodic relocation of the household was common, approximately every six to ten years, and it was motivated by the exhaustion of game, fish and gathering products in local territories, by the death of the household head, or by the increase of feuding (ibid.: 1981:620, 1982a:227). A household usually consisted of a senior man, his wife or wives, their own unmarried children, and their married children and spouses. Sons-in-law typically lived in the

house of their fathers-in-law during the period of brideservice that accompanied uxorilocal post-marital residence until the newly married couple had at least one or two children and built a house of their own.

Household aggregates were not organised following descent principles or rules of fixed membership, so a common feature of Jivaroan kinship is the absence of unilineal descent or corporate groups. Shuar reckon descent bilaterally and their elementary social units are typically open kindred groups, more or less inclusive according to the context and social circumstances. Like in other Amazonian societies who share a Dravidian kinship type of organisation founded on the ideal model of an exchange of sisters between cross-cousins (Overing Kaplan 1975), Jivaro social relations are typically organised by a symmetrical division between consanguinity and affinity.

The members of territorial aggregates tended to regard themselves as "ideal consanguineous communities" since the affinal links within them were obliterated as a result of manipulation of the kinship terminology[21] (Descola 1981:626). Taylor (1983) and Descola (1993) call these aggregates "endogamous nexi", that is nexi within which intermarriages preferentially developed, even though the authors emphasise that this form of organisation did not formally feature in native conceptualisations "except through the general precept which valued marrying 'close' over marrying 'far'" (Descola 1981:626). Adding to the repetition of internal marriages, the solidarity of each endogamous nexus depended on the sharing of a territory, and factional alliances, which however remained unstable. Each endogamous nexus centred on the influence of one or two 'great men' – designated with the Shuar term *uunt* (big) – generally two eminent brothers-in-law who exchanged sisters and who repeated their affinal alliances in the next generation as their children married their cross-cousins (Hendricks 1986:60; Mader & Gippelhauser 2000:64). Great men were able to exert influence thanks to their seniority, ritual knowledge, verbal mastery, generosity and bravery in warfare, qualities that allowed them to control interpersonal relations (e.g. marriage alliances), and accrue fame as exceptional warriors (*kakaram*, tr. 'the strong one').

Beyond the endogamous group, relations tended to be hostile although graduated according to the degree of social distance or relative otherness. Indeed, the ideological unity of the endogamous nexus did not hinge on economic interdependency since each house was conceived as a self-sufficient unit of production and consumption (Harner 1972:41; Karsten 1935:183; Stirling 1938:38; Mader & Gippelhauser 2000:62,75;). Unity was instead the

---

[21] Namely, a tendency to affinalise male relations and consanguinise female relations.

temporary and unintentional effect of endemic conflict expressed in the form of permanent tension and armed feuds between endogamous nexi (Harner 1972:113; Descola 1981:637).

Insofar as feuding has been the principal mechanism of temporary cohesion through the formation of factions, ethnographers have considered it – alongside headhunting expeditions – a structuring feature of Jivaroan societies (Seymour-Smith 1988; Mader 1999:433; Descola 2012:477-478). However, feuding and head-hunting expeditions obeyed very different logics of group differentiation. Feuding took the form of blood revenge expeditions or vendettas organised against enemies of the local group. Such vendettas were the result of internal dissension and the primary cause of group fission. The local word used for feuds is *mesét*, which can be translated as harm or damage and suggests a "deterioration of relationships between people who in other respects recognise one another as relatives, speak the same dialect and know one another personally" (Descola 1996a:277). Head-hunting expeditions, by contrast, targeted unknown Jivaros from different dialect groups with the sole purpose of capturing heads for shrunken-head trophies.

Pre-*centro* livelihoods

Here I present key aspects of the pre-*centro* native economy focusing specifically on the organisation of labour in a dispersed habitat, leaving a more focused discussion of pre-*centro* territoriality and its transformations through the creation of *centros* to Chapter 4. I rely on Descola's comprehensive study of pre-nucleated Achuar livelihoods (1994, 1996b), the findings of which the author himself confidently extended to the pre-nucleated Shuar, who inhabit the same interfluvial ecosystem to which some Achuar groups had adapted (1982a). This discussion sets a baseline to contextualise the transformations that have ensued as Shuar have gradually adapted to a different system of production in a nucleated habitat, which are examined in the third section and subsequent chapters.

As in other parts of Amazonia, Jivaroan labour processes are guided by a strict gender complementarity. Women were in charge of swidden horticulture, food preparation, child rearing and pet raising, while men were responsible for hunting, fishing, and clearing gardens before they are cultivated by women. Shuar have domesticated an extensive variety of cultigens, of which sweet manioc is the most important, procuring the domestic unit most of their consumed calories, although only a few of the proteins. Productive labour rather than jural property rights guided the appropriation of cultivable plots by a domestic unit, so there has been no ownership of non-transformed land (Descola 1981:631, 1982b:306–8). Given the low density of the population, members of the domestic unit could easily appropriate cultivable land. Shuar

have practiced slash-and-burn horticulture of a pioneer type, which means that new plots were always being cleared in primary forest, every two to three years in the interfluvial habitat (Descola 1994:207). While horticulture remained within the sphere of control of the domestic unit (i.e. each family cleared, planted, harvested, and consumed the produce of their gardens), the sustainability of hunting territories depended on supra-local mechanisms of territoriality. This is because the maintenance of low man to animal ratios within a hunting territory required the dispersion that resulted from feuding, and thus "ultimately depended on the institutionalisation of intra-tribal feuding" (Descola 1981:632).

As in many parts of Amazonia, a traditional emphasis on domestic self-sufficiency, individualised modes of resource procurement, the centrality of conflict as a structuring feature of social organisation, and the establishment of personal relations with certain species of plants and animals, all contributed to discouraging Shuar from intensifying the exploitation of their habitats where the environment so permitted. In fact, the interfluvial habitats could have withstood the development of villages of about a hundred inhabitants without environmental damage, on the condition that their inhabitants had continued practising the fallow system (Descola 1982a:228). But if Shuar and other Jivaroan populations had not developed large villages, Descola forcefully argued, it was because "their symbolic paradigm was not sufficiently flexible to absorb the reorientation of social relations that such a choice would have engendered" (1996b:330).

We might thus expect that the creation of villages and the development of new modes of production would significantly affect the autonomy of the domestic unit and its control over labour processes, the arrangement of territoriality and property, the role of internal conflict, and the social relations Shuar have with humans and non-humans more generally. Some of these issues will be central to the following chapters, but to understand what is at stake we must first explore how villages and new labour relations were introduced in the first place and how Shuar adjusted to some of these changes. In the remainder of this chapter, I briefly introduce the main developments that have affected all Shuar in the 20th century; subsequently, I focus on the relations the Shuar of Makuma established with the Evangelical Mission and later with the state.

Republican colonialism: the missions ahead

Up to the 19th century, repeated failures to subdue Jivaroan populations had dampened the motivation of the Spanish and later Ecuadorian authorities to colonise the Southeastern Amazonian region. However, the promise of 'free', undeveloped land, of oil and natural riches and the expansionist policy of neighbouring Peru pushed the state to gain control over the region.

As elsewhere in the Andes (Urban & Sherzer 1991:9), the Ecuadorian government opted for subtle mechanisms of colonisation rather than the direct application of force, aiming simultaneously at assimilating its Indian populations by transforming them into citizens and gaining sovereignty over their lands. Lacking resources either to sponsor large-scale colonisation or to develop infrastructural links that connected the Amazon to the rest of the country, the Ecuadorian government relied on the work of missionaries to gain control over the region and pacify its native populations. Two missions were principally involved in this process among Shuar: the Catholic mission of the Salesian Order founded by John Bosco in 1859, in Turin, Italy, and one of the oldest North American missionary agencies, the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU), founded in 1892 in the United States.[22]

Both missions began to implant outposts in what is now known as the province of Morona Santiago[23] at the turn of the 20th century.[24] In 1935, the Ecuadorian government created a reserve and granted the Salesian order jurisdiction over Shuar people and their lands (Rubenstein 2001:267). However, Salesian control did not extend over areas where the GMU had already been established. The GMU established its first outpost in Macas around 1903, and subsequently created other outposts in Sucúa in 1919 and in Makuma in 1945 (Karsten 1935:21; Harner 1972: 35; Drown & Drown 2002:22–23). Around the 1950s, evangelical missionaries also sought land grants from the state but according to their own accounts, they never held jurisdiction over Shuar territories (cf. Harner 1972:33). The areas that became associated with the GMU, thanks to the outposts they gradually established or to their evangelist visits around Shuar territory, later became part of the NASHE Federation.

For both missions, the "pacification" of Shuar people required the eradication of feuding and shamanism, which missionaries regarded as the main causes of their seminomadic, polygynous and heathen ways of life. Of the two, however, the Catholic mission was far more expansive[25]; their urbanising work during the first decades played a substantial role in the development of what was to become the main front of colonisation in the Southern areas of the province (on the Zamora and Upano River valleys). Salesian missionaries devoted most of their earlier efforts to the spiritual conversion and "economic development" of Shuar people, for

---

[22] The GMU changed its name to 'Avant Ministries' in 2004. It was the first evangelical mission to enter Ecuador and begin the translation of the Bible into Kichwa and Shuar.

[23] The province only came into existence on November 1953.

[24] Two different Catholic orders had located short-lived missions in the area earlier (for further details, see Taylor 1994c:50).

[25] See (Taylor 1981), for a comparison of the strategies used by each mission to gain converts.

instance by establishing mission boarding schools.[26] They also promoted the establishment of settlements of Highland peasant families, specifically from the southern regions of the country – Azuay and Cañar provinces –, as a way of providing Shuar with a model of monogamous, Christian and civilised life, while also gaining economic allies to support the infrastructural development of the region (Descola 1982a:224; Gnerre 2012:587).

For a long time, therefore, missionary work went hand in hand with settler penetration in the region. Migrant colonisation increased exponentially from the second half of the 1950s as a series of laws of colonisation were issued, first, by the Azuay Regional Agency (CREA) and, subsequently, by the state Land-Titling and Agrarian Agency (IERAC). Through agrarian reforms, both agencies encouraged impoverished peasants from the Highlands to establish *minifundios* (small, privately owned farms) in the Amazon to take pressure off highland cities (Rubenstein 2001:274). The laws emphasised the right of the peasants to obtain title to the land that they worked, and later ones added the concept of the 'social function' of the land; that is, the idea that the land, being a productive asset, had to benefit the community or nation as well as the individual owner (Hendricks 1986:35). The result was to force indigenous populations, such as the Shuar, located at the frontier "to imitate the colonists' modes of production or risk losing all land to the colonists" (ibid.:36). The IERAC law stipulated that to acquire land titles, an individual or family had to exploit at least two thirds of the land in its possession. Since the maximum area of personal land concession ranged between 50 and 60 ha, it would have been impossible for a Shuar family to exploit all of it through traditional slash-and-burn horticulture (Descola 1982a:226; Rubenstein 2001:280). Moreover, hunting and foraging were not considered viable productive activities to gain land titles. Consequently, cattle rearing, which had previously been introduced by pioneer colonists in the province, became the only way a Shuar family could reasonably exploit about two thirds of its assigned land (approx. 25-to-30 ha) in order to claim legal titles (Descola 1982a:226). In light of these new legal demands and to protect Shuar from "the temptation" of individually selling their land to the colonists, missionaries and emerging Shuar leaders opted to request 'global' (i.e. collective) rather than individual titles in order to facilitate the nucleation of Shuar around a common economic project.

The Shuar populations living in the southwestern areas of the province, where the colonial frontier expanded around the towns of Gualaquiza, Mendez, Logroño and Sucúa, were the first to be affected by settler encroachment (see map 4).

---

[26] For reviews of the process of nucleation promoted by Salesian missionaries see (Descola 1982a; Santana 1995:69-97; Rubenstein 2001; Gnerre 2012:580-593).
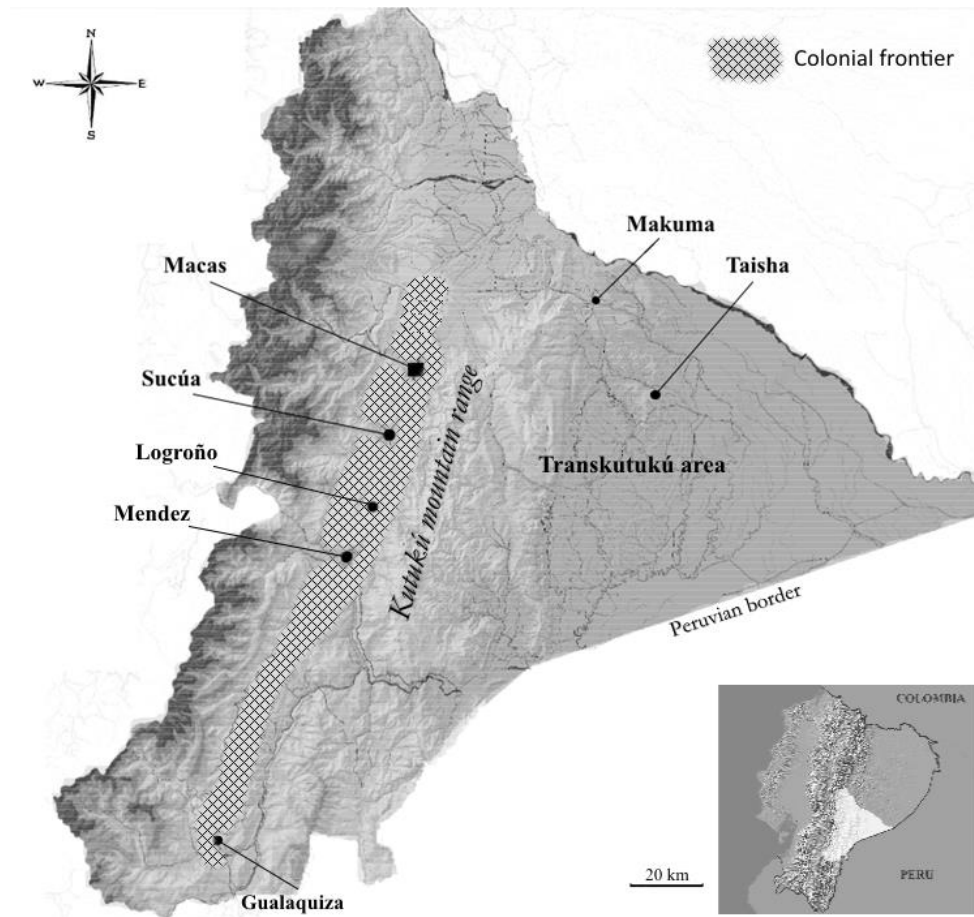
Map 4 - Colonial frontier and main towns (province of Morona Santiago).

Consequently, from the first decades of the 20th century, some of these Shuar began to escape frontier developments by relocating to Transkutukú, a remote and difficult-to-access area across the Kutukú mountain range, which had remained insulated from colonisation. Since a part of Transkutukú was occupied by the Achuar, whose settlements extended to the areas of the Upper Makuma River and its tributaries, Shuar migrations to these areas had the effect of forcing the Achuar to resettle further to the southeast of the province between the Makuma and Pastaza Rivers. This process of consecutive colonisation or internal migration in turn exacerbated internal conflicts between Jivaroan populations. Thus, by the time the GMU established an outpost by the Upper Makuma River, migrant factions of Shuar people had already settled in the area. By all records, this was a period of exceptional violence characterised by intense intra-tribal feuding and warfare between Shuar and Achuar (Harner 1972:36; Taylor 1981; Descola 1993:187; Drown & Drown 2002:20).

The "Golden Years" of Makuma

The area of Makuma is located in the eastern Transkutukú forest, bounded on the southwest by the Kutukú Mountains and on the northeast by the Pastaza River. Within this region, Makuma is also the name of the specific settlement where GMU missionaries built the first mission station and around which Shuar living in the vicinities began to nucleate in the 1950s. Over the years, Makuma gradually grew into a little town, becoming in 1972 the seat of the civil parish, the smallest political-administrative unit of Ecuador. In fact, the Shuar commonly use the term 'parish' (Sp. *parroquia*) to refer to the town of Makuma. Before examining the events leading to nucleation, let me briefly introduce the mission as I knew it during fieldwork.

If one stands by the parish airstrip, facing south, and looking towards the right upper side of the airstrip one sees the shabby hut of the hangar with the name 'Makuma' written in fading black paint. The hangar lies just outside what remains of the Evangelical mission, a handful of American-style wooden cabins raised on perfectly mowed grass and green gardens. Only two foreign families currently live in the mission and only for intermittent periods of the year. Jim and Norma Hedlund who have been in the area since 1967, and Dwain and Loida Holmes who have taken residence in Makuma but have worked with the Achuar since 1986. Norma and Jim's primary objective these days is the completion of the Shuar Bible, a project they have carried over from previous missionaries and presently develop with a small and fluctuating team of local translators. The couple know almost everyone in the area and continue to receive visits from their Shuar friends on a daily basis, but long gone are the days when they were involved in almost anything of public significance in Makuma. As one walks into the domesticated quarters of the mission, one has the impression of being on retreat in a faraway place of spiritual contemplation completely closed off from and largely indifferent to the buzz of ordinary life outside it. Largely devoted to translating the bible and seemingly cut off from public life, the missionaries' influence these days is minimal indeed. Yet, the mission of the present is a far cry from the vibrant hub of development everyone remembers it having been just a few decades ago.

Early on in my research, I came to appreciate that some of the ideas Shuar frequently voiced in everyday conversations and assemblies – progress, unity, and organisation – were in one way or another connected to a major period of development they had experienced in the recent past. I call this period, the 'golden years' of the mission, reflecting how Shuar tend to remember it as a time of general affluence and wellbeing. Indeed, the developments of this period were often spoken about with a sense of admiration and nostalgia (Ch.3). To fully understand what Shuar had in mind when they referred to 'progress' or 'organisation' therefore required me to try to imagine a different Makuma, one massively transformed by the intervention

and development work of missionaries. In this section, I bring to life pieces of the golden Makuma, taking as a guiding thread the process of nucleation. My focus here is on the socio-political and economic factors that facilitated nucleation rather than the ideological and spiritual work of missionaries or the effects of Christianisation among Shuar.[27] Since my purpose is to reconstruct the birth of *centros* in the area, I primarily focus on the major developments that took place between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1980s, an interval that roughly coincides with two phases of nucleation. In the first, cattle cooperatives were introduced to promote nucleation, while during the second, the cooperatives fragmented into different *centros* and cattle herds began to decline. Since I cannot explore every major development promoted by the mission during those years, I provide a chronology with key information below.

To reconstruct 'the golden years', I rely on a combination of sources. First, oral accounts by elderly and middle age Shuar people who were themselves involved in some of the events I describe or had stories and opinions to share about the ways in which their elders experienced them. Second, more structured conversations with Esteban and Felipe Sandu, two Shuar brothers, in their late seventies and sixties respectively. Both brothers were trained at the mission school and have been key players in Makuma and important collaborators of the missionaries over the years.[28] Both were particularly interested in the history of the mission, and had produced and preserved a variety of documents from the period I am interested in reconstructing. Indeed, the quote with which I began this chapter was taken from a text, written by Felipe prior to my arrival, in which he relates some stories that interested him about the relationships between Shuar and missionaries.

Upon learning of my interest in the history of *centros*, Esteban – who worked as a bilingual educational advisor – proposed that we hold 'workshops', so we held two of these. Third, I have used my conversations with missionaries and the literature they have produced over the years. This literature includes: "Mission to the Headhunters" by Mary and Frank Drown (2002[1961]), an American wife and husband, who spent 37 years living among Shuar and played a decisive role in the establishment of the Makuma mission; and also, "A Critique of the Makuma project" (1967) by Donald Caswell, who became the professional cattleman of the mission

---

[27] Brief discussions of Christianity can be found at various points throughout this dissertation. For a full discussion of these, I invite the reader to consult the work of Gnerre (2008, 2012) and Meiser (2015) on Shuar relations with Catholicism and Cova (2014) on Evangelical Christianity among the Shuar of Makuma.

[28] Esteban collaborated with Glenn Turner, an SIL linguist and bible translator during his youth and trained as a bilingual teacher. Felipe worked at the radio station "Amazonas" and then became administrator of the hydroelectric power plant "Yantsa", constructed by the mission and still the main power supplier in Makuma and neighbouring *centros*. Despite their closeness to missionaries, I found that their views did not significantly differ from those of other people.

between 1962 and 1969. I had long conversations about Makuma with Norma and Jim, and thanks to them, I also corresponded with other missionaries who have previously worked in Makuma (see Appendix 1). Although I aim to keep the accounts of Shuar people separate from those of missionaries, my Shuar friends often prompted me to ask missionaries to corroborate details. While I do not mean to imply that their accounts converge neatly, I am suggesting that some Shuar regard missionaries as their partners in history and I rely on their own inclusion of missionary voices when this is relevant. Finally, I rely on documents the missionaries and Felipe made available to me (e.g. federation statutes, meeting minutes, and letters, missionaries' newsletters to their donors, letters, etc.) and on available ethnographic accounts, specifically those concerned with the nucleation of the Achuar promoted by the same GMU mission during the 1970s.

The main objective of Evangelical missionaries in Makuma has been to propagate the gospel and support the implantation of native churches that can work autonomously after their departure. In their view, all missionary work, whether this be political or economic, should ultimately lead towards the creation of strong native churches and Christian communities. While this work may necessitate that forest-dwelling tribes abandon the "savage" ways of life that keep them hostage to the devil – "the horror" of feuding and the deceit of sorcery (Drown & Drown 2002:20-25) – true conversion can only happen if native hearts are transformed by Jesus's saving power. This is why preaching the gospel and translating the Bible into the vernacular play such an important role in paving the way to the eternal salvation that missionaries see themselves as announcing. Importantly, for evangelical missionaries the work of salvation does not presuppose the obliteration of difference. On the contrary, "the 'true' church can only be built out of and through difference" (Cova 2014:66). What Rival observes for the evangelical missionaries working among the Waorani very well applies to the missionaries of Makuma; that is, for them, "God has created people as ethnically different and thus naturally speaking different languages" (2002:161). But if missionaries have striven to 'preserve' Shuar linguistic and cultural distinctiveness – though their vision of Shuar culture is obviously very selective (Ch.7) – they also easily accept that preaching the gospel to a group of forest-dwelling, semi-nomadic and warring people has necessarily implied effecting changes in their lifeways. As Jim put it, missionaries encouraged Shuar to gather in stable communities because they recognised:

> the impossibility of chasing after moving targets to teach a different way of thinking and establishing churches and schools that could offer any consistent education, provide a monetary base to integrate the Shuar with the rest of Ecuador so they could deal with health needs etc. (personal communication, November 2014).

Peace, trade and cattle: the birth of cooperatives

Ernest Johnson was the first missionary to arrive in Makuma in 1944. By 1948, he and some Shuar from the area had built the airstrip that facilitated the arrival of Marie and Frank Drown. The prospect of temporary peace and increased access to manufactured goods give us an initial hint as to why Shuar might have allowed missionaries to stay and implant a mission. The mission was built in the middle of two fighting factions to the north and south of the outpost. According to some elders, the establishment of the mission created a neutral territory where warring factions could safely meet during days of worship despite the tensions. According to the Drowns (2002:35), Ernest chose that very stretch of uninhabited land on the south side of the Makuma River because he needed to be friends with all the Indians[29], as opposed to only with a few factions (see also Belzner 1981:148). We can thus speculate that among fighting groups there was a growing desire for a temporary truce on which the mission capitalised. Moreover, according to Felipe Sandu (1995), the great men living in the area allowed Ernest to stay and gave him land on the agreement that missionaries would help Shuar to defend their lands against future encroachment from settlers. It is not difficult to believe that for a people who had already escaped the front of colonisation, it would have been important to find ways to continue to keep the colonist at bay. Further evidence that ceasefire was a concern in the area comes from Taylor who worked among the Achuar in the mid-1970s; she mentions that the Achuar explicitly acknowledged that warfare was "getting out of hand" and referred to the previous decades as a period in which they "were ending" (1981:651). The author also observes that in "this apocalyptic atmosphere", intergroup trade had been made difficult, and as a result, renewed "access to guns and ammunitions (...) probably made the Achuar receptive to powerful white groups who offered protection and peace implantation" (ibid.).

The history of the mission outpost in Makuma is one of gradual technological development. Already in the 1950s, we find appreciative reports of the mission by the local political lieutenant (Sp. *teniente político de Taisha*[30]) to the governor of the province describing an impressive aviation system, health centre, and school in Makuma and recommending that the

---

[29] The Drowns however describe the agreement in economic terms: "Ernest bought that land paying Shuar with axes, cloth, and other trade goods" (2002:36). In framing this exchange as a one-off purchase, Ernest appears to behave no differently to the frontier colonists who managed to occupy native land by "paying Shuar". Shuar however understood that they were establishing trading partnerships with ceremonial friends (see below and also Rubenstein 2002:52-3). According to Caswell, land was given to the GMU by the government to develop an agricultural town, with its own educational and medical centres, and to meet any other needs aimed at the cultural development and civilisation of the Jivaro Indian (1967:12).

[30] The local representative of the state.

state support the Evangelical Mission's work among the Jivaro (see Appendix 2). Belzner, an ethnomusicologist, writes in 1981 that regular flights from Shell-Mera in the Pastaza Province to Makuma enabled missionaries to ship great quantities of construction materials and machinery (including a jeep), medicines, and foodstuffs, with which to start building the radio station, the power hydroelectric plant and other edifices (155).

Table 1 - Chronology of main developments in Makuma (period 1945-1991)

November 1945	Ernesto Johnson arrives in Makuma.
March 1947	Inauguration of the airstrip.
April 1948	Frank "Panchu" Drown and Mary Drown settle in Makuma.
1950	Construction of the primary school 'Eloy Alfaro'.
February 1962	Opening of the Radio 'Río Amazonas'.
June 1962	Creation of the *Asociación Protectora y de Desarrollo de las Tribus Jíbaras del Oriente Ecuatoriano* (ADJOE).
1965-1978	Construction of the hydroelectric plant.
1967	Jim and Norma Hedlund settle in Makuma.
1978	The clinic of the mission is transferred to the community of Makuma.
1980	Construction of the State health care centre.
October 1982	Construction of the national high school 'Antonio Samaniego'.
1986	Dwain and Lois Holmes settle in Makuma to work with the Achuar.
April 1991	Closure of the radio 'Río Amazonas'.

Throughout all this process, missionaries also kept shops and facilitated a steady supply of highly desirable manufactured goods such as medicines, radios, ammunitions, steel tools and utensils, which Shuar were then able to exchange for jungle products with the Achuar living north of the Pastaza. As we will see in the following chapter, Shuar establish an intimate link between technical mastery and symbolic mastery, so a person's technological command and ability to access exotic goods reflects his or her supernatural power. When Shuar compare the power of foreigners (*inkis*) with that of the Ecuadorian mestizo (*apach*), they consider the former far more powerful than the latter because of their technological might, which in the case of the missionaries, Shuar attribute to the superiority and strength of their alliance with the Christian God. Thus the combination of material and symbolic wealth enabled the missionaries to establish control in the area. Taylor reports, for instance, that a strategy of the GMU mission was to reinforce and intensify the traditional web of trade relations radiating out of Makuma by

establishing mission shops and allowing Shuar and Achuar people access to radio and air service to facilitate communication (1981:658).

Traditionally, the most important social bonds outside the household and bilateral kindred have been created through a trade system called *amikri* (a word derived from the Spanish '*amigo*', that is, friend). This system involves a pair of men who become formal partners in ceremonial exchanges over a long period. In addition to its utilitarian role in allowing access to locally scarce resources, this trade serves as a means of incorporating the exotic, foreign powers of Kichwa shamans, mestizo and white men. Formal partners acquire social influence not by stockpiling goods (*kuit*) but by distributing, thus acquiring obligations from neighbours (Steel 1997:4). On receipt of goods from a trade partner, a person becomes morally obligated to the latter until he (it is usually a 'he') can reciprocate with other goods or with services (Harner 1972:126). When inserted within this system, the mission, with its shops, began to operate as a central hub within a vast network of traditional trade, while helping to foster personal links of dependence between Shuar great men and the missionaries and between the latter and other Shuar/Achuar formal partners and allies.

The first great men to establish alliances with missionaries began to relocate their endogamous groups around the mission to benefit from additional goods with which to increase their interpersonal networks and to access medical and educational services. However, missionaries soon faced a problem of saturation: first, of their services which they felt they could not indefinitely provide "for free" or simply in exchange for labour or jungle products, and second, of land, as progressive nucleation around the mission exacerbated conflicts between different endogamous groups as a result of land shortage (Caswell 1967:12; Belzner 1981:155). Missionaries came up with two interrelated solutions to these problems. One was to encourage the concentration of different groups on the same land, but not necessarily around the mission, to facilitate evangelisation and the provision of services. Another was to promote an internal market so that Shuar could start paying for medicines, foodstuffs and schooling. A key issue then became how to get Shuar to produce for 'exchange' – that is, how to encourage them to move from a subsistence economy to one based on surplus production so that they could begin to farm for profit and gradually "get into the habit" of paying for services "as abstract as education" (Caswell 1967:26). This is a critical point. It is well-known that previous missionary efforts such as the Jesuit *reducciones* (reductions) in the 17th and 18th centuries managed to promote sedentarisation but failed to produce long-term transformations because they could not change the indigenous system of production. As Descola points out,

except for a little free labour extorted by the missionaries, the *reducciones* of the past centuries did not modify the existing relations of production among the artificially nucleated indigenous groups. These *reducciones* were largely self-sufficient and their economic life was based on a production similar to the one existing among their independent neighbours (1982b:318–19).

As Descola accurately observed, however, the new missions proved much more successful at promoting economic transformation by altering the traditional pattern of family self-sufficiency.

The GMU did this by introducing a system of cooperative cattle breeding. Cattle herds were a way to encourage Shuar to settle permanently in one place. The Drowns describe the logic of the cattle experiment in the following manner: "it would be hard for an Indian with a cow and a pasture to put his possessions in a basket and move away" (2002:29). Indeed, because planting pastures in the forest was so demanding of labour, people were forced to remain in one place (see Descola 1981:639). With cattle, missionaries also sought to promote a local cash economy in which Shuar would become increasingly responsible for purchasing their consumer goods and paying for services, such as: schooling, announcements of the radio station and electricity. From a legal perspective, and given the pressure to contain the possibility of settler colonisation and respond to the new laws of land tenure, cattle were also the most efficient way to secure land titles for the territories of Makuma for the future. Finally, and most importantly, the idea was that cattle could provide Shuar with an incentive to live and work together or, as Norma put it, 'to live with people outside their relatives since deceit has been such a way of life' (personal communication, October 2014). For instance, missionaries tried to persuade their Shuar allies that with cattle they could establish their own schools wherever they settled. However, to have schools in their own land implied that people had to cooperate to clear the plot of land, build the schoolhouse, and clear trails for children to walk safely, etc. As Caswell, the cattleman, explains,

"the matter of education opened further the concept of 'community' – a community with a common purpose of living together to common benefit in one place. This was the beginning of a shift from 'nomadic' life to a life involving 'labour-intensive' technology" (ibid.:13-14, 17).

Yet, Caswell also describes the challenges faced throughout this process. He recalls how at various points, Shuar living close to the mission gathered and discussed the possibility of 'working together', but nobody would be motivated enough to try it. Even after the financial incentives of cattle production were considered, there remained the obstacles of old feuds.

"Working together had not been done before – except in times of war against a common enemy – and the concept was difficult to understand and accept." (Caswell 1967:17).

Figure 1 – Shuar of Makuma and Panchu Drown, with a Cebu calf from "Heifer Project International". Taken between 1962-1965, mission archive.

Livestock was first introduced in 1958, but to manage it missionaries introduced 'cooperatives' in 1963. 'Cooperatives' was the name given to group of nucleated kin who began to rear cattle. As Norma explained in a conversation about the economic initiative, 'cooperative' was the name the IERAC - the state Land-Titling and Agrarian Agency – used at the time for those formations where multiple indigenous or peasant families came to live together through a common economic enterprise. Every time a great man decided to participate in a cooperative, following a period of steady trade relations with missionaries, the endogamous group centred on him would begin clearing a section of forest and planting at least a hectare of pasture per animal they hoped to obtain. If they lived far away from the mission, they also had to build an airstrip so that missionaries could ship the cattle in and out. Often the same airstrip would serve several of these nuclei, which eventually would join to form a single cooperative. Caswell described the process as follows,

> As soon as they [Shuar who accepted nucleation] built an airstrip, we flew in a heifer calf and a bull calf and gave them to the "head man" of the group. We did that with the understanding that the first offspring was given to another family in the group – and so on it went. For the most part it worked quite well. When I got there, there were about 25 head of cattle in the area; when we left there were some 450 head (personal communication, October 2014).

To help get cooperatives running, missionaries promoted the idea of creating 'an association' (later called, 'federation'), a legal entity recognised by the government through which Shuar could procure and administer the cattle. This is how the Evangelical Shuar Federation, ADJOE (*Asociación Protectora y de Desarrollo de las Tribus Jíbaras del Oriente Ecuatoriano*) came into existence in 1962.[31] Through ADJOE, cattle were donated from American and Ecuadorian organisations. A group of missionaries and close Shuar allies wrote the first statutes of the federation, in which they emphasised above all its economic function. These first statutes stipulate that the organisation's goal was

> to procure external economic support for the education and work needs of Jivaroan populations, to obtain donations (...), to carry out a comprehensive plan of cattle rearing (...) and agriculture, and to spread the knowledge of the cooperative system among indigenous people (ADJOE, 1962:1).

To ensure that cooperatives benefitted "the individual and the community", some rules were established. For instance, cattle would be given only if there was "manifest stability in the community to merit the privilege" (Caswell 1967:17). The directive council of the association was initially staffed by missionaries with Shuar people gradually also included. A cattle council composed of three members elected in an annual meeting was also responsible for overseeing the enforcement of breeding practices, management, and marketing of cattle. The council was thus responsible for slaughtering and shipping the cattle out by plane to sell them in settler towns such as Sucúa and Puyo. Upon a sale, 50% of the proceeds went to the person who cared for the animal, and the remainder of the sale was divided between the federation and the community where the herder was settled so that the school and other community development projects could be funded. In 1967, seven years after the inception of the project, Caswell states:

> 95% of the Jivaro of this region live on recognised ownership plots of 125 acres each [50.6 ha]. From the time he moves onto this plot, the Jivaro feels an ownership for it and uses it accordingly. He is adjusting his life on this plot around this livestock (...). His livestock is strictly a commercial venture having nothing to do with subsistence agriculture (Caswell 1967:22).

Cattle have a special status in the memories of this period. When Manuel recalled how Makuma looked when the mission was still at its peak, the first thing that came to mind was the vast and beautiful green savannah he saw every day on his way to school. When the forests of

---

[31] The ADJOE has changed names three times since then. In September 1976, it was renamed AIPSE (*Asociación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar*), in December 1996 it became FIPSE (*Federación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar de Ecuador*), and finally, in 2009, it became NASHE (*Nación Shuar del Ecuador*).

Makuma had been turned into pastures, 'the fields were covered in white with the cows grazing here and there, and one could hear everywhere the roaring of the cattle'. As indicated by Manuel's description of the cows 'roaring', for a people used only to domesticate chickens and pigs, cattle certainly would have made a strong impression. This is how Esteban recalls the arrival of cattle:

> One day Panchu [the nickname of Frank Drown] said "we have preached the gospel, we have built the school, now I'm going to bring grass". He said he was going to bring an animal that did not eat manioc or maize. That was the cow. Panchu had a millionaire friend who took pity on the Shuar and said 'So much they kill themselves!' and donated 15 head of cattle, which Panchu gave to the *uunt* who wanted to work. (...) This animal was like a demon for the Shuar, nobody wanted to eat its meat.[32] It caused fright illness in children [Sp. *espanto*], but then the Shuar got used to it, they multiplied it and learned to butcher it to fly it all the way to Puyo. (...) So the Shuar began to work, they began to live well together. Some increased their herds up to 70 and 80 heads of cattle and there was a lot of money. Everyone had pastures and we were wealthy.

Esteban is not alone in associating cattle with a motivation to 'work' and 'live well together'. In many conversations, Shuar singled out cattle husbandry as the main factor enabling a sort of qualitatively different kind of work and life. For instance, many expressed admiration for those who had the patience and strength to work with cattle, as the job is considered extremely taxing. But above all, because cattle sanctioned the birth of cooperatives, when Shuar stress the importance of work in this period, they usually have in mind some form of 'community work', which motivated them to give up feuding. Cattle are intimately associated with the onset of peace. For instance, recounting how the wars with the Achuar had ended, a resident of Achunts emphasised the role of cattle thus: 'we brought them [the Achuar] cattle, and therefore taught them to work with the cattle like we did, and that's how we made peace with our enemies'. The relationship between 'living well together', that is peacefully (see Ch.4), and cattle was clearly expressed by an elderly man when he gave a speech during a *centro* festival: 'Panchu said, former enemies need to come together in cooperatives to breed cattle and make a village. This is how we began to live well'. As we might expect, missionaries also saw a link between the cessation of war and cattle. Caswell, for instance, writes,

> When the Jivaro left off his revenge killing and attendant head shrinking ritual he had no basis then for many of the processes that took so much of his time – gaining members for proposed killing raids; building and maintaining

---

[32] To stress how frightening the cow appeared to their elders, Shuar like to say that the Achuar – who are often described as being more like Shuar used to be in the past – still do not eat beef.

stockades around his house for protection; time spent in religious rituals gaining and maintaining spiritual strength and protection. This time had to be taken up in some other gainful employment of time (1967:27).

From cooperatives to *centros*

The new market-driven system of production promoted by the mission had tremendous repercussions on the organisation of territoriality and property relations. Since these effects are intimately tied to the question of how Shuar manage and understand contemporary villages, I will return to examine these aspects in the chapters devoted to the *centro*. Here, I focus instead on those effects of nucleation more directly related to cattle production. My analysis benefits from the observations of other ethnographers who conducted their research in the years immediately following the introduction of cattle, as well as from my own historical research into the challenges that Shuar encountered during the peak period of cattle production from the 1960s to 1980s. I focus, firstly, on the ecological consequences of pastoral economy, or what Descola tellingly termed "the savannization of the forest" (1981:641), and, secondly, on the effects of a system oriented towards the market and managed by a centralised organisation, namely, the intensification of labour, loss of domestic autonomy, and resulting socioeconomic inequalities.

It is useful to begin with Descola's analysis, as he was able to observe simultaneously the incipient effects of the cattle system among the Achuar, who began to nucleate around the mid/late-1970s, and the more advanced effects among those Shuar who nucleated through the Salesian mission around the 1950s and 60s. Earlier, I reported Descola's finding that interfluvial ecosystems could withstand temporary nucleation and an increase in horticultural production, but that the long-term sustainability of the foraging economy, that is, the replenishment of game, was guaranteed by a dispersed residential pattern.

In Descola's view, permanent nucleation was causing environmental degradation and a gradual loss of importance of hunting, fishing and foraging as techniques of protein acquisition (1982:239). The increased efficiency of firearms and steel tools to which the mission facilitated greater access, and the marketability of forest products[33] as these began to wane in the territories of the frontier, also had the effect of accelerating the overpredation of nearby hunting territories and the over-rotation of swidden gardens.[34] Indeed, the major negative effect was the degradation of cultivable soils. Acquiring additional heads of cattle implied opening more hectares of pasture,

---

[33] This became an important economic asset for cooperatives to raise money (see Caswell 1967:28).
[34] This is because it is faster to clear a new garden with steel tools than to weed an old one (Descola 1981:635).

so increasingly older gardens were transformed into pastures with no time gap for their recovery, as would have been the case in the fallow system (see also Caswell 1967:23).

According to Descola, these transformations were doomed to increase labour expenditure. Once all gardens are converted into pastures, he surmised, people would be left with graded hillside with low nutrients as the only available forest source for new clearings, resulting in increased agricultural labour for women and men (1981:639). It is worth noting that although Shuar hold in high esteem the work of the cattleman, many remember it as an overly demanding task, which forced them to rely on the mission. This is one of the reasons that some swiftly quit after the first trials. Tending cattle involved clearing tracts of forest, planting grass, moving the cattle twice a day, transporting the animals periodically through the forest to the hangar, and butchering them. According to missionaries, already in the 1970s, Shuar began to sell their animals to mestizo traders who turned up directly on the "trail market". This avoided the effort of taking the cattle to Makuma to ship them to town and then waiting for the money (J. Hedlund, personal communication, November 2014). We can well imagine that, in addition to 'freeing up' time, arranging for cattle sales independently of the mission might have been a way of reasserting autonomy.

Indeed, for previous ethnographers the most pernicious effect of the system was the indigenous loss of autonomy over the new factors of production (cattle and pasture), as cattle production was directly tied to the loan system of the mission and was oriented towards the creation of exchange value. Describing the situation among Shuar of the Upano valley, Descola notes that "having given up all subsistence production [they] find it more convenient to buy their food supplies from the whites" (1981:640). The implication seems to be that, as Shuar go from being hunter-horticulturalists to becoming cattle-ranchers, they become increasingly alienated. That is, their reliance on the market creates an autonomous sphere of productive work the goal of which is to satisfy needs external to the work they perform (1982a:231). Commenting on the situation of the Upano Valley during the 1990s, Rubenstein reaches similar conclusions, asserting that the majority of Shuar "are peasants, occasionally selling cattle, *naranjilla*, and lumber in order to pay for clothing, medical, and educational supplies, and, increasingly, for meat" (2001:283).

For the Achuar of the interior who did not face land encroachment from settlers, Descola's predictions were slightly less pessimistic. He suggested that as Achuar run out of cultivable land and invest labour on community structures and cattle, they are encouraged to remain nucleated. Permanent nucleation was taking a toll on social relations since proximity undermined domestic autonomy and decreased the amount of usable land. The author predicted that the quest for independence in a pressurised environment would eventually lead to fission,

or threaten the Achuar "economic, social and cultural survival" (1981:641-43). Previous analyses thus allowed for two radically diverging scenarios: total surrender and loss of autonomy, as they get absorbed into the colonist mode of production; or, disintegration and fission as they re-disperse into endogamous nexi.

The problem I see with this reading is that it evaluates nucleation only from the perspective of the negative effects of cattle, failing to consider a scenario in which nucleation is no longer associated with cattle production. That is, it omits consideration of the fact that people could embrace a sedentarized, village-based way of life even while resisting the pastoral economy; therefore taking on some aspects of their new livelihoods while rejecting others.

Only a handful of families still owned any cattle within the network of *centros* where I conducted fieldwork, and they tended to them in complete independence from both the mission and the federation. Indeed, from the 1980s, the cooperatives declined, cattle herds decreased and missionaries' involvement in public life waned. Let me begin with the fate of the cooperatives. By the end of 1970s, the federation was managing 14 cooperatives. With time, however, the cattle cooperatives began to segment into various sub-nuclei. Norma explains that as the cooperatives grew in population, extended family groups wished to have a say over their 'own little part of the cooperative' (personal communication, October 2014; see also Belzner 1981:156,160). As a result, these families created their own nucleated settlements, which were then called '*centros*', following the wider use of the term in the region. In turn, the word 'association' was introduced to label the larger area previously covered by the cooperative, while the association that managed the cooperatives[35] was renamed 'federation' (see table 2). For example, Achunts, which was one of the cattle cooperatives managed by ADJOE, at first subdivided into two different *centros*, called Achunts and Wisuí. The process of fission has continued over the years so that presently there are seven *centros* in the area previously covered by the cooperative of Achunts (Wisuí, Kuamar, Arutam, Achunts, Timias, Paantin and Namaj). Once subdivided from the cooperatives the members of every *centro* began to lay claim to their own communal services such as a school and other infrastructures.

---

[35] Despite these changes, Felipe Sandu affirms that the cooperatives are still the legal entities recognised by the state.
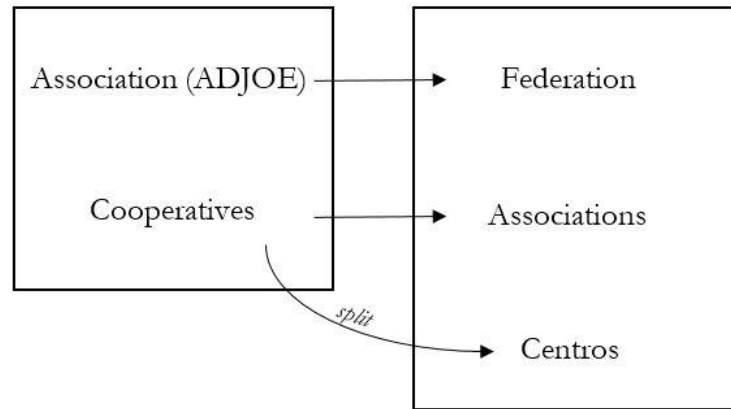
Table 2 - From cooperatives to centros

With no cattle cooperatives to administer, the federation became the political-legal structure that represented the associations of Shuar *centros* to the outside, i.e. NGOs and the State. The structure of the evangelical federation thus came to be identical to the "nested hierarchy" of the Salesian federation (FICSH) (Rubenstein 2001), whereby *centros* were encompassed by the associations and the associations were encompassed by the federation. However, while Rubenstein emphasises that the leaders of the FICSH introduced this structure as part of a centralising process that would strengthen their land claims and stop land encroachment (ibid.:278), in Makuma the *centros* and associations were not a direct response to the requirement to gain title over the land, since settlers had not penetrated the region. Rather, the structure emerged as part of a process of fragmentation of the mission cooperatives and therefore must be understood as a result of a centrifugal or decentralising tendency.[36] Since more than one family was necessary to create a *centro* and request communal services, it is reasonable to think that *centros* were organised around endogamous nexi or extended families, a tendency that stood in contrast with the larger concentration of different (and even enemy) family groups in cooperatives. The process of segmentation could therefore be read as a return to the dispersed, pre-*centro* residential pattern described in the first part of this chapter. However, this would be an oversimplification. Once the *centros* were created, their residents did not build their houses scattered from one another, but remained nucleated so that children could attend school. Proximity to the *centro* also allowed every family to access external wealth more easily and secure collective land titles when these became important, since both services were handled by the federation.

---

[36] For the Achuar who came under the influence of the GMU, their first experience of nucleation was in *centros*, since they were further removed from the mission.

In Makuma, the creation of *centros* was thus at once a process of segmentation and re-nucleation. It reflected a tendency towards decentralisation while preserving nucleation as a way of life; it can also be read as a form of centralisation more adjusted to Shuar demands. But what motivated the segmentation into *centros*? In the narratives I have collected regarding the formation of *centros* during the 1980s and 1990s, Shuar emphasise several motivations for fission: the search for better land and natural resources; disputes over cattle and land; and conflicts ensuing from adultery and sorcery attacks. I will give examples of a dispute relating to land, adultery and sorcery in Ch.4; here, I would like to focus on the disputes related to cattle, as these can help illuminate the reasons for the latter's decline and the sort of values Shuar were trying to reassert.

Despite the widespread perception that cattle brought peace, ex-herders also remember cattle-breeding as an activity that invited envy (*akasma*).[37] More specifically, herders recall the period of highest cattle production as one in which there was a lot of "want" and/or selfishness (*waken*), two immoral emotions associated with anger (*kajen*) and bad talk (*tsanuma*), which typically lie at the root of sorcery accusations (Ch.4). The connection between abundance, envy, and misfortune is encoded in the Shuar word *nukumamu*, which denotes the risk of misfortune resulting from undue abundance (*nukū*).[38] 'Envy finished the cattle' is what the son of a herder replied when I asked him about the decline of his father's heard, which is still remembered as having been one of the most thriving of the region. The perception that envy increased during this period suggests awareness and unease about the new inequalities that cattle created. While the cooperative system required that heifers were divided equally among household heads, the profits of meat sales were distributed according to the contributions of meat made by each herder. As a result, the extent to which herders thrived was determined by the number of animals in their possession and by their personal investment in labour. Such contributions, however, would not have been equal since the families of the first allies of missionaries, the *uunt* who first embraced nucleation and benefitted from the first animals, had benefitted from a head start in the process (see, e.g., Taylor 1981:655). Caswell for example recalls that when heifers began to arrive in the 1960s, these were given "outright to eleven Indian families in the immediate area of Makuma" (1967:14). He also argues that a major setback for the cooperative system was freeloading by those who resisted pressure to join the co-operative. For Caswell, it was unfair that

---

[37] To denote 'envy', Shuar use Shuar verbs associated with emotions such as anger (*kajen*), selfish interests/wants (*waken*) and bad talk/gossip/defamation (*tsanuma*). Envy or jealousy (*akasma*) is also considered to be at the root of misfortune and sorcery.

[38] For example, Pellizzaro & Náwech (2005:318) reports that of a garden that produces in excess, Shuar would say that it brings misfortune by calling upon envy upon its growers and their families (see also Mader 1999:124).

these people neither owned cattle nor contributed funds to the cooperative's school, yet nonetheless sent their children to school (ibid.:33). However, we can also interpret this problem the other way around, and speculate that non-cattle owners were resisting the increase in labour and the inequities introduced by cattle. Caswell himself shows that at various points Shuar rebelled against the cooperatives since they did not see immediate benefits and dreaded the long wait to accumulate collective funds made available through the school, etc. Though it is likely that the idea of working for future collective profits would have been unfamiliar to family-oriented hunter-horticulturalists, discontent with the cooperatives perhaps also signalled resistance to the loss of autonomy and the inequalities entailed by the collective oversight of cattle production. Indeed, the cooperatives promoted internal differentiation by introducing new offices and occupations. The most prominent of these were the roles of schoolteachers, who unlike pastors, received a stipend from the mission and could as a result more rapidly increase their herds. Some elders also mentioned that the officers of the federation began to use money from the cooperatives for personal consumption.

A related critique of the period is that people were stingy (*surim-*). Stinginess (*surimkiamu*) is the other side of envy, for it is the emotional response to a situation in which others are perceived as not sharing. When a garden produced in excess, the well-known Salesian missionary Pellizzaro recounts, a family could organise a feast (*námper*) and invite others to eat in order to avert misfortune (2005:318). Cattle, however, could not easily re-enter social networks as food since beef was not locally consumed during this period and missionaries had instead promoted the idea that cattle were reared for commercial purposes, in order to help individual families save money and foster an internal cash economy. Hence, it is not hard to imagine that thriving herders faced pressure to share their profits with kin. This may partly explain why herders began to sell their cattle. Indeed, different accounts of this period converge on the perception that Shuar began to sell whatever cattle they owned. For instance, Eldon Yoder, another GMU missionary, shared a story from the 1980s about a Shuar schoolteacher from Yaapi, named Ankuash,

> Ankuash eventually became a very rich man as the Shuar viewed him. He had about 25 head of cattle. Many of them were very nice cattle. But then little by little he started to get rid of [i.e. sell] his cattle. Eventually he was back down to two or three, or maybe five head of cattle. I asked him, 'Why?' He said, 'Oh, Eldon, it is so hard to have more than other Shuar. They always want me to pay their bills. The Shuar have a method of equalizing things in their communities. Few people can stay above that. Ankuash remained a good teacher, but he never ever again increased his cattle herd (personal communication, August 2014).

Esteban observed that the 'cunning' of Shuar (Sp. *picardía*) made them quickly sell all their cattle to incoming traders to purchase radios with which they could organise parties. Another elder remarked that it was 'too difficult to have more cattle than others because if one didn't help as people expected then others would send their *tsentsak* [shamanic darts]'. It thus appears that Shuar found ways to curb a trend towards accumulation and reconvert cattle into valuable forms of sociality (e.g. parties, meals, etc.).[39] Missionaries interpreted this tendency as evidence that for Shuar "ties of kinship are stronger than community responsibility" (Caswell 1962:34). This assumption led missionaries to consider introducing sanctions against non-co-operators, however, this strategy was risky as public denunciations and formal punishment could revamp revenge feuds (ibid.) (see Ch.4). Thus, at the root of the decline of cooperatives lie incompatible understandings of community responsibility. For missionaries, the creation of community was dependent on a level of individual accumulation that Shuar felt threatened their values and their responsibilities to pre-existing social relations; hence, the perceived intensification of envy and stinginess. However, as we will see in the following chapters, despite the inadequacies of the cooperative system, Shuar have not given up on community making. On the contrary, the idea that they should strive to live and work as a unified community has come to be seen as increasingly important and necessary, to the point that the Shuar have willingly introduced their own systems of formal sanctions.

If the nucleated livelihoods that the mission and the federation promoted entailed growing inequalities and a significant loss of control over the factors of production, it appears that Shuar found ways of embracing nucleation while reasserting some degree of autonomy and egalitarianism. For example, they did this by selling cattle in ways that bypassed the cooperative system, by creating *centros*, and sometimes by giving up cattle-breeding altogether. In Chapters 4-6, I will return to these issues as I examine the tenor of life in contemporary *centros* and discuss in more detail the reasons why nucleation has become compelling for the Shuar of Makuma. I now move on to contextualise the broader political scene of which the *centro* is part, focusing specifically on the changing role of the federation following the decline of the mission and the rising importance of the state, not so much as a supplier of wealth, a topic of Chapter 5, but as the main threat to local autonomy.

---

[39] Taylor shows how this was the case for Achuar wage labourers who worked in coastal provinces during the 1970s. On their return Achuar labourers seldom bought cattle choosing instead to buy consumer goods "such as radios and clothes used within the *amikri* and shamanistic trade circuits" (1981:653).

The decline of the mission, the rise of ethno-politics: Shuar within and against the state

Unity is fundamental (...)
If we are not united as a people,
Then we will be nothing.[40]

"Iruntrarik Kakarmaitji"
Only together we are strong.[41]

Over the decades, the activities of the mission shrank significantly. Services such as schooling and health provision were taken over by the state and missionaries increasingly focused their efforts on evangelical matters, ceding control over previous services to Shuar people.

The declining influence of the mission in Makuma became most evident at the level of the Federation (ADJOE – renamed AIPSE in 1976) as its leaders gradually opposed the tutelage of missionaries and sought to ally and integrate with other sibling organisations that were mobilising for indigenous autonomy. Indeed, the 1980s and 1990s marked a political turn in the activities of AIPSE as its leaders began to collaborate closely with the leadership of the Federation of Shuar Centres (FICSH) and form alliances with Amazonian-wide indigenous organisations. Previously, although each of the Shuar federations had pursued similar political strategies, the relations between them were at best distant and tense. This distance was a consequence of an ideological cleavage that emerged because Shuar identified their neighbours according to which missionary group was established in that particular territory. Hence, the Shuar of Makuma used the term '*Iwianch* Shuar' (Shuar of the devil) to refer to those Shuar missionised under Catholic priests, whereas the latter called the Shuar of Makuma 'Panchu Shuar', meaning Shuar of Panchu – the nickname of the missionary Frank Drown. However, with the surge of anti-missionary sentiment on each camp, the declining economic influence of the missions, and as Shuar leaders took on a more direct role in their relations with settlers and the state (Rubenstein 2001:282), the significance of this ideological gap decreased, resulting in increased collaboration between the two federations.

By this time the FICSH, with its strong pro-autonomy stance in matters of territory, bilingual education and Indian-led economic development (see its manifesto, 1976), had become a referent for subsequent indigenous organising in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In other provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazon, rapid state-sanctioned agricultural colonisation and unscrupulous oil extraction had posed a clear threat to indigenous material and political autonomy and survival,

---

[40] Press release of the FIPSE in June 9, 1999, as the people of Makuma waged a legal battle against the American oil company 'Arco' (cited in, Figueroa et al. 2002:23).
[41] Common expression in political assemblies and rallies.

gradually catalysing the politicisation of indigenous organisations and their coalescence in an Amazonia-wide indigenous organisation, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENIAE (created in 1980). The AIPSE of Makuma was not only a central player in the mobilisations and political congresses that led to the creation of the CONFENIAE, its leaders also characterised their participation in these regional networks as a way of breaking with the tutelage and political parochialism of the mission. In a publication of the National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE, of which the CONFENAIE eventually became part, the leaders of the AIPSE, stated the following,

> This divisive policy [of the missions] had the effect of separating our people impeding us from creating relations among equivalent organisations (...). Religion was not giving us the opportunity to live as a united people. Since our people did not like the term 'Jivaro' due to its pejorative character and since our organisational aim is to strive for goals other than development, in 1976 we changed our name to 'Independent Association of the Ecuadorian Shuar People' (AIPSE) (CONAIE 1989:49-50).

Associating themselves with 'equivalent organisations', the leaders of AIPSE took part in a broader process of national indigenous organising which resulted in the creation of a common language and institutional basis for collaborations between Andean and Amazonian indigenous organisations. This process culminated in the formation of the CONAIE[42], which brought together 14 indigenous nationalities. The common cause identified by the pan-indigenist organisation as their motive for mobilisation and unity was the defence of cultural diversity (plurinationality) and self-determination, two notions that, when brought together, infused a cultural dimension to all material needs and demands of indigenous people and identified the condition of ethnic survival and integrity in ancestral territories (Pallares 1997:349; Yashar 2005:130-33).

But if this process of reorientation of goals and political unification of the federations has strengthened Shuar claims of autonomy vis-à-vis foreign bodies and the state, it has also meant that federation leaders have had to claim for themselves the authority to represent all Shuar people at specific junctures. In other words, as we shall see below, the fight for autonomy at the regional and national levels has at times entailed that local groupings have had to come under the authority of the federation, or accept that the latter has jurisdiction over certain matters, especially land, which is now defined as a 'collective' asset. This is the main legacy of the

---

[42] This process was greatly facilitated by NGOs, rural unions and liberation theology inspired church-based organisations working at the local and regional levels (see Yashar 2005:97-133). This liaison with organisations that the GMU deemed "Marxist" was also a point of contention between the missionaries and Makuma leaders.

indigenous movement and specifically of Andean indigenous nationalities, which historically adopted a 'corporatist' model that emphasises group interests when placing demands on the state, specifically in relation to questions of territory (e.g. Yashar 2005; Becker 2011:48).

We can relate this process to Rubenstein's analysis of state formation. His point of departure is that fundamentally colonialism is less about the movement of people or the extension of state authority over new territory, but rather involves a multiplication of hierarchical boundaries. He argues that, whereas Shuar precolonial spatial, social and political boundaries were characterised by multiple, partial, and overlapping boundaries, colonial boundaries are organised hierarchically (2001:264).[43] For instance, he views the rise of the FICSH as the culmination of a process of boundary multiplication in subsequent phases: the institutionalisation of an ethnic boundary between Shuar and mestizo settlers through the demarcation of indigenous territories, the establishment of missions, the creation of nucleated settlements or *centros*, and the incorporation of Shuar within the state through the federation. In his view, spatially and institutionally, the federation mimics the hierarchical structure of the state. As leaders of the federation negotiate with the government to secure territorial autonomy for Shuar, they simultaneously allow the state to maintain its claim to sovereignty over indigenous territory and this process, in turn, leads them (the leaders) to claim hegemony over Shuar. I shall analyse in more detail whether 'hegemony' can be understood in the terms Rubenstein proposes when I discuss leadership at the level of the *centro*. Meanwhile, if we consider the reconfiguration of the role of AIPSE since the 1980s, there is some evidence that the process Rubenstein describes is central.

The issue of how the federation has been able to appeal to external agencies in order to establish supralocal authority is an important one. For instance, the success of some territorial battles led by AIPSE (subsequently renamed FIPSE or Shuar People of the Independent Federation of Ecuador), crucially hinged on the ability of its leaders to legitimate the federation as the main representative body of the Shuar of Makuma vis-à-vis external agencies. Leaders have been particularly successful at this in situations in which their brokerage was necessary to defend Shuar from external threats. For example, from 1999 to 2002, FIPSE waged a series of legal battles against the American oil companies, Arco Oriente and Burlington, which had signed a contract with the Ecuadorian government to exploit oil in 'bloc 24', an area including territory around Makuma, which FIPSE claimed to represent. Although most of this territory still awaited legal titling, FIPSE was able to secure external support[44] to appeal for legal protection and subsequently

---

[43] For a similar argument in Amazonia, see Rosengren 2003.
[44] Specifically from a union: the National Workers' Confederation – CEOSL.

present criminal charges against the oil company. What is interesting about this case is that a local Court (*Juez de lo Civil*, in Macas) ruled in favour of FIPSE's claims against the oil company. Furthermore, the Court's decision rendered null individual agreements that the company had previously reached with specific Shuar *centros* and families, thereby acknowledging the "assembly" of FIPSE as the highest authority of Shuar people under its jurisdiction (Figueroa et al. 2002; Figueroa 2006). Some years later, the Federation, which had changed its name to NASHE (Shuar Nation of Ecuador, in 2009[45]) initiated legal proceedings with the aid of the NGO Pachamama to gain title over all its territories in order to protect them from loggers, settlers and oil companies. In this case, the federation was again able to establish temporary hegemony over "subordinate" Shuar social units, gaining collective titles for most associations of *centros* (see map 5), even though a few families opposed collective titling (Beltrán & Narváez 2012:34).

---

[45] The NASHE was legally recognised by the CODENPE through Ministerial Agreement N°1689 on January 14, 2010. Currently the NASHE is composed of 11 associations and 75 *centros*.
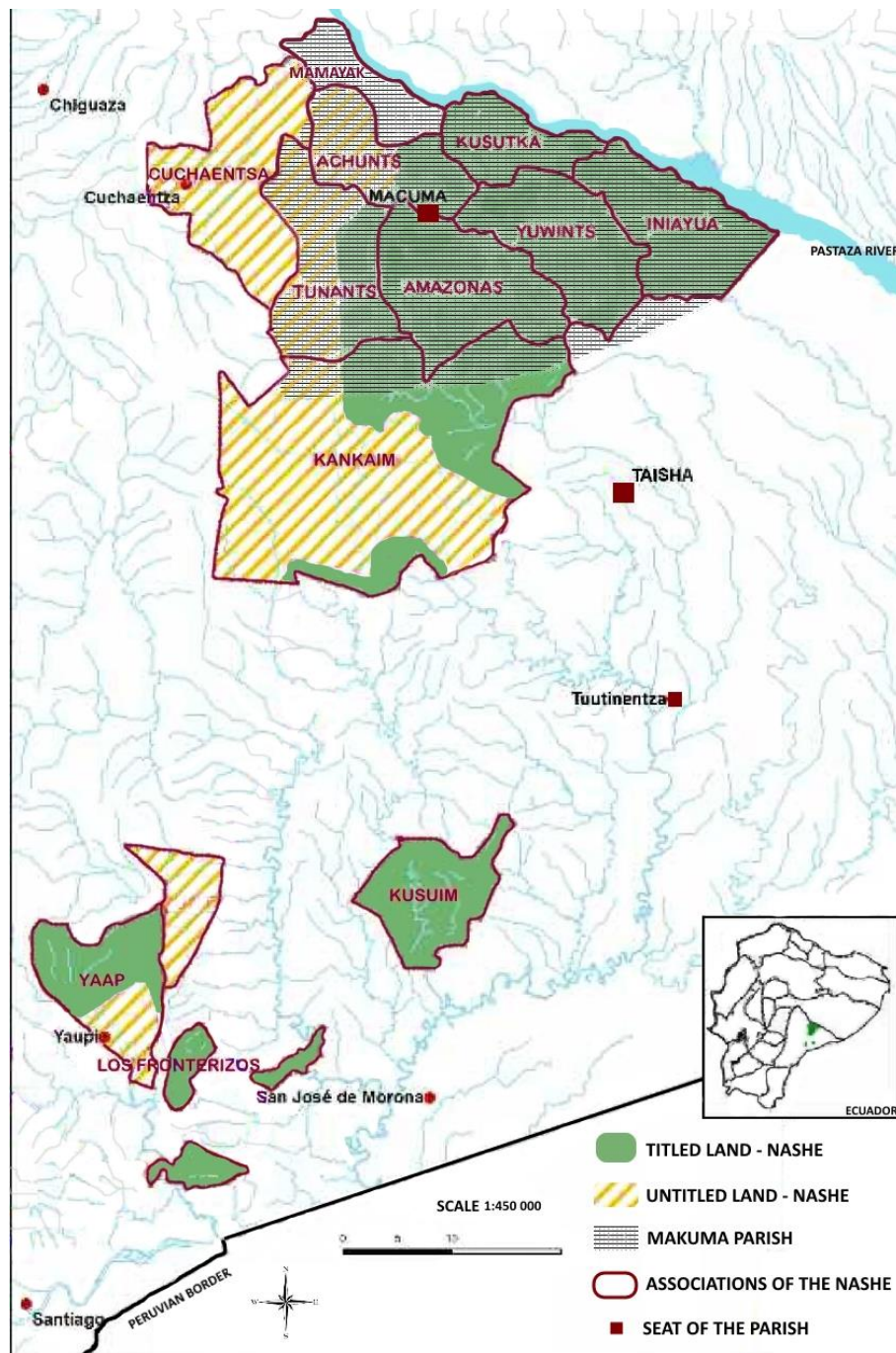
Map 5 - NASHE territory and Makuma parish (2012) (adapted from Beltrán & Narváez 2012:34)

The ability of federation leaders to claim hegemony over all Shuar hinges not only on external recognition but also on the oppositional dynamic in which Shuar understand themselves as engaging with the national society. In the present, Shuar are continuously engaged in 'symbolic' (Ch.6) or actual conflict with colonists, including oil workers, state officials, etc. Yet, as I shall demonstrate in later chapters, this dynamic of opposition and conflict can at times motivate a local push towards unity. Taylor's (1994) analysis of the ethnogenesis of Shuar people in relation

to the creation of federations is instructive in this respect. Taylor notes that, by appropriating the idea of "nation", Shuar people had been guided by a typically Jivaroan way of configuring collective identities. For Shuar, as for other Jivaroan groups, social boundaries have been generated through a dynamic of mutual hostility and opposition rather than inclusion (Taylor 1985; Descola 1993). In the past, inter-tribal warfare created oppositional identities, for example between Shuar and the Achuar, although warfare simultaneously fostered a supra-tribal ethnic identity premised on a ritualised relationship of enmity. Taylor summarises this way of relating to others as "to live with living against"[46] and argues that it has significantly affected the way Shuar construe their relations with the state. Taylor (1994:277) claims that by becoming a "nation" within a nation – or a "nationality" as minority indigenous groups are presently called in Ecuador – Shuar have strengthened their collective distinctiveness vis-à-vis the national society while also foregrounding the federation as a space of continuous confrontation between Shuar and the national state. In the same article, Taylor also noted that it was remarkable that unlike the Jivaroan populations of Peru, the adoption of a confrontational attitude towards the state had not led Shuar to penetrate the municipal and regional apparatuses. On the contrary, Shuar appeared disinterested in state power, confining their new politics to the arena of federation rivalries (ibid.: 279).

The apparent "disinterest" of Shuar in public administration was short-lived, however. The state has become a central field of the Shuar politics of confrontation. Just a year after Taylor's publication, in August 1995, Amazonian indigenous activists took the initiative to participate in elections for the first time, forcing the CONAIE to rethink its traditionally hostile position towards electoral politics and create a political party, the Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity, commonly simply called Pachakutik (Yashar 2005:149; Becker 2011:43– 44). Since the creation of the party, Shuar leaders have been enthusiastic participants in electoral politics, but only in 2009 were they finally able to strike electoral victories in Morona Santiago. That year, they won the most important office of the province, the prefecture, electing the first Shuar prefect in the history of the region, Marcelino Chumpi (re-elected in 2014), as well as many other officials. These electoral victories must be related to the fact that, unlike in other Amazonian provinces where several indigenous nationalities participate in elections, in Morona Santiago Pachakutik is composed mostly of Jivaroan voters (Shuar and Achuar) who have managed to form a unitary bloc against mestizo voters, reflecting the demographics of the province. Indeed, Pachakutik is a powerful ethnic symbol of unity for Shuar (and many Achuar)

---

[46] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of cited texts are my own.

people. *Shuaraitjai nuinkia pachakutikiaitjai* (I am Shuar, thus I am Pachakutik) is the slogan with which Shuar typically characterise their taken-for-granted affiliation to the party.

Figure 2 - Assembly of Makuma 2012.
The rainbow colours are Pachakutik's.

Pachakutik assumes particular relevance at times of marked conflict with the state, which has certainly increased since Shuar gained elected positions in local administration. The main point of contention between Shuar and the Ecuadorian government during the period of my research concerned the construction of an historic new road connecting Transkutukú with the main settler towns of the province. What triggered the conflict was the decision of Marcelino's administration to undertake the construction of the road in open defiance of the central government, which had reportedly been trying to bargain the provision of "road-and-hospital" against oil extraction in Shuar territories.

In December 2011, the first time I travelled to Makuma with Manuel, the taxi left the cobblestoned streets of Macas for the highway that had recently been built by the government of Rafael Correa (the Ecuadorian president) as part of his 'Revolución Ciudadana' (Citizen's Revolution). Later, we turned left off the highway onto a smaller gravel road, slowing down to avoid the puddles. The taxi came to a halt at the Metsankim River, after the Kutukú mountain range, when we reached the *punta* – the current endpoint of construction of the new road. Here, we left the taxi and put on our wellingtons. Buses also terminated their journey here before returning to Macas. Travellers continuing on their journey had to use an improvised bridge made of tree-trunks lain across the river. Beyond this, a crude pathway made of assorted sticks and planks was all that saved us from continuous falls and slips during the journey. All around us were signs of bulldozers and heavy trucks hard at work: the clatter of stones from unseen points in the jungle, fallen trees, disintegrating mud and dense swamps left by the excavations. The scene

was potent: a once impervious forest was transforming into a country road. After the bureaucratic struggle to reach the inner territories of Transkutukú (see introduction), I had arrived at a moment in which the new road was obliterating the very distinction between the territories of the interior and the frontier (see map 4, p.62).

Before the road finally reached Makuma in 2013, the area could be accessed only by trail or the use of expensive small aircraft, as the rivers and streams running through the area are not navigable by canoe. During the period of construction, nothing excited the Shuar of Makuma more than the arrival of the road. Every two weeks the endpoint got closer and the arduous journeys to settler towns became shorter. Each milestone of construction was met with relief and happiness. There were big celebrations when the prefect visited the area and delivered impassioned speeches emphasising how the new road would lead to local development. It seemed as though all difficulties and suffering would vanish as soon as Makuma could be connected to the towns. Along with trees and rivers, the road was burying stories of sacrifice, death and isolation. Everyone I met had tragic stories of times when prohibitive airfares had left sick loved ones with no choice but to undertake marathon thirteen-to-fifteen hour treks, only to die in mestizo hospitals because by the time they arrived it was too late to save them.

The fact that Shuar had been able to gain the power to pursue 'much-needed' infrastructural work while sabotaging the central government's plans to blackmail them into oil extraction was a source of pride that was continually remarked upon. For my informants, the road came to symbolise their capacity to use the resources of local government to pursue development in their own terms (Ch.5), as well as their opposition to the government's large-scale extractive enterprises, including oil extraction, planned for the Southeastern Amazon. But this act of defiance provoked much political upheaval: the construction of the road was halted several times as Marcelino's government faced charges of failing to obtain the necessary environmental permissions and destroying primary Amazonian forest. An incessant tug-of-war between the provincial and the central government provoked countless mobilisations and increasingly violent confrontations between the Shuar of Transkutukú and the police and army. The prefect, supported by Shuar leaders, has accused the central government of double standards: flagging environmental law at its convenience to stop indigenous-led development while signing large-scale copper-mining contracts for the Amazon. For his part, Correa has criticised the 'hypocrisy' and 'incoherence' of Shuar people who reject oil but insist on benefitting from 'development'.

The contentiousness of this relationship is indicated by the following extract from a dialogue that took place in 2009 between Pepe Acacho, president of the FICSH from 2009-

2011, and Rafael Correa on matters of sovereignty and political control over natural resources, specifically water rights[47],

> P.A: We [Shuar] don't speak too much because we're warriors. So we're going to defend our territory because the transnationals are trying to take our wealth. And we came to tell you that our province, Morona Santiago, is being declared an ecological province, free from contamination and extractive activities.
> R.C: [pointedly waving the constitution] Where in the constitution does it say that the Shuar federation can declare a province free from extractive activities? In any case, I'm willing to accept your request. I can do that. By decree. Can't I? [Looking around to his ministers]. Sure, [let's make] Morona Santiago free from extractive activities. But in the same manner: do not demand from us, electrification, potable water, health, housing, roads, because, from where do you expect us to get the money? That's my counterproposal, *compañero* [mate].

The conflict over the road brings to the surface broader lines of division that have existed for some time now between the national indigenous movement and the socialist government of Correa. While the election of a socialist government in 2006 (and re-elected again in 2013), has led to Ecuadorians adopting in 2008 a progressive constitution that recognises the plurinational and intercultural character of the country, it has also entailed a deterioration of the relations between the indigenous movement and the central government. Although the indigenous movements shared Correa's stated desire to curtail neoliberal policies and implement social and economic policies that would benefit the majority of the country's people, they have increasingly clashed over how to realise these objectives (Becker 2011:47). For Correa's government, the rejection of neoliberalism does not entail an automatic abandonment of extractive industries, even if the latter are the most tangible manifestation of neoliberal principles in Ecuador. Rather, Correa envisions extractivism as the engine with which the government can support the sort of inclusionary development that can eventually help the country transition to a post-extractive economy. So while promoting extractive endeavours, the government has also pursued a strategy of decentralisation whereby local governments gain more control and access to public funding and benefit directly from oil income. This has been accompanied by a heated debate over whether communities should have the right to accept or reject extraction on their lands. "In the end, the constitution conceded that communities had the right to consultation but extractive endeavours would not be subject to their consent or veto" (Ibid.:58). In sum, the government owns all subsurface mineral rights, and can at any time auction them in concessions to foreign or

---

[47] The conversation took place in parliament in October 2009, after an indigenous march from the Amazon to the capital. Excerpt taken from the documentary 'Por qué murió Bosco Wisum?' by Larrea & Laurini, 2010.

national companies. This broader scenario partly explains the impasse between Marcelino's administration and the central government: by funding the construction of the road with the local public budget, Marcelino's administration took away from the government the big selling point of oil developments to local communities.

In November 2012, the government launched the XI Oil Round to auction 16 new oil blocks in the southern Ecuadorian Amazon, three of which would directly affect the Makuma area. For many, these new auctions brought back memories of the paranoid atmosphere and internal fights provoked by the Arco oil company, when they had attempted to persuade individuals and local communities to accept oil extraction in the early 2000s. The NASHE responded to the oil round by mobilising against the consultation process, which was run by the government from 2011 to 2012 and which would allow oil explorations to proceed, describing it as an illegitimate procedure.[48] Throughout this period, some leaders worked painstakingly to mobilise the Shuar in support of a new political coalition for the 2013 presidential elections in the hope that Shuar could unite with other indigenous and social movements to defeat Correa.

Somewhat paradoxically given their general enthusiasm for the new road, the more the road advanced, the more my Shuar friends fretted over the impending oil threat. Now that the road existed, I was told, 'oil developers' (Sp. *petroleros*) and 'the company' (Sp. *la compañia*) could enter their territory at any time and negotiate with individual families. The anxieties of the period gave rise to all sorts of rumours which circulated locally: Correa was preparing the army to invade Shuar territory; socialist Latin-American presidents planned to vanquish indigenous

Figure 3 - Poster publicising oil developments in Amazonian cities. 'Finally! Oil profits are for the Amazon. Oil in Ecuadorian hands.' Photography taken in 2012, Macas.

---

[48] See García Serrano (2014), Ortiz-T (2013:156) and the documentary *La Consulta Inconsulta* by Laurini (2013).

people using illnesses carried by bats incubated in laboratories.[49] While neither rumour proved accurate, the years 2011-2013 were indeed an eventful and stormy period to be in Makuma; Shuar leaders continuously summoned assemblies and villagers impelled one another to 'unity' lest 'socialism exterminated Shuar people.' Meanwhile, all the time, the road continued to advance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the key actors and institutions that have played a role in shaping the spatial and associational politics of the Makuma area during the republican period of colonisation and leading up to the political situation during the period of my research. From the outset, sedentarisation has been intimately associated with the inflow of external commodities and the production of new forms of wealth. Since the new form of wealth was cattle, mission-led nucleation put significant pressure not only on the environment but also on the way Shuar organised labour processes and political relationships. The increase of labour expenditure, the political centralisation of economic processes and the emergence of new inequalities led to the segmentation of the cooperatives into *centros*. While Shuar gradually abandoned cattle-breeding, they maintained a nucleated way of life. The reasons for this embracing of nucleation even after the end of the cooperatives period are more complex than I have been able to show here, and this will be a central topic of later chapters. By bringing to life different accounts of the 'golden years' of the mission – the positive connotations of wealth and peace, and the conflicts stemming from cattle-breeding – I have shown that while some aspects of nucleation were desirable to Shuar, it also brought new challenges, to which they have responded over time.

While contending with new processes of political and economic centralisation driven by external agents, Shuar have been keen to take control themselves. On the one hand, this has led them to seek independence from the mission and end the federation's control over domestic livelihoods. On the other hand, it has led Shuar to accentuate the federation's intermediary role in territorial battles that surfaced in the post-mission political landscape. As the federation gained independence from the mission and its original goal of fostering development, it assumed a more straightforwardly political function of ethnic defence, which has eventually led Shuar to enter the electoral field. As Shuar have come to occupy an increasingly important place in local administration, a new political dynamic has ensued whereby a group of elected leaders has been empowered to foster 'development' – a topic which will be a key focus of Chapter 5.

---

[49] These rumours sprouted during an epidemic of rabies in the region in 2011-12.

The aim of this chapter was to begin to demonstrate how the livelihoods, desires and challenges that Shuar experience in the present cannot be fully understood unless we consider the specific ways in which nucleation has unfolded in Makuma, including the changing political role of the federation, the Shuar's open but confrontational stance towards the state, and their mixed sense of empowerment and vulnerability in the current political landscape. In the next chapter, I shall flesh out these issues further by examining how Shuar of the interior experience both empowerment and vulnerability. To do this, I shall take the reader directly into the lives of my closest informants in Kuamar to consider how they experience everyday life in the post-mission era in an interior massively transformed by the pastoral economy. After the macro-picture provided in this chapter, we will find answers within the micro-dynamics of family making.

Chapter 3. Towards a better life

'Shuar live well in the interior.' Every so often, my hosts expressed their wholehearted appreciation for the good life of the interior.[50] Why is life so good in the interior? I asked them one day during the first weeks of fieldwork, a little hesitant to disturb the atmosphere of tranquillity that enfolded the home during the moments when such positive remarks were expressed. Manuel, his first wife Targelia and I had just returned from a trip to Macas, the nearest settler town. The trek home had been demanding because we were caught in torrential rain while carrying several cardboard boxes of provisions for the family all the way from the endpoint of the road under construction, still three hours walk away from the small forest trail that led to Kuamar. The cartons were destroyed by the rain and we juggled with several packs of salt, noodles and sardine cans. Nonetheless, my hosts were cheerful. At least we were far from the bustle of the city! Once home, we all sat around the hearth to dry, enjoying the soft crackle of the fire on which Carmen began to cook our meals. Sipping frugally from his bowl of manioc beer, Manuel gave me a swift but telling answer: 'everything is free here; no one is starving or forced to work.'

Life is good in the interior because it is free: Shuar have their homes and their land, their gardens can feed them and they 'need no money to eat', as other residents of Kuamar sometimes expressed the same idea. But it is also free because they live and work as they please, receiving orders from no one, in contrast to those who are forced to work for others in town. The characterisation of life in the interior has a built-in comparison with the life Shuar sometimes experience in the exterior: the frontier towns where they are homeless and landless, where everything has a price and where people can go hungry with no one to feed them. Villagers sometimes comment with antipathy on the rude manners of the colonists and speak reprovingly about how when they have to work in the city or surrounding mestizo farms, they are treated like peons. If living well is a matter of freedom – or, more specifically, a state of wellbeing predicated upon self-sufficiency and autonomy – then living badly is associated with situations and places that prevent Shuar from enjoying these qualities. This is why the spatial image of the interior and exterior lends itself so well to the comparison. It was usually after staying in towns, where Shuar witnessed or experienced first-hand harsh moments of dependency and deprivation in the

---

[50] Shuar use the qualifiers 'beautiful' (*shiir*) or 'good' (*penker*) interchangeably to describe 'the mode of existence or being' *pujustin*. The expression *shiir/penker pujustin* can be translated as 'beautiful/good life, existence, state of being.'

'exterior', that their return to the interior was so strongly suffused with an empowering feeling of self-sufficiency and autonomy.

Yet on other occasions, my hosts also problematized the life of the interior in starkly different terms. Villagers frequently lamented that there was hardly any good food anymore, as resources were fast depleting in the forest. They also resented that they rarely had any money to purchase supplies from towns as we had done that day in Macas. As self-assuredly as my hosts expressed contentment with their lot as they waited for a good meal in the tranquillity of their homes, they also at times employed that very image of tranquillity to voice their impatience: 'We can't just sit drinking manioc beer; we're not eating well. We're not living well. We can do better!' These were frequent assertions of discontent and desire for change. A man from Achunts once told me that rather than complacently saying, 'Oh we are all good', people should be saying, 'we must work harder, help our children to prepare so that they learn other things and come back with knowledge. We have to improve to live better.'

In this chapter, my aim is to explore how the people I came to know most closely in the interior understand living well and why they want to live better. To this end I examine the practices and values that underpin native notions of the good life, but also consider why villagers feel they no longer have the means to live well. I examine how they problematize their livelihoods and the links they draw between the scarcity of the present and their failure to build on a recent past of abundance associated with the mission. I show that a desire to strive for something better, although apparently expressing an aspiration for change, is fundamentally a desire to recover self-sufficiency and autonomy through new means. The desire to achieve a better life is a form of striving for a good life that no longer is. It is also a desire to acquire new forms of knowledge and power that bring about a future whereby Shuar can pursue material self-sufficiency and combat uncertainty while remaining autonomous.

Regional scholars have placed significant emphasis upon the role of desire and intent in Amazonian practices and ideas of the good life. Overing, for example, has conceptualised the skills for social living through which people cultivate personal freedoms and harmonious relations as conscious political acts and choices (1989:172, 2012:61). Others have highlighted the importance of people's active regulation of desire and affective life in the production of the subsistence economy understood as a way through which they construct gender identities, kinship relations and 'people' more generally (Gow 1991:121; see also Echeverri 2000). While my analysis will touch upon most of these motives, I also hope to draw attention to how Shuar problematize their present lives, and how this process of problematisation foregrounds an orientation towards the future. Problematization is the transformation of difficulties and obstacles

into 'problems' (Foucault 1998:118). Something becomes a problem when it stands out, when it can no longer be taken as a given. This, as Moore tells us, often happens due to specific social, economic and political changes (2011:20). The socioeconomic transformations that the Shuar of Makuma have experienced in the past decades, as summarised in the previous chapter, have created specific subsistence challenges that push them to problematise their capacity to live well in the interior. But while these challenges or socioeconomic circumstances may trigger a process of problematisation, they do not 'completely determine its form and character' (ibid.). The responses and solutions that people produce through forms of problematisation are inflected by their understandings of transformation and their projects of self-making and can take a variety of conflicting or contradictory forms. I thus hope to start delineating here what such understandings and projects are for Shuar.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first half, I shall begin with a brief note on social classification and kinship. This is because any kind of social good living involves forms of relatedness but also distinctions from other kinds of people. Here I broadly introduce the relationships among the people of Kuamar. I then present the main coordinates of what Shuar consider good living by exploring the ideas and practices of self-sufficiency, autonomy and mutuality. I turn subsequently to examine the problem of scarcity that threatens their ability to live well and the comparisons that my informants draw with the abundance of the recent past as well as how they problematize their ability or failure to deal with external powers. In the second half of the chapter, I outline a Shuar theory of reproductive work and efficacy, focusing on the key devices through which Shuar acquire power and knowledge in order to produce abundance and to live a worthwhile existence. Finally, I give examples of the solutions that villagers provide as a way of striving toward a better life.

Figure 4 – Carmen, Jintia Nua and Manuel in the thatch-roofed house, Kuamar, 2013.

The good life and its discontents

Brief notes on social classification and relatedness

I wrote in the last chapter that *shuar* means person, human; but another general term *aents* can also be used to include humans or persons. *Aents* includes all sorts of beings – humans proper, plants, animals, spirits, and even some meteorological phenomena – who share a common subjective element (*wakan*)[51], and with whom, as a result, Shuar can communicate in very specific circumstances, as for example during dreams and visions. Most such beings are considered powerful in one way or another and figure prominently in mythology. The term *shuar* also specifies humans more specifically in relation to all living organisms, but it does not extend to non-Jivaroan groups such as the mestizo (*apach*), white foreigners (*inkis*), or Kichwa.[52] In contrast to *aents*, the term *shuar* is always a social classifier and, moreover, an inherently expansive one. It designates a different kind of 'we' in different contexts. It can refer to the closest of kin or household members, to the bilateral kin grouping, as for example *Sandu shuar*, 'the family of Sandu', which includes all the known descendants of a famous great man (and his wife) from the region, or even to all the people of a *centro.* In the last case genealogical distance maps onto territorial space. It can also refer to the ethnic group 'Shuar' proper as opposed to other Jivaroan groups (Achuar, Wampis, Awajun), or to a Shuar-Jivaro identity vis-à-vis that of whites or mestizo.

One of the most common yet ambiguous usages of the term *shuar* is to indicate the condition of being kin, or, as Shuar call kin relatedness in Spanish, '*familia*'. In the absence of stable descent principles, most individuals can at most remember no higher order of kin than their grandparents, and the kinship system enables almost unlimited collateral expansion. The kinship terminology describes whom one can marry. To respect the preferential marriage rule a man has to marry the daughter of his 'true' uncle – MB or FZH (*iichi*) (see appendix 5), although marriage rules have considerably relaxed. Still, there is a tendency to reside and marry with genealogically close or 'true' relatives rather than more 'distant' relatives (see below). Close relationships develop over the generations between neighbouring *centros* through marriages. For example, most recent marriages in Kuamar have been with people living in adjacent *centros* (e.g. Achunts, Arutam, Tunants), or other *centros* further away but still within the Makuma area.

---

[51] For a thorough elucidation of the Jivaroan notion of this spiritual essence, often translated as 'soul', see Taylor (1993:660; 2009:328).

[52] No term designates 'humanity' in general or all cultural or social groupings of the world. The prototypical humanity, as distinct from other human groupings in the natural world, is always Shuar (Jivaro). I also found resistance to applying the term *aents* to the *apach*: 'To us, they have always been strangers' were the words of an informant.

Nevertheless, the condition of being family extends beyond the bounds of residence, territory and even of ethnic identification. For example, in Kuamar, several children of Alfredo were married to Highlanders and, whenever they were around, everyone treated them with the corresponding kin terms, although no one ever thought of them as Shuar in the sense of being Jivaroan persons.

Anyone with whom one is able to trace a connection along consanguineal or affinal lines can be, according to circumstances, 'family'. Any two Shuar who meet for the first time, will always spend some time trying to find out the extent to which they are family. Failure to find some degree of connectedness or the discovery of severed relations due to prior hostility between each of the speakers' close family can feel threatening. However, forms of ethnic and territorial connectedness established through the federation system presently offer additional forms of identification which people also avail themselves of to soothe tensions.

One way in which Shuar discriminate among kin is by adding a modifier to all elementary kin terms of reference to establish degrees of closeness with the result that the degree of relatedness can always be contextually manipulated. Thus, Shuar distinguish between close, true, legitimate (*nekas*) and distant (*kana*) kin. Close consanguineal relations (biological parents, grandparents, siblings, children, and sometimes cross-cousins and their fathers) are typically assigned to the 'true' category, whereas affinal relatives with whom no relationship can be established prior to marriage are typically assigned to the distant category. However, since co-residence and political alliances are regularly factored in, 'true' relationships can easily shift status: close social ties can be established between persons that do not have any kind of kin relationship while consanguineous relatives residing faraway can be transformed into ideal affines, that is, affines free from any consanguineous link. What is more, killings within the immediate kin group or failure to demonstrate solidarity in moments of conflict, which is tantamount to denying one's obligations as true kin, can result in the denial of relatedness. Several men from Arutam, the nearest neighbouring *centro* to Kuamar (see map 3, p.42), told me that a young man who left the community after killing his father during a domestic row could never return to visit them because he was a 'strange person' – note that the men in question were the youth's classificatory fathers, i.e. uncles (*apa*). However, this sense of strangerhood is usually reserved for mestizo people: in Shuar, it is rendered spatially, 'person from far away' (*yajana aents*). Another way in which Shuar describe disconnection is using the Spanish term *particular*, so people may say that someone is a 'particular' to indicate that they have never seen the person before and can establish no connection with her/him.

Compared with larger ones in the area, Kuamar is a close-knit *centro* where everyone is related along consanguineal or affinal lines (see figure 5). It is largely composed of a group of siblings (Alfredo, Juana Nakaimp, Rafael, Manuel, and Juana Rosa), who brought their spouses to live with them, and those children of the sibling generation who settled with their spouses in Kuamar. Kuamar is also a very young *centro* where many residents are still unmarried youths (e.g., none of Manuel's 14 children was married in 2013). People would sometimes say that everyone in Kuamar was 'family' because they were all children or grandchildren of Entsa, the most elderly person of the *centro*, who united two sets of siblings: the children of her deceased husband Kuamar, and the children of her second husband, Torka. When Kuamar died, Torka raised some of Entsa's children so Alfredo and Rafael considered him a father as well. Entsa was a key figure in the community as she was greatly respected by everyone; however, her old age meant that she was really debilitated and was becoming increasingly disengaged from what was happening around her.

Solidarity in Kuamar had a slight agnatic tendency as the community was held together by the three male brothers (Alfredo, Rafael, and Manuel) who had the largest families (i.e. the most children) and the most connections with everyone else. The three brothers were united by strong brotherly affection and a keen desire to promote peace and collaboration among different households. They visited one another almost daily and had significant influence on other villagers. Nonetheless, despite the small size and cohesiveness of Kuamar, there were tensions. The idea that everyone was related through Entsa was not strictly true for most real affines in the community, specifically those who were not from the Makuma area and had no prior kin connection to others; for example, Germán, Diana, Martín, Carmen, and Cecilia. Most tensions in the community manifested along affinal lines, for example between the three older brothers and Martín (the husband of Nakaimp – see Ch.4), and among women.

When villagers mentioned 'their own family' (*winia shuar* – 'my family', 'my people') within the *centro*, they usually referred to the members of their own household. All houses in Kuamar were composed of independent nuclear families. Even Manuel's domestic unit, the only one formed out of a polygynous marriage, was regarded as composed of two independent families. Despite the existence of strong ties of solidarity between different households, especially along siblingship lines, villagers focused most of their energies and affections within their homes.
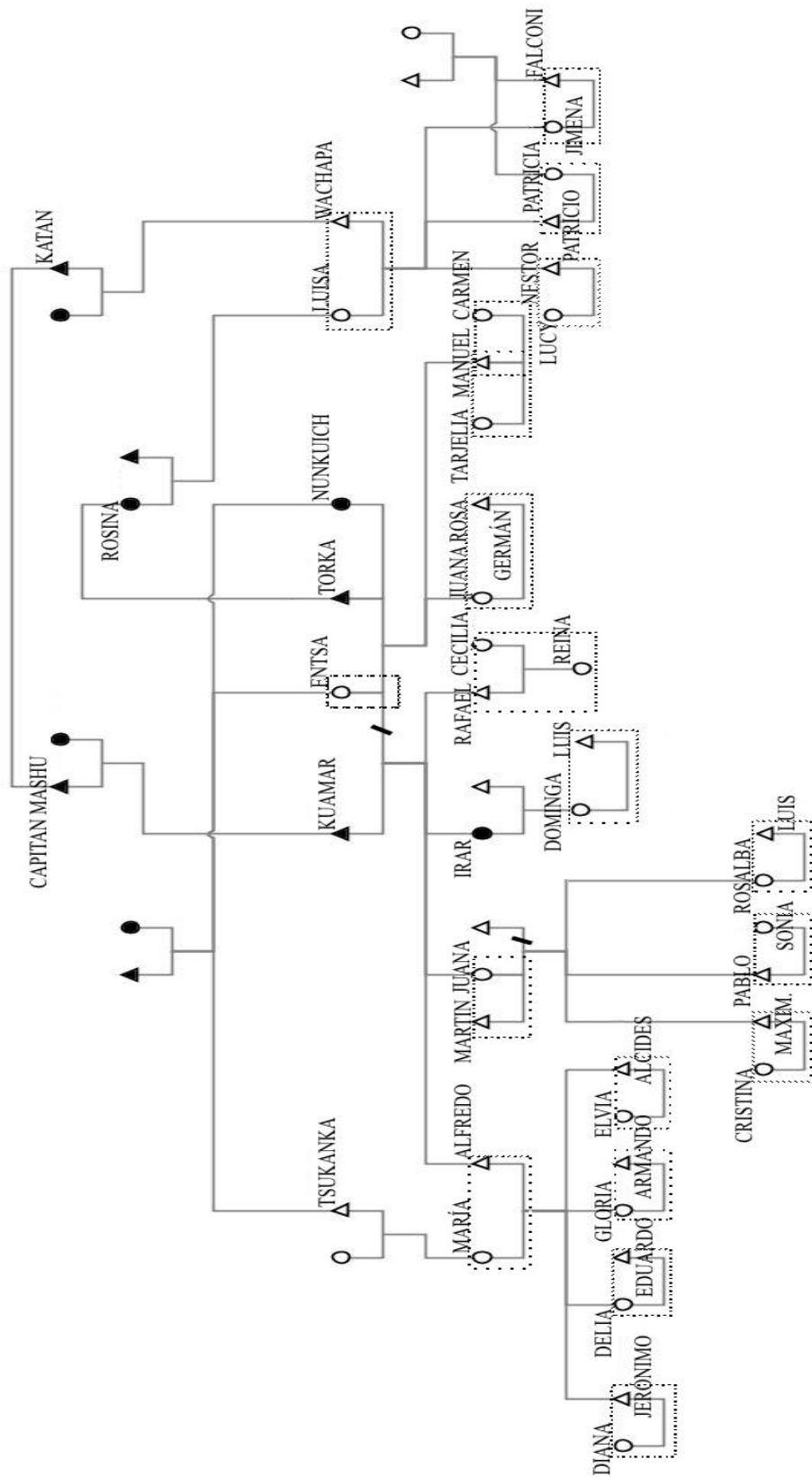
Figure 5 - Kinship diagram of Kuamar
(excluding unmarried persons). Updated
to May 2013.

Coordinates of the good life: self-sufficiency, autonomy, and mutuality

To live well an individual must achieve prosperity and domestic peace. If the former, as we shall see, requires efficacious work, the latter can be achieved only by successfully managing conflict and overcoming the misfortunes befalling one's household. In this chapter, I specifically focus on the achievement of prosperity, which, of course, also contributes to domestic peace. While it might be said of an individual that she or he lives well – competently and prosperously, these evaluations usually presuppose a very specific context: the domestic web of relations in which an individual is most immediately embedded. Living well is thus unimaginable in a state of loneliness or disconnection – the kind of disaffection and erosion of the web of relations that Shuar frequently associate with being ill or weak. The good life requires the establishment of a household, for only paired with a conjugal partner can a person achieve the independence expected of an adult. A household creates the condition for prosperity through conjugal complementarity as well as the forging of the most basic of social alliances: with one's in-laws in this generation and one's future-in-laws in the next generation, after one's children marry.

A typical household consists of a husband, one or at most two wives, and their unmarried children. Although married children and their spouses may be temporarily incorporated as an annex of the primary nuclear family, as soon as they conceive children, or shortly after, they become house owners (*jeentin*) and thus begin to live separately, even if, as is usually preferred, still in proximity of their parents' or parents-in-laws' households. While marriage has customarily been uxorilocal, the limited availability of land and natural resources in Shuar *centros* has increased the number of virilocal and neolocal post-marital arrangements.

To the question of why someone marries, relatives sometimes answer along the lines of, 'He wants his own manioc beer!', 'She relishes meat', and 'He can procure her money.' Whilst pointing to the importance of satisfying bodily desires for personal wellbeing, these comments also underscore productive maturity, independence, and economic complementarity as essential components of marriage. To meet complementary desires, marriage provides a complementary division of labour. A good wife gains prestige from properly nurturing her family and contributing to its growth. She is in charge of feeding the children, supplying manioc beer in abundance for her husband, raising domestic animals, and maintaining her garden. As the main staple, manioc (*mama*) is the embodiment of self-subsistence and is often used metonymically to refer to nourishment more generally (*yurúmak*). Villagers often say that, if the worst comes to the worst, a family will always be able to rely on manioc. When people return from long trips to the city, they express relief that in their homes 'they at least have manioc'; although, as we shall see, it is precisely the idea of 'living off manioc' or devoting one's life to the preparation of manioc which

some parents use disparagingly to encourage their children – and especially their daughters – to aspire to live better.

In turn, a good husband must be capable of satisfying his wife's needs and desires with a steady supply of meat and protecting the household from external danger. Meat is what makes a meal most desirable, yet since game and fish are substantially depleted in the Makuma area, men fulfil their roles as protein-suppliers in a variety of manners. Two men in Kuamar breed cattle while three other men earn wages as a local teacher, county official and soldier respectively. The rest cultivate cacao or maize for sale, sell lumber, and occasionally work as day labourers locally or in mestizo farms. The goal in all cases is to make some money to procure the monthly supply of sugar, salt, and fresh meat or fish, or tinned sardines, which most families now consume.

Husband and wife are understood to be mutually interdependent, not only because they bring together two different spheres of expertise, but also because they require the cooperation of their partners in each of them. Unless pregnant, a wife sometimes accompanies her husband in his forays to the forest or the city. The occasional fishing that is still done, whether with traps or poison, is performed by all the family. And while productive tasks such as cash crops or maize are largely managed by men, wives and children assist as well. A woman relies on her husband to clear a garden and build a house – activities that the husband usually undertakes by hosting a labour party called *minga* with close kin and affines. However, a couple cannot host *mingas* or even attend meetings in the *centro* unless women prepare and serve abundant manioc beer to kin and neighbours (see also Harner 1972:81; Mader 1999:384).

Shuar emphasise that the best marriages are those in which each spouse excels in her or his gender-specific sphere of expertise, in which there are no imbalances of intent or skill between them, and when they are united in pursuit of prosperity. As a villager explained, 'If a man has good ideas for new projects and knows how to multiply resources for his family, but his wife does not know how to make her plants grow, the household fails. Conversely, if a woman has good will and has the power to create abundance, but the husband is inept, the house decays.' We will see below how one can acquire 'the power to create abundance', but what I would like to highlight for now is the importance of individual self-reliance and balance between the spouses, and the idea that the ultimate goal of marital synergy is to be able to generate a family's sustenance by way of multiplying vital resources. Shuar render this idea with the term *ipiampamu*[53], which means to cause to increase crops and domestic animals, but as we shall see in Chapter 5, it may also extend to other income-generating activities carried out domestically. The concept also

---

[53] The word *ipiampamu* is formed by the causative prefix /i-/ added to /pampa-/ which is the root of the reflexive verb 'reproduce' and 'multiply' and /-amu/, a nominaliser.

encompasses the growth of the family, or the multiplication of children expected of a fertile marriage. The term is routinely translated into Spanish as *productividad*, that is, productiveness, in the sense of thriving, fecundity and abundance.[54]

A household relies on multiplying food to achieve vitality, strength, health and good relations with others. This is because, if a couple does not have its own sustenance, they will be forced to rely on other households, thus putting themselves in a subordinate position. This is tantamount to acknowledging their ineptitude, in the sense of not being mature persons or adults. The idea that people achieve adulthood only once they are capable of forming and sustaining a household is emphasised both socially and linguistically. For instance, young unmarried people are considered immature persons. In turn, villagers do not distinguish between the condition of being young and the condition of being unmarried, both of which are rendered with the same word ("*natsa*"), suggesting that the attainment of full personhood requires marriage, for only through marriage can a person achieve self-sufficiency.

The expectation that marriage paves the way for economic self-sufficiency can be illustrated with the case of Nestor, the son of Luisa and Wachapa, who married in his early twenties. One day I met him at the bus station in Macas waiting to hear about a job in the farm of a mestizo landowner. When asked what made him want to work faraway from Kuamar, Nestor answered, 'I have my own family now', by which he meant that he was now responsible for sustaining a new household and bringing resources for his new young wife who had moved to Kuamar. A few weeks later, Nestor brought tin roofing from Macas for a new house and began clearing a new garden for his now pregnant wife. Even before Nestor and his father had finished building the house, the young wife was making her own manioc beer on an improvised hearth on the construction site. Laying the foundations of a household and making a garden are the acts of autonomy and maturity par excellence. They constitute the foundation or base of social life, a notion that Shuar designate with the term *tarimiat*[55], which melds the idea of self-determination and ownership.[56] This example also enables me to clarify that, while Shuar have experienced a significant decline in self-provisioning in the territories of the interior, new economic activities such as occasional cash labour continue to be oriented towards house self-sufficiency.

---

[54] This is why when I refer to Shuar ideas of fertility, I prefer to use the word 'productiveness' to distinguish it from 'productivity', which is the economic measure of productive effort calculated in terms of output per unit of input. The latter has little to do with the way Shuar understand desirable forms of work.

[55] *Tarimiat* refers also to the first wife, who has more authority over the younger ones, in polygynous marriages.

[56] Relatedly, when Shuar leaders refer to the importance of collective territory for wellbeing, they invoke the domestic *tarimiat* since the notion conveys a sense of emplacement, autonomy, and possession.

The emphasis on self-sufficiency goes hand in hand with a prioritisation of personal autonomy understood as freedom of action and lack of coercion. To live well is to have freedom in work, that is, the capacity to choose how, when and with whom one works. Handiness, effortlessness and independence in performing daily tasks are a continuous subject of conversation and public appreciation. 'A good wife has abundance and works silently and with ease' was the expression Wachapa and his wife used as a shorthand for the importance of self-reliance, tranquillity and productiveness in the home. What matters is not so much how much, how long one works, or how much one boasts about it, but simply, how energetically and effectively. A couple are considered skilled at what they do when they can be seen spending time placidly with one another whilst their gardens look plentiful, a sign that they are capable of balancing work and leisure and living harmoniously.

Much respect is thereby shown for an individual's freedom to decide his/her course of action and use of time and to rely on his/her labour. Respect for autonomy is essential even within asymmetric relations in which one party can exert authority over the other, such as, husbands over wives, parents over children, and parents-in-law over children-in-law. For example, although a husband is regarded as a kind of tutor or master who can teach and correct his wife – even using physical punishment, which is common in cases of presumed adultery or open disobedience – I never witnessed a man interfere with the work of his wife or tell her what to do in her gender-specific tasks. As is common among other Amazonian peoples, there is a strong sense among Shuar that no one is entitled to coerce others (e.g. Overing 1983; Santos-Granero 1993:123). The same applies to daily conduct: people manifest extreme care not to presume to know what others want. Manuel for example spoke of each of his wives as having unique and different hearts (*enentai*), which he could not entirely predict.

Children are also considered to develop a strong sense of individuality[57], which parents must learn to respect if they hope to have influence over it. Parents typically maintain that whether their children will live well ultimately depends on the strength and soundness of their own hearts. So, while parents are convinced that children who obey their elders bear more chances of success in life, they also think that a good life cannot be forced on children who must choose it for themselves. In fact, to account for why children end up following different paths, parents typically adduce the fact that every person has specific dispositions and inscrutable motives; that is, different hearts. The relationship between the belief in people's unique make-up and the respect for autonomy can be illustrated with the following example.

---

[57] See Descola (1996a:311) for the Achuar's deep-seated belief in personality.

One day, Carmen was describing each of her children to me, telling me what each of them was 'fit' or 'good' for. She told me that Nayapi was not good at school but 'at least he was good at making money' as he was not even 12 when he spontaneously started lumbering in the afternoons with some older men in Kuamar. Nayapi, who happened to be listening to Carmen, became visibly upset by his mother's words and rebutted her claim, arguing that he did 'like to study and could perform well at school'. That evening Nayapi fell ill with *wainchi nápu*, which is the name for the dizziness and strong headache that seize a person who has felt intense shame or anger in a social situation, typically because of undue intrusion. The ailment can be cured when the person who has produced the shame blows tobacco on the patient. *Wainchi nápu*, which is one of a variety of curable 'interpersonal' ailments, reveals the delicate balance of freedom and authority required in even the most asymmetric relations.

Alongside autonomy, an ideal of balance of power regulates many interactions within the home. Manuel, Targelia and Carmen orchestrated their everyday lives in such a way as to prioritise the autonomy of each. The independence (and equality) of each conjugal pair was greatly emphasised. For example, co-wives do not usually share hearths or gardens, and while multiple wives can sometimes live in the same house, the opinion of my hosts was that this would only bring trouble. 'To live calmly, I care for my own things and do not meddle in her [Carmen's] business', is how Targelia put the issue. In fact, Carmen and Targelia lived relatively far apart from one another compared to the small distances between all other houses in Kuamar (see figure 6), and were extremely reluctant to request anything from each other's households or ask favours from one another, lest they would appear less capable of performing well their own tasks. Manuel conscientiously moved between the two households on a daily basis: if he had a morning meal at Carmen's he would take his evening meal and spend the night with Targelia, or vice versa; if he brought a fish to one, he would give a fish to the other.

The same value of respect for autonomy applies beyond the household. People go to great pains to limit the degree of annoyance they may inflict upon others and largely avoid giving orders or unsolicited advice to their fellows. This is an effective way of preventing conflict as meddling in issues beyond one's sphere of influence is considered extremely offensive. For example, neighbours would rather tolerate others' misconduct, especially if this is something committed within the bounds of their own household, than run the risk of embarrassing them in public and attracting their anger and vengefulness. I learned how jealous Shuar could be of their autonomy in domestic affairs on the day when Jerónimo and Diana, a husband and wife, fought in front of their house while other villagers were gathered nearby on the football pitch. The row became particularly ugly to watch as Diana threatened Jerónimo with a knife and Jerónimo began

to beating Diana, leading Maximiliano (Jerónimo's brother-in-law – *sair*) to approach Jerónimo and ask him, 'What's up with you?' Jerónimo answered him with a punch. When the row finally quieted down by itself, everyone who commented on the episode blamed Maximiliano's recklessness. 'One can only intervene with equilibrium,' said Rafael, 'you can't just walk up to another person and ask "what's up with you!" You have to speak kindly to their hearts, and even so...'

Inter-household relations are governed by a combination of mutuality and autonomy. Villagers are largely attuned to what is happening to others, and will try to help their neighbours when possible, for example, by helping with work if asked to join a *minga*, lending tools, or even lending money when illness strikes. However, they are also at pains to emphasise the voluntary and spontaneous character of mutual aid. For instance, requests for help are most often framed as pleasurable invitations to spend time together, always leaving the space for others to opt out without feeling embarrassed. The great lengths to which villagers go to minimise obligation, became particularly clear to me the time an outsider contravened the expectation. This was Simalesa, a man from the Highlands, living in Kuamar and married to Delia, Alfredo's daughter. One day, he invited his in-laws to a *minga*, telling them that they did 'not need to worry wasting their time for nothing in exchange' because he was going 'to reward them with plenty of good food'. Almost immediately, Alfredo and other men lamented among themselves that Simalesa still 'did not know how to call a *minga*'. The suggestion that people might do something for payment strongly undermines their sense of autonomy by depriving them of the pleasure of voluntary participation and impinging on their personal motives for action.

Much anthropological literature emphasises the importance of empathy in relations of mutuality, that is, the feeling of "commonality and connection with others as opposed to self-interest" that underpins sharing and reciprocity in domestic or communal spaces (see e.g. Gudeman & Hahn 2015:2). However, among Shuar, there is a sense in which mutuality works better when people do not attempt to empathise or anticipate the reasons others may have for acting in a certain way and, instead, discreetly grant them autonomy. In common with many other Amazonian peoples, among Shuar, personal autonomy is thus a prime component of sociability as voluntary forms of mutuality overshadow any sense of obligatory reciprocity (e.g. Gow 1991:136-140; Viveiros de Castro 1992:106-7; Rival 2002:104; Killick 2009:704).

Having briefly outlined some of the values and practices that Shuar consider essential to living well, I now turn to the conditions which disturb this image and which motivate Shuar to strive for something better.

The good life as a receding horizon: the decline of Makuma

'Even if we *do house*, we have a problem: in the forest there isn't much; in the soil there isn't much', said Juana Rosa, as we returned from her garden chatting about the 'problem of scarcity', a topic that villagers frequently brought up. Maria expressed 'the problem' sharply that day: even if Shuar 'do house', that is, form a household and implement conjugal work to pursue prosperity, as described above, villagers feel they no longer live well because food and resources have become scarce. 'Only those with shotguns and casting nets are eating something these days', added Germán, expressing the still widespread view that those who persevered in hunting and fishing were able to eat better, whereas all those who had shifted to different occupations and therefore to different diets 'suffered more'. However, from my conversations with the few obstinate hunters in Kuamar and Achunts, I learned that their hunting trips were few and far between because they rarely found any game anymore. When they did so, it was no more than an agouti or armadillo. They had not seen the coveted capybara, peccary, tapir and monkey in many years. Even further south in the interior, where everyone had told me that game was still plentiful, the situation was far from ideal.

During a party organised by Targelia's parents in Samikim, a *centro* located further into the interior, we saw her father, a seventy-year-old man, return empty-handed and demoralised after having spent more than nine hours in the forest. Confronted with the reality of a game-deprived forest, some villagers projected abundance onto a further 'interior', to more forested areas, where, they insisted, the game must still be abundant. The dearth of game was not the only problem, however. Villagers worried about the unsatisfactory yield of their gardens and the inadequacy of their diets. 'We only eat manioc, taro and plantain these days, and we add chilli pepper and salt, too much salt!' Rafael told me one day. Other people similarly lamented their overreliance on urban foodstuffs. 'Our stomachs do not want these things', expressed a woman from Wisuí when I asked her if she enjoyed the sardines she had just bought in the city. A common preoccupation was that children were not growing well anymore because they no longer ate all the vegetables, fruits, fish and smoked game that their parents had eaten in their own childhoods. 'When someone is well fed, they may be thin, but they're still filled-up, fleshy, and rounded. Our ancients were strong but our children are weak', said Luisa, a woman in her sixties who was raising three of her grandchildren. People frequently admitted that this situation made them feel ashamed. There are at least three reasons why scarcity provoked feelings of shame.

The villagers largely attributed the scarcity of game to their own reckless overhunting. Manuel recalled that when he was still in his twenties, whenever his mother desired meat, his father just had to shoot randomly to bring a few parakeets down from the trees, and whenever

the family fancied fish, they could get a windfall catch with the powder they bought with cattle. 'We were using too much dynamite, that's why there are no fish anymore', he said. Everyone else I discussed the issue with likewise condemned the overuse of dynamite and firearms: 'The elders loved the gunpowder too much!' 'We hunted even when we didn't need to.' A second widespread perception was that people had become less disciplined, even lazier than the ancients were, and this was the reason they were working 'so little these days'. A third reason that contributed to the feeling of shame was the idea that Shuar had not been able to take advantage of the knowledge and wealth they had acquired in the past. Some villagers remembered the recent past as a period of exceptional wealth and abundance. A period in which there had still been game in the forest, agricultural work had been facilitated by steel tools, and Shuar had become 'wealthy selling cattle'. These were, of course, the 'golden years' of the mission, a period when Makuma was flooded with manufactured goods thanks to the sale of cattle. But, subsequently, there had been a sharp decline. Now, Shuar only had themselves to blame for their hubris and lack of foresight: they had sold away their cattle, they had eaten away their fortunes buying radios and drinking beer, and neither they (nor their ancients) had thought about the future of their children.

My informants never associated the ecological depletion of Makuma with the pastoral economy, nucleation, or any of the initiatives advocated by the mission. On the contrary, and somewhat ironically, some people remembered the missionary Panchu as a sort of wise elder who alerted them to the misery they would experience if they did not stop using dynamite. Panchu is also remembered as urging Shuar to organise themselves better in the *centros*, stop selling their cattle, pull their lives together, and stay strong in God, so that they could together brave the shortages of land and game that they would surely experience.

As noted in the previous chapter, the creation of *centros* and the gradual separation of the federation from the orbit of influence of the mission were partly a means by which Shuar sought independence from the centralising economic activities promoted by the cooperatives. I also mentioned that people are largely aware of the difficulties brought by cattle – the increase of work, the envy, sorcery, etc. Still, villagers remembered the abundance brought by the mission with some nostalgia and regretted their own short-sightedness, which they considered the main cause of the downturn of Makuma.

Shame is not only related to regret. It is also a feeling of inadequacy that stems from the comparison with the power of other people, especially with the technologically unbeatable North Americans. Why could the missionaries turn Makuma into the dazzling place it had become during the 'golden years', yet Shuar could not do the same now that missionaries had retreated

from public life? With these thoughts, villagers expressed their frustration at not having been able to master the power of the *inkis*. A few people associated their decreased access to wealth with their inability to persist with their Christian lives. 'I couldn't follow God', a villager said explaining why he could not keep his cattle and wealth. The perception that cattle and the manufactured wealth of 'the golden years' are connected to the Christian God has some history in the area. Taylor, for example, recalls that many Achuar explicitly related the ostentatious ritual language of missionaries to their immense ability to command manufactured goods (1981:672). Not long after, Taylor observes, a few elders attempted to bypass missionary mediation by learning prayers and invoking God to give them God-wealth, that is, cattle (see also, Descola 1996:358).[58] In Makuma, the association of affluence with Christianity is reinforced because the few people who did manage to stay 'on God's path' are considered to be thriving economically. A few Christian families[59] still have cattle, flaunt large dwellings and are slightly more cohesive and enterprising than other families in the area – thanks in part to their longstanding connection with the mission.

A dream Manuel narrated one morning reflects the perception that the economic downturn Shuar experienced in Makuma is somehow related to their incapacity to forge a durable alliance with God. Manuel dreamt that all of Makuma was sinking and people were drowning in mud and excrement. The mission however was spared. Like an island it remained above and clean while the missionaries stood outside their homes staring at the general disaster. When I asked Manuel why in his opinion the missionaries did not sink, he answered, 'They have their God. For us, it's too difficult'.

Christianity is particularly difficult because after conversion, an observant Christian must break with the past in at least three important ways: by halting all dealings with *arutam* (see below), shunning shamanism (whether as ritual specialist or patient); and quitting drinking manioc beer

---

[58] Other Jivaroan groups establish similar associations between abundance, wellbeing and Evangelical Christianity. Seymour-Smith summarises the attraction of the Shiwiar to the mission with the motto 'to follow Evangelicalism in order to live better' (1988:81). Surrallés observes that the Candoshi recall how the SIL put an end to the hardships and suffering they had endured by providing them with all the steel goods they needed so they could finally stop killing one another when they avoided exchanging them (2009:195).

[59] Shuar Christians (*yus shuar*) 'people of God' are an unstable community that cannot be counted by the number of worshipers at service. Christians come and go, adhere to and detach from the church with frequency. Whilst most people who grew up in Makuma would say that they have been Christian at some point in their lives or that they have been "preached to" and they know "God's word" (the gospel), they would also be clear that they are not actually practicing the gospel and have drifted from 'God's path'. There are a few self-declared practicing Christians. These individuals are admired for their rigour and strong wills. Christianity continues to exist in Makuma, largely thanks to the living testimony of these individuals and their strenuous work in keeping going a Shuar church through weekly services in different communities, but also through the memory of Christianity conserved by most individuals raised in the area.

and dancing. For many villagers Christianity involved more renunciations than they could cope with. As a villager put it with an air of resignation, 'We tried but we couldn't. Now we need to move on.' Some people also resented missionaries for having kept control over everything without teaching Shuar how to 'make' technology and money themselves. In their view, missionaries had sought to keep Shuar in a situation of dependence. 'They gave us cattle but then they told us that we shouldn't think about making money so as not to become like the mestizo. They wanted to keep us protected, but why can't Shuar make money too?' was the eloquent view of a villager. Other people – including some self-declared Christians – expressed similar views. The impression I formed is that for many people the wealth available through the mission entailed too much subjugation to foreigners, a situation that they felt untenable despite their admiration for missionaries' technological power. Taylor reports a similar finding for the Achuar:

> Christian proselytization is, for them, both the means and the symbolic model
> of a situation of cultural domination (...) they are clearly aware that unrestricted
> access to the white world implies the rejection of most of their traditional values
> (1981:670).

An equivalent ambivalence characterised villagers' perception of the mestizo world. While Shuar of the interior felt general antipathy and distrust of mestizo people and their miserly and unruly ways, these feelings went hand-in-hand with their amazement at the mestizo's entrepreneurialism. An interesting conversation, which took place as a few villagers gathered to watch a football match in Achunts, neatly illustrates the ambivalence and slight sense of inadequacy that comparisons with the mestizo elicit. The conversation started when a schoolteacher complained that the teachers hardly had anything to eat at lunchtime.

> Why don't some women come to sell us some food? I tell you, we Shuar don't
> have much initiative when it comes to business. If our mestizo neighbours were
> living among us, they'd be making piles of money!

The conversation continued in this tone with some people wondering about how it was that mestizo managed to transform everything into money. 'You go to the markets, they make everything look shiny. What power is it?' asked one. 'Those people from the Coast [Sp. *costeños*], they also can sell you anything, with their smooth talk. They know that sort of stuff', added another. 'Say if we started selling something, what would we sell? Our people still don't understand money', said an elderly man expressing a general perception that Shuar were lagging behind these days because they still did not understand the mysteries of moneymaking. Though admiring their moneymaking abilities, Shuar attitudes towards mestizo people remain decidedly ambivalent. As noted in the introduction, Shuar also associate a strong feeling of unease and lack of control with the types of work and customs of mestizo urban dwellers.

As seen above, when Shuar reflect on their current circumstances, they problematise the challenges they face and contemplate how they might achieve the life to which they aspire. The conundrum they face can be paraphrased as follows: How can Shuar overcome scarcity and regenerate abundance in their homes, given the current constraints and without losing autonomy? How can they live well again without losing control, subjecting themselves to other people or becoming like them? These are questions which I begin to address in the next section.

Efficacious work and getting ahead

Visions for life: an enduring device for acquiring power

Before I explore the paths that villagers envision for themselves, I would like to turn to how Shuar conceive of reproductive work. Specifically, how have Shuar generated domestic abundance? To this end, it is helpful to examine some of the myths that narrate the sources of scarcity and abundance, as these provide a key with which to interrogate how Shuar conceive of power and efficacy.[60]

A number of myths relate that in the past powerful beings such as the daughter of Nunkui, the garden spirit, and Jempe, the hummingbird, showed compassion for Shuar people and saved them from a pitiful state of scarcity.[61] To save them from starvation, these beings magically multiplied the produce of their gardens. Nunkui's daughter, for example, brought into existence an abundance of crops and domesticated animals by calling things by their name. Likewise, Jempe magically planted manioc cuttings by simply blowing over them. In all these cases, however, the overweening zeal of the Shuar, their disobedience, and their scepticism about the magic of these powerful beings disrupted this original state of plenty. For instance, one of the myths of Nunkui recounts that as her daughter performed these acts of magical creation, mischievous children asked her to call for demons and poisonous snakes to appear and hence these were also created, indicating that power is ambivalent and must be controlled to be of any use (see also Hendricks 1993b:7). Failing to control and understand power, humanity was cursed to arduous labour. From the moment when work was rendered necessary, laziness was condemned (see also Descola 1996:299-300; Mader 1999:90-99). Eventually, Nunkui took pity on Shuar and appeared to a woman in a dream to give her some manioc cuttings and teach her

---

[60] I am aware of the risk of using the discursive content of myths to make inferences about everyday understandings. Nevertheless, I am here drawing on of the best-known myths and heroines of Jivaroan culture, Nunkui, which my informants abundantly reference and spontaneously relate to ideas of productiveness, fertility and ordinary cycles of abundance and scarcity.

[61] Variants of these myths can be found in Pellizzaro (1978). An analysis of an interesting Achuar variant can be found in Descola (1996b:192-196).

how to cultivate them. Ever since women require the aid of Nunkui to aid the growth of their plants.

These myths recount the onset of hard work. They also reveal a view of fertility and abundance whereby the acquisition of valuable resources and knowledge hinges on the ability of humans to tap external, creative powers and cultivate relations with powerful beings. In the preceding section, I cited Luis saying that a woman has to have the 'power to generate abundance'. The power to generate abundance by establishing successful relations with powerful, special beings, is visionary power, which in the case of gardening activities is associated with Nunkui. Of a woman who has a thriving garden, people say that 'she is in love with her garden', which is another way of saying that the woman works a lot and is disciplined. But they also observe that 'she probably had good dreams', and 'she has a lot of power because she sacrificed fasting when she was young, and knows a lot of *ánent*'[62]. In addition to hard work, discipline and sacrifice, a person requires visionary power to succeed in any productive pursuit. One can acquire visionary power through dreams and by ingesting datura (*maikua*[63]), *ayahuasca* (*nateni*[64]) and tobacco (*tsaank*), but also through rituals of interpersonal transmission, on which I briefly touch below.

It is useful to think of the combination of hard work and visionary power required to generate productiveness as a form of 'efficacious work'. In addition to being dedicated, to plant a garden or undertake a hunting expedition successfully, people must have a range of knowledge and skills. They must know about the plants and game, and know how to interpret dreams, fast and observe sexual abstinence, manipulate charms and sing incantations called *ánent* to either enlist the help of Nunkui in the garden or successfully lure game in the forest. Charms and *ánent* might be acquired in the course of vision quests or from living elders who have accumulated power. Through this power, individuals acquire the generative skills to activate production or to transact with a panoply of powerful others overseeing various spheres of abundance (the game masters, garden guardians and a number of powerful allies-patrons overseeing income-producing projects – see Ch.5).

---

[62] *Ánent* are private magical incantations or invocations used to influence the dispositions of other sentient beings, whether human or non-human such as game animals and cultivated plants. As Descola puts it, effective gardening depends on "direct, harmonious, and constant commerce with Nunkui", the mother of all cultivated plants (1996b:192), an endeavour that women accomplish through *ánent*. The subject of *ánent* has been widely studied, see, for example, Taylor (1983); Descola (1983, 1996b:191-210); Brown (1984c, 1986); Mader (1999:101-117, 2003). For transcriptions of *ánent*, see Tsamaraint et al. 1997; Pellizzaro 1977; Chumpi Kayap (1985, 1986); Napolitano (1988); Ujukam et al. (1991).
[63] *Brugmansia sp.* or *Datura sp.*
[64] *Banisteriopsis sp.*

An example of how efficacious work becomes relevant in everyday productive pursuits is illustrated by the conversation I had with Yaunt, the 16-year-old daughter of Manuel. On one of our daily walks to the high school, Yaunt told me about her older friend Lucrecia. Lucrecia had many hens, of which she took good care, and the hens laid many eggs. This is because Lucrecia had *nantar* (charms), which Yaunt described as 'little pretty stones one can find'. To find these stones,

> you dream, you dream of a woman who sings and then you go to the garden and you search where you saw the woman singing in your dream, and then you find a little stone. So you keep it safely, burying it so that no one else can find it. My grandmother [Entsa] used to have *nantar*, and was going to give me some, but then someone stole them. One can find some of these around, but unless you dream of them or someone gives them to you, there is no point. They can even curse you and make your garden overgrown. These stones, [they're] so pretty, there is one for everything, for the hens, for the crops, and for other things. I hope I can get some when I get my own garden.

A person may obtain *nantar* and other forms of power via dreams or through the elders. These powers strengthen a person and provide access to essential knowledge. The most potent form of power in this respect is *arutam,* the apparition of an ancestor*,* which reveals a personal destiny or future in the course of visions.

While I have so far related visionary power to productive pursuits, visions – and especially *arutam* visions – are said to endow an individual with the sorts of qualities that lead to more general success in life, for example, courage, a strong body, straight thinking, and forceful clear speech. Additionally, visions are particularly sought as a way of reinvigorating the self in decisive or critical moments, such as prior to accomplishing important feats or after debilitating periods of illness and conflict. The power (*kakaram*) that someone acquires increases in proportion to the visions.

Female visions are usually associated with fecundity. They enhance a woman's productive and reproductive potential, turning her into a mistress of plenty. Good visions or dreams are those in which a woman sees a flourishing household brimming with well-kept crops and numerous fat pigs, hunting dogs, and poultry. In the course of these visions, it is thought that Nunkui or other powerful beings will reveal specific skills to the vision-seeker and predict futures of longevity, fertility and harmonious marriages. A woman can also transmit her power of fecundity to all the household even if her husband has not had equally fortunate visions (see also Mader 1999:115). A man may receive different kinds of visions or predictions. For example, visions of domestic happiness and ordinary satisfaction: a long, healthy and happy life, a vision of marrying numerous hard-working, obedient wives, with plenty of children, productive sons-in-

law, close and loyal relatives, a bountiful household, and the ability to surmount conflict. Another kind of vision, which is much celebrated and evoked in narratives of past warriors (*kakaram*), guarantees success in war, it announces invincibility in future armed conflicts and much prestige from warring exploits. Despite the cessation of feuding and head-hunting expeditions, visions and metaphors of invincibility at war continue to strengthen and prepare men to confront everyday political scuffles (see also Mader 1999:180). Manuel, for instance, recalled a vision quest in which the elder who guided him transmitted him strength by calling the spirits (*wakan*) of all his political enemies and singing them away through *ánent* so that his rivals could not easily outdo him through gossip, defamation and conspiring.

Linguistically *arutam* means 'the ancient one' or 'the ancient thing'.[65] In the vision quest, this form of ancestral power becomes individualised assuming the shape of a familiar dead person whom the vision-seeker sees as the bearer of special capabilities by virtue of having led an exemplary life. Usually female ancestors appear to women and male ancestors to men – *arutam* may be the recently-deceased and dearly-loved and respected relatives. Importantly, however, when the revealed spirit is someone from the domestic group, s/he is not always deceased, but can also be a living elder.

Among the Shuar of Makuma, there is relative agreement concerning the fact that youths today seek visionary power less frequently than in the past. This is in part because missionaries have strongly condemned vision quests identifying *arutam* with the devil. *Arutam* is in fact strongly rejected by Evangelical Shuar, who attribute to it an evil-nature, because of its longstanding association with prowess in war, and contrast it with the supreme goodness of God's power.[66] However, as the story of Yaunt reveals, the specific skills and powers acquired in rituals of transmission continue to be passed down from elders to juniors in other ways. Furthermore, visionary power continues to be strongly emphasised in parental lessons to their children, as we shall see in the next section. This is because the acquisition of visionary power is itself an exercise in sacrifice and discipline since the vision seeker must fast and abstain from sex prior to and during the vision quest. For instance, one evening in which grandmother Entsa was exceptionally talkative she recalled that for a long period before she had her menstruation[67], she only ate the

---

[65] It derives from *arut* meaning 'old' and the suffix /-amu/, which is a nominaliser.

[66] In the dualistic reconfiguration of *arutam* that Evangelicals operate, one finds a stern criticism of the war vision whilst the vision of domestic happiness is reconceptualised as God-given. Christians are blessed with precisely the kind of domestic prosperity Shuar have long pursued. That is, since *arutam* does not only serve straightforward well-meaning actions, Evangelicals reconceptualise *arutam* as malevolent and ill-driven while appropriating its source of 'good' efficacy.

[67] Entsa was referring to the *nua tsankram*, a festive ritual of transmission in which female youths acquired gender-specific knowledge/powers from a knowledgeable elder. See also Karsten (1935:215-233) and Mader (1999:109-116).

heart of the *tinkimi* palm. This period of fasting prepared her for a ritual in which she was given tobacco to have visions. Even while full baskets of peccary and monkey were brought home, she diligently observed all the dietary restrictions her mother-in-law instructed her to follow.

Moreover, despite the Evangelical separation of visionary and Christian paths, Christian characters and revelations regularly intrude on visionary quests. *Arutam* may indeed reveal itself as a Christian, mestizo or foreign figure. An example of the first sort of 'intrusion' or integration of Christian powers within the *arutam* complex is a vision Entsa recalled,

> I arrived where a river sounded. Next to the river, there was a path. There I drank drops of water falling from the heavens, from God. I arrived where the earth ended. This I saw with tobacco, thus I had that dream. I arrived at the end of the earth. 'Drink this water from God', said an elderly woman, and from the heavens water began to pour and I drank it. Drop by drop I drank the water of God. One day, [when she was already] in her deathbed, I told this vision to my mother-in-law and she told me 'You took away my dream'.

In this vision we see a merging of the power of *arutam* – in this case the elderly woman Entsa saw in her dream, who she later discovered was her own mother-in-law and, perhaps even the latter's own vision – and heavenly water, a metonymic version of God's power. Entsa was considered a healthy, strong and wise woman, not least because she was widely known to have taken datura five times in her life. She had also carefully followed the advice of her mother-in-law whom she recalled urging her to, 'abstain and fast to be strong!'

We might want to see the repertoire of ideas and practices related to visionary power – dreams, interpersonal ritual transmissions, sacrifice and discipline, vision quests, etc. – as constituting a device through which Shuar can acquire the capacities and efficacy that become necessary to ensure their livelihood and reproduction. Shuar have continued to use this device to integrate a variety of new foreign powers, such as the power of God, for example. The device of visionary power also operates as an interpretative framework through which Shuar make sense of power more generally. The idea that an individual's capacity to cultivate relations with powerful beings brings success has, for instance, guided villagers' interpretation that success with cattle and other Christian forms of wealth stems from an ability to forge an alliance with the Christian God. Shuar use the same interpretative device when they construe moneymaking as a sort of power and knowledge that mestizo possess and Shuar still need to understand.

So, how do villagers seek to regenerate their livelihoods? What solutions do they propose to the problem of scarcity? Let us turn to their construal of a 'better life'.

Parental counsel for a better life

'*Tsat-tsat-tsat*', said Manuel imitating the sound women make with their calabash sieves (*tsatsa*) when they sift manioc beer before serving it to guests. 'Do you want to make manioc beer all your life?' Manuel asked Suanua, one of his daughters, provocatively. 'Or do you want to become a professional (*unuíkiartin*)? If you want to be poor like all of us, you better stop going to school, stay at home, and wait to get married.'

Though I began this chapter with villagers' wholehearted expressions of praise for the good life of the interior, I have also shown that they increasingly worry about their inability to live well. There were moments when villagers' pronounced awareness of the decline in their living conditions led them to refer disparagingly to the 'poverty' of the interior. Scarcity was seen as poverty and to fight poverty villagers impelled their children to prepare to 'live better'. To confront the situation of scarcity in the interior, villagers considered they needed to be open to new economic pursuits. To pursue these, children needed to study in order to become professionals, that is, university-educated wage earners, as this was how they could access skilled jobs, sustain their families, and regenerate abundance, while avoiding the hardships of the city (manual labour, ill treatment, and hunger). Let me give you an example of the path parents imagined for their children.

Germán's main regret was that his eldest son, Paul, had dropped out of high school because he did not do well. Paul spent a big part of the year lumbering or working in factories in the Highlands. While Paul enjoyed his journeys, he also resented the harsh treatment he received from his bosses. Germán felt that his son 'suffered too much in the city'. This is how he advised his other children who were still studying:

> Whoever wants a job needs to study. But if you just go to the city without study, you'll end up working like your brother in a factory. You'll have a bad life. When you study, you can stay home and help your own family here. Say, you become an agronomist, then you return and give us advice to cultivate cacao. You do what Chankuap [a Salesian NGO which incentivises cacao growth] does. Why can't we do the same? So you do the cacao. Before, when there wasn't electricity, there were many birds and animals. We lived well. When I was hungry, I just went to fetch some snails. Go see now if there's any of these. Nothing. So, stay at school and prepare yourself! To do anything today, you need 'the study' [Sp. *el estudio*].

The idea was therefore to find alternative routes to material self-sufficiency while fostering autonomy. But what sorts of transformations do Shuar envision when they prompt their children to become professionals? It is useful to turn briefly to how parents conceive of their children's education, as this will enable us to illuminate the similarities and differences between the images

of 'the good life' and 'a better life'. It will also enable us to see the device of visionary power at work even while parents promote new engagements with the world. In what follows, I rely mostly on what I learnt from living with Manuel's family, although I was able to draw similar conclusions through conversations with members of other families.

Parental education focuses on helping children to develop autonomy, discipline, and self-possession. From when children are toddlers, parents use a great variety of medicinal concoctions and poultices made from nettles and medicinal plants with magical properties[68] to help them develop desirable qualities: to walk fast, to strengthen their bones, to make them calm, to study well and develop intelligence. There are also a series of slightly more painful treatments intended as cures against bad habits. For example, *kaniúkma*, is a punishment to heal the habit of stealing food and involves forcing children to inhale large quantities of smoked chilli peppers. Another example is putting the hand of the child in an ant's nest until it goes numb. Parents explain that these treatments help children grow strong, disciplined and resilient. Even though the Shuar life-course does not presuppose rigid social stages or ceremonial age-sets, children (*uchi*) still need to develop the self-control, oratorical skills and gendered productive capacities that characterise mature Shuar persons.

The process of developing self-control is represented as taking place in the heart (*enentai*), the centre of individuality where one's self-reflexivity, intentions, emotions and the ability to act appropriately reside. The idea that thoughts and judgements originate from the heart is also marked in the etymology of the word 'thought' *enentáimsatin* which derives from *enentai* (Hendricks 1986:89–90, 1993b:4; Mader 1999:427). Knowing and feeling (*nekámu*) and experience (*nekápsamu*) have a common root with *neká* (true). The whole purpose of a home education is, in fact, to enable children to judge for themselves and develop 'straight thinking': the capacity for good conduct that a person apprehends through visions and which typically manifests through forceful and 'clear speech', that is truthful speech (Ch.4) (see also Brown 1986a:154; Mader 1999:426).

There are different sorts of knowledge a person can develop. *Unuímiamu*, which means 'that which is learned' refers to all forms of technical skill and knowledge, from making a basket to reading and writing at school. It is from this term for learning, which can also mean teaching, that Shuar derive the word for professional (*unuíkiartin*) and school (*unuímiatai*). This form of knowledge is very different from the *nekámu*, mentioned above, which is associated with the sort of clarity and sense of direction one achieves through visions. As Hendricks notes, Shuar do not

---

[68] Especially different varieties of *piripiri* (Cyperus sp.) that women cultivate around the house and in their gardens.

use the verb 'to learn' (*unuímiatin*) to speak about the knowledge obtained through visions, but rather say "I know in my heart" or "I have seen" (1993b:4). Although parents encourage children to acquire both forms of knowledge, parental lessons are oriented towards enhancing children's thoughts/feelings more specifically. Manuel expressed the difference between the two forms of knowledge thus,

> We think that the school is going to teach our children how to behave but that's wrong. At school, our children only learn science. We have to continue teaching children how to think straight. If I hadn't been indoctrinated by my parents, I would have got lost in the city during my journeys, I wouldn't have missed this land, this way of life.

So, if Manuel encourages his children to learn science and pursue 'professions', he does so while nurturing their thoughts so that they do not get lost. The idea that one can get lost in the city points to the risk of uncontrolled transformation, for example, by travelling and living among mestizo people and foreigners. This risk is also expressed as a process of becoming 'mixed' (Sp. *mezclados*) as Shuar say mestizo people are. For Manuel, one gets lost when one distances oneself from parental advice,

> Take my sister Nakaimp, for example, when I came back to live in Kuamar she told me, 'From being up you've come down. Why did you marry a Shuar woman, a woman from our own, from where we live dirty? You could have married a *gringa*, she would have given you money. But now you've come back to the jungle, with what money are you going to live?' She thinks this way because she never listened to our mother. She is not like Untsuma [Manuel's eldest sister], who has a strong character (...) Nakaimp knows how to create abundance, but she doesn't know how to live well, how to live with a man.

When Manuel says that Nakaimp never listened to her mother Entsa, he is referring to parental speech. The most explicit way in which parents seek to instil straight thoughts in their children is through the characteristic genre of speech called *chichamat*. This speech takes the form of parental monologues or lectures consisting of moral advice and admonitions to live well. It is through *chichamat* that parents, but especially fathers, most explicitly transmit to their children knowledge of what they must do to achieve a prosperous and tranquil life. Those who listen to their elders are said to live long, develop good thoughts and learn how to live well.

Nakaimp's position appears to reject key elements of a good life: a stable relationship with a hardworking partner and the balance and autonomy of conjugal relations. Manuel's view was shared by other siblings who often criticised Nakaimp for having divorced and then marrying a shaman from outside. Nakaimp was perceived to have failed to live well since it is not enough to work productively, one must also live harmoniously.

But if Nakaimp rejects traditional gender roles by reproaching her brother for not marrying a foreigner who could support him, is Manuel not also doing the same when he encourages his daughter to study to become a professional instead of staying home and waiting to get married? Let me illustrate the difference between Nakaimp and Manuel's positions by turning to the example of Manuel's parental speech to another of his daughters, Yajaira (15-years-old). Manuel advised her to refrain from premature marriage so that she will be able to study to become a professional. This, however, he does, by advising her to follow the steps of her grandmother Entsa, who fasted and followed strict discipline to live well throughout her life:

> Many men and women [of your age] have a curiosity about sex, they have that desire. When you fall in love with someone, [say] with one of your classmates, or another man from here, and you marry him without studying, you will find yourself outright gutting a paca. Then you will [have to] go to find fish poison, plant manioc and taro and get dirty. Then, you'll become pregnant and chew manioc [to make beer], inside [Sp. *adentro*]. Well, I'm also from inside, but you know that I'm not so demanding when it comes to manioc beer. Then your mother-in-law will begin to say, 'she doesn't know how to make manioc beer, she does not how to cultivate'. Yes, they will criticise you. You will become tired of all that and escape leaving your husband. And then, what man will marry you [again] if you already have children?

Manuel delineates an imagined marriage, as it would happen according to the life of the interior or, 'inside'. In the example, a young woman marries (she satisfies her desire for game meat – paca) and accomplishes her duties as a good wife (she plants manioc, helps her husband to fish and follows the advice of her in-laws). Yet Manuel characterises this model of marriage as one 'without studying' and foresees a negative ending. Interestingly, Manuel does so by using the same image of 'getting dirty' that Nakaimp used to describe the life of the interior – that is, working in the garden or fields, a choice of hardship and backwardness. However, instead of rejecting the choice of the interior marriage in favour of marrying a foreigner with money, as did Nakaimp, Manuel suggests a different alternative:

> Abstain, my daughter, and practice fasting! (...) My mother used to say, 'Those who will study, do not have to be spanked, the advice of a father will suffice.' Yes, your grandmother used to say, 'To have a long life, one has to withstand discipline.' That is the power of tobacco. When she had the first menstruation, she acquired the power of tobacco. She waited until the pigs grew big and she fasted, eating only some foods, for more than a year and a half. 'For this reason, I have lived long', she says now. So do like your grandmother and you will live well. Abstain from that my daughter. Don't marry! Whoever cannot stand fasting, fails. I used to listen to my parents, now if you listen to me, you will study. Only that way will you become someone in life. Later, when you will have a profession, then you will marry as a professional. In order to have

something in life you have to be a professional and your husband has to be a professional, then there will be true happiness. If one earns money and the other too, then both of you have money. A child is born and you can provide it with everything it needs. But if you or your brothers marry too young, you will be poor like the rest here [in Kuamar].

In this alternative image of marriage, a woman first secures an income through wage labour, which enables her to get out of poverty, and only subsequently pairs up with a husband who is also self-reliant. Manuel continues to emphasise conjugal complementarity, economic productiveness and self-sufficiency as the conditions to achieve marital harmony. What changes is the means of achieving self-sufficiency. Manuel encourages his daughter to prepare through formal education to control a new sphere of production (the cash economy) where she will work in parallel to her husband. Hence, he outlines an image of gender complementarity that is no longer based on the different sources of expertise and types of efficacious work performed by men and women, but instead focuses on their equivalence and similarity (i.e. both wife and husband are wage earners). We are far from the image of the wife as the processer of manioc beer who relies on her husband to procure her game and cash. Nevertheless, even in the alternative model, productive maturity, hard work and eventually a stable marriage continue to be the bases for achieving prosperity, understood as abundance and harmony).

Manuel's alternative model is not universal, however. As we have already seen, Nakaimp's model consisted of a comfortable kind of dependence on the money and power of outsiders that Manuel rejects. While both siblings recognise the advantages of doing things differently, their models of change differ in relation to the aspects of the good life that they would transform. One also finds some parents who are less happy about their daughters leaving their homes to become breadwinners, while most parents unambiguously encourage their sons to do so. The fact that Shuar parents oscillate in this respect is in itself interesting in view of the widespread finding that in Amazonia a strategy of pursuing change through cash labour is reserved for men (Seymour-Smith 1991; Knauft 1997; Walker 2013c). Shuar men do in fact dominate relations with outsiders and formal politics, but most parents who, like Manuel, have several daughters go to great lengths to educate their daughters in the hope that they can become professionals.

Irrespective of gender, parents encourage their children to delay their marriages and prepare for the future, while warning them about the risks of getting lost in the city and forgetting their elders' teachings. What children are advised to develop in preparation for their future is a capacity for controlled openness. That is, openness to change rooted in 'straight thinking'.

Conclusion

The regeneration of native livelihoods requires a new capacity, a new form of power. This is what Shuar call 'study' or 'science', the abilities people acquire at school, with which one can make money and sustain one's family without working for mestizo landowners or bosses as petty labourers. 'Everything is study these days', I once heard an elderly say. 'This table is study, what we're dressed with is study. The hotels, the businesses, that's study. The machetes, all of it.' All such things Shuar can acquire if they study.

To acquire 'study', children must go to school. The desire for children to prepare and learn other things so that they can have a better life – a life in which Shuar do not experience scarcity – indicates an agentive orientation toward the future. Children are encouraged to prepare for the future, and parents themselves invest in the future through the education of their children. In the late-1980s, Hendricks wrote the following regarding the Shuar with whom she worked in the interior:

> Shuar traditionally place little emphasis on the distant future in their worldview. A man works throughout his life so that he will be a big man when he is old. Though he provides for his children, he expects them to make their own way in the world, and he believes that their time will come when they reach old age. The federation tells the people to "prepare themselves" by educating their children. An older informant responded to this by saying, "what about living now instead of always preparing for something else?" (1988:226).

I suppose that when Hendricks notes that a man works throughout his life 'so that he will be a big man when he is old' she is still pointing to a certain emphasis on the future. However, the words of her older informant indeed reveal a difference between enjoying the here-and-now and preparing for something else. The key difference seems to be that villagers no longer expect that their children will "make their own way". To get out of scarcity, to regenerate the livelihoods of the interior, children must prepare for the future. In this sense, to an extent, the present is shaped by how parents imagine the future – the time when the children will return to help their families – and parents project themselves onto the next generation.

I once had a conversation with Luis, a senior student in his late twenties and father of four children in Kuamar. Luis told me that after his graduation, he planned to work on his maize plantation and that he was glad that all the sacrifice endured in studying was about to end. I asked him about the purpose of schooling: why did he bother walking on the muddy trails to school each day, sometimes leaving his family and fields behind? Luis provided a long answer, but the key point I want to emphasise for now is evident in this extract: 'Well, to get ahead, to have a

profession, to educate and teach my children, so that they can become something more/better than what I am myself.'

From Luis' answer, we see that there is an orientation towards the future linked to his desire for betterment in which the next generations play a critical role. This attitude involves more than simply hoping that one's children reach old age or that they live long lives, like Entsa. When parents encourage their children to become professionals, they not only hope their children can 'become someone in life', as Manuel put it, but also that they can be better or have more than their parents. This desire for betterment also casts a shadow over the life of the interior. As I have shown in the last section, when villagers imagine a better life, they also express a dissatisfaction with their current lives, which involves a degree of self-disparagement. The life of the interior is imagined as a life of poverty and scarcity, in which even traditional livelihoods become undesirable as when Manuel and Nakaimp referred to 'getting dirty'.

When villagers imagine a way out of scarcity, they are willing to consider new ways of organising productive activities that to some extent transform conjugal relations while further articulating the household economy with larger economic processes. But the ultimate goal continues to be household self-sufficiency. Children are impelled to study so they can return and improve the livelihoods of their families in the interior. As mentioned in the introduction, a desire for a better life is intimately tied to the desire to recover a vanishing image of the good life.

This explains why villagers oscillate between commendations for the good life of the interior and encouragements for a better life. The good life becomes a sort of ideal, and appears rather like what Walker and Kavedžija (2015:6, 16) suggest happiness might be when it becomes "a pursuit or a promise more virtual than actual"; that is, a sort of horizon which "delimits a space of action and understanding, even as it recedes from view."

Understandings of a better life still operates within the horizon delimited by the good life. To pursue a better life one must open oneself to new possibilities, while remaining rooted. So, to live better, children must know how to live well; they must listen to their elders and think straight so that they understand what a good life requires. Additionally, the desire to live better is embedded in longstanding processes of self-making: the value of acquiring external power to become knowledgeable and to achieve productiveness, the importance of discipline and sacrifice for success, and the desire to achieve self-sufficiency and remain autonomous.

The question of whether Shuar can remain autonomous or whether the meanings and practices of self-sufficiency, autonomy and mutuality are transformed in the process of pursuing a better life is something that I shall gradually approach in the following chapters. As we shall see, the embrace of new life pathways – such as 'becoming a professional' – is thought to improve

the life of the interior in more than one way. Professionals help to regenerate internal livelihoods but are also key figures in the development of the form of collective organisation in the *centro* that villagers consider necessary if they are to work together to improve the economic prospects of individual families. It is at the *centro* where children can attend schools and it is through the *centro* that villagers try to harness external forms of wealth to pursue new economic activities.

But for that to happen villagers must first live together. In this chapter, I have focused on the extent to which villagers care about domestic autonomy, while the difficulties that they can experience living side by side with others in *centros* have remained in the background. However, as was already seen in the previous chapter, conflict is a key part of everyday life for Shuar and it can increase in situations of nucleation. The next chapter therefore examines how Shuar are able to reconcile an ideal of personal and domestic autonomy with living in the *centro*.

Chapter 4. The moral force of the community: controlling conflict as *socios*

A *minga* had just finished and most villagers began to collect their machetes and make their way back home. It was about the time when the cicadas' singing becomes most active, announcing the end of the afternoon. With some manioc beer still left in their bowls, Maria and Targelia encouraged me to stay behind to finish drinking it with them. The two women were engaged in a cheery conversation with their husbands, Alfredo and Manuel.

Alfredo, a man in his seventies, about 25 years older than his brother Manuel, was recalling the games Manuel used to play with other children, many years before. Pointing towards the main trail, Alfredo showed us where the children 'had built a community',

> With a stick, they marked out the pitch and the main trails. They also gathered sticks to parcel out the land to each of them. The children then elected Manuel president and Dario [another child] became secretary. Another child became the schoolteacher. That's how they used to play when Kuamar did not even exist yet. Back then, all of this was called Wisuí.

The women laughed in their characteristically joyous manner, stressing a high pitch at the end as Targelia teased Manuel calling him 'the president of the community made with sticks'. Alfredo then reminisced about the time when he and Torka (Manuel's father) created Kuamar, after they separated from Wisuí. 'Those were good times; we were discussing things clearly and getting organised, now we're forgetting that, we're again spending too much time in *shuarologia*'. All four chuckled. The curious word *shuarologia* certainly sounded funny. I asked Alfredo what he meant. 'The three "C's",' Manuel replied amused. 'We have the three subjects of *shuarologia*, like in the school', said Maria. The three subjects were 'shamanism, gossip, and manioc beer', which in Spanish all start with 'C' (Sp. *chamanismo, chisme, chicha*).

Alfredo and Torka created Kuamar in 1993, but as discussed in Chapter 1, the people of Makuma began creating their own *centros* around the late 1970s. As the memory of children's games attests, everyday discourse is saturated with images of 'community', but also with the language of schooling. The coinage of *shuarologia* is perhaps the most telling legacy of the past decades. The term embodies a sort of reified "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 2005), a common form of sociality in which villagers recognise themselves in somewhat negative terms. As used by the people of Kuamar, the term was meant to be self-consciously disparaging and funny. With it, villagers conveyed the idea that some native customs that they increasingly considered unviable or incompatible with their contemporary lives could be thought as equivalent to school subjects, a kind of science, to which some Shuar people somewhat unfruitfully devoted their lives. 'Instead

of studying for good, some of us spend our time in *shuarologia*!' was the self-ironic comment of a villager in an assembly. It was what people did when they did not want to organise themselves well in the community. As Alfredo's words make clear, *shuarologia* was no source of pride, and no firm ground on which to create a community. What they needed instead was to get together, discuss things clearly, and organise the community well.

Although *centros* are relatively recent formations and seem like a major shift in the ways Shuar people live with one another, villagers continuously refer to the *centros* as a defining feature of their way of life. This chapter is about the discourses and practices that my informants mobilise to make community at the level of the *centro*. I will be concerned with the ideological motives that attach villagers to *centros* and the variety of tools they deploy to produce a 'community' and keep it together. How, in other words, do they deal with what they perceive as the inherently centrifugal and anti-communitarian tendencies of some features of *shuarologia*?

Joys and sorrows of gathering in *centros*

As the introductory vignette reveals, villagers are aware that living well or better in *centros* is no straightforward task. From time to time, they appeared extremely concerned about the deterioration of life in *centros*. They felt that there was too much conflict which was making them fall ill; that they were 'being defeated by shamanism and 'bad talk' – in other words, they felt that *shuarologia* was taking over. In addition to these issues, villagers had to deal with a host of new challenges created by the very structure of the *centro*.

I shall start by providing a general picture of the *centro* and the structural constraints and challenges it creates for people. I then turn to examine how villagers experience and thematise these constraints and challenges. For villagers such challenges involve dealing with that which poses threats to everyday living because it is 'concealed'. Therefore, I shall interrogate the tension between secret and public forms of knowledge and sociality in *centros*. We will then see that villagers use the layout of the *centro* and the attributes of formal membership – the idea of being *socios*, or members of a *centro* – to create 'tools of harmony' that enable them to tackle critical and sensitive issues together. Finally, I discuss both how villagers apply these tools to new arenas of interest and conflict created by the *centro* and also the meanings and practice of 'authority' in *centros*. Throughout, I will engage with two interrelated debates. The first concerns the conditions under which communal forms of action develop in nucleated settlements in Amazonia. The second relates to the meanings and usages of legal idioms and artefacts to promote consensus and prevent settlement fission in Amazonian communities.

So what is a *centro*?

A *centro* is the smallest territorial and administrative division recognised by the Shuar federations and the state. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the first *centros* in Makuma emerged when the members of cooperatives began to create their own nucleated settlements, while seeking to maintain access to public services. Ever since, *centros* have been modelled on the administrative structure of the federation, which, as the reader will recall, had a directive council and statutes to regulate the cooperatives. When the federation (initially called 'association') was created, there also emerged the idea of being *socios* – that is, members of the association. The word *socio* literally translates as 'partner' and refers to the names of the signatory parties of an agreement as established by the statutes of the federation.

Presently, a *socio* is an official member of a *centro* and by extension, of a federation. The main condition of membership is that an individual may only be member of one *centro* at a time. So while Shuar are still greatly mobile and travel for marriage, visits or work at various points in their lives, they can claim membership in one *centro* only. Consequently, after a few weeks visiting another *centro* a person will be expected to either return to the *centro* where s/he is originally *socio* or ask to become *socio* in the new *centro*. To request membership in a *centro* where one did not grow up, however, is easier said than done if one has not married in, since land is increasingly scarce and Shuar are extremely aware of the problems deriving from population growth (see also Hendricks 1986:56).

The great majority of *centros* have collective titles to the land (Sp. '*títulos globales*') so while individual *socios* gain usufruct rights over a plot of land, the land itself cannot be marketed for it remains the inalienable possession of the collectivity or group of members.[69] Membership regulates access to the land and rights and duties deriving from permanent residence. When an individual becomes *socio* of a *centro* his/her name is written down in the register (Sp. *nómina*) of the *centro*, s/he can then vote in village meetings, elect and be elected to the directive council, and receive benefits offered by the *centro* (see Ch.5). Similarly, a *socio* is expected to participate in *mingas* and village meetings (Sp. *asambleas*) and in principle becomes liable for fines and sanctions detailed in the charter of the *centro* (Sp. *reglamento interno*).

Centros are divided into the urban centre (Sp. *urbanización*) and the fields (Sp. *fincas*) located further afield. In the urban centre there are also plots (Sp. *parcelas*) for the households of individual families. The houses are usually built next to each other around the football pitch or nearby. The urban centre is also the area where all public buildings and facilities are built: the

---

[69] The statutes of the federation prohibit the sale of land to non-Shuar persons. When Shuar marry non-Shuar persons, the latter enjoy usufruct rights over the land of their Shuar spouses, even after their death. When the marriage is dissolved or both spouses die, the plot is divided among their children.

central plaza, which comprises the football and volleyball pitches, the assembly hall called 'roofed-house[70] (Sp. *casa cubierta*) for village meetings (Sp. *asambleas*), the room for the short-wave radio, the nursery and school.[71] This area represents the heart of the village. This is because, as its name clearly suggests, the creation of a *centro* involves the clearing of forest to create a centre in an otherwise reticular and dispersed landscape, but also because access to schooling, urban services and technology has been crucial in fostering the desire for nucleated living.
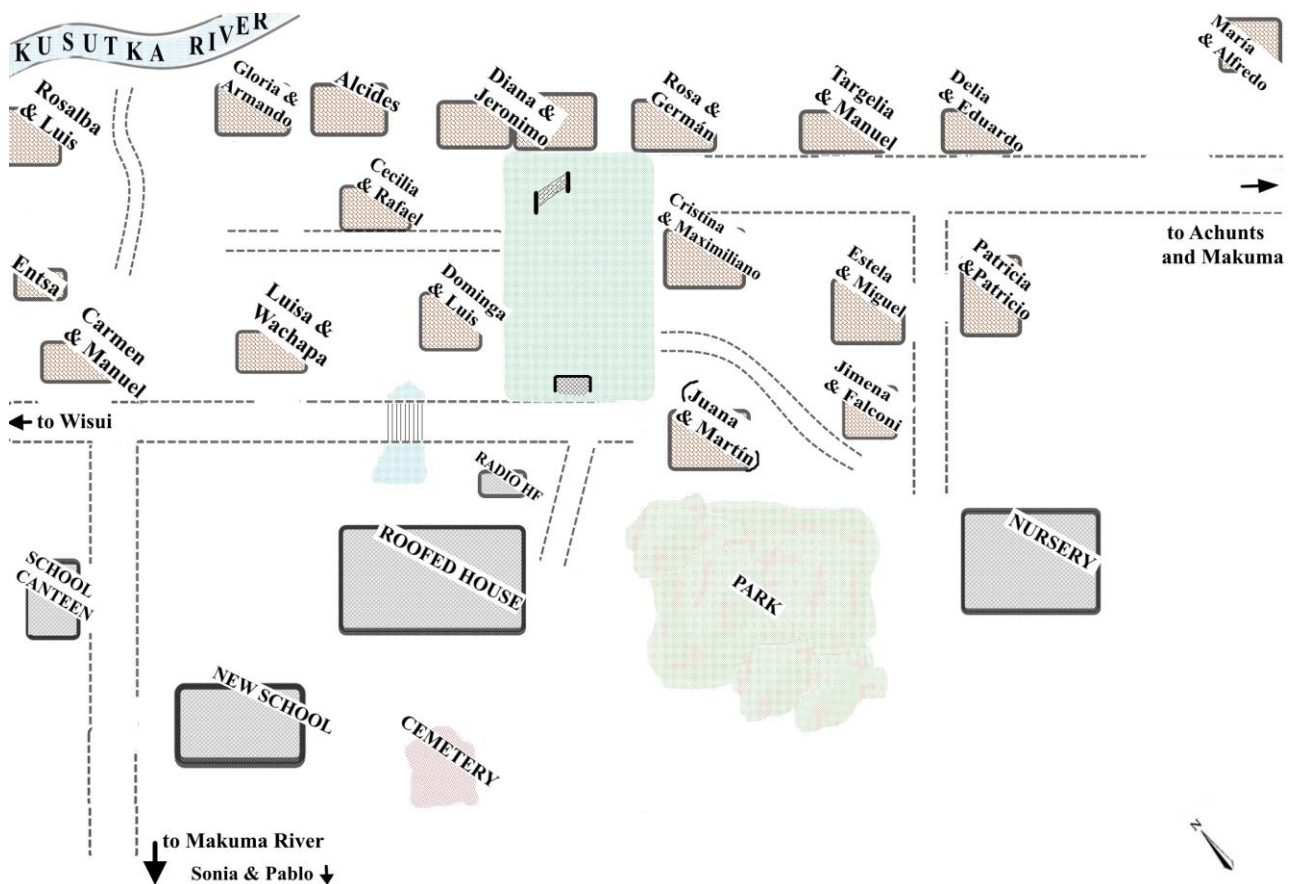
Figure 6 - Drawing of the centro *Kuamar*

At first sight, *centros* appear to compromise at least two key social factors that have characterised sociality in pre-*centro* arrangements. One is the autonomy of the domestic unit and, another, the fluid composition of the endogamous group and its proneness to fission, since individuals were free to move and thereby shift allegiances whenever conflicts erupted. Within each endogamous nexus, the houses were built at a distance from each other so as not to tip the balance of domestic autonomy. According to Descola, this feature responded to the social

---

[70] This house is modelled on the coliseum of mestizo towns. The 'roofed' aspect is probably emphasised because being the biggest building of a village, the corrugated roofing creates a wide shining surface one can see from afar.

[71] Additionally, in Makuma some *centros* have airstrips. Airstrips are becoming obsolete as roads are being built which make transportation more affordable for everyone. Most *centros* of the FICSH also have a chapel.

imperative whereby "to live happily, one must live somewhat concealed" (1981:637). In the previous chapter, I have shown that domestic autonomy is still very much a social imperative that villagers seek to uphold in a variety of informal ways. Previous ethnographers have predicted that permanent nucleation would inevitably result in fission, because the layout of *centros* greatly reduces the possibility of concealment, while the intensification of visits, daily interactions, and the sharing of resources can increase disputes over adultery, sorcery and territorial encroachment (Descola 1981:642-3).

Pre-existent sources of conflict and the new characteristics of *centros* can indeed lead to fission in some cases. Alfredo cited three reasons why he and his brothers decided to separate from Wisuí and form a new *centro*. The first was that they were weary of living among sorcerers (*uwishin*, Sp. *brujo/chamán*), who apparently abounded among the Katan kin group (Katan was the most influential great man in the area). The second reason was the perception that in Wisuí the women were too adulterous and if they had stayed 'their women too would have become the same'. But the reason that precipitated the split was directly connected to the new territorial situation of the *centro*. Since the sons of Katan had taken the initiative to create Wisuí, they were considered the official founders, a prerogative they used to monopolise public services and discourage other families from building houses in the urban centre. Angered by this, Alfredo and Torka initiated the procedures to create Kuamar.

This pattern of *centro* formation and fissioning has been common in Makuma: at first, different families gather in order to strengthen their claim to petition for *centro* status before the federation yet they soon find coexistence problematic, so a faction tries to form a new *centro*. However, this process of fission cannot go indefinitely since there simply is no more land where Shuar may relocate.

Building on an extensive review of settlement fissioning in different Amazonian societies, Santos-Granero argues that most community splits happen when disputes escalate, since internal factions cannot resort to formal mechanisms to resolve them peacefully as a result of the inherently weak and diffuse system of political authority in the region (Santos-Granero 2000:281; see also Bamberger 1979:133). Santos-Granero's characterisation of fission closely follows Rivière's analysis of "the lack of tolerance for disharmony" and "low threshold of tolerance for dissension" that characterises Native Amazonian societies (1984:74, 81; 2000:253). Brown makes a similar point with reference to the Jivaroan Awajun who now live in sedentary communities in Peru. The author argues how kinship ethics are not capable of holding together large groups of people. He argues that the residential mobility of several domestic units from one community to

another is "the normal Awajun process" when conflicts regarding sorcery accusations and adultery arise (Brown 1984b:103-104).

In the remainder of this chapter, I shall thus try to understand how Shuar reconcile the new condition of *centro* living with the processes that might push them towards fission. Can villagers generate formal mechanisms to resolve conflicts peacefully when fission is no longer an option? If so, what compromises do they have to make?

In addition to Kuamar, I substantiate part of the discussion with examples from a very different *centro*: Pampants, which belongs to the federation FICSH. Pampants is much bigger than Kuamar; the former has an area of 4,436.7 hectares for approximately 350 residents whereas Kuamar has only 980 hectares for a total of 127 residents, figures that include children. Pampants was created in 1978 by a family headed by a great man called Chiriap, who previously had lived in Tuutinentsa, another big *centro*. Hendricks (1986:68-72), who conducted fieldwork in 1983 in Pampants reports that Chiriap moved his family to the place now called Pampants to claim land formerly held by his father, Washikiat. Initially, Pampants had the appearance of an endogamous nexus as Chiriap was joined by his brother-in-law, and the latter's brother-in-law. Since they did not have enough people to petition for status as *centro*,[72] Chiriap invited other families to join him. Pampants is currently composed of eight different residential-kin groups in latent but intense conflict with one another. Each residential-kin group is a cluster of closely interrelated households, each including the house of a great man and his close relatives, such as his sons and sons-in-law. In Pampants, these kin groups form alliance groups through affinal ties, typically between two-brothers-in-law, although they do not operate as unified factions as there is significant conflict among their members. By comparison with Pampants, Kuamar is relatively more cohesive being comprised of only one big residential-kin group made of siblings (see figure 5).

The enemy within: secrecy in the *centro*

A *centro* can be a quiet place. Except in the late afternoons when some villagers gathered around the volleyball pitch, most life was confined to the intimacy of the home. Villagers spent most of their time in the thatch-roofed house and working alone or in groups of twos in their gardens and fields. As the last volleyball players left the central field, a penetrating darkness seemed to erase any trace of life from the narrow trails that connected human dwellings. Only on evenings with a full moon could one glimpse the soundless transit of late bathers and visitors,

---

[72] Only legally constituted *centros* could apply for cattle loans from the FICSH. For more details on the foundation of Pampants, see Hendricks (1986:17,68) and the PhD thesis of Grégory Deshoullière.

usually men, going in and out of each other's houses. This was of course what made life pleasant for my hosts. Everyone could live and work autonomously and members of the family tended to their own needs and desires, yet there was also the opportunity for social encounters that kept hosts and guests entertained until the end of the day. But this tranquillity and general sense of ease is somewhat deceptive. A *centro* is also a turbulent place, filled with disquieting events. There was a sense in which the very privacy and intimacy of everyday life fomented suspicion. As calm and affable as everyday encounters were, villagers continuously wondered about their neighbours' potentially malevolent intentions and what the latter did privately, which may prove harmful to them and their families.

If, after visiting the house of his classificatory brother Jerónimo, Manuel felt slightly ill, then Targelia and Carmen would brood over whether Jerónimo's wife had been angry or envious when she gave him manioc beer, or whether she held secret grudges. If Targelia woke up with a strange pain in her foot after dreaming that something hurt it in the river, then Martín, the shaman who lived far away from the urban centre, would be suspected of troubling the family again, and so it went.

Of all ills and troubles that neighbours are imagined capable of provoking, what villagers fear the most is sorcery. Sorcery can provoke a wide spectrum of uncontrollable and undesirable circumstances and conditions: misfortune, wastefulness, frenzied love, craziness, but most worryingly, illness and death. Almost everyone in Kuamar – including individuals in their teens – could recall a critical moment of illness when they had 'almost died', a phase of life when they 'became speechless', their 'consciousness slipped away' and their 'strength extinguished', as a result of sorcery.

As one of the most pervasive sources of ailment, sorcery is one of the primary causes of friction within *centros*. The most common pattern is the following. People fall ill, if the affection is serious, lasts too long, or resists domestic and medical cures, the victim and their family visit a shaman (usually from outside the *centro*), who in the course of healing reveals that the person causing the illness is a sorcerer living in the *centro* of the victim. Although the divination rarely reveals the name of the sorcerer, it points to the existence of 'hidden' (*uumak*) sorcerers. As a result, the victim and family group scrutinise their interactions in search of tensions that can lead towards the culprit. Throughout this period, the community is suffused with rumours, more or less veiled mutual accusations, and an intense climate of mutual suspicion.

Whether as spiritual aggressors or as diviners, shamans have been central figures in the manipulation of conflict, contributing to the reproduction of a fragmentary system of relations (Descola & Lory 1982:108). This is because the knowledge that people garner in therapeutic

séances has traditionally constituted a legitimate reason for punitive retaliatory sanctions, by taking part in blood revenge feuds against enemy sorcerers or by commissioning allied shamans to kill the enemy sorcerer through bewitchment (ibid.; Harner 1972:170-1).

Shamanism is shrouded in secrecy. Shamans harm or heal thanks to their ability to see invisible entities and establish relationships with powerful helper spirits. They act concealed from public view and their power defies ordinary control. Shamans acquire their powers beyond the local group in faraway locales as they undertake apprenticeship travels that are kept secret. To make matters worse, anyone can be a shaman without their relatives and neighbours knowing about it. Another Shuar expression for 'hidden' shamans is *nekachma tsukintnmaya*, which translates as 'unknown from the edge.' The idea of being 'from the edge' is indicative of how Shuar imagine that shamans operate: in darkness and secrecy, never using well-known paths, but always hidden and hiding from the comings and goings of everyday sociality. But what makes shamanism even more problematic in a *centro* is that it forces everyone else to act secretly. When people seek the help of shamans, they attend therapeutic rituals that take place only at night, in the privacy of the shaman's home, and they do so furtively, without telling anyone but the closest of kin. This is because the accusations revealed during the rituals typically point towards other people in the community, but also because it is understood that when someone visits a shaman, the person presumably also seeks revenge.

In Pampants the situation was particularly complex because different kin groups had a long history of mutual sorcery accusations and, as a result, the cause of sorcery was distributed around multiple 'hidden' sorcerers, as every family accused their detractors within the community.[73] In contrast, in Kuamar, most grave ailments and deaths were attributed to the same 'known' (*nekáamu*) shaman, Martín, the brother-in-law of the core of three male brothers around whom the community centred. Both known and hidden shamans are dangerous, of course, but the latter generate more anxiety, engaging in a sort of 'psychological war', as a villager of Pampants once described the uncertainty and suspicion villagers were experiencing. Consequently, villagers' daily interactions in Pampants appeared significantly more affected by the fear of unknown sorcerers than in Kuamar where villagers thought they knew their enemy. For instance, a few villagers were absent from one of the days of celebration of the three-daylong festival organised by the directive council in Pampants. I asked one of the organisers of the festival why they had not come. He told me, 'People are afraid. Even my father told me this morning, "Son,

---

[73] Given the limited space, in this thesis I cannot give a full account of the conflicts concerning sorcery accusations in Pampants. For a detailed analysis see the PhD thesis of Grégory Deshoulliere. Given the sensitivity of the conflicts here broadly related, the names of all persons in Pampants have been changed to protect identities.

it's better if I don't go to the *centro*, or I'm going to fall ill again.'" When sorcery strikes, villagers particularly fear attending parties and *mingas,* because the intense commensality of these occasions increases the risk of bewitchment through shamanic evil blows (*umpun*) on one's food and manioc beer.

Shamans have always been targets of suspicion even amongst their relatives who may fear that a closely related shaman may eventually turn against them (see also, Hendricks 1986:136; Brown 1988:104). But suspicion is reinforced in situations in which different kin groups live in permanent nucleation, as in Pampants. In *centros,* accusations, which would have otherwise targeted distant kin or enemies in other endogamous nexi, are inevitably absorbed within the community. Moreover, with no recourse to fission, the enemy remains within.

The challenge for villagers is how to deal with sorcery when feuding and fission are no longer viable options. Whenever my informants singled out a feature that made them different from their ancients, they pointed out that 'they no longer killed one another'. Some would say that Shuar stopped killing when they became Christians, while others would simply observe that Shuar were no longer as powerful, strict and fierce as their elders had been, and that it was pointless to kill one another when they needed to find ways to live together better. In the absence of feuding, there is a sense in which interpersonal aggression plays out mostly in the form of invisible warfare. With no recourse to direct revenge, interpersonal conflicts are considerably suffused with the threat or suspicion of sorcery. Such suspicions and threats provoke fear, anger and resentment. So when villagers say that shamanism is 'defeating them', they have in mind illness and death which they associate with assault sorcery, but also the ceaseless sequence of revenge attacks that sorcery activates and the undercurrent of suspicion that threatens to diminish everyone's participation in villages.

For my informants, secrecy and concealment were the core of the problem. Villagers feared those who lived and acted covertly, for anything harmful was always imagined to be committed in secrecy: from adultery, to thievery, to retaliatory acts. Many people with whom I talked seemed convinced that their fellows were particularly adept at secret evil doing. A man from Pampants for example described the vengeful character of Shuar people like this, 'Shuar are revengeful like no one else is. Say, a mestizo woman leaves her husband for another, and he'll let her go. A Shuar would never do that! Secretly, secretly, but he will chase them to death.' In Kuamar, villagers often talked about how, despite the cessation of feuding, Shuar continued to be tricky (Sp. *mañoso*). 'When you least expect it, very much concealed, a Shuar you thought friendly, strikes you!' was the phrase with which Alfredo half-laughingly described why 'one can't just trust Shuar people'.

The perception that others harm when 'in hiding' generates a strong anti-secrecy sentiment among villagers. In Kuamar, villagers emphasised that to live well means to be settled and proximate to one another. The very Shuar word villagers use to call the *centro*, 'irutkamu', connotes the importance of reuniting 'all together'. *Irutkamu*, as well as the word used for the association of *centros* 'matsatkamu', derive from the verbs (*irut-* and *matsa-*) which express a rich gamut of meanings concerning 'gathering and coming together'[74]: regrouping aggregating, reuniting, and sometimes settling.[75]

As Wachapa once put it, 'When someone knows how to live well, they settle for good, among their fellows, for they have nothing to hide, no evil thought or desire for problems.' By contrast, concealment and mobility connote unwillingness to live well in the *centro*. For instance, when villagers expressed suspicions about their fellows or evaluated them negatively, they typically used the image of 'walking/wandering' or 'hiding' as a shorthand for moral wickedness. Villagers stressed that it is better when *socios* all live in the urban centre and not isolated in their own *fincas*. Significantly, in Kuamar, only Martín (the shaman) and his wife lived in their own *finca*, despite owning a house in the urban centre and being closely related to most *socios*, thereby reinforcing amongst other members the view that Martín did not want to 'reunite with others' because he was a pernicious person. Similarly, in Pampants, Tsere, the only self-declared, practicing shaman in the *centro*, lived in his *finca*, about four hours away from the urban centre. Villagers who live in isolation or in the margins of the *centro* are continuously criticised for excluding themselves from interaction but also from the standards of proximity and visibility that the *centro* has made possible.

Proximity and visibility are also forms of fostering sociability in the urban centre. From time to time, before dusk, one could see a small wooden desk in front of Rafael's house. At the desk, there always sat someone with a whistle, ready to referee the informal volleyball matches that youths organised, as other villagers gradually joined in the conversations and games on their return from their baths in the river, or from work in the fields. Meanwhile, women brought out manioc beer, sisters deloused their siblings, and other children played around the football pitch. This was the place where most informal discussions beyond the home took place, as villagers who walked out of their dwellings at this time inevitably met others on the public trails. But by sparing themselves from the gaze of others, those living at the margins, or 'the independents', as

---

[74] According to Taylor, the verb also connotes the idea of gathering things belonging to the same class, e.g., a flock of birds (1983:19).

[75] See, e.g., Bolla & Ishtik (2000:174).

Hendricks (1986:161) calls them, become easy targets for suspicion about that which remains occult and defies explanation.

Becoming a target has important social consequences. Consider the case of Martín. Martín was a self-recognised shaman who had settled in the community as a senior man (when he was about 60), after marrying Nakaimp, the eldest sister of Alfredo, Rafael, and Manuel. Rumours had it that after killing his previous wife, Martín had been on the run sowing discord wherever he went. Martín originally came from Gualaquiza and had been living in the community for no more than five years in 2012, but he was already suspected of having caused the deaths of two members of the *centro*: Torka and a daughter of Rafael and Cecilia. Explaining Martín's motivation to kill Torka, villagers claimed that Martín resented the fact that Torka had sternly opposed his marriage with Nakaimp, claiming that he, as an external shaman, would bring trouble to the community. Torka had also opposed Martín's establishment in the community because he was a 'thrown-out' (Sp. *botado*). *Botado* is the expression villagers use to refer to people unable to settle for good because they are serially expelled from various *centros*, usually troublemakers who grow old without being able to live peacefully due to their restless wandering and their angry and vengeful character.

Eventually Martín was expelled from Kuamar. This happened a few weeks after I left Kuamar, when Alfredo died. His death took everyone by surprise, and enraged villagers who felt their suspicions about Martín's malevolence were vindicated. Suanua told me that the day after Alfredo's death, all the *socios* gathered in an assembly. There was talk of waiting until Martín returned from a trip to confront him directly, but apparently, villagers had been so irate that German (the president of Kuamar) decided that it was better if Martín did not come to the assembly. They wrote a document that stated that 'the *socios* of Kuamar expelled Martín from the community'. Martín never returned from his trip. A year later, when I asked Manuel why they had decided to expel Martín, he told me, 'everyone was becoming too angry.'

Anger is particularly dangerous. When villagers say of someone that she or he was 'angry' or became 'angry' (*kajen*), they imply that the person might very well harm others. Concerning the perceived risks of anger in a situation of nucleation, Hendrick reports a series of speeches by federation leaders who visited newly created *centros* in the interior during the 1980s to encourage their fellows to participate in the cattle cooperatives and work together in their communities. In their speeches, the leaders emphasised the importance of abandoning 'isolation' and 'violence', two features which to date villagers still intimately associate with one another. One of these speeches is particularly telling as the leader suggests that it is Shuar traditional individualism, their keeping themselves separated from one another, that leads them to anger:

"Truly we say that when he who goes about saying 'I am apart'

Then we begin to get angry" (In Hendricks 1988:234).

As Targelia explained, someone angry is someone thoughtless because the person no longer 'listens or understands'. Listening and understanding are cognitive functions that for Shuar always come together. In his ethnography of Shuar verbal communication, Juncosa notes that anger connotes "a stubborn interruption of the flow of communication" (2005:55). As we shall see, it is by widening the flow of communication that villagers seek to fight suspicion, vengefulness and anger.

The 'clear speech' of *socios*: tools of harmony in the making

If living in the urban centre is thought to enhance proximity and visibility, this is even more the case for roofed-house where villagers gather to hold assemblies. The roofed-house is a rectangle-shaped building. Inside the hall, there are long wooden benches on the internal perimeter for villagers to seat. When someone stands up to speak, as Shuar do, everyone can see the speaker and the speaker can see everyone. As we will see in Chapter 6, the roofed-house facilitates a particularly intense form of sociality centred on the consumption of manioc beer and the organisation of formal acts of hospitality during the festival of the *centro*. As the reader will remember, my informants included '*chicha*' (manioc beer) in the three subjects of *shuarologia*. This inclusion is somewhat surprising since villagers strongly value drinking manioc beer with one another and consider this act a sign that they are capable of sharing with one another without suspicion. The problem, however, is drunkenness, which inevitably brings trouble. 'The assembly is not to get drunk with manioc beer' (Sp. *la asamblea no es para chichar*[76])', is what the people of Kuamar say, stressing the importance of the assembly as a forum for sober discussion.

Assemblies are village meetings in which *socios* gather to discuss all sorts of 'collective' issues, from economic projects, to elections, to the necessary preparations for a festival (see Chapters 5 and 6). But perhaps the most urgent issue villagers discuss is the surge of conflict that affects everyone in the community, most commonly, sorcery. If sorcery is considered so serious as to push villagers to expel someone from the community, it is because by provoking illness and death[77] sorcery can trigger a sequence of revenge acts that inevitably lead to fission or total lack of cooperation. Such outcomes inevitably compromise villagers' ability to access the key resources available to them through a *centro*: land, wealth, and education. Sorcery is also serious

---

[76] *Chicha* is transformed into a verb, *chichar* to indicate the act of drinking manioc beer in excess.
[77] Illness and death are not conceived of as distinct states but rather as part of the same process of invasion that produces unwanted psychic and somatic transformations in the victim (see Taylor 1996:203). The most dangerous and depressing pathological conditions are labelled with the same term used for 'dying' (*ja-ka*) (Warren 1994:12).

because by crippling people's ability to work and thrive, it puts at risk the core of domestic self-sufficiency and autonomy that Shuar consider essential to live well, as I showed in the previous chapter. The strong positive valuation of domestic autonomy in fact gives us a good indication of where villagers draw the line between conflicts that require a collective response and those that do not. As we saw in the previous chapter with the example of the fight between Jerónimo and Diana, when a conflict is restricted to the members of a domestic unit, villagers make no attempt at communal solutions, unless the issue spills over into neighbouring households or members of the household voluntarily reach out to the authorities of the *centro*. Even when this happens, however, the authorities intervene reluctantly and often simply delegate the matter to close relatives of the plaintiff (e.g. parents-in-law, siblings), rather than making the conflict an issue for collective discussion.

I now turn to examine how villagers manage issues collectively through sober discussion.

> If we say that we want to live well, we all have to contribute (...). We have to speak clearly in the assembly to fix these problems. If we do it privately [using 'particulars'], every family will pick its own shaman, and we'll be in the worst conditions. I'm telling you clearly [*paan tajai*].

This is how the secretary of Pampants spoke to all the villagers assembled. With his address, he hoped to persuade other villagers to make a contribution of money so that the community could raise US$300. The money would allow *socios* to summon a group of shamans from the frontier to heal all the people who had fallen victim to sorcery in the community and to conduct a public inspection of suspects to identify the 'hidden' sorcerer. The importance of doing this together, as villagers emphasised repeatedly in the meeting, was to put a definitive end to sorcery for if each family sought a private solution (did it 'particularly', as villagers say), then, the wave of individual revenge acts would continue indefinitely until 'the *centro* would die'. As a villager put it, individual divinations were harmful because when shamans privately tell specific victims and their families that 'the evil is being done here [in Pampants], they make us fight.' If the evil was within the community, it was better for everyone to find out who the culprit was at the same time.

'These are no times of fighting anymore. These are not times of killing anymore (...). There is no law of killing anymore; we just need to clear our doubts', stated the president of the *centro*. His words echo the insistent demand made by most of the villagers during assemblies, that people must speak clearly, clear away doubts and reveal what is hidden, rather than kill and fight one another.

In assemblies, Shuar proffer 'clear words/speech' – *paan chicham*. Clear speech is routinely opposed to the lies and false accusations (*tsanuma*) that circulate in the form of gossip

or 'bad talk'. 'Bad talk' is not only bad because it spreads falsehood, but also because it is 'angry'. It is usually through bad speech that villagers recognise when others are angry, which, as mentioned above, is an indication that they may harbour evil plans or are prepared for violence, or, simply, that they intend no good in the community. For example, Manuel and Carmen told me that Germán had 'only recently learned to live well.' Before, they added, 'he only followed his father, from *centro* to *centro*, aimlessly.' His father was described as one of those angry men who had been serially thrown-out from various *centros*. The reason for this was 'his tongue': 'he criticised others, he spoke with anger'. 'Someone like that', my hosts insisted, 'does not live well and does not allow others to live well.' If Shuar establish an intimate relationship between how a person speaks and how s/he lives, this is not only because of the pressure they currently face to settle permanently and avoid conflict in *centros*, as the example of Germán's father might suggest. The analysis of several types of linguistic evidence – from mythology to meta-communicative speech acts to political oratory – leads Hendricks (1993b) to propose that Shuar have an implicit theory about language and speech whereby correct speech (clear speech) 'creates harmony and order' whereas 'speaking incorrectly' (gossip, declarations of anger), is equivalent to behaving badly, which leads to disharmony and disorder. If bad talk produces disharmony, it is also because, like shamanism, it spreads in a concealed manner. Consider for example what Elsa, a villager from Achunts, said once when all parents and schoolteachers gathered in the roofed-house of Achunts to discuss some rumours that had spread about the teachers:

> This sort of problem happens because we only listen to gossip these days. But I shouldn't speak ill about others in a concealed manner (*uúka*). Why would I do that? The teachers will fear me afterwards.

Indeed, bad talk provokes fear. As noted, when something bad happens villagers routinely search for evidence of fellow villagers' envy and anger to substantiate their fears of having been bewitched. In other words, 'bad talk' contributes to reproducing the sort of fear of misfortune caused by sorcery that villagers find detrimental to everyday interactions.

To illuminate the sort of speech villagers oppose to gossip, I find it useful to introduce here Warner's characterisation of the distinction between public discourse and gossip. Warner suggests that public speech implies non-identification with the object of address, the reason why impersonality and strangerhood are key characteristics of public speech: it is speech at once addressed to us and to strangers. By contrast, while gossip is a form of public discourse, it is never a relation among strangers. Rather,

> You gossip about particular people and to particular people. What you can get away with saying depends very much on with whom you are talking and what your status is in that person's eyes. Speak ill of someone when you are not

thought to have earned the privilege and you will be taken as slandering rather than gossiping (2002:58-59).

Gossip is a ubiquitous aspect of daily interaction within households or among the small groups that gather in the urban centre. But villagers must indeed tread a fine line between gossiping and slandering to avoid giving others reason to believe they are intent on harming. Warner's characterisation is useful in another respect, for it is precisely the talking "about particular people and to particular people" which villagers seek to transcend in assemblies. However, this is not because the public speech of Shuar assemblies presupposes a relationship among strangers, as in the Western 'publics' Warner has in mind, rather, precisely because in the *centro*, villagers are never relating or speaking to strangers. In assemblies, villagers continue to address close and more distant kin, amiable and disagreeable neighbours, friends and foes, but importantly they transcend them together. They transcend the particular by addressing the collective.

During the assemblies, villagers endeavour to create a different register of communication that enables them to contextualise problems at a more general level. They seek to construct a discursive framework whereby acts can be evaluated in relation to how they affect the community as a whole. While there is no such a thing as 'impersonality' in Shuar assemblies, villagers try to gradually depersonalise public speech, by promoting forms of public knowledge and public decisions that express collective rather than personal points of views. To do this, villagers rely on two instruments: 'clear speech' and the role of *socio*, a general membership role through which specific individuals can temporarily situate themselves vis-à-vis others not as particular persons but as members of the community. I call these two instruments 'tools of harmony' because through them villagers seek to transform a cause of disharmony and conflict into a motive of harmony and unity.

Let us return to the assembly of Pampants to see these instruments at work. After the motion to summon an external group of shamans to conduct a public inspection of suspects was widely supported, villagers began to single out potential suspects.[78] The first to make a public accusation was a villager who defended himself against 'bad talk' by revealing his own suspicions about someone else. A few minutes later, several accusations had been launched which targeted

---

[78] Normally a shaman would be able to determine directly the cause of sorcery in the process of healing a patient. The reason why villagers decided they needed a short list of suspects is not entirely clear to me, but my suspicion is that it allowed villagers to have more control over the overall accusation process bypassing the risk of collusion between a shaman and a patient and his/her family. It is also possible that villagers were modelling the inspection on the format of the legal trial. For the context of creation of this brigade of shamans called "CUWISH" – a remarkable innovation in the Jivaroan shamanistic field, see Deshoullière (2016b), and Grégory Deshoulliere's PhD thesis (in progress).

suspects from every residential-kin group of the community. The discussion flowed rather smoothly and calmly despite the contentiousness of the subject. Still, at this point, it was far from clear that villagers would be able to reach consensus about the list of suspects.

After a while, the discussion changed course. Someone revealed that Luis, a renowned shaman from the frontier, had been seen visiting the family of the president, called Tukup, the day before the assembly. Luis happened to be Tukup's brother-in-law. [79] Luis was the main shaman that other members of the community had been thinking of inviting to conduct the public inspection to identify the sorcerer of the *centro*. The unannounced visit of Luis angered many villagers who felt the president and his family had taken advantage of their personal connection with the shaman to benefit from his services at the expense of the community. What made this episode particularly problematic was that Tukup's brother, a man called Nawech, was one of the individuals singled out as suspects by other *socios*. Some villagers suggested that Luis had probably already revealed the name of the culprit and the president could be occulting this useful piece of information from the community in order to defend his brother. As brother of a potential sorcerer and president of the community, Tukup found himself in a sort of double bind. Put under pressure to reveal details about the visit, the president stood up and spoke thus:

> Already yesterday, rumours came my way that Luis paid my family a secret visit. This is false. Luis did come, I do not hide that, but he did not come in hiding, he came openly. Yesterday, I myself told my brother Nawech, "Even if the people [Sp. *pueblo*] aren't here, let Luis inspect you." And I told my brother-in-law Luis, "See him for me, and tell me what it is." [And upon inspecting him, Luis told me,] "It's true what it's said, he has a wrong part, but he's not a sorcerer." I cannot say more because I am no shaman, but Luis told me he would come back to run an inspection at the request of the community. He also told me that there are other shamans here. I tell you openly. I do not hide anything. I'm speaking to you as president of the community so don't say that the president is dissimulating to protect his brother, his family. I'm a *socio* of this *centro* and this is why I want to find a solution for everyone. To heal our community. I speak clearly. I have nothing to hide. [The president then enumerated all the names of the suspects that had been previously proposed by other villagers, including his own brother.]

In assemblies, villagers are able to openly express grievances and hold others accountable without giving in to 'bad talk'. They are also able to defend themselves from 'bad talk' by persuading others of their good conduct. In both cases 'clear speech' is fundamental. Clear speech enables speakers to disapprove of a certain way of behaving that creates trouble, avoiding angry accusations or harmful language. For instance, before pointing out anything sensitive,

---

[79] The shaman was the brother of the president's brother-in-law.

villagers emphasise that they mean no ill, that they care about the welfare of the community, and insistently reiterate that they are speaking clearly, without hiding anything. Through clear speech, villagers thus invest public discourse with a form of declarative good will. Emphasising clarity, their good intentions, and their desire to find a solution that suits everyone, villagers attempt to allay fears about what goes unannounced, the rumours they have heard, and what they did privately. Moreover, by bringing to light specific pieces of information – normally considered 'secret' or 'bad talk' – villagers put them before everyone for examination and further discussion, in such a way that gossip is gradually transformed into public knowledge.

For instance, the president relayed the words of the shaman, giving everyone a snapshot of what had been said in the private visit, discursively opening it to public view. At the end of his speech, the president also relayed the opinions of others by enumerating all the names of potential suspects. He suggested that perhaps not everyone mentioned was a shaman, but simply possessed 'a wrong part', as Luis had said of his own brother. While helping to soothe other suspects and their families, the president also bowed to every single opinion expressed. Importantly, when the president mentioned the suspects, he did not make explicit who had accused whom. Gradually, as others kept repeating the names of suspects and referring to the latter as 'the general suspects', the president's statement gained a sort of collective status. The names of suspects were eventually written down in a document called 'public resolution'. The resolution contained no record of who had said what; it simply bore a collective signature, 'assembly of *socios* of Pampants'. This was the resolution villagers later used to call the group of shamans to carry out the inspection.

The construction of consensus through a depersonalisation of discourse has been shown to be particularly important when villagers try to counteract factionalism in other parts of Amazonia. For instance, Laura Graham (1993) shows that in men's council meetings, the Brazilian Xavante engage in forms of decision-making that place emphasis upon collaborative discourse and depersonalised accountability. Among both the Xavante and Shuar, consensus emerges gradually as different speakers restate the positions of others while gradually dissociating utterances from the individuals who pronounce them. However, the process of depersonalisation seems lengthier and more effortful for Shuar. This is because, unlike the Xavante, in assemblies Shuar do not start from the premise that knowledge is a "collective rather than individual production" (ibid.:718). Graham argues that the Xavante make a point that they never stand for themselves as they always speak as representatives of groups (ibid.:725). By contrast, Shuar do not stand for anyone but themselves, as it would be presumptuous and offensive for them to speak on behalf of anyone else, even their closest of kin. So for villagers to be able to dissociate

knowledge from individual speakers to create a public narrative, they must first express their interest in adhering to some form of general framework. They are able to do this not by 'representing' the opinions of others – as do the Xavante – but by fashioning a new role that enables them to position themselves as members of the *centro*, concerned about the welfare of the community.

I would like to suggest that the reason villagers are at pains to emphasise that they must act together, not as 'particulars', and the reason they insistently assert that they speak as '*socios*', is that doing so allows them to attach 'clear speech' to a general principle, the welfare of the community. In fact, although 'clear speech' has played a longstanding role in the way Shuar have managed conflict, it had always previously reproduced a fragmentary group dynamic. According to Mader, the dynamics of social prestige traditionally depended on the ability of individuals to fend off accusations, "bad talk", by using their ability to speak clearly to convince a sufficiently large group of people to share and defend their position in a particular conflict (1994:4). However, Mader adds, 'clear speech' cannot establish universal validity of moral principles since "what is considered as morally deviant behaviour within the alliance groups, can be viewed as correct or at least tolerable towards enemies" (ibid.). The author further stresses that this is particularly the case when clear speech is used to defend the legitimacy or illegitimacy of shamanic action.

However, when villagers 'speak clearly' as *socios*, they reiterate that they have in mind the welfare of the community as a whole and are concerned to find solutions which prevent fission. What they are attempting to create is not only a form of consensus that allows them to stand together in moments of crisis but also the possibility of establishing moral principles that enable them to evaluate an action in general. In the case of Pampants, individual villagers reassured others that they were willing to refrain from an action that would be beneficial to them – e.g. visiting a shaman to inquire about the culprit – in order to avoid aggravating the situation for the community. Taking on the role of *socios*, they repeatedly stressed that the best and most desirable option for all was to coordinate their actions and seek a common solution. At the same time, villagers promoted the view that seeking individual revenge was generally inappropriate: as they kept repeating to one another during the assembly, 'these are no longer times of killing'.

Hendricks (1986:161-2) reports that during the 1980s those Shuar individuals who were less acquainted with the role of federation authorities than elected leaders, interpreted the latter's occasional reprimands and lectures as explicit threats of violence or bewitchment since, as we have seen, 'bad talk' and angry confrontations could be taken as personal attacks. Much seems to have changed since. In the cases I have observed, public speech in the *centro* is actually

mobilised as a way of depersonalising conflict, precisely to avoid the risks implied by 'bad talk'. In the assembly, by emphasising their positions or roles as *socios*, villagers avoid professing personal enmities and instead relate to one another as though they were considering issues of common knowledge amenable to technical resolution. This is because if personal attacks and accusations are framed in terms that foreground specific positions and kin loyalties/enmities, the village could easily divide into factions. Since one accusation is followed by another, customarily conflicts would not be resolved but would either escalate into a cycle of revenge or diffuse through temporary dispersal. Assemblies are geared towards establishing a common framework that guarantees the making of collective decisions suitable to the new conditions of the *centro*. To be sure, this does not mean villagers do not discuss kinship in public forums. On the contrary, when tackling pre-existent conflicts such as sorcery, they always do; and, even when dealing with new arenas of conflict, kinship is always overtly or covertly part of the picture, as will be seen in the next section. However, villagers do seem to have found a way of tackling these issues by appealing to a framework that at least rhetorically de-emphasises kinship to allow for the possibility of a technical resolution.

In an insightful comparison of individual and legal responsibility in moral disputes, Gluckman (2014[1972]) argues that secular consultants differ from magical oracles and witch-detectives in that they try to distract attention from individual responsibility to focus on external or structural problems. The advantage of the secular approach is perceived to lie in the possibility of a technical resolution. By proposing to summon external shamans and approaching the issue of sorcery collectively, thereby attempting to de-emphasise personal interests during the assembly, the villagers of Pampants did appear to conceive of the possibility of treating conflict as an issue amenable to technical resolution with external consultants at the service of communal relations rather than as triggers of interpersonal conflict. I do not have space here to analyse the different ways in which the secular-technical and magical-moral overlap or not with the way Shuar villagers are currently dealing with sorcery. However, I take from Gluckman the suggestion that an emphasis on general issues and the structural implications of social phenomena (e.g. the analysis of the implications of individual revenge acts in Pampants) helpfully distracts attention from pre-existent interpersonal dilemmas. To my informants, the combination of public speech and the general framework of the *socio* has somehow opened the way for collective technical resolutions while foregrounding their capacity to abstain from secretive reprisals.

I have no way to ascertain whether villagers in Pampants indeed abstained from visiting private shamans as they waited for the public inspection. A villager in Pampants mentioned that no one would attempt to defy the decision of the assembly because, if they were caught, they

would likely find themselves among the accused, as they would be confirming that they were seeking revenge. There is also a sense in which, once villagers participate in creating a public resolution, they do not want to be perceived as backtracking on their own statements as they would be undermining their ability to persuade others in the future. Furthermore, the views villagers voice in assemblies are not merely attempts at creating harmony at the expense of truthfulness. Many of the preoccupations I have heard villagers voice in assemblies, I have also heard them say in more private contexts; in both cases they seemed to be expressing genuine and heartfelt concerns and desires.

Let me note other potential limits of the public approach to conflict. Villagers only assume the role of *socios* in moments in which they confront strong tensions that involve several kin groups in the community and when there is a high risk of fission. I only saw this happen in highly public and relatively formal situations in which almost everyone in the village came together, such as, for example in assemblies and *centro* festivals (Ch.6). At home, in the urban centre, or when two or more villagers encounter one another on the trails or in the city, the role of *socio* is almost never invoked. In such situations, people always approached conversations foregrounding personal and relational identities, even when people discussed the importance of holding the community together. Moreover, villagers did not call assemblies or attempt to appeal to their position as *socios* to intervene in domestic debacles. In Pampants, for instance, several people recalled that a member of the Washikiat family had murdered his own daughter a few years back, but while they privately condemned the episode, it was clear from the way they evoked it that they did not consider that a collective approach would have been appropriate in that case.

More importantly, not everyone's interests are being defended when villagers embrace the welfare of the community. Clearly, the accused are losing out from the collective battle to hold together the community. Some of them, like Martín in Kuamar, were never invited to have a say for fear of violence. In situations in which consensus can be easily reached because villagers oppose the same person, as in Kuamar, an assembly can easily make an authoritarian use of 'public resolutions'. The accused's next of kin are also being affected. Suanua mentioned that Nakaimp – Martín's wife – sobbed throughout the whole assembly, as the decision meant that she would no longer be able to live with her husband in the community.

In some cases, however, close relatives also play a key role in facilitating consensus by siding with the community. Take Tuntiak, the son of the self-declared shaman, Tsere, who, needless to say, was one of those suspected of sorcery. When his turn came to speak, Tuntiak said, 'I'm not interested in hiding. I say this in front of all the *socios* here, if there's evil, if people are dying, then we need to do the inspection. Even if I have to drag my father to the *centro*, then

I will bring him [to be inspected].' The image of dragging his father to the *centro* was particularly effective as Tsere was one of the 'independents' who lived far from the urban centre. Tuntiak's parents were not in the assembly that day, so it is hard to know if he would have said the same had this been the case, although Tuntiak did occasionally express his dislike for his father's occupation in his presence.

Most of the named suspects in Pampants vigorously defended themselves in the assembly. However, this was to no avail, because their inclusion in the final list allowed for a balanced approach whereby every residential-kin group in the community could exert pressure on all the others. It is worth recalling the words with which one of the suspects, Nawech, addressed the assembly, as his words reveal that the suspects also affirm the value of living well with others in the community: 'Why would I want to harm you? I am good, I like to play, I like to play [football] and I'm joyful in the *centro*.' Nawech was one of the main accused in the public inspection. I was no longer present in Pampants to see the long-term effect that the accusation had on him, but another villager described him to me like this, 'Afterwards, he became pale, sick, passive. He didn't come to the parties, and he spent all the time hidden in his *finca*.' Eventually Nawech, his wife and children left Pampants.[80] Like other people who have found themselves in such situations, they left for settler towns, as they were unlikely to find land or be approved for membership in other *centros*.

A similar pattern is found in other places in Amazonia, with individuals leaving the community in anger or shame after losing face from confrontations after being chastised by others (Santos-Granero 2000:283). So, although Shuar villagers are able to avoid the fission of the *centro*, they have not been able to prevent individual members (and their nuclear families) occasionally leaving the community. While publicly confronting 'bad talk' and sorcery allows villagers to overcome crises and mostly keep the community together avoiding violence, this comes at the risk of creating the very 'independents' and 'aimless wanderers and thrown-outs' from whom they seek protection, as they force 'potential sorcerers' to live in continuous marginality and movement.

The suggestion that some individuals are forced into marginality leads me to consider whether 'the tools of harmony' villagers have created are themselves conducive to coercion. After the public inspection was carried out in Pampants, amidst much dissension, some villagers

---

[80] Brown reports a series of similar conflicts related to sorcery in nucleated settlements among the Jivaroan Awajun in which after airing accusations in the assembly, an entire kin group relocates to another community as the assembly ends in dissension (1984:103-104). The Awajun share a similar oratorical tradition with Shuar, so only two features can be adduced to account for the different outcomes: the feasibility of relocation and the absence of anything comparable to the role of *socio* among the Awajun.

persuaded others that it would be wrong to punish the accused because they were 'sons of the community', so they asked the shamans to withdraw the culprits' evil powers. Villagers also forewent an official expulsion, eventually resorting instead to ostracism, a common sanction against harmful sorcerers in Amazonia (Dole 1959; Wilbert 2004).[81] Alongside ridicule and gossip, ostracism is typically associated with egalitarian rather than coercive political systems (Middleton & Cohen 1967). But if there really is no coercion, one wonders if and how the pursuit of harmony in nucleated communities inevitably engenders some form of marginality. I now move on to discuss how such issues have been analysed by previous ethnographers and the question of authority in nucleated settlements more specifically.

Communities as embryonic states or indigenous institutions in the making?

Scholars working in Peruvian Amazonia have highlighted the prominence that collective identities have come to assume among indigenous peoples who now live in nucleated villages. For instance, Rosengren notes that among the Matsigenka, *comunidades nativas* (native communities) "have fomented the development of a group consciousness that did not exist earlier, when settlement groups consisted of a number of loosely related and dispersed households (...)" (2003:230). He argues that a prime aspect of this development is the new organisational structure of the community with its mechanisms of formal governance, "that demands, expects, and creates opportunities for coordinated action" (ibid.). Similarly, Killick argues that the acquisition of land titles that connect specific groups with definite and prescribed areas that indigenous people must monitor has motivated the Ashéninka to create community. That is, land titles have given the Ashéninka "impetus for frequent communal cooperation", where formerly there were only autonomous families who strongly valued separation and concealment (2008:41).

A key question then is how the organisational structure of nucleated settlements (native communities or *centros*) – with their structure of governance and their clearly demarcated boundaries – can become motivating and obligating to people little accustomed to such institutions. One answer may be that individuals instrumentally submit to the expectations and rulings of the *centro* in order to benefit from access to key resources such as land, education and external wealth. Nevertheless, this does not entirely help us understand why individuals would abide by or take seriously the rules and expectations that regulate access to these resources in the

---

[81] In the pre-*centro* system, the accumulation of lethal power by shamans (or even great men) was at times perceived as a "public danger" that needed to be suppressed (Descola & Lory 1982:91; Colajanni 1984:230), and among the Awajun (2009:81). It must also be noted that even before the *centro* model had taken root in the interior, great men could expel people from the land (see Hendricks 1988:231).

first place, nor does it help us explain their genuine enthusiasm for the *centro* as a way of life. So, what gives such organisations their normative and morally motivating value?

A proposal that has been outlined by previous ethnographers is that native communities work because villagers capture and mobilise the authority of the state. Rubenstein for example suggests that by becoming miniature replicas of the state, native federations and their recognised organs of coercion become legitimate users of its legal force, while the state pacifies them in the process (2001, 2012). By extension, the state grants the *centro* legal authority through its local representatives, the president of the *centro*, and through the official documents that bring it into existence: the map of the community, the official title to land, and the community charter, all of which are obtained through membership to the Federation. While Rubenstein cogently explains how federation leaders can come to have legitimacy in specific moments by claiming to represent a collectivity, as noted in Chapter 2, he does not give examples of situations in which the federation – and by extension the *centros* – become organs of coercion as Shuar manage internal issues. As I shall show below, elected authorities in *centros* now do wield coercive powers. Furthermore, their legitimacy within the community does not derive from the state, and community charters play very little role in the way communal decisions are made.

In a somewhat similar line of argumentation, Walker maintains that each native community "effectively becomes a microcosm of the state: a centralised political organisation and coercive order, punishing in its own name" (2015:55). This coercive order takes root via the introduction of external figures of authority and the development of group-wide authority. So, while an elected representative of the state within the community begins to wield coercive power to adjudicate disputes, the members of the community also make decisions to punish as a group through a process of consensus in communal meetings (ibid.:53). These developments lead Walker to argue that alongside the monopolisation of force by the community, among the Urarina the law is constructing "a new model of the person as a legal subject or citizen" whereby "law, morality, and custom come to be seen as external to people and regulating their behaviour" (ibid.:54-55).

Walker's argument is insightful, as it could explain how the idea of communal organisation can become both normative, that is, to some extent binding, and motivating for people. However, I would hesitate to extend it to explain how villagers construct communal authority in the Shuar *centros* of the interior. This is because the model of community Shuar are constructing is not coercive in the same sense; that is, it does not entail a monopolisation of violence by the group via capture of state law. Although villagers do seek to issue public judgements which are similar to what Walker describes as "public vindication(s) of collective

values" (2015:53), there is very little attempt at punishing others. I certainly never witnessed anything resembling the imprisonment punishments that ethnographers have reported from the Peruvian Amazonia (Brown 1984b:104,116-119; Walker 2015:53). Moreover, I heard many villagers sternly criticise the few people who occasionally resorted to state-mandated third-party adjudicators (such as lieutenant governors) to solve domestic issues. In their view, these people were admitting to being too weak of mind to resolve conflicts through 'clear speech' among themselves.

A different suggestion comes from Hendricks, who worked among Shuar of the interior in the mid-1980s. According to Hendricks, the establishment of *centros* in and of themselves cannot explain why Shuar accepted the federation's ideology. Hendricks's analysis differs from Rubenstein's in that she does not focus on how the federation mimics the state's coercive power, but, rather, on how federations leaders creatively develop an ideology of "unity, dependency, and subordination" (1988:218). Hendricks points out that the main challenge for the new generations of Shuar living in the *centros* of the interior is to replace outdated traditional values with a new moral order that is accepted by the group (1986:64). Her research identifies some of the new coordinates of this new moral order in the speech styles of federation officials. Through their speeches, official leaders appropriate pre-federation idioms in order to provide an image of tradition, while introducing new values such as unity, collective work and obedience to the system of authority of the federation (1988). Hendricks's suggestion is that the linchpin between the pre-federation and federation ideological systems is Shuar's longstanding emphasis on the acquisition of external knowledge and power. So, aware that "the power of the whites allows them to dominate weaker peoples, Shuar believe that they must acquire the appropriate knowledge of white spheres of power" – namely, literacy – in order to defend themselves from white domination. Hence, they are willing to imitate a hierarchical political order in the form of the federation (1988:236). While Hendricks's emphasis on ideological reinvention, or the creation of a new moral order is well-taken, her analysis does not account for the extent to which villagers use the structure of the *centro* to deal with internal issues in which defending themselves from external domination plays no part.

The legitimacy of federation leaders has in great part derived from their ability to defend Shuar territory against land encroachment. However, now that land titles have been obtained, it is difficult to explain everything that villagers do in *centros* with reference to the federation, especially since villagers do not refer or resort to it as a legitimating system. Another key problem I see with Hendricks's argument is that it takes the federation as a given, that is, as an established institution in the semantic sense, *à la* J. Searle (2005) with a clearly defined set of values and a

monopoly on correct interpretation. There are reasons to presume, however, that federation officials were not working with a stable system of interpretations. As I have outlined in Chapter 2, the federations were forged as a result of longstanding interactions with a multiplicity of actors: missionaries of different denominations, settlers, state functionaries, indigenous movements, NGOs, etc.

Similarly, *centros* are not established institutions. Villagers continuously generate ad hoc rules and procedures to deal with issues for which there is no clear or pre-established route of action and, importantly, for which neither the federation nor civil law provides legislation. So, perhaps the question of how Amazonian peoples so little accustomed to the organisational structure of nucleated settlements, nevertheless find these structures compelling must be reframed. Shuar people are not adapting to new legislation or to ready-made institutions. Rather, they are creating these institutions. If the practice of being a *socio* plays a chief role in the way villagers construct consensus and communal authority, the normative framework they create – that is the rules and procedures they generate in the process – has a certain improvised or in-the-process-of-making quality, which has little of the stability or sacredness of the 'law' or of an established institutional order.

I would thus like to propose that we view the communal instruments of decision-making that Shuar generate as a purposive and strategic accomplishment. That is, rather than seeing them as a substantive organised way of life forged through state law or through the federation, we might see them as a "method of moral persuasion and justification" that villagers continuously produce (Murphy 1990:32), for example, through the 'tools of harmony' I outlined above. So, a first answer to the question of why villagers find the framework of the *centro* both normative and motivating may lie in the fact that they are themselves engaged in producing it, and rather creatively so. Below, I provide an example of how villagers are able to apply these tools to provide technical solutions to new problems engendered by the very structure of the *centro*. Subsequently, I examine how Shuar construe the authority of elected leaders within the *centros*, in order to shed light on what could be considered a Shuar discourse on the law.

Membership rules in the making: an illustration

Although from a legal perspective land is collectively owned, within the *centro*, individuals are considered *de facto* owners of the land. Nucleation has entailed a shift from "short-term appropriation of resources, justified by labour, to an exclusive and transmissible

appropriation of parcelled land" (Descola 1982:316).[82] While this way of organising property is ultimately grounded on juridical principles foreign to Shuar traditional organisation (Ch.2), these are not validated by an external apparatus that enforces their application in *centros*.

Within the *centro*, land is divided into parcels for every registered nuclear family. Internally, there may be transfers, swaps, or sales of domestically owned plots and fields, but these must be authorised by the assembly of *socios*. The allocation of plots within the urban centre is not carried out by parents but by the directive council of the community since there is still unoccupied land within the *centro* awaiting allocation to future *socios*. Any child over 12 can request a plot in the urban centre to build a new house or for his/her parents to use as a family garden until s/he marries. It is more or less at this age that a child is considered a *socio*: that is, the child is added to the register of the *centro* and is expected to participate in communal *mingas* and assemblies.

This means that villagers distinguish between residents and *socios*: the latter only include the official members registered in the list of the *centro*, whereas the former include all villagers who are yet to become *socios*, that is, unmarried children/youths (*natsa*) who have grown up in the village and have rights to parental land. When an adult person from a different *centro* wishes to gain membership, the matter is decided collectively: no household can determine this unilaterally. As might be expected, there are ambiguous cases because someone may have parental/domestic rights to land but questionable entitlement to political membership of the *centro*. The example below illustrates the extent to which villagers endeavour to make formal membership of the *centro* a communal matter even in cases in which individual's access to parental land would be unproblematic. It also shows how villagers mobilise the status of *socio* to deal with new arenas of conflict, and how these new conflicts may interweave with more traditional areas of conflict.

Tuntiak was born and raised in Pampants where his father, Tsere, had previously settled with his wife in search of land and game. As a young man, Tuntiak returned to live with his mother's kin in Asunción, a *centro* of the frontier, where he finished high school (in Sucúa) and later married. Motivated by the prospect of game and land in the territories of the interior, Tuntiak decided to re-settle with his wife in Pampants where Tsere would give them land. On

---

[82] At least in the *centros* of the interior I came to know best, this has not entailed, as Descola suggests, that Shuar have developed a "stable and localised principle of unilineal agnatic succession" (1982:232). Descola assumes that since in the pre-*centro* system, the inheritance of movable goods ran along agnatic lines for men and uterine lines for women, in the *centro* system land (now turned into a transmissible object) is transmitted only along agnatic lines (ibid.:233). Presently, both men and women inherit land, although men are in greater control of land, since they can use the uxorilocal residence rule to gain access to land in *centros* of the interior (see also Rubenstein 1993:5).

their arrival in Pampants, however, the president (a member of the Washikiat family) called a series of village meetings in which *socios* discussed whether Tuntiak could live in the *centro*. Eventually the assembly of *socios* decided that Tuntiak would be re-admitted on the condition that he retroactively pay all the fines that he had acquired during the years he had stopped attending the *mingas*. The rationale behind the decision was that, since Tuntiak had not suspended his membership in Pampants during the years he spent in Asunción, he had continued to count as a defective *socio*. As a result, villagers raised concerns about Tuntiak's capacity to fulfil his duties as a *socio*.

Before continuing with the story of Tuntiak, let me clarify that every *centro* has different rules about membership admittance and fines. Additionally, while the federation requires that all *centros* have statutes[83] (Sp. *reglamentos*) and some *centros* sometimes do have such documents, villagers rarely use them when making decisions. My impression is that whatever was decided in assemblies was considered the 'rule' for the time being. When I mentioned what had happened to Tuntiak to the people of Kuamar they seemed surprised that someone whose parents live in the *centro* would not be automatically admitted, and even more about the idea of the person having to pay retroactive fees.

Many years had gone by when Tuntiak related this story; he had already raised a few children in Pampants and had become the president of the *centro*, proof that he had successfully dealt with relocation in spite of the initial problems. In his view, however, the decision to fine him retroactively had been instigated by the family of the then president in power who had long accused his father, Tsere, of using sorcery to kill his own father, Chiriap.

While secretly thinking that the fines had been motivated by the president's desire to avenge his father, Tuntiak did not retort with a counter-accusation against the president. Instead, he replied in the same manner by which his request had been decided, that is, by invoking the authority of the *centro*. Therefore, not only did he do what he was asked, by paying his fines, but he also voluntarily provided a certificate of 'good conduct' that he managed to obtain from the president of the Asunción *centro*. This is because, as Tuntiak explained, in the assembly the president had also suggested that he had been wandering around and not living a proper settled life. The letter from an authority of another *centro* helped make the case that he had indeed been living 'settled' and in compliance with the obligations of a *socio*, although in a different *centro*. Thus, although a person can in practice move freely and settle with kin, membership in

---

[83] This is so that the *centro* and its elected authorities can be granted legal appointment and legal personhood (Sp. *nombramiento*, *personería jurídica*) by the CODENPE (Council of Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador), the national agency in charge of managing development in indigenous territories. However, within a *centro*, nobody requires the president to have a *nombramiento*.

a community now hinges not only on kinship but also on respecting agreements sanctioned by the whole community.

The re-entry of Tuntiak into Pampants raises some interesting points. First, it shows that the role of *socio* has a certain normativity. It can be mobilised by an assembly to demand something of an incoming resident, in defiance of what the incomer and his/her family may prefer to do. Second, it shows that this normativity is itself an effect of the way villagers conduct themselves. Notwithstanding the history of resentments between Tuntiak and the president's respective families, the assembly and both men were able to find a solution that prevented them from re-engaging in interpersonal conflicts. Third, it shows that villagers are significantly resourceful when managing the institution of membership in the *centro*. Criteria for membership are not pre-determined or ready-made. Rather, villagers construct these criteria – and hence re-evaluate what it means to be a member – as they make decisions on novel issues and introduce new procedures (such as the 'certificate of good conduct', which had no precedent in Pampants), to validate moral expectations that have emerged as they adapt to living together in *centros*.

On being president, or 'authority' in the *centro*

During the assembly of Pampants in which villagers discussed the upsurge of sorcery, a schoolteacher from the community spoke out about the qualities required of leaders:

> You, if you don't solve the problem, then we have elected you president of the community for nothing (...). We cannot live with these words that grow in the community. This is what I say. Peacefully we must debate. We cannot lie. When that happened in the past, our elders acted fearlessly. But now we are educated. We read books [*papi*], we read the law [Sp. *ley*], and with all of this we respect everyone. We live well now. This is how we the professionals [*unuíkiartin*] speak. This is what we teach to our future leaders.

I have chosen this statement because it contains the most important elements of the notion of *autoridad* (authority) as used by Shuar in *centros*. The role of an elected leader is first and foremost to work for the wellbeing of the community. To do this an authority should be literate and have knowledge of the outside world, as this will empower him/her to access external wealth (Ch.6) and manipulate the books and laws that villagers need to live well with one another.

Although the normative framework used in the *centro* does not derive from books or statuses, the idea that elected leaders should be prepared to use these has by now some history amongst Shuar people. On the basis of her ethnographic research in the 1980s, Hendricks argues that Shuar held that the power of elected authorities came "from 'the book', that is, the statutes of the Federation" (1986:137). Given this new source of power originating in the law and the concurrent transformations resulting from the introduction of elected offices (Sp. *cargos*) in the

newly created *centros*, previous ethnographers expected "modern" leaders to make use of new coercive powers that could enhance their positions and limit the freedoms of others in the communities (Taylor 1981:656; Hendricks 1986:64,127). Nevertheless, when Hendricks compared the power of the *uunt* of the endogamous nexi and that of the president of the *centro*, she noted that the latter is by far more circumscribed in his capacities. Not only can a president be removed from office whereas the knowledge/power of a strong elder "cannot be taken away easily", but the president can also only operate within a defined territory while the power of the headman "is limited only by his personal power and political enterprise" (1986:130).

In the Makuma area, when the cooperatives and *centros* were first created and Shuar began to hold elections, some of the first men elected to public offices were great men. This is probably why contemporary presidents of *centros* are still called '*uunt'* as are most other elected authorities. One of the key negotiations between the missionaries and the first generation of nucleated Shuar was over whether parents would send children to the mission school. As Shuar gained independence from the mission, the skills gained by this generation of literate Shuar became an essential asset for leadership. The first generation of trained bilingual teachers (Ch.7) thus gradually replaced the *uunt* in public offices. The essential assets for leadership are now thought to derive from literacy and the moral qualities teachers acquire through schooling (Ch.8). These are also the qualities Shuar associate with 'professionals', a term that, as I explained in the previous chapter, Shuar translate using the verb 'to learn/to teach' (*unui-*) – perhaps unsurprisingly, since the first qualified wage-earners and politicians have been schoolteachers.

For my informants the major difference between great men and elected leaders resides in the foundation of their power, and therefore in the kinds of knowledge that sustain their leadership practice. Consider for example the way Ernesto (from Pampants) explains the difference:

> Well, all our elders had power [visionary power], like a spirit. They were mostly dedicated to acquiring that power with sacrifice, going to the waterfall (...). Doing all the rituals they acquired this, eh, how shall we put it, a voice, yes a voice that led [allowed them to lead]. That is why they knew how to speak and they could advise others, and so before, we voted for them. When they spoke, everyone listened. When they summoned a *minga*, even the dog attended! They organised *mingas*, *programas*, and when there were problems, they helped to mediate. Just like now, but what has changed is that before it was pure practice whereas now we also have the theory. The elders did not have the theory of the study or any scientific subject. They didn't know how to write, but they could still lead people. Now instead the leaders are prepared [educated], they have titles [diplomas], they read, write, they manage, they organise, and they also have an economic base and that facilitates their work.

Visionary power gave great men 'a voice' to lead whereas formal education and literacy gives educated leaders the theory to lead: vision/voice and literacy then. However, these two bases of power – vision/voice and literacy – are not mutually exclusive. *Centro* presidents still require visions to lead effectively, while great men have always coveted – and sometimes acquired – the power of literacy. Literacy gives leaders access to the theory or the study of leadership which villagers identify as being found in books and the law. When Shuar speak about this type of 'theory' or 'study' they have in mind the instruments of collective organisation that are used in the *centro* and which, as will be seen in Chapter 8, schoolteachers use widely at school. This scholarly and legal knowledge is what gives leaders the ability to guide people to live in an organised manner. It is what allows them to lead the fight against the objectionable subjects of *shuarologia*.

Following Beatty (1967), Hendricks identifies some further ways in which the great men and community presidents diverge. The power of the headman derives from highly valued qualities such as "age, generosity, speaking ability, prowess in hunting and warfare" (1986:64), whereas the power of the president acquires meaning only in relation to "an institutionally based network of authoritative roles" (ibid.:127). It is in relation to this institutional framework that we may understand why Tuntiak's certificate of 'good conduct' had an effect: although nobody knew the president of Asunción, he filled a role of authority equivalent to the president of Pampants.

Certainly, a key difference between great men and contemporary leaders is the institutional framework of the federation within which the role of the modern leader, as well as the role of *socio*, and the territorial boundaries of *centros* acquire much broader meaning. However, this institutional framework does not automatically produce 'internal organisation' nor does it grant *centro* leaders coercive powers within their communities, contrary to what Rubenstein (2001) suggested in his influential analysis of the federation.

In Kuamar, I heard many stories about Torka, a man remembered as an exceptionally good leader who died a year before my arrival. The anecdotes I heard depicted an entrepreneurial and incessant worker but also a good-natured man who disliked conflict. For instance after the foundation of Kuamar, Torka gained a reputation as a good leader by creating a school in the community. Since this involved travelling to market towns to do paperwork, Torka proposed to raise money doing a paid *minga* in the fields of a great man from Achunts. While a great man would never work for another in a situation of paid labour, Torka called this 'community work' and other *socios* interpreted it as 'having initiative' for the benefit of the community. Torka himself had worked for many years for mestizo bosses in market towns so he knew well how to raise money. Torka was also prone to forming harmonious relations with others

and was strict about practices that might foment tensions. Several villagers recalled that he so disliked gossip that when he heard villagers spreading rumours about others in the community he would stand up and leave. The story of Torka encapsulates three elements that are usually cited as necessary characteristics of good leaders. The first is the knowledge of labour and money, which stands as a clear legacy from the 'golden years' of the mission, a time in which, as noted in Chapter 2, some people in Makuma say that they 'learned how to work'. The second is the capacity to persuade others to work for the benefit of the community, for example building the school, while remaining disinterested in personal gain. The third is the specific character traits village leaders are expected to display in order to arbitrate conflicts in the community.

As a chairperson of assemblies, the president has to able to act as a mediator, although never as adjudicator, since he does not derive power to intervene in disputes from his office but from the invitation of the disputants themselves to suggest advice or solutions. Other duties consist of rallying people for labour parties and taking ultimate responsibility for the distribution of communal land. None of these decisions, however, are taken by himself alone for he is expected to persuade others beforehand. The way a good leader persuades others is by making good use of speech, as I have shown in the first part of this chapter. Speaking clearly is an asset when persuading others and demonstrating good will and moral strength. Before an assembly, a president usually pays private visits to most households in order to relay information to them and ask for support. A president demonstrates his power through his ability to elicit agreement[84] by appealing to the welfare of the community.

The office of president does not therefore grant the leader the capacity to issue orders and dominate others but instead seems to bind him even closer to the role of the good and disinterested *socio.* So, while the president as an authority is said to have knowledge of 'the books' and 'the laws', this knowledge usually denotes a superior capacity to act as a good *socio.* Neither the books nor the laws provide the president with a set of sanctions that can indiscriminately and coercively be imposed on villagers. A comparison with Gow's description of the Piro use of the enabling powers of 'external institutions' is particularly instructive.

Gow's central claim is that while the *Comunidad Nativa* with its school has its "origins outside of native social relations, they have been made central to the contemporary communities of native people" (1991:204). However, he also notes that "given that co-residence is the very

---

[84] The Clastrian precept according to which a chief must mark the harmless nature of his power "by framing commands as invitations" (Santos-Granero 1993:225) is well-known in Amazonia, although I suggest it is much more appropriate for the village leader than the traditional great man. The latter's immense ritual power could command obedience among those who feared his unintentional supernatural reprisals (see, e.g. Hendricks 1988:220).

foundation of the community" when disagreements and disputes arise, the structure of the *Comunidad Nativa* "cannot deal with such issues" (ibid.:208). So even while village leaders manage to develop a particular kind of speech that "overcomes the constraints on speech between adults" of the community (ibid.:209-10), this does not enable them to create a framework whereby disputing coresidents are encouraged to identify with the community. My suggestion is that this may be the case because it is only village leaders who manage to transcend the specific modalities of speaking and allegiances they have acquired as kin in everyday life. In contrast, in the Shuar case, the president of the *centro* is not the only one who may appropriate the speech of *socios.* Everyone else is encouraged to do so.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with my hosts commenting that they were spending 'too much time in *shuarologia*' and ended the last section reiterating that Shuar have been able to create a framework that enables them to identify with the community. Since everyone can adopt the position of *socio,* not only the leader might speak for the group. Pressed to live settled by structural constrains and their own moral expectations, Shuar have indeed come up with tools of harmony that enables them to find a way of living in villages permanently. This is how villagers counteract the centrifugal forces of *shuarologia* that otherwise might lead to fission and dispersal. These tools of harmony are not entirely new. Clear speech has long played a significant role in traditional management of conflict, but what Shuar have been able to do is to harness it to counteract rather than reproduce factionalism.

Perhaps the most significant innovation that has emerged from the combination of clear speech and the role of *socio* in assemblies is the possibility of transforming disharmony into a motive for rapprochement sanctioned through public resolutions. Several authors note that Amazonian people are disinclined to express dissent or displeasure in public forums, for to do so would go against an aesthetic of social harmony (Rosengren 2000; Rivière 2000; Johnson 2003:127; but see Hewlett 2014:287). Walker suggests that what is valued in communal meetings is "a presentation of social harmony, rather than any genuine resolution of differences" (2012:5). He argues that sometimes these meetings function more as venues where people display a consensus that has already been established through endless and almost covert one-to-one discussions. We might say that Shuar put an aesthetics of harmony to the service of displaying difference, for in assemblies they are now also able to disclose and thus transform into 'public knowledge' those covert one-to-one discussions that trigger and foment social tensions. Similarly,

assemblies facilitate discussions that would be impossible to have even in a covert fashion between individuals who secretly suspect one another of sorcery.

It would be possible to interpret the role of *socio* as having introduced a coercive understanding of harmony whereby forms of social control external to the individual come to be perceived as necessary. However, this is not how Shuar represent their acquisition of the 'theory' of the law and organisations. Instead, older Shuar ideas of clear speech and visionary power continue to guide ideas about appropriate ways of using the law and acting within organisations. For, while knowledge of the law derives from books and literacy, the appropriate and lawful use of this knowledge is dependent on clear speech, straight thinking, determination, and self-control, all of which are endowed by visions.

Although Shuar are keen to express the desire to consider the welfare of the community, public speech itself contributes to individual prestige. Thus, the role of *socio* is another tool that Shuar must cultivate and control in order to negotiate their positions in a conflict-driven social landscape.

Furthermore, while villagers are able to promote forms of communal organisation and harmony in assemblies, they are also reproducing what they increasingly perceive as the source of disorder and disharmony: *shuarologia*. For instance, sorcery is not being suppressed, if anything it is being reinforced, not only through the occasional recourse to potent external shamans, but also as villagers target people from the community and condemn them to perennial marginality as enemy sorcerers.

If by fashioning new tools of harmony, villagers are able to defend valuable forms of autonomy such as domestic peace, they are also producing social expectations that inevitably impinge on their autonomy. This is because by producing a new normative framework, they must also act as willing subjects. In some ways, therefore, living well in the context of the domestic unit is not the same as living well with others at the level of the *centro*. As I have shown in this chapter, new standards of visibility, proximity and permanence in the *centro* emerge in the context of *centro* living. If, as Descola tells us, in the pre-*centro* system "to live happily" a person had to "live somewhat concealed" (1981:637), in the *centro* system, to live happily a person must learn how to refrain from concealment and show him/herself to others not simply through clear speech, but also through positive forms of sociability that require visibility and integration.

We will see that the ability to create such forms of sociability in the urban centre and the assembly are important assets as villagers are required to cooperate to access key resources available through the *centro*. If in the previous chapter I showed how a desire to sustain desirable forms of self-sufficiency has given rise to the aspiration to 'live better', in the following chapter I

shall show how villagers use the structure of the *centro* to pursue such an aspiration and seek prosperity. At that point it will become important to re-problematise the figure of the elected leader, to consider how their authority and the potential for coercion are changed as the leaders acquire an economic base.

Chapter 5. The *centro* as a cooperative unit: a nascent ideology of public wealth

> If we had some kind of productiveness [*ipiampamu*], if there were chickens, palm grubs, palm hearts we could eat well and even sell these products to other people. But since we don't have much of any of these, we have to eat what others give us (...). [But] we can't just wait until it [the government] sends us tuna, sardines, and be happy. We have to work, we have to create our own projects for each family rather than spend our time drinking *chicha*.

Manuel made this statement when he addressed a group of *socios* gathered in the schoolhouse. In it, he captures a critical quandary for many residents of *centros* in the interior. When he says that villagers do not have 'much of any of these', he is referring to the scarcity of game, forest resources and non-autochthonous sources of nourishment such as poultry, which has made traditional livelihoods less sustainable. As internally "produced" resources decline, a possibility is to rely on state-derived resources. But as Manuel and other villagers clarified later that day, relying passively on the state was undesirable. Just waiting for the government to send food, would put the villagers in a situation of unwanted dependency and lack of control over what they eat and how they live. The quandary the villagers face, therefore, is how to ensure internal sufficiency through the tapping of external resources without losing their agency and autonomy. While presently unable to make the *centro* materially self-sufficient, the villagers still strive to retain the ethic of self-reliance and autonomy central to ideas of the good life.

As seen in Chapter 3, the two key criteria used by villagers to distinguish the good life of the interior from the life of towns: firstly, food sovereignty, that is, relying on their one's own food/resources; and secondly, work autonomy, that is, is being able to work at one's own pace, without receiving orders. Villagers can achieve a life of plenty, autonomy, and tranquillity in the interior because there they are the owners of their homes, lands and time. How then can they counteract scarcity and boost productiveness without losing autonomy? As we shall see, villagers try to solve this, not by turning down external resources, but by seeking to control the manner in which they access them. They do this through organisation: by cooperating to funnel state wealth via the *centro* and networks of elected leaders to individual households. In this way, the villagers aim to use these resources to develop alternative livelihoods that increase rather than limit their self-sufficiency and autonomy, or, as Manuel put it, 'create their own projects for each family'.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the moral and social expectations that facilitate the gradual institutionalisation of *socio* as new category of political membership at the level of the *centro*. I showed how villagers use the category of *socio* to refer to the commitments and

affiliations they have acquired by virtue of living in *centros*. In this chapter, I continue to explore the social life of *centros* by analysing how, in certain circumstances, the relationships that villagers establish with state agents help to constitute the *centro* as a collective unit of work and decision making. So, if the previous chapter explored how villagers organise themselves to manage conflict, in this chapter I explore how they cooperate to procure and manage external resources.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I examine what motivates the villagers to procure resources from the state, and consider why they seek to enhance their control over the process of procurement. I also analyse the extent to which their pursuit of resources is itself understood as a form of work, by contextualising it in relation to changing Shuar livelihoods. I then explain how villagers cooperate within the *centro* to elect leaders, and consider what type of relationships villagers seek to establish with these leaders and the state more generally.

The second section of the chapter illustrates two different ways in which external wealth arrives in *centros*: one in which villagers are its captors and control its internal distribution; and another in which ordinary villagers are turned into clients, controlled by their leaders, acting as patrons, and increasingly caught up in the state's logic of exchange. In the second case, I explain how what begins as the procurement of wealth for domestic sufficiency can gradually give rise to new forms of public wealth in the *centro*. I end by considering the implications that changes in how villagers relate to the outside have for villagers' understandings of autonomy and the way in which their aspirations for progress can fit with the ideals of the good life.

From the state to the house: predation at work

Work, productiveness and autonomy

As noted in Chapter 3, households are organised around female gardening, male lumbering, and cash crop farming, although a few family members may also have off-*centro* farm or public jobs that bring cash income. An additional source of income derives from state-sponsored schemes called productive projects (Sp. *proyectos productivos*) geared towards the local production of cash crops, animal husbandry and other income-generating activities. They provide villagers with funds and the expert training for the development of local knowledge: the technical and marketing skills required for the success of a specific productive venture. When villagers are able to earn money from these projects, they use it to pay for occasional school fees and to procure non-forest products, clothes, and medical or shamanistic cures.

Chapter 3 also described how, for villagers, it is fundamental to maintain a high degree of self-sufficiency centred on the reproduction of the household even while the resources needed by the household are obtained in very different domains that include, to some extent, the market.

A key question which I did not specifically address in Chapter 3, however, is how new productive endeavours affect the way Shuar understand and experience new forms of work. This is an important question because what villagers consider good about work is modelled on self-provisioning activities through which they can achieve flexibility and autonomy. But what about other activities in which it is not so clear that Shuar are working to procure their own nourishment? I do not have space here to discuss how villagers experience work in the city, but I shall briefly discuss why procuring resources from outside, in this case through productive projects, can be likened to a self-provisioning activity. Let me first briefly recap what other ethnographers have argued about the transformations of native conceptions of work brought about by new economic pursuits.

Previous ethnographers are unambiguous about the matter: the cattle economy transformed the way Shuar represented work. Let us see why.

According to Descola, work in the pre-*centro* subsistence economy was best characterised as an attribute or personal quality, so that a person may for example express the feeling of "being moved by [his/her] capacity as a worker" (1996b:297). Work was not separated from the worker who performs it (ibid.:284) and it always acquired meaning in relation to a specific activity performed in the present. The term that most closely translates as the English word 'work' is *takat*, the noun form of the verb *taka-* that designates "an arduous physical activity involving technical skill and the mediation of a tool (...) and associated with such notions as hard labour, physical suffering and sweat" (ibid.). To do work or to work (*takakmastin, takastin*) was always transitive, so there was no way of expressing the idea of working in general (Hendricks 1988:226). As for many non-capitalist societies, Shuar did not represent work as an all-inclusive semantic category – that is, as "as a coherent set of technical operations the purpose of which is to produce the material means necessary to existence" (Descola 1996b:296). Rather, distinct labour processes (i.e. gardening, gathering, hunting and fishing) were differentiated by the symbolic and technical preconditions that underpinned their performance: the forms of knowledge, abilities, powers, and mastery that a person cultivates to successfully manipulate the relations on which his or her access to specific spheres of abundance depend.

Descola argues that as Shuar began to raise cattle, work acquired a different meaning: from being a specific task oriented towards the immediate satisfaction of needs, it began to be represented as an activity whose final product is not directly consumed. That is, as a means of satisfying needs intrinsically external to the work, for example, to purchase manufactured goods (1982a:231). Work, in other words, became an autonomous sphere founded on the creation of exchange rather than use value: work as commodity. The author gives evidence that the Achuar

differentiated between *takat* (as work-attribute) and the Western abstract notion of work/wage labour (work-commodity), recounting that those few Achuar who worked in oil companies used the Spanish word *trabajo*, rather than the word *takat*, to refer to the "newly acquired exteriority of their labour power"[85] (1996a:298; see also Hendricks 1988:227).

The emergence of a representation of work as "an end in itself or as having moral value apart from its product" (Hendricks 1988:226) was not only facilitated by the introduction of market-oriented activities, but by the values that such activities were meant to defend. Among the Shuar of the FICSH, cattle rearing was associated with the defence of the land from colonist encroachment, so working to breed cattle for sale, also meant working for the defence of 'Shuar people' in general. Since the 1970s, through radio messages (see Ch.7) and visits to the interior, federation leaders have promoted the idea of development and progress connecting these notions to the idea of collective autonomy. Hendricks gives evidence that federation leaders incorporated into their ideology "the idea of work as a means of acquiring power", and that they regarded it "as necessary to protect the Shuar from further advances by Ecuadorian colonists". An example of this is seen in the words of a leader in the 1980s recorded by Hendricks: "We have to work together; the colonists will take our land if we don't work for it" (ibid.:234). Such messages are still frequent in the present. Consider for example the following address from Francisco Shiki, the president of the FICSH during the time of my research. He reminded the people of Pampants that Shuar had once had to leave their lands in the frontier to escape encroachment, but despite their failure to stop the colonists' advance back then, they were still 'alive' and should continue on the path of independent development – most poignantly envisioned through agriculture, that is, food sovereignty.

> Shuar [we] are[86] still here [we live/we are alive]. We haven't emigrated too far.
> Shuar have not been exterminated. Who's going to exterminate the Shuar who
> grow these many plants?

The Shuar with whom I worked do represent work in the abstract, endowing the notion with a sense of moral worth, beyond the specific activity they perform, as a good in and of itself. For instance, people say that they learned 'to work together', or simply, 'to work' when they refer to the work they did in the cattle cooperatives, implying that whatever work they did before then was qualitatively different, as shown in Chapter 2. They also have a clear representation of work as commodity; for example, they sometimes say that someone 'knows how to work' meaning that someone knows 'how to make money'.

---

[85] For a similar finding amongst the Venezuelan Pemon see Thomas (1982:43).
[86] The verb the president used (*pujú-*), roughly corresponds to the English 'to be', but incorporates also the additional meanings 'to live, stay'.

However, we also find signs of continuity with the earlier use/representation of work as attribute. Villagers may, for example, describe the specific kind of work they do as 'strong work' or 'work done with strength/valour' (*kakarma takatna naja-*), 'planting done with good will/love' (*wakeramu aramuka*), thereby providing evidence of the view of work as an attitude or a "mode of performing certain tasks", rather than a quality abstracted or estranged from the worker (Descola 1996:297). Similarly, work continues to be associated with, or modelled on, gardening activities considered arduous or demanding. For instance during the festival of Pampants in 2013, most direct allusions to work – and there tend to be numerous in festivals, as we shall see in the next chapter – referred to the agricultural work of the villagers, as in Francisco's address cited above. Further evidence for the mutually constitutive character of work and worker comes from the fact that people joke about how Shuar officials have become fat and unhealthy and as a result possess weaker bodies, since their urban jobs no longer allow them to do proper work. Implicit in this example is the difference between work-commodity (as wage labour) and work-attribute as a mode of activity that is physically demanding.

Moreover, as I showed in Chapter 3, within the subsistence economy of the household, work characterises a variety of activities that generate what Shuar understand as 'productiveness' (*ipiampamu*) in the sense of fertility and abundance. By adding direction to the work of vegetable and animal reproduction, humans multiply or increase their populations. In this sense, *ipiampamu* bears some resemblance with the connotation of fecundity taken by *takat*[87] in the sense of directing "action on nature with the aim of transforming or reorienting its goal" (Descola 1996b:297).

More importantly, villagers achieve success in work through some form of symbolic knowledge. The hard work that men devote to clearing and that women devote to planting is still considered barren without the performance of the propitiatory prerequisites: personal strength acquired through visions, dreams, abstinence, and knowledge of magical songs, depending on the specific case. For my informants, the multiplication of vital resources is still represented as an activity that requires specialised interactions with a panoply of subjects in distinct environments.[88] Such interactions are typically represented as predatory in character, as they

---

[87] And as shown in Chapter 3, the connection between work and productiveness, or the multiplication of resources, is established in mythology. *Takat* is also seen as a way of actualising the productive potential of something. This may involve facilitating the natural propensities of a tract of forest by turning it into a garden or realising the potential of a young virgin, thereby carrying sexual connotations (Descola 1996b:297).

[88] With regards to how villagers conceive of their subsistence activities, I have found no evidence that they understand production as a process of transformation (*ex nihilo*) of the material entities needed for subsistence or as the imposition of a form on inert matter (Descola 2012a:459), as would be the case if work-commodity had completely overridden work-attribute. For a similar observation among the Awajun, even in cases in which they increasingly work in large-scale rice cultivation, see Brown (1984:110).

involve the use of specialised language and techniques to captivate or persuade others – the owners or masters of various spheres of abundance – to relinquish something with which villagers hope to foster internal wellbeing. As I showed in Chapter 3, productiveness for Shuar requires a combination of technical and symbolic knowledge, and these two domains are not separated. So, if the success of hunters traditionally depended on the relationships they were able to establish with game masters through the skilful use of magical songs (*ánent*), currently no act of procurement can be productive without the generative knowledge, the sort of specialised skills necessary to charm and persuade the powerful beings who control that on which Shuar people feed. In recent times, such beings have included Christian deities, missionaries, mestizo patrons, NGO workers and state agents.

Given the decline of environmental resources in Shuar inner territories, the generation of productiveness increasingly depends on the procurement of productive projects, as noted earlier. The wealth/resources (*kuit*) procured through these projects come in the form of money or natural and material valuables such as barnyard animals, agricultural seeds, or construction materials for buildings, etc. To refer to these projects, villagers use the same word that indicates work (*takat*), just like more conventional activities. This makes sense because the projects require hard work – actual growing and raising of the animals and seeds – but also savvy interaction with powerful outsiders, as I shall show in the next sections. Thus, *takat* – understood as work-attribute or capacity for work in the present context – has come ordinarily to refer to the process of generating not only nourishment but also commodities. I believe this is because cultivated crops for internal consumption and cash crops for sale are both now considered integral to the maintenance of self-sufficiency and autonomy. However, not all forms of external wealth promote internal wellbeing. This is because feeding on external resources, and specifically on resources that villagers know derive from the colonists and the central government, creates specific dilemmas. Explaining what sorts of dilemmas, gives me the opportunity to return to the introductory quote from Manuel.

That day, a group of parents from Kuamar gathered in the schoolhouse to welcome the supervisor of education, also a Shuar man. During the visit, parents raised complaints about the school breakfast, which consists of a daily ration of powder milk, biscuits and granola that schoolchildren receive as part of the government's nation-wide feeding programme. They described the breakfast as 'mixed-up' like all the foodstuffs of the colonists. Since the breakfast was causing diarrhoea, some speculated that perhaps the government was trying to poison their children. Another parent stated that the problem did not simply concern the breakfast but all the food villagers were eating, for example, the battery chickens that were purchased in towns, which

in his view, were making children grow deformed and develop bad/obscene (*netse*) thoughts. So, the villager said, 'We have to work ourselves. We have to multiply our food!' Upon everyone's request, the supervisor was asked to demand money from the authorities so that instead of receiving 'bad gifts', as they called the breakfast, villagers could directly purchase their own food and prepare it at home.

Villagers thus discriminate between the malign gifts from the government that further their dependence and turn them into deformed and weak people, and the kind of external wealth that enables them to prosper. Through the latter, they aim to re-produce their food locally, so as to bypass the risks of directly consuming the foods of the colonists. Chickens are a good example of this. After the supervisor left, I asked the villager who had complained about the chickens why people still tried to get money to purchase the very chickens they so disliked. His answer was illuminating: 'We will raise the chicken at home. That's why I say that we need to multiply our own productive projects for each family!'

Indeed, villagers strive to 're-produce external resources at home'. In part, this is done by putting in their hard work to multiply the animals and crops they receive – a much preferred method than eating the ready-made foodstuffs of the colonists. But, another important way in which external resources can be re-produced at home is by gaining control over the channels through which state wealth is made available; that is, by taking charge of the specialised techniques required to harness resources from the state. I turn to consider this now.

The art of multiplying wealth: paperwork and brokerage

Public resources, including projects, will only be offered to indigenous populations if they are organised in legally-constituted communities that can demonstrate good public government. This primarily means that *centros* must have a directive council – a president, a secretary and a treasurer – who can request funds on behalf of the community and can prove that the funds will benefit all villagers. Therefore, presidents of *centros* must demonstrate that they have the backing of the assembly of *socios* when external sponsors visit the community or via official documents bearing the signatures of all *socios* and the official seal of the community.

The requirement that external funding benefits indigenous communities rather than individuals has a long history in Ecuador, dating back to the time when indigenous people began to organise in cooperatives to defend their lands from encroachment (Ch.2). Presently, a significant part of the budgeting and disbursement of private and public monies to indigenous peoples is still premised on the assumption that community-based development projects are preferable to family/individual-based projects, because they enhance fiscal responsibility while

being tailored to the presumably more communistic and egalitarian ethos of indigenous peoples (see Erazo 2010; Wilson 2010).[89]

Much of the work done by villagers is aimed at mastering the techniques that are required to access external funds. Shuar write community charters, elect formal leaders, run periodic village assemblies, record meeting minutes, attend project workshops, manage community funds, and write petitions (Sp. *solicitudes*) to attract external resources. Villagers also care immensely about training the future leaders of their communities, which they do by sending their children to school so that they can acquire the knowledge necessary to run the community. As an elderly man bluntly stated in a school meeting, 'If there aren't going to be Shuar capable of writing petitions and drumming up resources, we might as well shut down the community.' This statement reveals the widespread perception that the community is a kind of vehicle; a set of knowledge practices and techniques that Shuar require for funnelling resources and to go on living well.

But the most important aspect of funnelling resources is the organisation of sophisticated and resistant webs of political brokerage which, while being sufficiently effective and expansive to reach out to the state centres of power, avoid getting captured by the latter's extractivist strategies. To understand why villagers are keen to ensure their leaders retain loyalty to the village in their dealings with the state, we first need to understand how formal leadership works.

As noted in Chapter 1, Shuar were enjoying a time of political bonanza during the period I conducted fieldwork. Table 3 shows the primary levels of local administration in descending order (provincial, county and parish). Table 4 shows the number of offices Shuar officials occupied at the time of my research. Shuar were able to place their own representatives at the prefecture, several town halls (counties), and the majority of councillorships in localities where Shuar represented the majority of the electorate. In addition to these positions in local governments, Shuar also elect their own leaders at the level of the *centros*, the associations, and the federations. Contemporary Shuar leaders thus occupy a range of formal positions, with their authority depending on a larger institutional framework. Still, their local influence depends on their individual qualities and superior knowledge of the colonist society. Indeed, it is this knowledge that gets them elected.

---

[89] This emphasis on economic collectivism has begun to change as Correa's citizens' revolution has promoted a liberal framework that emphasises individual rights in opposition to the collective view of rights promoted by the indigenous movement (see Becker 2011:48).

Table 3 - Levels of Ecuadorian political administration

Levels of Administrative Encompassment (State)					
Nation	Province	County	Parish	Association	Centro
Ecuador	Morona Santiago	Taisha	Makuma	Achunts	Kuamar

Levels of Administrative Encompassment (Shuar)		
Federation	Association	Centro
NASHE	Achunts	Kuamar

Proportion of elected Shuar officials in local administration		
Results election 2009-2013, Province of Morona Santiago		
Province	Counties	Parishes
1/1	7/12	28/58
➔ prefect	➔ mayor, councillors	➔ president, chairpersons

Table 4 - Elected Shuar officials 2009-2013

While all Shuar leaders operate as brokers, it is helpful to distinguish between formal leaders elected to local governments and formal leaders elected within the system of the federation as each group performs different roles within the system of brokerage. I call the former 'officials' and the latter 'territorial leaders'. Villagers insist that only leaders with academic credentials above high school level can stand a chance of performing well as 'officials'. On the other hand, the legitimacy of territorial leaders, but especially leaders of the federation, is perceived as more grounded on visionary rather than literary power/knowledge, as villagers emphasise that it is the leaders' rhetorical abilities – their voice and their strength/valour (*ni kakármari*) – that enables them to mobilise people in the communities in case of external threat.[90] However, it is increasingly the case that even territorial leaders are required to have academic credentials because their jobs involve travelling to perform all sorts of formal procedures on behalf of their communities. Doing this requires bureaucratic skills, but also financial resources, so leaders who have already secured a public salary – 'an economic base', as Shuar tellingly call it – are considered to be in a better position to perform their job. So the 'capacity/power of mobilisation' (Sp. *poder de mobilización*), understood as the ability to be mobile but also to

---

[90] In the past, federation leaders were the main intermediaries between Shuar and the state, but now officials have significantly overshadowed them. This is because the budgets that officials can mobilise by far outcompete the meagre funds at the disposal of federation leaders, who have always relied on occasional donations to promote local projects. Moreover, insofar as officials represent their Shuar electorate in state administrations, they can now make decisions on local affairs bypassing the authority of federation leaders. This is particularly the case where the jurisdiction of the federation partially overlaps with that of the local administrations as in Makuma, which hosts the headquarters of the NASHE and that of the parish government (see map 5).

mobilise people to secure resources for the communities, is perhaps the most valuable quality that any leader may have. The main distinction in the occupations of officials and territorial leaders is the following: officials cultivate relationships with external allies in the colonist society in order to extract state wealth; in contrast, territorial leaders mobilise 'the bases' (i.e. all members of the federation, especially in the interior) to defend their territories and cultivate relationships with Shuar officials to get hold of the resources the latter divert from local governments. In both cases, one of the main objectives is to capture external resources.

Given that most electoral positions of interest to Shuar people are now occupied by Shuar officials, the state is enmeshed with the local system of Shuar alliances and kin networks. Despite living in *centros*, Shuar are extremely mobile and enjoy tracing connections and enmities with people living in distant areas. Encounters between hosts, guests and travellers are punctuated by rich and insistent 'kin talk' in which speakers won't consider themselves satisfied unless they find connecting points in what is a very flexible system of relations, often discursively journeying through a long series of marriages, migrations, memories of war and geographical displacements. Therefore, elected authorities are not only figures that most Shuar villagers have heard of or seen on electoral posters (a popular decoration of domestic walls), but also concrete persons with whom they may have chatted and drunk manioc beer and with whom they can trace some form of prior or recently established personal connection.

During the run-up to a major local election, villagers spend much time collectively weighing the strength of their connections with various potential nominees. On the eve of the major assembly where nominations for parish presidents were to be launched in Makuma, the *socios* of Kuamar were woken up by a conversation of rhythmic and cheerful howls. After hurling the first howl, Manuel was echoed by a succession of unseen shouters from other households. As I was to discover, this early collective call summoned most men and a few women of the *centro* onto the football pitch where everyone had gathered to share their predictions for the day. The discussion focused on the best 'nomination strategy'. Who of all potential nominees was the closest to the community? Whom among the closest, the best prepared, and most trustworthy had any chance of being supported by the other six *centros* of the association?

The system of electoral politics therefore articulates several webs of brokerage, which ideally nest into one another so as to reach out to higher instances of the public administration. Following Lazar, we might say that as individuals strategize and coordinate to elect the most favourable candidate, or the one who is most likely to align with a given collectivity, Shuar manage at these particular times to constitute themselves into a 'corporate client' (2004:231). In this sense,

personalist politics is a means by which individuals actually engage with the state, both individually and collectively (ibid.).[91]

There are at least two interrelated 'practical' reasons why Shuar villagers enthusiastically engage in the business of electoral politics, thus occasionally becoming 'corporate clients'. The first is, as I mentioned earlier, that most state aid is available through state-defined native communities. Except for the women's poverty allowance and the military pension from which a few ex-soldiers benefit, Shuar individuals need to be official members of a *centro* inscribed in the territory of a Shuar federation in order to benefit from public funding. The second reason is that in a system of (decentralised) representative democracy, Shuar communities need to have their own elected leaders to represent them in government. Most Shuar villagers understand that the more representatives they have at different levels of public administration the more diversified their sources of external wealth will be.

Considerable tensions permeate villagers' involvement in electoral politics, however. This is because, as leaders get elected beyond the community and get access to ever greater external resources, villagers become more vigilant about the possibility that their leaders are bribed and corrupted by the central government. To reflect this, Shuar draw a distinction between, on the one hand, local government, where they have been able to appoint and somewhat successfully control their leaders, and, on the other hand, the central government, or '*el gobierno*'. When Shuar talk about *el gobierno,* they have in mind the state president, Rafael Correa, and his entourage of mestizo politicians, who command an inexhaustible reservoir of riches, a perception which is reinforced as sizeable yearly budgets are broadcast through radio announcements and in political rallies.

To a great extent, Shuar project onto the central government their antagonism towards mestizo society. Market towns are worlds of riches where people have constant electricity, running water, cobbled streets, TVs – all goods which figure prominently in villagers' petitions to brokers. But towns are also worlds of degeneration, filled with drunkenness, prostitution, and drug trafficking. Besides, as alluded to in Chapter 3, many of my informants have a prototypically negative image of mestizo people who are depicted as stingy, lazy and disrespectful to the point of acting in a crazy or deranged (*waun*) manner. Villagers frequently express worries that as their

---

[91] However, personalist politics is also inherently divisive. While Shuar are aware that they need to unite if they are to elect, say, a Shuar prefect, there is no hiding of the fact that every *centro* tries to position their own candidates at the level of the parish or county, and that once these 'local' candidates are placed in government, their job is to drum up resources for their 'closest' constituents, meaning their relatives and most immediate *socios.* If political leaders gain prominence by successfully diverting public resources towards their households and communities, they do so by skilfully navigating a competitive network of coalitions and divisions within Shuar society. Electoral politics has opened yet another space of strife for Shuar political titans.

officials spend most of their time in towns and enjoy the wealth, food, and pleasures of the city, they can end up turning into mestizo urban dwellers. Underlying this concern is the idea that by living with mestizos and consuming the latter's substances, leaders shift perspectives and are unable to identify with their own people; a widespread perception in Amazonia (see, e.g. Santos-Granero 2009:507; Virtanen 2009:349). However, the anxiety of turning into a mestizo person is not limited to the leaders; the same idea lies at the root of villagers' anxiety about eating the 'mixed' foodstuffs of the colonist, as we saw above.

These feelings of vulnerability are no doubt intensified by the awareness that Shuar officials are dealing with deceitful state masters. As noted in Chapter 1, in recent years there has been a surge of confrontation between Shuar and Correa's government. Shuar hold the central government responsible for the mining laws, oil auctions, taxes and all forms of traps with which native people are fooled into surrendering their land. People have heard numerous stories of the conspiratorial methods used by government officials to expropriate indigenous lands. Windfall remittances from oil figure prominently in these stories. The idea is that the president offers extraordinary sums of money in return for permission to exploit native lands. These fortunes are said to vanish into thin air as soon as the deal is struck and people are slowly left to starve and die from pollution. Another common fear is that the government distributes gifts to poison Shuar people.

As a result, Shuar villagers want their brokers to prey upon the state without falling prey to its tricks. Leaders are thus continuously reminded to resist any governmental insinuation that Shuar should give anything in return for the wealth they receive. The logic of the political game seems to be: either extract or be extracted. Shuar thus seek to invert an inherently asymmetric and tense relationship with the government by framing the role of their leaders as unilaterally extracting state wealth.

Consider for example the way Maria, an elderly woman, spoke to a couple of officials who visited Kuamar to garner support for the re-election of Marcelino:

> I greet you my brother [*umar*] Luis Samik and my son [*uchir*] Rómulo Acachu (...) I encourage you, you are not colonists, you can hear/understand me [speaking Shuar] because you're not colonists. You're drinking manioc beer because you're not colonists. We elected you so that you help us (...). Don't deceive us like some do (...). When we will have the road, [like colonists do] in the city, our children will go to school like the children of the colonists, without getting covered in mud (...). In the past we were defeated by the colonists, and we used to suffer. Leaders [*uunt*], speak with strength so that you can build the road until here. The road isn't going to get built unless you supervise the [*mestizo*] contractors and drivers working there, those good-for-nothing beer-drinkers (...) [Now you have to] be strong! (...) We didn't elect

you so that you extract oil, I don't agree with that, we don't need it. I didn't educate my son [also an official] for that.

As Maria makes clear in her speech, now that Shuar are in control of formal politics, their needs ought not to come second to those of the colonists. What is more, Shuar are now in a position to oversee the work of the colonists and this is precisely what Maria commands the leaders to do if the road is going to get built. Maria also engages the leaders in an exercise of 're-identification' as Shuar people and urges them not to fall prey to the government's deals.

Maria also reminds the officials that villagers are aware some of them are deceitful. Villagers are very explicit in forcibly reminding their leaders that they should work for the interests of Shuar people, avoiding collusion with the state. Villagers' speeches to their leaders are filled with undertones and half-concealed critiques, and are frequently imperative in character, constituting veritable harangues in which leaders are reminded that they may easily lose villagers' support if they attempt deceit. From my conversations with villagers and leaders alike, it is clear that political deceit may take different forms. The most common is hoarding wealth, the reason why leaders are subject to constant pleading and relentless demands. Another possibility is treason. Political sagas are filled with more or less conspiratorial stories of leaders who work undercover for the government. A third, routinely stressed form of deceit is the leaders' attempt to benefit at the expense of their electorate by demanding a return for the resources they furnish. That is, while leaders are required to reciprocate villagers' electoral support with external wealth, they cannot in turn impose on villagers any kind of reciprocal obligation in exchange for their services. Indeed, in their visits to *centros,* leaders continually ward off public critique on this point by making explicit to villagers that they are not trying to trick them by demanding a return. Consider the following exchanges: 'If there is a strike or war, we know what happens in the city because we also travel.' With this statement, a *socio* from Pampants reminded the officials of the provincial government that although villagers live far away they find ways to keep themselves informed and cannot easily be tricked. To this, the president of the parish replied trying to reassure the people of Pampants that officials remained committed to providing villagers with resources and advising them on how to bring their resources to fruition so that villagers did not need to worry about reciprocating their services. He told the villagers,

> We're saying that it's good that you sell and make money [*suruka kuit achírmakminrum*], but not so that you give us something back [*awainki surustárum*].

We will see the relevance of the president's advice that villagers 'sell and make money' below when we look at how external wealth may be funnelled not only for the sake of achieving

self-sufficiency but also for the sake of progress. For now let me briefly recapitulate in more interpretive terms what sort of relationship villagers seek to establish with the state and by extension with their leaders.

The way villagers conceive of their dealings with the central government throws into sharp relief an underlying logic of predation, a primary mode of relation with the outside for Jivaroan people. What Shuar aim to avoid is entering into balanced, reciprocal dealings with the state, and this is precisely what a relationship of predation manages to achieve. As described by Descola (2013), predation is a form of negative asymmetry that involves taking something from someone without offering anything in return. What characterises predation is indeed "the stubborn rejection of any freely accepted reciprocity", as the captor places higher value on his/her appropriation of vital substances and resources than on "the free play of their circulation" (ibid.:342). Predation has underpinned the relations that Shuar have established with humans and non-humans from whom they have procured vital substances (i.e. prey game) and identity principles, as in the *arutam* and head-shrinking complex (i.e. anonymous elder's spirit and Jivaroan enemies). There are two reasons it makes sense that Shuar adopt predation as a mode of relating to the central government. Firstly, because, it is perceived to be largely managed by mestizo people, and the latter have figured as the primary targets of symbolic capture and enmity, at least since the creation of the federations (see Ch.6, see also Hendricks 1988:235). Secondly, because it is the state that possesses most of the valuable resources that Shuar require for living well. Descola defines predation as a phenomenon of productive appropriation "that is indispensable for the perpetuation of individuals" and "a paradoxical means of incorporating the deepest kind of otherness while remaining faithful to themselves" (2012b:455).[92] This is at heart the sort of relationship Shuar aim to establish with mestizo society: they want to capture mestizo resources while reproducing their own sense of worth and self-sufficiency in the process.

As was seen in Chapter 3, the process of appropriation from the outside is particularly relevant to understanding how some Amazonian societies resort to external resources and alterity in the process of generating internal productivity and thereby producing the good life of local autonomy, sociability and tranquillity.

But can Shuar successfully preserve this sort of autonomy, sociability and tranquillity when working with state resources? There is some evidence that they do. As the next part of the chapter will illustrate, projects are a good example of how this is achieved by mobilising the

---

[92] This is in keeping with other scholarly work in Amazonia (Overing 1981, 1993:196-99; Taylor 1993, 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1993:184-192; Fausto 1999, 2001; Surrallés 2003; Santos-Graneros 2009:478) which similarly identifies predation as the cardinal relational schema used by some Amazonian societies to structure their relations with various kinds of 'others'.

community to generate wealth while simultaneously loosening its grip in order to maintain everyday domestic autonomy.

Projects and contracts: wealth in the *centro*

De-collectivising community projects: autonomy and mutuality at work

One morning, the people of Kuamar welcomed the visit of a group of technical trainers from the provincial government who came to run a reforestation workshop. As usual the event mobilised extraordinary levels of participation and good humour among villagers who were extremely curious to learn how on earth one could find any use in planting more trees when there were so many already in the forest. The leader of the trainers first briefed the assembly about the different phases of implementation of the tree nurseries, and then introduced a few methods for carrying out 'community work'. She instructed villagers about the importance of using worksheets in order to develop a local rota system to distribute daily tasks: watering the plants, weeding the plots, etc. At this point Manuel, who had invited the trainers, intervened to clarify that 'since his family would be responsible for all the work, the worksheets and all those methods wouldn't be necessary'. A bit confused by this intervention, the trainer insisted that the project would require 'community work', reasoning that 'a family alone is not going to be able to sustain all the necessary work'. In her experience, the trainer said, 'these projects tended to fail because people don't commit to work together'. At this point, Germán, the president of Kuamar felt compelled to intervene. This is what he said:

> Look Mrs. Engineer, in the past we have tried this community method you're suggesting but it just doesn't work for us. At first, everyone says 'we will work together' and then nobody shows up. Here every family is responsible for its own thing. We have granted permission to Manuel to do this project and if he calls a *minga*, we will do *minga* for him but every one of us has other [household] responsibilities to mind.

The organisation of spontaneous *mingas* reveals a great deal about how Shuar villagers continue to conceptualise cooperation. Informal work parties are preferably carried out between sibling and affinal households and are generally conducted in an atmosphere of playful sociability – fuelled by loads of food, manioc beer, laughter and conversation. The *mingas*, as well as occasional feasts, present an occasion for affirming inter-household ties and alliances, to exchange news and gossip, and, above all, to have a drinking party to break the monotony of everyday life.

It is interesting to note here that previous ethnographers have on the whole highlighted the potentially obligatory and coercive aspects of *minga*. This is because a *minga* is not exactly a

native institution. *Minga* derives from the Kichwa *minka*, the name for a collective work of obligatory character organised at the instigation of a central leader[93] (Descola 1982a:231; but see Whitten 1985:95). Shuar adopted the institution around the time they were creating cooperatives and *centros* to denominate the larger work parties they began to organise to build and maintain community services; that is, more or less at the time that missionaries, and subsequently federation leaders intensely promoted the value of communal cooperation (Ch.2). Prior to that, Shuar did have collective work parties, which they designated as 'an invitation to work' (*takat iniampramu*), but these typically only happened between interrelated households. As Mader and Gippelhauser note (2000:75), upon receiving an invitation to work, people were "at liberty to either accept the invitation, or to excuse themselves because of urgent work in their own household or because of bad dreams". By contrast, *mingas* have introduced a system of fines for missed attendances. This has led previous ethnographers to argue that the adoption of the *minga* system reflects an "evolution in the representation of the relations of solidarity" (Descola 1982a:232). If in the pre-*centro* system, the invitations were more the pretext for entertainment, in the *centro* system, the frequency of the *minga* (Descola mentions a frequency of 3-4 days a week in the mid-1970s) makes the *minga* more demanding, even when it does give way to some feasting. Hendricks (1988:226) also observes that the idea of working for the community in biweekly *minga*s (in the mid-1980s) contributed to impressing upon Shuar an abstract idea of work, because they worked on the orders of the village president at specified times.[94]

In Kuamar, there were very few *centro mingas* summoned by the president, and this usually happened at the instigation of the assembly, and certainly not more than once or twice every month. Except for the roll call at the start of the *centro minga*, I did not perceive substantial differences between *centro* and inter-household *mingas*: in *centro minga*s, villagers could easily excuse themselves from participation, although too many and too frequent excuses could transform someone into "an independent" who preferred to live at the margins of the community. Also, the president did not attempt to impose orders, work was flexibly performed and villagers placed much emphasis upon sociability during and after the work itself.

In *mingas* organised for productive projects, participants help other households but do not share responsibility for the outcome of the work or for the use of resources. Co-participants,

---

[93] For a brief history of how *mingas* among Amazonian Kichwa went from being relatively relaxed affairs to being codified as mandatory in the Ecuadorian 1937 Commons Law, see Erazo (2010:1024).

[94] Only once did I witness a case in which a *minga* took the form of external imposition. The president of Kuamar assigned 'community work' to a *socio* as a form of light punishment for a case of non-serious adultery, although the punishment was sought by the wife and welcomed by her adulterous husband. For community work codified as punishment in Awajun community charters, see Brown (1984:119).

therefore, do not become co-proprietors and, as a result, they can never control the labour of others. So whilst Shuar perform 'community work' – for example, by attending the meetings and workshops necessary to funnel external resources – they also try to de-collectivise the actual implementation of the projects so as to preserve domestic autonomy. Whilst villagers use the community as a channel for obtaining funding, they then revert to their own style of organising labour and cooperation on the basis of mutuality.

Mutuality involves affective interactions based on respectful engagement and appreciation. Villagers strongly emphasise that the purpose of sharing food and offering a hand at work does not have any purpose other than that of coming together. Incidentally, for villagers, *mingas* are key to combating the dark side of mutuality – that is, the perennial risk of conflict, sorcery and illness provoked by neighbours. As a result, they are also one of the first group activities to be affected when there are grave tensions in the community.

The style of cooperation in voluntary groups is significantly different from the centralised rota system proposed by the workshop trainers. The rota system presupposes that someone takes responsibility for assigning and overseeing the work; that everyone shares responsibility for the general outcome; and that participants work separately, each carrying out a task at a specified time in the pursuit of efficient community work. According to the trainers, a key advantage of the rota system is that villagers would be able to calculate individual input, thus creating a proportional division of labour, something that villagers do not find necessary in work parties, where sociability is an end in and of itself. Another advantage, the trainers later insisted, is that villagers would not have to rely on the goodwill of other community members turning up to the *mingas*; but, as Shuar see it, a successful collective endeavour is premised precisely on their mutual trust that others will turn up. Somewhat ironically, therefore, what the trainers call 'community work' appears to Shuar villagers as less communistic than their own model of cooperation. By rejecting the rota system, the villagers of Kuamar were thus defending their freedom from imposed supervision and their preference for choosing cooperation partners on the basis of positive mutuality and individual preference. But they were also upholding their own understanding of trust. I find it useful here to turn to Ingold, who defines trust as a peculiar combination of autonomy and dependency (2000:69). In this sort of trusting relationship, "any attempt to impose a response, to lay down conditions or obligations that the other is bound to follow, would represent a betrayal of trust and a negation of the relationship" (ibid.:70). This kind of trust does involve an element of risk – the risk that the other party on whose actions I depend may act contrary to my expectations.

Readers may be wondering what, if any, is the purpose of working collectively to drum up resources if the fruits of labour go to individual households. It is worth remembering that community leaders and higher-up brokers are responsible for attracting governmental aid, but they need to demonstrate that they have the backing of the assembly. So, villagers establish a certain reciprocity in their management of the *centro* structure to funnel resources: a family attends the workshops and assemblies necessary to demonstrate support for the projects that will benefit other families, and will in turn subsequently benefit from the support of others. Ideally, a community works to obtain as many different projects as there are ideas for projects in the *centro*. The system guarantees domestic autonomy not only at the level of work but also in terms of activity choice, for, as villagers repeatedly assert, 'Shuar do not all want to do the same', 'every person and family is very different from the others'. Whilst villagers do depend on one another to attract and manage state wealth, they choose to practice a sort of mutuality that remains voluntary, freely terminable and that involves the preservation of the personal autonomy of all parties.

There are however occasions when villagers enter more contractual sorts of obligations, for the sake of generating productiveness.

The community as client: working for the sake of progress

So far, I have presented the community as an instrument to generate productiveness. But communities also require a continuous inflow of work and resources to go on existing. Villages are made more permanent by an increasing number of public works and services (better and more resistant trails, cement schools, electrification systems, collection centres, trenches, etc.). Most public works are built in the urban centre (Sp. *urbanización*). 'The *urbanización* enlivens the community!' is what villagers say. Indeed, it is in the urban centre that people gather to play football, host festivals, discuss political nominations, run workshops, etc. If the urban centre of a community does not look well maintained and developed – for example, if it lacks a school, the trails are overgrown, or the central plaza is not weeded – visitors will see this as a lack of organisation and unity, which reflects badly on the 'good government' that villagers aim to demonstrate. Villagers thus strive to keep their communities tidy and to build public structures that show that they are capable of cooperating with one another and that they are skilled enough to harness resources to embellish and develop their communities. Most people I met truly relished public infrastructures and services: they not only found them beautiful but also considered that they have made life considerable more joyful and less painful. One day that I returned from town and asked a group of women in Kuamar if there had been electricity in the

centro (a rare event in any case), Juana Rosa replied, 'No, we are suffering.' Similarly, I heard the same commentary about the lessening of suffering in relation to the advent of running water and the approaching road. People routinely talk about the importance of multiplying public works for making the community grow and develop so as to generate productiveness (*ipiampamu*). From this we see that, as well as being a means to achieve productiveness, the community is itself a form of productiveness – thus improving the community becomes an end in and of itself. This insight will be relevant to understand why villagers are willing to enter contractual obligations, as I discuss in the next section. But just before I turn to that, let me take a diversion to the urban centre of Pampants where a festival of 'community productiveness' is underway.

The morning has been punctuated by a series of spectacular arrivals. The thumping of a couple of light aircraft announces that two of the most important official guests of the day, Marcelino, the prefect, and Francisco, the president of the FICSH have arrived. The welcoming of the authorities is initiated, as usual, by the offering of manioc beer from some women of the community and effusive handshakes from the president and other *socios*. Meanwhile we are engulfed by a general uproar as villagers gather to watch the more humble entrance of the president of the parish and his aides as they disembark from the dusty 4x4 pickup truck with which José, a teacher and owner of the vehicle, has managed to become the new target of envy and admiration in Pampants. The excitement however is provoked not just by the perennially interesting arrival of the vehicle but also by the sound system with which the officials of the parish pay tribute to the festivity. Now everyone knows that they will dance Amazonian techno cumbia until the early hours of the morning. A few minutes later, we see all the guest authorities and the main authorities of the *centro* on the football pitch from where they lead a rather short parade into the roofed-house.

The master of ceremonies or perhaps I should say the masters of ceremonies, since the microphone keeps changing hands, effusively proclaim their names and persistently rehearse the ditty of the day: 'The *socios* welcome you to the 33rd anniversary of [the founding of] Pampants!' As the procession of authorities concludes the parade, our attention turns to a marching band of high school students dressed in impeccable uniforms and armed with drums, xylophones and cymbals intoning some well-known military theme. Meanwhile inside the roofed-house, under the scorching heat produced by the tin roof, wooden tables have been lined up and decorated with the name of each 'producer' – the husband or wife of the residential units participating in the display of products. On each of the tables, we see a collection of shiny produce – cacao fruit, peanuts, sugar cane, ginger, *tagua*, manioc, sweet potato, pineapple, palm hearts, corn, plantain,

taro, snails, and palm grubs and more – which, except for the conspicuous absence of game, makes for a veritable explosion of forest food. This is after all, as the president of the *centro* broadcasts in his euphoric address to guest authorities and other visitors, is only the second '*expo-feria*' (an agricultural exhibition – also called 'market') ever celebrated by the community.

Before the authorities are invited to inspect the tables' to taste the produce and chat with the producers, the public are entertained by a series of buzzing speeches from the makeshift stage built at one end of the roofed-house. The speeches refer not only to the products on display – the proof of the hard work of the *socios* – but also to the array of projects and public works that constitute the wealth of the *centro*. The following is an excerpt from the speech delivered by the prefect:

> Mr. President, you just asked me about the collection centre [space used to gather cash crops and to organise other collective activities]. No problem. Once we finish building the road, we're going to construct that too (...) so that you have more space to do your trade, your assemblies, sports, and cultural activities, everything you wish (...) you will have my support to boost the development of our people. To all the people gathered today in Pampants I say the following: continue doing more productive activities, do not dismay (...) I'm really glad that there is someone here who owns a car [referring to the pickup track owned by the schoolteacher], so we need more of you buy cars because now that we have the road, we're going to start trading [Sp. *comercializar*] and to trade we need transportation, isn't it the case?

Public works such as roads, airstrips, schools, football pitches, collection centres and even brass bands, as well as productive activities such as cash crops and the exhibitions demonstrating the marketable potential of internally produced food (Ch.6) together all constitute the productiveness of the community. Or, as the prefect and many other Shuar put it, they embody 'development (Sp. *desarrollo*) and progress'. In addition to this multitude of 'work of the people', there are various collective events undertaken by the *socios* as a collectivity: assemblies, sports, project workshops, cultural events, all of which go by the name of *programas*. As the brief description of the festival suggests, *programas* are rewarding in and of themselves. But how do villagers go from pursuing productive projects in order to enhance their own domestic wellbeing to pursuing community productiveness and the development of the *centro*? And, relevant to this, if villagers are being encouraged to start trading as a means to community development, just how are they able to purchase items like cars, as the teacher had done? Consideration of state contracts may give us some answers.

State contracts are an alternative way of accessing wealth. Only individuals, rather than whole communities, can become contractors, even though contractors then pool cheap labour

from the community. This is how this might happen. A local broker embarks on the usual business of funnelling state resources, but instead of securing a project, he or she gets a public work contract from a Shuar official working in one of the three levels of local government.

To carry out the work, a contractor employs other people in the community. Thus, to benefit from state resources by way of a contract, villagers must become day labourers, subject to external orders and conditions. Since a contractor usually only receives full payment upon completion and external auditing of the work, the broker is prompted to impose conditions and deadlines upon the performance of the work. What's more, the system of deferred payment gives the upper hand to state officials, since they draft the terms of the contract.

Although the acquisition of both productive projects and contracts is predicated on brokerage, only contracts end up establishing a full-blown system of patronage. Through contracts, villagers become clients: they depend considerably more on Shuar officials to receive full payment for their work and to obtain future contracts. Individuals who develop client relations with officials tend to refer to their patrons as 'friends' (*amikri*), modelling the terms of the contract on the system of reciprocal exchanges they have with ceremonial partners. As noted in Chapter 2, such a system involves a pair of men in ritualised, non-incremental exchanges over a long period. That Shuar should find similarities between ritual friendship and market contracts is not entirely surprising considering that ritual friendships are the only traditional institution premised on a form of 'contractual' solidarity. The gifts exchanged between *amikri* in fact carry the connotation of binding debts (*tumash*) and their obligatory character[95] differs from the forms of mutual generosity that characterise the exchanges of food gifts among kin, which, far from calling for equivalent returns, create attachment (Descola 2012a:452; Taylor 2015:147). The specific kind of trustworthiness that ceremonial friendships elicit may also buttress an analogy with contracts. As contractual relations, ceremonial friendships are highly individualised and invite a kind of infallible trust that has less to do with psychological empathy than with statutory obligation (Taylor 2015:148), of the sort Mauss thought necessary to instil peace and exchange (1966; see also Sahlins 1972:175). By contrast, in non-obligatory, everyday relations, trust rests on a peculiar combination of autonomy and mutuality that must be continuously recreated, as intimate everyday relations never cease to involve an element of risk and uncertainty. However, nothing in the institution of formal friendship comes close to the coercive potential of the

---

[95] Two other characteristics of ceremonial friendships further illuminate the strengths and limitations of the analogy with contractual exchange. The first, which supports the analogy, is that the *amikri* system has been one of the few ways of creating solidarity among unrelated persons. The second, which limits it, is Surrallés's insightful observation to the effect that the *amikri* system is underpinned by a logic of mutual aid, which differs from the notion of exchange premised on exaction and debt (2009:211).

contract. To be effective, market contracts depend on a threat of "punishment if workers withhold their labour or buyers fail to pay up" (Hart and Hann 2011:30-31). In fact, contractors cannot make that threat alone: they require administrative power and institutional resources: government, laws, prisons, and police – all instruments which are now within the range of the Shuar officials delivering contracts. Punishment related to broken contracts has indeed emerged among Shuar. Once, in Kuamar, news broke that a villager from a nearby *centro* had needed to flee because some officials were chasing him to send him to prison as he had sold the cattle they had given him as part of a contract.[96] Furthermore, ceremonial trade, is predicated on the equality of the trade partners, so when people use the idiom of friendship to describe the relations engendered by contracts they appear to be masking (or perhaps subverting) the increasingly hierarchical relationships that some villagers develop with officials.

Contracts also reinforce a trend towards accumulation started by salaried workers. In fact, a new group of Shuar professionals (comprising of state officials and schoolteachers) distinguish themselves in the community by their ability to accumulate resources. It is telling that of the few people who still own cattle, most are professionals who receive a school or public salary with which they are able to hire others in the *centro* to help them with the ranching work. Officials are also able to renovate their houses, buy sound systems, home appliances and cars. All of these commodities eventually turn out to be useful to others in the *centro,* so the professionals' ability to accumulate turns them into internal patrons or sponsors.

Not a day goes by in which professionals are not subjected to requests for compassionate sharing by their insistent kin and neighbours. Increasingly, however, redistribution takes place in the form of paid work as professionals use their salaries to hire villagers to do the farm work they no longer have the time to do. Thanks to the commissions they receive, contractors have joined this class of professionals by becoming occasional moneylenders and work suppliers in the community.

At times, the contract system may also engender a chain of other informal deals, with every contractor underpaying labourers at the next level. This is similar to what Hugh Jones described for the Barasana Indians, who passed onto their relatives the informal work debts they

---

[96] According to Taylor, the institution of ritual friendship, which is "located at the crossroads of potential affinity and meta-consanguinity", offers a condensed indigenous model of society that could prove "a privileged terrain" for the insertion of state institutions and "true power" (2015:153-54). The present articulation of market contract and ceremonial friendship provides great impetus for exploring Taylor's hypothesis. Note that, ceremonial partnerships were also key in introducing market relations during the 'golden years' of the mission. For an interesting and contrasting case in which friendship is the notion through which oil workers seek to promote 'mutualism' and exchange with Amazonian peoples, see Rival's discussion of how the Waorani challenge exchange relations with an oil company by applying a logic of demand-sharing that underpins host-guest relations (2015:282-284).

had contracted with mestizo cocaine dealers and rubber gatherers, by disguising them under ties of kinship and affinity (1992:69). In the case of state contracts among Shuar, the difference is that the patrons are Shuar officials and that the practice is legitimised by invoking community development. As Gudeman argues, while mutuality and trade are two different strategies of production, "they may subsume, veil (...) or absorb features of the other" (2008:14). For instance, on one occasion, a villager of Kuamar enlisted the support of his mother-in-law and sisters-in-law to help him with a contract to build a trench to transport water to the schoolhouse. He paid them less than 50% of his total contract gain. In turn, the women enlisted the help of other young, unmarried men to finish the work faster and rewarded them with manioc beer. In this last example, the women were treating the extra labourers as if they had been summoned to a *minga*. We thus see here the potential for mutuality to support emerging forms of exploitation.

Considering what I have said about the intimate connection between generative capacities and production and the value of autonomy and mutuality in the organisation of work, a crucial question is why villagers agree to enter these deals.

I can suggest a couple of interrelated reasons. The first is that people really value any form of 'collective work' for the creation of community development. I have shown that villagers prefer to use the *minga* system when implementing productive projects. But, as I noted in Chapter 4 with the example of Torka in Kuamar, *mingas* are also occasionally called by the president of the community to carry out a task of general benefit or when the community requires maintenance work ahead of a yearly festival. Apart from these community *mingas*, there are very few occasions when villagers agree to work collectively for a third party in return for payment or benefits in pursuit of a community goal. Although these agreements are rare and extremely difficult to organise, their exceptionality makes them hugely rewarding for participants. However, agreements of this sort can also be "colonised" by the logic of the contract. For example, the villagers of Pampants requested a cow for the celebration of the yearly festival from a local cattleman, who donated it on the condition that villagers would clear two hectares of his field. Although agreements of this sort had taken place informally in previous years, in 2013 the cattleman asked to have it written down as an 'act of commitment' (Sp. *acta de compromiso*) (see appendix 4), lest, he said, 'villagers forget their obligation once the fun of the festival lay behind them'. This type of work straddles the boundary between *minga* and contract: while the transaction becomes increasingly formalised with a legal authority implicitly guaranteeing the deal, villagers retain relative autonomy with regards to the way in which they work and the equal distribution of the rewards among everyone.

The public contract, by contrast, enables the broker to accumulate on behalf of the community while specifying conditions to perform the work. It is striking, all the same, that villagers do not draw the same grim conclusions about public contracts. This is because when a new public work is built, the community is made bigger, it becomes more organised, more beautiful, and as a result, the leader is seen as engendering productiveness. What I am suggesting is that, in addition to the occasional income villagers can earn, the final outcome of the contract, the beautiful and highly desirable public works, significantly contributes to overshadowing the inequality between contractor and daily labourer.

Contracts are a legal instrument through which mutuality is co-opted and autonomy may ultimately be undermined for the sake of community development. But of more significance here is that contracts also pave the way for the cultivation of new economic attitudes.

One of the key challenges faced by Shuar officials is to comply with the framework of accountability of the institutions they serve, for example, the requirement to audit the allocation of public resources. Shuar officials therefore struggle to introduce a different regime of accountability that would allow them to impose conditions on the provision of resources such as projects.[97] Brokers are aware that changes in local attitudes would be necessary for villagers to comply with such a framework. For instance, one day I accompanied Santiago, a Shuar official, to an informal political meeting where his friends, all veteran politicians, proffered some advice concerning 'how to speak to Shuar people during electoral campaigns'. One of the politicians told Santiago that he needed to persuade villagers that the best way officials could serve their electorate was not by providing them with projects but through legislation and the audit of public works. In other words, formal leaders may try to reconfigure how they are viewed by villagers, in order to move away from being treated as wealth-purveyors and instead assume an overseeing role more appropriate to their functions as state officials.

Leaders deploy ingenious ways of illustrating the importance of accountability to Shuar villagers. For example, during a *centro* festival, the president of the parish launched into a lecture seeking to inculcate in villagers the value of gratitude. Through an amusing narrative, the president told villagers that they did not show enough gratitude to their leaders. Shuar have 'inverted thoughts' (*achápai enentai*), he said, because instead of thanking those who help them, they criticise them. He then compared the villagers' attitudes to the behaviour of a mythical

---

[97] For an interesting case in which "the representatives of indigenous people" (i.e. FUNAI) seek to impose accountability on the Brazilian Enawene-Nawe see Nahum-Claudel (2012:455). But there are also cases in Amazonia in which villagers/commoners themselves try to capture such devices of accountability to guarantee equality (Brown 1984:110) or to offset growing inequalities and limit leaders' redistributive authority (Fisher 2000:181).

woman called Auju, who personifies gluttony. In this well-known myth[98], Auju is transformed into a potoo bird[99] and condemned to cry *aujuuu-aujuuu* on full-moon nights. She received this punishment after her husband, the Sun (Etsa), discovered that she had been eating ripe squashes while cleverly denying him dinner. Just like Auju, the president said, Shuar eat the goods they receive but do not want to make them grow. For this reason, the president continued, the authorities of the parish were now implementing 'work with documents (*papi*) and signatures (*kuésma*[100])', so that they could account who had received what. With the signatures, the leaders could show the villagers that 'they don't lie or try to deceive them'.

With stories such as this one, leaders try to invert the direction of power and accountability: instead of leaders having to demonstrate their loyalty to villagers, villagers should be thankful to their leaders for the goods they receive from them. More importantly, villagers should change their ways of managing the resources they receive: to consume them all is to be selfish gluttons like Auju, that's gluttony. Instead, they should try to increase their returns.

During a political meeting, the prefect illustrated this line of reasoning with the following comparison:

> If I give chickens to the colonists, the next time I visit them, they will have doubled their chicken flock, but if I give chicken to Shuar people when I return to see them, there will be no chicken! The owners will tell me that a fox ate their chicken. I have the impression Shuar only like to ask, and haven't yet learned to return. Well, nothing comes for free; there is no progress without commitment.

The accountability promoted by the leaders does not simply imply that Shuar should commit to clearly defined conditions of work, as in the case of contracts, or to be responsible and ensure good management of the resources they receive, as in the case of projects. It also means that Shuar should commit to progress; that is, they should change their mode of work so that they can gradually sell their foodstuffs and replenish their subsistence base. Leaders continuously encourage villagers to work harder so that they will be able to sell their produce and make money. In so doing, leaders strive to promote a different understanding of growth and productiveness.

As mentioned above, a long-standing way in which villagers try to generate productiveness is by multiplying their crops and animals. Productiveness in this sense is geared towards the wellbeing of the family; it is a means to support each household. To this end, villagers deploy an

---

[98] The reader interested in this myth could find versions of it in Rueda & Tankamash' (1983:105), Barrueco (1988:21-22), Pellizzaro (1993:72-75) and Descola (1996b:69).

[99] *Nyctibiidae.*

[100] A kind of scratching on a surface frequently rendered as 'signature' when referred to documents.

ethic of self-sufficiency – tied to ideas of the 'good life' – whereby they continuously replenish their subsistence base through a combination of hard work and the mastery of relations with powerful others in control of external wealth. This is an effort undertaken day-by-day which has little room for future reserves and none for accumulation. By contrast, the growth that leaders promote, while emphasising the value of self-sufficiency, entails a different strategy focused on the optimisation of resource management and the increase of work productivity with the aim of making Shuar self-reliant in the market.

The leaders with whom I have discussed these issues think that this model is desirable as it would allow Shuar villagers to become independent from state wealth and pay for the community services they are so keen to acquire: water, electricity, and transportation. The model of self-reliance that leaders have in mind is, of course, one based on entirely different economic premises from the self-sufficiency of the 'good life', for it presupposes that Shuar would become either full-time commercial farmers or salaried workers. Hence, from being a means to achieve autonomy, the community itself with all its public works and services turns into a kind of good that activates new forms of subordination to larger powers.

Some villagers are receptive to this message. As *centros* grow in size and new facilities and services create novel forms of obligations, they are increasingly inclined to work for payment, even at the cost of compromising autonomy and mutuality.

One day I was chatting with Manuel as we made our way home after a *minga*. Manuel told me that the reason one of his brothers-in-law, Simalesa, was not at the *minga* was that he had started working for a contractor in another community. This fact got Manuel thinking about how one should go about working and living. Thinking aloud Manuel said,

> In a few months Simalesa might be able to buy a car, so he's right to take so many contracts (...). But what do we [other villagers] do instead? We complain because he doesn't come to *mingas*. So while he's making money, we're just living in *shuarologia* (...). As I see it, education everywhere is teaching people how to make money, it's teaching them to produce. I have seen in my visions that Kuamar will be a large city, so we will need more and more people like Simalesa who can maintain the city and offer new services. In fact, who is going to be responsible for the city? Our children will. This is why we have to think seriously about productiveness.

Manuel's words reveal a twist to the notion of productiveness, which suggests that 'to think seriously about it', involves making money. Meanwhile, *shuarologia* (in this case gossip), the chitchat about those who forgo the *mingas* to make their own fortunes, an attitude that would perhaps exert pressure on new patrons and counter a trend towards accumulation, is ideologically represented as an obstacle to progress.

Conclusion

In the introduction to a recent edited volume on 'Amazonian images of public wealth', Santos-Granero invites us to reconsider the archaic notion of wealth (*welthe*) as a better approximation of what Amazonian people mean by wealth. The author proposes that the Amazonian notion of public wealth better approximates the (European) archaic notion in which being wealthy indicates "the condition of being happy and prosperous" while referring to the "collective riches of a people" (Santos-Granero 2015:10). Both these notions would contrast with the more privatised (contemporary Western) conception of wealth as "a large amount of money and valuable material possessions" (ibid.:12).

My contention is that the more recent emphasis that Shuar villagers place upon the prosperity created through projects of development is indeed underpinned by an ongoing concern with the regeneration of the capacities of Shuar people and their wellbeing. So, while Shuar seem to devote their collective energies to the process of 'incorporating otherness' – as the resources and knowledge of development held captive in the treasure box of the state – they do so as a way of persisting being themselves; that is, in order to continue living prosperously and independently. However, as Descola (2013:342) reminds us, the predatory process is hardly innocuous for the captor who is in turn partly transformed by that which he or she captures and assimilates.[101]

I have shown that the ways in which productiveness is currently used in *centros* entail several points of rupture from previous understandings of the good life.

The first is the fact that wellbeing and productiveness are in great part achieved through a more recent emphasis on collective organised work. Through this work, the constant assemblage of forces that villagers channel to drum up resources as a community, another form of identity is being shaped: that of the *socio*. In the previous chapter and this, it has been my intention to show how this identity of the *socio* is gradually forged through tools of harmony and techniques of cooperation and brokerage, and how in the process a collectivity such as the *centro* is fashioned.

Another critical point of rupture is that the importance of political brokerage as a way of achieving life-sustaining capacities and autonomy simultaneously creates the conditions for the entrenchment of the state at the local level. Quite literally, on many levels Shuar officials have become the state; and while villagers work hard at preventing it from establishing its own register

---

[101] Greene reports similar strategies undertaken by the Awajun "to appropriate the state's nationwide promotion of expanding rural agricultural markets even while being appropriated by it" (2009:158). Rather than entering into contracts with authorities, the Awajun are leasing their land to mestizo rice growers.

of exchange and accountability, they only partially succeed in resisting patronage. In turn, while both projects and contracts may be said to capitalise on the personalist character of Shuar formal politics, contracts rigidify what is otherwise an extremely flexible and divisive system of alliances. The reason why resisting patronage is so complicated is that political brokerage is predicated on 'capturing the state', which, again, requires that at least some Shuar incorporate the state's most effective attributes; bureaucracy (e.g. the logic of accountability) and an emphasis on accumulation through profit. So, while brokerage is a system of capture, and to some extent resistance for Shuar people, it can also come to assume another face when it turns into a hierarchical system of patronage. When this happens, not only is there a reversion to predation, but predation can also be transformed into an altogether different relational schema: protection. Protection implies "the non-reversible domination of the protector over the one who benefits from that protection" (Descola 2012a:461). In the process of capturing state wealth, villagers thus begin to be enfolded and patronised by the state's paternalistic apparatus – all of this mediated by Shuar officials. As Graeber suggests, a system of mutual aid can easily slip into hierarchy. This happens when the "aid" offered is such that it generates unpayable debts, and thus do patron-client relations come into being (2011:116,119). Interestingly, Graeber compares the hierarchical system of patronage to the logic of the wage-labour contract: "a wage-labour contract is, ostensibly, a free contract between equals – but an agreement between equals in which both agree that once one of them punches the time clock, they won't be equals any more" (ibid.:120).

Presently, in the name of productiveness that materialises in the form of public works, a villager may use the resources of an external contract to recruit labour within the *centro* with the result that he or she will be accumulating consumer items while others will have alienated their labour. Since this kind of wage labouring continues to bear some kind of productive and tangible effect within the *centro*, villagers are less prone to recognise it as producing exploitation, i.e. one in which work is alienable and separable form the person. Wealth may therefore be acquired not only to reproduce internal capacities and sources of production but also to generate profit. Thus we can recognise work-attribute being gradually transformed into work-commodity, even though locally the difference between the two and the inequalities that result from this shift are somewhat obscured by the fact that, for Shuar, the notion of productiveness has itself become fused with the external, but highly desirable idea of development.

At the core of the notion of the good life lies a concern with the achievement of good nourishment and health, happy or tranquil moods, and the perpetuation of autonomy and the generative capacities of people. Additionally, as we saw in the review of pre-*centro* livelihoods in Chapter 2, the good life depends on the achievement of a certain equilibrium or, as Descola

called it (1996b:328-330), a homeostasis of the system of production. Descola claimed that for Jivaroan people, production did not entail "accumulating an unending list of consumer items, but arriving at the state of equilibrium they term the 'good life'" (ibid.:308). Equilibrium has been traditionally achieved by seeking to maintain control over the means and ends of production (non-alienated work), thereby avoiding man-man exploitation, two features that point towards the local prioritisation of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Descola argued that once Shuar shifted to a system oriented towards the production of exchange value, accumulation would naturally follow. In his view, this scenario was particularly likely given that Shuar lacked lineages, clans or anything that could have provided the institutional basis for the development of an ideology of a community village and a collective system of rights and duties to manage resources. Lacking this, he predicted that the *centros* would only reinforce an individualist tendency premised on domestic autonomy (1982:231).

In this chapter, I have tried to complicate Descola's analysis. Villagers' desire to foster self-sufficiency drives some of the innovations of collective life in *centros*: it pushes villagers to cooperate to funnel resources for each family. This cooperation does not however give rise to an ideology of collectivism, since, as we have seen, resources and work are de-collectivised so as to protect individual and domestic autonomy. Rather, it gradually gives rise to a notion of community wealth, a sort of public prosperity embodied in public works that to some extent benefit everyone, although it certainly benefits more the contractors in charge of overseeing the work. Community wealth is the sort of ideological basis upon which other forms of individual accumulation (and the resulting inequalities) are then justified.

It might be said that Shuar currently switch back and forth between different understandings and usages of community. Sometimes the community is simply a vehicle to access external wealth; that is, a set of techniques required for furthering internal wellbeing. When this happens, villagers reassert their own rationale in managing state wealth, resorting to a combination of autonomy and mutuality to organise internal work. In these cases, leaders only mediate but cannot impose conditions on the inflow of wealth and the arrangement of work. By contrast, when leaders control the distribution of wealth through contracts, they can impinge on the autonomy of their constituents and co-opt mutuality for the sake of progress. Even in these cases, villagers show a concern with autonomy and mutuality by reinserting reciprocity in their relations with officials through the idiom of friendship. A concern with autonomy is also manifest in the respect shown towards those individuals willing to undertake new economic activities even when this allows them to accumulate wealth. Indeed, villagers see the ability that leaders and neighbours have to 'make profit' as an important collective asset which can contribute to the

upkeep and development of their communities. At this point, autonomy seems to take on an aspirational character, more akin to the orthodox view held in capitalist societies where self-interest and individuals' fortunes are said to drive the economy and promote general wellbeing in spite of contributing to entrenching inequalities.

Locally, the consequences of this shift may be tremendous. Perhaps the most important is the specialisation of labour by ranking some clients higher than others on the basis of social and cultural capital. Not only are officials, that is those who possess academic credentials, the ones who distribute contracts, but contractors are usually villagers who have some degree of education and bureaucratic mastery.[102] I will devote the two final chapters of the dissertation to demonstrating how such a specialisation comes about and the crucial role that schooling and other institutions at the interface of Shuar and the state now play in creating the figure of a well-suited broker: the professional. But before turning to the construction of the professional, I shall first explore the ideology of productiveness at work in its full splendour in the festival of the *centro*.

Figure 7 – On the airstrip of Pampants. Socios *receiving a productive project's bounty*
Credits: Wilson Shimpiukat. 2013

---

[102] Contractors must have as minimum prerequisites their national IDs (Sp. cédula), their electoral certificate (Sp. papeleta de votación) and the equivalent of a national security number called RUC in Ecuador.

Chapter 6: The Festival of the *Centro*. Re-presenting formal order

> Nowadays it is this way: all the *centros* do their festivals. Before our elders did it differently (...) They used to peel the head of a sloth or kill and peel a person itself[103], and that was for them the festival [*námper*]. But this no longer exists. Today we celebrate the creation of our community. This is the festival. The youths play football, we become friends with one another and have fun. This is it, my sons. For this reason, I too am in Kuamar and think well [good thoughts]. I thank you all, the organisers of the festival and all those who are bringing forward the community of Kuamar. (Speech of the president of the *centro* 'Amazonas' during the festival of Kuamar, April 2013).

The *fiesta de la comunidad* (*irutkamu námper*), or festival of the community is a major event that celebrates the *centro*. Every one or two years and for the duration of three days, the *socios* of a *centro* invite members of neighbouring and distant communities and host a series of *programas* to pay tribute to their resolution to found a *centro*[104] and live together. Although the festival is not the only occasion in which villagers come together as a collectivity, it certainly is the only time when they do so publically by hosting other *centros*.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the relations that villagers establish with state authorities help to constitute the *centro* as an organised political and socioeconomic entity. This chapter continues this line of examination by looking at the relations that members of a *centro* establish with their neighbours – members of other *centros* – in the context of the festival.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance that Shuar villagers assign to this festivity. The very organisation of the festivity stands as a trial of cooperativeness whereby *socios* re-articulate increasingly important formal statuses and signal their commitment to the community. For example, in Pampants, villagers routinely assessed the political standing of resident families according to their degree of involvement in the annual festival of the community. The independents who kept apart and eschewed communal preparations risked being singled out in village assemblies as trouble-makers. By hosting a festival, villagers send a clear message of solidarity, collective organisation and vigour to their neighbours and enhance their political standing in inter-*centro* bids for elections and public funds. If the festival creates a context in which the *centro* is publically recognised, it also helps to popularise its formal model of

---

[103] Shuar famously celebrated *uunt námper*, "the big festival", festivals using shrunken heads (*tsantsa*) of Jivaroan enemies but, occasionally, of sloths (*uyush*), animals of mythological importance in which Shuar recognise human qualities. The sloth is said to be an elder from an enemy tribe (Karsten 2000:228).

[104] Unlike other groups in Amazonia where equivalent festivals are celebrated on the anniversary of receiving legal title (see Gow 1991:221), Shuar commemorate the decision to found a *centro*, usually a year or two before obtaining legal recognition.

organisation and to present it as a coherent outgrowth from Shuar traditional etiquette. Indeed, despite the relatively recent creation of *centros*, festivals are occasionally being publicised as ancestral or traditional festivities, thus being presented as major celebrations of Shuar culture and identity.[105]

Yet, while celebrating *centro* unity and Shuar culture, the series of *programas* featured in the festivals are largely modelled on the colonist festive repertoire. This is evident, for instance, in the urban foodstuffs provided to visitors (rice, beef stew and noodles), as well as in the items of the agenda. The latter range from organised sports (football, ecuavolley[106]) and staged contests (beauty pageants, singing and dancing competitions) to spectacular public ceremonies that mirror Ecuadorian national holidays (civic parades, expo-agricultural fairs). That the festival displays such a rich array of activities and symbols of external origin is intriguing considering its significance for the local imagining of Shuar communities. In fact, on the whole, the festival seems to constitute a fascinating example of internal celebration via external appropriation. So, what kind of 'inside' or 'internal image' does this outward-oriented celebration bring forth? This is the question I try to answer in this chapter.

Admittedly, some of the activities of the festival also occur in Shuar everyday life. For example, villagers play sports from time-to-time in the *centro* and children also stage performances in the yearly school *programas*. Urban foodstuffs and reared animals also occasionally circulate in the *centro*. This is the case of cattle. If game meat was the festive food of the past, beef is the festive food of the present and, as we shall see, the butchering and redistribution of a cow occupies a central place in the preparation of a community's festival. However, cattle are normally raised only for sale, and seldom eaten in everyday meals, while rice and noodles are specifically bought for the festival.

What deserves attention, therefore, is not that Shuar villagers incorporate football, cattle and school performances in their *programas*, as clearly these are features that play an important part in their lives. Rather, what deserves attention is the fact that with the festival villagers want to engage in a different way of celebrating, as we see in the opening speech by the president of Amazonas: 'today we celebrate the creation of our community (...) the youths play football', etc. During the festival all these 'different ways' are brought together as a sort of selective and condensed statement about what a *centro* is or should be, even if they are hardly representative

---

[105] Arguably, this is also the result of government forms that *centro* members must fill in to obtain funding to organise collective events. The applications for public funding introduced in 2013 asked native communities to justify their requests as geared towards the revalorisation of ancestral customs and the assertion of indigenous identity.

[106] A variation of volleyball invented in Ecuador.

of everyday life. In doing so, I argue that the festival invites an outward and forward-looking image of the *centro* and defines 'the inside' in relation to the surrounding mestizo world. By partially mirroring the outside, villagers present to themselves what they consider to be a progressive version of social reality, in this case, the dreamed or imagined future of their *centro*, as a way of shaping the present. However, as will become apparent throughout the chapter, the festival reconnects 'progress' to tradition as participants construct an image of collective unity premised on the proper use of speech and the authoritative ways of the elders.

In arguing that villagers use the festival to present to themselves a composite image of the past and the future as a way of forging the present, I treat the festival as an event that *re-presents* the lived-in world. According to Handelman (1998), public events that re-present create occasions for comparisons in relation to everyday social reality and offer propositions and counter-propositions.[107] By showing multiple visions of the possible, these events therefore enable alternative and emergent versions of the social to come into focus (1998:49). Therefore, in what follows my analysis will focus on three distinct images that villagers create through the activities of the festival, namely, social harmony, collective unity, and economic progress.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part starts from a brief account of 'social openness' or the appropriation of otherness in Amazonian ceremonial life. Through comparison with the festival life of the past, I examine the particular social configuration in which the contemporary festival of the community inserts itself. I then move on to discuss how villagers prepare a festival and the ways in which they mobilise a particular idea of united and organised community including the difficulties they encounter in the process. The second part of the chapter discusses the relations that villagers create with villagers of other *centros* – as *socios* – by detailing the roles and attitudes of hosts and guests during the festival as seen through speech and performance. To do this I dedicate a section to exploring the ideas, ambiguities and contradictions behind each of the three key themes emphasised during the festival: that harmony can be achieved by suffocating conflict; that unity emerges from harnessing the competitive spirit of the festival; and that the pursuit of conviviality sets the ground for the achievement of progress.

The ethnography of this chapter is based on the observation of three community festivals (in Kuamar, Achunts and Pampants; see map 2, p.38 and map 3, p.42). I supplement the analysis with comparative data from household parties and school *programas* I witnessed in other *centros* when relevant.

---

[107] In addition to events that re-present, Handelman has two other kinds of public events in his typology of public events: events that model, which make change happen within themselves that directly affect social realities; and events-that-present, which are axiomatic icons of versions of such realities.

Preparing the Scene

Appropriating otherness in the past and the present

The use of activities, places, and symbols in collective events that come from the exterior is frequent in some parts of contemporary Amazonia. In Peruvian Amazonia, Santos-Granero describes how football tournaments, school festivities and church gatherings at the village centre create moments of heightened sociality and generosity whereby Amuesha put in practice a highly valued conception of being a "big family" (1986:122). Gow documents similar festivities among the Piro. The key symbols of the festival of the Piro native community are all drawn from outside: "the title of the *Comunidad Nativa* comes from the 'government in Lima', the festival dates are mainly national holidays, the food served is 'fine food', and the guests are invited as neighbours" rather than as kin (1991:225). According to Gow, the 'civilized' tone of the festival serves to confirm the boundedness of contemporary communities, in counterpoint to the 'wild' life of the forest, while reaffirming the motivation for Piro to live with some kinsmen as opposed to others. More recently, Walker (2013b) illustrates how football festivals engender a new mode of sociality in which Urarina relate not merely as kin but as good neighbours united through visions of fraternal equality and abstract rules of play tied to the Peruvian nation-state.

In addition to being widespread, the use of external symbols in cycles of festive sociality is a longstanding phenomenon that predates the relatively recent trend of nucleation in Amazonia. The most famous Jivaro feast involved the appropriation, production, and incorporation of a *tsantsa* or shrunken head trophy after a successful head-hunting expedition. Although a thorough exposition of the *tsantsa* feast goes beyond the scope of this chapter, I mention it briefly because it can shed some light on the reasons why Shuar contrast it with the *centro* festival, as illustrated in the opening statement. The entire feast cycle, which was composed of two main parts separated by an interval of at least one year, is analysed in the regional ethnography as a ritual of predatory or cannibalistic appropriation.[108] The motivation for the feast was the appropriation of principles of identity – embodied in the enemy's head – for the benefit of the victor's own group (Taylor 1993:671). The head of an enemy belonging to a non-related Jivaro was thus treated as the embodiment of a generic Jivaroan identity, a formal existential subjectivity, to be ritually incorporated into the victor's group where it would eventually engender new life through the group's women (see Taylor 1994d: 96). Through a lengthy process of

---

[108] An extensive literature analyses the *tsantsa* feast on the basis of primary ethnographic data provided by Karsten (1923, 1935:293-368), Stirling (1938:61-78) and Pellizzaro (1980a, 1980b). For analysis on secondary data and narratives, see Taylor (1985, 1994), Descola (1996:269-78, 2012b:478); Fausto (1999:946-48; 2012a:258-60); Surrallés (2009:276-283). A brief note can be found in Mader (1999:198-201).

familiarisation, the trophy was finally transformed into "children" of the killer's group (Fausto 2012a:259). Importantly, the feast was the result of inter-tribal head-hunting expeditions (warfare) rather than intra-tribal feuds (vendettas). As alluded to in Chapter 2, underlying the distinction between warfare and vendettas is the significant sociological difference between ideal and real affines.[109] Descola (2012b:477) neatly summarises what is at stake in this distinction by outlining the kind of affinity created through the *tsantsa* feast:

> A virtual existence obtained from strangers, the child owes his procreation to the staging of an ideal affinity, the only kind truly satisfactory for the Jivaros, because free of any obligation of reciprocity: this is, in short an affinity without affines.

If conflicts and feuding with real affines were predicated upon symmetry and reciprocity, intertribal warfare, which targeted ideal affines (speakers of different Jivaroan dialects), was founded on asymmetry and predation. Once the head of an ideal affine had been obtained, the victor's group hosted real affines and intra-tribal allies. The feast can be said to have been premised on a distinction between insiders and outsiders. The outsiders were the enemies or ideal affines, Jivaroan persons of other tribes whose heads were appropriated. Conversely, the insiders were the guests of the feast, relatives, and real or potential affines (that is, persons susceptible of being assimilated into the endogamous group). The ritual sequence of the feast, then, procured the transference and multiplication of the empowering effects of the enemy's trophy to the local collectivity, composed of the victor's endogamous group and allies from neighbouring groups. The *tsantsa* feast thus stood as a crucial ritual stage configuring intertribal warfare and interposing solidarity within internal cycles of vendettas; it embodied the entirety of social classifications and interethnic relations. Previous ethnographers have accordingly considered the feast of utmost importance for the construction of pre-missionised Jivaroan collective identities (Taylor 1985:164; Descola 2012b:477).

According to some Shuar in Makuma and missionaries, the last *tsantsa* feast is likely to have been celebrated in the 1960s. At present, Shuar continue to evoke the feast in private narratives of war as well as on those public occasions when solidarities and antagonisms are most markedly expressed. In both kinds of narrative, Shuar tend to contrast the violence involved in

---

[109] Real affines are proper Shuar persons, speakers of the same Jivaroan dialect and classified as wife-givers and potential enemies in symmetric vendettas. Real affines thus remain susceptible of being assimilated into the endogamous group. On the other hand, ideal affines are speakers of other Jivaroan dialects (Achuar, Wampis, Awajun), recognised as carriers of true Jivaroan (Shuar) personhood but excluded from marriage. It was against ideal affines that violent expeditions were launched with the sole objective of capturing heads. Shiwiar, an expression employed to refer to the latter groups, partially helped to distinguish between Shuar kin and those persons who were considered Shuar but to whom kin status was denied (see Taylor 1985:167).

the *tsantsa* feast with the playful, peaceful and unifying qualities of contemporary celebrations, as did the president of Amazonas in the opening speech. Indeed, the festival of the *centro* activates a very different set of configurations and relies on the arousal of very different moods.

As villagers participate in a festivity which is largely predicated on the pursuit of unity between hosts and guests, hosts are at pains to deter open and latent hostilities vis-à-vis Shuar neighbours (real affines) as well as distant Jivaroan guests such as the Achuar (historically classified as enemies or ideal affines). This is for the sake of progress for the whole Shuar/Jivaroan nation – which in this festive context extends well beyond the local group. Hence, rather than treating extra-tribal groups as enemies, that is, as potent receptacles of virtual identity, Shuar hosts transform them into convivial guests and co-participants in a common endeavour.[110] As we shall see, whilst references to the mestizo world are conspicuous, mestizo people themselves are conspicuously absent during the celebration and thus wholly excluded from internal solidarity and peaceful commensality. The colonists are instead continuously evoked as the new targets of antagonism, competition and appropriation – or, one might say, of symbolic acts of cannibalistic appropriation. By capturing key elements of mestizo identity – from foodstuffs to elements of civic organisation and staged contests – Shuar appear to project symbolic predation onto non-indigenous people at the same time that they emphasise Jivaroan unity. The *centro* festival thus seems to invert the social configuration of the *tsantsa* feast, which was predicated on the expression of antagonisms in a general context of peaceful relations with non-indigenous others such as mestizo traders.

Internal organisation: cooperation and redistribution

Festivals are characterised by a strong sense of competitive hospitality between *centros*. There is a strong sense in which the members of a *centro* accrue prestige by indebting their guests through conspicuous acts of hospitality. Additionally, the very boundedness of nucleated settlements reinforces competition, as each settlement is constituted as a sort of autonomous politico-territorial entity. For instance, the monitoring and maintenance of communal property have become new ways in which Ashéninka native communities construct oppositional relations with one another (Killick 2008). Killick suggests that an internal sense of unity and cooperation is created through the communal effort devoted to cutting and maintaining territorial boundaries and trails. In dialogue with Veber (1998), the author proposes that alongside land titles, these

---

[110] Having been the preferential victims of Shuar head-hunting pursuits, the Achuar are now preferential guests in *centro* festivals. To some extent, the prestige associated with the presence of Achuar guests ensues precisely from the fraught history of confrontations between the two populations. Their co-presence in festivals therefore underscores the exceptional achievement of contemporary Jivaroan unity while latently retaining the fierceness and antagonism that grant vitality to the festival.

new activities work as symbolic acts or "tokens of civilization" that bring forth and ensure the continued official recognition of modern sedentary communities (2008:4, 35). Among Shuar, the festival constitutes the main battleground for prestige between members of different *centros*. If a *centro* does not look good when it welcomes its guests – for example, if the trails are overgrown and the central plaza is not weeded – visitors will see this as a lack of organisation and group cohesion. The same can be said about the food and the *programas* of the festivity: if the food is scarce or the organisation of the events of the festival appears improvised or unfinished, the members of a *centro* will lose face in front of their neighbours.

To be competitive, the members of a *centro* are thus impelled to work as a cooperative community. As the largest collective undertaking of a *centro*, the organisation of a festival presents villagers with unique challenges of cooperation and redistribution. Cooperation is required not only to harness funding from local governments, but also to plan each of the festive events, build public latrines and the makeshift stage, clean the community, and amass large quantities of manioc, urban foodstuffs and at least two bulls. So how do villagers allot the work, and how do they procure and distribute resources? My suggestion is that villagers do so by engaging in symbolic acts similar to those the Ashéninka perform between communities, but within the *centro*, so as to re-enact the organised status of *centros* internally prior to the festival. If villagers are able to project an image of internal organisation and cohesion towards the outside, it is thanks to the fact that they have spent several months before the festival intensely performing communal organisation within the *centro*. Prior to the festival, the number of *mingas*, assemblies and brokering activities intensifies. Additionally, to organise the festival, villagers resort to the creation of task-specific work commissions and acts of redistribution which instantiate the formal structure of the *centro*.

Throughout the year, the president of the *centro* is responsible for organising communal maintenance work; however, in the lead-up to the festival, his overseeing role is facilitated by the creation of work commissions. In Kuamar, the preparation of the festival started four months earlier with the following commissions:

> **Commission *pro-fiesta*:** responsible for cheering up the festival, specifically during the evening *programas* of 'social integration' (e.g. partying).
> **Commission of queens:** in charge of organising the beauty pageant.
> **Commission of logistics:** in charge of overseeing maintenance work and managing food supplies and music.

Commission of sociocultural events: in charge of organising and managing all staged contests.

Commission of civic affairs: in charge of the solemn ceremony, or commemoration of the anniversary.

Commission of security: responsible for the maintenance of peace during the evening *programas.*

Commission of sports: in charge of running all organised sports (i.e. football, ecuavolley and athletics).

The assembly, which is responsible for creating the commissions, makes sure to appoint 'the professionals' of the *centro* to fill the commissions' positions, since such people are experienced in acting as brokers for the community and they are expected to possess the knowledge required to organise the *programas* of the festival and to write up formal documents to drum up necessary resources and invite guests. The job of the commissions is logistic and diplomatic in nature. The diplomatic work expected of brokers can be best illustrated in relation to the procurement and distribution of resources in preparation for the festival. But before I turn to the role of brokers, it is important to note that there is also some internal work that the assembly does not entrust to any particular commission; exploring why might give us some insights into the specific modes of cooperation villagers create so as not to impinge on the autonomy of persons and households.

Eating and drinking well is an important part of the festival. *Socios* begin to prepare for the festival at least ten months in advance so that enough manioc beer can be supplied for three days of intense drinking. For most festivals, each family donates staples of manioc and other tubers to accompany the rice, noodles and meat of the communal meals. Since the quantity of manioc necessary can exceed what all households would be able to provide together, in some cases women cultivate manioc and sweet potato in a communal garden. Given the strong preference that Shuar have for individualised modes of work, the act of planting, harvesting and preparing manioc beer communally under the orders of a few would run counter to the everyday organisation of domestic work, to say the least. In fact, what tends to happen is that when women use the communal garden, they cultivate it autonomously, dividing it into individual mini-plots. There is no such a thing as a '*minga* to amass manioc'. A few days before the festival, most women in Kuamar gathered in the largest house of the *centro* (Diana and Jeronimo's) to prepare the beer communally, something I had never witnessed before. One might occasionally see a couple of women helping each other to chew and mix the manioc if they visit their relatives when

the latter happen to be preparing the beer, but otherwise preparation is always carried independently by each woman or small groups of mothers and daughters. The women of Kuamar found a good compromise: while they gathered for the preparation and thus signalled their cooperation in the organisation of the festival, they still performed every task individually and took care of their own pots for which they alone were responsible during the festival. So, the women's gathering, even more than inter-household *mingas*, appeared organised in the service of sociability rather than of technical collaboration. Let us now turn to the brokers.

Unlike feasts of the past in which the hosts would be responsible for planting gardens of manioc, plantain and other fruits as well as rearing pigs and chickens (see Karsten 2000), for the *centro* festival external contributions are necessary to obtain the cattle as well as the rice and vegetables for the stew – all products that Shuar do not cultivate. The president, the directive council and festival commissions are in charge of issuing the petitions to request resources from affluent donors in the area (e.g. schoolteachers, elected officials, mestizo doctors, anthropologists, etc.). Money and donations are used to procure food and at least two head of cattle, one reserved for internal consumption and the other for feeding the guests. They are also used to procure the 'incentives', the name given to the awards and trophies gifted to the winners of the matches and contests staged during the festival. These consist of machetes, cookware, blankets and actual trophies (see example of petition in appendix 3).

In addition to these donations, every *centro* tries to secure one or two Shuar artists for the evening *programas*. The artists are usually Shuar singers of Amazonian *cumbia*, sponsored by the Shuar federations or local governments.[111]

The organisation of the festival reveals the divisions that now exist between community officials and territorial leaders (typically schoolteachers or aspiring professionals) who live in *centros*, and between the latter and non-professional villagers. In Pampants most of the brokering work was performed by two political rivals: Tuntiak, the president of Pampants, and José, the school headmaster. Instead of working together, each man approached his own allies in the hope of outdoing the other. Tuntiak spent most of his brokering resources requesting two head of cattle from the prefect in Macas, whereas José tried to secure food and music (sound system and artists) from the mayor of Taisha and the parish officials in Tuutinentsa. When it was clear that Tuntiak would be partially unsuccessful in his pursuit, José's family and other villagers started spreading rumours that the president's 'friendships' in the city had failed him. Eventually, Tuntiak managed to secure only one head of cattle, and to do so he had to enter a contract with

---

[111] When a singer is sponsored by a certain candidate or elected officer, s/he advertises the officer's candidacy or government during the festival.

the prefecture to build a tract of road in the area.[112] In order to secure the second animal, the community was forced to turn to an affluent *socio,* who acted as a sort of internal donor. As mentioned in the previous chapter, to secure the deal the donor requested that an 'act of commitment' be issued, so in this case the whole community entered into a sort of informal contract. The result of this arrangement to procure valuable resources is that brokers and donors were able to accrue prestige or some economic profits. For instance, by becoming a contractor of the prefecture, Tuntiak was able to hire other people in the community to work on the road once the festival was over.

By contrast, the assembly in Kuamar unanimously chose from the outset three internal donors and made them responsible for obtaining the necessary cattle without the community having to incur payments or work debts. Two of the donors were straightforward choices as they were the only *socios* who owned cattle in the community: Alfredo, the schoolteacher, and his son Jerónimo, the councillor for Taisha. In contrast, the third donor, Manuel, did not own any cattle or earn a state salary, so I suspect he was chosen because of his connections as president of the NASHE. In the end, only Alfredo and Jerónimo were actually able to donate cattle, but this was still sufficient to hold the festival.

We can see how the residents of different *centros* resort to different strategies to secure the resources for a common enterprise: they might come together as communal debtors, thereby empowering brokers and increasing internal inequalities, as in the case of Pampants; alternatively, as in Kuamar, they might ensure that brokers redistribute resources by coming together as communal collectors, a strategy which in the end appears more suitable for preventing accumulation.[113] In the first case, we see how contractual relations take root in Shuar communities, and we can follow the logic by which individual brokers sign contracts with provincial governments. In the second case, whilst donors are chosen in a general assembly that is sanctioned by the president of the *centro,* responsibilities are allocated in accordance to an internal system of prestige whereby men who wish to play a leading role in the community must act as magnanimous hosts (or donors).[114] In both cases, however, by investing brokers with the responsibility of securing resources from which collective prestige is amassed, groups of villagers strengthen their brokers' positions within the community and pave the way for the exacerbation of political and economic asymmetries. At the root of the asymmetry however is not really the

---

[112] The interior road from Taisha to Pampants which the provincial government was building in 2013.
[113] For a similar example among the Tacana of Bolivia see Bathurst (2009:198).
[114] In pre-*centro* social formations, *uunt* acquired prestige by acting as generous hosts and bearing the brunt of work involved in collective celebrations, and this continues to be the case in small *centros* like Kuamar.

delegation of the capture of resources to brokers, but the fact that only the professionals have the required qualifications to procure the most valuable resources for their *centros*.

As I now move on to show, villagers to some extent resent these asymmetries, and they strive to mitigate them through formal acts of redistribution. Let me illustrate this by looking at the handling of the head of the cattle that was reserved for internal consumption. The butchering, distribution and cooking of the meat is a major event which starts on the first day of the festival, before the guests' arrival.

Kuamar, first day of the festival, 1ˢᵗ April 2013

At 4 am, Germán (the president) blew the *cachu* to announce that one of the calves had been brought to the pasture where it would be slaughtered. About an hour later Carmen grabbed a basket and asked little Shaanua to get a bucket. Together we walked towards the pasture where everyone else had gathered around the dead calf which was being butchered by three young men. Women assembled the skin and the discarded bones in their baskets while children collected some of the blood to feed to their dogs. As the butchering continued, a few men began to transport large portions of the animal on a wheelbarrow to the dining precinct next to the roofed-space and started to dissect the meat. Meanwhile, a few women gathered the guts and washed them in a nearby stream.

Figure 8 – Children collect some of the cow's blood for their dogs – Kuamar, 2013

When most of the butchering work was done, Germán and Armando (secretary of Kuamar) began to summon *socios* to the roofed-house to start the distribution. 'The first cow (Sp. *ganado*) is for the community', said Armando, and continued, 'Every married woman will get a portion of meat. Everyone has a right to meat, except those women who do not live in Kuamar but are just visiting.' On the wooden table lay a line of different types of meat all divided

into equal portions. Armando took out the minute book and ran a roll call of every woman (*socia*) of the *centro* as Pablo, another member of the commission, prepared a full portion of meat for each. Meanwhile, Delia, the daughter of Alfredo (one of the donors), handed each woman a portion of guts. These portions of meat were for every family to consume in their own homes, whereas the rest of the meat had been reserved for the day's communal meal.

While the organisation of the distribution seemed perfectly orderly and equal, the atmosphere was tense. After collecting their portions, a few women complained that they had received scrawny parts whereas other women (relatives of the donors) had been given fatter portions. 'The year before the bones were only left for the second round, but now they are giving some of us the bones and the good meat to the wives of donors', said Carmen. When Germán heard these complaints, he started shouting, 'Give them more meat, until everyone is satisfied!' But he failed to soothe the dissatisfied women, and quickly rumours spread that the wives of the donors had been favoured in the distribution and that they had kept the legs and the head of the animal for themselves, even though these should have been sold and the money kept in the coffers of the community. Meanwhile, some protested that needier women – for example, elderly Luisa from one of the most humble families in Kuamar – had received only bones. 'Well, together, head and legs do not cost more than $2!' responded Germán, trying to placate the complainants and suggesting that donors were justified in keeping something for themselves.

This episode illustrates the difficulties of managing communal wealth in situations of increasing economic inequalities. While villagers – in this case the directive council – are at pains to make equal distributions (I witnessed extreme care in cutting equal portions of meat and writing down the names of every recipient), they fail to convince everyone that distributions are not being made on the basis of economic differentials. Festival wealth is not simply the result of subsistence work, as would have been the case in the past. Rather, it now hinges on a structure of dependence (i.e. salaried work and political offices) that not all villagers control and which entrenches inequalities within the *centros* by creating distinctions between donors/brokers and commoners. Since all *centro* members act as 'hosts' of the festival, but only a few villagers/families are actually able to sponsor key resources, there are growing concerns about who is entitled to what within the community. In Kuamar these concerns intensified as the relatives of the donors did play a more central role in the organisation of the festival as they took the lead in cooperative and redistributive acts: Diana (the wife of Jerónimo) lent her house to prepare the manioc beer and Delia (the daughter of Alfredo) took control over part of the cattle distribution. The women who complained about the scrawny portions worried about the possibility that the wives of the donors would try to avail themselves of their husbands' special status as donors to get larger cuts

of meat. My suggestion is that this situation creates a tension between different ways of sharing. On the one hand, sharing as kin (or as close allies, still modelled on kin relations), whereby everyone contributes according to his or her capacities and receives according to his or her needs. On the other, sharing as *socios*, whereby an ideology of equal shares begins to intersect with the notion of desert. We also see how money equivalences are put forward to soothe concerns about inequalities – as shown in the president's reaction to the complaint about the legs and head of the animals. Towards the end of the chapter, we will see how villagers reconcile these different ways of sharing and the resulting asymmetries with their own aspirations to entrepreneurialism as the festival gains space as a stage for making profit.

The Festival

Festivals last three days. Generally, the first is devoted to friendly ecuavolley games and the election of the queen of the *centro*; the second is reserved for more competitive sports, staged contests and the awards ceremony; and the third to an official parade and/or closing ceremony. Every evening there is a party in the roofed-house. Throughout the festival, there are resounding speeches delivered by hosts and guests. The roofed-house and the football pitch are the places where most 'social integration', as villagers call it using the Spanish term, takes place.

Every *centro* invites nearby and more distant *centros* to its festival. At least one *centro* will receive a formal invitation and will be treated as the 'official guest', while the rest will be invited informally or will simply turn up to the festival as 'friendly guests'. The official guest is the *centro* that is the furthest away, sometimes a couple of days' walk or a few hours by car if the communities are connected by roads. The *socios* of a *centro* may choose a specific community as official guest to reciprocate an invitation or to honour relatives from that *centro*. Usually relations between the two *centros* are courteous but cold, and the aim is to use the festival to become closer. By contrast, the relations with friendly guests are warm but complex due to ongoing territorial conflicts and sorcery accusations between different families.

Table 5 shows the friendly and official guests in the festivals of Kuamar, Achunts and Pampants. We can see that neighbouring Kuamar and Achunts usually attend each other's festivals as friendly guests.

Table 5 - 'Friendly' and 'official' guests of centro festivals

Host community	Friendly guests	Official guests
Achunts 2012	Kuamar, Arutam, Paantin	Kusutka
Kuamar 2013	Achunts, Arutam, Wisuí	Amazonas, Palora
Pampants 2013	Tuutinentsa, Putuntsa	Tukup

The following table shows the general pattern of the festival, divided per day, based on the observation of three different festivals. When events repeat in day 2 and 3, different communities follow slightly different arrangements.

Table 6 - Programme of centro festivals

Times	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Morning	"Internal" butchering and distribution of the cattle Arrival of friendly guests Friendly ecuavolley matches	Arrival of the official guests and ceremonial greeting Registration of teams and draw for football tournament Inauguration of the lightning football tournament	Parade and civic ceremony of tribute to the community (speeches of commemoration and, occasionally, signature of official documents, e.g. productive projects, resolutions) Mass (only in Catholic *centros* – e.g. Pampants) Final of the lightning football tournament

Afternoon	Communal meal or food sales	Communal meal or food sales	Communal meal with official guests and authorities
	Ecuavolley matches	Inauguration of sociocultural *programa*: cultural contests (e.g. woodcutter, manioc beer, *ánent* and *nampet*)	Sociocultural *programa* continues
	Athletics competition	Typical and folkloric dance contests (*or*) Expo-agricultural fair (e.g. market) & election of the queen of the fair	
Evening	Election of the *centro* queen	Song/music festival Awards ceremony	Awards ceremony and closure of festival
	General party for the queen	Party or dance of 'social integration'	General closing party

As part of the organisation of the festival, every community distributes a brochure which publicises the event and lays out the agenda for each day. The brochure for the Achunts festival of 2012 also had a slogan which read, 'IV years of organised life. Long live Achunts! Organised community with a vision towards the future of economic, social and political development.' On the right and above the slogan, there was a photo of an elderly woman, said to be one of the founding members of the community. From the outset, we can see that the festival puts forward a composite image: an image of tradition – though a relatively novel one focused on territorial boundedness and fixed origins (see also Rosengren 2003) – and an image of progress predicated on collective organisation and oriented towards future development. In what follows, I show how these two images interlink in the festival through a series of seemingly contrasting, but on the whole synergetic themes: joyfulness subdues conflict; competition foregrounds formal unity; and, hospitality is put to the service of entrepreneurship and economic progress. Whilst the festival is permeated by the dictum of social harmony grounded in tradition, the patterning of the event is insistently competitive and explicit in its staging of socioeconomic progress. Let me start with the first of these themes.

Figure 9 – Brochure of Achunts 2012 festival

First theme: the commendation of joy and social harmony

Mirroring the most familiar gesture of hospitality in the household, the women of the *centro* welcome the guests with profuse libations. I was able to witness a well-staged welcome at the festival of Achunts. As the people of Kusutka made their entry into the central square, walking in an orderly single file, a few men waited solemnly to shake hands and escort the guests towards

the women. By this time the women had lined up in pairs, each carrying a large bowl filled with manioc beer, so the file of guests could move along the middle of the formation and quench their thirst. As the group of guests progressed, drinking from the bowl offered by each woman, an elderly man and a few officers of the *centro*, all bearing spears, waited for a few delegates from the group of guests to arrive at the roofed-house. The role of this man and the officers was to choreograph a ceremonial greeting, which was followed by endless rounds of speeches and proclamations.

No festive speech or proclamation goes by without an explicit encouragement to be joyful ('*warastarum*'). At all times during the party, a *socio* of the hosting *centro* publicly reminds visitors that the festival is for everyone, and he urges them to enjoy themselves, to drink manioc beer, eat, play sports and dance together. This hospitable reminder to have fun and share with one another is accompanied by the exhortation to avoid animosities, rumours and any bad feeling that would prevent participants from experiencing harmony and unity.

As mentioned earlier, festivals bring together people who are classified as real and potential affines and those who are historical enemies. Even if feuding has been discontinued, Shuar continue to map their social landscape along shifting ties of alliance and enmity. It should not be surprising therefore if festivals, especially the evening parties when hosts and guests become inebriated, are charged with tension and suspicion. I became aware of the very real sense of distrust and danger that Shuar guests associate with partying far away from home after a tragic episode that involved a resident of Amazonas, a community of the Makuma area. In March 2013, a badly beaten up man was found lying on the trail leading to the village. According to popular rumours, this was the second time the victim had miraculously escaped death. More than ten years earlier, the man had been attacked in the vicinity of the Makuma River upon leaving a festival in Paantin after a whole night of drinking. On that occasion, his assailants had sought revenge for an ancient offence the family of the victim had committed. Most people I talked to about the 2013 episode converged on a version of the story whereby the offenders had again sought revenge by attacking the drunk man on his way home after having shared drinks with him at the party. These incidents show that behind the insistent dictum of enjoyment there lurks an implicit, but very real warning against violence.

The ambiguity of feasting is well known in the literature. Taylor suggests that the decline in festive gatherings during the first period of Achuar nucleation has less to do with the crusade that evangelical missionaries led against manioc beer than with the Achuar's own censure of drinking in their concerted attempt to minimise conflict (1981:120). Harner challenges a straightforward interpretation of inter-household partying as a mechanism of social solidarity,

noting that any feeling of good fellowship created in social gatherings was offset by the rows that erupted during the evenings of inebriety and dance (1972:110). Juncosa proposes that even though parties hardly fostered group unity, as they frequently resulted in scuffles, they nonetheless permitted a "focused management of rivalries" (2005:45).

According to Juncosa, rivalries are managed through a form of normative speech officiated by the household owner or host of the party. This speech register is similar to that used in the daily lecturing of children (*chichamat*) which takes place in the mornings, and whose purpose is counselling (see also Ch.3). In their speeches, attendees are invited to 'have a good time!' and avoid anger and aggression (ibid.). Something very similar happens in *centro* festivals, although the speakers at festivals are officers of the host *centro* and representatives of guest communities speaking to larger groups in a public arena. We can identify four characteristics in this normative speech. Firstly, speakers tend to refer to the words and deeds of the elders as benchmarks of good behaviour. For example, this is how Martín, a shaman of Kuamar who was in charge of animating the party on the first evening, addressed all present:

> I am in charge of directing the party, so I tell you, we want to do a live dance
> (Sp. *hacer un baile en vivo en directo*)*,* and I tell you my brothers (*yatsuru*),
> drink well! (*penker umártarum*). But I must also please ask you to moderate
> the manioc beer, as the leaders of the *centro* (*uunt*) have told us and as our
> elders (*uunt*)[115] used to behave. Hence we can really enjoy the festival.

Secondly, speakers emphasise the importance of shunning ill will and insistently state that they themselves have good thoughts and intentions – an example of this is seen in the speech quoted at the start of this chapter. As discussed in Chapter 4, in *centro* assemblies *socios* try to invest public discourse with a form of declarative good will, thereby challenging the unknowability of private points of view that they associate with secrecy and evil doing. In the festival, speakers in fact make a point of underscoring that they 'have good thoughts' and 'do not mean ill' as though putting forward their own unknowable wills for public examination. An example of this sort of declaration is provided by the words of Lucho, the *pro-fiesta* leader of Kuamar's festival who, inviting everyone to enjoy the party, clarified that his cautionary remarks should not be identified with negative emotions such as stinginess or envy:

> You're all cordially invited. But let me tell you, there is abundant manioc beer
> and if you have already drunk too much, to my young sons I say, stop now and
> go home to rest. But I am not saying this so as not to share, to be stingy (*surim-*
>) but just to avoid problems.

---

[115] As shown in Chapter 4, it is usual for speakers to use the same word for *uunt* –respectable elder, influential man – and *uunt* – elected authority.

Thirdly, speakers reprove not only excesses and aggression but also, importantly, the pursuit of self-interest and the clearing of debts and obligations that may elicit negative emotions and lead to fights. This is because festivals are important forums for placing requests to elected officials and demanding that their contributions be free of obligations, as I showed in the previous chapter. Besides, debts (*tumash*) also carry the connotation of unsolved confrontation or unpunished offences and thus immediately bring to mind the possibility of revenge as a way of seeking compensation. Thus, during Felipe's household party, he welcomed the guests saying, 'We do not come to the party to talk about debts but to enjoy.' Villagers also challenge the divisive effects of self-interest even while staging competitive events. For instance, as Jerónimo inaugurated the election of the queen in Kuamar in which his own daughter was a contestant, he proclaimed, 'We are not here so our own daughters win the contest or to fight, here we are united in all respects', thereby suggesting that the elected queen would represent the *centro* as a whole and not a single family.

Finally, speakers assume a counselling and didactic tone in their speeches. According to Seymour-Smith (1988:175-76), the traditional *chichamat* implies a certain asymmetry between speaker and addressee as it is usually unidirectional: from parents to children or leaders to followers. The speaker typically engages in a sort of soft "harangue which includes frequent moral admonitions and instructions to 'live properly'". We should not be surprised then if, as I shall show in Chapter 8, teachers adopt the same speech to address the students in school *programas*. Indeed, there are important connections and recurrences between school *programas* and the *programas* of *centros*. In the first place, the very idea and format of *programas* originated in the context of bilingual institutes where many Shuar schoolteachers have trained (Ch.7). Furthermore, schoolteachers play a central role in coordinating sociocultural and sport events in *centro* festivals. It is also common for speakers in *centro* festivals to speak as if they are addressing an audience of young people or students – the people who will be 'leading in the future' – just as schoolteachers do in school *programas*.[116] Moreover, beyond the *centro* festival, the largest and most well attended inter-*centro* public events in the Makuma are those organised by schoolteachers. In both kinds of *programas*, speakers place much emphasis upon the importance of leaving suspicion behind, sharing together, being joyful, etc.

---

[116] It is also possible that speakers address the audience as 'young people' to convey their message of harmony and peace without impinging on the autonomy of more senior guests. This certainly makes the pedagogic tone of some speeches appear less condescending. In fact, villagers are usually very tactful and subtle when admonishing others or expressing disagreement, since they do not want to be seen as spoiling the hospitable mood of the party, even when this is done for the sake of social harmony.

A neat illustration of this is a school *programa* I attended in Mamayak. In many ways, the Mamayak *programa* resembled a *centro* festival, most especially because of the presence of neighbouring and farther-away communities. Using a boisterous and amusing style, the speakers invited attendees to mingle and get acquainted with one another. For instance, the headmaster prompted children to meet their local peers to exchange a few words with them. 'Go and ask them [other children]', the headmaster said, 'Who are you? What is your name? Who are your parents? How are you?' Then, addressing the parents, he spoke about the importance of teaching children 'new thoughts' [thoughts children did not yet know – *enentai nekatsna nu uchi jintiantiatin*]. 'Tell children that they must become brothers and sisters with those who have arrived from faraway (...) They are our own people [*ii shuarak aíniawai*], our own blood (...).' Through these messages of fraternity, *centro* officers and schoolteachers prompt children 'to communicate their thoughts' and become acquainted with those 'we do not know', precisely those abilities that senior villagers are eager to demonstrate in the context of the festival. Such capacity to share with others, said the headmaster, 'truly was a reason to have a good time and be joyful'.

Invitations as tokens of reciprocity and modern civility

It is through the continuous idiom of invitation, whether prior or during the festival, that the value of social integration gets orchestrated. As mentioned earlier, prior to a festival, host *centros* send invitations to guest *centros* and to specific sponsors asking them to join the celebration. But even during the festival, the act of inviting – to eat, to drink, to share, to be joyful, etc. – is continuously evoked in the speeches of hosts and guests as a sign of reciprocity between different communities. For instance, hosts state that, as they have sent the message/invitation (*chicham*) to their guests, they expect the latter to reciprocate with joy during the celebration. Guests in turn reciprocate these words by thanking the hosts and stating that their attendance expresses their desire to comply with their hosts' invitation. As rounds of thanking alternate with rounds of welcoming, the festival turns into an insistent diplomatic back and forth.

Traditionally, invitations would have been sent both directly, as an act of summoning (*untsum-ka*), and indirectly, by inviting (*ipia-*) via an intermediary (see Juncosa 2005:45). Invitations to participate in labour parties, social gatherings and sporadic religious festivals such as the *tsantsa* and *uwi* feasts were key to the creation of solidarity in Jivaroan neighbourhoods. Indirect invitations were issued beyond the local group in two different circumstances: to call a feuding or headhunting expedition and to celebrate a *tsantsa* feast. These invitations were highly formal and involved ceremonial discourse, something we might expect as social distance increased. According to Karsten, the victorious man (usually the slayer of enemy groups) would

address the future guest in a formal speech delivered forcefully (1923:50). When emissaries were needed, children could not be relied upon to transmit the message (Juncosa 2005:45). This prohibition reveals the importance of parity and reciprocity between adults (usually men) in both situations. Juncosa distinguishes the register of invitation by the use of dialogue and negotiation between speakers, a characteristic that is absent in the *chichamat* we just discussed, in which a speaker addresses a silent audience.

Considering that invitations have played a central role in orchestrating wars and feasts (which often followed one another), that is, in configuring the geography of intergroup solidarities, it is hardly surprising that Shuar villagers should continue to employ them in contemporary festivals. Invitations have kept their formality, but their recipient and medium have changed. Whilst some invitations are sent to specific individuals (e.g. sponsors and donors), most are addressed to social groups, such as *centros*, local governments and schools. Additionally, although some invitations continue to use an oral medium, their written support (*papi,* from the Spanish *papel,* literally 'paper' as well as 'document') has become much more important. The following pronouncement made by Germán during the festival of Kuamar illustrates the role of documents as tokens of peace and reciprocity between host and guest *centros*:

> Truly, my brothers, because you are our guests, by virtue of the document, you
> are with us, with joy (...). [Thus I say], on behalf of Kuamar. This is unity!

The festival thus creates a unique space in which the *centro* becomes a social actor inviting and hosting other *centros*. For instance, the president of Amazonas made explicit during the festival that his *centro* was visiting Kuamar because they [the directive council of the *centro*] had received a written invitation and the assembly of *socios* had analysed it and had approved the visit. The fact that documents more tangibly formalise and represent the will of a collectivity (whether as hosts or guests) is likely to be the reason why an ideological distinction is now drawn between written and verbal invitations, with the former being increasingly seen as more legitimate and progressive. As the president of Kuamar made explicit during one of the festival evenings, 'Before, our elders used to send words (*chicham*) and comply with them. But now we do this with the written word (*aarmia chichama*)'. The effect of this is that even when written invitations are unnecessary – for example when inviting neighbouring groups with whom members of a *centro* already have cordial relations – hosts might risk offending their guests by not writing out invitations. Aware of this, the hosts of a festival often feel obliged to make an extra effort to emphasise that all guests should feel welcome even if not every community has been formally invited, that is, not all have received a written invitation. So even while villagers are keen to avail themselves of the new distinctions that documents afford so as to create a sort of ranking among

guests, they are also at pains to temper the effect of such distinctions during the actual festival lest they defeat the unifying character of the event. Ironically, however, the more inclusive hosts try to be, the more they reinforce the hierarchical distinction between those who have been invited with documents (*papijai ipiamu*) and those who have not (*papijai ipiashmau*). Whilst continuing a longstanding tradition of managing social distance via ceremonial speech, written invitations thus also index the new techniques and 'tokens of civilization' that make an 'organised' community.

Second theme: unity through competition

Having considered how participants perform social harmony, I now turn to the theme of unity: the two different kinds of unity that villagers emphasise and the means by which unity is achieved in the context of the festival, namely, competition. Before addressing competition, I shall briefly point out two different kinds of unity villagers emphasise.

Unity: kin and territorial community

Long live the community! This is unity! These are recurrent shouts throughout the festival. But what kinds of sentiments and imaginings are expressions of this sort actually tapping into? In general, calls for unity might evoke either the unity of kin (all Shuar are one family) or the unity of the political-territorial community (all Shuar *centros* form a nation). In calls for unity expressed in family parties it is kinship which is evoked as the main model of association with non-kin. In contrast, during *centro* festivals, idioms of kinship are usually interwoven with notions of territory and political administration, which would include the *centro*, the association of *centros* and the federation of associations which together constitute the Shuar nation. Compare, for example, the following two calls for unity, one made in the context of a family party and the other in Kuamar's roofed-house during the *centro* festival.

Family party	*Centro* festival
[Felipe's welcome speech to the guests who arrived at his home. Among the guests were his nuclear and extended family, the schoolteachers and students of Makuma, and other foreign friends of the family – Victor (another anthropologist), and me:]	[Welcome speech of Mashumar, the interim president of Achunts, speaking during Kuamar's festival:]
With Angel Najantai [Felipe's brother-in-law and co-organiser of the party], we have become one more family. And with the schoolteachers we are another family, aren't we? [Sp/Sh. *una **familia** más ii ajasji*] And all the Shuar, aren't we also a family? With us today are Natalia and Victor and we are another family, this is what I think, so let us continue with the programme.	The community of Kuamar and the parish of Makuma will become a county in the future (...). Together these communities: Wisum, Kuamar, Achunts, Paantin, Timias, Tuntaim, Amazonas, Tunants, we are all the same family [*númtak **shuaraitji***[117]] so we have to love one another and never get angry.

---

[117] Literally, 'among ourselves we are family/Shuar'.

Although both Felipe and Mashumar employed kinship idioms, Felipe used the Spanish word *familia* whereas Mashumar used the Shuar word *shuar* (see words in bold). As we have seen in Chapter 3, the prefix *shuar*, when used to refer to a social group rather than to mean 'human', is inherently expansive. It can refer to the bilateral kindred, to the local group or to Shuar proper as opposed to other Jivaroan social units, and to Jivaro as opposed to other indigenous groups, mestizos and whites (see also Taylor 1996:204). Thus, insofar as *shuar* works as both a kin denominator and an ethnonym, Mashumar opted for the most expansive term[118] in his address, whereas Felipe chose a Spanish word that more closely circumscribes a group of relatives. Further, Mashumar referred to territorial and administrative entities rather than specific persons, as was done by Felipe. Finally, in his speech Mashumar foregrounded the future of Makuma (e.g. Makuma will become a county in the future) in terms that make sense only with reference to the administrative divisions of the nation state.

Nevertheless, even within the context of the *centro* festival, different representations of unity are at work. Some of these emerge in the speeches of women. Though women seldom address the crowds from the roofed-house during the festival, the few who do so tend to emphasise affective connections to their land or their kin (and the two are usually inseparable in women's speech) rather than the formal or administrative aspects of the *centro*. Women's public speech is usually more sentimental and biographical, which makes sense considering that when they do speak it is often with the intention of introducing their singing of *ánent*, a highly affective discursive genre. The way a female speaker identifies with the *centro* or the intensity of the attachment stated in public varies according to her history of relations with the community – whether she settled in the community where she grew up (with or nearby her parents) or whether she had to move out and settle with her in-laws.

Let me illustrate this with the interventions of Maria Tsukanka and Juana Nakaimp, two of the most elderly women in Kuamar, who spoke and sang from the roofed-house in Kuamar's festival. Maria is a woman in her sixties who moved to Kuamar from Palora upon marriage with Alfredo. Part of the reason why the *centro* of Palora had been invited as official guest was Maria's connection to the community – the people of Palora were the affines of Alfredo, founding member of Kuamar. Juana Nakaimp is a woman in her sixties, who grew up in the Makuma area;

---

[118] When I analysed this text with a Shuar collaborator, he immediately rendered Mashumar's expression in Spanish as 'we are all the same blood'. So whilst the term is inherently expansive, in this context it is clear that Mashumar was using 'Shuar' to denote the unity of kin.

she is the daughter of a man called Kuamar, father of Alfredo and Rafael who together with Torka founded the *centro*.

Maria's address:	Juana's address:
I greet all of you who have come to visit us. I greet the guests from Palora, my family. My heart was sad yesterday but today you have made it beat again because I am pleased to see you. I married here so I came to live here. To make you joyful, I am going to sing.[119] Because I am Shuar and not Colonist, I am going to sing as it comes out, dedicating this to you, I will sing.	Well, me too, I am from my land Kuamar. I thank my *uunt* Germán [president of Kuamar]. We were born here. My father settled here, so here I age too. I thank the guests from Palora and the students from Makuma and I will make you joyful. Let us not forget our culture (Sp. *cultura*). Daughters, even if you are still unmarried, sing always. Study these songs, so that you can progress and stand out (...). I am going to sing for all of you. Even if our father and mother have passed away, even if you happen to be tearful today, whatever the circumstances, let us rejoice today.

The connections that each woman establishes with the *centros* are primarily biographical. Both women identify with their kin and through them establish a connection with Palora or Kuamar. Further, both women identify as Shuar, although they do so by embracing a sentimental form of ethnic pride that omits territorial unity (e.g. counties, associations, etc.). This pride is evident in Maria's implicit contrast with the colonist world and Juana's appeal to the preservation of Shuar songs and culture. Whether it emphasises connections to local kin or Shuar identity, feminine public speech foregrounds the emotive rather than the formal aspects of community-making and unity.

By contrast, male festive speech, which is in great part delivered by territorial leaders, officials and, generally, 'the professionals' or aspiring professionals, tends to be more impersonal in style and to focus on territorial and administrative unity. For instance, the president of Kuamar animated the festival proclaiming, 'Very well, here we have to stick together because we are all part of the same association [of *centros*].'

Centro officers and schoolteachers also draw links to ways of doing things in the past that should be reaffirmed as they enthusiastically appeal for organisation and work (*takat*) and progress (*emkatin*). Consider for example the speech delivered by the headmaster of the Makuma high school during Kuamar's festival:

> We are joyful because the community celebrates 20 years today and this means one more year of work has been accomplished. Sacrifice [*waitsamu*] is what is being celebrated today, and for this I thank you [for the invitation]. Indeed

---

[119] Interestingly, she went on to sing an *ánent* in which a mother lamented that her daughter has been taken away by a man, clearly a reference to her own displacement from home.

work brings people together. In the past our elders used to visit one another and talked things over, thus they lived beautifully. I thus invite you *compañeros*, let us not forget that and let us commit to work and to educate our children.

In Mamayak, a similar speech by the headmaster of the Achunts high school focused entirely on work and progress saying: 'Gathering with strength we are going to continue for the better this is progress *this is effort*!' Progress is performed and celebrated in many ways. On the one hand, as we have seen, the act of gathering together and getting acquainted with unfamiliar others is considered a sign of civility and willingness to engage with people from afar leaving suspicions behind. On the other hand, the festival – with all its specialised commissions, written invitations, and series of *programas* – evinces organisation and progress. Having discussed commissions and invitations earlier, let us now turn to *programas*, as they will enable us to see the effectiveness of competition in foregrounding unity.

The power of competition

Games and contests make the bulk of the festival *programas*. Whether in sporting games or cultural contests, villagers compete as members of *centros*.

The first day of the festival starts with ecuavolley matches in the central plaza. During these matches, the atmosphere is very amicable and relaxed, similar to the tranquil afternoons in which villagers gather to play after work. The only difference during the festival is that all players must be registered with the sports commission prior to the games and individual players should not place bets since the raising and allocation of prizes are the responsibility of the *centro* hosting the festival and the sports commission in particular.

On the second day, when the official guests have arrived, the sports commission inaugurates the awaited "lightning" football tournament. The football matches are more spectacular and serious affairs judging by the high turnout and energetic support that the occasion receives and the dramatic attitudes of young male players. Though women also play football during the festival – as they do at other times – male matches last longer and receive more attention. However, the vocal role that young women play during men's matches is as important as the role of young men on the football pitch. As the matches unfold, informal groups of women from different communities gather in different areas around the pitch to demonstrate support for their respective teams. Through a cacophony of shouts, cheers and insults, female supporters infect onlookers with an electric mood and effectively intensify the rivalry of the games: 'Kick with energy! What are you, a woman?' 'Get up! Why are you crying? You're complaining like a girl, for nothing.' 'Are you a child, playing with your hands?! This is football!"

Football is the last game organised by the sports commission before it hands over to the commission in charge of the 'sociocultural *programa*', which is celebrated in the roofed-house during the second and third day of the festival. This *programa* includes an assortment of Shuar cultural performances modelled on mestizo folk contests. The most popular individual contests are the manioc beer preparation, *ánent* and *nampet*[120] singing, though occasionally there are also blow-gunning and basketry competitions. The sociocultural *programa* also stages group dance contests in which the schoolchildren and/or high school students of host and guest communities perform two different choreographic genres: the 'typical' dance (a reworking on Shuar festive dances) and the folkloric dance (a reworking of Andean dances).

The afternoon of cultural contests closes with the 'festival of song' (Sp. *festival de la canción*), which functions as a prelude to the evening's party. During the festival of song, artists sing *cumbia* in Shuar or Spanish, and, occasionally, Hispanic romantic hits. Though the mood during the sociocultural *programa* is less electric and competitive compared with the sports' events – for instance, I have never heard anyone cheering during cultural contests – most participants and onlookers tend to behave affably with one another in an atmosphere of general amusement. The event attracts a wide audience and many conceive of it as the most beautiful *programa* of the festival.[121] Finally, an awards ceremony closes the day of competitions: *centro* officers present trophies and awards to all winning contestants and teams as representatives of their respective *centros*.

Games and competitive performances are a widespread feature in South American feasts (e.g. Cooper 1949:503; Clastres 1998:225-226; see also Erikson 2013:167). To mention but a few, inter-village Yanomami feasts sometimes ended in chest-pounding duels when hosts and guests accomplished their "trade talk" (Albert 1985:510-512). In Shipibo-Conibo initiation feasts, host and guests exchanged light head taps and participated in archery duels (DeBoer 2001:220). Ethnographers have converged on interpreting festive duelling and the atmosphere of berating and bantering that accompanies it as a form of ritualised conflict in which hosts and guests simultaneously act out and regulate longstanding hostilities within a context of inter-village solidarity (Menget 1993:67; DeBoer 2001; see also Albert 1985:267).

Similar interpretations have been offered for the performance of organised sports in contemporary sedentary communities. Rosengren, for example, cites football matches as one of the exceptional moments in which Matsigenka act "as a united group against intruding *extranjeros*

---

[120] '*Nampet*' designates a genre of festive song, typically performed in social gatherings.
[121] For instance, even though Shuar Christians disprove of festivals for inciting people to drinking and dancing – two prohibitions which sets them apart from other Shuar – they very much enjoy (and defend) the sociocultural *programa*.

[foreigners]" (1987:156), in a way redolent of past war raids when dispersed groups would occasionally aggregate into a war party. Whilst this analysis suggestively draws a parallel between the temporary boundedness created by war parties and sporting teams, it is important to clarify that, at least for Shuar people, the geography of difference (and the sociology of the group) that each of these activities expresses is markedly different. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, feuding and war parties targeted intraethnic enemies – Shuar affines or other Jivaroan people. In contrast, whilst the excitement of playing in local tournaments is fuelled by internal rivalries, much of the interest in sporting tournaments seems to derive from the prestige that ensues from playing the most popular sport in the country. Whenever youths recalled their experiences of playing football, what they liked to emphasise was the process of becoming good players, the pride and fun of being invited to play in other places and their capacity to play just as well, but ideally better than mestizo people.

Something similar seems to be happening among Urarina people for whom football festivals, Walker argues (2013b:393), are potent ways of performing a different kind of social solidarity and of engaging with resonant features of the non-indigenous society. Walker suggests that through inflexible rules and specialised teamwork, sporting tournaments introduce a very different kind of selfhood and collective to that which ethnographers are used to describe. In these festivals, an Amazonian ethos of individualism and social fragmentation seems gradually to be replaced by an ideology of sameness, grounded in universal laws and in the unifying power of the group which legitimises its status by recourse to potentially coercive roles and rules (ibid.:393-394).

I believe many of the events of the festival evoke a form of collective organisation grounded on ranked roles and an entrepreneurial ethos, which is not yet fully rooted in everyday life. The enthusiasm for football seems to derive in great part from the way in which the sport at once permits both antagonism and unity. In Mamayak, as young people gathered on the football pitch under the rain, the president of the association gracefully expressed football's potential for integration when he said, 'Shuar are not frogs' [which come out in the rain], yet we have come to see the match in the rain, for such is the importance of gathering in large groups (*utsáneakur pujuiniaj*[122]).' Coming together as a team to play or to support one's community and possibly compete with more powerful others brings together an ideal of local autonomy and a new form of corporate unity that Shuar are at pains to create. In this regard, football powerfully indexes both continuity, as manifested in the expression of individuality and antagonism during the

---

[122] Literally 'being gathered in large groups'. The verb '*utsán-*' is only used for a large group.

match, and change, as expressed in the attraction of superordinate unity: defending/representing one's team, one's community, one's nation. Throughout the matches and *programas*, the referees, schoolteachers and other speakers at the festival keep remarking that when youths play well they demonstrate that they compete with the best players of the province: the colonists. In this sense, the competitive matches within the *centros* symbolise and prefigure competition with mestizo people. Similarly, even in cultural contests in which the display of specifically Shuar skills and knowledge is definitely more important than in football, what villagers emphasise is that contestants are able to 'demonstrate'[123] their skills (manioc beer preparation, woodcutting, blow-gunning, *ánent* singing and speaking in public) or those of others (catwalk, Spanish singing and speaking, etc.) just as capably and beautifully, or even more so, than Ecuadorian city dwellers. In approaching football and cultural competitions in this way, Shuar not only demonstrate their civility, they are also staking their claim to belong to the modern Ecuadorian nation.

Though I agree with other authors when they point out that non-indigenous sporting culture has been eagerly appropriated by some Amazonian groups at least in part because of the ease with which sports lend themselves to the ongoing expression of fierceness, antagonism, and individualism as well as an Amazonian penchant for decorum (see Erikson 2013:168), my suggestion is that contemporary contests should not be automatically conflated with traditional duels. Instead, they should be analysed as part of the new festive context in which they are staged. Their significance should be seen in relation to the expressed and implicit goals of the public events of which they are part. As I have been arguing, the *centro* festival prefigures an organised, unified and progressive community. Following this line of interpretation, the analysis must look beyond the tournaments and contests and encompass the entirety of the organisation and sequence of the *programas*. Of great significance to this is the award ceremony, which is the culmination of the festival.

A key characteristic of sporting games and contests is classification and ranking – the separation of contestants into winners and losers. As noted by Lévi-Strauss (1966:33), games create difference between individual players or teams. Whilst premised on equal rules, asymmetry is engendered from "the contingent nature of events, themselves due to intention, chance or talent" (ibid.). Asymmetry is important in Shuar contests, and it is manifested not only in the classification of contestants and teams on the basis of talent, but also in the act of ranking

---

[123] To demonstrate in public (Sp. *demonstrar en público*) is exactly the expression that Shuar use to refer to what they consider beautiful and forceful in these performances. From Shuar speeches in which the skills displayed are praised I have noted the use of the expression '*imiatrusam chichaktinia jeaniwai timiarmi*', which can be translated as 'being able to speak as someone important' (or 'with grandeur'. The reader can note here the usual emphasis on verbal ability, even when the performances described exceed the use of speech.

and awarding contestants enacted by a group of experts. During the awards ceremony a group of 'professionals' – schoolteachers and elected officers acting as referees, judges, and festival organisers – elevate themselves above everyone else by bestowing awards to the winners on behalf of the whole community. During the allocation of prizes, officials once again use the normative speech *chichamat* to congratulate contestants and to encourage them to continue improving their skills for the economic progress of the *centro*. During the awards ceremony, when the speeches of authorities give a sort of summative closure to the whole set of *programas*, the competitive energy of tournaments and contests seems to be symbolically harnessed and put to the service of a higher goal: collective betterment.

To better appreciate how contests come to symbolise collective progress, let us take a closer look at what happens in the awards ceremony. Consider for example the offering of trophies to the captains of football teams during the ceremony in Pampants.

When the president of the Tuutinentsa parish was called onto the stage to present the trophies to the teams, he took the opportunity to deliver a speech about the importance of sport. The president was no older than forty, yet, in the typical lecturing style of the *chichamat*, he harangued the youth for not caring enough about training to become competitive football players. Regretting the youth's laziness and contrasting it to the discipline and victories of his own generation – a time when, in his view, the parish had been competitive at the level of the province – the president mentioned that his office was going to increase the stakes by investing in uniforms and in a football school that would open in 2014. He thus hoped that youths would start training more diligently. Hoping to encourage the parents, he also spoke about the economic prospects of professional sport and used the victories of non-indigenous people to drive his point home. He referred to the case of other minority peoples whose high levels of discrimination by mestizo and indigenous alike is well known to the Shuar:

> We say that Black people are smokers and thieves, just like the colonists, but the fact is that they make a lot of money playing football. Why can't Shuar do the same? (...) Youths, you need to think about money! (...) Come on, let us work in a coordinated manner! [Sp. *vamos a trabajar de una manera coordinada y conjunta*].

Competition is taken from the football pitch and projected onto a larger social scene, where Shuar compete with other groups for their own betterment. Furthermore, the competitive injunctions delivered from the stage during the awards ceremony suit well the kind of specialised and hierarchized community into which an organised *centro* is ideally transformed. For instance, during the same awards ceremony, Lenin, the captain of Pampants, congratulated the official guests from Tukup on their participation in the football matches, even though Tukup had lost

to Pampants in the games. As a gesture of friendship, Lenin said, Pampants had decided to present a trophy to the Tukup team. As Lenin gestured to hand over the trophy to his counterpart, he said, 'This I gift you because if you do not bring a trophy to your community, your president will be angry.' Whilst this was expressed in good humour, it illustrates that the participation in inter-*centro* matches and the awarding acts that follow are intimately associated with the formal order of the community. Therefore, they entail a form of subordination to collective power, which, in this case, is embodied in the figure of the president. The image of formal power that this ceremony displays is similar to the one reflected by the civic parade during the final day of the festival. A group of elected authorities from local governments heads the parade, marching alongside a group of student flag-bearers, *centro* officers and the elected queen and her 'court of honour' (second, third and fourth queens). Following this group, the schoolteachers and a group of students march while performing as a military band. Nobody else

Figure 10 - Parade at the festival of Kuamar - 2013

parades that day. This is interesting because in these moments the community is entirely represented by the authorities and the students, that is, the people who are considered to be studying to become authorities (Ch.8).

That playing, performing and winning involve a certain subordination to the sanctioning role of authorities is also evident in the presentation of prizes to winners of cultural contests. For example, consider the time Yaunt, the 17-year-old daughter of Manuel (the president of the NASHE federation), was asked to award the prize to the winner of the manioc beer contest. The winner happened to be Yaunt's mother, Targelia. Presenting her mother with the prize, Yaunt said: 'Mother, I thank you. You have made a very strong manioc beer indeed! On behalf of Kuamar I give you this prize so that you continue making good manioc beer for my father'. By

215

speaking to her mother in this way, we see how family roles are thus also susceptible of being *re-presented* as though performed for the benefit of, and in conformity with, community expectations, insofar as they evince a positive contribution to *centro* life.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between the different formats of competition present in the festival. Football does not look anything like a manioc beer contest, nor does the latter resemble a singing contest or a beauty contest. To be sure, cultural contests also rank contestants and distinguish between commoners and authorities by installing a judging panel that assesses the performances. However, since cultural contests package Shuar cultural forms into a foreign format of presentation, the sociocultural *programa* engenders more interpretive dilemmas during the assessment of performers' abilities. For example, culinary and artistic abilities as well as knowledge of the "culture" are required in contests like manioc beer, blow gunning, Shuar dance, and song; yet, to win in these competitions, contestants must be capable of displaying these abilities in public. The presentational skills involved in these public performances require the embellishment of the practices as well as the stylisation of body language. To achieve this, contestants must train specifically for the festival under the tutelage of *programa* 'experts', usually schoolteachers. The beautification and spectacle-isation of ordinary domestic and artistic skills have resulted in the specialisation of cultural knowledge, a topic I will explore in more detail in the following chapter when I discuss the meanings of what Shuar call 'typical' (i.e. 'of the culture') performances. For now, I aim to offer an interpretation of the purposes and affordances of cultural contests in the context of the festival.

What spectators, participants and judges emphasise during these cultural events is the ability 'to demonstrate' something on stage. In the speeches and comments preceding and following each performance, what villagers seem to convey is their admiration for the "stage presence" that performers radiate – their ability to produce forceful and captivating performances through the display of choreographic and oratorical skills. As we have seen in previous chapters, the ability to perform and speak forcefully are some of the most important abilities a Shuar individual can have, but I suggest that being able to do this on the stage is valued even more because this is what most national performances involve. Shuar are exposed to the national festive repertoire through their sporadic journeys to Amazonian cities, their participation in civic and political mobilisations, as well as through the continuous radio announcements in their homes, and the DVD broadcasts they occasionally watch. This explains why commentators at the festival frequently state that performers are demonstrating their skills 'like the colonists'– but usually 'better than colonists'. My suggestion is that these contests have become important markers of

identity – to such an extent as to be publicised as 'ancestral' programmes – because they transform ordinary events into a form of spectacle that hosts and guests can enjoy together.

The fact that some of the performances display motifs to which Shuar associate emotional value intimately connected to their kin (remember, for example, the performances of *ánent* by Maria and Juana) further enhances the experience of participating with others in a like community. By bringing together what Shuar continue to value most of themselves and by enacting their sophisticated appropriation of performative formats appreciated by the outside, cultural contests offer a fertile terrain for cultivating pride and a wide sense of belonging.

Seen as a whole, the festival moves from the sporting games to the cultural contests, thus sequencing different kinds of competitions: from heightened rivalries (in football) to shared sentiments and common values (in cultural contests). In other words, after a sequence of sports that has fuelled antagonism between communities, cultural contests facilitate the job of bringing everyone together into the kind of union required to project competition against the outside – the mestizo world.

The awards ceremony flows into a party or 'dance of social integration'. This nocturnal *programa* steadily gives way to a more licentious kind of unity. The party starts when women from the host *centro* cluster their buckets of manioc beer around the central pole dividing the roofed-house in two equal areas. During most of the day's events, guest communities have been sitting in one of the two areas and the hosts in the opposite area. As the night unfolds, however, men from each side ask women from the other side to dance, and communities mix at the centre of the roofed-house around the pole. Meanwhile the hostesses take turns to go round the roofed-space serving manioc beer to everyone sitting and dancing, without minding whose manioc beer they take on their rounds. As communities mix and manioc beer is communally used, the party reaches a moment of maximum communality.

Thus, the sequence of competitions closes with an event that emphasises internal solidarity. This progression enables a projection of competition from the intra-ethnic to the inter-ethnic political realm (i.e. vis-à-vis non-indigenous people).

In fact, this overall progression is already prefigured in the first evening of the festival when the election of the queen of the *centro* is celebrated. During the election, three unmarried youths compete for the prize of queen of the *centro* – sometimes also called 'Nunkui nua' (the female garden spirit). The pageant is split into two performances. The first, called 'typical garment', consists of a short choreography in which a girl wearing so-called 'typical' or festive cultural attire (*tarash*) mimes an offering of manioc beer to the public while dancing to the rhythm

of a festive song (*nampet*). In the second performance, the same contestants sport an evening gown and high heels and strut along the stage accompanied by a catwalk melody.

Figure 11 – Contestants for the title of Nunkui nua in evening gown, Kuamar, 2013

This intriguing transformation from Shuar to mestizo[124] appearance is noteworthy in light of contemporary analyses of Amazonian double or mixed identities as inscribed and experienced through bodily and clothing choices (Gow 1991; Turner 1992:8; Kelly 2005; Vilaça 2007; Ewart 2007). However, in these performances Shuar are less interested in the creation of hybrid or doubled bodies as they are in producing two pure exemplars. In this sense, whilst valuing their own capability for transformation, Shuar never imply that they are turning into mestizos or even consider such a transformation desirable. Instead, what they eagerly seek (and this also applies to men's use of the stage during the same performance) is the possession of stage presence. So, instead of operating as an act of imitation of the mestizo*,* the event works to emphasise Shuar capacity for producing stage-like performances, and thus provides a way of "competing with the whites at their own game" (Taylor 2007:145).

I would suggest that the 'typical' and gala performances of the pageant should be understood within the larger set of goals of the *centro* festival and indeed can be seen as a condensed version of the whole event. During the course of the festival, Shuar make a point of

---

[124] Shuar exhibited a great interest in the contestants' capability to enact a realistic performance of two different implicit models of femininity. They consider a good performance one in which a contestant confidently interprets both models. As a clarification, although villagers normally wear the clothes they purchase in market towns, the evening gowns chosen for the gala performance are never worn in everyday life. I have no evidence that Shuar conceptualise the evening gown as belonging specifically to mestizo people. It is more likely that they conceive of this elegant apparel as endowing their owners with beautiful properties and that they can wear them just as well or even better than the mestizo women.

portraying themselves as a forward-looking, organised and productive collectivity capable of maintaining their *centro* and hosting people from other such *centros* in a spirit of hospitality. In the pageant, girls simultaneously bring to life both images. On the one hand, the model of hospitality – canonised in the offering of manioc beer to the public – while, on the other, the model of progressiveness – as the girls bring to life a powerful image of progress and integration by embodying the ideal of national beauty on stage. Shuar are very much aware that no Ecuadorian town would deserve its name without electing a queen. Indeed, queen elections celebrated in Ecuador are not simply artistic or cultural performances but complex representations of political administration and collective unity (see, for example, Rogers 1999). Thus, since the queen represents the whole community, the queen election, perhaps even more powerfully than football or cultural contests, brings forth an image of a unified collectivity whilst summoning progress and equality vis-à-vis the non-indigenous world. This was neatly expressed by Jerónimo when crowning the elected queen of Kuamar:

> Shuar too have beautiful girls, not just the colonists. We are as capable as them. All we need to do is to continue improving our work, our crops and sales and when this will happen, not only our daughters but also our sons will be able to confront the public.

Here Jerónimo presents an analogy between the performance of the queen and the productiveness of the *centro*. Just as women create an image of progress on the stage during the festival, villagers, and specifically men, should be able to generate progress in the *centro* through their everyday hard work. Let us then turn to the final theme of the festival: the staging of socioeconomic progress.

Third theme: hospitality for the sake of progress

There is sport, there is food, and there is manioc beer! As we have seen, hospitality features conspicuously in the festival. However, as I suggested in the first section, the festival foregrounds an emerging conflict between different ways of sharing within the *centro*. This conflict becomes apparent in the relations villagers establish with visitors as their desire to be good hosts competes with their desire to exploit the entrepreneurial potential of the *centro*. To illustrate what kind of entrepreneurialism villagers have in mind, let me take you back to a *minga* during which the *socios* of Kuamar interrogated themselves about the purpose of the festival. It will suffice to report the words of Jerónimo as he summarised much of the discussion among villagers when they resolved to skip the 2012 celebration since the preparations had not started early enough.

We are forgetting our traditions. Maybe you thought we didn't have enough manioc. But I tell you, we are wealthy here. Moreover, do we perhaps celebrate the festival only to drink *chicha*? The festival is also to speak, to relate to others [Sp. *relacionarnos*], to become known to others [Sp. *para hacernos conocer*]. We could have invited the mayor (...). We could have invited the prefect, even the governor, and other communities. A festival allows us to open the doors to others. In Kuamar we seem to care only about the roofed-house (...). But now I'd like to ask you, what is the purpose of a roofed-house? To get drunk? To fight?[125] In the meantime what are our families eating? No, *compañeros*, we have to organise ourselves so that one family has fisheries, another cultivates maize, yet another raises chickens. And where are the cattle? Who is going to do tourism? How are we going to progress? I want you to be able to release your products for sale, to display them for sale, to compete with the colonist in the expo-agricultural fairs of the city. We're few people in comparison, alright, but we're also talented!

I have quoted Jerónimo at length here because his words shed light on the ways in which the productiveness of the *centro*, as discussed in the previous chapter, relates to the celebration of the festival. With the festival villagers ideally show case the development and progress of their *centro*; so, as Jerónimo puts it, the festival should not only be organised for the fun of it (to dance and get drunk), but also to trade. Whilst hosts gain prestige from being able to collectively feed others, they are also keen to make some profit by selling foodstuffs to visitors – something that never happens among villagers in everyday *centro* life.[126] In recent years, some larger communities such as Pampants have held an expo-agricultural fair or market in the roofed-house as part of the *programas* of the festival, as we saw in the previous chapter. Smaller communities like Kuamar are beginning to discuss the possibility of doing something similar, but in the meantime, they have started to sell crops and foodstuffs during the festival. This is how it happened.

During one of the village assemblies held as part of the preparatory work for Kuamar's festival, a few people raised the issue of women's labour during the festival. In their view, women would spend too much time cooking for the guests and thus would not be able to properly enjoy the festival. This, some suggested, was the reason why couples sometimes fought during festivals. It was then decided that with the savings of the *centro*, *socios* would hire a few women from a neighbouring community, Wisuí. At this point, a few families had the idea that now that women

---

[125] Note that Jerónimo exaggerates the disuniting potential of the roofed-house by considering its use only for excessive drinking and fighting. But, instead of contrasting these divisive use of roofed-house to the unity created at the assembly which also takes place there, he proposes to deploy the building for commercial purposes.

[126] One or two women sometimes keep shops but they only sell urban items such as sugar, salt, matches, etc. Locally produced food is never sold within the *centro*, which is what villagers propose to do during the festival market.

were spared from cooking, they could organise their own sales during the festival. So, these families subsequently asked permission from the assembly to sell stored goods and foodstuffs. Two such families already kept small shops in Kuamar (Juana Rosa's and Targelia's families); the other two were those of Jerónimo and his wife and a young couple whose father/father-in-law owned a shop and restaurant in Makuma. Permission was granted and the result was that the women of these families ended up working for most of the festival rather than just enjoying it. Crucially, instead of working "for free" as they would have done had they contributed to the cooking of the communal meals, they instead raised some profits. Given that not all families in Kuamar had enough resources to set up a shop during the festival, not everyone could benefit equally from this initiative. The profits of those few who could, moreover, did not go back to the coffers of the *centro* but were privately accumulated. If we consider that the decision to outsource female labour was taken so that local women would be spared from work and could enjoy the festival, we are left with the paradoxical conclusion that the motivation to guarantee peace and conviviality during the festival created the conditions for the accumulation of profit of a few families in the *centro.*

In the first part of the chapter, I suggested that villagers resent the new asymmetries of social life in the *centro.* So, why did no one protest when a few families were allowed to raise more profits during the festival? There are two possible interrelated answers to this question: the first is that villagers accepted this outcome because those families who did raise some money had acted with the permission of the assembly; the second is that, as suggested in the previous chapter, the assembly agreed to this in the first place because sales are thought to bring productiveness and are therefore deemed inherently good. In fact, around the same time that villagers were deciding on individual family sales, they also agreed that manioc beer would be sold during the first two evenings of the festival and only shared during the last night. My impression is that if villagers spend time discussing how each family can create its own productive project, and some are actually able to realise this ambition, then, it is likely that others will see this as a sign of entrepreneurialism that ultimately promotes a prosperous image of their *centro.* Moreover, when every family is responsible for managing its own project and sales point, villagers are much less concerned about the resulting inequalities than when they have to divide a common good and feel that someone may be taking advantage, as per the example of the meat distribution presented above.

The festival is also a space where the meaning of productiveness takes on an aspirational and competitive dimension throughout the whole series of *programas.* For instance, at several intervals during the festival of Kuamar, hosts stated that 'Shuar would not be subdued', there

'would continue to be more [Shuar] people and more [Shuar] communities', and they 'would continue carrying on and improving themselves for the future'. To do so, the same speakers would caution, Shuar needed 'to work harder and sell more'. So, in addition to those features of productiveness we have examined in the previous chapter – e.g. the multiplication of foodstuffs for each family and of public works for everyone – productiveness assumes a normative character in the context of the festival, where the message seems to be that Shuar should work to increase their produce not just to live well and share with others in periodic festivals, but so that they can begin to demonstrate their talent in urban contexts – e.g. at the expo-agricultural fairs organised in Amazonian cities. The markets set up at the festivals would thus seem to stage a kind of preview of the sales and contests to come in future competitions in the non-indigenous world. There is some similarity between the progress conveyed by the competitive spirit of sports and contests and that conveyed by hosting a market during the festival. However, unlike the sports and contests, which coalesce in a form of collective unity during the evening parties, the staging of sales risks achieving progress only at the expense of other Shuar people.

We thus see how the roofed-house has the potential to convey two different images of progress, depending on the activity it hosts: a party or a market. While the hosting of a party embodies hospitality, the market embodies profit. Yet, when Jerónimo defends the idea of sales, he chooses to focus on the divisive aspects of the party (e.g. drinking and fighting) as though to rhetorically intensify the unity of productive projects. To put it differently, whilst a party reveals what a festival is when it is done "for its own sake", the market reveals what the festival becomes when it is done "for the sake of something else".[127]

But the festival is still far from being transformed into a full-blown market. Even in Pampants, where, in 2012, the first organised market took up a whole afternoon of the festival, the market was more ritualised than actual. After each family displayed its products in the roofed-house and guests and officers went around sampling and admiring the display, villagers enthusiastically gifted full baskets of produce to the provincial authorities who visited the community and extolled the productiveness of the *centro* (Ch.5). Moreover, one of the schoolteachers in charge of putting together the market later told me that although the directive council had intended the market to work as a competition – to award the family with the best products, etc. – in the end they had decided to give awards to all participants because what really mattered was 'the participation of the *socios*'. By turning the market into a big act of gifting to the

---

[127] I am inspired here by Gudeman's discussion of two interconnected economic realms: mutuality or community and market or trade, which he conceives as being characterised by the distinction "between a commitment and a contract, or the difference between an activity undertaken 'for its own sake' and one done 'for the sake of' something else" (2009:18).

authorities, villagers subvert not only the marketing of their products but also their rejection of patron-client relations with the authorities. Nevertheless, as markets become more common, so does the logic of fair exchange. During the second fair of Pampants, celebrated in 2013, villagers did not gift their produce in the same way as they had done the year before, even though the sales were rare and largely restricted to the few mestizo who happened to be in the *centro* such as nurses, county officers, etc.

Arguably, this experimentation with opportunities for business in the context of the festival could, in the long run, transform the meaning of festivals. In the meantime, these sorts of activities help to popularise the view that Shuar should go out of their way to create the conditions that facilitate the entrenchment of markets: e.g. productive projects, work contracts, roads, etc.

Conclusion

Handelman proposes that "events that re-present" recast the actuality and re-present it in revised versions (1998:49). These events create, in the author's words, a world of "make-believe" which projects desired and expected futures and developments (ibid.:56,188). As he illustrates through his re-analysis of the well-known Kalela dance celebrated in the African Copperbelt, the prospective character of these events provides a commentary upon the growing prominence of emergent ways of life. He thus interprets the "insignia of dress and occupation" deployed in the Kalela performance as "indices of aspirations of status and class" that migrants were unable to attain as yet in the wider social order of the city, "but that would be theirs in a future constituted through the formations of tribalism" (ibid.:56). In a similar vein, I suggest that the insistence on the formality of documents, the expertise of professionals and elected officers, the unified character of the community, and the entrepreneurial attitudes of villagers, which together result in an ideological emphasis on harmony, unity and progress, should all be interpreted as indices of aspirations of an approaching future in which Shuar increasingly interact on equal terms with mestizo people while incorporating the tokens of the civic order of the state. If such tokens lend themselves to such an elaboration, it is also because Shuar can tap into their own heritage for examples of civility, as was seen above in the use of the invitations and the speeches of the elders. As Surrallés neatly puts it when referring to the Candoshi, "if speech/words do not make society, they certainly constitute civility" (2009:351). But despite villagers' occasional emphasis upon the importance of verbal etiquette and general civility of the elders, the social harmony and unity they are keen to forge in the present can also be enacted in *centro* festivals thanks to different forms of official media. I suspect the reason written invitations and festival brochures are so

appealing is that, with the community seal and the signatures of *centro* representatives, they index a very different kind of bureaucratic mastery and a corporate sense of "peoplehood" than were available to the elders through their individualised speeches. In this way, these documents bring forth a collective agent, similar to the one villagers create through public resolutions in assemblies.

However, we should not lose sight of the fact that as an event that re-presents, the festival only partially reflects social reality. As we have seen in Chapter 4, the president of the *centro* does not wield power unless he continues to lead by example and please the *socios*. Thus, the exaggerated emphasis on a hierarchical formal order presented during the awards ceremony or the civic parade are precisely that: an overstated display of unity in hierarchy. Similarly, as I have shown in Chapter 5, villagers make a point of holding their elected authorities accountable, while rejecting the logic of exchange and obligation that the latter try to impose on them. It would therefore be misleading to take the amount of attention and speech time granted to elected officers at face value. There is simply no way in which officers can impose their "progressive" intentions on the majority of villagers; so, we must concede that the pompous, pacifying, and unifying speeches of the festival bear fruits through persuasion rather than coercion. But the work of persuasion is not simply achieved by the authorities during the festival since a great number of villagers are themselves happy to extol the advantages of living in *centros* and devote much energy to organising a beautiful festival. And perhaps most importantly, villagers actually enjoy the festival: they relish the abundance of unusual food, the cultural performances, the parades, and the football matches. In most of these events, as in many of the speeches, youths are key participants. To a large extent, it is the young people of the village who are being re-presented in the festival: a future of cup winners, entrepreneurs and professionals. In the next two chapters, I turn to the historical and contemporary role of schooling in forging some of the discourses and performances Shuar take up in the festival and in *centro* life more generally.

Chapter 7: The scholarly tradition

'This is the step of the toucan' says Teresa. Tac, tac, tac [sounds of dancers' jumps on the floor]. 'No, no, no, you're not doing it well. Look, you do it like this', corrects Teresa, showing again the sequence of steps. 'Let's start over again.' The music track is rewound.

One afternoon of January 2012, about 50 Shuar adults between their twenties and thirties training to become bilingual teachers gathered in a big classroom of the Bomboiza institute to participate in a 'typical dance and music workshop.' Teresa, a renowned teacher-trainer, instructed the group from the front of the room. The track was stopped and resumed as the dancers wiped away their sweat, returned to position and repeatedly rehearsed the steps. The morning after, the trainees were asked to compose new lyrics for *nampet* (festive songs) and to rehearse the songs in unison. That same evening, Teresa organised a 'demonstration event' in which the students displayed the dances and songs they had learnt in small groups. Before the demonstrations began, she encouraged the students like this:

> This evening we're all going to demonstrate our abilities because if you can't sing and dance, how are you going to teach the children and youths? How are you going to help organise the *programas* of your communities?

* * *

Some months later in Achunts, a group of youths rehearsed the choreography of a typical dance at the schoolyard under the scorching sun. Claudio, a teacher in his late twenties who had trained in the Sevilla Bilingual Institute (equivalent to the Bomboiza one), showed the steps to the students. The youths energetically repeated the steps for several hours surrounded by a group of curious children who with great amusement began to try the steps among themselves, delaying their return journeys home.

* * *

A few days later, in Kuamar, Carmen shouted out from her house as Alfredo was passing by on his way to the primary school, 'Brother-in-law, are you going to have the children dance and sing for Mother's Day?' Alfredo answered positively, 'Send your children to the roofed-house with their "typical" garments tomorrow.' On Mother's Day, the children danced and sang in typical garments as they do in every *programa* of the *centro*.

These three episodes involve different people, but they are part of the same chain of teaching and learning events connecting educational institutions with the production of festive life in *centros*: teacher-trainers instruct future bilingual teachers, who then teach the dances and

songs to Shuar students so that the latter, in turn, can perform in *programas*. In this chapter, I trace this chain of teaching and learning events and explore how through participation in school rehearsals and public performances, Shuar fashion a certain understanding of cultural expertise.

I have evoked the importance of schooling in all previous chapters. Starting in Chapter 3, I have shown that, at school, Shuar hope to acquire 'the science', 'the theory' or 'the study' that they associate with collective organisation and economic development. If the former relates to the 'tools of harmony' with which Shuar seek to foster unity and cooperation at the level of the *centro*, the latter relates to the specific techniques that brokers need for capturing external wealth. In both cases, the importance of the school resides in its transmission of external knowledge. In the last chapter I noted that schoolteachers are central figures in the organisation of public events called *programas*. A key part of these *programas* is the staging of cultural performances that Shuar call 'typical'. 'Typical' is a term widely used in Ecuadorian Amazonia to denote tokens of traditional indigenous culture. Shuar currently produce a variety of staged cultural representations that show an object or facet of social life they consider customarily 'Shuar'. Most of these objects and events go by the name of 'typical', and sometimes 'ancestral', as in 'typical garment', 'typical food', 'typical dance', 'typical greeting', 'ancestral games', thereby pointing to the conventional or traditional character of the objects and activities in question. As key orchestrators of the 'typical', schoolteachers are therefore considered to preserve Shuar culture by helping to organise *programas* in their communities. Thus, in addition to external knowledge, at school, Shuar also acquire internal knowledge, the sort that, as we shall see, creates 'experts' of culture.

When previous ethnographers have commented on the role of a self-conscious and objectified notion of culture in the consolidation of Shuar ethnic identity, they have emphasised the detrimental effects that such processes have on pre-existent cultural patterns. Descola notes that the idea of ethnic identity as something that is bounded and stable emerges only when a system of values, "an ethos", begins to vanish. Only then, the author argues, do people feel the need to eternalise "culture" by transforming it into a memorial, the sort of dogmatic corpus of ideas which nation-states teach to children at schools (1982a:235). The author also observes, however, that the process of transferring native culture onto the registers of communication that characterise the inculcation of values in the dominant society, namely radio and written publications, has enabled Shuar to combat a feeling of self-depreciation that characterises most "situations of acculturation" (ibid.). In a similar vein, Gnerre notes that the introduction of writing and other representational techniques at Shuar schools became "tools for nostalgia and memory"

(2006:24), which resulted in the transformation of central aspects of social life into mere folkloric spectacles (1986:311; 2003:114-15).

In this chapter, I take up some of these issues in relation to how Shuar currently experiment with the production of culture at school and in *centros*. However, rather than merely showing how educational institutions serve to transform or recover cultural practices, I explore how they use 'typical' culture to create community. By creating an objectified understanding of 'culture', Shuar have simultaneously given rise to a village festive lore – called 'the typical' – which functions as an important marker of communal belonging and group identity. In the previous chapter, I noted that the spectacle-isation of ordinary events and skills in festivals goes hand in hand with the specialisation of cultural knowledge. Here, I explore this process of specialisation further by examining the historical rise of 'the teacher' as an expert of Shuar culture. I also noted that spectacle-isation results in the creation of a common repertoire of motifs with which Shuar associate emotional value and which enable them to feel part of a community. In this chapter, I explore the processes that have given rise to 'the typical' and its current usage in *centros*. I will show that, in parallel to festivals, which, are in part a celebration of internal unity through the appropriation of external idioms, the 'typical' is also a representation of internal unity forged through exogenous techniques of representation. It would be impossible to fully appreciate how Shuar create community life without understanding the many ways in which Shuar use *programas*. Thus, as I trace the relationship between schooling and the creation of an objectified tradition, I also examine the origin of *programas*.

I begin from a discussion of how villagers and teachers understand the vernacular orientation of education. Following this, I trace the roots of some of the ideas and techniques that characterise cultural production in contemporary schools to Shuar people's earlier experiences of mission and mestizo-led schooling. Finally, I examine the production of cultural knowledge in local schools and consider its relevance in *centro* life. I must warn the reader that the topic of Intercultural Bilingual Education (henceforth: IBE) and the massive cultural and literary production in which Shuar educationalists are currently involved is so vast and rich to deserve a thesis of its own. In this and the following chapter, I therefore limit the discussion to issues and events that are most relevant to understanding the creation of community at the local level in which the people of Makuma are most enthusiastically engaged.

Throughout the discussion, I contextualise the situation of education in Makuma by taking into consideration a wider educational landscape that includes other areas of Shuar territory connected to the federation FICSH. This is because many schoolteachers in Makuma

are presently trained in bilingual institutes that have a strong Salesian legacy. Moreover, Salesian educational policies have shaped current educational work much more than Evangelical ones.

Cultural Knowledge at school

Since Shuar began to take over control of the schooling system with the rise of the federations around the mid-1960s, native teachers have been charged with a Janus-faced role. On the one hand, they have been responsible for teaching literacy and numeracy so that children could succeed in new political and economic spheres, while on the other, they have been entrusted with the preservation of the oral patrimony of Shuar 'culture' – a concept precipitated out of encounters with missionaries and Ecuadorian national society. Salesian missionaries and the first Shuar literati educated in the missions considered that to preserve Shuar oral culture they needed to systematise it and transfer it to written form. Thus, from the outset, the appropriation of literacy has had a double purpose.

Presently, all formal education in Ecuador is called "intercultural" according to the National Law of Education (LOEI – March 2011). However, Shuar formal education, like all indigenous education in Ecuador, is part of a differentiated administrative system called Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE), overseen by the Sub-secretary of IBE, a branch of the Ministry of Education mostly run by indigenous functionaries. Most Shuar schools in the province are almost entirely staffed by resident Shuar professionals. The curriculum for indigenous education combines the national curriculum and the IBE curriculum or MOSEIB.[128] The MOSEIB is a curricular model with a strong vernacular orientation seeking to instil increased self-confidence in indigenous students. It states that indigenous education should promote the recovery and re-valorisation of native languages and cultures (Quishpe 2001:1). In 2005, an IBE sub-curricular proposal was created for Amazonia called AMEIBA, which proposes a series of adaptations to attune school pedagogy to indigenous teaching and learning processes. For example, the proposal eliminates school years and subjects and shifts towards a system of integrated "units of learning", so that every child can learn at his or her own pace (SEIB 2013:20).[129]

The primary reason why parents send their children to school is so that they can learn what the colonists know; that is, the school is primarily associated with socioeconomic empowerment. Most parents to whom I talked voiced their desire for children to learn 'more

---

[128] *Modelo del Sistema de Educación Bilingüe* (approved in 1993, reformed in 2013).
[129] Shuar educationalists were still designing the units of learning in 2011. The creation of a curriculum that integrates all areas of knowledge was an innovative but extremely challenging task, and it was even harder to apply it in class. I only ever saw this happen when the teachers were the same people who designed it.

and better' than they currently were able to in local schools. In Makuma, parents typically evaluate contemporary schools according to the standards of the formal education they witnessed between the 1950s and 1980s, when some schools in the area were still largely staffed by missionary and mestizo teachers. The people who attended these schools claim that their education was better because foreign teachers taught them about the outside world.

The idea that schooling is about acquiring the tools of powerful outsiders was once nicely described to me by Manuel, who compared formal education to the powerful masters sought by apprentice shamans:

> It's like the shamans' darts [*tsentsak*]. The shamans don't train only with one master but they become apprentices of many; they go far away to acquire their *tsentsak*. If we do this, we can also acquire different tools. We have to learn other languages; we have to let our children become friends with other people. See, like you're teaching in the high school [referring to my collaboration in Achunts]. We could have many more like you. A friend, a German, who was teaching me English when I lived in Baños [a city in the highlands where Manuel worked as a teenager], once told me, 'I'm teaching you what I learned in many years at University.' I had that privilege! So our children can also learn from other people, they can create relations. Maybe they'll go outside [one day] and study in those other places. See, you came because you're interested in learning from us. Well, someday, our children too could go and study other people.

Given that villagers hope that their children relate with different people and acquire external knowledge at school, how do they deal with the fact that their schools are staffed by native teachers and the IBE has an official vernacular orientation? The first thing to mention is that, although parents desire that their children benefit from learning foreign things, they also appreciate the school's vernacular orientation. But before I explain how and why, let me first examine how teachers understand and adapt the IBE curriculum.

Although teachers are strong advocates of teaching culture at school, they rarely do so in the way the AMEIBA dictates, which requires a thorough adaptation of the whole syllabus to local pedagogies and a translation to – or even substitution of – mainstream contents with locally meaningful themes. The AMEIBA is designed by indigenous intellectuals who have had significant experience in the indigenisation of schooling and academic training concerning the application of alternative pedagogies in class. By contrast, ordinary teachers are much less equipped and motivated to adapt the AMEIBA as they face local pressure to deliver 'good quality' education, which for most parents means education that allows children to compete with mestizo people. Hence, teachers adopt a pedagogic strategy whereby they transfer native knowledge onto external formats (written texts, public spectacle) while teaching the mainstream

curriculum as faithfully as possible. In fact, very few teachers in the interior use the AMEIBA learning units and pedagogic guides in their classes, preferring to employ mainstream methodology and textbooks. As a schoolteacher of Achunts explained when I asked him why he did not use the AMEIBA, 'It's too difficult! And then, if we don't teach the students to write, read and copy properly as mestizo teachers do, what are the parents going to tell us?'

But despite teachers' best efforts to teach the national curriculum, parents remain painfully aware that the education Shuar children receive in IBE schools is inferior to the education mestizo children receive in Hispanic urban schools. In Kuamar, I once witnessed the dismay of parents when the educational supervisor visited the multi-grade primary school to run an 'annual evaluation'. During the visit, schoolchildren were asked to demonstrate what they had learned in front of everyone in the community. Parents, who had hoped their ten- to twelve-year-old children would have a promising future of informatics, accountancy and English, rapidly became disheartened as they watched them struggle with basic literacy and maths at the blackboard.

Villagers also know that bilingual schools are not competitive because high school graduates from the interior are usually unsuccessful in the examinations for entry to public universities. As a result, most youths who aspire to become professionals, but cannot afford to pay for auxiliary courses that prepare them for the examinations, resign themselves to enrolling in tertiary bilingual institutes located within Shuar territory as these are better suited to their educational backgrounds and financial means.[130]

The awareness that IBE is not "good enough" has at times led some villagers to request that their schools be handed over to the Hispanic system so that mestizo teachers instruct Shuar children. This desire is reinforced by the fact that wealthy Shuar send their own children to study in Hispanic schools in Amazonian or Highland cities. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of people I knew continue to support IBE with more or less enthusiasm. One of the reasons for this is that the system offers very concrete local benefits that would be lost if it were discontinued.

For Shuar people, becoming bilingual teachers has been for many decades the only available path to professionalization. At present, the overwhelming majority of Shuar professionals in the province have obtained IBE degrees from universities or tertiary bilingual institutes. Up until 2014, the latter were sufficient qualification for graduates to take up posts as teachers. Moreover, a policy of accelerated distance higher-education training for young teachers

---

[130] Public universities are largely free, but living in cities is expensive. Until very recently, only those able to secure scholarships from missionaries to study at the Salesian University of Quito were able to afford higher education.

enables some high school graduates to start their teaching duties before they obtain a higher education qualification. The IBE system thus offers a unique and considerably flexible means by which to secure qualified employment. It allows some young graduates to receive a monthly salary while sparing them from the high expenses and difficulties of studying or working in the city as they can easily find a teaching post within Shuar territory. Finally, the IBE is strongly associated with emancipatory gains in the context of Shuar territorial and political militancy (see also King and Haboud 2002:385).[131] Many Shuar feel proud of the IBE system because it has enabled them to control the means of their own emancipation. 'Why would you want to send your children to suffer in the city? Just because we are in the jungle, it doesn't mean we can't have good education!' this is how Leonidas, the Achunts headmaster addressed the parents and students during a civic ceremony. 'As Shuar, we have to demonstrate to the country that we too are capable!' was the combative assertion of a school supervisor who visited Kuamar only a few days after villagers held an assembly to discuss whether they should request a transfer to the Hispanic educational system. After the visit, one of the villagers who had proposed the transfer motion confessed that he had changed his mind because changing system would imply 'surrendering to the mestizo', so it was 'better to improve their own education'.

Let us examine how teachers and educationalists understand the vernacular orientation of the school.

Crafting culture

Shuar educationalists – that is, Shuar working as teacher-trainers, education functionaries or full-time researchers in tertiary bilingual institutes, Ecuadorian universities and in the Sub-Secretary of Education – emphasise that one of the key responsibilities of bilingual teachers is to become experts in their own cultures. To become experts, they have to research their own cultures. According to this view, the knowledge teachers acquire through research enables them to rescue the fast-eroding traditions of the elders by teaching to children what the latter are no longer learning from their parents. Most teachers are thus required to write theses on their own cultural traditions to obtain higher education diplomas in IBE. These theses are part of subjects called 'indigenous science' (Sp. *ciencia indígena*) or 'indigenous worldview' (Sp. *cosmovisión*

---

[131] The institutionalisation of bilingual education in Ecuador in 1988 was the indigenous movement's first legal achievement. The control over the national direction of bilingual education (DINEIB) became a powerful political organising instrument for indigenous cadres thereafter (Van Cott 2005:110). However, Correa's government has significantly curtailed the autonomy of the DINEIB (Martinez-Novo 2014:115).

indígena), following wider use of the terms among the intellectuals of interculturality in Ecuador.[132]

For example, to obtain a degree in IBE at the University of Cuenca, Alicia and Marcía, a couple of middle-aged schoolteachers from Makuma, wrote a thesis entitled '*The sacred value of prayers and their use by women in the agricultural cycle of the Macuma community*'. In the thesis, after expressing their concern about the decline of *ánent* (magical incantations) amongst young people, Alicia and Marcía described some of their research goals as follows:

- To find out about the use of prayer-songs [Sp: *plegarias*, as the students call *ánent* following a Salesian missionary use] and their sacred value in the agricultural cycle.

- To classify the prayer-songs according to their different phases of cultivation of the swidden garden.

- To suggest recommendations for the survival of the prayer-songs and their insertion into the school curriculum (Cacepa & Jeencham 2006:17).

To pursue these aims, Alicia and Marcia interviewed a few elderly women in the area. Similarly, the students who participated in the dance and song workshop with which I opened the chapter conducted research in their own communities on a variety of native topics at the end of their study programme. Ideally, teachers then integrate what they learn in the course of their research experience into their own pedagogic practice since they are required to teach 'worldview' at school. The other cultural subject that IBE teachers impart at school is Shuar Chicham, Shuar's native language. When they teach worldview, they introduce two different sorts of activities for children. The first entails transforming stories and cultural images into written or pictorial symbols by, for example, writing myths and illustrating them, or drawing the festive garments and postures of warriors and powerful elders, etc. The second engages students in routinised performances, primarily, of 'typical dances' that the students perform in *centros* and, occasionally, of festive and magical incantations. It is the performance of 'typical dances' which teachers, villagers, and children alike are most excited about when they talk about 'culture'. Indeed, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter, this is the

Figure 12 - Drawing by a schoolchild of a posture adopted by powerful man during a ritual speech, with the names of traditional ornaments. (Germán Tuna Sanimba Mashu, 2012)

---

[132] Indigenous cadres largely treat culture as an abstract system of representations, susceptible to systematisation and classification like any other form of science. The arguments Rival (1997) put forward to critique this view of culture in the context of Ecuadorian bilingual education are still valid. Elsewhere, I discuss some of the dilemmas of seeking to preserve knowledge by writing university dissertations on culture (Buitrón-Arias 2014).

type of practice through which Shuar schools most contribute to the creation of *centro* events. But before I get to this, it is important to continue exploring how it is that schoolteachers come to acquire expertise in culture. Let me then return to the idea that schoolteachers become experts in their culture by conducting research.

During one of my visits to the Bomboiza Institute, a group of IBE students who attended a worldview class were asked to consult with their mothers or grandmothers during the weekend with a view to learning *ánent*. I accompanied one of the youngest students, Ligia, a student in her twenties, to her native *centro*, Tiink (in the FICSH Southern Territories), where she hoped to learn an *ánent* from her mother, Marta. Once at home, Marta began to sing as Ligia sat at the table scribbling some notes in front of her and softly repeating the words.[133] After the *ánent* session, Ligia's father told me that when he first married Marta, she had not known *ánent*. He captured this idea by saying that Marta had been 'a woman of the household' and that as a result 'she didn't know this sort of thing'. I was taken aback by this comment as I had always assumed that *ánent* signalled, above other things, a woman's capacity for symbolic manipulation of her garden and, by extension, of the household. Indeed, *ánent* have been considered especially important in preparation for marriage. Descola, for instance, observes that *ánent* constituted a woman's "spiritual trousseau", equipping her for the successful management of her married life (1996a:81). So, if Marta did not know *ánent* then, because she was 'a woman of the household', how is it that she knows them now?' This was more or less what I asked Hector. He proudly answered, 'Well, at the Institute, she had to do research with the elderly women'.

Thus, Ligia was already part of the second generation of women in the family for whom the Institute had mediated the transmission of *ánent*. But even more important than this is the fact that Hector, like other parents I met, is increasingly likely to construe traditional knowledge as something scholarly. That is, for him, *ánent* is something that one learns 'at the institute'. As Marta and Ligia told me more about their relationship with the institute, they repeatedly made complementary comments about Teresa, the teacher-trainer of Bomboiza, whom they called 'doctor', because she was an 'expert' who knew 'a lot about the culture'.

I once had an illuminating conversation with one of those experts or 'doctors' of culture, Manuel Mashinkiash. He is a Shuar educationalist who had recently written a thesis 'on the

---

[133] I do not have space here to discuss the implications of learning *ánent* at the school for local notions of efficacy, but plan to do so in the future. In non-school contexts, *ánent* can be acquired through visions and dreams or from powerful elders in enclosed situations that typically involve the absorption of tobacco. Also, *ánent* were not performed in public, as is the case now. The school thus seems to be disembedding *ánent* from their specific contexts of performance while making them more routinized.

pedagogy of the *arutam'* for a degree on Amazonian Research[134] at the University of Cuenca, in which he analysed the views of many parents and elders about visionary knowledge and the importance of visions for children's education. He told me that the purpose of his thesis was to conserve the knowledge of the elders – whom he called 'sages' – because they were the "living encyclopaedias" of Shuar society. While emphasising the importance of preserving knowledge, Manuel, like many educationalists construes expert educational practice as one involving 'knowing about knowledge'. For instance, in his thesis, he was more interested in transforming visionary knowledge into a coherent system of representations than in exploring how children could go on seeking visions (Mashinkiash 2012).

While paying due credit to the elders, Manuel went on to highlight his own expertise as researcher, in the same way Hector and Marta had done when they mentioned Teresa's knowledge. Manuel had also participated in the preparation for publication of many IBE theses produced by some of his colleagues and previous students.[135] This is how he recalled this experience:

> In the beginning, I made some mistakes but now things are clear to me, I know how to teach my students. Besides, thanks to the systematisation I did for the publication of the theses of my colleagues, now I know about Anthropology, Botany, Worldview, about everything... 'You are a researcher, you must know', is what they tell me [referring to his students].

The idea that teachers are experts in salvage research and that a key part of their endeavour is to systematise traditional knowledge has a long history among Shuar people that can be traced back to the time when missionaries began to train bilingual teachers. In the following section, I briefly reconstruct some aspects of that history, focusing on the importance of literacy and cultural research in the early days of bilingual education. Towards the end, I also focus on an aspect of education that is key to understanding how the people of Makuma I came to know best construe scholarly expertise in cultural matters in the present. That is, as something that schooled people not only know about but are also capable of representing, displaying and performing in public. This will enable me to return to the discussion of collective rehearsals, 'typical dances' and *programas*, which, in Makuma, are the most tangible way in which ordinary schoolteachers demonstrate cultural expertise.

---

[134] *Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación e Investigación de las Culturas Amazónicas* (2006-2010).
[135] A colossal collection of cultural theses published in 2012 under the name 'Amazonian Wisdom'.

The roots of cultural education

Although the Evangelical and Salesian missions had different theological stances which were reflected in the policies they implemented and their views of the native culture, both introduced bilingual education as part of their efforts to evangelise Shuar people. Evangelical missionaries sought to demarcate a clear boundary between Christianity as divine revelation and the native oral tradition. They viewed the latter tradition as one in which good and evil were confused so that the natives were held hostage by Satan. They thus envisioned the gospel as the true path to salvation, and therefore directed their efforts to the translation of the bible and the promotion of literacy among Shuar people, for, as Eldon Yoder, an Evangelical missionary observed, 'What good is there to having the Bible translated if you can't read it? That is where schools came into play' (personal communication, August 2014).

On the contrary, some of the most influential Salesian padres condemned the ethnocentric prejudices that, in the early phase of missionisation, had blinded them to the discovery of seeds of the gospel in the cosmology of the natives; they thus endeavoured to construct a new bilingual hermeneutics on which to pivot the Christian message.

The Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) created the first school in Makuma in the 1950s. Even though the state was paying for some of the teachers – all of whom were mestizo – missionaries were in control of education, which they envisioned as Christianisation. As missionaries began to extend their evangelist work in different cooperatives and *centros,* they saw the need to train bilingual teachers who would be able to read the Scripture and teach basic literacy. The system they implemented for the training as follows. In 1963, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) introduced bilingual education for Amazonian indigenous peoples at the Pedagogical Institute of Limoncocha.[136] To take advantage of this training, the GMU selected a few students who had finished primary education in Makuma to become bilingual teachers. These students began to attend summer courses in Limoncocha to get through their secondary education. The Institute established a system of accelerated learning so that after every summer the students would be promoted to another year of secondary education. As the students progressed through secondary education, they became qualified to teach more advanced year of primary education in their own communities. Moreover, the first generation of students trained as bilingual teachers were also taken on as summer instructors at the Institute so they began to train future generations of students who could serve in the *centros* of Makuma. During this time,

---

[136] Limoncocha is located in Northern Ecuadorian Amazonia, in the Napo province. Around this time, it was one of the main headquarters of the SIL.

missionaries also worked with Shuar trainees on recording and transcribing myths and life experiences as well as producing bilingual textbooks for primary schools. Let us see what was happening on the Salesian side.

Most of what Salesian missionaries did in terms of bilingual education from the 1960s onwards came as a reaction to policies they had implemented earlier. During the first half of the 20th century, Catholic missionary work was predicated on a policy of conversion by acculturation that targeted young generations. Children were separated from their parents and educated in mission schools under an aggressive policy of "castilianisation". The 1960s brought a sea change in the policies of the Catholic mission. The spread of liberation theology in Latin America and especially the culturalist shift that ensued from the Second Vatican Council (1962) greatly influenced Salesian missionaries to reconsider the value of the native language and belief systems for the spread of the gospel. Other reasons for this change of attitude were the growing influence of linguistics and anthropology on the new missiology, and a linguistics arms race with the Evangelical mission, which had begun translation of the bible earlier. Catholic preachers thus saw the need to train Shuar interns who would help them understand and gradually use the native language to convey novel formulations of Christian doctrine (Gnerre 2012:32). However, as Salesian missionaries embarked on the promotion of an indigenised Christianity, they had to deal with the youths who, as they came out of mission schools, were ashamed of speaking their native language and reluctant to engage with the ways of their elders. Having worked for decades to hispanicise Shuar youths, Salesian missionaries now had to re-convert their pupils to a self-conscious appreciation of their own traditions.[137]

Throughout this period (post-1960s), the padres promoted a view of 'culture' as something that belongs to the group. Gnerre (2000a) notes that a key pedagogic technique through which missionaries sought to develop cultural consciousness amongst their pupils was the theatre form. On special occasions when important civil or religious authorities visited the mission, interns were requested to prepare a theatrical sketch of their everyday lives to perform in public. Typically, students would dramatise a home ceremonial dialogue, a domestic scene, or even a comic imitation of a shamanic séance. As Gnerre maintains, theatrical presentations helped students to recognise in the everyday habits and linguistic expressions of others something shared, unitary and collective (ibid.:295).

The most important way in which the Salesian mission sought to instil a reflexive attitude in their pupils while promoting literacy was the creation of two different kinds of schooling

---

[137] Around the late 1970s, the Evangelical mission also underwent a 'cultural or nativist turn' of sorts, though different from that of the Catholic mission. For a fuller discussion, see Cova (2014:141-151) and Belzner (1981:149).

initiatives. The first was the radio educational system (SERBISH, which was created in 1972), and broadcast to Catholic *centros.* The radio system consisted of a 'tele-master' in charge of writing the lesson scripts that were broadcast daily from the headquarters of the federation to the *centros.* In the *centros*, 'tele-assistants' were in charge of instructing schoolchildren by coordinating the voice that came from the receivers with the exercises of textbooks. The second kind of initiative was the pedagogic bilingual institutes, the first of which was the Bomboiza Institute created in 1983. These institutes trained pupils to become bilingual teachers (for the SERBISH), while preparing them to become researchers and saviours of their own changing cultures. For instance, as described above, teacher trainees had to write cultural monographs that usually consisted in the recording, transcription and translation of elders' mythological and discursive knowledge and life histories. These monographs were in turn used to produce bilingual schoolbooks for the development of literacy skills.

Some of the monographs that the new Shuar literati and missionaries produced were published in the *Mundo Shuar*[138] series, an editorial initiative that gave life to an unprecedented wave of ethnological publications authored by Shuar students throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Contemporary cultural monographs continue this tradition, although missionaries are no longer heading the initiative. Around the same time, missionaries were producing a variety of "bicultural" educational material in which they syncretised Shuar concepts with Christian concepts and cultural notions from the dominant society. An example of the latter is a collection of textbooks called *Shuara Antukta*! ('Listen oh Shuar!'), which linked Shuar traditional festivities and activities with the national and liturgical calendars through bilingual stories and syncretic illustrations.

The pedagogic institutes and radio programmes created an experimental network of cultural transmission. Indeed, the increase and propagation of written productions in print and oral media is likely to have produced what Goody calls "the lecto-oral" (2010:123), namely cultural productions that have been influenced by the introduction of writing and hegemonic religions. For instance, a great innovation of this interface of oral-written communication was that literacy was not limited to Spanish but extended to Shuar. From this process emerged a Shuar language that had been standardised for writing. This new "domesticated Shuar" introduced

---

[138] A decade later *Mundo Shuar* became Abya Yala, a renowned publishing house based in Quito which covers a broad range of indigenous and public affairs in Latin America.

punctuation, a series of grammatical innovations[139] and neologisms[140] to express concepts for novel ideas, for example, numbers, the Western calendar, and other bureaucratic, administrative and Christian concepts that had become familiar at the level of federation and *centro* life (Gnerre 2012). The standardisation of Shuar Chicham for writing also extended to the Evangelical territories since the project was part of a collaborative linguistic project undertaken by both missions in 1971-2 (ibid.:25). Slowly most bilingual production crossed mission boundaries through the use of radio communication (since the Evangelical mission had also set up a radio).

In the areas covered by the Salesian Mission, most of the federation and *centro* leaders of today, usually men and women in their forties and fifties, were the schoolchildren of the SERBISH. This generation grew up hearing not only the stories of their parents and grandparents at home, some of whom had already had some degree of exposure to the early mission schools themselves, but also the narratives of Shuar tele-masters and tele-assistants. They were thus the first generation of children to study with bilingual schoolbooks authored by missionaries and by a new wave of Shuar researchers-translators, who had come out of bilingual institutes, where they themselves often continued their secondary education.

Just as myths and cultural data were being systematised[141], a new kind of public event was created, which missionaries called 'programa'. Silvio Broseghini, the missionary who founded the Bomboiza Institute, reports that the idea behind *programas* was to include a great part of "the programmatic contents that are part of the [Shuar] culture". For example, one of the *programas* they created was "the Culture Week" celebration in which they "tried to rescue traditional forms of dance and thus to re-valorise the ancients" (cited in Boster 2007:45).

Dance was a major focus of the cultural revivalism promoted in Salesian bilingual institutes and, as the introductory vignette illustrates, it continues to be a central focus of 'teaching culture' in the present. During the 1980s, a new choreographic repertoire was composed by assembling a series of motifs of a disappearing festive domestic tradition. At the same time, several monographs came out that provided systematic information about the songs, ornamentation and costumes of Shuar aesthetics in domestic festivals (Rovere 1977; Chumpi Kayap 1985; Ujukam et al. 1991). This new literature is likely to have contributed to the codification of body ornamentation and dance styles in the institutes.

---

[139] See Gnerre (1986; 2007; 2012).
[140] Consult also Descola (2000) on the creation of the first Spanish-Shuar dictionary produced in the SERBISH. The evangelical mission's greatest contribution to the development of neologisms can be seen in the glossary to the Shuar bible (AIESE 2009:1412-1430).
[141] For discussions of this, see Gnerre (1985ab, 1986, 2006, 2012).

Meanwhile, the Shuar of Makuma were also beginning to experiment with *programas*, although of a different character.

In the 1980s, formal education, which thus far had been under the control of Evangelical missionaries, was taken over by the Ministry of Education and the first high school 'Antonio Samaniego' was created in Makuma, which was initially staffed by mestizo teachers. Teachers introduced a variety of civic celebrations characteristic of mestizo towns and schools: pageantry,

Figure 13 - Christmas pageant presented in December 1968 by schoolchildren (Makuma). Mission Archive

Figure 14 - School parade in Makuma, around 1961. Mission Archive.

parades, and sports tournaments. Pageants and sport matches had already been introduced at the mission school. I found pictures of nativity pageants in the mission archives, which suggests that some form of drama was taking place at the mission school (see figure 13).

In a conversation I had with Norma Hedlund, she recalled that missionaries introduced sports as a way of replacing prior "sinful" feasting practices while promoting large gatherings among Shuar people. However, she also observed that Shuar soon "hijacked" sports tournaments and turned them into feasts. The combination of sports and feasting in public events seems definitely to have intensified from the 1980s onwards, as Shuar began to participate in school-organised civic celebrations. Alicia, the teacher I mentioned earlier, remembers that when the high school was created, schoolteachers organised 'toasts' which gradually gave way to drinking and dancing. Schoolteachers also introduced 'queens' for football teams. The girls would attend the event wearing home-sewn cotton print dresses. At some point, these events began to alternate between years in which the queen and her court of honour wore a 'typical' dress – that is, the *tarash*, the garment that women wore in Shuar festivities – and years in which they wore mestizo-style gowns, thus foreshadowing the two different performances of the contemporary beauty pageants described in Chapter 6. At the high school in Makuma, Alicia was put in charge of fixing the girls' hairdos and preparing them to walk in heels. To this date, in fact, schoolteachers are usually in charge of preparing the contestants for the *programas* at

festivals, whether teaching them to walk the catwalk or to perform the Shuar 'typical dance' in *centro* festivals.

What seems to have happened in Makuma therefore is that civic celebrations gradually began to include native elements, something we might have expected given this was a period of increased rapprochement between the Shuar who had been missionised by Evangelicals and those who had been missionised by Catholics. As I noted in Chapter 2, around this time the two federations began to collaborate in political and pro-indigenous autonomy projects. The fact that *centro* festivals of both NASHE and FICSH federations are presently very similar in their inclusion of 'typical' items such as Shuar dances and events like parades characteristic of civic celebrations, suggests that a similar combination of native and mestizo elements was taking place when *programas* were being introduced in Salesian bilingual institutes.

Throughout the 1990s, most Shuar schools became part of the national IBE system. However, in pedagogical terms the difference between missionary and national bilingual training was minimal since cultural education at the school was still centred on the transference of oral traditions to the written form. This explains why ordinary schoolteachers are still reluctant to switch to a methodology that demands the development of indigenous pedagogic techniques.

The overall schooling legacy of the period going from the 1950s to the 1990s is one in which the introduction of literacy, cultural performances and civic celebrations alongside the promotion of research to recover cultural knowledge created new areas of expertise for bilingual teachers. For the first time in Shuar society, a group of people made a profession out of producing and transmitting practices for which previously there were no clearly identified classes of specialists[142] or formal institutions.

In the following section, I return to the schools of today to explore how schoolteachers deploy their expertise within and outside the classrooms and the relationship between the school and *centro* life.

The scholarly tradition

When schoolteachers showed enthusiasm about teaching *cultura*, 'culture', they usually drew my attention to classes of Shuar Chicham and their rehearsals of typical dances. Let me begin from a description of a class of Shuar Chicham in Kiim, a *centro* of the Makuma area, where Alicia taught.

---

[142] Shamans (*uwishin*) do constitute a pre-existent class of ritual specialists but, interestingly, shamanism has not been integrated into the scholarly tradition. Grégory Deshoullière explores the relationship between shamanism and formal institutions in his thesis.

When I entered the classroom, the children were repeating in chorus the days of the week in Shuar. Alicia showed the class cardboard pieces with a drawing of each of the seven types of palm trees whose local names have been designated in the text as names for the days. On the table was a textbook used at the time of the SERBISH.[143] All children were fluent Shuar speakers but they struggled to remember the names of the week just as I have seen secondary students struggle with the names of months and numbers that they have to memorise for the translation exercises of the exams. After a few imperfect trials, Alicia harangued the children. She told them that they had to speak better, not like their parents who 'speak just to speak'. On our way home I asked Alicia if she thought parents did not speak good enough Shuar and she explained that what she meant was that 'they weren't very educated' because they did not understand very well that there were words for everything in Shuar. Instead, they continued to use Spanish words. Alicia was basically arguing that because parents did not use the neologisms introduced when Shuar was being standardised for writing, they did not have a good command of their mother tongue.

Spanish words for calendar terms and numbers are routinely use during conversations in Shuar. I remember that one day Yajaira, Carmen and Manuel's daughter, who studies in Achunts High School and is a monolingual Spanish speaker, on her return from school asked her sisters why they did not use the words for the months of the year that she had just learnt in her Shuar Chicham class. 'Which words?' Suanua, her perfectly bilingual sister, asked in turn. 'You know *Etsa, Ayumpum.*' Suanua shook her head and Manuel intervened: 'Those are different characters, we're not used to that.' He was referring to the fact that *Etsa, Tsunki, Ayumpum* and other such terms are originally names of mythical persons, which is the reason adults may find it odd to use them to refer to the months of the year and why children struggle to learn them at school.

Alicia's ideas about language to some extent reflect the views of the Shuar educationalists with whom she trained. For instance, Alicia recalled how ashamed she and other classmates from Makuma had felt when they had gone to Cuenca to finish their distance undergraduate degree in IBE. Teresa, the same teacher-trainer featured in the introductory vignette, who began her career as a tele-master of the SERBISH, had been invited as a visiting professor to teach Shuar Chicham to the students in Cuenca. Alicia recalls that Teresa opened one of her classes asking them how they said school in Shuar. 'Escuela', they replied, in Spanish, chuckling at their use of

---

[143] The textbook's stated objective is to improve the student's oral expression and writing skills by proposing texts in each of the two languages while developing an "Ecuadorianness" respectful of the specific characteristics of the ethnic group (SERBISH n.d:1).

the Spanish word. But, unimpressed, Teresa mocked them in response: 'As usual, Panchu Shuar don't know how to speak Shuar', she said, using the old-fashioned expression to refer to Evangelical Shuar, dating from the time when Frank Drown (Panchu) still lived in Makuma.

"Speaking Shuar" at the school has come to mean speaking standardised Shuar, that is, the Shuar that has been the subject of monographs on neologisms (e.g. Utitiaj 1999), dictionaries, textbooks, and grammars: the Shuar of a written tradition. What's interesting here is not simply that an adult may discover at university that she had never known that there was a "native" word for "school", but also that, as in learning this fact, she is simultaneously learning a pedagogical lesson, "learning to teach", which she subsequently applies in her own practice. The implication of Teresa and Alicia's discourse on language is that ignorance somehow stems from the parents, who do not participate in the creation and reproduction of the literate tradition.

Yet, even while teachers sometimes promote the view that parents do not know their mother tongue as well as they should, parents do value the fact that their children learn Shuar at school. For instance, one of the arguments villagers use to argue against those who wish to leave the IBE system is that, if they did so, 'children would no longer learn Shuar'.

'Typical' dance as scholarly tradition

'Typical' dances are another field in which Shuar teachers and schooled people more generally demonstrate their cultural expertise. Any kind of *programa* contains typical dances, which teachers dutifully teach to schoolchildren beforehand. Children and youths can spend several hours a week rehearsing dances for presentations. This is because although the steps are more or less always the same, the choreographies can vary significantly. The more stylised and embellished the dances the better. Claudio, the schoolteacher of Achunts, was widely recognised as one of the best teachers of dance in the area. The reason for this was that he was able to create choreographies that no one had seen before. For the festival of Kuamar, he came up with a

Figure 15 – theatrical prelude to a typical dance by Achunts highs school students at Kuamar festival, 2013

theatrical prelude to a typical dance in which the boys, who were brandishing spears in a highly defensive attitude as if on the lookout for their enemies, were followed by girls carrying their baskets on their foreheads, as women do when they journey with their husbands in the forest. Musical changes accompanied every dramatic turn of the prelude. After a mimed ceremonial speech, the boys, acting as powerful elders, signalled friendship by mimicking manioc beer drinking from their wives' bowls and by beginning the dance.

According to most people – teachers, performers, and spectators – these performances are beautiful because they are Shuar, something that people also convey by saying that the performances show how the 'elders used to dance'. As a villager told me, 'Children are Shuar, so they need to dance like our elders.'

Since contemporary typical dances comprise theatrical sketches of the ways of the elders – as Claudio's choreography above – it is useful to compare them with the performances that Shuar performed in the bilingual institutes around the 1970s. Gnerre reports that, at the institutes, youths were able to produce astonishing theatrical performances of the speech of the elders, emulating their style of speech, vocal tonality and bodily language. Interpreting these episodes as mere folkloric representations, Gnerre reads the goals of these students as trying to ridicule the elders, emphasising their social distance from the latter's world (2012:35). What is happening now seems remarkably different since there is no sense of deprecation or irony, but rather admiration in enacting performances which villagers associate with the elders. A further comparison with the neighbouring Waorani can be helpful to understand how Shuar perceive typical performances.

Waorani children and youths also do 'typical' performances in school and at intercultural events organised in Amazonian cities. In the performances that Rival observed in the 1990s in the village school, schoolteachers engaged children in make-believe performances in which they depicted their elders as Stone Age people. The irony of these presentations, as the author shows, was that children were not taught real songs, but were "merely asked to parody the intonations and rhythm of Huaorani chanting", which were still being performed by adults (1997:142). Thus, the parents "commented disapprovingly that their children 'had *played* at being Huaorani'" (ibid.). By contrast, in theatrical preludes and 'typical' dances, Shuar youths are not enacting out-of-context performances given that these have very little autonomous existence beyond the school. The very genre of 'typical dance' was fashioned in bilingual institutes by Salesian missionaries and Shuar literati. Presently, most teachers continue to learn to dance in the choreographic way of the school when they participate in workshops organised by the bilingual institutes. While there is a discourse concerning the fact that these dances represent how 'the

elders used to dance', and while choreographing involves theatrical performance, neither parents nor teachers ever suggest that youths are simply *playing* at being Shuar. Dancing 'the typical way' is one of the most Shuar things one can possibly do, and parents take a huge source of pride when their children can do it well. Nevertheless, Shuar presently perform dances only for the sake of representing culture and dances are for the most part taught at school. This is itself the product of a long process of de-contextualisation of previous festive dances from their original settings of production, transmission and performance that initiated in the missions. This process was merely beginning among the Waorani through the introduction of bilingual schooling from the late-1980s, as Rival eloquently shows.

The attitudes of Shuar villagers are closer to what High witnessed, also among Waorani people, but more than a decade after Rival's fieldwork. High reports that while the elders speak critically of past violence in their own oral histories and seek to eject violence from sedentary communities, they "take pride in carving spears and crafting costumes so that their children and grandchildren can embody violent images of the ancestors" (2009:729). High attributes the popularity of these performances to their entertainment value but also to the specific generational and gendered positions that youths currently occupy as "managers of alterity" within Waorani society (2015:73). Waorani youths are currently engaged in building "a new image of warriorhood through their participation in representations of their 'culture' outside the village in front of larger urban audiences" (2009:729). By performing "wildness", High argues, youths convey "the autonomy and strength of their ethnic group – a claim supported by older generations of Waorani" (ibid.:731; 2015:69). As representations of the ways of the elders, Shuar performances are also powerful symbols of ethnic identity. The performance of ethnic identity does not display wildness – although this element is not totally absent when Shuar represent 'warriorhood' in some dances. Instead, it displays a stylised image of a Shuar cultured tradition. While many Shuar now also perform in the cities, 'typical' performances are an essential component of village festive life in contests organised by and for an internal public. Moreover, 'typical' dances are not the prerogative of youths as they can also be performed by adults and elderly people. When elderly people perform, however, it is usually the case that they have learned to dance in bilingual institutes or Salesian missions. For instance, a group of elderly people from the frontier was regularly invited to participate in the *programas* of Makuma. The dance group was directed by Siro Ujukam, a man in his sixties who was educated in a Catholic mission and was considered the *protégé* of Siro Pellizzaro, a renowned Salesian missionary. Siro was considered an exceptional singer and dancer and in fact worked as cultural advisor to FICSH, organising 'cultural *programas*'.

Among Shuar, typical performances are thus part of a cultivated or scholarly tradition: when youths or elders perform in the choreographic manner of schools, they are not only signalling a sense of continuity with the past – the ways of the elders – but also their expertise in cultural matters, their scholarly knowledge. To further demonstrate this, let me give you more examples of the role of performances in *centros*.

As with the Waorani, among Shuar the dances also have an element of entertainment. Even Christians, who shun dancing and seldom stay for the *programas'* nocturnal techno cumbia dancing, find the 'typical dances' beautiful and enjoyable because in their view they have a sense of modesty and joy which modern cumbia dancing does not. Part of the enjoyment for villagers is that the performances take place as part of competitions between *centros* or schools. In Makuma, there was always great anticipation before the dances were introduced in *programas*, as many schoolteachers from neighbouring *centros* had strong reputations for 'knowing how to dance well' and were thus expected to produce beautiful performances.

But how do 'elders' who have not been trained in Salesian institutes or contemporary schools feel about 'typical' choreographies? Let me give you an example of an interesting episode in which an elderly woman disagreed with the views of schoolteachers regarding a 'typical' performance during the festival of Kuamar.

The dance contest featured four schools which were 'evaluated' by a group composed of three jurors: two schoolteachers from Achunts and an elderly woman from Amazonas. The elderly woman had been chosen because of her traditional expertise. Three of the schools contesting that day displayed highly elaborate performances. One was Claudio's choreography, which I described above, and the other two were equally neat choreographies that included theatrical preludes, dancing with stylised accessories and recorded Shuar music. However, the winner of the contest was the last performance by the group of schoolchildren from Kuamar who did not have any of these embellishments. The schoolchildren danced in a lively but disorderly manner to the tunes of a flute played by Alfredo, a man in his seventies. The verdict came as a surprise to the other contestants and some people in the audience who expected one of the more elaborate performances to get the first prize. Apparently, this had also been the expectation of the two schoolteachers on the jury. As they later explained, they had yielded to the more traditional opinion of the elderly woman in the jury who preferred the schoolchildren's disorderly choreography, alleging that in the past dancers did not use recorded music but instead played their own instruments. As this case demonstrates, the idea of the 'typical' is not fixed, but is subject to interpretation and may vary depending on people's age and involvement in formal education. However, I would not like to give the impression that there is a clash between the

unschooled (generally elderly) and schooled (generally younger) sectors of the population, as one can find schooled youths who fiercely defend old-style performances and unschooled elders enthusiastic about the new-style of elaborate school performances. However, many villagers, including unschooled elderly people, have come to identify the typical performances with the stylised aesthetics promoted by the school. The case of Tsere illustrates this.

One day my partner and I were visiting Tsere in the outskirts of Pampants. Tsere had decided to organise a festive gathering in his home and had invited Bosco, the son-in-law of his son, to the party with the idea that together they would demonstrate some dancing to us, the only foreign guests. Tsere, a man in his late seventies, was a wholly unschooled man, whose experience in the Salesian mission was limited to a few years of agricultural work. He was a man respected for his traditional knowledge as he had shared most of his life with powerful elders from the past at a time when most great rituals were still being celebrated. He had mastered a variety of chants that most middle-aged professionals respect but of which have little first-hand experience. In sum, he was considered a '*wea*', a term of respect used for people of great ritual knowledge. The profile of his son's son-in-law could not be more different: Bosco was a schoolteacher in his twenties with 12 years of formal education in Tuutinentsa, a stronghold of the Salesian mission in Transkutukú. While Bosco, as many teachers, was interested in typical performances, he regarded Tsere as the true bearer of knowledge of an ancestral festive tradition.

At the gathering, each of the men danced individually. Tsere sang to accompany his dancing and gave a performance of slowly paced steps. Bosco did not sing and gave a faster and more choreographed performance that compressed several steps into less time. Tsere watched Bosco for a while with mesmerised eyes. After some minutes, he finally looked back at the small audience that had gathered around and with a touch of praise exclaimed, 'He knows it [the dance] better because he learned it in the school.' When Bosco finished his demonstration, he humbly remarked that what he just had demonstrated was how 'the ancients used to dance'.

If the typical performances of schoolteachers gain legitimacy for helping to preserve a longstanding festive tradition, they are in practice very much admired for their association with the school. They are in fact not just tokens of tradition, but of a *scholarly* tradition.

As Tsere's comment suggests, knowing how to dance in the 'typical' style learned at schools is a matter of praise these days. It is a sign of distinction. One is distinguished by the possession of a skill others admire and enjoy. But also by the ability to represent, that is to perform before others, something 'typically' Shuar. Around the time Yajaira was preparing to participate in the beauty pageant of Kuamar, she came home worried about not being able to do the typical dance required as part of the presentation on stage. Yajaira did not grow up in Kuamar,

but with her grandparents who lived near Puyo, a settler town. As a result, she had always attended Hispanic schools and had never learned to dance in the 'typical' way. Carmen who was a bit exasperated that day, just looked at her, and cruelly told her, 'And you call yourself Shuar?' Yajaira spent the following weeks learning from one of her teachers the basic steps of a typical dance.

Although through staged typical performances, children and youths are said to re-enact knowledge from a longstanding tradition that should be quite familiar to them, in reality, learning to dance well, like learning to speak using the Shuar of the written tradition, requires specialised school training these days.

With its internal orientation, the school is helping to create a certain kind of cultural expertise that is widely practised and enjoyed in village life. However, as we have seen, one consequence of this is that villagers seem to be increasingly reliant on schooling to perform Shuar culture competently.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the chapter, I noted that previous ethnographers have given a slightly pessimistic view of the role of the formalisation of knowledge in the creation of a self-conscious idea of culture and ethnicity, highlighting the losses and negative transformations of everyday cultural patterns. My argument in this chapter has been twofold. On the one hand, I have shown that the way Shuar have understood the role of the school since the time of the mission has led them to engage in a process of specialisation of cultural knowledge that has resulted in the creation of a new sphere of expertise controlled by schoolteachers. In this sense, while aiming to recover a "culture" embodied in fast-eroding practices, schoolteachers have also contributed to distancing knowledge from its everyday contexts of production. They have done this by institutionalising new ways of learning about Shuar language and culture. On the other hand, I have also shown that indigenous-led schooling contributes to an important aspect of social life in contemporary *centros*. If engaging in 'the representation of cultural knowledge' has resulted in the creation of an autonomous discourse and practice of culture which implicitly distinguishes between the culture of the everyday (or the vernacular) and scholarly culture, such a distinction does not entail a total loss of touch with practice. While participating in the creation of objectified 'culture' at least since the time of the missions, Shuar have also re-contextualised and re-embedded the cultural performances that resulted from the process of missionisation and bilingual education in new sociocultural contexts. Villagers have not ceased to desire practical involvement and social participation in the production of culture since not every self-conscious

practice of culture is necessarily abstract. 'Typical' performances are not only embodied ways of identifying with the ways of the elders, they are also ways of participating in village life.

I have thus tried to avoid simply analysing the transformation of cultural knowledge by the school in terms of 'cultural loss' in order to engage with the meanings that Shuar assign to their cultural productions.

In doing this, I have also sought to move beyond the idea that what Shuar do at the school acquires meaning only in relation to identity politics, that is, as a way of regaining pride and overcoming a self-depreciating attitude typical of colonial situations. Several recent analyses demonstrate the value of exploring self-reflexive social consciousness in Amazonia beyond the specific symbolic and instrumental gains that indigenous peoples obtain by performing according to external notions of Indianness. The authors of these studies propose that we explore how public spectacle and cultural activism become meaningful to indigenous peoples themselves prior to or after the events (Oakdale 2004:61). For instance, Graham (2005) shows that the emphasis that Xavante elders place upon perpetuating cultural continuity guides them in their desire to become known to others as a way of gaining "existential recognition". Turning to the process of preservation of knowledge, Fausto (2011:208) shows that the Kuikuro elders' decision to entrust entire sequences of rituals and songs to tape recorders stems from their desire that the new generations will be able to become "Indians for themselves" and not only "for white people".

In a similar vein, I have traced the processes whereby Shuar have come to value representing culture in 'typical' performances. There are, however, differences stemming from the material I have analysed. Most of the above studies focus on how Amazonian people make sense of cultural representations staged for outsiders. In contrast, while the cultural representations in which Shuar currently engage have been fashioned conjointly with outsiders, they are mostly staged for an internal audience. Furthermore, while schoolteachers and villagers emphasise the importance of preserving tradition, they are also enthusiastic about the civic format they use in festivals and *programas*. Indeed, 'typical' dances are usually performed in events of foreign provenance such as Mother's Day and a variety of national holidays (Ch.8). Similarly, as I have shown in the previous chapter, the festival is an event consisting of many external idioms, symbols and objects used for internal purposes.

The creation of 'the typical' has been as much about innovation as about preservation from the outset. In fact, the making of culture at school involves an outward and inward looking attitude. Through performances, Shuar reproduce a view of themselves as Shuar, but also convey their ability to master the techniques of representation of the other: the staged performances and the *programas*. Through the latter, Shuar have created a repertoire of festive village life to which

they are deeply attached. Meanwhile, however, what defines cultural tradition is increasingly less what the elders transmit as tradition and more what the school and its textual and pictorials products enshrines as Shuar tradition in 'typical' performances. Inevitably, this empowers schoolteachers. While the exploration of mission education and bilingual education help us understand how schoolteachers have turned into cultural experts, there are different ways in which teachers can be experts, and their command of external knowledge is by far the most important. I turn to this in the next chapter.

Figure 16 – Drawing of a dream of graduation by high school student of Achunts (Rolando Tzamareinia, 2013)

Chapter 8 - Teachers at work: programming community life

> Children, young people and parents, I want to greet you. Let's continue moving forward so the future of our children is the future of Shuar people (...). Educated they will fight for their territory. We want people capable of facing all sorts of problems, within the household, the community and in the whole country. You must have heard that Shuar people have evolved. We have authorities now. Shuar! Before we didn't have that access [to school] but now we do (...) not just as Shuar, but also as indigenous people of Ecuador. We have a member of parliament, we have a prefect, various mayors, several councillors, various presidents of the parishes in the local governments, many directors of schools, numerous Shuar teachers and you can be one of them! You, students! Thus we want you to get educated because you're the future of the people.

This was the impassioned and much applauded speech of the head of the committee of parents of Achunts during a *programa* that celebrated the anniversary of the school of Mamayak, a neighbouring *centro*. For villagers, schooling not only helps to bring forth a future of progress, the school is progress itself.

The school is where children get their primary and secondary education and where the majority of professionals work as teachers. In addition to occupying teaching posts, professionals may occupy paid jobs as political officials as well as unpaid elected jobs in their communities as local brokers. It is thanks to the school that Shuar 'have evolved' as the speaker remarks, and the proof of this is that Shuar have their own officials and professionals in power: in parliament, in the prefecture, in county halls, in schools. We began to see the importance that parents attribute to formal education in Chapter 3 when Manuel advised his daughters to delay marriage in order to become professionals. In Chapter 4, in the context of dispute-resolution in assemblies, we saw that villagers associated harmony with lawfulness, the theory of the law and organisation that educated people acquire at school. Similarly, in Chapter 5 we saw that professionals are brokers *par excellence*, they help to develop the community by writing petitions and funnelling wealth from the state. Finally, in the previous chapter, I traced the history of professionalisation among Shuar from the time of the missions and the gradual emergence of teachers as experts in their culture and organisers of cultural *programas*. Ever since, teachers have occupied a Janus-faced role: as rescuers and promoters of their cultures and as political leaders who help to create and move forward their communities.

From the mid-1960s, the first literati coming out of mission schools and bilingual institutes became territorial leaders and began working in the federation (FICSH) to encourage

other Shuar to settle in *centros* so as to get land titles, to educate their children, and to think about the future of Shuar society. Around the same time, in the area of Makuma, the new bilingual teachers were also training to become leaders of their communities. Consider for example the words of Eldon Yoder, an evangelical missionary:

> During the training courses at SIL, it was impressed on the bilingual teachers that they were to be Spiritual leaders in the communities as well as teachers (...) these guys [at that time all the teachers were young men] were viewed as the leaders in their communities and that often meant preaching God's Word when the community met for Worship (...) Evangelical missions emphasized in the communities where they ministered that the Indians should be good citizens (personal communication, September 2014).

If there is one lesson that all Shuar professionals have been taught at school since the time of the missions, it is the importance of 'making community'. In this chapter, I explore how teachers contribute to the creation of community by organising events that bring people together to practise collective work, entrepreneurialism, unity and peaceful deliberation in public meetings. While examining the activities in which teachers and students engage, I also aim to shed light on the ethos that Shuar associate with educated people who become professionals and on the ways in which this ethos is gradually shaped at school. Teachers play a key role in 'planning' the time of the communities, periodising it through the organisation of *programas.* This is why the school can become a learning ground for everyone, not just for school pupils. Indeed, at school, three social categories come into being – students, parents and teachers – who, together, create a different institutional order. I argue that the school and its institutional order constitute an external referent and a reservoir of models and ideas with which Shuar can experiment in *centros* with different ways of creating collective organisation.

I divide this chapter into 3 sections. In the first, I briefly relate the school to the pursuit of equality vis-à-vis the dominant society. In the second, I explore the intense discipline, formality, and social categorisation that Shuar institute at school. I say that 'Shuar institute' it because, although the school, as Rival (1996:164) shows, is "the historical product of specific social relations and cultural norms" of external origin, bilingual teachers have the option of disarranging some features of the school to bring it closer to the sociocultural lives and expectations of their students but they choose not to do so. In the third section I turn to the way in which the school 'programmes' social life. I will analyse three kinds of *programas* which re-play the three key themes we encountered at the festival in Chapter 6.

The drive for equality and progress

Let us return to the speech with which I opened the chapter. Education is a measure of progress because Shuar have been able to conquer positions usually reserved for mestizo people and thanks to these they feel they are now able to help their families and develop their communities. The school caters to several projects at once: the individual, the family, the community, the Shuar nation as educated people will be able to fight for their territory, and even the Ecuadorian nation, as Shuar will be able to 'demonstrate to others that they too are capable'. In speeches of praise for the school, Shuar are always in competition with mestizo people.

'Educated' villagers, that is, villagers who have achieved high school and higher education degrees, but especially the latter, relish telling stories of the emancipation they have achieved through education. These are stories of moments when they have been able to defend themselves from the abuses of mestizo people and have been able to demonstrate their worth and knowledge. Marcelo, a man in his mid-twenties from Achunts, once returned for a family celebration from Quito, the capital, where he was studying to become a chemical engineer. The young man came full of stories to share with his family. He told them that he had met very nice guys in the capital but also a few abusive people who had treated him like a savage. 'But, why would I be ashamed?' he said, 'I am also educated. I was studying just like them, and I even knew more than them.' One day for example, a classmate at university had insulted him during a teamwork exercise, 'Hey, you Indian, why don't you work harder? Aren't you an Indian?' Marcelo, had become infuriated, but because 'he was educated', he had held his nerve and retorted,

> Who are you calling Indian? Do you even know what 'Indian' means? So that you know, I'm not an Indian, I'm Shuar, a pure Shuar, not mixed like you, and I speak two languages. Aren't you ashamed to speak only Spanish? And you don't even know what Indian means. Aren't you educated? Don't you know that there was a confusion, and that it was the name of India?

Marcelo ended the story imitating the stutter of the mestizo young man who had been forced to improvise a clumsy apology. What is interesting in this story is not only that Marcelo was able to rebut the provocation because he has more knowledge than the mestizo, but that he feels that the way he did so – by speaking calmly and winning an argument in conversation rather than giving in to anger – is itself a sign of his education. Later in this chapter we will see that if educated people can help advance their communities it is not only because they can aspire to different jobs and a 'better life', but also because they have acquired the necessary tools that

enable them to deal with conflict in a peaceful manner, something that I began to show in Chapter 3.

Several regional ethnographers have pointed out that the attraction of formal education for many Amazonian peoples lies in the promise of acquiring the knowledge to defend themselves from the abuses of the dominant society. The knowledge to avoid or fight exploitation is one of the constant themes underpinning the idea of 'becoming civilised' which native Amazonians repeatedly express. Rival shows that one of the varied meanings that the notion of becoming civilised encompasses for the Waorani is a change in lifestyle, the acquisition of a new identity, which enables them to visit "towns without being noticed or stigmatised" (1996:157; 1997:143). Similarly, Gow describes that, among the Piro, those who have not civilised themselves – meaning those who cannot speak Spanish, read, write and count – "do not know how to defend themselves" and are at "the mercy of those who possess such accomplishments" (1991:233). Killick mentions that many Ashéninka men have resigned themselves to the exploitation they suffer at the hands of outsiders, because the Ashéninka men "do not know any better", but they do go to great lengths to ensure their children learn to read and "work with numbers" so that "they won't be cheated in the future" (2008:33).

When the Shuar of Makuma talk about education in terms of civilisation they usually refer to several things. The first is the twinned ideas of progress and equality. They do not see themselves as having to leave ignorance behind to become civilised (see, e.g. Gow 1991:69-70), but instead pursue education to gain the knowledge required to deal with the dominant mestizo on the latter's own terms, and thereby show them who Shuar really are: pure (as opposed to mixed), intelligent (because they speak more languages), fierce (as opposed to cowardly), and ready to surpass them in every sphere where mestizo people have reigned supreme. As seen above in the speech by the head of the parents committee, through education, Shuar aspire to control state power and wealth without depending on the colonist. In this sense, the Shuar desire for equality and progress is closer to what motivates the Kayapo when they seek a balance of power with Brazilian whites: a neutralisation of the material inequality between themselves and outsiders, by gaining control "of all institutional and technological aspects of dependence at the community level ('the architecture of dependence')" (Turner 1993:10,12).

In the previous chapter, I explained that villagers feel that the quality of education in intercultural bilingual schools is often less than satisfactory. However, the fact that many contemporary state officials have been trained and/or taught within the IBE system continues to provide strong evidence that the students of today can indeed become the professionals of

tomorrow. What is more, as children progress from primary to secondary education, they begin to study a variety of new subjects that Shuar associate with the spheres of administration and economic development: informatics, accountancy and management. In Achunts, high schoolers spent at least 10 hours a week copying accounting lessons into their notebooks. Although students found the class extremely demanding and abstract – for instance, many youths remarked that all they did was copy things they did not fully understand – they were nevertheless enthusiastic about being able to recognise terms such as inventories, financial statements, invoices, and contracts, about which politicians talk all the time.

This leads me to the second feature that Shuar associate with the idea of civilisation. Shuar are convinced that the knowledge they acquire at school will help them to organise themselves in their communities. So, as much as education gains importance as Shuar desire to beat the colonist at their own game, it also gains importance in relation to an internal political project of organisation and unity. Of course the two goals are related: when they are organised, Shuar can defend themselves better and appropriate the state and its wealth.

This is why youths happily put up with abstract educational lessons. It was precisely the foreignness of all such lessons and the difficulty of learning them by copying them into notebooks that makes school attractive for Shuar youths. This is a recurrent pattern in native Amazonia. For instance, Tassinari and Cohn (2009:163) note that it is "differences in knowledge and ways of conceiving knowledge, its production, acquisition, and expression" that make the school valuable for the Karipuna and the Xikrin of Brazil. This is the reason why they strongly resist turning the school into "a native institution" (see also Collet for the Bakairi of Brazil 2006:238). In a similar vein, I shall show below that despite the fact that indigenous teachers are given much freedom to adapt the curriculum and the social regimentation of the school to local rhythms and expectations, they actually endeavour to do the opposite: to keep it as different as possible. However, as I will show, this is still a way of domesticating the school, for Shuar are keen to use it to shape a local political project. With the school, they try to bring forth a sort of unified yet ranked community that villagers seldom experience even at the level of the *centro*. Even so, there are remarkable continuities between some of the pedagogic expectations guiding the ways in which youths turn into knowledgeable persons in everyday life and what they need to do in order to become good students.

Discipline, formality and authority

Let me begin by explaining what sorts of schools exist in Makuma and the Transkutukú area. Pre-university public education in Ecuador comprises 10 years of 'general basic education'

(*educación general básica*) and 3 final years of 'general baccalaureate' (*bachillerato general unificado*), 13 years in total. Depending on the number of children*, centros* have different types of IBE schools, all of which are legally called CECIB (*Centro Educativo Comunitario Intercultural Bilingüe*). The first type is the multi-grade school which usually continues until the 10th year of basic education and has 1 or at most 3 teachers and a minimum of 25 students. The second type is the 'educational unit' which comprises the first 10 years of general basic education and the final 3 years of the baccalaureate. By 'primary education', I am referring to the first 10 years of basic education, and I use 'secondary education' to refer to the last 3 years of the baccalaureate.

The schools I am most familiar with are those of Kuamar and Achunts. In Kuamar, schoolchildren's ages ranged between 5 and 14 years-old. They were enrolled in the first 7 grades of basic education and studied in one multi-grade classroom headed by Alfredo, the only schoolteacher. In Achunts, the school covered primary school and high school (*colegio*) levels (see Table 7). Children in the first 7 grades of education were grouped into two multi-grade classrooms where two teachers led all classes. Higher-grade students were divided into 6 different classrooms covering each of the remaining grades (8-13), so this was a uni-grade system. From grade 8 onwards, students also had different teachers per academic subject. When I was specifically studying schooling, I spent most of the time in Achunts, whether teaching, chatting, or auditing other teachers' classes in the high school, which comprised about 75 students aged between 14 and 29 years-old who came from at least 10 neighbouring *centros*, including from Kuamar. As I will show, the multi-grade and uni-grade systems are remarkably different with regards to the institutional habitus required of villagers, students and parents. To differentiate between them, I call the multi-grade schools the multi-grade system and *colegio* the uni-grade one, following the local use (see table 7). When I write 'school', I refer to the 'educational unit' in general including both primary and high school levels. Overall, in Achunts there were 8 schoolteachers including the headmaster of the entire educational unit, the coordinator of the high school, and the inspector, who took care of discipline. All students and schoolteachers were Shuar.

Ecuadorian State	General basic education										General baccalaureate		
Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3
Transkutukú area	Multi-grade primary schools							Uni-grade high school (*colegio*)					

Table 7 - Public education system

Multi-grade primary schools in small *centros* had a very relaxed atmosphere and interfered very little with the sense of autonomy that characterised children's behaviour at home. The children of Kuamar for instance went to school at their own pace, walking barefoot, wearing their own daily clothes and carrying some of the fruit fetched in the morning – an activity that often delayed their arrival to classes. At the school, they sat together sharing desks or sometimes on the floor and got involved in each other's tasks as they would have done if they were outside school. Alfredo began the day sitting at his desk and only slowly gave instructions to children. Since Alfredo had different levels to deal with, he usually started a task with one group of children and gradually moved on to the rest, never minding too much about the noise of children who had yet to begin working or who had already finished. Children stood up and left the classroom whenever they wanted, and while Alfredo at times reminded the children to ask for permission, he did so in a playful manner, putting his hands on his hips and saying, 'Who's leaving like a little dog without saying goodbye today?' This always made children giggle a little and return to perform the little permission ceremony. Perhaps the most evident sign of the flexible dynamic of the multi-grade school was time management. Atop Alfredo's desk stood a clock, but it remained without batteries throughout all the period I stayed in Kuamar. In fact, the classes could finish as early as 10am and as late as 2pm, with no apparent pattern. When something of collective importance was happening at the *centro* that required that children stayed at their homes, for example if new cacao plants had arrived and children needed to help their parents to transport them, Alfredo always cancelled the classes.

But as children progressed through formal education, they were introduced to an entirely different system of school regimentation. For the children of Kuamar the transition to the *colegio* was drastic as they had to start journeying to Achunts. In addition to the early morning trek of about 60 minutes, they had to start minding their appearance, as every day the inspector ran random checks to see that all uniforms were immaculate and pupils had a 'good presence'. On the last stretch of the journey, anticipating the imminent morning bell, the youngster thus initiated their gradual transformation into students. After rinsing their feet in nearby streams, the girls fitted in their knee-length skirts and braided their long hair to hold it tight, while boys put on the navy trousers and gave a final shine to their black moccasin shoes.

At the *colegio,* a morning class would start with students sitting relatively quietly at their individual desks, waiting for the teacher of the first subject to enter the classroom in order to stand up and greet him with a ceremonious 'good morning' in Spanish. The teachers would then run a roll-call and start a 45-minute long class perfectly delimited by the bell. Students also had to familiarise themselves with a variety of teaching styles and subjects. For instance, the literature

teacher used a story-telling style of exposition punctuated by continuous questions and answers, the maths teacher involved students in collective problem-solving exercises in which it seemed the whole class was always solving an algebraic equation together, and the accountancy teacher mostly dictated from the textbook while sitting at his desk. Yet, all teachers insisted on discipline. The most important instrument of disciplinary control within the classroom was the 'book of faults' (Sp. *leccionario*) where teachers wrote every act of misconduct that affected the class. When an act of misconduct was deemed grave – for example, if the student failed to ask permission to go to the toilet or turned up to class in dirty clothes – the student could be asked to visit the inspector or would be sent back home. Schoolteachers routinely emphasised discipline and self-presentation, giving the impression that they considered these requirements part and parcel of the value of education. For instance, an older student in his twenties was once prevented from entering his final high school examination because he had forgotten his shoes and was wearing rubber boots: 'He can't take his exam wearing boots!' the inspector told me when I impertinently asked whether the sanction had been too harsh. For teachers, however, wearing proper shoes was almost as important as taking the final examination.

In private conversations, schoolchildren, especially the youngest, expressed their discomfort with the *colegio* disciplinary regime. Comments such as 'I suffer walking every day', 'I get tired sitting', 'the homework gives me headache', and 'the inspector is annoying' were frequent. But with time, children went to great lengths to adapt to school and behave appropriately. I was often amazed to see students sitting quietly while trying to do classwork when left alone in the classroom. The impression I formed observing students' orderly behaviour at the *colegio* and chatting with them about it was that, for children and young people, bodily discipline was intimately connected to formal education and, given the effort they had to make to accommodate to the rigid disciplinary routine, that there was something rewarding about working hard to turn into proper students.[144]

Parents were no different in this respect. As has been previously observed in other parts of Amazonia and indigenous South America (e.g. Tassinari & Cohn 2009:152,162; Lazar 2010), Shuar people too expressed a preference for disciplined and authoritarian education. I mentioned in the last chapter that villagers said they liked missionary and mestizo-run schools better because Shuar learned more from foreigners. These judgements were also connected to discipline. When parents revisited their memories of past education in Makuma, discipline

---

[144] The willingness of children to go along with school discipline and teachers' authority has been noted in Amazonia. Rival shows that Waorani children "seemed to enjoy the latter's display of authority" (2002:153). Similarly, Xikrin children engaged with ease in the new model of learning and time routine despite the discomfort and embarrassment that they felt (Tassinari & Cohn 2009:161).

always came to the fore as an indicator of good quality education. For example, one day Manuel told me, 'If I were a teacher, I would let the students know straight away, here we are going back to the old times (Sp. *lo antiguo*) and I would be really strict!'

It was common to hear villagers who had attended mestizo-run schools tease their children by comparing the better quality and discipline of their own schooling experience: 'we used to have better calligraphy', 'more examinations', 'we were better groomed', etc. Most likely, an appreciation for self-composure and discipline – typically associated with mature people who had already learned to regulate their speech and bodily demeanour – also underpinned parents' appreciation for school discipline. These views reflected a more general association villagers made between home education and discipline. The reader will remember from Chapter 3 that discipline and sacrifice are key habits/notions that adults inculcate in children at home so that they can live well. In home lessons, parents also typically emphasise the superior power of the elders, who are considered to have sacrificed themselves by undergoing strict and long periods of sexual abstinence and fasting to seek visions.

Schoolteachers echoed the same discourse on sacrifice and the past to remind students that their effort and discipline were necessary to succeed at school. On a rainy Monday, when many students arrived late at the *colegio*, Leónidas, the headmaster, encouraged the students to sacrifice more, as their elders had in the past, saying:

> I'm telling you Mr/Miss Students (Sp. *señores estudiantes*) that you shouldn't stay home, you should come to study, and do so promptly. Now you have the school and the high school here, (...) before your parents used to walk much farther and even wade through the Makuma River [to reach the mission or mestizo-run high school]. Back then, there wasn't anything to cross it like the hanging cable nowadays. Your elders suffered a lot! So, wake up earlier, do not dismay, and be strong.

But if students could find similarities between the ideal of discipline and sacrifice promoted by parents and the discipline required of them at school, no experience in their homes prepared them for the hierarchy and formalism of the school.

Inside and outside the classroom, most interactions between students and teachers were marked by an obligatory formality. Whenever students entered the office where teachers worked, called 'the coordination', they had to ask permission to be there and shake hands with every one of the teachers present, even if they had already done so earlier in different places in the school. To my surprise, it did not matter whether the students were closely related to the schoolteachers, as was often the case; whenever they met teachers they acted deferentially using the title 'teacher', and even going as far as asking for permission to join the same table in the dining room. One

could for example see closely related people who would normally interact in very informal terms suddenly treat one another as 'Mr/Miss Student' and 'Teacher'. The teacher-student distinction was not simply a matter of seniority, that is, one that Shuar emphasised only because teachers were older than the students. Rather, it was a matter of role differentiation: teachers knew more and had more institutional authority. For instance, some teachers were young. One of them, Celestino was 28 years-old. He had many young cousins in Achunts with whom he would play football, chat and drink manioc beer jovially outside the school context. Yet at school, his cousins, who were just one or two years younger than him, suddenly treated him with great deference.

The school thus abounded with ceremonial rituals[145] of daily conduct. Ordinary public behaviour at the school was regulated by a myriad of gestures of avoidance and presentation. Goffman defines rituals of avoidance as those "forms of deference which lead the actor to keep at a distance from" or show circumspection in his/her approach to the recipient (1956: 481). These are characterised by proscriptions, interdictions, and taboos that often signal social distance between social actors (ibid.:487). Asking for permission to come into their presence and avoiding the teachers' table in the dining room are examples of rituals of avoidance. Rituals of presentation, on the other hand, encompass prescriptions rather than proscriptions, that is, positive acts "through which the individual makes specific attestations to recipients concerning how s/he regards them" (e.g. salutations, invitations, compliments, and minor services) (ibid.:485-486). Standing up to greet teachers and using specific terms of address are examples of presentation rituals.

It is through the enactment of these ceremonial rituals that categories of people such as "teachers" and "students" – and the hierarchical relationship that defines them – come into being. Indeed, through such behaviours individuals express their recognition of and regard for individuals as instances of a category, or representatives of something beyond themselves. Through these acts, which appear capable of temporarily overriding pre-existent ties, individuals give others their due not because of what they think of them personally but in spite of it (Goffman 1956:478). This is also the reason why sociality at school often appeared so ostentatiously impersonal. To be sure, interactions at school were sometimes explicitly arranged to celebrate pre-existent affective ties such as in celebrations, taken from the national popular calendar, to pay homage to the 'Mother' or the 'Child'. But even these *programas* emphasised relations

---

[145] I am using 'ceremonial' here as defined by Goffman to refer to "guides of conduct in matters felt to have secondary or even no significance in their own right, having their primary importance – officially anyway – as a conventionalized means of communication" (1956:476) and not in the classical anthropological sense adopted for "extended sequence of symbolic action", although of course everyday ceremonial ritual may be used in ceremonies in the latter sense.

between types or categories of persons rather than everyday relations between concrete persons. For instance, for Mother's Day, all the senior women sat in a row of chairs while children paraded in columns towards their mothers carrying cards they had made together. When handing over their cards they were instructed to embrace their mothers at the same time. Crucially, in these events, children are not offering gifts just as individual children but as members of a group of student-children.

The acts of deference that guided social interactions at school helped to constitute what Bloch calls "essentialised roles" and statuses, that is, "social roles that exist separately from the individual who holds them" (Bloch 2013:26). A person who is a teacher should act as a teacher "irrespective of the kind of person he/she is at any particular stage in the transactional social game" (ibid.).

The difference between school interactions and everyday non-school interactions stands out if we compare relations between adults in both contexts. As noted earlier, in Achunts there were students as old as 29 years old. Most adult students enrolled at the high school were already married and had children who simultaneously attended the primary school. Given the premium on autonomy, in ordinary situations, relationships between adults are fairly symmetrical, so two adults who meet would never treat one another with deference or give one another orders. However, at school, teachers regularly gave orders to adult students and treated them as juniors, calling them interchangeably 'students' or 'youths'. In Shuar, they called them *natsa*, a term reserved for unmarried people.

One of the rules introduced at school that differed most significantly from everyday interactions was the idea that every student had to have 'representatives'. This meant that individual students did not decide for themselves when important institutional requirements or disciplinary sanctions were being decided. At this point, students needed to be represented by 'an adult', usually a parent who could speak or decide on their behalf. For instance, if students had to excuse themselves for being late or ask permission to miss classes, they had to write a letter signed by their 'representative' before re-joining classes. The requirement of having representatives applied even if the student was a grown-up. Adult students were thus obliged to ask their elder siblings or even their parents to 'represent' them in writing, in meetings or in special occasions.

As villagers move across non-school and school settings and experiment with institutional roles and rules, they have to juggle different commitments and expectations. At times, their crossing of institutional settings puts them in temporary situations of dislocation in which they find themselves at a loss, that is, uncertain about what the rules of the social game are. This can

be illustrated by two examples, one of an adult student who had to have a representative, and the other of elderly lady who 'represented' several of her grandchildren at the school.

Marcelo was a student in his late-twenties in the last year of high school who had just received the good news that he was to be proclaimed flag-bearer – the person who holds the banner in important civic ceremonies. He had earned this prerogative because he had achieved the best marks through his secondary education. The day when he was to be proclaimed in a school ceremony, I was fortunate to run into him on my way to Achunts. He was carrying two big chickens. He mentioned that he had been going around households in the area since early in the morning, desperately trying to find someone who could sell him the chickens, so that his family could prepare a meal for a formal lunch to be held immediately after the ceremony. This is because the day before the teachers had informed him that 'his representative' was responsible for hosting a lunch after the proclamation ceremony. Marcelo was already married and was the father of three children, yet he had been forced to ask his elder brother to act on his behalf in school ceremonies. I asked Marcelo if had considered asking his brother to get the chickens, and he looked at me as though I must be out of my mind. I then asked him if he thought his brother was happy about the news of his proclamation. Marcelo blushed and told me that he 'did not know'. To pretend to know what others know is simply inappropriate and since in this case the matter regarded Marcelo's individual achievement, it would have been boastful. Marcelo had gone to fetch the chickens himself instead of asking his brother to procure the food for the lunch because, as an adult fully responsible for his own household, to expect his brother to do it for him would have flown in the face of the expectation that adults are autonomous. Besides, it would have been pretentious since the chickens were going to be prepared to celebrate his proclamation. That day, Marcelo's brother did officially act as Marcelo's representative in the formal ceremony and everything went according to the school's rules. But to play the family and school games properly, Marcelo had to accommodate incompatible expectations: to act autonomously to procure the chicken, yet also to rely on his elder brother to host a formal lunch on his behalf.

Around the same time, an interesting episode took place during an assembly that gathered schoolteachers and parents to the roofed-house in Achunts. During these assemblies, schoolteachers start by establishing if there is quorum of attendees. They thus typically run a roll call as they do in classes. As parents hear their names, they answer '*pujajai*' (I am). In meetings of particular importance, they are also asked to provide a signature next to their names on a register of attendance. In the assembly in question, the meeting had started some thirty minutes before when an elderly woman arrived to the roofed-house, visibly gasping. Still running and a

bit embarrassed to be late, she rushed to shake hands with every teacher sitting on the row of seats facing the attendees. She then went to find a seat on the lateral benches where parents sit. While everyone expected the meeting to resume, the headmaster suddenly addressed the woman, 'Madam, what is your name, and who do you represent?' The woman looked very confused. She laughed nervously and, as the headmaster seemed to be awaiting an answer, she said, 'As you know me, why do you ask?' At this point, everyone (including the headmaster) burst into laughter, confirming the hilarity of the situation. Indeed, when the woman shook hands with the schoolteachers, it did seem that everyone knew who she was, and it is unlikely that there was anyone in the meeting who did not know who she was or 'whom she represented'. Everyone knows everyone else even in large *centros* such as Achunts, which has a population of about 300 inhabitants. After a few seconds of laughter, the headmaster tried again, this time making explicit the procedural nature of his request, 'We have to write the list [of attendees], so, madam, if you will, please come to the front, tell us your name and sign the document.' By insisting on the protocol, the headmaster reminded parents that they were in a school assembly acting in the capacity of 'representatives' of their children.

Now that we know which are the categories and rules of the school's game, let us turn to how they 'programme' the life of the community.

Programming community life

Anyone who spends some time in a Shuar school would notice how much time went into planning. Teachers held meetings at least three or four days a week and most of them were devoted to planning events. Similarly, most of the training events that schoolteachers attend during the scholastic year are meant to develop their skills for planning, and, in particular, for planning 'community life' [Sp. *planificación comunitaria*].

A key goal of the IBE curriculum is to integrate schooling into the ebb and flow of life in indigenous communities. Since the early years of bilingual education at the national level, indigenous intellectuals have argued that the national schooling system can help promote solidarity and indigenous identity if it comes under community control. Modelled on an idealised version of Andean communitarianism, the first IBE curriculum published in 1990 stated that "communities have always been the fundamental units of Indian societies" (cited in Rival 1997:140).[146]

While most educationalists today recognise the singularity of Amazonian identities and social organisation in their efforts to develop the AMEIBA, the Amazonian IBE curriculum,

---

[146] See the Rival (1997) for a detailed study of the DINEIB 1990 proposal.

they continue to place significant emphasis upon the interdependency of school and community. This is in keeping with the IBE mandate to turn indigenous schools into CECIBS (Communitarian Intercultural Bilingual Educational Centres). The AMEIBA establishes that education must occur "in the geographic and cosmic space of the community, where all the activities of training must unfold with a view to improving the conditions of life quality [of the community] with the solidary participation of students, parents, teachers, leaders, elders, etc." (cited in Mashinkiash 2012:85).

As part of this goal, teachers, called "communitarian teachers", are encouraged to implement a variety of 'planning work' so as to involve the community in educational decisions. One of the most important instruments is the development of a cultural calendar which respects the "socio-cultural and economic situation of the Amazonian nationality" (ibid.:92). When teachers elaborate these calendars, they usually come up with creative renderings of Shuar mythological themes depicted in the form of a circle following a sequence of seasonal activities (e.g. frog collection in the rainy season) so as to reflect the "cyclical vision" of time that they are encouraged to associate with "an indigenous worldview" (SEIB 2013:39). However, other than for decoration, these calendars were never used for planning community life.

What teachers did use on a day-to-day basis was their own planning which closely followed the national civic calendar. They called this the 'community calendar' as it included designated times for 'community work' and periodic *programas* that involved the whole community. Teachers plan and meticulously organised three types of events:

- **School community events:** for example, school *mingas*, the election of the representatives of the parents' council.

- **Civic national holidays:** Christmas, Independence Day, Teacher's Day, Mother's Day and Child's Day, National flag oath.

- **Institutional events:** registration of students, evaluation of performance, drafting of the school/community coexistence code.

Strictly speaking, the only events that schoolteachers were required to hold by law were the institutional ones. IBE educationalists have been at pains to write about the importance of excluding colonial formalisms from the indigenous curriculum. Examples of undesirable formalisms they provide are the use of uniforms – which they recommend substituting for normal clothes or even 'typical' garments – and civic ceremonies such as the national oath flag (Mashinkiash 2012:90). I have already described how insistent teachers are on uniforms and 'good presence'. The national flag oath is simply too loved to be given up, as we shall see below. Teachers spent much time organising a variety of events that had no direct relevance to internal

affairs, even going as far as creating new ones. Similarly, they went out of their way to organise school community events which received very little attention in mestizo schools. For instance, the Ministry of Education requires every school to develop a community coexistence code. To draft the code parents, teachers and children of all public schools are supposed to gather and discuss their rights and duties with regards to one another and write down their goals and 'agreements/commitments' for the future. But, while the code is a national requirement, two mestizo schoolteachers from Macas with whom I discussed the code mentioned that it was 'merely a formality', and so they simply copied and pasted previous versions of it. We shall see in the final section that in Achunts the coexistence code is not only duly written down, it is also applied.

Before drafting the code with parents and students, all the teachers of the Makuma area received a three-day training workshop from Shuar supervisors so that teachers could then summon a series of assemblies with parents and children to write the code together. I find it useful to reproduce here some of the conversations that the teachers had with the supervisors during the training workshop, as they help us to understand how much teachers are encouraged to take a leading role in community organisation. The drafting of the code requires that teachers run a 'self-evaluation of the school' exercise with different members of the community. With this exercise in mind, during the workshop, supervisors cautioned teachers that they were 'the mirrors of their communities' and they must start by evaluating themselves, so that they could then evaluate 'their people.' As teachers were briefed on how to organise the self-evaluation of 'their people', a few of them took the opportunity to discuss issues they had experienced with parents. One teacher for example mentioned the difficulty he had experienced eliciting cooperation from parents to work on improving the school. As an example of parents' disengagement he mentioned that he was still sleeping in the storeroom wareroom of the *centro* where he worked because villagers had not yet found the time to do a *minga* to help him build a house. To this complaint, the supervisor replied:

> Teachers, if you want something to be done about it, you need to write it down in the code of coexistence. Remember, you are not just anyone! What will happen when the supervisors arrive then? They can't just sleep anywhere [referring to the storeroom wareroom], otherwise they won't come back to pay a visit [to the community]. You [teachers] have hegemony, authority! (Sp. *hegemonía, autoridad*). So when the school year starts, you need to write together the code of coexistence and development plan for the community and if they [parents] don't obey it later, they'll be on the wrong side. However, if you don't even draft the plan then you're the problem. You are the authorities, you can't be ordered about by parents. It would not be acceptable, for

example, for [children] to skip classes or [for parents] not to attend school *mingas* because they have to go fishing.

In these seminars, teachers are reminded that they have special qualifications and institutional authority and as such can demand compliance from parents. The way to do this is by 'planning'. According to the supervisors, the authority of teachers derives from the community documents that teachers draft, hence the importance of doing all the planning work. Only then could teachers hold parents accountable. The supervisor was thus suggesting exactly the opposite of what the IBE requires, which is that teachers develop a calendar which accommodates to the local activities of indigenous people. Rather than involving the school into the ebb and flow of community life, teachers and supervisors understand 'planning work' as contributing to bringing forth the community.

Below, I give examples of each of the three different kinds of events I noted above: school community events, civic ceremonies, and institutional events. In each of these we will see how some of the themes I discussed at length in the context of the festival and the assemblies of the *centro* come to the surface again: entrepreneurialism or economic progress, unity, and social harmony. In previous chapters, I noted that schoolteachers play an important role organising *programas*. This is because they do *programas* all the time at school. *Programas* that take place in the context of the school are interesting because they assume a much more pedagogical character than those in the *centro*. Additionally, since most of them actively involve young people, they provide insights into how they learn to participate in the new public arenas of the community. Moreover, when schoolteachers plan these events, they are highly aware that they are 'planning the community', so their *programas* afford a window into how professionals understand community and the sorts of attitudes they want to inculcate in others.

School community events: learning collective work and entrepreneurialism

The school creates work for all villagers, not just for teachers and pupils. The schoolyard must be weeded, books need to be collected from towns, and the state-prescribed breakfast must be cooked. Schoolteachers capitalise on the fact that *mingas* are a fairly institutionalised activity in *centros* to enlist villagers for some of these tasks. But at school they add an extra bit of systematicity and accountability to the organisation of *mingas*. Not just teachers do this, however. Some parents who have been appointed to (unpaid) roles of authority to do planning work also participate. The head of the parents' council was responsible for creating a rota system so that the 'representatives' of every student took turns to come to the school breakfast. Those who had to miss their turns were responsible for finding someone else or would be fined. Teachers also organised school *mingas* at least once every two months to do maintenance work. On the

occasion of *mingas,* teachers made a point of suspending classes so that 'all the community could work together', and parents and students were asked to bring food from their homes to prepare at the school. The *minga* typically started with a roll-call by the headmaster and absences were punished by fines.

What is worth noticing here is that, at school, villagers go along with some of the 'community instruments' that villagers usually relax or forgo in *centros* (e.g. fines) or reject altogether, for example the 'rota systems' proposed by government officials to manage productive projects. An important difference is that at school teachers are in charge of monitoring collective work using a variety of writing techniques: lists of attendance, record of fines. That schools institutionalise or transform work to a degree not normally seen in Amazonian communities has been noted before. Erazo reveals that Napo Kichwa had the effect that villagers increasingly organised their hunting trips, family visits and gardening activities around school calendars, responsibilities to collective projects, and organisational events and celebrations (2009:1029).

But Shuar schools not only create work, they inculcate the desire for communal work and for students to become entrepreneurial. After all, they will be the people funnelling wealth and aiding their communities.

At the *colegio,* students had a class called 'productive techniques' when they tended to a communal school garden. The idea behind the project, as the teacher in charge mentioned, was for students to learn to cultivate new products and sell them. However, only in the high school of Makuma did this activity manage to turn into something like a 'community market'. In Achunts, the students' harvest was usually consumed during *programas.*

An activity of a more entrepreneurial character was organised with the students of grade 12. In order to graduate from high school, the students were required to complete individual or group productive projects under the supervision of a teacher. Most students raised chickens in the school whereas a few chose to raise pigs and keep fisheries. As part of planning the project, students were also required to write petitions to local authorities to request funds for economic activities. I noted earlier that accountancy and other classes can be abstract, but by the time students finish high school they have a pretty good idea of how to write petitions to organise events and request projects. In some cases in Amazonia, projects to promote agriculture and other productive activities can work to de-skill children, as Rival (1996:159) argues. This happens when students and their families stop participating in forest livelihoods to switch to a sedentary livelihood organised around the school. However, for sedentary Shuar, for whom an increase in

agriculture and state reliance has been necessary in the past decades, the school takes on an important up-skilling function.

Figure 17 – 'Productive techniques' class at school. Achunts, 2011

Civic ceremonies: the performance of unity

'In spite of the mud and the rain, we must continue marching' were the words of an official from the roofed-house of Makuma during the first Shuar anniversary celebration I attended in the area. I heard the words before I could see the group of marchers struggling solemnly as they tried to avoid losing their shoes in the mud. The march had become particularly challenging for the crowned and sashed queens who were walking in high heels, and for the flag-bearer who could barely watch his step as he tried to keep the banner straight. Accompanying the students were all the authorities of Makuma: NASHE leaders, the parish officials, all the schoolteachers and educational supervisors. When the squadron reached the roofed-house, the marchers, who were completely soaked by now, began to take their positions, as they prepared to sing the anthem of the county of Taisha. Meanwhile the master of ceremonies continued shouting, 'This, truly, is the unity of Makuma.'

There is an insistent emphasis on unity in civic ceremonies. Students march orderly and solemnly while the authorities emphasise the importance of the acts and education more generally for the unity of the people. But while the rhetoric and visual order of the ceremonies certainly convey a sense of unity to the spectators, I shall argue that civic ceremonies not only succeed at conveying unity but also at enabling students to experience it. What is interesting about these ceremonies is that while they are replete with national symbols – flag, anthems, etc. – in

these events Shuar are not so much celebrating the nation, a superordinate collective body, as much as a local political body.

The students of the *colegio* spent much time outside the classroom engaged in collective physical exercises. They had two hours of 'physical education' each week when they trained together doing warm-up and stretching exercises before a more intense workout which usually comprised at least 30 minutes of football. After the first two hours of classes, Fridays were entirely devoted to football or to collective rehearsals for upcoming *programas*. Rehearsals involved learning to dance, sing, recite or march together. The most sophisticated marches were rehearsed for civic ceremonies of the national calendar. Some civic ceremonies involved substantial preparation on the part of teachers in order to get the whole student body or entire cohorts to coordinate in day-long, martial-like choreographic performances.

One ceremony in particular attracted a wide public of villagers from all neighbouring *centros* and was charged with extraordinary anticipation: 'the national flag oath', or *juramento*. The *juramento* was celebrated every 24th of May to commemorate the battle that gave independence to Ecuador in 1822. For the *juramento*, all students in grade 13, the last of secondary education, made a public oath of allegiance to defend the nation in the event of war. The reason the event was considered so important is that villagers and teachers associated it with academic achievement, since only students who were going to graduate that year took the oath. Throughout the period of preparation for the ceremony, schoolteachers emphasised this prerogative using special titles for the students: 'brilliant graduates' (Sp. *flamantes bachilleres*), 'graduates of the motherland' (Sp. *bachilleres de la patria*). Moreover, the *juramento* had been celebrated in Makuma at least since the first cohort of primary school pupils graduated from the mission school. Hence, a few parents treasured dear memories of their own *juramentos* and were proud to see their children perform it.

The *juramento* is divided into two parts: a collective and an individual pledge. During the collective pledge, students recite together words of allegiance to the national flag prompted by a territorial leader. The individual pledge then sees each student marching rhythmically towards the flag-bearer who stands in front of the group. The student kneels down in front of the flagpole and removes the glove from his right hand. Raising the extremity of the national flag with the bare hand and pronouncing a ceremonious 'yes, I pledge', the student kisses it. The ceremony ends with the pledging students singing the flag's anthem.

The attraction of nationalistic civic ceremonies for indigenous peoples has been noted before in Amazonia. Collet draws attention to how, for the Brazilian Bakairi, the school becomes a privileged site for the display of patriotism (2006:218). The author attributes the ostensible love

of the Bakairi for the nation to the history of schooling in the area. She notes that civic ceremonies played a crucial role in the "civilising project" carried out by the first Brazilian posts responsible for implanting schools in indigenous territories. Alongside a host of national symbols and ceremonies, early posts also introduced native governing offices of military origin. One such office was occupied by native 'captains' responsible for mediating relations between Indians and white people. Following Souza Lima (1995:71), Collet proposes that through this office, the Bakairi gradually constructed their symbolic subordination as an Indian nation to the protectorate of the Brazilian state which they conceived of as embodied in the person of the emperor (2006:187-89). Indeed, the military character of school civic ceremonies in which students sing and march like soldiers of the nation is typically accompanied by a conspicuous stress on the Indianness of the performers, marked through nakedness and stereotypical Indian clothing and demeanour, especially on those occasions in which Amazonian Indians perform before non-indigenous audiences (e.g. High 2010). As Collet argues, "learning to identify themselves as Brazilian people goes hand in hand with learning to identify themselves as indigenous peoples" (ibid:208).

High draws a similar conclusion in relation to the annual *juramento* that Waorani youths perform. For instance, Waorani perform patriotism by invoking the imagery of the *auca* savage dressing "like the ancient ones" (2010:728). Donning feather crowns and shortened spears Waorani youths communicate that they are "prepared to defend their country with the stereotyped weapons of Amazonian warriorhood" while "constituting Waorani claims of autonomy and strength in the face of powerful outsiders" (ibid:729,732).

These two cases help me specify the kind of patriotism Shuar express in civic ceremonies. If at first glance the ceremonies appear nationalistic, a closer examination of the symbolism of the event, as seen through speech and bodily practice, reveals that Shuar are not so interested in displaying their subordination to the nation as much as their internal unity often in contradistinction to the state. Similarly, if the image of unity these events bring forth conveys ethnic autonomy and power, Shuar do not do this by emphasising wildness or Amazonian warriorhood, as in the examples above, but rather stately military power. Let us start from how unity is constructed discursively during the event.

As is customary in *programas*, in the 2012 *juramento* ceremony, Leonidas, the headmaster delivered a passionate speech. Leonidas prepared the speech in Shuar language adapting some of the factual information about the Independence Day from a Spanish history textbook. Despite the foreignness of the facts that he related – the names of *criollo* soldiers, geographic landmarks, and the names and dates of battles fought by the liberating army –

Leonidas managed to deliver a speech celebrating Shuar unity that was extremely well attuned to local ears. For example, he lingered on the importance of unity and the willingness to fight against external danger that Shuar routinely express in contemporary political battles against the state (Ch.2). To do this, while referring to the national independence, Leonidas creatively incorporated fictional references to the role of youths in the Independence battle. Leonidas's speech was thus filled with imaginary dialogues and reported speech. For instance, he cited youths who on seeing the liberating army would have said, 'I too want to defend my territory, I'll accompany you brother.' This is how he proclaimed, 'the army had become stronger and stronger until it had been able to vanquish the enemy.' Leonidas concluded his speech expressing that the day of Independence was 'of much benefit and significance for the students, parents, and for all the community' because in the same way that 'the patriots' had driven away the Spaniards, Shuar could drive away the colonists.

Leonidas's speech was characteristic of many I heard in civic ceremonies in which schoolteachers and villagers appropriate national events and characters to produce an internal commentary on the importance of local unity and autonomy. Let us then turn to bodily practices and how youths create unity on the ground while evoking military power.

The ceremony is replete with militaristic overtones. Not only are students routinely compared with soldiers but teachers and villagers continuously evoke the army. For instance, a teacher told me that previous *juramento* performances he had organised were better because he had been able to summon an actual military battalion to fire every time a student performed the oath. This is also an event in which villagers are reminded of the 1995 war of Cenepa, a time when many Shuar men – especially teachers, federation cadres, and youths – enrolled in the Ecuadorian army to fight against Peru. Manuel was one of the ex-combatants of the war, and for him, as for many other men, the combination of camaraderie, discipline and authority experienced at the time of the war has led him to project onto the army a sort of utopian and much admired model of collective power. When Shuar talked about the army they often praised the coordination and uniformity of soldiers and the impressive authority that colonels command. Admiration combined with a certain ambivalence, for whenever Shuar considered the threat presented by the state, they feared the eventuality that the president may send the army to invade their territory.[147]

---

[147] There is a local battalion named after a mythological monster (Iwia) in Ecuadorian Amazonia and its existence has contributed to Shuar people's admiration for and familiarity with the army. A few male students drop out of school to join the army. Fully exploring attitudes of Shuar towards the army would take me beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Taylor (1995); Ortiz Batallas (2006).

Alongside the discursive emphasis on group unity is the physical experience of unity. In Achunts, the rehearsals for the *juramento* lasted for a whole week prior to the ceremony. Some days before the ceremony the students were enlisted into a 4-hour long rehearsal to learn the flag's anthem. The schoolteachers worried about not having electricity on the day of the ceremony, as indeed happened, and thus ensured that all students had memorised the words and melody of the anthem so as to sing synchronously without accompanying music. The singing exercise was followed by a series of rehearsals of the parade and the collective and individual oaths. To direct these exercises, the inspector equipped himself with a rod and a whistle. As the students marched, he walked behind them threatening to use the rod if anyone was found with their arms behind them as opposed to laterally during the line-up and when marching. Under the scorching sun, the students repeated the whole routine an excruciating number of times. Every time a student was found out of step or in the wrong posture, the instructing teacher stopped the music so that students had to begin the military choreography all over again. Despite the repetition and severity of the whole affair and although students considered the coordination exercises extremely challenging, they were always excited to go to the *colegio* for a full day of rehearsals.

Students were never exposed to coordination exercises other than at school, so it should not be surprising that they found the whole business of synchronising novel and taxing. As was also the case during collective rehearsals for 'typical' dances, while teachers insisted that students do the right move and bear the appropriate posture and demeanour, they provided very little in the way of explicit instructions for the students concerning how they could try to coordinate more effectively. Rather, students were expected to learn silently through imitation and repetition. This made the rehearsals lengthier and harder. On seeing the rigour of the rehearsals, I often had the impression that in preparing for these events what mattered most was that through the singing and marching youths learned to act like a single unified body. That students might also feel this way after several days of practising joint coordination is plausible in view of the psychological finding in the field of 'joint action' and interaction that there is a strong link between iterative collective practices and the experience of group cohesion (Wiltermuth and Heath 2009; Sebanz et al. 2006).

It was only once students had sweated and struggled to coordinate and hold the correct postures, that is, when they had literally suffered like soldiers – and thereby somewhat lived up to the expectations of their oath of allegiance – that teachers seemed satisfied and concluded the rehearsals. Teachers and parents placed great emphasis on the discipline, the effort and the stamina the students needed in order to perform well, rather than simply on their ability to

perform the movements per se. For instance, the day before the ceremony, the students were sent home earlier so that they could wash their uniforms and get proper rest.

Civic ceremonies are thus 'martial' not only in the sense that the final display usually comes close to the ideal of coordination and uniformity that villagers so admire in the army, but also because the rigorous practices preceding the ceremony are taken very seriously. The day of the actual ceremony in Achunts, after the individual oaths, the students sang together the anthem of Taisha County on the football pitch surrounded by their proud families and teachers. At this point a tropical downpour unexpectedly forced all spectators to seek refuge in the roofed-house. Yet the students stayed behind until they finished the last note of the song. After the long and arduous preparations the students were indeed more than ready to seize the moment to display their heroism.

Figure 18 – Rehearsing for the juramento, Achunts, 2013

Practicing social harmony through agreements

An oft-remarked opinion was that educated people were particularly able to solve problems in a civilised manner through 'clear speech', the use of documents, and avoiding anger. For example, in the speech I cited in the first section, the head of the parents' committee encouraged students to continue moving forward because Shuar needed people capable of 'facing all sorts of problems, within the household, the community, etc.'. In Chapter 4, I showed that while every villager is expected to speak clearly in public meetings and behave as a good *socio*, elected authorities are thought to have acquired 'the theory' or 'the study' that enables them to lead others well and act lawfully. At school students not only start rehearsing public speech, they are also introduced to the importance of collective pacts and formal documents.

One of the key devices of public regulation with which villagers and students become familiar at school meetings is agreements/commitments. The agreements play a similar role to the public resolutions that villagers use in *centro* assemblies but the difference is that schoolteachers place much more emphasis on accountability and rights or duties pertaining to categories of people.

One morning of May 2013, all the students of the educational unit of Achunts carried their wooden desks up the hill that divides the classrooms from the roofed-house. Once all the primary and secondary pupils were arranged in the centre as one big classroom, teachers brought a heavy blackboard in front of the meeting. The headmaster lectured the youngest children who, excited by the unusual arrangement, were behaving somewhat rowdily: 'It's not time to wander around! Raise your hands if you want to go to the toilet. And raise it again if you want to talk. One by one you walk. Now, sit down and listen, we're doing the code!' The time had come for students to participate in drafting of the code of coexistence which, as mentioned earlier, schoolteachers had to compose by involving all members of the 'community', beginning from the students. The focus of this particular meeting was on participation and reciprocal duties. This is how the headmaster introduced the session: 'We're not here to blame one another. We are all going to do our part, our agreement to make things better (...). Now we will speak about how we will do the agreement.'

Whilst the headmaster cautioned that everyone was going to play a 'part', he also emphasised the 'we' doing the agreement. The headmaster spoke Shuar most of the time but he always used the Spanish word to call the agreement (*compromiso*), which conveys at once the sense of agreeing and of committing. As we saw earlier, the code of coexistence needed to be based on a self-evaluation, which for teachers meant that each category of people – teachers, students and parents – had to play a part evaluating the state of affairs of the school and then give suggestions for improvement. The students were thus encouraged to speak their minds so that together, teachers and students, could find solutions that would be written down in the code in the form of 'rights and duties'. The whole process lasted two entire mornings, so here I can only highlight the three main lessons to which students were exposed in the course of the event. The first is that students were prompted to use the style of participation used in classrooms to discuss communal problems. They had to raise their hands before speaking and take turns to speak. The routine found many students enthusiastic. I was surprised to see students as young as 12-to-14 years old stand up and speak up eloquently about what they thought could change in the school. More importantly, students were asked to talk about what was problematic without blaming others, that is, without speaking ill of others. They were also asked to identify problems

that concerned them not as individuals but as a collectivity – the whole student body – as the key categories of the event were students and teachers. So anytime a student raised a point that regarded them alone – for example, if they complained about not having being allowed into the classroom because they had not been wearing uniforms – schoolteachers would ask the student if that was a general problem, if classmates had also experienced this, etc. Thirdly, students were encouraged to see individual acts through 'public eyes', that is, to consider them from the point of view of the institution, as illustrated in the following example.

A 14-year-old female student spoke about 'the problem of early pregnancies', which prevented girls from continuing education.[148] Once the schoolteacher acting as secretary had noted down the problem on the blackboard, the headmaster took the floor to express his opinion,

> We are all good. There is no point in girls becoming pregnant when they're studying. I'm telling you this, so that you behave well and the institution can have a good reputation and can be seen with good eyes.

The headmaster did not so much provide a solution for the problem of pregnancies as advised against it. What is interesting however is that to do so he emphasised the importance that all ('we') are good and that students honour the institution with good conduct.

We have seen that villagers are also at pains to take a general point of view when they discuss sensitive issues in *centro* assemblies. At school meetings, students are being introduced to a very similar kind of exercise but perhaps more radical since it entails not simply considering the welfare of the community, but the good name and reputation of an external institution while dealing with multiple corporate interests: teachers, students and parents.

Villagers also participated in similar exercises of 'doing agreements' and learning to 'respect the institution', and, by extension, the authority of schoolteachers. As a place where multiple interests and people converged on a daily basis, a school could be a conflict-ridden environment with many of the usual 'threats' to everyday peace that villagers experienced in *centros*. How, then, do villagers and teachers deal with interpersonal conflicts in the institutional context of the school?

At the end of the 2012 academic year, 7 out of 19 students had failed their final examinations and risked delayed graduation or referral. After placing so much hope on

---

[148] When girls become pregnant, parents take them out of school. This is unlike boys whose educational careers are not interrupted by parenting or marriage. In fact, some of them pursue education with the moral and financial support of their parents-in-law. This is certainly a factor that contributes to increasing inequalities between the genders in new spheres of prestige. This episode illustrates the willingness of students to take public meetings seriously and discuss sensitive issues of concern to them.

graduating from high school, the low results disappointed the students and their parents. Some parents in particular became enraged by the news as they found it very difficult to understand the idea that some students deserved to be promoted while others did not. 'Why, if everyone suffered going to school and sacrificed to be in the classroom and do their homework, would there be some youths who could not get their final diploma?' commented an angry woman after the coordinator had tried, without much success, to explain to her the rationale of merit which guided examinations. Growing impatient at not being able to explain to the mother why some students failed and others not, he insisted, 'Madam, these are the rules!' Feeling dismissed, and unable to understand, the woman told the coordinator what she really was thinking. She told him it was rumoured that the teachers had let some students pass because they had been bribed by parents. Some people were suggesting, she added, that the coordinator himself had allowed one student in particular to pass because the student was the son of a shaman, and the coordinator was frightened of being bewitched. The woman then left visibly angry. Such rumours continued to spread so, some days later, the teachers, feeling that villagers were being unreasonable, decided to call a meeting to discuss the issue with the parents (representatives) of the students who had failed.

The schoolteachers began the meeting by referring to the agreements that parents had reached in the code of coexistence the year before as evidence of the parents' long-pledged resolutions to abide by the school examination regulations. Although none of these agreements were actually read, the documents were repeatedly mentioned and shown as the schoolteachers spoke. In these meetings, it is common for villagers to evoke the importance of writing down agreements even if they do not always write things down. This is similar to what Howe reports about Cuna's use of writing in political meetings: "speakers in village meetings often cite written laws or allude to the fact that a law has been recorded without consulting the document itself" (1979:9).

The idea stressed by the teachers was that once an agreement was reached and written down, people had to stand by it. As the supervisor of education pointed out, people could still discuss issues together and collectively reach agreements, but there was no point in becoming angry. 'Why don't you want to solve things speaking well and clearly, talking about the agreements? Why did you get angry and giving in to "bad talk"?' he asked.

At this point, one of the parents became conciliatory and intervened, saying, 'Indeed, parents had been unhelpful by spreading gossip about shamanism. Shuar are now educated and there was no point in speaking ill.' Even the woman who had angrily reproached the coordinator a few days earlier expressed her desire to find a solution. The coordinator explained that teachers

had not wanted to give students another chance because they were 'underperforming if compared with Hispanic schools that never repeated their examinations'. All the same, the supervisor suggested that another chance be given, and he congratulated himself with everyone for 'speaking well' and 'reaching an agreement'. Yes, 'we agree when we speak through the paper' was the final comment of the coordinator, referring to the new agreement that had been reached in the meeting. The idea of 'speaking through the paper' is an expression that has come to symbolise the importance of 'speaking clearly' and committing to agreements reached in the course of meetings. That is, speaking without evil intentions, without anger, without hiding in gossip, while seeking to reach solutions together.

Conclusion

The school has been implicated in the creation of community from the early days of nucleation. As noted in Chapter 2, missionaries hoped that the promise of cattle and formal education and the demand for collective work that the school required would motivate Shuar to establish a community with a common purpose of living together. Already in that chapter, I showed that the creation of community within the terms of the mission was anything but a straightforward process. Shuar did not uphold the idea of community responsibility promoted by the mission and eventually shunned the cooperative's control over the domestic economy. Yet, we have seen that Shuar re-embraced village life and have continued to put the school at the centre of the communal project. Being the place where Shuar hope to acquire the necessary skills to keep wealth flowing into the household, the school is crucial for living well in the present. The school is also the place where Shuar seek to acquire the necessary knowledge to keep *centros* running – not just so that villagers can funnel wealth, but also so that they can live together, avoiding ill talk and sorcery. Indeed, for the people of Kuamar, the practices of *shuarologia* viewed as destructive of community are almost a photo-negative version of the school subjects that help them live well together.

What is it exactly that Shuar learn at school that they associate with the tools of communal living? At several points in this thesis, I observed that Shuar think of the law as the sort of 'theory' or study that people learn at school. For my informants, the law is a certain kind of literacy: the competence to handle the books or documents (*papi*) that villagers associate with the pursuit of collective organisation. As we have seen, teachers use a variety of documents for planning and for decision-making in school meetings. Further, the school can also look like a succession of *programas* and is always goal-oriented, heavily planned and temporally segmented. Everything in

the school is segmented and 'programmed' to some extent: classes, public events, meetings, and moments of collective work. Thus, while the school does not have a specific subject of 'the law', villagers can establish an intimate connection between the tools of organised living and the knowledge they acquire at school because everything that they do and experience at school has to do with doing things collectively in a highly organised manner.

To begin with, at school, villagers participate in a series of everyday ceremonial rituals which bring into existence three different social categories: teachers, students and parents. At school, villagers thus rehearse the creation of positional roles, a practice which facilitates their own practice of becoming *socios* in village assemblies.

Learning to treat a relative as a teacher is a comparable experience to learning to treat one's kin and neighbours as *socios*. Moreover, at school students are introduced to some of the techniques of communal deliberation used in the new public arenas of the *centro*. The practice of expressing general as opposed to individual concerns in school meetings is similar to the practice of taking a general perspective which villagers promote in assemblies so as to evaluate and solve problems together. Indeed, the most apparent way in which villagers experience collective organisation is through school meetings in which students, villagers and teachers endeavour to speak without 'blaming one another', that is avoiding gossip and generating or invoking documents that signal collective responsibilities.

At school villagers also participate in collective work at a much greater scale than in *centros* since parents, children and teachers from many different *centros* do *mingas* together while youths practise tending to gardens together. At school *mingas* are organised as part of a 'community calendar' which routinises them while introducing different devices to monitor participation in collective work. Furthermore, while learning how to regularise collective work, students also learn the skills necessary to harness external wealth. In Chapter 5, I mentioned the importance of petitions when I described how villagers organise themselves to capture wealth at the *centro*. 'If there aren't going to be Shuar capable of writing petitions and drumming up resources, we might as well shut down the community,' was the comment I reported from an elderly man. Luckily, youths are learning to write petitions and indeed, as soon as they graduate from high school, they take on a much more active role in their *centros*, often working within the directive council in the capacity of secretary, treasurer or president. There is therefore a neat correspondence between what villagers are trying to achieve in *centros* and what they are learning and practicing at school, but the degree of elaboration of organisational discourses and practices at the school means that it remains a productive reservoir of tools which the villagers are able to tap in their own experiments with collective organisation.

Exploring the social interactions that the Wayãpi of Brazil and the French Guyana develop at school, Macedo refers to school institutions as "political laboratories" (2009:183). She argues that the schools create "a new meeting space that brings together people of different genders and generations" where the Wayãpi elaborate and discuss new forms of interaction and knowledge. The schools are particularly rich spaces, she proposes, because they are sites of articulation not only between individuals who would otherwise seldom come together, but also between old and new forms of interaction. Macedo's account of schools fits the Shuar case in two ways: firstly, because of the degree of continuity and circulation of political tools between the school and the *centro*; and, secondly, because at school Shuar experience a variety of ways of coming together and creating collectivity.

This second point creates an interesting contrast with Macedo's material. Whilst the school fosters the creation of new codes of interaction among the Wayãpi, the author believes that there are limits to what the school can or cannot enable in an Amazonian indigenous community. For instance, she explores the extent to which the school creates a public. Macedo argues that the school can be characterised as a public space when considered as a state institution that creates a sort of neutral space accessible to all members of different local groups. However, in her view, the school does not necessarily make the Wayãpi "think in terms of a public space, of an *agora*" (ibid). This is because the idea of 'public' presupposes the collective unit, the citizens of a group represented by a nation-state, a notion which does not exist among the Wayãpi.

In contrast, however, there are various ways in which Shuar "think in terms of a public" and create *agora*, a public space, but these are not produced exclusively by the school or through a process of importation of an entire external model imposed onto the indigenous society. Rather, Shuar have produced these ways of "thinking in terms of a public" over years through their domestication of a variety of external institutions, among which the most important has been the federation, from which the idea of political representation and of *socios* first derived.

The proof that the school provides a variety of models of organisation with which Shuar experiment but which they nevertheless select and adopt in order to produce collective organisation in *centros* is that there continue to exist differences between the institutions that Shuar use in *centros* and those they use at school. The main differences lie in the great extent to which hierarchy is emphasised at school and, correspondingly, in the degree of authority that teachers exert at school, whereas neither hierarchy nor authority are permanently instituted in *centros*. At school teachers become the teachers of all Shuar, not just of children, and seek to institute an order whereby villagers comply with the rules of the school. But while teachers play

a vital role in creating *programas* for the community and educating villagers in the institutional order of the school, they do not become the permanent authorities of the community.

I have argued that villagers strongly associate education with equality and their ability to compete with the national society and that the school simultaneously provides them with some of the tools with which they produce an internal political project. The school is an experimental ground where villagers can play with different models of producing collectivity. They do so through repetitive practices (marching, singing, and choreographing) as when the whole student body becomes one in a march, but also through a system of hierarchical representation as when parents represent children, or when the authorities speak about the unity and progress of all Shuar people from the top of a stage in public events.

In many places of Amazonia, the school has come to be seen as the public sphere where Amerindians can rehearse modern identities and become civilised (e.g. Collet 2007:259-267; Rival 1996; Gow 1991:229-252; Aikman 1999:146). Rival (1996) shows, for example, that the Waorani embraced the schooling project through their fascination with the performance of civilised demeanours – the modern bodily dispositions of foreign schoolteachers, and the appearance and the life-styles of sedentary dwellers. Considering that Shuar associate the school with knowledge of the law and organisation, and that at school they engage one another in ways of producing collectivity, for Shuar the school is not so much a space in which they rehearse civility as one in which they rehearse and produce *civitas* – a body of citizens organised into a community. For Shuar, 'civilisation', progress and development is achieved by neutralising the material inequality between them and the mestizo society and this is something they seek to achieve by training to become entrepreneurially and bureaucratically sophisticated at school.

In the introduction of this chapter I noted that from the early days of education bilingual teachers have been charged with the creation of community. Just as the specialisation of cultural knowledge has created experts in culture, the specialisation of knowledge required to foster collective organisation has created experts in community. Teachers – and professionals more generally – monopolise these roles in the present. This is because formal education grants individuals a superior ability to manipulate written documents, to organise *programas*, and counsel others on the 'civilised' way to behave, all of which earn them prestige in public arenas. The tools teachers hone – literacy, entrepreneurialism and the civilised ethos of professionals – enable them to behave as exemplary *socios*, promoting harmony and lawfulness while simultaneously mastering the bureaucratic skills with which they can hope to seduce and control external allies to generate wealth for their communities. Thus, those individuals who can pursue a literate pathway are doubly aided by education, as they are at once better equipped to appear

both 'harmony prone' within Shuar territories, but also combative with powerful outsiders away from it. Similarly, while schoolteachers participate in the production and transmission of a scholarly tradition tied to the state, teachers are also crucially involved in the creation of the festive life of their local communities. Yet, intriguingly, whilst involved in the project of training children to represent 'Shuar-ness' in the villages, teachers are increasingly able to send their own children away to study so that they can acquire better formal education. Institutions of learning such as high schools and universities, which create specialised pathways to knowledge and power, have thus become implicated in a revealing contradiction. The educated professionals to which these institutions give rise are actively involved in promoting Shuar unity and progress, but, at the same time, they are pursuing strategies aimed at distinguishing themselves and their children from ordinary villagers.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with Manuel's suggestion that the way forward for Shuar people had to be found in their ability to create a new mode of organisation. Taking my cue from Manuel's suggestion, I have investigated how Shuar develop centralised institutions of decision-making and economic management. Though Shuar are in many ways a household-based society, they also succeed at generating a qualitatively different mode of organisation in which authority lies with the community. Let me briefly recapitulate how Shuar achieve this and the effects of their political choices in light of some of the questions and debates I have engaged with in this thesis. As I do this, I shall also flesh out some of the wider implications of this study.

Shuar villagers succeed at turning the *centro* into a political institution because they are motivated to create forms of suprafamilial cooperation and authority. In fact, the *centro* does not simply come into existence thanks to its connection to the federation and, by extension, to state law. To be sure, the history of colonialism is fundamental to the understanding of nucleation whereby formerly dispersed and autonomous kin groups came to live together. However, nucleation does not in and of itself give rise to centralised institutions. *Centros* are brought in to existence by a range of actions that the villagers undertake: villagers create norms of membership, which they decide in assemblies; they elect a directive council; they write public resolutions to act on serious issues such as sorcery that affect everyone in the community; they become a corporate client to elect brokers; they manage collective resources; and they hold festivals in which they present themselves as members of organised villages.

The villagers are able to generate and maintain this new mode of organisation, in part, by deploying what I have called 'tools of harmony', which include a combination of visionary and formal instruments of power: clear speech and the role of *socio*. Through these tools, villagers have created the possibility of public critique – that is, the possibility of holding others responsible for actions that detract from the common good. If managing conflict in public has traditionally promoted factionalism, in *centros* it instead helps villagers to act temporarily as members of a sort of unified group. We thus have a situation that contrasts with the dynamics of group formation in those parts of Amazonia where the group is typically constituted by the leader. In *centros*, the president is not the only person capable of holding the community together through a certain kind of speech and through his leadership; in *centros* everyone is, and everyone must. The *centro* is therefore a group that can persist independently of the people who comprise it. Individuals come and go, and in fact some are expelled from the community, but the *centro* and the membership role persists.

Does this mean that, unlike the weak and diffuse system of political authority that characterises much of the region, Shuar have shifted towards a form of centralised political authority? I have argued that Shuar are able to create forms of centralised authority in certain contexts but that these do not depend on the authority of the chief or any external coercive figure. As in other places in which indigenous people participate in public forums and use legal artefacts and tools to handle complex social issues such as sorcery, the creation of group authority depends on the use of positional roles that at least temporarily enable individuals to de-emphasise kinship or interpersonal relations and the commitments tied to them. For the Maring of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, when a big man desires to act as a judge in new sorcery trials, he must be able to transcend his kin and clan relations for otherwise his authority will not be accepted by litigants (LiPuma 2000:163). A key difference, however, is that for the Maring the neutralisation of kinship in a trial has entailed what LiPuma calls "an externalisation of social life" since the authority of judges derives in large measure from the nation-state over which the Maring have little control (ibid.). By contrast, the decisions that Shuar villagers make in assemblies are not legitimated or enforced by national laws, command, or the threat of force. Despite Shuar fascination with books, formal documents, and codes – 'the codes of communal living' that Manuel evokes in the prologue – centralised authority does not emanate from books or formal codes but from public consensus.

In contrast to recent theorisations of burgeoning forms of group authority in Amazonian sedentary communities, I have argued that a local emphasis upon public commitments sanctioned through documents does not entail a shift towards coercion. Recent scholarship has interpreted assembly decision-making and the employment of legal artefacts and idioms in sedentary communities as processes that entrench the logic of the state within Amerindian societies (Walker 2015:53; also see Rubenstein 2001). Rubenstein has suggested that as Shuar organise in "corporate groups", which he identifies in the *centros* (2001:277; 2012) and gradually integrate within a structure of hierarchical leadership, introduced by the Shuar federations, they might gradually turn into a "society for the state[149]". This thesis has challenged Rubenstein's assumptions about the character of leadership and authority in Shuar *centros*. My ethnography has demonstrated that while *centros* are a form of corporate group, they have not taken on the hierarchical structures or legal ideology of the state indiscriminately or without modification. Instead the *centro* is characterised by a form of communal authority shaped by Shuar values of autonomy and in which the power of leaders is heavily circumscribed. In light of this, it is

---

[149] Here Rubenstein is drawing a contrast with Clastres's (1989) idea of "society against the state", which I discuss below.

important not to make the mistake of equating all forms of communal authority with state power. To do so risks overshadowing the extent to which villagers are able to generate new deliberative practices and may blind us to cases in which elements of the two (state and non-state forms of power) might combine without engendering coercion.

When applied to Amazonia the dichotomy between non-state and state evokes Clastres's influential characterisation of Amerindian decentralised societies as "societies against the state" (1989). The problem I see with applying this characterisation when studying processes of village formation in Amazonia is that it only leaves us with the possibility of studying centralisation, or formalisation for that matter, as ways in which Amazonian societies turn into state societies. There is, however, a wide spectrum of possibilities between the non-state and state dichotomy. While Shuar villagers centralise authority in certain contexts and employ documents which significantly formalise the process of communal decision making, *centros* have not turned into miniature states. This is evident, for example, in the way that village assemblies generate communal decisions through processes of consensus building. The reason the assembly is of particular interest is because it is a model of decision-making that extends well beyond the Shuar case, being found across a vast number of societies – including state societies. Indeed, the assembly might prove an interesting political setting in which to compare the distinct forms of communal authority and political representation that different small-scale societies develop even while they are encapsulated within the state.

A case in point is Howe's classic study of the effects of writing on Cuna political organisation. He shows that the Cuna seek to regularise procedures and codify rules for social interaction through written lists, letters, and case records. However, he also shows that they prioritise the flexibility of their decision-making process in gatherings even when it goes against previously codified written law (1979:9). On the other hand, when the Cuna do emphasise the law in political gatherings, they do so with the aim of "encouraging equal treatment for all" and "limiting the discretionary powers of village leaders" (ibid.). Similarly, I have shown that Shuar deploy the role of *socio*, which they associate with law and organisation, to create a form of political consensus so as to avoid giving the upper hand to anyone in particular: that is, to pursue collective harmony through formal equality.

When studying the forms of participatory politics and formal equality which members of small-scale societies generate in villages, it thus appears necessary to introduce alternative models to those that rely exclusively on coercion to understand all forms of collective authority. An interesting starting point is the concept of democracy. The ethnographic record abounds with examples of peoples who appropriate instruments of government to preserve autonomy from

the state, or to avoid turning into a state, while still engaging in semi-autonomous forms of participatory democracy. Some of the best known cases are those of the Zapatistas of Mexico and the Movement of Landless Rural Workers of Brazil who have a longstanding tradition of training in the practice of "being government" through forms of direct and deliberative democracy independent of the state (Starr et al. 2011). The Zapatistas have developed a very similar system of village representation to the one Shuar currently enforce in *centros*. The system includes, for example, short terms of office, no payment for office holders, revocation of the latter's mandate when they overstep the authority granted to them by the assembly, and the circulation of offices among members of the community (Baschet 2014:26).

Such system of representation fits rather well with the political concept of 'direct democracy' that Weber, who having theorised the inevitability of legal domination in societies with a complex division of labour, nevertheless deemed highly possible in small groups with little technical differentiation. For Weber, direct democracy is a form of administration embodied in the assembly of all members of the community (Thomas 1984:26). A key prerequisite of direct democracy is the "minimisation of the authority of officialdom in the interest of expanding the sphere of influence of public opinion" (Weber 1968:72). Insofar as decisions at the *centro* emerge from a process of consensus building on "public opinion" (as embodied in the assembly), Shuar *centros* are a vivid example of direct democracy.

Yet, I have argued that the identification of public opinion with communal authority generates forms of exclusion and marginality within the new political body. Indeed, the avoidance of coercion is no guarantee of total inclusion and equality in communal organisation. On the contrary, formal equality proves extremely inimical to forms of individualism such as those embodied by shamans. Public opinion evaluates negatively that which remains occult or hidden. Villagers seek to deal with conflict in *centros* by becoming visible to one another through public (clear) speech. However, this act presupposes a realm of hidden speech or 'bad talk', which villagers shun in the process of trying to keep the community together.

Shuar transpose the distinction between the public and the secret/hidden onto a wider system of beliefs in which the desirability of living openly, in harmony and in proximity is contrasted with the threats associated with living secretively, violently and in isolation. Interestingly, anthropologists have found similar distinctions are frequently implicated in processes of village formation, especially in cases in which previous forest-dwellers settle in villages. For instance, like many peoples who have experienced sedentarisation in Amazonia, the Korowai of West Papua associate villages with a nonviolent ethos, which requires that they disavow "anger, violence in favour of a new social dispensation of 'good thoughts'" (Stasch

2013:560-61). Further, Stasch shows that for Korowai the wide openness of village space, a feature that makes villages "clear, bright" and as such attractive to some and frightening to others, "is saturated with specific understandings of political life", namely, reduced personal autonomy and heightened proximity with non-kin.

Intriguingly, the ideology of visibility present in the Korowai villages described by Stasch and in my ethnography of Shuar villages closely resembles the goal that underpins the state's promotion of village formation in many parts of the world. This is what James Scott refers to as "efforts at domestication" carried out by the modern nation-state through rural settlement formation (1998:184). For Scott, the key purpose of the processes of sedentarisation initiated by modern nation-states is to settle mobile peoples so as to make them legible – visible and clear – while moulding their landscape to the state's "techniques of observation" (ibid.:82).

It appears that villages, understood as a specific mode of organisation related to processes of state formation, can trigger similar ideological associations in very different parts of the world. As I have shown in this thesis, Shuar villages are not neutral spaces, their layout – including the roofed-houses where Shuar engage in public speech – are also steeped in colonial history. Nonetheless, Shuar have not been subject to a continuous process of enforced sedentarisation and have at times embraced village life of their own accord. Yet, by foregrounding visibility and proximity in everyday sociality, Shuar villagers have come to impose on one another similar "techniques of observation" to those that states impose on their subjects.

The emphasis on visibility and its potential use as a means of control should draw our attention to its disciplinary effects on Shuar villagers. The association of an ideology of harmony with the openness and visibility encouraged in the public realm has given rise to new behavioural expectations. Talk should be open and honest. Conflicts should be resolved peacefully and publicly rather than through gossip, sorcery, fission or war. However, this comes at a cost of engendering new forms of social marginality that afflict those who are unable or unwilling to become legible, visible or clear. This was seen in the case of the 'the independents' who were excluded from the community life of the *centro*. Therefore, while I have emphasised the harmonious and democratic qualities of Shuar villages, there are also subtle yet intrusive forms of power to which villagers can resort to enforce agreement and conformity; these have a much more surreptitious connection with the state than a wholesale imposition of its hierarchical structures or coercive power.

I have also shown that, in addition to this ideology of harmony, the form of the village facilitates the development of an ideology of public wealth. In Chapter 5, I argued that the longstanding process of capturing external wealth to foster the wellbeing and productiveness of

individual households has undergone a shift. As a result, the capture of external wealth is no longer exclusively for the benefit of households, but is also a means of generating the public wealth associated with the growth and development of the *centro*. Furthermore, the *centro*'s public wealth is now understood to be a form of productiveness, so villagers anticipate that strengthening the community will itself lead to increasing prosperity. Hence, having started as a means to achieve productiveness and prosperity for households, the creation of public wealth in the *centro* has become an end in and of itself. So, how does the creation of public wealth affect domestic autonomy? What does a household-based society require to start producing communal wealth?

In the introduction I referred to Overing's (1993b) argument against Sahlins's (1972) assumption that the autonomy of small kin groups must be undermined for a group of people to become a polity and achieve public economic goals. Overing's main issue with Sahlins's view is that it equates collectivity with the institutions of exchange and control, which according to Overing are largely absent in native Amazonia, but especially in the Guianas. I have shown that Shuar villagers try to safeguard the autonomy of household members in the process of capturing external wealth by avoiding exchange with the state. They also do this by keeping a sense of equality and balance among the families – for example, by obtaining productive projects for everyone in the *centro*, de-collectivising labour, and enabling every family to manage its own affairs when the wealth arrives in the *centro*. However, this is possible only when villagers capture wealth for the household via the *centro*. When villagers begin to capture *centro* wealth directly, new institutions of exchange emerge as well as new forms of acquisitiveness that privilege autonomy over equality. To be sure, public infrastructure, communal workshops, and development projects benefit everyone to some extent. However, it is thanks to the fact that such forms of wealth are perceived as desirable and necessary that villagers are increasingly willing to enter contracts (and let others do the same) facilitated through state officials to construct public wealth. Contracts empower officials, rigidify an otherwise flexible system of alliances, and foster debt and accumulation within the community.

Does this prove Sahlins right? Part of the issue is that Sahlins refers to wealth as "goods", whereas Overing refers to wealth as an ideal of sociality: a certain quality of life (1993b:33). The distinction is useful to understand what is happening among Shuar as we can see both ideas at play. Villagers participate in the capture of external wealth – often wealth as "goods" – in an effort to re-attain their ideal of a tranquil and a self-sufficient life. But, what is ultimately required for Shuar to continue living self-sufficiently is productiveness, which is the capacity to multiply wealth, that is, to make wealth from wealth.

However, as Shuar begin to generate public wealth as a form of productiveness, the linked ideals of autonomy and egalitarianism, which are common to much of Amazonia, come under increasing strain. New forms of acquisitiveness and ambition emerge which create communal wealth while entrenching inequalities between villagers. The key issue is the dissociation and resulting tension between autonomy and egalitarianism. The creation of public wealth fosters forms of autonomy that are no longer harmonious or compatible with egalitarianism. Put differently, this is how a new form of individualism springs up among Shuar.

Graeber (2001:84) offers an instructive example taken from Nancy Munn's research on the fame of Gawa which might further illuminate this idea and point us in the direction of important implications. Like Shuar, Gawans are highly egalitarian and highly individualistic, and the two principles – individualism and egalitarianism – can at times be in contradiction. For example, the pursuit of fame, which involves the creation of positive value through exchange, tends to subvert equality. When everyone is free to enter into exchange relations, Gawans can produce communal value, what they call "the fame of Gawa". For this to happen, however, Gawans must suppress a negative form of value: witchcraft. "Witches, motivated by envy, attack those who have been too successful in rising above their fellows; in one sense, they represent the egalitarian ethos of the community, in another, absolute selfish individualism and hence, absolute evil." Indeed, as Graeber emphasises, "Gawans' conceptions of witchcraft form an almost exact photo-negative version of the creation of positive value through exchange." Hence, the chief way through which "a notion of communal value" can emerge in Gawa is through the negation of witchcraft. Gawans combat witchcraft through communal consensus in public events, moments in which influential senior men inveigh against it "and use their rhetorical powers to convince potential witches to desist from their evil plans". Only when witchcraft is controlled, can Gawans be successful in *kula* and "spread their own individual names in all directions" creating "the fame of Gawa" (ibid.).

I believe that a similar logic of positive and negative value is at play among Shuar. Sorcery, which Shuar also connect to envy, rises at moments when they begin to engage in exchange that results in the accumulation of too much positive value. "Envy finished the cattle," say villagers regarding the gradual decline of cattle which, among other factors, brought 'the golden age' of Makuma to an end. Currently Shuar are engaged in a different type of exchange involving the state. Since their officials are positioned within the very centres of local state power, they are able to funnel wealth into the community by promoting exchange through contracts. Hence, villagers are able to create even more wealth (public wealth). As I have shown in Chapter 4, the very idea of community is incompatible with the independence and uncontrollability of shamans, so one

might expect that the creation of *centro* wealth necessitates the weakening of shamanism. Therefore it is unlikely to be a coincidence that recently, for the first time, Shuar have been able to create ways to destabilise sorcery – 'the evil of shamanism' – through communal authority in village assemblies. As studies of acephalous polities in situations of state incorporation and colonisation attest, it is only when powerful built-in mechanisms that prevent the domination and exploitation of one individual (or group) by another are deactivated that economic inequalities and political hierarchies can stabilise (see Trigger 1990). My findings in this thesis are consistent with this: I have shown that while villagers increasingly identify wellbeing with new forms of entrepreneurship, they are also working hard at neutralising *shuarologia*, specifically sorcery attacks and gossip, which have the potential to counteract accumulation and acquisitiveness. In this way, Shuar have facilitated both the creation of public wealth and the potential for growing inequality.

Sahlins's domestic mode of production does not give the principle of autonomy of the household political value and Overing (1993b:35) is right to take issue with him on this point. However, his model of the transition to the creation of communal value is useful for illuminating how the rise of exchange is associated with the development of a different kind of community engaged in the production of public wealth. Nevertheless, to produce communal wealth, families must not only develop "mechanisms for holding a growing community together" as Sahlins argues (1972:98). The autonomy of individuals and small kin groups must also be attached to the project of the community. To put it better, the project of community-making must also enhance and cultivate new forms of autonomy; that is, it must reward individuals for their acquisitiveness – the ideology of progress I have discussed in previous chapters. Among Shuar, these rewards come in the form of prestigious and lucrative identities, such as the figure of the professional, whose prominence has risen in parallel with the development of the collectivity. In a nutshell, for Shuar the professional is a person who 'knows the things of the community' and who is able to use this knowledge for both collective and individual benefit.

Sedentary communities with their constant inflow of infrastructure, development projects, schools and communal workshops that benefit everyone, while helping in particular to train the professionals of the future, are privileged places for the development of notions of public wealth. Rival (1996:158) used the notion of the "public sphere" when referring to similar processes of community development centred on the school among the Waorani. School villages with their infrastructural requirements catalysed a process of sedentarisation and population density while introducing a new division of labour which separated consumers (children) from producers (adults). Among Shuar, the combination of school, *centro* and political offices

currently creates a full-blown system of specialisation which differentiates economic roles between mental and manual: the professionals, who are the intellectuals; and villagers who increasingly become the labourers. It is only when the three settings come together, however, and specifically, when political offices join the other two that a new system of inequalities really emerges. This is because it is only at this point that a group of people qualifies for office beyond the *centro*, thereby receiving a salary and acquiring prestige that can be used to funnel wealth into the community. At this level of interaction, direct democracy is increasingly difficult and, in fact, I have shown that office-holders increasingly have the upper hand when negotiating contracts. According to Weber, the differential in levels of technical expertise and functional specialisation between individuals undermines forms of direct democracy. By contrast, "legal forms of domination are grounded in technical expertise" (cited in Thomas 1984:228). Indeed, through their public offices, professionals are part of a system of legal domination legitimated by the state which they increasingly entrench in *centros*. It is only when professionals acquire state offices, funnel state wealth, and introduce external systems of accountability that we begin to see a new class of scholars and political officials consolidate and entrench inequalities at the local level.

But this is only half of the story. Centralisation is not a permanent state.

A key question I asked in the introduction was how Shuar are able to engender productiveness without undermining the very autonomy they aim to protect. In other words, what forms of collective action are Shuar capable of and happy to produce as they embark on the project of participating in *centro* economic organisation?

Shuar continuously shift between different ways of organising collective life. They have assemblies but they do not use assemblies for everything. They participate in workshops and elections to harness external resources but they are also keen to de-collectivise resources by resorting to domestic management and inter-household *mingas*. They have bi-annual festivals and sporadic *programas* that gather a multitude of villagers in profuse exaltations of joy, unity, and progress, but for most of the year the *centro* feels quiet, and villagers lead an intimate domestic existence. If making *centros* sustainable in the long run requires that villagers are able to get together and cooperate as a village, it also requires that villagers separate again and decentralise cooperation.

Santos-Granero (2009:283-84) has compared the developmental cycle of settlement formation and fissioning in Amazonia to the cyclical journeys of Sisyphus who rolls a stone to the top of a steep hill, only to see it roll down again. The author argues that the cycle of settlement formation more generally reveals the developmental cycle of Amerindian conviviality. Once settlements are formed, they grow and thrive as people are bound not only by acts of

commensality, mutuality, and the ethics of kinship, but also by shared ideals and goals. Yet the ideals of perfect conviviality carry with them "the seeds of their own destruction". While commensality, cooperation and shared ideals generate strong positive feelings, any rupture in relations provokes equally strong emotions of anger and shame that lead to schism. I have suggested that when fission is no longer an option, managing the positive and negative aspects of intense community life requires a more concerted solution to counteract tensions. This is why villagers insist that they 'cannot survive disunited, in conflict, fighting over shamanism and gossip'.

The solution villagers have found is alternation: being able to generate centralising forms of organisation while keeping the flexibility to shift back to decentralised forms. When movement is no longer possible, cycles of concentration and contraction are managed politically within the village. In other words, 'the cycles of sociality' that Santos-Granero proposes may also become a more or less conscious strategy to manage community life while avoiding schism. This would not be an exceptional solution in Amazonia. Some regional, scholarly work that explores the processual dimension of political life in more synchronic and localised fashion has revealed substantial intra-societal alternations between more egalitarian and more hierarchical modes of structuring social relations and leadership. Some of these studies converge on the fact that many such alternations stem from a form of "systemic flexibility" that triggers distinct models of leadership and decision-making (Hill 1984:530; see also Killick 2007; Ruedas 2004). Shuar villagers are able to generate centralised authority and cooperation but they are also aware of the importance of loosening the grip of the community so as to devolve power to domestic units, revert to decentralised and fluid modes of cooperation, and maintain harmony. Indeed, despite the ostentatious emphasis on collective harmony in the new public arenas of the *centro*, the social harmony that villagers can achieve is not merely the effect of centralised organising and formal 'tools of harmony'; in addition, it is the result of villagers' sensitive modulation and orchestration of different forms of interaction. Systemic flexibility is the key to how villagers reconcile collective organisation and domestic autonomy – and it may be a much more widespread and effective strategy of human sociality.

Systemic flexibility can be compared with what Wengrow and Graeber (2015) have called "institutional plasticity". Inspired by the work of Mauss, Lowie and Lévi-Strauss on seasonal variations and socio-political variance, the authors argue in favour of institutional plasticity. They provide evidence that hunter-gatherers of the Palaeolithic – like many hunters, foragers and agriculturalists studied by ethnographers in the past century – have alternated more or less consciously and deliberately between contrasting modes of political organisation, including a variety of hierarchical and egalitarian possibilities (ibid.:598). The archaeological and

ethnographic records, the authors report, abound with examples of human groups shifting back and forth between periods of collective intensity and periods of pragmatic and individualistic dispersal. In some cases, periods of intense aggregation and ceremonialism give rise to dramatic assertions of social order, hierarchy and unity; but, it is just as likely that they will result in the reverse tendency, that is, in overt challenges and renegotiations of social roles and collective authority (ibid.:611-13). Of interest for the authors is not so much which specific modes of social organisation correspond to particular phases of aggregation and dispersal, since these often vary across human groupings. Their concern is rather with the fact that such an alternation takes place *within* the same grouping. For the authors this finding means that we should no longer have to choose between binary classifications as 'egalitarian' and 'hierarchical', 'simple' and 'complex' when studying the social organisation of non-industrial societies (of past and present). Instead, we should acknowledge that throughout history humans have grappled with "the paradoxes of social creativity", experimenting with different social possibilities. "Perhaps this is what being 'intellectually modern' actually means," they suggest. That is, being 'intellectually modern' means imagining different realities, living with and acting on the awareness that "no social order is immutable" (ibid.: 613).

The Shuar festival is one of those occasions in which villagers dramatically assert formal order. Such formal order takes on reality through the ordering and classifying of guests-hosts, winners-losers, authorities-commoners. Taking cue from Handelman, I have interpreted the three-day long celebration of the *centro* as an event that re-presents, that is, as a way of re-presenting and conventionalising social reality by comparison with everyday arrangements. We might say, taking some inspiration from Wengrow and Graeber that the festival is an event in which villagers imagine and experiment with a social possibility. For the duration of the festival, the villagers experiment with the idea of 'communal organisation', putting it in to practice, and exploring its implications. However, as an intense moment of conviviality in which unity and joy reverberate, the festival also tests the limits of sociability. It is not surprising then, that even though the festival is so intensely formal, at the same time, there always remains the possibility that the gathering will descend into hostility and chaos.

I have shown that festivals and school *programa*s – even more so than assemblies – are replete with formality: codes of etiquette and civilised speech, rankings and roles, and a continuous emphasis on unity and organisation. Yet, as I have concluded in Chapter 6, these do not automatically translate into harmony, unity, authority and progress in everyday life, but create an order 'as if' it were the case, a sort of 'social subjunctive' (Seligman et al. 2008). However, this order is not purely illusory – if by illusory we mean ineffective.

As I write these conclusions, the Shuar of Makuma have summoned a *minga* that gathers all the *socios* of Taisha County (of which the Makuma area is itself a part) 'in defence of the road Makuma-Taisha'. As I have mentioned at several points in this thesis, the ongoing construction of this road gave Marcelino Chumpi, the prefect, a remarkable level of popularity among the Shuar electorate. The decision to organise a *minga* at the level of the county comes in the middle of a lengthy conflict with the central government, which, as mentioned in Chapter 2, denied the environmental licence required by the provincial government. In January of this year, the government finally declared the road unlawful and ordered the army to confiscate the construction equipment from Shuar territory. Just when Marcelino appeared to be wavering after a few weeks of pressure in which the police and the army besieged the Makuma area, Shuar villagers announced the *minga,* causing a standoff. They stated that they would finish building the road by themselves, through a *minga*, since the equipment did not belong to the state, or to the provincial government for that matter, but to the people who alone gave any power to elected authorities.

To my knowledge, this is the first time that the Shuar of the interior have organised a *minga* of this magnitude, further illustrating the scalability and transformability of local solidarity as Shuar respond to external conflict, specifically with the state. In the process of electing leaders and experimenting with formal democratic institutions, Shuar have thus understood the political potential of claiming power for 'the people' while becoming increasingly ambivalent towards formal representation and the inherent conservatism and coercive potential of officialdom. The ability to scale up a *minga* to the level of a county relies on being able to project a unified antagonism towards the outside, while producing and maintaining internal distinctions, hierarchies and specialisations: leaders who write resolutions, sub-groups of villagers who protect the road equipment, spokespersons who carry messages, brokers who negotiate with the prefect, etc. The successful organisation of this county-wide *minga* builds on the experiences of similar practices that are pervasive in the organisation of all public occasions: forming commissions for a variety of activities; participating in a set of intense communal *mingas* prior to the festival to clean up the *centro*; welcoming of a variety of 'friendly' and 'official' guests and authorities from different local governments; and, of imagining competition with mestizo people. As has been seen, festivals and school *programas* are all occasions in which villagers perform and experiment with coordination, cooperation, unity, boundedness, and the possibility of stratification.

In the introduction, I noted that I would foreground the issues of plurality and internal variance as I explored how Shuar pursue change by appropriating, refashioning and combining a variety of endogenous and exogenous tools of organisation. In line with this strategy, I have also

shown that the switching back and forth between different models of organising collective action is not always smooth. Shuar often experience moments of dislocation and confusion. This can happen when they move across institutional settings, as in the case of the old lady who was asked to announce her name and sign a document at the school even though everyone knew her already. But also at particular phases in the lives of individuals, such as when Shuar feel that they get lost in the city, or when they feel that they no longer manage to live well. In these situations, they are forced to re-problematize how they are doing things in order to carry on. By foregrounding the plurality of fields of cultural knowledge, contexts of communication and domains of practice in which Shuar engage, while pointing to their reflexivity about frustrations, contradictions and desires, my intention has been to problematize whether unitary models of continuity and change can help us grasp the complexity of Amerindians lives in the present. Whilst Shuar do their best to appropriate external power while imposing their own conditions on transactions with external others, they also experience vulnerability when they are not capable of acquiring or maintaining power or when they feel they are being transformed by the outside in the process of trying to achieve a better life. Indeed, while one interpretation of Shuar people's desire to acquire external knowledge and power is that it is a way of "opening to the other", in this thesis I have shown how it can also be understood as a way of reacting against and even closing boundaries vis-à-vis the exterior. The more Shuar are involved with the outside – economically, politically and symbolically – the more vigorously they recognise themselves as Shuar people and the more they seek to protect themselves from unwanted transformation. For Shuar, "opening and closing to the other" are part and parcel of the same dynamic. This explains why a 'continuity' approach to change that views the appropriation of the outside as a form of self-preservation is unable to account for ambivalent attitude Shuar people have towards mestizo society and their future prospects. That is, the uneasy mixture of concern and confusion about what has been or may yet be lost, combined with a cautious openness to outside influence, and the desire for a radically different future.

I have made frequent references to the importance of the future and to the idea that Shuar villagers are in constant preparation for something else. What are the aspirations and desires that nourish people's visions of the future and motivate these preparations? As I have shown, there is a widespread desire for development and progress that is transforming the Shuar ideal of self-sufficiency as villagers increasingly associate their self-worth with their entrepreneurial abilities and their capacity to trade and compete with mestizo people. However, an even more significant motivation is that which has been in evidence throughout the

ethnography of this thesis: the desire to live as an organised people and to create collective organisation.

Beyond their desire to foster a good and better life, I believe that Shuar are attracted to collective organisation for the same reasons they are attracted to the state. Although villagers do not create a mini-state in their own communities and they endeavour to keep the state at bay, the state figures prominently in their imagination of society. There are two interrelated reasons for this. The first relates to *civitas* and the second to unity.

I have shown that the forms of *civitas* that Shuar associate with literacy and bureaucracy are intimately associated with 'civilisation'. I have argued that for Shuar the idea of becoming civilised is related to the production of a certain kind of organised politics. It is being able to appear bureaucratically sophisticated and in command of paper, books, codes and documents – or what Shuar call the law and organisation. An interesting avenue for future research would be to explore comparatively why civility, *civitas* and civilisation prove so productive in indigenous Amazonia, giving rise to new ideas of personhood and new individual and collective aspirations. Walker asks a similar question in relation to the Urarina but also more generally: "how do states so successfully manage to associate the condition of being a citizen with the condition of being civilised?" (2012:4). Graeber (2015:165) hints at a potentially promising path of investigation when he notes that there is something about the way we imagine reason – and bureaucracy in connection to reason – as capable of containing or facilitating our creativity, which makes it appear morally compelling. He observes that the word *polis*, meaning the political community and place of rational order, is the same root that gives us both 'politeness' and 'police'. While these etymologies and philosophical traditions are a world apart from Amazonia, it is interesting that the ideas associated with them – the creation of an organised community, bureaucratic formality, and the much feared and somewhat admired power of the police and, for Shuar, of the army – captures so much the imagination of native Amazonians.

Whether it is in the legal ethos of professionals or in the political offices they occupy, in the marches youths rehearse or in the football matches they play, there is a sense in which the state is a continuous source of inspiration for Shuar – a reservoir of models for being together and creating collective power. It is not so much that Shuar want to be part of the state, though they want this too, but that they are attracted to the utopian possibility of becoming One. This truly is a desire for radical alterity: the attraction of unity.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Dates of cited correspondence with evangelical missionaries (Avant Ministries)

Eldon Yoder   24th of August 2014.

Norma Hedlund   13th October 2014, 23th of October 2014.

Don Caswell   14th October 2014.

Jim Hedlund   2nd November 2014.

**INCORPOREMOS EL ORIENTE ECUATORIANO A LA
VIDA NACIONAL POR LA PRODUCCION Y LA CULTURA**

REPUBLICA DEL ECUADOR
——

MINISTERIO DE GOBIERNO Y ORIENTE
——

Tenencia Politica de Taysha, a 15 de Mayo de 1954.

En vista de la solicitud presentada en este despacho,de fecha 12,del presente
mes y ano,por el senor Frank Drown,de nacionalidad Americano,Jirector de la Mi-
sion Evanjelica del "Macuma",esta Autorida realèzo una inspeccion ocular en todos
los trabajos y mas labores desarrollados en la jurisdiccion de esta Parroqui,los
mismos que a continuacion detallo.

En el sector del"Macuma,"existen en primer lugar diez casas las mismas que prestan
los siguientes servicios;casas de avitacion cinco,una casa que tiene el servicio
de botiquin y dormitorio de niñas,una casa que sirve de templo para los actos Re-
ligiosos y de plantel para las claces de los niños varones,cuyo numeroes de trein
ta y ocho,una casa que sirve de dormitorio de los niños varones,una que sirve de
cocina y comedor de todos los ninos,una casa que sirve de avitacion de obreros;to
das estas construcciones estan alumbradas por la noche por una magnifica Planta
Electrica.

Al frente de los planteles de educacion existen dos profesores Nacionales que se
encargan de cultivar todos los conocimientos elementales dentro de las diferentes
materias de educacion,siendo el principal los conocimientos del idioma castellano
el civismo y conocimiento de la Patria;los mismos que son el senor Salomon Carde-
nas,que dirije el plantel de niños varones y la senorita Luz Maria Cardenas quien
dirije el plantel de niñas en un número de trece;los mismos planteles que funcion
con los grados de preparatoria y primer grado.

En el servicio sanitario,he constado personalmente el gran lavor,en atender a
muchos jibaros con remedios apropiados que los administra la senoriya Dorotea
Brow,quien los atiende con verdadera solicitud de enfermera,con muchos conoci-
mientos sobre el ramo y sobre todo de espiritu humanitario,ya que en este sector
Oriental se encuentra muy desarrollado las enfermedades"Pian en sus diferentes
casos,siendo el asolamiento de la pobre Raza Jibara",ya que al no existir la Mi-
sion E.anjelica,tenderian a desaparecer lo más pornto.

Por indicacion del suscrito,se practica todos los dias Domingos la Izada de la
Bandera Nacional,al son del Himno patrio,cantado por todos los ninos jibaros,
practicando asi en presencia de un gran número de jibaros,que se reunen para el
servicio Religioso,en este mismo momento,el senor profesor Cardenas,pronuncia
plabras de civismo y mas llamamientos de conocimientos Patrios.

En lo referente a los trabajos de agricultura,existen cinco lotes con diferentes
cultivos,como sembrios de yuca,cana,piatano,arros,frejol,maiz,pelma,camote y gran
extencion de potreros,para fomentar la cria de ganado,la misma que va encaminada
a dar conocimientos a los jibaros que toman interes,para ayudarlos en este senti-
do a mejorar su vida dentro de lo econimico;ya que la raza jibara es muy atrasada
en todos estos conocimientos.

Tiene tambien la Mision Evanjelica del"Macuma" un magnifico campo de Aviacino
para el servicio de la Avioneta,de la Compania "Alas de Socorro"cuya extencion
es de setecientos metros.

REPUBLICA DEL ECUADOR

MINISTERIO DE GOBIERNO Y ORIENTE

Para el servicio de agua existe una magnifica bomba, que funciona por medio de fuerza electrica, siendo su capacida de unos docientos galones por hora.

Tambien viene practicando la Mision Evanjelica del "Macuma, el cruzamiento de la cria de ganado y gallinas, ya que existe ejemplares Holstien y en gallinas tiene la raza "Leghon y Barriados; en ganado existen diezy ocho cabezas.

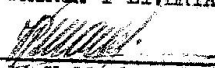El numero de hectarias trabajadas en el "Macuma es de CIENTO CINCO, queda explicado en los difernetes cultivos.

Devo anotar que los senores Cardenas que prestan los servicos como profesores son rentados por la misma Mision Evanjelica del "Macuma",.

En lo referente a los trabajos en el Campo Taysha, se encuentra actualmente siembrascdermdáz y limpieza para chacras, ademas a efectuado la limpieza para la construccion de dos casas de avitacion, en igual for ma que la limpieza de cuatrocientos metros a quinientos del campo de Aviacion para el servicio de la Avioneta de la "Compania Alas de Socorro".

Ademas es digna de mencionar, que la Mision Evanjelica, presta todo el apoyo alos Ecuatorianos que nos toca cruzar por ella, sin reparar en color ni credos, siendo asi un verdaderoapoyo para la Patria, y, que es dever tambien de las autoridades procurar el mejoramiento de todocuanto pueden necesitar, dentro de lo que a cada uno nos compete

Es cuanto puedo informar en cumplimiento a lo solicitado y a fin de que el senor Drown pueda hacer el uso que creyera combeniente.

DIOS PATRIA Y LIVERTAD

Neptalí Villacís Q,
Teniente Político

Appendix 3 – Petitions by members of Kuamar directive council requesting 'incentives' for the festival.

COMUNIDAD SHUAR KUAMAR

Parroquia : Macuma - Cantón. Taisha - Provincia : Morona Santiago
Acuerdo Ministerial Nº 218 del 24 de Marzo del 2004

Kuamar, 22 de febrero de 2013.

Antropologa.
Natalia Caicedo
VOLUNTARIA DEL EXTENSION 4AHARAH TZAWAA.
Presente.

De nuestras Consideraciones :

Reciba nuestros fraternos Saludos deseamos éxitos en su función en mejor desarrollo de la Juventud de nuestra Asociación.
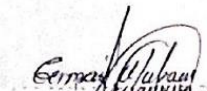
Srta, Antropologa, la Comunidad shuar Kuamar al Celebrar su XX aniversario de su fundación, le SOLICITAMOS a su digna persona, muy respetuosamente que nos Considera' dar los Siguientes
- 5 Cobijas
- 5 machetes
- 2 Tachos
Que nos servirá para nuestras festividades, para Concursos en diferentes diciplinas

Conocedor de su alto espiritu de Colaboración a la Comunidad le reiteramos en agradecerle.

Atentamente

Sr. German Yukam
PRESIDENTE - KUAMAR

Tec. Armando Wisuma
SECRETARIO - KUAMAR

Sr. Luis chiriap
PRESIDENTE -
PROFIESTA - KUAMAR

Appendix 4 – 'Act of commitment': Agreement of work between *socios* of Pampants and affluent cattleman

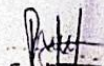## PAMPANTSANMAYA SHUAR IRUTKAMU
CENTRO SHUAR PAMPANTS
Registro Oficial N° 175 del 21 de septiembre de 2007 CODENPE

Pampantsa, el 15 de Marzo 2013

COMPROMISO

El presente documento es para dejar constancia de los principales acuerdos y compromisos a los cuales, nosotros, los Socios que firmamos, hemos llegado:

— El Señor ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ identificado con la cedula N° ▬▬▬▬▬▬ se compromete a donar un torete a los Socios del centro Pampantsa por el festejo de su aniversario el dia 15 de Marzo 2013.

— A su vez los Socios del centro Pampantsa se compremeten a ayudar con mano de obra de 2 hectareas (socolar, limpiar) en la finca del Señor ya mencionado una vez terminadas las festividades en la fecha que se acordara mas pertinente para el socio donante.

Las partes interesadas se comprometen a cumplir cabalmente con los acuerdos descritos y en caso de incumplimiento se dara paso a las instancias legales pertinentes.

Atentamente,

_____	_____	_____
Presidente pro-fiesta	Vice-Síndico	Socio donante

Juntos Buscaremos el Desarrollo de Nuestra Comunidad
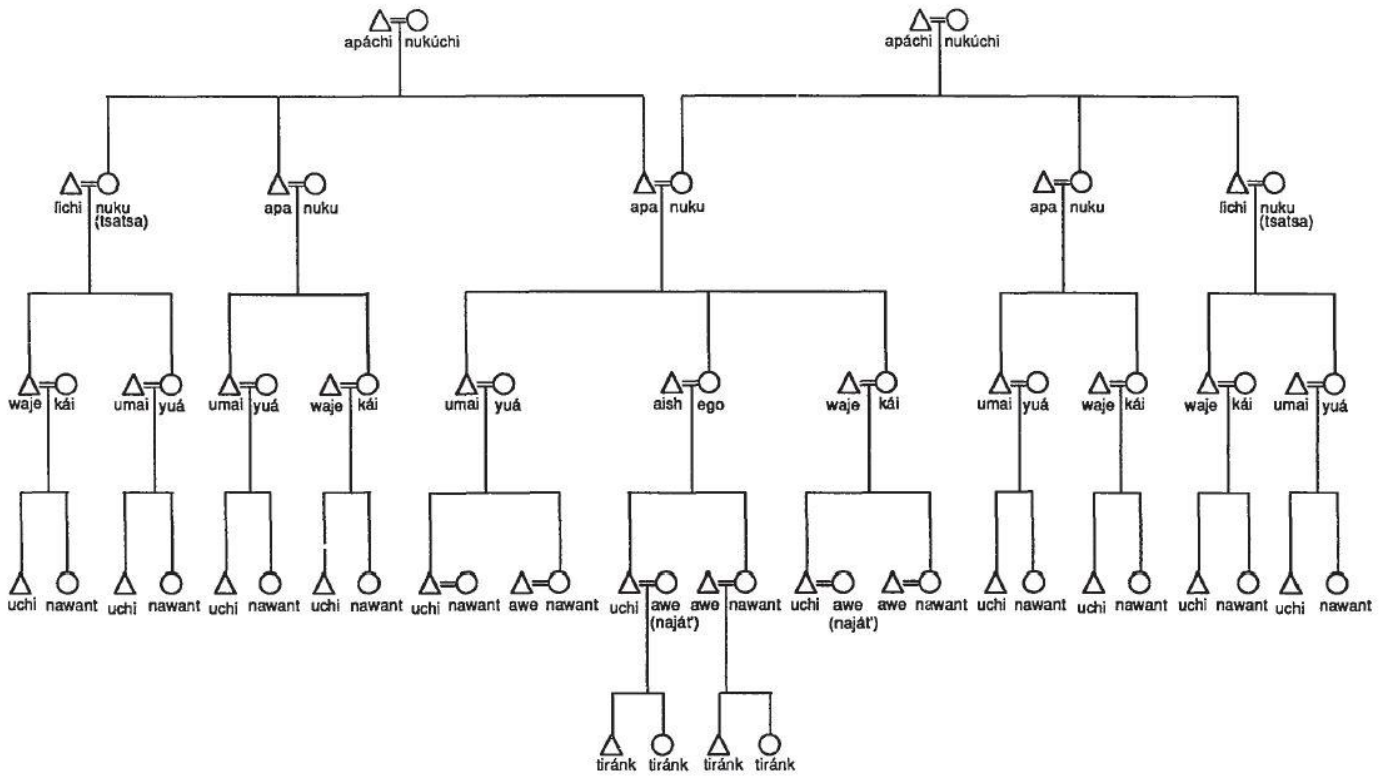
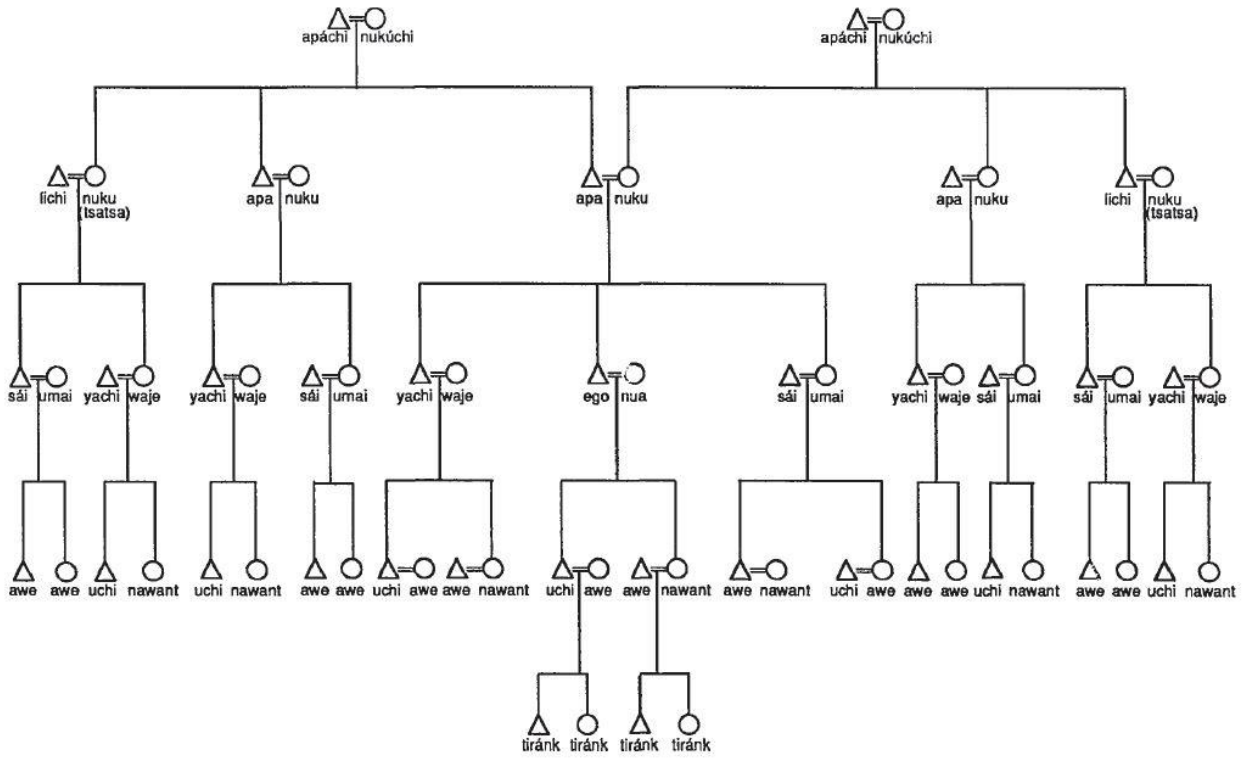**Pampants   Tuutinentza   Taisha   Morona Santiago**

SECRETARIO

Appendix 5 – Terms of reference.

Terms of reference – female speaking (from Hendricks 1986:58)

Terms of reference – male speaking (from Hendricks 1986:57)

Bibliography

ADJOE
—— 1962. *Estatutos y sus reformas de la asociación protectora y de desarrollo de las tribus jibaras del oriente ecuatoriano, que en adelante se llamara: Asociación Independiente del Pueblo Shuara del Ecuador.* Unpublished document.

AIESE - ASOCIACIÓN DE IGLESIAS EVANGÉLICAS SHUAR DEL ECUADOR
—— 2009. *Yus Papí. Yusa chichame aarma.* Makuma: MiDi Bible.

AIKMAN, S.
—— 1999. *Intercultural education and literacy. An ethnographic study of indigenous knowledge and learning in the Peruvian Amazon.* Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

ALBERT, B.
—— 1985. Temps du sang, temps des cendres. Représentation de la maladie, système rituel et espace politique chez les Yanomami du sud-est (Amazonie brésilienne). Université Paris X. Unpublished PhD Thesis.

ALBERT, B. & A. R. RAMOS
—— (eds) 2000. *Pacificando o branco: cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônico.* São Paulo: Editora UNESP.

ALEXIADES, M. N.
—— (ed) 2009. *Mobility and migration in indigenous amazonia. Contempory ethnoecological perspectives.* New York & Oxford: Berghahn books.

ALMEIDA, J.
—— (ed) 1995. *Identidades indias en el Ecuador contemporáneo.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

ÅRHEM, K.
—— 2001. From longhouse to village. Structure and change in the Colombian Amazon. In *Beyond the visible and the material: the amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière* (eds) L. Rival & N. L. Whitehead, 123–155. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BAMBERGER, J.
—— 1979. Exit and voice in Central Brazil: the politics of flight in Kayapó society. In *Dialectical Societies. The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil* (ed) D. Maybury-Lewis, 130–146. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

BARRUECO, D.
—— 1988. *Mitos y leyendas shuar.* Sucúa: Mundo Shuar.

BARTH, F.
—— 1969. *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture.* Universitets Forlaget & London: George Allen & Unwin.

BASCHET, J.
—— 2014. Autonomie, indianité et anticapitalisme : l'expérience zapatiste. *Actuel Marx* 56(2), 23-39.

BATHURST, L.
—— 2009. Theft as 'involuntary gifting' among the Tacana of Northern Bolivia. *Tipití: Journal of The Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 7(2), 181–204.

BENEI, V.
—— 2008. *Schooling passions. Nation, history, and language in contemporary western India.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

BEATTIE, J.

—— 1967. Checks on the abuse of political power in some African societies: a preliminary framework for analysis. In *Comparative political systems* (eds) R. Cohen & J. Middleton, 355–374. New York: The Natural History Press.

BELZNER, W.

—— 1981. Música modernización y occidentalización entre los shuar de Macuma. In *Amazonía Ecuatoriana, la otra cara del progreso*, 145–165. Quito: Abya-Yala.

BECKER, M.

—— 2011. Correa, indigenous movements, and the writing of a New Constitution in Ecuador. *Latin American Perspectives* **38**(*1*), 47–62.

BELTRÁN, B. & R. NARVÁEZ

—— 2012. *Reconstitución de los territorios indígenas en la Amazonía, nacionalidades Achuar, Shuar y Shiwiar*. Quito: Fundación Pachamama.

BLOCH, M.

—— 2006. *L'anthropologie cognitive à l'épreuve du terrain*. Paris: Fayard.

—— 2013. *In and out of each other's bodies. Theory of mind, evolution, truth, and the nature of the social*. Boulder & London: Paradigm publishers.

BOLLA, L. & P. KANTÁSH ISHTIK

—— 2000. *Achuar ujákratmau. Diccionario achuar. Achuar Matsátmau*, vol. 3. Lima: CAAAP.

BOLTANSKI, L.

—— 2011. *On critique: a sociology of emancipation*. Cambridge: Polity.

BOSTER, J. S.

—— 2007. Misiones y antropología. Entrevista al P. Silvio Broseghini. *Alteridad,* March, 42–54.

BRIGHTMAN, M.

—— 2007. *Amerindian leadership in Guianese Amazonia*. University of Cambridge. Unpublished PhD thesis.

BROWN, M. F.

—— (ed) 1984a. *Relaciones interétnicas y adaptación cultural entre Shuar, Achuar, Aguaruna y Canelos Quichua*. Quito: Mundo Shuar.

—— 1984b. *Una paz incierta. Historia y cultura de las comunidades aguarunas frente al impacto de la carretera marginal*. Lima: Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica.

—— 1984c. The role of words in Aguaruna hunting magic. *American Ethnologist* **11**(*3*), 545–558.

—— 1986. *Tsewa's Gift. Magic and meaning in an Amazonian society*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Arizona Press.

—— 1993. Facing the state, facing the world: Amazonia's native leaders and the new politics of identity. *L'Homme* **33**, 307–326.

BUITRÓN ARIAS, N.

—— 2014. 'La Pedagogía del Arutam' o notas etnográficas sobre la producción shuar en torno a la cultura. In *En torno al documento*. Quito: Universidad San Francisco de Quito.

BUSTAMANTE, T.

—— 1988. *La larga lucha del kakaram contra el sucre*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

CACEPA NANCHI, A. L. & A. M. MANCHU JEENCHAM

—— 2006. El valor sagrado de las plegarias y su uso en el ciclo agrícola por las mujeres Shuar de la Comunidad de Macuma. Universidad de Cuenca. Unpublished thesis.

CASWELL, D. F.

—— 1967. *A critique of the Macuma project*. American Institute for Foreign Trade. Unpublished report.

CHAUMEIL, J-P.

—— 1990. 'Les nouveaux chefs...': pratiques politiques et organisations indigènes en Amazonie péruvienne. *Problèmes d'Amérique latine* **96**, 93-113.

CHAUMEIL, J-P. & B. CHAUMEIL

—— 1983. De un espacio mítico a un territorio legal o la evolución de la noción de frontera en el noreste peruano. *Amazonía Indígena* **3**, 15–22.

CHUMPI KAYAP, M. M.

—— 1985. *Los Anent: Expresión religiosa y familiar de los Shuar*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

CEPEK, M. L.

—— 2011. Foucault in the forest: questioning environmentality in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist* **38**(*3*), 501–515.

CLASTRES, P.

—— 1989. *Society against the State: essays in political anthropology*. New York: Zone Books.

—— 1998. *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*. New York: Zone Books.

COHEN, R. & J. MIDDLETON

—— (eds) 1967. *Comparative political systems studies in the politics of pre-industrial societies*. Austin & London: University of Texas Press.

COLAJANNI, A.

—— 1984. Prácticas chamanicas y cambio social. La muerte de un hechicero achuar: hechos e interpretaciones. In *Relaciones interétnicas y adaptación cultural entre Shuar, Achuar, Aguaruna y Canelos Quichua* (ed) M. F. Brown, 227–249. Quito: Abya-Yala.

COLLET, C.

—— 2007. *Ritos de civilizaçao e cultura: a escola bakairi*. Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Unpublished PhD thesis.

CONAIE

—— 1989. *Las nacionalidades indígenas en el Ecuador: Nuestro proceso organizativo*. Quito: Ediciones Tinkui.

COOPER, J. M.

—— 1949. Games and gambling. In *Handbook of South American Indians. Vol. V The comparative ethnology of South American Indian*, 503–524. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution.

COURSE, M.

—— 2013. The clown within: becoming white and Mapuche ritual clowns. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* **55**(*4*), 771–799.

COVA, V.

—— 2014. *Manioc beer and the word of God. Faces of the future in Makuma*, Ecuador. University of St Andrews. Unpublished PhD thesis.

DEBOER, W. R.

—— 2001. The big drink. Feast and forum in the upper Amazon. In *Feasts. Archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on food, politics, and power* (eds) M. Dietler & B. Hayden, 212–239. Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

DENEVAN, W.

—— 1992 *The native population of the Americas in 1492*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

DESCOLA, P.

—— 1981. From scattered to nucleated settlement: A process of socioeconomic change among the Achuar. In *Cultural transformations and ethnicity in Ecuador* (ed) N. E. J. Whitten, 614–646. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

—— 1982a. Ethnicité et développement économique : le cas de la Fédération des centres shuar. In *Indianité ethnocide indigénisme en Amérique Latine* (ed) GRAL, 221–237. Paris-Toulouse: Éditions du CNRS.

—— 1982b. Territorial adjustments among the Achuar of Ecuador. *Social Science Information* **21**(*2*), 301–320.

—— 1983. Le jardin de colibri. Procès de travail et catégorisations sexuelles chez les Achuar de l'Équateur. *L'Homme* **23**, 61-89.

—— 1988. La chefferie amérindienne dans l'anthropologie politique. *Revue française de science politique* **38**, 818–827.

—— 1993. Les Affinités sélectives. Alliance, guerre et prédation dans l'ensemble jivaro. *L'Homme* **33**, 171–190.

—— 1994. Homeostasis as a cultural system: the Jivaro case. In *Amazonian indians. From prehistory to the present* (ed) A. Roosevelt, 203–224. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

—— 1996a. *The spears of twilight. Life and death in the Amazon jungle.* New York: The New Press, Harper Collins.

—— 1996b. *In the society of nature. A native ecology in Amazonia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— 2000. Un dialogue entre lexiques. Ethnographies croisées d'un dictionnaire espagnol-shuar. In *Les rituels du dialogue : Promenades etehnolinguistiques en terres amérindiennes* (eds) A. Monod-becquelin & P. Erikson, 212–327. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie

—— 2010. From wholes to collectives steps to an ontology of social forms. In *Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropology* (eds) T. Otto & N. Bubandt, 209–226. Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

—— 2012. Beyond nature and culture. Forms of attachment. *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory* **2**, 447–471.

—— 2012b. Beyond nature and culture. The traffic of souls. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* **2**, 473–500.

—— 2013. *Beyond nature and culture.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

DESCOLA, P. & J.-L. LORY

—— 1982. Les guerriers de l'invisible. Sociologie comparative de l'agression chamanique en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée (Baruya) et en Haute-Amazonie (Achuar). *L'Ethnographie* **87-88**(*78*), 85–111.

DESCOLA, P. & A. TAYLOR

—— 1981. El conjunto jivaro en los comienzos de la conquista español. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Études Andines* **10**, 7–54.

DESHOULLIERE, G.

—— n.d. *Une première route à Transkutukú, terres Jivaro. Quelques remarques sur le rapport entre ethnicité, territoire et développement économique au temps de la Révolution Citoyenne (Équateur).* Unpublished manuscrit.

—— 2016a. Vanité aux livres. Variations magiques en pays jivaro. In *Hypalampuses Hemeras à la pointe du jour*, Gruppen **10**, 44-55. Paris: Édition Gruppen.

—— 2016b. (in press) Chamanismo, desarrollo económico y políticas estatales: notas de investigación desde una asociación de chamanes Shuar (Ecuador). In *Iniciativas empresariales y culturales. Estudios de casos en América Latina* (eds) A.G. Bilhaut & S. Macedo. Quito: Abya Yala/Fabriq'am.

DROWN, F. & M. DROWN

—— 2002. *Mission to the headhunters. How god's forgiveness transformed tribal enemies.* Fearn: Christian Focus.

DOLE, G. E.

—— 1959. Shamanism and political control among the Kuikuru. In *Peoples and Cultures of Native South America* (ed) D. R. Gross, 294–307. New York: Doubleday/The Natural History Press.

ECHEVERRI, J. A.

—— 2000. The first love of a young man: salt and sexual education among the Uitoto Indians of Lowland Colombia. In *The Anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetic of conviviality in native Amazonia* (eds) J. Overing & A. Passes, 33–45. London: Routledge.

ERAZO, J. S.

——— 2010. Constructing indigenous subjectivities: Economic collectivism and identity in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Development and change* 41(*6*), 1017–1039.

——— 2013. *Governing indigenous territories. Enacting sovereignty in the Ecuadorian Amazon.* Durham: Duke University Press.

ERIKSON, P.

——— 1986. Altérité, tatouage et anthropophagie chez les Pano : la belliqueuse quête du soi. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 72, 185–210.

——— 2013. Une affaire qui roule ? De l'introduction du football en Amazonie indigène. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 99, 167–173.

EWART, E.

——— 2007. Black paint, red paint and wristwatch. The aesthetics of modernity among the Panará in central Brazil. In *Body arts and modernity* (eds) E. Ewart & M. O'Hanlon, 36–53. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.

FAUSTO, C.

——— 1999. Of enemies and pets: Warfare and shamanism in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist* 26(*4*), 933–956.

——— 2001. If god were a jaguar. Cannibalism and Christianity among the Guarani (16th-20th Centuries). In *Time and memory in indigenous Amazonia* (eds) C. Fausto & M. J. Heckenberger, 74–105. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

——— 2007. Feasting on people: Eating animals and humans in Amazonia. *Current Anthropology* 48(*4*), 497–530.

——— 2009. Comment on F. Santos-Granero article 'Hybrid Bodyscapes. A visual history of Yanesha patterns of cultural change'. *Current Anthropology* 50(*4*), 497-498.

——— 2011. Mil años de transformación. La cultura de la tradición entre los Kuikuro del Alto Xingú. In *Por donde hay soplo Estudios amazónicos en los países andinos* (eds) J.P. Chaumeil, O. Espinosa & M. Cornejo Chaparro, 185–216. Lima: Institut Français d'Études Andines, Fondo Editorial, CAAAP.

——— 2012a. *Warfare and shamanism in Amazonia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 2012b. The friend, the enemy, and the anthropologist: hostility and hospitality among the Parakanã. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.), S196–S209.

FAUSTO, C. & D. RODGERS

——— 1999. Of Enemies and pets: warfare and shamanism in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist* 26(*4*), 933–956.

FAUSTO, C. & M. J. HECKENBERGER

——— 2007. Introduction. Indigenous history and the history of the 'Indians'. In *Time and memory in indigenous Amazonia: anthropological perspectives* (eds) C. Fausto & M. J. Heckenberger, 1–43. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

FEDERACIÓN DE CENTROS SHUAR

——— 1976. *Federación de centro shuar. Solución original a un problema actual.* Sucúa: FCSH.

FERGUSON, R. B. & N. L. WHITEHEAD

——— (eds) 2000. *War in the tribal zone. Expanding states and indigenous warfare.* (2nd edition). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

FIGUEROA, I.

——— 2006. Indigenous peoples versus oil companies: constitutional control within resistance. *International Journal on Human Rights* 4(*3*), 50–79.

FIGUEROA, I., V. LOPEZ ACEVEDO, M. MELO, ET AL.

——— 2002. *Firmes en nuestro territorio FIPSE vs ARCO.* Quito: CONAIE, FLACSO, CDES.

FISCHER, E.

——— (ed) 2009. *Indigenous peoples, civil society, and the neo-liberal state in Latin America.* New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.

FISHER, W. H.

—— 2000. *Rainforest Exchanges: Industry and Community on an Amazonian Frontier.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

FOUCAULT, M.

—— 1998. *Ethics: subjectivity and truth (Essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984).* New York: New Press.

GARCIA SERRANO, F.

—— 2014. Territorialidad y autonomía, proyectos minero-energéticos y consulta previa: el caso de los pueblos indígenas de la Amazonía ecuatoriana. *Anthropologica* **32**, 71–85.

GLUCKMAN, M.

—— 2014 [1964]. Moral crises. Magical and secular solutions, vol. 4. In *The allocation of responsability* (ed) M. Gluckman, 369–405. Manchester.

GNERRE, M.

—— 1973. Sources of Spanish Jivaro. *Romance philology* **2**, 203–204.

—— 1985. Lo spazio del mito. *La Ricerca Folklorica* **11**, 29–34.

—— 1986. The decline of dialogue: ceremonial and mythological discourse among the Shuar and Achuar. In *Native South American discourse* (eds) J. Sherzer & G. Urban, 307–341. Berlin: Monton & De Gruyer.

—— 2000a. Cazando sapos... El triste humorismo escondido en un diálogo shuar. In *Les rituels du dialogue : promenades ethnolinguistiques en terres amérindiennes* (eds) A. Monod-Becquelin & P. Erikson, 285–311. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie.

—— 2000b. From headhunters to writers. A shuar myth and an oration. In *Translating Native Latin America Verbal Art: Ethnopoetics and Ethnography of Speaking* (eds) K. Sammons & J. Sherzer, 197–210. Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

—— 2003. L'addomesticamento dei corpi selvaggi. In *Antropologia* (ed) C. Mattalucci, vol. 3, 93–118. Roma: Meltemi Edizione

—— 2006. From multiple framed communicative performances to frozen sounds: announced deaths and hidden heritages. In *Undescribed and endangered languages: the preservation of linguistic diversity* (ed) A. de Dominicis, 21–43. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.

—— 2007. 'Io', agentività e genere nelle modalità comunicative shuar (Amazzonia), vol. d. In *Agency e linguaggio. Etnoteorie della soggettività e della responsabilità* (eds) A. Donzelli & A. Fasulo, 113–141. Roma: Meltemi Editore.

—— 2008. Misioneros frente al desafío de la alteridad comunicativa. In *En nombre de dios. La empresa misionera frente a la alteridad* (ed) F. Cuturi. Quito: Abya-Yala.

—— 2012. Los salesianos y los shuar construyendo la identidad cultural. In *La presencia salesiana en Ecuador. Perspectivas históricas y sociales* (eds) L. Vázquez, J. F. Regalado, B. Garzón Vera, V. H. Torres & J. E. Juncosa, 567–628. Quito: Abya-Yala/Salesianos Don Bosco.

GRAEBER, D.

—— 2001. *Toward an anthropological theory of value. The false coin of our own dreams.* New York: Palgrave.

—— 2011. *Debt. The first 5 000 years.* Brooklyn & New York: Melvillehouse.

—— 2015. *The Utopia of rules.* Brooklyn & New York: Melvillehouse.

GRAHAM, L. R.

—— 1993. A public sphere in Amazonia? The depersonalized collaborative construction of discourse in Xavante. *American Ethnologist* **20**(*4*), 717–741.

—— 2005. Image and instrumentality in a Xavante politics of existential recognition: the public outreach work of Eténhiritipa Pimentel Barbosa. *American Ethnologist* **32**(*4*), 622–641.

GREENE, S.

—— 2009. *Customizing indigeneity. Paths to a visionary politics in Peru.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

GOFFMAN, E.
—— 1956. The nature of deference and demeanur. *American Anthropologist* 58(*3*), 473–502.
GORDON, C.
—— 2006. *Economia selvagem. Ritual e mercadoria entre os índios Xibrin-Mebêngôkre.* São Paulo: UNESP, ISA, NuTI.
GOODY, J.
—— 2010. *Myth, ritual and the oral.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
GOW, P.
—— 1991. *Of mixed blood. Kinship and history in Peruvian Amazonia.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
—— 2001. *An Amazonian myth and its history.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
GUDEMAN, S.
—— 2009. Necessity or contingency: mutuality and market. In *Market and society. The great transformation today*, 17–37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
—— 2008. *Economy's tension. The dialectics of community and market.* New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.
HANDELMAN, D.
—— 1998. *Models and mirrors. Towards an anthropology public events.* New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.
HANKS, W. F. & C. SEVERI
—— 2014. Translating worlds. The epistemological space of translation. *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory* 4, 1–16.
HANN, C. & K. HART
—— 2011. *Economic anthropology. History, ethnography, critique.* Cambridge: Polity.
HARNER, M. J.
—— 1972. *The Jivaro. People of the sacred waterfalls.* London: Robert Hale & Company.
HECKENBERGER, M.
—— 2005 *The Ecology of power: Culture, place, and personhood in the Southern Amazon*, A.D. 1000–2000. New York: Routledge.
HENDRICKS, J. W.
—— 1986. *Images of tradition: ideological transformations among the Shuar.* University of Texas at Austin.
—— 1988. Power and knowledge: discourse and ideological transformation among the Shuar. *American Ethnologist* 15(*2*), 216–238.
—— 1991. Symbolic counter-hegemony among the Ecadorian shuar. In *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* (eds) G. Urban & J. Sherzer, 53–71. Austin: University of Texas Ppress.
—— 1993a. *To drink of death. The Narrative of a Shuar Warrior.* Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press.
——1993b. Symbolic counter-hegemony among the Ecuadorian Shuar. *South American Indian Studies* 3, 2-15.
HENLEY, P.
—— 1982. *The Panare: tradition and change on the Amazonian frontier.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
HERZFELD, M.
—— 2005. *Cultural intimacy. Social poetics in the Nation-State.* New York & London: Routledge.
HEWLETT, C.
—— 2014. History, kinship, and comunidad: learning to live together amongst Amahuaca People on the Inuya River in the Peruvian Amazon. University of St Andrews. Unpublished PhD thesis.

HIGH, C.

—— 2006. From Enemies to Affines: Conflict and Community among the Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador. London School of Economics. PhD thesis.

—— 2010. Warriors, hunters, and Bruce Lee: Gendered agency and the transformation of Amazonian masculinity. *American Ethnologist* **37**(*4*), 753–770.

—— 2015a. *Victims and warriors: violence, history and memory in Amazonia*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

—— 2015b. Keep on changing: recent trends in Amazonian anthropology. *Reviews in Anthropology* **44**(*2*), 93–117.

HILL, J. D.

—— 1984. Social equality and ritual hierarchy: the Arawakan Wakuenai of Venezuela. *American Ethnologist* **11**(*3*), 528–544.

—— (ed) 1988. *Rethinking history and myth. Indigenous South American perspectives on the past*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

—— 1996. Introduction. Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992. In *History, power, and identity: ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992* (ed) J. D. Hill. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

HORNBORG, A. & J. D. HILL

—— (eds) 2011. *Ethnicity in ancient amazonia. Reconstructing past identities from archaeology, linguistics, and ethnohistory*. Colorado: University Press of Colorado.

HOWE, J.

—— 1979. The effects of writing on the Cuna political system. *Ethnology* **18**(*1*), 1–16.

HUGH-JONES, S.

—— 1992. Yesterday's luxuries, tomorrow's necessities: business and barter in northwest Amazonia. In *Barter, exchange and value: an anthropological approach* (eds) C. Humphrey & S. Hugh-jones, 42–74. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

—— 2013. Bride-service and the absent gift. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **19**(*2*), 356–377.

INEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censos)

—— 2011. *Ecuador en Cifras*. Quito. Retrieved from http://www.inec.gob.ec/estadisticas

INGOLD, T.

—— 1994. Introduction to social life. In *Companion encyclopedia of anthropology: humanity, culture and social life* (ed) T. Ingold. New York: Routledge.

—— 2000. *The perception of the environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London & New York: Routledge.

IRVINE, J. T.

—— 1979. Formality and informality in communicative events. *American Anthropologist* **81**(*4*), 773–790.

JOHNSON, A.

—— 2003. *Families of the forest. The Matsigenka indians of the Peruvian Amazon*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

JUNCOSA, J. E.

—— 2005. *Etnografía de la comunicación verbal shuar*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

KAPLAN, J.

—— 1977. Comments. In *Social time and social space in Lowland Southamerican societies. Actes du XLIIe. Congrès International des Américanistes* (eds) B. Albert, C.-F. Baudez, J. Galarza, M. Guyot & J. Soustelle, 387–394. Abbeville: Société des Américanistes.

KARSTEN, R.

—— 1923. *Blood revenge, war and victory feasts among the Jibaro indians of eastern Ecuador*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

—— 1935. *La vida y la cultura de los Shuar*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

KELLY, J. A.
—— 2005. Notas para uma teoria do 'virar branco'. *Mana* **1**, 201-234.
—— 2011a. *State healthcare and Yanomami transformations: a symmetrical ethnography.* Tucson: Arizona University Press.
—— 2011b. Parimonialización de la indianidad y anti-mestizaje indígena. In *Por donde hay soplo. Estudios amazónicos en los países andinos* (eds) J. Chaumeil & O. Espinosa, 425–442. Lima: Institut Français d'Études Andines.

KEESING, R. M.
—— 1982. Kastom in Melanesia: an overview. *Mankind* **13**(*4*), 297–301.

KILLICK, E.
—— 2005. Living Apart: Separation and Sociality amongst the Ashéninka of Peruvian Amazonia. The London School of Economics and Political Science. Unpublished PhD thesis.
—— 2007. Autonomy and Leadership: political formations among the Ashéninka of Peruvian Amazonia. *Ethnos* **72**(*4*), 461–482.
—— 2008. Creating community: land titling, education, and settlement formation among the Ashéninka of Peruvian Amazonia. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* **13**(*1*), 22-47.
—— 2009. Ashéninka amity: a study of social relations in an Amazonian society. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **15**(*4*), 701–718.

KING, K. & M. HABOUD
—— 2002. Language planning and policy in Ecuador. *Current issues in language planning* **4**(*3*), 259-424.

KNAUFT, B. M.
—— 1997. Gender identity, political economy and modernity in Melanesia and Amazonia. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **3**(*2*), 233-259.

LARREA, J. & T. LAURINI
—— 2010. *Por qué murió Bosco Wisum.* Lluvia Comunicación. 32 min.

LAURINI, T.
—— 2013. *La consulta inconsulta.* Lluvia Comunicación. 21min.

LAZAR, S.
—— 2004. Personalist politics, clientelism and citizenship: local elections in El Alto, Bolivia. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* **23**(*2*), 228-243.
—— 2010. Schooling and critical citizenship: Pedagogies of political agency in El Alto, Bolivia. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* **41**(*2*), 181-205.

LÉVI-STRAUSS, C.
—— 1991. *Histoire de lynx.* Paris: Plon.

LIPUMA, E.
—— 2000. *Encompassing others. The magic of modernity in Melanesia.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

MACEDO, S.
—— 2009. Indigenous school policies and politics: The sociopolitical relationship of Wayapi Amerindians to Brazilian and French Guianan schooling. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* **40**(*2*), 170-186.

MADER, E.
—— 1994. "*Deviance, conflict and power in Shuar-Achuar society.*" Unpublished lecture held at the 3rd EASA Conference in Oslo.
—— 1999. *Metamorfosis del poder. Persona, mito y visión en la sociedad de Shuar y Achuar (Ecuador, Perú).* Quito: Abya-Yala.

—— 2003. Un discurso mágico del amor. Significado y acción en los hechizos shuar (anent). In *Los mundos de abajo y los mundos de arriba* (ed) M.S. Cipolletti, 51-80. Quito: Abya-Yala.

MADER, E. & R. GIPPELHAUSER

—— 2000. Power and kinship in Shuar and Achuar society. In *Dividends of kinship: meanings and uses of social relatedness* (ed) P. P. Schweitzer, 61–91. London: Routledge.

MARTÍNEZ MARTÍN, C.

—— 2005. Búsqueda y hallazgo de las ruinas de Logroño en la región de los jíbaros (siglos XVI-XIX). In *Estudios sobre América: siglos XVI-XX* (eds) A. Gutiérrez Escudero & M. L. Laviana Cuestos, 89–107. Sevilla: Asociación Española de americanistas.

MARTINEZ NOVO, C.

—— 2014. Managing Diversity in Postneoliberal Ecuador. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* **19**(*1*), 103–125.

MASHINKIASH, M.

—— 2012. *Etnoeducación shuar y aplicación del modelo de educación intercultural bilingüe en la nacionalidad shuar*, vol. 8. Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca & DINEIB-UNICEF.

MAUSS, M.

—— 1966. *The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies,* (trans.) I. Cunnison. London: Cohen & West.

MAYBURY-LEWIS, D.

—— (ed)1979. *Dialectical societies. The Gê and Bororo of central brazil.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

MEISER, A.

—— 2015. *Bebo de dos ríos. Sobre la lógica de procesos transculturales entre los cristianos Achuar y Shuar en la Amazonía alta.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

MENGET, P.

—— 1993. Les Frontières de la chefferie. Remarques sur le système politique du haut Xingu (Brésil). *L'Homme* **33**, 59–76.

MOORE, H. L.

—— 2011. *Still life. Hopes, desires and satisfactions.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

MURATORIO, B.

—— 1988. *Rucuyaya Alonso y la historia social y económica del Alto Napo, 1850-1950.* (2nd edition). Quito: Abya-Yala

MURPHY, W. P.

—— 1990. Creating the appearance of consensus in Mende political discourse. *American Anthropologist* **92**(*1*), 24–41.

NAHUM-CLAUDEL, C.

—— 2012. Enawene-nawe 'potlatch against the state'. *Social Anthropology* **4**(*20*), 444–457.

NAPOLITANO, E.

—— 1988. *Anent. Shuarti ii arutmari anentrutai.* Bomboiza: CEDISH.

NUGENT, D. & G. M. JOSEPH

—— (eds) 1994. *Everyday forms of state formation. Revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico.* Durham & London: Duke University Press.

OAKDALE, S.

—— 2004. The culture-conscious Brazilian Indian: Representing and reworking indianness in Kayabi political discourse. *American Ethnologist* **31**(*1*), 60–75.

ORTIZ BATALLAS, C.

—— 2006. *Indios, militares e imaginarios de nación en el Ecuador del siglo XX.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

ORTIZ-T, P.

—— 2013. Crisis organizacional, representación y autonomía: Aproximación a la dinámica organizativa en la nacionalidad Shuar de la Amazonía ecuatoriana. In *¿Quién habla por*

quién? Representatividad y legitimidad de organizaciones y representantes indígenas. Un debate abierto (ed) S. Speiser, 133–161. Quito: Cooperación Alemana / GIZ.

OVERING, J.

—— 1975. *The Piaroa: a people of the Orinoco Basin. A study in kinship and marriage.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

—— 1981. Review article: Amazonian anthropology. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 13(*1*), 151–165.

—— 1983. Elementary structures of reciprocity: a comparative note on Guianese, Central Brazilian, and North-West Amazon Socio-Political Thought in Themes in Political Organization: the Caribs and their Neighbours. *Antropologica* 59, 331–348.

—— 1989. The aesthetics of production: the sense of community among the Cubeo and Piaroa. *Dialectical Anthropology* 14(*3*),159–175.

—— 1993a. Death and the loss of civilized predation among the Piaroa of the Orinoco basin. *L'Homme* 33, 191–211.

—— 1993b. The anarchy and collectivism of the 'primitive other': Marx and Sahlins in the Amazon. In *Socialism. Ideals, ideologies, and local practice* (ed) C. Hann, 20–37. London & New York: Routledge.

—— 2003. In praise of the everyday: Trust and the art of social living in an Amazonian community. *Ethnos* 68(*3*), 293–316.

—— 2012. The spectre of the tyrant. Power, violence and the poetics of an Amazonian egalitarianism. In *Contesting the State. The dynamics of resistance and control* (eds) B. Kapferer & A. Hobart, 55–86. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.

OVERING, J. & A. PASSES

—— (eds) 2000. *The anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetics of conviviality in native Amazonia.* London & New York: Routledge.

PALLARES, A.

—— 1997. *From peasant struggles to Indian resistance: political identity in highland Ecuador 1964-1992.* University of Texas at Austin. Unpublished PhD thesis.

PELLIZZARO, S.

—— 1977. *Cantos de amor de la esposa achuar.* Serie G 2. Sucúa: Mundo Shuar

—— 1978. *Nunkui. El modelo e la mujer shuar. Mitología shuar*, vol. 8. Sucúa: Mundo shuar.

—— 1993. *Los pueblos indios en sus mitos. Shuar*, vol. 12. Quito: Abya Yala.

PELLIZZARO, S. & F. O. NÁWECH

—— 2005. *Chicham. Diccionario shuar-castellano.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

PERREAULT, T.

—— 2003. Changing places: Transnational networks, ethnic politics, and community development in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Political Geography* 22(*1*), 61–88.

POSTERO, N.

—— 2006. *Now we are citizens. Indigenous politics in postmulticultural Bolivia.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

QUISHPE, C.

—— 2001. Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe. *Boletin ICCI-RIMAI* 31(3).

RADCLIFFE, S. A.

—— 2001. Imagining the state as a space: territoriality and the formation of the state in Ecuador. In *States of imagination. Ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state* (eds) T. Blom Hansen & F. Stepputat, 123–148. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

RAPPORT, N. & J. OVERING

- (eds) 2000. *Social and cultural anthropology. The key concepts.* London & New York: Routledge.

RENARD-CASEVITZ, F.-M., T. SAIGNES & A.-C. TAYLOR

—— 1988. *Al este de los andes. relaciones entre las sociedades amazónicas y andinas entre los siglos XV y XVII.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

RIVAL, L.

—— 1996. Formal schooling and the production of modern citizens in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person* (eds) B. A. Levinson, D. E. Foley & D. C. Holland, 153–168. Albany: State University of New York Press.

—— 1997. Modernity and the politics of identity in an Amazonian society. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 16(*2*), 137–151.

—— 2000. Marginality with a difference, or how the Huaorani preserve their sharing relations and naturalise outside powers. In *Hunters and gatherers in the modern world. Conflict, resistance, and self-determination* (eds) M. Biesele, R. K. Hitchcock & P. P. Schweitzer, 244-260. New York: Berghahn Books.

—— 2002. *Trekking through history: The Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador.* New York: Columbia University Press.

—— 2015 *Transformaciones huaoranis. Frontera, cultura y tensión.* Quito: Abya-Yala & Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.

RIVIÈRE, P.

—— 1969. *Marriage among the Trio. A principle of social organization.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

—— 1971. The political structure of the Trio Indians as manifested in a system of ceremonial dialogue. In *The translation of culture* (ed) T.O Beidelman, 293-311. London: Tavistock publications.

—— 1984. *Individual and society in Guiana. A comparative study of Amerindian social organization.* Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press.

—— 2000. 'The more we are together...' In *The anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetic of conviviality in Native Amazonia* (eds) J. Overing & A. Passes. London & New York: Routledge.

ROBBINS, J.

—— 2004. *Becoming sinners. Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea Society.* Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

ROBERTS, S.

—— 1994. Law and dispute processes. In *Companion encyclopaedia of anthropology. Humanity, culture and social life* (ed) T. Ingold, 962–982. London: Routledge.

ROGERS, M.

—— 1999. Spectacular bodies: folklorization and the politics of identity in Ecuadorian beauty pageants. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 2(*3*), 54–85.

ROSENGREN, D.

—— 1987. *In the eyes of the beholder. Leadership and the social construction of power and dominance among the Matsigenka of the Peruvian amazon.* Göteborg: Göteborgs Etnografiska Museum.

—— 2000. The delicacy of community. On kisangantsi in Matsigenka narrative discourse. In *The anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetic of conviviality in native Amazonia* (eds) J. Overing & A. Passes, 221–234. London & New York: Routledge.

—— 2003. The collective self and the ethnopolitical movement: 'rhizomes' and 'taproots' in the Amazon. *Identities: Global studies in culture and power* 10(*2*), 221–240.

ROSTAIN, S.

—— 2013 *Islands in the forest: landscape management in pre-columbian Amazonia.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

ROVERE, F.

—— 1977. *El peinado y las posiciones corporales,* Mundo Shuar 12. Serie B. Sucúa: Abya-Yala.

RUBENSTEIN, S. L.

—— 1993. Chain marriage among the shuar. *The Latin American Anthropology Review* 5(*1*), 3–9.

—— 2001. Colonialism, the Shuar Federation, and the Ecuadorian state. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19(*3*), 263–293.

—— 2002. *Alejandro Tsakimp: A Shuar healer in the margins of history.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

—— 2004. Steps to a political ecology of Amazonia. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2(*2*), 131–176.

—— 2012. On the importance of visions among the Amazonian Shuar. *Current Anthropology* 53(*1*), 39–79.

RUEDA, M. V. & M. TANKAMASH'

—— 1987. *Setenta 'mitos shuar'.* Quito: Abya Yala.

RUEDAS, J.

—— 2004. History, Ethnography, and Politics in Amazonia: Implications of Diachronic and Synchronic Variability in Marubo Politics History. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2(*1*), 23–64.

SAHLINS, M.

—— 1972. *Stone age economics.* Chicago & New York: Aldine Atherton.

SANDU, F.

—— 1995. *Urukamtai Makum anaikiamuit.* Unpublished manuscript.

SANTANA, R.

—— 1995. *¿Ciudadanos en la etnicidad? Los indios en la política o la política de los indios.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

SANTOS-GRANERO, F.

—— 1993. From prisoner of the group to darling of the Gods: An approach to the issue of power in Lowland South America. *L'Homme* **126**, 213–230.

—— 1996. Introducción. Hacia una antropología de lo contemporáneo en la amazonia indígena. In *Globalización y cambio en la amazonía indígena.* (ed) F. Santos-Granero, 7–43. Quito: Abya-Yala.

—— 2000. The Sisyphus syndrome or the struggle for conviviality in native Amazonia. In *The anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetics of conviviality in native Amazonia* (eds) J. Overing & A. Passes, 268–287. Routledge: New York.

—— 2007. Of fear and friendship: Amazonian sociality beyond kinship and affinity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(*1*), 1–18.

—— 2009. *Vital enemies: slavery, predation, and the Amerindian political economy of life.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

—— (ed) 2015. *Images of public wealth or the anatomy of well-being in indigenous Amazonia.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

SARMIENTO BARLETTI, J. P.

—— 2011. Kametsa Asaiki: the pursuit of the 'good life' in an Asháninka village (Peruvian Amazonia). University of St. Andrew. Unpublished PhD thesis.

SCOTT, J. C.

—— 2009. *The art of not being governed. An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

SEARLE, J.

—— 2005. What is an institution? *Journal of Institutional Economics* **1**, 1–22.

SEBANZ, N., H. BEKKERING & G. KNOBLICH

—— 2006. Joint action: bodies and minds moving together. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 10(*2*), 70–76.

SECRETARÍA NACIONAL DE PLANIFICACIÓN Y DESARROLLO

—— 2012. *¿Qué son las zonas, distritos y circuitos?* Quito: SENPLADES.

SEEGER, A., R. MATTA & E. VIVEIROS DE CASTRO
—— 1979. A construção da pessoa nas sociedades indigenas. *Boletim do Museu Nacional* **32**, 2-19.

SEIB - SISTEMA DE EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL BILINGÜE
—— 2013. *MOSEIB. Modelo del sistema de educación intercultural bilingüe.* Quito: Ministerio de Educación.

SELIGMAN, A. B., R. P. WELLER, M. J. PUETT & B. SIMON
—— 2008. *Ritual and its consequences. An essay on the limits of sincerity.* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

SERBISH
—— n.d. *Warat-warat unuimiaitiarum.* Series *Shuar antukta!* 3. Sucúa: SERBISH.

SEYMOUR-SMITH, C.
—— 1988. *Shiwiar. Identidad étnica y cambio en el río Corrientes.* Quito: Abya-Yala/CAAAP.
—— 1991. Women have no affines and men no kin: the politics of the Jivaroan gender relation. *Man* **26**, 629–649.

SIDER, G.
—— 1994. Identity as history: ethnohistory, ethnogenesis, and ethnocide in the Southeastern United States. *Identities* **1**(*1*), 109–122.

SOUZA LIMA, A. C.
—— 1995. *Um grande cerco de paz: poder tutelar, indianidade e formação do Estado no Brasil.* Petrópolis: Vozes.

STARR, A., M. E. MARTÍNEZ-TORRES & P. ROSSET
—— 2011. Participatory democracy in action: practices of the Zapatistas and the movimento Sem Terra. *Latin American Perspectives* **38**(*1*), 102–119.

STASCH, R.
—— 2009. *Society of others. Kinship and mourning in West Papuan place.* Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.
—— 2013. The poetics of village space when villages are new: settlement form as history making in Papua, Indonesia. *American Ethnologist* **40**(*3*), 555–570.

STEEL, D.
—— 1997. Trade goods and Jívaro warfare: the Shuar 1850 – 1957, and the Achuar, 1940 -1978. *Ethnohistory* **46**(*4*), 745–776.

STIRLING, M. W.
—— 1938. *Historical and ethnographical material on the Jivaro Indians.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

STRATHERN, M.
—— 1985. Discovering 'Social Control'. *Journal of Law and Society* **12**(*2*), 111–134.
—— 1988. *The gender of the gift. Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia.* Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

SURRALLÉS, A.
—— 1992. À propos de l'ethnographie des Candoshi et des Shapra. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* **78**, 47–58.
—— 2003. Face to face: meaning, feeling and perception in Amazonian welcoming ceremonies. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **9**(*4*), 775– 791.
—— 2009. *En el corazón del sentido. Percepción, afectividad, acción en los candoshi, Alta Amazonia.* Lima: Institut Français d'Études Andines.

TASSINARI, A. I. & C. COHN
—— 2009. 'Opening to the Other': schooling among the Karipuna and Mebengokré-Xikrin of Brazil. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* **40**(*2*), 150–169.

TAYLOR, A.-C.

—— 1981. La riqueza de Dios: los achuar y las misiones. In *Globalización y cambio en la amazonía indígena.* (ed) N. E. J. Whitten, 116–143. Quito: Abya-Yala.

—— 1983. The marriage alliance and its structural variations in Jivaroan societies. *Social Science Information* **22**(*3*), 331–353.

—— 1985. L'art de la réduction : la guerre et les mécanismes de la différenciation tribale dans la culture jivaro. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* **71**, 159–173.

—— 1993. Remembering to forget: identity, mourning and memory among the Jivaro. *Man* **28**(*4*), 653–678.

—— 1994a Una categoría irreductible en el conjunto de las naciones indígenas: los Jivaro en las representaciones occidentales. In *Imágenes e imagineros* (ed) B. Muratorio, 75–107. Quito: FLACSO.

—— 1994b Estudio introductorio. In *Conquista de La Región Jivaro 1550-1650. Relación documental* (eds) Anne-Christine Taylor and Cristóbal Landázuri, 1–32. Quito: Marka/IFEA/Abya-Yala.

—— 1994c. El Oriente ecuatoriano en el siglo XIX: 'el otro litoral'. In *Historia y región en el Ecuador: 1830-1930* (ed) J. Maiguashca, 17–68. Quito: CEN/FLACSO/IIFEA.

—— 1994d. Les bons ennemis et les mauvais parents. Le traitement symbolique de l'alliance dans les rituels de chasse aux têtes des Shuar (Jivaro) de l'Equateur. In *Les Complexités de l'alliance. Volume IV, Economie, politique et fondements symboliques* (eds) F. Héritier-Augé & E. Copet-Rougier, 73-105. Paris: Editions des Archives contemporaines.

—— 1995. Les Shuar et le mouvement indien équatorien dans le contexte de la guerre. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* **81**, 275–283.

—— 1996. The soul's body and its states: an amazonian perspective on the nature of being human. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **2**(*2*), 201–215.

—— 1998. Jivaro kinship: 'simple' and 'complex' formulas: a Dravidian transformation group. In *Transformations of kinship* (eds) M. Godelier, T. R. Trautmann & F. E. Tjon, 187–214. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

—— 1999. The western margins of Amazonia from the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. In *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas* (eds) F. Salomon & S. B. Schwarz, 188–225. Cambridge University Press.

—— 2007. Sick of history: contrasting regimes of historicity in the Upper Amazon. In *Time and memory in indigenous Amazonia. Anthropological perspectives* (eds) C. Fausto & M. J. Heckenberger, 133–168. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

—— 2009. Corps immortels, devoir d'oubli. Formes humaines et trajectoires de vie chez les Achuar. In *Le corps humain. Conçu, supplicié, possédé, cannibalisé* (eds) M. Godelier & M. Panoff, 319-338. Paris: CNRS Éditions.

—— 2015. Amitiés amazoniennes : deux contre l'Un ? *Terrain. Revue d'ethnologie de l'Europe* **65**, 138–157.

TAYLOR, A.-C. & C. LANDÁZURI

—— (eds) 1994. *Conquista de la región jívaro (1550-1650): relación documental.* Quito: Abya-Yala.

THOMAS, D. J.

—— 1982. *Order without government. The society of the Pemon Indians of Venezuela.* Urbana, Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press.

THOMAS, J. J. R.

—— 1984. Weber and direct democracy. *The British Journal of Sociology* **35**(*2*), 216–240.

TONNIES, F.

—— 1957. *Community and society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TRIGGER, B.

—— 1990. Maintaining economic equality in opposition to complexity: an Iroquoian case study. In *The Evolution of Political Systems in Small-Scale Sedentary Societies* (ed) S. Upham, 119-145. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TRUJILLO, P. & S. CUESTA
—— (eds) 1999. *De guerreros a buenos salvajes modernos. Estudios de dos grupos étnicos de la Amazonía ecuatoriana*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

TSAMARAINT, A., S. MASHUMAR & S. PELLIZZARO
—— 1977. *Cantos de amor*. Sucúa: Mundo Shuar

TURNER, T.
—— 1991. Representing, resisting, rethinking. Historical transformations of Kayapo culture and anthropological consciousness. In *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge* (ed) G. W. J. Stocking, 285–313. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
—— 1992. Defiant images. The Kayapo appropriation of video. *Anthropology Today* 8(6), 5–16.
—— 1993. From cosmology to ideology. Resistance adaptation and social consciousness among the Kayapo. *South American Indians Studies* 9, 1–13.

UJUKAM, Y., F. ANTUN & A. AWANANCH
—— 1991. *Mujer y poesía en el pueblo Shuar*. Quito: Abya Yala.

URBAN, G.
—— 1986. Ceremonial dialogues in South America. *American Anthropologist* 88(2), 371–386.

URBAN, G. & J. SHERZER
—— (eds) 1991. Introduction: Indians, nation-states, and culture. In *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America*, 1–18. Austin: University of Texas Press.

UTITIAJ PAATI, S.
—— 1999. Desarrollo de conceptos verbales y nominales en lengua shuar: léxico relacionad con la psiología aplicada, en las categorías de los sentidos, los sentimientos y las emociones. Universidad Politecnica Salesiana, Quito. Unpublished undergraduate thesis.

VAN COTT, D.
—— 2005. *From movements to parties in Latin America. The evolution of ethnic politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VEBER, H.
—— 1998. The salt of the montania: interpreting indigenous activism in the rain forest. *Cultural Anthropology* 13(3), 382–413.

VICKERS, W. T.
—— 1989. Traditional concepts of power among the Siona-Secoya and the advent of the Nation-State. *Latin American Anthropology Review* 1(2), 55–60.

VILAÇA, A.
—— 1999. Devenir autre : chamanisme et contact interethnique en Amazonie brésilienne. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 85, 239–260.
—— 2007. Cultural change as body metamorphosis. In *Time and memory in Indigenous Amazonia. Anthropological perspectives* (eds) M. J. Heckenberger & C. Fausto, 169-193. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
—— 2009. Conversion, predation and perspective. In *Native Christians. Modes and effects of Christianity among indigenous peoples of the Americas* (eds) A. Vilaça & R. M. Wright, 147–166. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.
—— 2010. *Strange enemies. Indigenous agency and scenes of encounters in Amazonia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
—— 2015a. Dividualism and individualism in indigenous Christianity A debate seen from Amazonia. *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory* 5, 197-225.

—— 2015b. Do animists become naturalists when converting to christianity? Discussing an ontological turn. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* **34**(*2*), 3–19.

VINCENT, J.

—— (ed) 2002. *The anthropology of politics. A reader in ethnography, theory, and critique.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

VIRTANEN, P. K.

—— 2009. New interethnic relations and native perceptions of human-to-human relations in Brazilian Amazonia. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* **14**(*2*), 332–354.

VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E.

—— 1992. *From the enemy's point of view: humanity and divinity in an Amazonian society.* Chicago and London: The University of Michigan Press.

—— 1993. Alguns aspectos da afinidade no dravidianato Amazônico. In *Amazônia: etnologia e história indígena* (eds) E. Viveiros de Castro & M. Carneiro da Cunha, 150–210. Sao Paulo: Núcleo de História indigena e do indigenismo, Universidade de Sao Paulo/Fundaçao de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Sao Paulo.

—— 1996. Images of nature and society in amazonian ethnology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* **25**, 179–200.

—— 2011. *The inconstancy of the Indian soul.* Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. & C. FAUSTO

—— 1993. La Puissance et l'acte. La parenté dans les basses terres d'Amérique du Sud. *L'Homme* **33**, 141–170.

WALKER, H.

—— 2012. On anarchist anthropology. *Anthropology of this Century* [online journal].

—— 2013a. *Under a watchful eye. Self, power, and intimacy in Amazonia.* Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

—— 2013b. State of play: The political ontology of sport in Amazonian Peru. *American Ethnologist* **40**(*2*), 382–398.

—— 2013c. Wild things: Manufacturing desire in the Urarina moral economy. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* **18**(*1*), 51–66.

—— 2015. Justice and the dark arts: law and shamanism in Amazonia. *American Anthropologist* **117**(*1*), 47–58.

—— n.d., Malinowski public lecture at London School of Economics, 28/5/15, London.

WALKER, H. & I. KAVEDZIJA

—— 2015. Values of happiness. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* **5**, 1–23.

WARNER, M.

—— 2002. Publics and counterpublics. *Public Culture* **14**(*1*), 49–90.

WARREN, P.

—— 1994. Representaciones cognitivas y administración social de las enfermedades en los Jivaros-Achuar, vol. 1. In *Salud y antropología* (eds) P. Warren, C. Hess & E. Ferraro, 7–45. Quito: Abya-Yala.

WEBER, M.

—— 1968. *On charisma and institution building.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

WENGROW, D. & D. GRAEBER

—— 2015. Farewell to the 'childhood of man': ritual, seasonality, and the origins of inequality. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **21**(*3*), 597–619.

WILBERT, J.

—— 2004. The order of dark shamans among the Warao. In *In darkness and secrecy: the anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia* (eds) N. L. Whitehead & R. M. Wright, 21–50. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

WILLIAMS, R.
—— 1983. *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society.* (Revised). New York: Oxford University Press.

WILSON, P. C.
—— 2010. Indigenous leadership and the shifting politics of development in Ecuador's Amazon. In *Editing Eden: A reconsideration of identity, politics, and place in Amazonia* (eds) F. Hutchins & P. C. Wilson, 218–246. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

WILTERMUTH, S. S. & C. HEATH
—— 2008. Synchrony and cooperation. *Psychological science* **20**(*1*), 1–5.

WHITEHEAD, N.
—— 1994 The ancient Amerindian polities of the Lower Orinoco, Amazon and Guayana Coast: a preliminary analysis of their passage from Antiquity to extinction. In *Amazonian Indians: From prehistory to present* (ed.) A. Roosevelt, 33–54. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

WHITTEN, N. E.
—— 1976. *Ecuadorian ethnocide and indigenous ethnogenesis. Amazonian resurgence amidst Andean colonialism.* Copenhaguen: IWGIA Document series, 23.
—— (ed) 1981. *Cultural transformations and ethnicity in modern Ecuador.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
—— 1985. *Sicuanga Runa: the other side of development in Amazonian Ecuador.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
—— 2003. *Millennial Ecuador. Critical essays on cultural transformations & social dynamics* (ed.) N. E. Jr. Whitten, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

WOLF, E. R.
—— 1982. *Europe and the people without history.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

YASHAR, D. J.
—— 2005. *Contesting citizenship in Latin America. The rise of indigenous movements and the postliberal challenge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ZENT, S.
—— 2009. The political ecology of ethnic frontiers and relations among the Piaroa of the Middle Orinoco. (ed) M.N. Alexiades, 167–194. In *Mobility and migration in indigenous Amazonia.* London: Berghahn Books.