

NATIVE CHRISTIANS

Modes and Effects of
Christianity among
Indigenous Peoples of
the Americas

Edited by
Aparecida Vilaça
and
Robin M. Wright

NATIVE CHRISTIANS

Native Christians reflects on the modes and effects of Christianity among indigenous peoples of the Americas drawing on comparative analysis of ethnographic and historical cases. Christianity in this region has been part of the process of conquest and domination, through the association usually made between civilizing and converting. While Catholic missions have emphasized the ‘civilizing’ process, teaching the Indians the skills which they were expected to exercise within the context of a new societal model, the Protestants have centered their work on promoting a deep internal change, or ‘conversion’, based on the recognition of God’s existence.

Various ethnologists and scholars of indigenous societies have focused their interest on understanding the nature of the transformations produced by the adoption of Christianity. The contributors in this volume take native thought as the starting point, looking at the need to relativize these transformations. Each author examines different ethnographic cases throughout the Americas, both historical and contemporary, enabling the reader to understand the indigenous points of view in the processes of adoption and transformation of new practices, objects, ideas and values.

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Native Christians

Modes and Effects of Christianity among
Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

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Indigenous peoples by chapter number:

- 1 Iroquois, Hurons, Algonquins and Montagnais
- 9 Inuit



Indigenous peoples by chapter number:

- 1 Guarani
- 2 Bajo Huallaga peoples
- 3 Apiao people
- 4 Pesillanos
- 5 Mapuche
- 6a Trio
- 6b Akuriyo
- 7 Paumari
- 8 Wari'
- 10 Baniwa / Walimanai
- 11 Sateré-Mawé

Introduction

A number of collections have been published since the 1990s on the subject of the Christianization of native peoples, as studied from an anthropological perspective (see especially Hefner 1993 and Cannell 2006). Continuing to explore this analytic theme, the present volume takes as its starting point native cosmologies and their models of transformation, situating Christianity as just one among the many transformations conceived or experienced by these peoples. In other words, we look to comprehend the native experience of Christianity as part of the wider socio-cosmological context within which this religion is classified, shaped and lived. Moreover, the volume focuses on a specific ethnographic area, the Americas, whose homogeneity (amid an equally evident diversity), especially in the domains of cosmology and myth – both of which are of particular interest to us here – was explored in depth in Lévi-Strauss's magisterial *Mythologiques* (1969, 1973, 1978, 1981). Our volume attests to the continuing fecundity of this work by highlighting the salience of those categories of thought – in particular the 'categories of the sensible' – identified by the author as elements found throughout Native American cultures.

The book is composed of 11 chapters focusing on different regions of the Americas: Canada (the Iroquois-speaking Huron and Mohawk, Inuit), the Ecuadorian Andes (the Quechua community of Pessillo), Peru (peoples of the Bajo Huallaga River: the Shiwilu/Jebero, Cocama, Cocamilla, Lamista Quechua, Chamicuro and Chayahuita), Chile (the island Apiao and the upland Mapuche), Paraguay (the Guaraní) and Brazilian Amazonia (the Trio, Paumari, Wari', Baniwa and Sateré-Mawé). It brings together the final versions of papers initially presented at the symposium *Modes and Effects of Christianity among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* held at the 52nd International Congress of Americanists in 2006.

Our point of departure in each case is the indigenous perspective. How have these different groups understood and experienced Christianity? What questions do the ethnographies of indigenous American peoples, and the new concepts and theories emerging from these studies, pose in terms of understanding the native experience of becoming Christian?

What interests us are the native viewpoints of the encounter with Christianity, particularly since, we believe, any phenomenon is culturally defined and we have no choice but to choose a culture from which to start (Viveiros de Castro 1999: 115; 120).¹ In this kind of encounter, there is no middle ground. In other words, there are

¹ In a more recent work, Viveiros de Castro (2002) adds a further twist to this epistemological framework by arguing that what we call the native point of view should really be understood as a relation between the anthropologist's perspective (his or her worldview and theoretical tools) and that of the native. (See too Wagner 1975 and Strathern 1988.)

no agents located on an imaginary dividing line between the two cultures: contrary to the suggestions of some authors (see Montero 2006), this applies even to those missionaries with long and intense experience among native peoples, speaking their languages and familiar with their customs. Our analytic framework situates missionaries unambiguously on *this* side of the divide, as agents propagating an unequivocally western ideology, albeit with nuances that need to be examined case-by-case.

This does not mean that the perspectives of missionaries and other western actors are ignored in the following texts. Indeed, Allan Greer's chapter deals precisely with a comparison between Jesuit missions in two different countries (Canada and Paraguay), based on historical records. We believe that the access to these perspectives is important, whether this viewpoint is acquired through written documents produced by the missions or government agents, or through direct statements from missionaries disposed to engage in an open dialogue with anthropologists and historians. The encounter with Christianity, like any encounter with alterity, is properly understood as a series of different moments or phases, all of which can be comprehended as 'structures of conjuncture' (Sahlins 1981), produced by a complex interaction between cultural forms, the overall historical setting and a wide variety of chance events, including the actions of particular individuals, some of them attributable to the specific personalities of the missionaries and natives involved (see Fienup-Riordan 1991). Our decision to focus on the native point of view does not mean that we have ignored the viewpoints of other agents. Rather, the latter are subsumed by the former insofar as the native perspectives provide us with the categories for comprehending the process of Christianization. In other words, we seek to understand the Christian experience of these peoples via their cosmological concepts, and their social, political and economic organizations.

Our interest, therefore, resides in observing and analyzing local versions of Christianity, accepting that, even from the viewpoint of western culture, there is not one Christianity but many. As Kee (1993) has shown in his study of the 'Jesus movement' – just one among a number of sects that opposed some of Judaism's basic premises – Christianity has been defined by a series of important mutations over time. For example, although there were initially no obvious figures of hierarchy or authority within the community (ibid: 55), the later emergence of an ecclesiastical base prompted a variety of changes, beginning with the introduction of hierarchy, which pushed the religion away from its charismatic origins towards an institutional structure (ibid: 63). In addition, 'Roman and Judaic paternalism of the early times, which was questioned by Jesus and by the tradition of the most ancient testaments, became the norm in Christian homes as well. Women had to be submissive to their husbands The slaves had to obey their masters' (ibid: 61). Likewise, the notion of faith underwent alteration. From being defined as a belief in the word of God, it became linked to the idea of a true doctrine in opposition to heresy (see Pollock 1993 on the historical changes in the conception of conversion and faith; see also Veyne 2007).

As we know, the most important and radical redefinition of Christianity came about with the Protestant Reformation, unleashed in 1517 by Luther's condemnation of Catholic hierarchy and dogma. Since then Christianity has been constantly redefined within Protestantism with the emergence of diverse intellectual currents, denominations and sects, each selecting different aspects of Christianity as central elements. The Catholic Church responded with the Counter-Reformation, based on a hardening of dogmas and an emphasis on missionary activities. Centuries later another important redefinition of Christianity occurred, this time within Catholicism, following the reforms implemented in the wake of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, which restored the Church's missionary vocation, emphasizing respect for different cultures (see Rufino 2006: 240–45). Cultural relativism became part of Catholic practice (or at least that of some of its segments), which meant, among other things, respect for different types of religious manifestations, including indigenous religions (see Shapiro 1981).

The most important point to stress, however, is that, given its missionary and inclusive nature, Christianity has always been redefined by the social groups in contact with it. Cultural openness is an indissociable part of any missionary religion. This was the vision, for example, of the apostle Paul who, as Kee observes (1993: 57), travelled from city to city recruiting local followers who could spread the Christian message throughout the Roman Empire. His strategy was to adapt rules and procedures to the local situation – a practice little different from what we observe today in the work of Catholic missionaries among indigenous groups (see also Cannell 2006: 26).

This does not mean, though, that no cultural forms or aspects have remained intact during Christianity's propagation over time and space – a point argued by some scholars of religion and social scientists in response to what they perceive as an excessive relativism in anthropological studies (see Hefner 1993 and Wood 1993 for a discussion of this issue). Although defining these cultural forms is something of an imprecise science, there is clear agreement concerning some of the basic premises, such as monotheism and divine transcendence, though neither of these are exclusive to Christianity, or the mediation of this transcendence with the divine incarnation in Jesus, and the idea of redemption or salvation through his death. One of the fascinating points revealed by the works in this volume is that the native peoples under study have their own singular view not only of apparently secondary aspects of Christianity but also of these founding dogmas. Thus God and Jesus are associated with the pantheon of traditional spirits, the shamans visit God and talk to him, carved figures of saints are treated as people, redemption depends on actions and the proper observance of rituals, and salvation is understood as a collective act of becoming. Similarly, conversion, far from being seen as the outcome of an individual's inner transformation (in accordance with Protestant doctrine), is conceived as a collective transformation arising from

a bodily change (as in the case of the Trio, Paumari and Wari' described here).² In many instances, such as among the Wari' studied by Vilaça, it is the very notion of an individual – which Dumont (1983) argues is an essential aspect of Christianity – that is absent.

We emphasize that the term conversion is used here as a synonym for becoming Christian and refers, therefore, to what native peoples understand as Christian practice. It should be noted the frequent mismatch between the perceptions of missionaries and those of native peoples – a confusion that occurs, for example, when the former believe that indigenous practices reveal internal and lasting transformation (see Viveiros de Castro 1992, and Gow, this volume), only to be surprised by a mass movement of de-conversion, or when the natives insist on the fact of their conversion in the face of disbelief from missionaries and even anthropologists (see Pollock 1993, and Gow and Vilaça, this volume).

The indigenous peoples described here manifest their adoption of Christianity in a variety of ways: by being baptized (Chiloé), attending masses or services (Chiloé, Wari', Trio, Paumari), making cash offerings to the saints (Pesillanos), affirming their belonging to the community by becoming immersed in a circuit of debts (Pesillanos), including the Catholic saints and God among the shamanic spirits (Chiloé, Mapuche, Pesillanos, Inuit), creating rituals that violate traditional food taboos (Inuit), masking affinity and suppressing the agency of animals (Wari'), or taking part in self-sustaining economic activities in collaboration with organizations controlled by Christian institutions (Pesillanos, Baniwa, Sateré-Mawé). They claim they are Christians and, in contrast to missionaries, as anthropologists we have no option than to believe in them.³

This is precisely what Gow proposes in his chapter: 'My account here of what it means to Bajo Huallaga people to be *cristianos*, "Christians," the densely interconnected emphases on naming, trade, ritual, peacefulness and magical violence, based as it is in twentieth century ethnography, suggests that what the Jesuits and anthropologists thought or think Christianity might be is very far from

² For a discussion of the collective aspect of conversion, see Viveiros de Castro (1992; 2002) on the seventeenth century Tupinambá, Tooker (1992) on the Akha of Burma [Myanmar], Gow (2006) on the Piro of Peruvian Amazonia, and Vilaça (1996, 1997) on the Wari'.

³ Viveiros de Castro (2002: 132–40) argues that this believing does not mean belief in the religious sense of the term; instead, it means 'taking the native seriously', looking to comprehend the implications of apparently contradictory or irrational statements for the indigenous lived world. In his words:

To ask oneself whether the anthropologist ought to believe in the native is a category mistake equivalent to asking whether the number two is tall or green ... as if it were necessary to explain (as if the essential task were to explain) why the Indians *believe* that peccaries are human when 'self-evidently' they are not. It is useless wondering whether the Indians are right or not in this respect: for do we not already 'know' the answer? But it is necessary to know precisely what we *don't know* – that is, what the Indians are saying when they say that the peccaries are human. (ibid: 134–5).

what it might mean to be *cristiano* from an indigenous perspective in the Bajo Huallaga' The question posed by the other authors of this volume in relation to their ethnographic material is the same as that explicitly formulated by Gow: 'Instead of asking, "What did the Jesuits do to the people of the Bajo Huallaga?" I want to shift the question to, "What did the people of the Bajo Huallaga do with the Jesuit mission?"' At issue, therefore, is not knowing what Christianity does to native culture, but what native culture does to Christianity (also see Gow 2001; Viveiros de Castro 1999: 165). As Gow observes in his work on the conversion of the Peruvian Piro, 'asking questions about the impact of Evangelical Protestantism on Piro culture is to ask missionaries' questions'. In a similar way, Wright's two volume series (1999, 2004), *Transformando os Deuses* [Transforming the Gods] took as its initial focus the concept of 'inter-religious fields of identity' and the perspective of seeing and understanding 'the ways in which indigenous peoples have, during their long histories of contact, incorporated, transformed or rejected the different forms of Christianity' (Wright 1999: 7).

As we pointed out earlier, these kinds of ethnographic situations present us with an unavoidable epistemological choice. Had we started out from the viewpoint of missionaries or other contact agents, we would have reached very different conclusions. These are perspectives derived from distinct ontologies, meaning they can hardly coincide.

However, another type of comparison is of particular interest to us here – namely, a comparison of the Christianization of native peoples in two distinct ethnographic areas, Amazonia (taken as a sub-area of the Americas) and Melanesia. From the outset, we stress that this enterprise was not part of the original proposal for the symposium and is not therefore an explicit theme in the contributions to this volume.⁴ We simply believe that a comparative perspective harbours an enormous potential for understanding the different forms assumed by Christian experience and the relation of these forms to the socio-cosmological systems characterizing these two regions. There are two main reasons for our belief. Firstly, studies of the Christianization of native groups suffer from an excessive regionalism (with two important exceptions, namely the collections edited by Hefner in 1993 and Cannell in 2006), which limits analysis to a specific ethnographic context with a few timid attempts to generalize to a regional level (see Robbins, this volume). Secondly, for at least a decade there has been an intense dialogue between Amazonianists and Melanesianists (see Grotti 2007; Kelly 2003, 2005; Strathern 1999; Vilaça 2005 and Viveiros de Castro 1996, 1998, 2002, 2004), which has still as yet to include the Christianization of native peoples.

Nonetheless, the only attempt to produce a systematic comparison between the two ethnographic regions to date has been the collection edited by Gregor and Tuzin (2001), entitled *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia*, in which Amazonianists

⁴ Aside from Vilaça, who in the conclusion to her chapter highlights the particularities of the Wari' case by contrasting it with the experience of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea analyzed by Robbins (2004).

and Melanesianists with lengthy fieldwork experience focus specifically on the question of gender, comparing and contrasting ethnographic data and analytic perspectives drawn from the two regions. Without embarking on a detailed evaluation of this work, we merely observe that the question that inspired the book, as some of its contributors observed at the time, has a different weight in each of these regions, playing a much more central role in the anthropological understanding of Melanesian sociality. As Descola demonstrates in his chapter, the evidence suggests that, in contrast to Gregor & Tuzin's proposal, what counts as 'gender' in Melanesia need not necessarily translate as 'gender' in Amazonia. The relations between humans and nonhumans, particularly animals, 'may be as central to the understanding of Amazonian sociability, as are gender distinctions to the construction of Melanesian identity' (Descola 2001: 108, see also Viveiros de Castro 2002: 444; n.37).⁵ Marilyn Strathern stresses the same point in relation to Melanesia:

humanity, and thus a division between humans and others, is not the principal ontological axis. I do not think that the difference between 'spirit' and 'animal' or 'human' has been the archetype for perspectival traffic in the Amazonian sense. Rather, it is persons who offer perspectives on one another. By this I mean that the significant lines are internal, between human beings as distinctive social entities, that is, between types or kinds, distinguished by their relationships with one another. That is why gender, as a means of reification, giving a form to persons, has figured so prominently in Melanesian anthropology. (Strathern 1999: 252–3).

We are not suggesting that the theme of Christianization can supplant that of gender relations (which in fact comprise a central theme of the Mapuche experience of Christianity, as we shall see). Perhaps the most important outcome of comparing these two regions of the world has not been the discussion of a specific theme, but the dialogue between analyses and concepts developed by regional specialists on the basis of their ethnographies. Our point in citing this debate, however, extends beyond observing that the interest in comparing these two regions has been around for some time. The fact that both the authors cited above emphasize the relation between humans and non-humans, especially animals, as a central aspect of Amazonian sociality resonates with a theme that pervades different chapters of this book, as we shall see, and that, far from being restricted to Amazonia, seems to comprise a pan-American motif (as indeed Lévi-Strauss had already shown in his four volume *Mythologiques*).

⁵ Also see Hugh-Jones (2001) in the same book for an interesting comparative exercise between 'Melanesia' and the Barasana of the Alto Rio Negro, a region where the concept of gender seems to have a different implication to that of most of Amazonia, and Strathern 1999: 249–260; 2001 as examples of what an anthropological comparison between the two regions might look like. See Vilaça 2005 for a brief discussion of this topic.

It was with the idea of instigating a reflection of this kind that we invited Joel Robbins to write an afterword to this book: a scholar of Melanesian Christianity, Robbins has developed a theory of conversion, based on his ethnographic experience, that has had a considerable impact on studies of Christianity. The present volume's comparative scope is limited to this initial outline, but we consider this the first step towards developing a more systematic comparative enterprise in the future.

Of the 11 chapters making up this book, Greer's is the only text that is exclusively historical in kind, examining and comparing two distinct experiences of the relationship between Jesuit missionaries and native peoples dating from the seventeenth century: namely, the Guaraní of Paraguay and the Iroquois of Canada. The author emphasizes the importance of the conjunctural aspect of these encounters, which are superimposed over the cultural peculiarities of the two groups. Greer argues that the most important point in terms of explaining the characteristics of each mission is the colonial context, which varied considerably between the two countries. In Paraguay, the Indians had entered into contact with the Europeans much earlier and had suffered more from slavery and exploitation. In Canada, contact was more recent and the exploitation of indigenous labour was not taken to be a natural fact, as occurred in Paraguay. In Greer's words: 'The Guaraní experience of European empire and colonization was very different from that of the Iroquoian peoples of North America. To oppose a Spanish empire of conquest and tribute to a French empire of commerce and alliance would be a rather crude simplification, but it is a simplification that captures more than a grain of truth.' Although this chapter does not deal specifically with the theme of conversion, the data presented clearly shows that the idea of conversion informing the activities of the seventeenth century Jesuits was very different from the one with which we are familiar today, with performance of rituals being taken as a sufficient proof of faith.⁶

Gow's chapter analyzes the significance of being Christian in the region of the Bajo Huallaga in Peru, an area inhabited by a number of different peoples (Shiwilu/Jebero, Cocama, Cocamilla, Lamista Quechua, Chamicuro and Chayahuita) and where Jesuit missions were once active. The author shows us that here the term 'Christian' carries the meaning of 'human' and appears devoid of any religious meaning, functioning as an instrument of social classification that interconnects Indians, mestizos, whites, animals, the living and the dead. His starting point is a critique of the tendency to favour an historical approach over ethnographic analysis when studying the culture of these peoples, as if the fact that these Indians are considered 'acculturated' implies that any ethnography will inevitably be incomplete (for an analogous critique see Viveiros de Castro 1999 and Ortner 1984: 143). In Gow's words: 'If the problem of historical ethnographies of the

⁶ See Pollock 1993 for analogous comments; also see Viveiros de Castro (1992) for an analysis of the relation between the Jesuits and the Tupinambá of the Brazilian coast during the same period.

Bajo Huallaga lies in the subordination of ethnography to history, the solution lies in using that ethnography to raise questions about that history.' Gow's analysis of the historical and ethnographic material produced by other authors on the region's peoples is an exemplary demonstration of the results attainable by an epistemology that privileges ethnography.

Comparing the Peruvian Bajo Huallaga and the Brazilian Upper Xingu – both composed of a set of linguistically distinct peoples who are linked by peaceful exchange relationships and conceive themselves as 'humans' in contrast to those located outside the system – Gow observes that the social system of the Bajo Huallaga cannot be interpreted as 'the exclusive product of Jesuit action'. According to the author, we are faced with 'a social form immanent within existing indigenous societies', which contact with the Jesuits allowed to become materialized. Christianization was a constitutive part of this new configuration, an important sign of the peaceful relations with the Jesuits and not simply a religious phenomenon.

Bacchiddu's chapter also examines the equation between Christians and humans, albeit from another angle, based on an ethnography of Apiao island in Chiloé southern Chile. Analyzing the conversion to Protestantism among a society that defines itself as Catholic since its beginnings, Bacchiddu reveals how religious identity here is inseparable from the idea of community and how the latter includes not just living humans, but also the dead and the saints. The critical attitude displayed by community members to those who become Protestants reveals that religion in Chiloé is not related to an inner posture, but to a set of attitudes and rituals through which people relate with each other and with the saints. To become Protestant is to detach oneself from this relational context, forming other relationships and ceasing to perform specific rites linked to the formation of the body, such as communion. Nevertheless, it is precisely because everyone submits to some of these rites, especially baptism, in their childhood that becoming Protestant is perceived to be effectively impossible, given that the bodies of these persons have already been formed as Catholic. The relationship between body and identity (as opposed to the relation between mind/soul and identity implied in the western concept of conversion) is a theme widely explored in recent ethnographies of Amazonian groups (see Conklin 1989, 1996, 2001; Grotti 2007; Kensinger 1995; McCallum 1996, 2001; Seeger et al. 1979; Vilaça 2002, 2005). As we argued earlier, and as can be observed in various chapters of this book, this theme is central to understanding Christianization.

Ferraro's chapter also focuses on a Catholic community, Pesillo, a Quichua village of northern Ecuador, and specifically on the way in which loan repayments – part of a continually renewed cycle of contracting and settling debts – form the main way of fabricating the community. As with the Chiloé, this community not only includes humans but also local Catholic divinities for whom payments in money are made as offerings or in return for favors. In analyzing two distinct practices of money lending – the Catholic NGO credit scheme and *el castillo*, a local scheme of providing small loans – the author shows that a special category

of money is born from the 'interaction of Catholic imageries of faith and salvation with Andean categories of the morality of reciprocity that requires a compulsory return over whatever has been given'. Although the meaning given by local people to money is indissociable from their lengthy familiarity with the power of the Catholic Church, there is a relation of continuity between the money and the offerings made to the spirits of the forest and, consequently, between these spirits and the Catholic divinities. Similar analyses can be found in the articles by Wright and Kapfhammer on the power relations between indigenous politico-religious associations, powerful NGOs and transnational foundations seeking to support sustainable development projects at local levels.

In her chapter on the Mapuche of Chile, Bacigalupo analyzes how the identity of shamans – typically men – has been shaped during the different moments in their relationship with Europeans, beginning in the seventeenth century with the wars of conquest undertaken by the Spanish and the arrival of the Jesuits. Her main focus is on the way in which the transgenderism of shamans, indissociable from their conception of spiritual power as inherently female, proved to be the main arena for the ideological clash between the shamanic and Catholic cultures. As has occurred in various other regions during the initial encounter with Christianity, shamans were identified with the priests (see too Laugrand and Oosten's chapter on the Inuit) as the primary mediators in the relation with spirits, curers and exorcists. This identification was not limited to the native peoples, since the priests themselves authorized and encouraged the association. In the case of the Mapuche, the identification led to – or perhaps started out from – the equation made by themselves between the transgenderism of the shamans and that of the priests, evident in their use of feminine clothes and celibacy, a factor which proved fundamental for the survival of the male shamans. It is worth highlighting the importance of clothing since, Bacigalupo adds, female clothing is so central to the constitution of the male shaman – or, in other words, to his identification with the female universe which is the source of his spiritual power – that even the present-day shamans, who want to avoid being pejoratively identified as homosexuals, continue to use feminine adornments as an indispensable part of their practice. This clothing is not simply a symbol of womanhood, but a central factor in its production, meaning that dressing as a woman is essential to the constitution of the female identity of these men (along with performing female activities and avoiding those related to male roles).⁷

The notion of the body as a site of identity and its eminently transformational nature is the central theme of Grotti's chapter on the Trio (Carib), more specifically those living in Tepu village in Suriname where the author based her research. In her introduction, Grotti discusses the centrality of the body in Amazonian socio-cosmologies, showing how native conceptualizations of the ways in which bodies are fabricated – and the different bodies produced as a result – offer key categories

⁷ See too Gow's chapter on the importance of clothing in constituting the identity of Christians.

for a 'reflection upon complex social networks which engage Amerindians and their Others: "wild people," "white people," categories that address the very fabrication of bodies and their humanity'. The Trio experienced the process of contact and sedentarization (begun in the early 1960s) as a bodily transformation achieved by adopting new dietary practices and swapping traditional rituals of producing the body for Christian rituals believed to have the same goal. In the case of the Trio of Tepu village, the process of sedentarization is inseparable from Christianization since the contact expeditions were conducted by Protestant missionaries from the West Indies Mission and Unevangelized Fields Missions, accompanied by recently contacted Waiwai Indians. A few years later, it was the Trio themselves who left with one of the missionaries to contact the Akuriyo with the aim of civilizing and Christianizing the latter people. Grotti's central point in relation to Christianization is: 'that to the Trio of Suriname, conversion to Christianity is understood above all as a change of body, which makes the body more socialized but less transformational. They do not understand Christianity as a set of moral laws or cosmological principles but as a series of bodily practices that change persons and how they relate to each other.' The failure to integrate the Akuriyo fully into Trio society 'rests on their bodies' incapacity to be molded into Christian bodies'. However, this is not a completely unwanted failure, the author explains, since the bodily difference in relation to the Akuriyo is carefully maintained by the Trio, who are keen to exploit the 'wildness' of these Indians – a trait responsible, among other things, for their skill as hunters and thus as providers of meat to the Trio.

The conception of conversion as a bodily change is also the central theme of Bonilla's chapter on the Paumari, speakers of an Arauan language, who inhabit the middle Purus river in the southwest of Brazilian Amazonia. Taking mythic transformations as a model, the Paumari experience history as a sequence of changes in social forms arising from a change of skin. The Christian phase was inaugurated by the Protestant missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in the 1960s, following their curing of various afflictions, especially *pinta*, a skin disease for which the Paumari were renowned (and stigmatized) by the local population. A new form of sociality was thereby begun, freeing them from submission to the rubber bosses. Likewise, this former phase marked by the relation with these bosses – who freed them from constant attacks by Indian enemies, introduced trade and with it access to manufactured goods – is conceived to have been initiated by a change of skin, in this case enabled by the access to western clothing.

The predator-prey pair – a central ontological schema in Amazonian cosmologies – functions here to organize social relations, serving as the basis for relations with the outside. Contrary to most Amazonian peoples, however, the Paumari strive to maintain the position of prey, not predators, in their relations with others. More specifically, this turns them into prey to be domesticated as pets, meaning that what is apparently a form of submission is actually the way they have found of controlling dangerous relationships, forcing the other to assume the position of an

adoptive father and provider. This was the relation formed with the rubber bosses when the Paumari became employees, and likewise with the missionaries. Bonilla concludes that Christianity is experienced as a collective relationship with a new boss or adoptive father, whether God or the missionaries, a form that apparently coincides with the model of dependency imposed by the newcomers.

The Wari', speakers of a Txapakura language living in southwestern Amazonia, have been in contact with the fundamentalist Protestant missionaries of the New Tribes Mission since the end of the 1950s. Like the Trio and the Paumari, the Wari' associate Christianization with a bodily transformation (one promoting consubstantialization), which in this case produces a change of perspective, situating them – though here in a way opposite to that of the Paumari – in the position of predators in the predator-prey ontological pair. Using myth as a tool of comparison, Vilaça applies the concept of Amerindian perspectivism developed by Viveiros de Castro (1996, 1998) to the task of understanding their conversion to Christianity, analyzing this conversion as a process of adopting the enemy's perspective rooted in the Wari' endeavor to stabilize the position of humans (equated with that of predators) for themselves. The author also contributes to the current debate between anthropologists and students of religion concerning the integrity of Christianity as it spreads across time and space, emphasizing that the dichotomy between continuity and rupture makes little sense for peoples, like the Wari' and other Amerindians, who reproduce themselves through successive alterations that involve the transformation into an other and the acquisition of this other's perspective, a central feature of shamanic systems.

The idea that Christianization simultaneously involves continuity and transformation is taken up again in Laugrand and Oosten's chapter on the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, though from another perspective. According to the authors, Christianity, brought to the Arctic by Anglicans and Catholics, was also assimilated by the Inuit on the basis of their own shamanic system. God was equated with other spirits, becoming the most powerful of them, while priests and shamans quickly perceived the similarity between their functions, a convergence widely reported throughout the Amerindian world (see Hugh-Jones 1988; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Wright 1998 and Bacigalupo, this volume). However, although the authors state that the shamanic system remains active insofar as the spiritual relations with animals have never been completely suppressed, they recognize that Christianization has provoked important transformations, which are conceived as a break with the past.

The idea of a break becomes evident in the ritual created by the Inuit to promote conversion, the *siqqitirniq*, centered on the collective ingestion of portions of game that are normally prohibited, such as the heart, liver, brains and tongue, with the intention of marking the suspension of traditional food taboos – a ritual equated with baptism or communion. It is worth noting that the *siqqitirniq* was a ritual of commensality, involving the collective ingestion of the same food, thereby echoing similar notions – examined in various other chapters of this book and elsewhere

– of transformation as a bodily change and conversion as a process involving the collective group rather than isolated individuals.

As occurs among the Paumari, the Trio and the Wari', as well as among the Chiloé and the peoples of the Bajo Huallaga, the relationship between humans and animals, or predators and prey, is an essential point in the Inuit reworking of Christianity. However, while for the Wari' divine creation dehumanizes animals, for the Inuit the animals maintain their human status, a condition enabling the persistence of shamanism. The transformation to which Laugrand and Oosten refer, sustained by the Inuit perception of their break with the past, is not understood as a change of perspective enabled by the adoption of the enemy's point of view, as occurs among the Wari'. What the authors' analysis suggests is the introduction of a hierarchy – connected to power and efficacy – of spirits, practices and rituals of Inuit and Christian origin. Following conversion, 'God was considered as the owner of all the animals, the sea woman lost her central position in Inuit cosmology.' Christian prayers and hymns became seen as more effective than shamanic formulas in terms of ensuring the success of hunting and healing, 'winter feasts' (*tivajut*) were abandoned and Christmas gradually became the most important celebration.

This is an important point, implicit in various other chapters of this book, and suggests that the Inuit experience is congruent with the model developed for the Urapmin case by Robbins (2004) and briefly presented in Vilaça's chapter. According to this model, conversion of the Urapmin involved the coexistence of two cultural systems (native and Christian) through a relation of hierarchical encompassment. However, a central element in Robbins's model is the moral domain, not only because it is through this domain that, the author argues, local people become aware of change, but also because morality comprises the central preoccupation of the Urapmin. Moreover, he argues, the cultural content of Christianity foregrounds the question of moral change. Christian morality, which represses desire and values the individual, encompasses Urapmin morality, which values desire and privileges relations and groups, producing a constant and tormented state of moral conflict among the Urapmin.

Although Laugrand and Oosten's analysis points to the same kind of hierarchical encompassment, it does not suggest the existence of a moral conflict among the Inuit, something that also appears to be absent among the other peoples described in this volume (with the exception of the Baniwa and the Sateré-Mawé, as we shall see below). The reasons for this absence can be traced to the principles intrinsic to native conceptions of social relations, and to anthropological practice itself, which, according to Robbins tends to ignore the moral domain.⁸ We cannot answer

⁸ It should be pointed out that what Robbins calls the moral domain – or the domain of values – is inspired by the work of Dumont (1983) and thus possesses a collective character. We are not dealing, therefore, with a moral conflict centred on the individual (although it may be experienced individually) but with the outcome of the encounter between different cultural systems.

for the cases described here, but like Robbins we believe that encompassment can only be apprehended when a specific domain is defined to which it applies (see note 5 in Vilaça's chapter). Thus, depending on the aspects or domains in focus or the analytic framework employed, we could argue that it is the native system that encompasses Christianity, as occurs among the Inuit, bearing in mind that shamanism continues to be the key domain for understanding the experience of Christianity.

The peoples described here – even those in contact with Christianity for centuries, such as the Chiloé, Mapuche, Pesillanos and the inhabitants of the Bajo Huallaga – have absorbed the new cosmology and new practices in stable and relatively comfortable continuity with traditional conceptions. God and the Catholic saints became part of the indigenous relational system, grounded in a conception of humanity that includes different types of beings, such as spirits and animals. The centrality of vision, a feature typical of shamanic systems, is maintained in the Christian experience of these peoples. Indeed, as Laugrand and Oosten highlight, adherence to Christianity among the Inuit only truly occurred after visions of Christian entities began to be reported. The same type of continuity with traditional principles is visible among new Christians, such as the Trio, the Paumari, and the Wari², who, among other things, experience conversion as a bodily change similar to other transformations, including those found in myths.

In this context, the Baniwa and the Sateré-Mawé analyzed here seem to occupy a place apart insofar as the ethnographies highlight the centrality of the moral domain, translated in the form of an intense conflict between groups of kin and affines. Several factors are critical for understanding Baniwa adhesion to Christianity today and its relation to their involvement with the global market for selling their baskets. Firstly, the Baniwa have a long tradition of participation in prophetic movements, led by powerful shamans, in which the central question of the movements has been the moral problem of the existence of witchcraft and how to control it. Secondly, the Baniwa also have a long tradition of insertion into local, regional, and global markets to sell their products, generally without intermediaries such as NGOs which, since the 1980s, have become key players, along with carefully chosen young leaders, in determining the directions of the so-called 'sustainable development' projects. Today, young Baniwa evangelicals are spearheading both the political movements of the Baniwa and their growing interest in sustainable development projects. These leaders have been the object of witchcraft assaults in a sort of tense relation between internal and external politics, local production and the external market. Like the Baniwa prophets of the past, these young leaders serve as intermediaries in directing change relative to the surrounding society.

Similar dynamics appear to be at work in the case of the Sateré-Mawé. Like the Baniwa, they have experienced a massive insertion into the capitalist economy – particularly through the production of the beverage called guaraná. This rapid insertion may have created the conditions for the more intense experience of individualism as a value, while at the same time it produced conflicts between

the new individualism and the traditional relational values as found in myths. Kapfhammer's paper analyzes the mythopraxis associated with the cultivation of the guaraná plant as a commercial product and its relation to the Sateré-Mawé politico-religious (evangelical) organization with its proclaimed ideology of universal brotherhood.

Robbins himself (2004) has suggested that insertion in the work market could exacerbate the conflict of values and eventually render impossible the coexistence of Christianity and the traditional system, leading to the complete substitution of one cultural system by the other. This amounts to the final stage of change, subsequent to the juxtaposition of the two systems. The latter for their part succeed the initial phases of contact with Christianity, which can be described as 'assimilation' and 'transformation', in accordance with the model of Sahlins (1981, 1985) adopted by the author. These first phases differ from later phases insofar as traditional culture forms the reference point for apprehending Christianity, which is not perceived on the basis of its own cultural peculiarities (valorization of the individual, condemnation of desire, and so on). True cultural change only occurs after this perception has taken place.

Taking this model as a reference point, we could say that most of the peoples described here – with the exception of the aforementioned Baniwa and Sateré-Mawé – have not passed the initial phases of processing the encounter with Christianity. However, while this claim may be accepted without too much problem for the recently contacted Paumari, Trio, Akuriyo and Wari⁹ who might not have had time to comprehend fully Christianity (though as Vilaça shows in her chapter on the Wari⁹, this does not seem to be the case there), it becomes problematic when applied to peoples such as the Chiloé, Mapuche, Pesillanos and the inhabitants of the Bajo Huallaga who have been in contact with Christianity for centuries and who take Christian identity to be traditional, unable to imagine a preceding moment of change or conversion.⁹ Just like the new Christians, those who have been Christians 'forever' also understand Christianity via native categories – that is, as a collective experience focused on the body and on the relations between humans and non-humans, and encompassed by the inclusive relational model characteristic of shamanism, which includes animals, spirits and Catholic saints within the sphere of humanity.

There is, of course, much more to be said on that topic, which will mostly benefit from a broader comparative discussion between different ethnographic areas. Again, the significant amount of work on cultural change among native peoples from the Pacific, even if not specifically focused on Christianity (see Akin and Robbins 1999; Bashkow 2006; Errington and Gewertz 1995; Keane 2007 [this one specifically on Christianity]; Robbins and Wardlow 2005; Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1995, 1999, 2005, 2007; Strathern 1999; Wagner 1975, to cite just a few books) is

⁹ The Inuit comprise a case apart, since although they have had more than a century of contact with missionaries, they mark a contrast – a break – between a traditional past and the Christian present.

a good example of a literature that could be put into dialogue with the Amerindian literature on the same subject (see Albert and Ramos 2000; Andreello 2006; Carneiro da Cunha 1992; Fausto and Heckemberger 2007; Gordon 2006; Gow 1991; 2001; Lasmar 2005; Santos Granero 1996; Vilaça 2006) that is recently appearing. The study of Christianization will mostly benefit if inserted within this more extensive discussion on cultural change.

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Chapter 1

Towards a Comparative Study of Jesuit Missions and Indigenous Peoples in Seventeenth-Century Canada and Paraguay¹

Allan Greer

From the sixteenth century to the eighteenth, the Society of Jesus acted as Europe's ethnographic antennae. With missions scattered across Asia, Africa and the Middle East, as well as North and South America and the Caribbean, and with an active program of correspondence and publishing, the Jesuits developed a significant body of knowledge on a variety of cultures. They approached non-western societies with the aim of changing them and, to varying degrees they did bring about change, though they never really controlled or even understood the processes at work. Be that as it may, the global scope of the Jesuit enterprise and of the archive of textual material assembled by the missionaries provides a unique opportunity to undertake comparative and intercontinental research on contact, colonization and religious transformation around the early modern world. How strange then that modern scholarship has remained, on the whole, so blinkered in its response to this documentary treasure trove, focusing their inquiries exclusively on a particular mission site, while ignoring the Jesuits' frequent references to far-flung locations (Peruvian missionaries referring to Japan, Canadian missionaries citing Latin American experiences, amongst others).² This chapter, not itself based on systematic comparative research in the Jesuit archives, considers the seventeenth-century Jesuit missions of Paraguay and New France. It is intended to be suggestive and to illustrate the potential value of deeper probes along these lines.

Early in the seventeenth century, Spanish Jesuits began establishing *reducciones* among the Guaraní of 'Paraguay', while a few years later French Jesuits were at work among the Iroquoian peoples – first the Huron and later the Five Nations Iroquois – of eastern North America. Viewed from an external, ethnographic, perspective, the aboriginal peoples involved shared several common characteristics (I make this point with some discomfort, given the reductionism involved in any classification of cultures). They lived in villages composed of several multi-family

¹ Revised version of a paper presented to the 52nd Congress of Americanists, Seville, 2006. My thanks to Dot Tuer for her helpful comments.

² There are of course exceptions to this observation. See, for example, Dauril Alden's examination of Portuguese missions in America and Asia.

houses; they practiced swidden agriculture, cultivation being the responsibility of women; men cleared fields, hunted, fished, waged war and occupied positions of community leadership. Politics and kinship were intertwined in these cultures and there was no external, coercive state structure. Beyond these schematically defined points of similarity, there were, of course, multiple divergences: for example, polygamy was a more important indicator of prestige for Guaraní than for Iroquoian men; the prophecies of charismatic shamans that moved the Guaraní to undertake great migrations had no equivalent among the Iroquoians. Still, in general terms, these peoples all fell under the broad heading of 'semi-sedentary villagers'.

The European missionaries who confronted Guaraní and Iroquois in the seventeenth century had even more in common. Though they hailed from different nations, mainly Spain in the one case, almost exclusively France in the other, they were Jesuits and consequently they were men of virtually identical social background, education and outlook. The Jesuits active in Canada were all of European origin, whereas some South American missionaries were Creoles, raised and trained in the New World, but the Jesuit *ratio studiorum* ensured that they had all read more or less the same classical and Christian authors in essentially the same order. Their missionary aspirations were basically identical, with (and here I brutally simplify motives that were complex and frequently contradictory) an interior and personal component that stressed self-sacrifice and *imitatio christi*, and an external component that aimed at conquering territory and peoples for the true religion. One of the founders of the Jesuit missions of Paraguay, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, entitled his account of the enterprise 'Conquista espiritual', implying an association between the conversion of souls and the violent seizure of territory (Montoya, 1993).³ Even though the French Jesuits came from a quarter of Europe where the militaristic traditions of the *reconquista* were absent, they too tended to express themselves in the language of conquest (Blackburn, 105–28). In seventeenth-century France, it was still considered proper to 'reduce' unbelievers and lead them to Catholicism, forcibly if necessary (Deslandres, 95). And yet, in spite of these parallels on both the native and the European side of the religious encounter, the course and the results of these two attempts at 'spiritual conquest' were strikingly different, and in ways that help to illuminate the general process of indigenous christianization.

³ In making use of the terms 'conversion' and 'convert' in this chapter, I mean to refer to the seventeenth-century Jesuits' understanding of religious change among indigenous peoples. Baptism was central to this process, but so was ongoing submission to clerical direction. Outside the mental universe of the Early Modern missionary, it is difficult to attach any clear, coherent and consistent meaning to the concept of 'conversion'; this is a point I argue at greater length elsewhere (Greer, 2003).

Paraguay

With Montoya leading the way, the Jesuits began their mission to the Guaraní in 1609, gathering people from a vast interior region centered on the Paraguay, Uruguay and Parana Rivers into thirty *reducciones*; in the eighteenth century, total population ranged between 80,000 and 120,000 (Saeger, 276). These specially constructed communities were a variation on models developed in the previous century by missionaries working in Brazil and Peru. In spite of Montoya's attempt to present his mission as a bold confrontation with wild savages, the Guaraní of the early seventeenth century had had long, and mostly disastrous, experience with Europeans.

A small corps of Spaniards had instituted an unruly and exceptionally exploitive colonial régime centered on Asunción in the mid-sixteenth century. Far from the centres of imperial governance, they had used an unregulated version of the institution of *encomienda* to lay claim to the labour of Guaraní, especially the women, whom they also exploited sexually. Native population dropped precipitously through the effects of disease combined with violence and dislocation, yet the Guaraní remained sufficiently numerous to effectively submerge the handful of Europeans in their midst. Racial mixing was an accomplished fact by the seventeenth century and Guaraní the dominant language. The line dividing colonizer from colonized was exceptionally indistinct in Paraguay and yet this remained a ruthlessly exploitive colonial régime. Into this milieu, Franciscan missionaries had come in around 1580, attracting Guaraní to their *reducciones* near the colonial settlements. Though the Franciscans' objectives were benevolent, the effect of their efforts was to facilitate the more systematic subjection of natives to the heavy demands of tribute and labour service.

Benefiting from the support of the Spanish imperial state in the wake of Francisco de Alfaro's commission of inquiry (1610–1612) into the abuses of Paraguay's Indians (Saeger, 1999: 270), the Jesuits pursued a strategy of isolating converts from the lay colonizers in comparatively remote locations far to the east of Asunción. Unfortunately, this exposed their *reducciones* to the brutal depredations of Brazilian slave-raiders from São Paulo. This led to the evacuation of several of the most vulnerable missions and to the Jesuits' decision to sponsor a Christian Guaraní militia force equipped with Spanish arms and training. Drawing on their own warrior traditions as well as their European training, the Guaraní succeeded in defeating the Paulistas in pitched battle, reducing but never eliminating the threat that these raiders posed. The mission militias emerged in the first half of the eighteenth century as the most potent armed force in the region, assisting the Spanish crown in opposing Portuguese expansion into the area and in mastering Paraguayan revolts. When part of their territory was ceded to Portugal by the terms of the Treaty of Madrid (1750), the Guaraní of the missions mounted a bloody but unsuccessful war of resistance. The Jesuits, already hated by many in Paraguay and Brazil for their opposition to the exploitation of Indians, took much of the

blame, a circumstance which helped precipitate the expulsion of the Society of Jesus, first from the Portuguese empire (1759), later from the Spanish (1767).

New France

Meanwhile, far to the north, French Jesuits were at work in Canada following their initial establishment at Quebec in 1625. Here too, they followed in the footsteps of Franciscans (of the reformed Recollet branch in this case), benefiting from the others' experience before shouldering them out of the way (Le Clercq 1691; Axtell 1985). Their early contacts were with nomadic bands of Montagnais and Algonquins on the St Lawrence River, people who traded furs with the French and who were disposed, whether out of curiosity or friendship, to give a hearing to the religious propositions of the French priests. But their numbers were small and the Jesuits found it difficult to maintain contact with such mobile people (Greer, 2000: 20–32) and so they redirected most of their efforts to the agricultural villages of the Huron peoples, located far to the west in present-day Ontario. They were aware of their Spanish colleagues' successes in Paraguay and chose to focus on the Hurons partly because their way of life seemed to resemble that of the Guaraní (Jetten, 1994: 15–33; Thwaites, 1896–1900, vol. 5: 33). Though the fruits of evangelizing were always somewhat disappointing, the Paraguay mission stood as an inspiring beacon of hope. Father Paul LeJeune, responding to an inquiry in 1637 as to the prospects for conversions in Canada, wrote, 'Je responds à cela, que si celuy qui a escrit cette lettre a leu la Relation de ce qui se passe au Paraquais, qu'il a veu ce qui se fera un jour en la nouvelle France' (Thwaites, *op. cit.*, vol. 12: 219).

The Jesuits came to the Hurons at an earlier stage in the latter's contact history than was the case with the Guaraní mission. In 1636, when the Huron mission had been firmly established after some interrupted early attempts, these natives were fully acquainted with European products and had forged commercial and diplomatic ties with the French, but they had not yet felt the full force of colonization. Only in 1639 were they visited by their first devastating smallpox epidemic. Because death and disease followed the Jesuits, the Hurons turned against them as dangerous sorcerers, and for a time it appeared that the whole enterprise would collapse in the face of unanimous resistance. The Jesuits held on, however, and over the course of the 1640s the Hurons were weakened by demographic decline, growing commercial dependence on the French and, above all, by defeats at the hands of their enemies, the Five Nations of the Iroquois League (Trigger, 1976: 603–788). In an atmosphere of demoralization and internal dissention, many Hurons accepted Catholic baptism and joined the pro-Jesuit faction that favored closer ties with the French. Concerted Iroquois attacks finally destroyed the Hurons as a coherent society in 1649 and a small remnant group later followed the missionaries down to Quebec where they eventually established a kind of *reducción* settlement near the city.

The Jesuits continued to evangelize the Algonquian bands that frequented the Canadian settlements, while the small population of lay French struggled to hold their own in conflict with the Five Nations. Only after the arrival of troops from France were they able to defeat (though not conquer) the Five Nations in 1666–67. Thereafter the way was open for the Jesuits to try to convert their former enemies. In the late 1660s and through the 1670s, a substantial number of Iroquois chose to accept baptism and migrate north to settle at two villages near Montreal; the largest of these, located on a Jesuit *seigneurie*, came to be known as Kahnawake. The Iroquois of Kahnawake were heavily involved in New France's fur trade and later on they came to play a central role as French allies in the recurrent wars against the British colonies. This *reducción* was also the site of intense mystic-ascetic devotions on the part of a group of women converts who whipped one another, burned their flesh, and exposed their naked bodies to ice and snow. These gestures alarmed the missionaries who sensed an attempt to bypass clerical mediation and gain direct access to the spiritual power of Christianity (Greer, 2005). The Jesuit record in New France was one of limited success. Few in number (30 to 40 missionaries through most of the period), the Jesuits dealt with Indian populations that were small (compared to those of South America) and dwindling. Thus the predominant motif of their writings, especially the annual *Relations des Jésuites*, was of spiritual trials rather than triumphs, martyrdom rather than Christian conquest. Nevertheless, they did manage by the late seventeenth century to assemble a network of five *reducciones* in the vicinity of the French settlements along the St Lawrence. The Iroquois mission of Kahnawake (near Montreal) remained the largest of these, but there was also the Huron settlement at Lorette (near Quebec), as well as Algonquian (Abenaki, Algonquin, Montagnais) missions at Odanak and Bécancour (near Trois-Rivières). (Harris, 1987, plate 47; Jetten, 1994) When we begin to compare the experience of convert Indians in the *reducciones* of Canada and Paraguay, we cannot help being struck by the disparity of numbers; beyond that, however, a number of interesting divergences, as well as some similarities, can be discerned.

Comparisons

Let us begin by reviewing some of the parallels. Both the Paraguay and the New France missions were 'frontier' enterprises in that they took place at the edges of imperial control, in contrast to Christianizing processes that occurred in the intensively colonized heartlands of Mexico and Peru. Moreover, the natives involved in both cases had not previously been subject to an indigenous state capable of exacting tribute and commanding labour. These Indians did however have a history of prior contact with Europeans, the Guaraní much more so than the Iroquoians, and there had been some exposure to Franciscan missionaries before the Jesuits arrived on the scene. In Canada as in Paraguay, the Jesuits endeavored to isolate and protect converted natives from what they saw as a menacing secular colonial

society. In the Paraguayan setting, the threats were extreme – death, enslavement or the quasi-slavery of *mita originaria* – whereas the French Jesuits worried about mission Iroquois being corrupted by liquor. An additional commonality lies in the military vocation of the mission Indians, though the Jesuits themselves did not act as instigators and organizers in Canada as they did in Paraguay. Still, in both these mission zones, Christian Indians acted as a crucially effective armed force of empire and enjoyed a degree of autonomy and respect as a result of that role.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Jesuits of North and South America had a common tendency to adapt to indigenous languages rather than require natives to learn a European tongue. This linguistic accommodation, the hallmark of Jesuit missions around the world, was an effective technique for attracting listeners at the initial stages of evangelization, but after the foundation of convert communities, it also contributed to the program of isolating Indians from secular European influences (less so, perhaps, in Paraguay where even the colonizers tended to be fluent in Guaraní). If language was an instrument of empire (Mignolo 1995), then both Jesuits and native Christians manifested some reservations about submitting fully to the rule of a European monarch, preferring instead to maintain a certain cultural autonomy.

For all these resemblances, the experience of Guaraní and Iroquoians under Jesuit tutelage was quite different in a number of important respects. Even when we make allowances for the sources' rhetorical tendency to exaggerate the degree of missionary control, it is clear that the Paraguay Jesuits succeeded in reorganizing the native economy quite fundamentally and in ways that their counterparts in New France could hardly contemplate. Notwithstanding the continuation of Guaraní subsistence activities in fishing, hunting and agriculture, a great deal of effort was directed in every *reducción* to new, market-oriented production. Native men traveled far from their homes to tend the cattle herds on vast, Jesuit-controlled *estancias*. The growing and harvesting of *yerba mate* was an even more important source of mission revenues. The leaf of a bush that the Guaraní had long used to create a tea-like beverage, *yerba mate* caught on with colonizers across southern South America and the Jesuits commercialized it very successfully. Natives performed the demanding work of harvesting, processing and transporting the product. At the same time, Guaraní subsistence labour was partially transformed with the introduction of some European cultivation techniques and with men joining women in the fields, contrary to the traditional sexual division of labour.

The economic practices of Iroquoian people living at the missions on the St Lawrence also changed and adapted to the ways of the market, but much more selectively. Families concentrated more than their ancestors had on the winter hunt and their main objective was to produce beaver and other animal pelts for sale and export. Yet this participation in the Atlantic exchange economy required only the expansion of one aspect of the pre-contact yearly round of activities, not a complete transformation of the 'traditional' economy. Moreover, the Jesuits had little or no role in the fur economy. Indians dealt directly with French traders and they were driven to the woods by financial incentives, not by the urgings of

missionaries; indeed the latter tended to disapprove of the hunt because of the way it took natives far from the mission chapel. They accepted it, rather grudgingly, as an economic necessity for their flocks, even though it escaped their control. Rather than financing the mission enterprise through the product of Indian labour, the French Jesuits had to depend on donations from abroad combined with rent from their seigneurial estates and government subsidies.

The subsistence economy of the mission Iroquois was very lightly affected by the missionaries. For generations, they maintained familiar agricultural patterns, with women growing the indigenous crops of corn, squash and beans. Over the years, some European livestock was gradually introduced, and even some European tillage techniques, but the change was gradual, and since similar shifts took place in the old Iroquois lands of New York, they can hardly be attributed solely to Jesuit influence. Cows and pigs, like Christianity, are among the things the Iroquois of the missions adopted from the French. Single-family wooden houses, bread, individual burials and some elements of the European costume were others. All were integrated into Iroquoian culture at a pace and in ways that suited the natives themselves. There is little evidence to suggest that the Jesuits exercised control over this process of 'assimilation'.

In Canada, unlike the Spanish empire, Indians owed no tribute payments and they had no labour-service obligations. The impulse to secure and exploit indigenous labour power was central to the Iberian colonization of the New World but it played only a minor part in the French North American empire (Seed 2001). Even though the Jesuits of Paraguay went to heroic lengths to defend Guaraní converts from secular coercion and exploitation, they still imbibed enough of the colonial atmosphere to consider it natural that Indians should be conscripted for construction and other strenuous tasks. Thus the residences, workshops and fine Baroque churches of the thirty towns were all built by native workers and skilled artisans. Similarly, Guaraní boatmen carried the *yerba mate* to market in Buenos Aires. In the Spanish Empire manual labour tended to be associated with Indians and other ethnic groups, but that was not generally the case in Canada. Accordingly, at a mission like Kahnawake, while natives constructed their own residences, using their own indigenous materials and architectural styles, the church was built by Creole artisans and paid for by the missionaries. A drawing illustrating Father Claude Chauchetière's history of the mission shows French carpenters labouring on the frame of the chapel while Indians sit on the ground nearby watching (Chauchetière 1984).

The Jesuits made much greater efforts in Paraguay than in Canada to modify indigenous culture and ways of life in far-reaching ways. They designed missions with rows of barrack-like living quarters for families, as well as locked enclosures for single women. The Guaraní, previously accustomed to go naked, were required to wear white cotton garments that gave the appearance of uniforms. Church bells tolled at prescribed intervals to tell people when to get up, when to pray and when to go to work. Marital relations were strictly regulated with a view to stamping out 'adultery' and polygamy. Some reports from the period give the

impression of a perfectly regimented, benevolently ordered society (which may be why Enlightenment *philosophes* with no direct knowledge of Paraguay came to be so enthralled with this cooperative, well-regulated ‘utopia’).⁴ Recent historical research is beginning to uncover the extent to which the Guaraní managed to frustrate Jesuit efforts to control them, for example, by living in traditional huts on the edge of the *reducción* instead of the dark masonry quarters assigned to them. (Ganson 2003; Tuer 2003). Of course, no regulatory regime has ever yet succeeded in overcoming the resistance of recalcitrant humanity, but the point is that the Paraguay missions represented an ambitious program of social and cultural engineering and, without ever eradicating Guaraní culture, it did impose major changes on native ways of being and acting.

Violent compulsion was an inevitable feature of a disciplinary regime like that of the *reducciones*. A minority worked voluntarily, wrote Father José Cardiel in 1747, ‘but for the rest, it was necessary to beat them one or more times so that they sow and reap the necessary amount’ (quoted in Saeger, 1999: 278). Corporal punishment was used to compel Indians to work, but also to sanction moral and religious offences, such as missing mass. ‘Whippings on the buttocks for adult males, females, and children alike were the primary punishment for correcting misbehavior. The Jesuits treated the Guaraní not as they would slaves, but more as a strict father would treat his own children or a schoolmaster would a classroom of pupils’ (Ganson, 2003: 78; cf. Haubert 1967: 167). Missions also had jails to incarcerate offenders for short periods.

Early in the history of the New France mission, the French Jesuits tried to establish a similarly disciplined convert community at Sillery, near Quebec. To get nomadic Montagnais and Algonquins to settle down and accept Christian regulation, they cleared some land, erected wooden houses and offered food as well as protection from enemy Iroquois (Ronda 1979). Leadership fell to trusted Indian converts who, with Jesuit advice and encouragement, began enforcing Catholic moral rules with real severity. Residents caught with pagan ritual objects, those practicing polygamy or traditional courting behavior, were subject to sentences of exile, public whipping or a term in the mission jail. Disobedient wives were a target: in one frequently cited incident, a woman who ran away after quarrelling with her husband was chained to a post and forced to fast for four days.⁵ But

⁴ The utopian legend of the Paraguay missions, propounded in the eighteenth century and repeated down to the present, is a subject crying out for a full treatment in the context of the intellectual history of Europe. Rare are the topics where Jesuit and *philosophe* visions converged, but an appreciation for the effective regulation of savages was one of them.

⁵ This anecdote, redolent of violent patriarchal power, has led to much misunderstanding of the gender politics of the Jesuit missions of New France (See Anderson 1991). Apart from the special situation of Sillery, such cases are very rare. Among Iroquoian peoples, the Jesuits operated through a tacit alliance with the women and generally supported female power. The punishment of wives at Sillery may have revealed more about Montagnais than French marital norms.

the crucial fact about this experiment in Latin American-style discipline is that it failed, as the Indians either died or moved away and the Jesuits were powerless to stop them. Inaugurated in 1638, repeatedly disbanded and reestablished over the following two decades, Sillery was essentially defunct as a punitive *reducción* by 1660. The Jesuits, quick to learn by their mistakes, appear to have concluded that Canadian Indians would not tolerate such treatment. When they dealt with natives less vulnerable than the often-starving bands of Montagnais hunters who settled at Sillery, they recognized that coercion of free, unconquered Indians was out of the question.

At the same time that the Sillery experiment was proceeding on its faltering way, Jesuits among the Hurons were struggling to gain any sort of hearing from their reluctant hosts. The Hurons, for their part, seemed to tolerate the Jesuit presence partly out of respect for French commercial power, but the leverage provided by trade had strict limits and it fell far short of giving the missionaries any power of command. Reflecting bitterly on the obstacles to conversion, which applied to everything – from the content of Christianity, the social life of the mission, baptism, respect for priests, Catholic moral regulation, and so on – Father Jérôme Lalement seemed to have Spanish American precedents in mind: ‘Finally, we cannot here have force at hand, and the support of that sharp sword which serves the Church in so holy a manner to give authority to her Decrees, to maintain Justice, and curb the insolence of those who trample under foot the holiness of her Mysteries’ (Thwaites, 1896–1900, 28: 55).

Lalement and his colleagues were certainly capable of confronting and affronting ‘pagans’ (deliberately courting martyrdom in the process) but they had no means of imposing their will in the country of the Hurons. Even after the 1660s when they gathered thousands of defeated Iroquois in the midst of the French settlements at the *reducción* of Kahnawake, the Jesuits still felt unable to practice coercion. They required residents to renounce ‘impurity’ and ‘drunkenness’, though it is apparent that they could not enforce these prohibitions; otherwise, they imposed no definite rules. Iroquois moved freely from the old, non-Catholic, Iroquois villages to Kahnawake and back again. The missionaries were acutely aware that any unacceptable regulatory regimen would simply lead to an empty community as residents voted for freedom with their feet. After 1684, when the first of a series of wars broke out and the colonial government became dependent on Catholic Iroquois military aid, the civil authorities joined the Jesuits in bending their efforts to keep Kahnawake residents content. French settlers nearby grumbled that Christian Indians were not even punished for crimes against their property and persons (Grabowski 1993).

It was not only the Iroquois of Kahnawake who seemed immune to force-based clerical regulation. The mission communities established in the St Lawrence Valley by Jesuits and other missionaries for Abenakis, Hurons, Iroquois and Algonquins were all run without apparent coercion. Here too, the state and the religious order acted from convergent motives: it was generally understood that the Indians had other options and so it was necessary to cultivate their goodwill to induce them

voluntarily to remain in place, alternately attending mass and fighting for the king. The fact that they were in conflict with powerful enemies to the south – for example, most of the Catholic Abenakis at St-François were refugees from the frontier wars of northern New England – lent their situation some vague resemblance to that of the Guaraní, though it still left them with a comparatively wide margin of maneuver. Certainly, both Church and secular authorities in New France seemed to feel constrained in their ability to force obedience upon natives.

Conclusion

Elsewhere, I have written on the Iroquois appropriation of Catholic Christianity in the seventeenth century (Greer, 2003), but this chapter has a different focus. It attempts to describe and compare the circumstances in which indigenous peoples of North and South America experienced Christian missions. The comparative analysis of Paraguayan and Canadian cases, both dating from the same period and both involving Jesuits, points to the need for further research, particularly in retrieving the native experience of conversion. Whether it is to Christianity or to the colonial system is not entirely clear in the cases examined here, and it seems that we have in both contexts rather a conversion to colonialism than to Christianity. However, even this ‘external’ examination of mission regimes suggests some preliminary conclusions and, I hope, demonstrates the value of dialogue between scholarly fields normally studied in mutual isolation. Assessing the nature and impact of Christianization, it seems, we must consider not only the aims and outlook of the missionaries, not only the culture and aims of the indigenous peoples, but also the ambient circumstances of contact and colonization. The Guaraní experience of European empire and colonization was very different from that of the Iroquoian peoples of North America. To oppose a Spanish empire of conquest and tribute to a French empire of commerce and alliance would be a rather crude simplification, but it is a simplification that captures more than a grain of truth. In Paraguay much more than in Canada, Indians and Jesuits inhabited a world where ideology and practice tended to suggest the normality of the subjugation of indigenous peoples. Similarly, it would be misleading to imply that violence and exploitation were unknown in New France. Yet, even though we know that deadly combat raged in the northeastern woodlands, it was rarely configured as a simple confrontation of European versus native. And seldom did colonizers here use violence, as they did in South America, as a means of recruiting forced Indian labour.

Guaraní in the *reducciones* of Paraguay enjoyed much less leverage in their relations with the Jesuits and were obliged to tolerate much more intrusive supervision than their Iroquoian counterparts, simply because their options were so limited and so repellant. Slavery and crushing labour service were the risks they ran outside the confines of the mission system. Choices for missionized Indians in Canada, though hardly unlimited, were nevertheless much less dreadful. Hence the Jesuits could not impose a very severe disciplinary regime.

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Chapter 2

Christians: A Transforming Concept in Peruvian Amazonia

Peter Gow

In contemporary Peruvian Amazonia, the word *cristiano*, ‘Christian’, is often used by speakers of the local dialect of Spanish as a mode of self-reference and of contrast to others defined as non-*cristiano*, but they would be surprised if their interlocutors responded with questions about religion. After all, the contemptuous question, ‘¿Acaso es cristiano?’, [Do you think he/she is a *cristiano*?], is often put to people showing inappropriate solicitude of animals such as cats, dogs or pigs.

Locally, the word *cristiano* primarily means ‘civilized human’, as opposed to ‘wild Indians’ or ‘animals’. This modern usage almost certainly arose in the Jesuit missions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Bajo Huallaga area in northern Peruvian Amazonia. The present chapter explores certain aspects of the meaning of the term *cristiano* for the indigenous peoples of the Bajo Huallaga, and the problems raised for anthropological approaches to Christianity.

Historically, anthropology arose in a social milieu dominated by the colonial expansion of predominantly Christian societies, and in that colonial process conversion to Christianity often played a key ideological function. Anthropologists therefore know a lot about Christianity. It is not surprising then that they are often tempted to make certain assumptions about what phenomena such as *cristiano* might mean without engaging in the detailed ethnographic description and analysis they would hold essential for less familiar phenomena such as cross-cousin marriage or totemism. It is easy to assume that the people of the Bajo Huallaga use the word *cristiano* because their ancestors were extensively missionized by the Jesuits. Historically this is almost certainly true, but why then do they use the term as having as its primary meaning one that would have been taken by those missionaries as theologically acceptable, but very far from its central import? Could it be that these indigenous people saw in Christianity a new way to say an existing non-Christian thing, something as familiar to them as Christianity is to anthropology?

The present chapter extends and complements the theme of my earlier ethnographic and historical account of the relationship between Piro people of the Bajo Urubamba and the Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliffe Bible Translators (Gow 2001, 2006). There I addressed an odd feature of this relationship: despite the historically well-attested importance of conversion to Evangelical Protestantism in the 1940s and 1950s, Piro people in the 1980s and later did not use ‘conversion’

as an important idiom for discussing their recent history. Important as conversion had been at the time it happened, they subsequently forgot it. Instead, they asserted that they were and always had been *cristianos*, 'Christians'. This usage came to the Piro from the Bajo Huallaga, for it was people from that area who were the major source of immigrant rubber workers to the Bajo Urubamba in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was these people, called *mosone* in Piro, who were to be the major model of social transformation for Urubamba Piro people.

Twentieth-century ethnographic accounts of indigenous peoples of the Bajo Huallaga, such as the Shiwilu/Jebero, Cocama, Cocamilla, Lamista Quechua, Chamicuro and Chayahuita, show clearly that conversion to Christianity is used by these people as a key metaphor of spatio-temporal processes, and especially as a means of social classification. However, my interest here is not in the historical processes of conversion, or even in the Jesuit missionaries or missions, but in the nature of the meaning of terms like *cristiano* for these people in the twentieth century. I start with a consideration of why I think the ethnography is more important than the history.

Historical Ethnographies

Steward in his account to the history of the indigenous people of the Montaña in the *Handbook of South American Indians*, presents a basic summary of the colonial history of the area. He divides it into three periods, as follows:

1. Exploration and Conquest, 1532–1643. During this period Spanish contacts had little lasting influence on the Indian. Exploration; 1532–60, seeking El Dorado, brought no settlers; the Conquest, 1560–1600 established towns on the western fringe of the Montaña but these were abandoned by 1600; an interim of comparative inactivity followed to about 1630.
2. Mission or Colonial Period, 1630–1830. Two subperiods are roughly that of (a) Jesuit success, 1640–1767, and (b) a period of decadence after the Jesuit expulsion.
3. National period, 1830–present. After national independence from Spain there was a gradual penetration by whites but no systematic policy. The period brought more regular exploration as well as settlement. The abrupt shock of the rubber boom came about 1890 and lasted to 1915 and, subsequently, the area has been gradually opened to more permanent settlement (1948: 510).

Later writers have refined Steward's account, but not changed its basic outlines. An important point about this history is that there is general agreement that conquest failed in Peruvian Amazonia, and effective and sustained domination of local indigenous people by Europeans only arose later through Jesuit missions.



Illustration 2.1 Church, Nauta, Bajo Marañon (Peter Gow, 2005)

The area I here call the Bajo Huallaga formed part of the Jesuit Missions of Mainas. It was the *Misión Alta*, the 'Upper Mission', which was both the most stable part of this mission system, and the one of most demonstrable importance to later developments in the region. The missions of the *Misión Alta* were concentrated in the Bajo Huallaga area, and centred on Santiago de la Laguna (today known as Lagunas) and they included Jeberos, Chamicuros, Yurimaguas, Lamistas, Chayavitas, Paranapurás, Muniches, Cahuapanas, and the two Mainas missions, with a total population of 6,400 people at the time of expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 (Santos-Granero, 1988: 175), and at least nine different languages were spoken in these missions at the time.

There are now several ethnographic monographs on the indigenous peoples from the general area of the Bajo Huallaga, including Scazzachio on the Lamista Quechua (1978, 1979), Stocks on the Cocamilla (1981), and Fuentes on the Chayahuita (1988). All are marked by a consistent concern with history, and specifically with the reconstruction of the historical vicissitudes of the people studied and how they came into being as a contemporary people. There is nothing particularly unusual about ethnographies starting with histories, but it is unusual that the subsequent ethnography is seen to only make sense in terms of the preceding history. In the cases of Scazzachio, Stocks and Fuentes, the reader has the sense that the ethnography could not have been written without the history.

That ethnographers of the Bajo Huallaga feel that they have to so situate their ethnographies points to a distinctive vision of history, and of indigenous societies. It is not simply that such historical contextualization is possible for this part of Peruvian Amazonia due to the comparative wealth of documentation, but rather that such contextualization is necessary because these societies are felt to be inexplicable without it. This is because they are 'acculturated': due to their long interactions with, and domination by, colonial and republican forces, they do not constitute 'whole societies'. They are only 'part societies', and to make up a 'whole society' they have to be completed by history.

That recent ethnographies of the peoples who live in the Bajo Huallaga should take this history seriously seems unremarkable, especially in the light of the 'historical turn' in anthropology, but they make me uneasy. My unease is with the resonances of a particular event: the conversion of the peoples of the Bajo Huallaga to Christianity by the Jesuits. As Viveiros de Castro has pointed out (1993), this event is not a neutral one for anthropology, for it was precisely in the conversion of colonized people that the modern anthropological conception of culture was born in the meditation on the nature of belief. Nor is conversion a neutral historical event, for it encodes a very distinctive vision of temporal processes and hence of history: missionary activity as a prelude to the end of history in the Second Coming. It is in these un-analysed archaeological features of the Jesuit mission that the specific dangers of historical ethnographies lie.

The solution is in ethnography *qua* ethnography. If the problem of historical ethnographies of the Bajo Huallaga lies in the subordination of ethnography to history, the solution lies in using that ethnography to raise questions about that history. Clearly, ethnographies of Bajo Huallaga peoples in the late twentieth centuries are temporally posterior to Jesuit action and writings, but they are not logically posterior. These ethnographies can be used to raise questions about the history.

Histories of Jeberos

In a fascinating article, Ronan Julou has raised this problem in a particularly clear and acute form about the Shiwilu/Jebero people. Jeberos was the first mission to be founded in the Bajo Huallaga, and continues to exist as a town to this day: it is inhabited by *mestizo* people who assert that they are foreign to the town, and by the Shiwilu people, who say that they have always lived there since its foundation. Julou (2000: 189) is concerned with answering the following question: how does an indigenous society, subjected to western political, economic and symbolic domination for almost four centuries, manage to maintain an identity distinct from Amazonian *mestizo* society? He argues that the Shiwilu have, in their narratives about the origins of their social world, a specific mode of appropriating history which transforms a long period of acculturation into the mythic foundation of their identity. He gives an account of Jeberos since its foundation in the mid-seventeenth

until the twentieth century based on Jesuit and other archival sources, and then two Shiwilu myths about the foundation and later history of their town. These two histories are both remarkably similar and remarkably different. The Jesuit history does not differ greatly from the summary provided by Steward quoted above, so I here concentrate on the myths.

The first myth, 'The First Shawala', tells of the foundation of the town. A man of the *shiwala kengma*, 'Shiwala tribe' (identified with the Jivaroan-speaking peoples), leaves his people in the north after having killed his adulterous wife, and travels south with his daughter whom he had rescued from a forest spirit. The man became the first Shawala, and searches for an unknown land where he can found a new people. He refuses to live with the Aguaruna or the Chayahuita because they are violent savages (*kengma*). He finds a site in uninhabited forest which he populates with the children he has with his daughter. Their children marry each other in turn and form a big village. The first Shawala teaches his oldest son, the first *hua'an*, 'chief', the rules of their society: a taboo on adultery or marriage to savages, a taboo on violence, and an injunction to always live in unity in the same village. Then the Smallpox Spirit arrives, and calls to the people, one of whom responds and so allows the epidemic to enter. The Shawala flee and live scattered about until the chief learns how to get rid of the smallpox and convinces the people to return to the village.

Julou notes that this myth is concerned with the differences the Shiwilu hold to exist between themselves and the *kengma*, 'tribal people, savages': living concentrated in a single stable village versus living in small mobile communities; and refusing violence versus constant warfare. He then notes that the way of life of the *kengma* is precisely how the Jebero were described by the Jesuits before the foundation of the mission, and that it was the Jesuits who instituted the distinctive features of Shiwilu society. Why then, Julou asks, do the Shiwilu not simply tell their history as it actually happened, that their society is a product of acculturation due to missionary influence? Julou argues that the myth presents sedenterization as a difficult but autonomous decision, one that has nothing to do with the arrival of *mestizos* in their village. The myth asserts the differentiation of the Shiwilu from both neighbouring indigenous groups and from *mestizos*.

Julou then analyses a second myth, 'The death of Sekpuchek', which deals with relations with *huazan*, 'spirits/strangers/Spanish people'. In this story, the Shawala hear about the Spanish people of the city of Moyobamba and one man visits them, returns home and then other Shawala people begin to visit too. Two Spanish men, Aputek and Sekpuchek, follow them back to Jeberos, and force the Shawala to work for Aputek, who also forbids them to prepare their ritual beer. An old woman ignores this order, and Sekpuchek destroys her beer. Some Shawala, furious with this act, then kill Sekpuchek. Other Shawala refuse to get involved, allowing Aputek to flee. The killer Shawala then massacre many of the non-killer Shawala, and the survivors flee to Cajamarca. The killers then defend the village for decades against the Spanish. One day, they hear about missionaries and the Christian religion from visitors from those in Cajamarca. The killer Shawala then

kidnap a priest from Moyobamba, to protect them from the Spanish and to get the Cajamarca Shawala to return. The Cajamarca Shawala, already Christians and mixed with non-Shawala, remain afraid of the killer Shawala, so the priest's house is constructed in the middle of the village to separate the upper moiety of the killers, *deilusak*, from the lower moiety of the non-killers, *deimbulusak*. The priest then decides to baptize the people, and places on the ground many saints' images. Each person chooses the one they like most and so receive their Christian name. From then, the Shawala decide to call themselves Shiwilu.

Julou argues that this myth is based on events from very distinct historical moments: contacts between the city of Moyobamba in the seventeenth century, and a rebellion against Spanish colonial authorities in the early nineteenth century. He argues that the reason for this temporal telescoping is to allow the Shiwilu to define the images of the Spanish man, on the one hand, and the priest, on the other, and their respective relations to Shiwilu society: the first characterized by domination and exploitation, the second by protection. Julou then compares this myth to the first one as follows:

Contrary to the 'etiological' myths, which use the image of a temporal rupture to mark in space a cultural distinction, the myth about 'contact' utilises the image of social relations in space to evoke a 'relation with the other' in time. (2000: 210)

Julou argues that the Shiwilu are 'predators' of history, in so far as they take historical events, mythify them, and use them for their own purposes.

I think Julou's data and analysis are extremely important and interesting, but I have one major doubt: Julou is unable to show that the Shiwilu myths are actually in dialogue with the historical account drawn from the archive. For Lévi-Strauss, myths can comment on or suppress memory of historical events, but they cannot be made out of such historical events, for myths are made out of other myths, 'stories heard and remembered' (1970). To be fully convincing, Julou's analysis would have to show how Shiwilu myths transformed over time to come to predate the colonial historical processes in which they were transforming. Since the archive presumably does not record enough, or quite possibly any, older versions of 'The First Shawala' or 'The death of Sekpuchek', that analysis would be either difficult or impossible. As such, Julou's analysis simply reveals certain interesting commonalities between Shiwilu myths of the late twentieth century and certain aspects of their colonial history.¹

¹ There is a further possibility here, for the Shiwilu myths belong to a broader myth-scapes in the late twentieth-century Bajo Huallaga. The theme of new people emerging from an incestuous relationship in 'The first Shawala' is a transformation of the Cocama myth of the flood (see Regan 1993, and Gow 2003). Further, the myths recorded by Julou bear remarkable resemblances to a Chamicuro story about the foundation of the town of Chamicuro (Parker 1987). The Chamicuro myth contains three of the key themes of 'The first Shawala': the search for a place to live well, a girl kidnapped by a forest spirit, and an epidemic.

Julou's historical focus contrasts strongly with an important feature of his own ethnography. He notes that the two sets of inhabitants of Jeberos, the *mestizos* and the Shiwilu, have radically different attitudes to the past as it relates to their own presence in the town. He writes:

A first category of discourse, held essentially by the descendants of the old-time bosses, consists in totally refusing a 'Shiwilu' identity. If they admit to being *jeberino* (they were, in fact, born in Jeberos), they do not admit any link with the history of the village inscribed in Shiwilu oral tradition. Their stories of the history of their family privilege facts and tales of one of the ascendant kin (father or grandfather), foreign to their village. This voluntary focalization on a single aspect of their genealogy permits them to distinguish themselves from the other inhabitants of Jeberos in identifying themselves as *mestizo jeberino* and in their auto-exclusion from 'Shiwilu' society.

Their discourse includes geographical references beyond the framework of the village. They evoke commercial links that connected, until recently, the village to other *mestizo* towns of the Department, even neighbouring countries (Brazil, Colombia and Bolivia) and describe the hazards of the international market that led their ascendant kin to settle in Jeberos.

Their identity claims therefore reveal a certain vision of the history of the village that is at once greater on the spatial plan (references to commercial axes connect Jeberos to the national and international circuit) and much shallower in time (reference to only the recent period of the exploitation of rubber or of barbasco). (2000: 198–9)

This suggests another, synchronic, context for the Shiwilu myths, that they are in direct dialogue with *mestizo* personal histories. However unfashionable synchronic analysis is in contemporary anthropology, I think that the explanatory possibilities of such synchronic contexts must be fully explored before we appeal to historical explanations.

This point is important given that the Shiwilu myths recorded by Julou are genuinely in dialogue with the *mestizo* personal histories recorded by Julou. They are speech acts within the same speech community. The same cannot be said of the relationship between the Shiwilu myths recorded by Julou and the Jesuit records read by Julou in the archive. Julou presents no evidence that the Shiwilu myths he records are in dialogue with Jesuit sources, and such a dialogue strikes me as highly unlikely. At most, the Jesuit sources record anterior states of the Shiwilu people, prior contexts of mythic narration, rather than the necessary origins of those mythic narratives.

Humans and Other People

The Shiwilu myth, 'The death of Sekpuchek', records the importance of conversion to Christianity for these people even if, following Julou's account, it locates this conversion in a different period to the foundation of the town of Jeberos. Julou notes that the Jesuits used the Shiwilu as the best local exemplar of *indios*

cristianos, ‘Christian Indians’, as opposed to *indios bravos*, ‘wild Indians’ (2000: 194). The term *cristiano*, ‘Christian’ now has a specific meaning for people in the Bajo Huallaga. Stocks defines the word *cristiano*, as used on the Bajo Huallaga, as follows:

The Cocamilla use the term almost in the sense of human. For example, they would say of a forest demon that it is not *cristiano*. Tribal native people are not considered *cristianos* since, therefore, ‘they are barely human’. (1981: 158)

Parker records one Chamicuro word for ‘person’ as *klistyano*. While this word clearly derives from the Spanish term *cristiano*, ‘Christian’, it seems to have been fully assimilated into the Chamicuro language (1987).

The place of *cristiano* in a local system of social classification in the Bajo Huallaga has been described in detail by Françoise Scazzachio for the Lamista Quechua people of the town of Lamas and its environs (1978). When viewing themselves from the point of view of *awka*, ‘other ethno-linguistic forest peoples’, the Lamista consider themselves to be *cristianos*, ‘Christians, humans’ like their *mestizo* neighbours. However, when they view themselves from the point of view of these same *mestizo* neighbours, they see themselves as *sacha runa*, ‘forest people’, like the *awka* (*auca*), as distinct from the *misti*, ‘*mestizos*’ and *wirakucha*, ‘whites’. These two modes of identification, ‘Christian’ and ‘forest people’, correspond to two different locations and phases of living: being ‘Christian’ corresponds to life in town with *mestizos*, and hence is opposed to the forest-dwelling *awka*, while being ‘forest people’ corresponds to life in garden houses in the forest, and hence is opposed to town-dwelling *mestizos*. Scazzachio’s data suggest a triadic system composed of two overlain dyadic oppositions, as shown in Figure 1.

(Wirakocha/Misti	+	Cristianos)	/	Awka
Wirakocha/Misti	/	(Sacha Runa	+	Awka)

Figure 1

Other ethnographers of the Bajo Huallaga record similar systems of social classification. Tessmann records that the Jebero distinguish between themselves as *sewélo*, and *wáyā*, ‘white people, dead people, souls’, and *köngma*, ‘“savages” who go around almost naked’ (1999: 231). This is confirmed by Julou, with the words now in the forms of *Shiwilu*, *huazan* and *kengma*. Again according to Tessmann, the Cocama distinguished *awa*, ‘humans, Cocama people’, *mai*, ‘souls, demons, white people’, and *tapuïya*, ‘wild Indians’ (see also Espinosa 1989). Similarly, Aldo Fuentes records that the Chayahuita distinguish between themselves, *piyapirōsa*, ‘humans’, *huayarōsa*, ‘*mestizo* people’ (which Fuentes suggests perhaps derives from *huaya*, ‘dead person’), and *aucarōsa*, ‘other native groups’, such as the Aguaruna (from Quechua *auca*, ‘warrior’) (1988). This suggests a general Bajo Huallaga system of identification composed of two overlapping dyadic oppositions

generating three terms, as shown in Figure 2. The identification of the central category of ‘human’ with ‘Christian’, suggests that Scazzachio’s ethnography of the Lamista Quechua is more general to the Bajo Huallaga: ‘Christian’ would necessarily have united ‘dead people’ and ‘humans’ against the ‘wild people’. While a specific *sacha runa* identification uniting ‘humans’ and ‘wild people’ against ‘dead people’ is not reported for other ethnographies, this would certainly make sense from a wider regional perspective.



Figure 2

The identification of white people with dead people is not simply one of pure opposition between living and dead, but introduces a key temporal armature to that opposition. The movement from living to dead is a temporal process. This is confirmed by the fact that the word *awka/auca*, along with meaning ‘wild people’ also means ‘unbaptised child’ (Regan 1993). The scheme suggested above can be refined as shown in Figure 3. The three poles therefore become a temporal sequence, and hence a potentially historical sequence. Carneiro da Cunha (1978), in her work on the Central Brazilian Kraho, argued that for these people, *os mortos são os outros*, ‘the dead are the others’, a conclusion that has been consistently supported by subsequent ethnographic research. This suggests that what united ‘humans’ and ‘wild people’ against ‘dead people’ was an opposition between the ‘living’ and the ‘dead’.

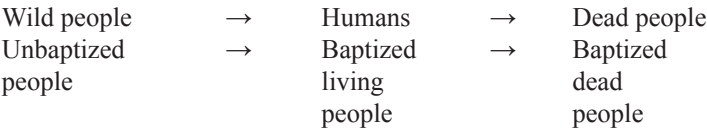


Figure 3

These data suggest that, at least by the early twentieth century and probably very much earlier, the people of the Bajo Huallaga had developed a very homogenous and stable scheme of social identification, whereby complex local schemes of multiple social identifications could be easily translated into two over-lapping and dyadic systems which formed a global triadic system with extraordinary internal dynamism. This, I argue, is a facet of the whole of Bajo Huallaga sociologic, and it corresponds to a series of shared features of the social lives of the Bajo Huallaga people.

Names and Places

The Bajo Huallaga was more than a series of missions and *cristiano* peoples, for it was also clearly a regional social system. Unfortunately, despite considerable historical documentation, including original Jesuit sources and later commentaries, and despite the existence of several detailed ethnographies, the only consistent account of all Bajo Huallaga peoples for any single historical period is the account given by Tessmann for the early 1920s (1999). Given that Tessmann's accounts of non-material aspects of local people's lives are based on short visits and interviews with few informants, I focus on those aspects of his ethnography where it is most likely to be accurate, and supplement it where necessary with fine-grained data from late-twentieth century researchers.

The Shiwilu myth, 'The death of Sekpuchek', contains the extraordinary scene where the priest lays out the images of saints, which are then chosen by Shiwilu people, who thereby acquire Christian names, and then the entire population change their collective name, Shawala, for a new one, Shiwilu. This suggests that for the Shiwilu, at least, being *cristiano*, 'Christian', is fundamentally about naming, and Tessmann's data show clearly the high salience of naming for the indigenous peoples of the Bajo Huallaga. His account shows that the 'Christian human' category for the Bajo Huallaga peoples was in turn segmented into named groups like *cocamilla*, *jebero*, *chayahuita*, and so on. Tessmann's account shows evidence that most of the Bajo Huallaga peoples at the time of his research identified themselves with named *pueblos*, 'towns', in which they lived, these towns being former Jesuit missions. For example, he records that the Jebero called themselves *sewélo* (*shiwilu* in Julou's transliteration), which is clearly the Jebero form of the Spanish name of the town of Limpia Concepción de Jeberos.² Julou notes that *shiwilu* has no further meaning in the Jebero language, and shows that it is part of a complex temporal sequence:

Shiwala → Shawala → Shiwilu

Similarly, Tessmann records that the Chamicuro called themselves *chamekolo*, but judging from Parker's data this seems to be the name of the town of Chamicuros and its former residents, rather than a Chamicuro word for 'people' (1987). In one case, that of the Aguanos, identification with the town, Santa Cruz de los Aguanos, had become sufficiently complete that, by the time of Tessmann's research, its inhabitants no longer recognized the term *awano*, and called themselves *santa crucinos* (1999: 144).³ In each case, the 'tribal' name has as a referent, or even as

² This is true even if the name Jeberos was, as Julou claims, an hispanicization of Shiwilu, for he clearly demonstrates that the Shiwilu think of this name as coming from the re-foundation of the town and the acquisition of new names.

³ It is possible that this shift was connected to the loss of the Aguanos language.

the primary referent, a place, a former mission. The exceptions to this pattern are Cocama and Cocamilla.

This pattern might seem to be explained by the Jesuit practices of naming. With one important exception, the Jesuits named missions after the dominant *nación*, 'nation/tribal group', resident there: Limpia Concepción de Jeberos, Santa Cruz de los Aguanos, and others. The exception was Lagunas, which was dominated by the Cocamilla and Cocama. These peoples did not have missions named for them except in the very early Jesuit period. The strong identification with mission names recorded by Tessmann for the early twentieth century might simply reflect the fact that those missions were named for the primary term by which the local population was already named. With the exception of Scazzachio's study of the Lamista, most anthropologists have imagined a simple continuity between pre-missionization peoples and contemporary peoples.

However, this seems unlikely for three reasons. Firstly, Espinosa has plausibly argued that many of the tribal names used by the Jesuits were drawn from the language of the Cocama and Omagua people, rather than being original auto-denominations (1955). Secondly, there is no reason to believe that there were peoples who thought of themselves as 'Jebero', 'Aguano' or 'Chamicuro' before they came to reside on Jesuit missions. Early Jesuit sources mention many *naciones* and *parcialidades* that had simply disappeared by the twentieth century, and it is by no means certain that this was due to physical extinction alone (see Frank 1991). Thirdly, ethnography from the late twentieth century such as that of Fuentes suggests that local people primarily think of names like Chayahuita, Cahuapanas and Balsapuerto as places with which distinctive kinds of people are associated (1988: 141–2). In no cases do the names of towns correspond to the terms for 'people, humans' in the locally-spoken language. This suggests that the peoples of the Bajo Huallaga were strongly identified with specific towns, but that these towns were linked together by an inclusive identification as 'Christian' towns, places inhabited by *cristianos* as opposed to 'wild people'.

The strong identification with named towns was undoubtedly connected to language. With the exception of Lagunas, each town was associated with a specific language group: Jebero, Chamicuro, Munichí, and others. In the case of Chayahuita, this language was spoken in three separate towns, probably in three separate dialects. In the case of Lagunas, the regional differentiation of Christian towns and their identification with specific languages was locally replicated in the structure of *barrios*, 'neighbourhoods'. In some cases, such as Lamas and Santa Cruz, aboriginal languages were replaced as everyday languages by the Jesuit *lingua franca*, San Martín Quechua.

This issue of 'tribal names' as primarily place names corresponds to a general feature of personal naming among the peoples of the Bajo Huallaga recorded by Tessmann: all of these people used Spanish Christian names as personal names. Tessmann's data is less consistent on the use of surnames, but he does mention these for the Lamista, Jebero and Cocama: in all these cases, surnames are distinctive to a specific 'tribal group'. A person from the Bajo Huallaga therefore

bore a set of names that, in the case of the first name, pointed towards a wider social world of Christian people, and in the case of the surnames, pointed towards specific localities.

Obviously, this naming system is a function of being Christian and the meaning of baptism, and it might be argued that it simply reflects a Jesuit imposition. However, Tessmann's data refer to a period a century and a half after the expulsion of the Jesuits, and many decades after the end of effective Franciscan presence. The enduring importance of such names reflects instead the stabilization of the system of social classification described above: Spanish personal names encode the status of their bearers as 'Christians' as opposed to *awka/auca*, in both the senses of 'wild people' and 'unbaptised children'. Further, in at least two cases for which there is good data, the Cocamilla (Stocks 1981, see also Gow 2003) and the Lamista (Tessmann 1999: 128), it appears that surnames are understood to derive from pre-Christian 'wild people' names and collective identifications. The Bajo Huallaga personal names therefore encoded a process of temporal transformation by combining collective 'wild people' names with 'Christian' personal names. The contemporary collective names, the names of towns, would encode the process of this temporal transformation as the name of the place in and through which it is effected.

A major function of the towns was as ritual centres. Although Tessmann consistently records the mission people as having few or no rituals, this is contradicted by the ethnographies of Stocks and Fuentes, which show the current or recent importance of many rituals to the Cocamilla and Chayahuita respectively. Clearly, Tessmann excluded specifically Catholic rituals from his account. Stocks writes: 'In the opinion of Cocamilla people, a community that does not have festivals is close to being non-Cocamilla. Of some of the new Cocamilla settlements, it is said, "They have no festivals. They live like anyone else."' (1981: 146) For the Chayahuita and the Lamista Quechua in the twentieth century, towns functioned primarily as ritual centres where people engaged with the 'Christian' sides of their lives in terms of ritual and relations with white people, and were opposed to garden houses where people engaged with the 'forest' aspect of their lives.

Another common factor among the Bajo Huallaga peoples noted by Tessmann was that they all wore clothing. The particular styles seemed to have varied from town to town, but all the men wore shirts and trousers, a form of clothing that is not aboriginal to the region. This fact may seem trivial, since it is a cliché of the literature to say that Christian missionaries prefer their converts to wear clothes, but I think it has a deeper significance. Firstly, cloth was a very important trade good in the area, and effectively functioned as a form of money (Raimondi 1942, Herndon and Gibbon 1991, Scazzachio 1978). As such, the mere fact of wearing clothes of the type they did tied the Bajo Huallaga people into the regional trade system and condensed that tie as personal appearance. Secondly, clothing seems also to have functioned as a distinguishing feature between 'Christian people' and 'wild people'. Tessmann recorded that the Jebero term for 'wild people' is used for "savages" who go around almost naked'. In Peruvian Amazonia today, a common term for 'wild people' is *calatos*, 'naked ones' (from San Martín Quechua: *kala*). It

is thus less the case that 'wild people' passively lack clothing, and more that they actively refuse the peaceful trade relations in which cloth circulates.

This raises a further common feature of the Bajo Huallaga peoples recorded by Tessmann, their peacefulness. He says of the Jivaro, the quintessential 'wild people' for many Bajo Huallaga peoples,

I have often felt tempted to believe that war, which in general among primitive indigenous peoples consists of surprise attacks and killings, is the true religion of the Jívaros. (1991: 198)

In contrast, he consistently notes of the Bajo Huallaga peoples their lack of any developed technology or rituals of war. This is not because the Bajo Huallaga people did not engage in raiding, for Hildebrando Fuentes noted in 1906 that rubber bosses employed Chayahuita, Lamista and Jebero youths for slave raids against 'savages' and noted that Jebero were the 'best element' for this kind of work (1906: 305). By contrast, Tessmann wrote, '... the Jeberos have never been aggressive, and they say that they only ever defended themselves.' (1999: 238) Even if such peacefulness is a self-serving half-truth, it is clear that the Bajo Huallaga peoples did not use war as a central social institution, or as part of their self-image (see also Julou's account discussed above). Obviously, peacefulness is not that surprising among 'Christian' people, but the willingness of Jebero people to raid 'wild people' for captives suggests that peacefulness was restricted to relations with other 'Christians'.

The ethic of peacefulness was certainly connected to Jesuit indoctrination, but it seems to also have been connected to the dramatic elaboration of shamanism that characterizes the Bajo Huallaga peoples, a process that certainly cannot be explained by the missionaries' teaching. For example, Scazzachio discusses the important role played by Lamista shamans in the wider regional trading system surrounding Lamas (1978), while Fuentes shows the importance of shamanism in the relations between the 'Christian' Chayahuita and 'wild' Aguaruna, such that most violent attacks by the latter on the former are in response to suspected sorcery from Chayahuita shamans (1988). Further, the shamanism of the Bajo Huallaga peoples is currently regionally famous for being particularly powerful: Lamista and Cocama shamans are respected and feared throughout Peruvian Amazonia. As I have argued elsewhere, this system of shamanism, which is currently the dominant one in Peruvian Amazonia, probably initially evolved in the Jesuit missions of the area in explicit dialogue with Jesuit eschatology (Gow 1994).

Tessmann's data suggest that the Bajo Huallaga peoples formed a large-scale regional system characterized by a complex mixture of homogeneity and heterogeneity. The Bajo Huallaga peoples were homogeneous in terms of first names, clothing, and ritual life, while heterogeneous in terms of language, their surnames and their attachments to specific named towns. The whole system was characterized by an internal ethic of peacefulness connected to a dramatic development of magical violence.

The Origins of 'Christians'

Thus far in my account of the Bajo Huallaga I have resisted historical analysis, in line with my stress on the priority of ethnographic analysis. Instead of asking, 'What did the Jesuits do to the people of the Bajo Huallaga?' I want to shift the question to, 'What did the people of the Bajo Huallaga do with the Jesuit mission?' Jesuit accounts of the Bajo Huallaga are dominated, naturally enough, by the scheme of conversion to Christianity, a scheme that has been adopted uncritically into the anthropological literature. My account here of what it means to Bajo Huallaga people to be *cristianos*, 'Christians', the densely interconnected emphases on naming, trade, ritual, peacefulness and magical violence, based as it is in twentieth-century ethnography, suggests that what the Jesuits and anthropologists thought or think Christianity might be is very far from what it might mean to be *cristiano* from an indigenous perspective in the Bajo Huallaga, which in turn suggests that this may always have been true.

One of the conundrums of the Bajo Huallaga is that while its indigenous peoples defied attempts at Spanish conquest, many accepted peaceful residence on Jesuit mission with relatively little obvious coercion. Key to the process of becoming *cristianos* was the process of *reducción*, 'reduction' to mission life. Clearly, most approaches to such 'reduction' focus on Jesuit agency, as in accounts of the 'success' or 'failure' of missionization. Such approaches have two serious problems. Firstly, they are answers to Jesuit questions, not historical or anthropological questions. Secondly, they ignore the obvious fact that the Bajo Huallaga was not the sole product of Jesuit action, for it was equally, and probably overwhelmingly, the product of indigenous action. Here I want to ask what 'reduction' could possibly have meant to indigenous people in the Bajo Huallaga.

One of the most interesting features of Julou's analysis of the Shiwilu is his account of their dramatic 'flip' from war to peace. He writes:

The ease with which the Shiwilu agreed to install themselves in the midst of the Jesuit mission seems at first sight to be very surprising. The contrast between their former mode of life (semi-nomadism, dispersed population, head-hunting) and that ordered by the Jesuits in the midst of the mission seems to render incomprehensible the reasons why the Shiwilu accepted the presence of the priests in their territory.

Two explanations have been advanced. That of Lucas de la Cueva himself, as a man of aware of subtle shading, hesitates between three hypotheses: fear of the Spanish, the good reputation of the missionaries or the charisma of the messenger of God.

The more recent hypothesis of A. Roth strikes us as completing the opinion of De la Cueva:

The Xebero profited from cooperating with the Europeans since they could dominate and take revenge on their enemies – especially on the Mayna who had always been militarily superior to the Xebero.... (2000: 193–4)

‘Reduction’ and peacefulness, in this view, turn out rather paradoxically to be a mode of continuing warfare by other means.

The generality of such a ‘flip’ between peace and war in indigenous Amazonia, and the manner in which trade and war are the two faces of the same relation with the other, was long ago noted by Lévi-Strauss in a series of important articles. He wrote:

We have tried precisely to show in this article that war and economic exchange do not consist solely, in South America, of two types of coexisting relations, but more profoundly the two aspects, opposed and indissoluble, of one and the same social process. The example of the Nambikwara reveals the modalities through which hostility makes way for cordiality, aggression to collaboration, or the contrary. But the continuity proper to the element of the social whole does not stop there. The facts on [dual organization] show that primitive institutions have available to them technical means to make hostile relations evolve beyond the stage of peaceful relations, and know how to utilize these latter relations for new elements, profoundly modifying their structure. (1976: 338–9)

As such, the ‘flip’ from warfare to peace and trade is something that indigenous Amazonian peoples are experts at doing, and does not require scrutiny of the Jesuits or their mission to explain. Indeed, the failure of conquest and the success of the Jesuit mission simply reflect the unforeseen consequences of two modes of colonizing indigenous Amazonian societies: violence breeds more violence in an escalating cycle of revenge killings, while peacefulness breeds more peacefulness in an escalating cycle of trading.

Analogy

A full appreciation of the Bajo Huallaga as a social system has, I think, been obscured by consistently viewing it from only one of its facets, as a former Jesuit mission system. As such, the Bajo Huallaga social system would be held to be comparable to Jesuit missions elsewhere, to other mission systems in Peruvian Amazonia, or to other mission systems anywhere, but not to other non-Christian indigenous Amazonian social forms. However, I think it bears some remarkable similarities to certain well-known regional systems in Amazonia, and especially to the Alto Xingú social system in Central Brazil. This point is important insofar as nobody, to my knowledge, has ever argued that the distinctive regional system of the Alto Xingú is the direct product of the ‘Europeanization’ of that area. If the Bajo Huallaga and the Alto Xingú have features in common, this suggests that they are both immanent social potentialities of indigenous Amazonian social forms.

An obvious parallel between the Bajo Huallaga and Alto Xingú is in the triadic and temporalized categorization of people. The Bajo Huallaga people’s ‘human’ category corresponds to the Alto Xingú forms such as Kalapalo *kuge* (Basso

1973), terms which cover all Alto Xingú peoples to the exclusion of others. The Bajo Huallaga 'wild people' category corresponds to Alto Xingú forms such as Kalapalo *iñikogo*, and has an almost identical content. As is the Bajo Huallaga, many Alto Xingú villages are said to be ex-'wild people', and to have become 'humans' during a process of pacification by people already within the Alto Xingú system. Further, contemporary Alto Xingú social classification is triadic: 'white people' are not assimilated to either the 'human' or the 'wild people' categories, but instead assigned to a third category (Kalapalo, *kagaifa*). It would be interesting to speculate whether such a triadic system existed in the 'pre-contact' Alto Xingú (see Franchetto and Heckenberger, 2001).

Another obvious similarity between the Bajo Huallaga and the Alto Xingú is their combination of local heterogeneity and global homogeneity. As in the Bajo Huallaga, the Alto Xingú is characterized by a high level of internal linguistic diversity matched by a high level of regional homogeneity. Each village is associated with its own language or at least dialect, but each village is more-or-less identical to every other one. Similarly, the Alto Xingú as a whole is characterized by an ethic of peacefulness, both personally and between communities, although violence towards peoples outside of the system was and remains sanctioned. Such peacefulness has two concomitants: an emphasis on trading as the key relation to the other, and a dramatic development of modes of magical violence.

In a discussion of Awetí history, Coelho de Souza writes:

Following in part Bastos and Menget, I have tried to argue that sorcery in the Xingú takes the place of war – or better, it is war, a war that cannot speak its name (although it uses the same weapons). The Alto Xingú people, for their part, say that what is in the place of war is wrestling (the *huka-huka*), and more widely intertribal ritual. Which is a way of saying that what is in the place of war are the chiefs: 'We don't make war: we have festivals for the chiefs at which all the villages attend. We sing, dance, trade and wrestle.' (Gregor,...). Without doubt this is a very different situation from that prevalent, for example, among such archetypical warriors as the Tupinambá, for whom war was institutionally central insofar as no other mechanism competed with it to assure the viability of the large villages (Viveiros de Castro,...) – for in the Alto Xingú war as sorcery is not institutionally central, operating as a counterpoint to 'mechanisms' such as chieftaincy and its ritual. (2001: 388)

Coelho de Souza's point about the Alto Xingú here could probably be translated into the Bajo Huallaga situation with very few changes. In the Bajo Huallaga, the role of chiefs was performed by Jesuit priests and later by *mestizos*, while shamanism (both curing and sorcery) formed a counterpoint to such mechanisms of communal viability.

There a major difference between the Alto Xingú and Bajo Huallaga. There is no evidence, for the Bajo Huallaga, for the pattern of inter-community festivals, and in particular for the place of institutions such as wrestling as a substitute for war. Bajo Huallaga towns were primarily ritual centres, oriented towards themselves, rather than towards other communities. But in fact, there is an important sense

in which these towns were interconnected by mechanisms focussed explicitly on peacefulness, for this was the intrinsic nature of the Jesuit mission as a mission, and of later *mestizo* presence. That the Jesuits were dedicated to universal peacefulness, and that *mestizo* traders were and are committed to a functioning, and hence pacific, trade system seem almost banalities to us, but we should ask what these apparently trivial and self-evident facts might mean to Bajo Huallaga people. If we remember the manner in which a transition from war to peacefulness is so important in Shiwilu images of their past, social agents committed to peacefulness between towns would have a powerful impact both locally and regionally.

Analysts have tended to view the emergence of a complex regional system in the Bajo Huallaga as the exclusive product of Jesuit action, but the analogy here with the Alto Xingú suggests that it was also a social form immanent within existing indigenous societies. It is conceivable that the pre-Jesuit Bajo Huallaga social system already had many characteristics analogous to the Alto Xingú, and that the reason that the Jesuits were successful at all was that they were able to release such social potentials. If this is correct, the Bajo Huallaga looks less like a product of Jesuit action and more like another indigenous Amazonian 'audacious innovation' (Lévi-Strauss 1976, Gow 1991) in response to the Jesuits' presence.

From *Cristiano* to Christianity

In conclusion, I want to re-iterate one key point about my analysis here: my argument is based on ethnography, not on history. I am not a trained historian, and my argument is historical insofar as it demands the kinds of historical hypotheses that comparative ethnographic analysis throws up. It would please me immensely if some fully-trained historian with a sympathy for anthropology took my argument here and tested it with reference to the available archive, which seems to be unusually rich for this part of Amazonia. As Santos-Granero has pointed out, the problem of Amazonian history is less the shortcomings of its anthropologists, and more the utter lack of its professional historians (1988). An anthropologically-informed historical account of the process of conversion in the Jesuit missions of the Bajo Huallaga strikes me as very promising research project, but no historian has done it yet.

As I noted above, Viveiros de Castro has argued that the Christian notion of conversion underlies our current, and notionally secular, concept of 'culture'. If, as I discussed in the paper on Piro Christianity (2007), asking questions about the impact of Evangelical Protestantism on Piro culture is to ask missionaries' questions, it is equally true that to interpret the importance of being *cristianos* for Bajo Huallaga peoples as a historical product of Jesuit action is to return to a Jesuit perspective on conversion. If history from a Christian perspective is primarily about conversion, then the significance of being *cristianos* for Bajo Huallaga peoples is only evidence for that Christian position.

My present analysis suggests an alternative. The historical possibilities of relations with the Other for the indigenous peoples of the Bajo Huallaga was a choice between warfare and trade. Having elected for peaceful trade relations with the Jesuits, for whatever complex historical reasons, these indigenous people were confronted with a non-negotiable aspect of such peaceful relations: becoming Christians. Rather than seeing this process of 'becoming Christians' as a purely religious phenomenon, these indigenous people saw it as the sign of their new peaceful relations with the Jesuits and other Spanish people. Being *crístianos* became what these two sets of people had in common. But these Jesuits and Spanish people were not the only Others that the Bajo Huallaga peoples had to deal with, for there were also all the indigenous peoples who refused peaceful contact with the Jesuits, the *kengma/auca/tapuïya*/and others.

Christianity and conversion to it, I suggest, acted as an historical 'releaser' of a specific set of social effects for indigenous people during the Jesuit period in the Bajo Huallaga. It seems unlikely to me that the Jesuits would have identified these social effects and the new social world they created as the fulfilment of their mission. Of course, specific facets of this new social world, such as residence in missions, wearing 'civilized' clothing and the expulsion of warfare to the 'wild' periphery of the system must have been congenial to them, and they certainly conceived of these features of this new social world as historical evidence of their agency in the world, to use language popular in modern social theory. Other aspects would have been less congenial to them, and even disturbing, such as the local people's identifications of them as 'dead souls, demons', and such aspects were referred to the agency of a non-Christian element in the world, the Devil, an element with no place in the secular language of modern social theory (see Espinosa 1989: 47 for discussion). But I do not think that this intelligibility of the new social world of the indigenous people of the Bajo Huallaga to their Jesuit missionaries was particularly important to that social world *other* than as one of its many ongoing conditions of existence. Local people had to keep the Jesuits on board their own project, much as they had to keep the 'wild people' on board as well. Like the Jesuits, the Bajo Huallaga people had a mission too.

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Chapter 3

‘Before We Were All Catholics’: Changing Religion in Apiao, Southern Chile¹

Giovanna Bacchiddu

Introduction

Several sociological surveys and anthropological studies report that evangelical Christianity is a growing force actively increasing its number of followers, particularly in Latin America, which has been described as a ‘Catholic continent trapped in an increasingly Protestant world’ (quoted in Stoll 1993: 1). Chile is one of the Latin American countries where Protestantism has been flourishing. The 2002 national census recorded a total population of approximately 15 million, of which 70 per cent declared to be Catholic, and 15 per cent evangelical Protestants.² This chapter is concerned with issues of conversion to evangelical Protestantism in a remote part of insular Chile, the archipelago of Chiloé and specifically the island of Apiao. Apiao is a small island of 13 square kilometres, inhabited by approximately 700 people who subsist through agriculture combined with fishing, shell collecting, and the rearing of domesticated animals.

In his substantial study of Chiloé, published in 1984, the French human geographer Grenier reiterates in several hundred pages his theory of the Chiloé inhabitants as submissive, marginal and dependent. Submission, indolence and laziness contribute to the fundamental characteristics of these people and their society: immutability and repetition. Grenier is just one of the voices that have historically portrayed Chiloé people as easily tamed and quickly conquered, unlike their northern neighbours the Mapuches, who famously resisted Spanish

¹ This chapter is based on ethnographic research conducted in Chile during the years 2000–2003. Funding has been provided by the Regione Autonoma della Sardegna (Assessorato della Pubblica Istruzione – Assegni di studio post-lauream programme) and is gratefully acknowledged. I am grateful to Magnus Course, Massimiliano Mollona and Joseph Tendler for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter, and to participants in seminars of the departments of Social Anthropology and Divinity at the University of St Andrews, as well as participants to the symposium ‘Modes and Effects of Christianity among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas’ of the 52 ICA, where this work has been presented. I thankfully acknowledge the editors for their invitation to be part of the symposium and the book, and for their useful comments.

² Instituto Nacional de Estadística – INE, <http://www.ine.cl/>, 25 March 2005.

and Chilean admission until the end of the nineteenth century (see Bacigalupo's chapter, this volume).

Given the aggressive and generally successful activity of the evangelicals, it would be expected that a region like Chiloé – described as the cradle of submission – would easily turn into a Protestant haven. Yet ethnographic data – *pace* Grenier – reveal a different story. In this chapter I intend to present a summary of the activities of two evangelical Protestant missionaries on the island of Apiao, and the effect of their proselytising on the population. The chapter will explore different streams of opinion and reaction within a relationship: that between Apiao people, mostly Catholic, and the missionaries, evangelical and newcomers, and those families who decided to follow them in their religion. I will describe narratives of Apiao Catholics on their fellow islanders who decided to 'change religion'. I will then briefly describe a service in the evangelical temple. Despite several years of hard work, the young missionaries have managed to convert only a very small minority (about 5 per cent of the population). The possible reasons for what looks like a failure will be explored: is it because the prohibitions that evangelism imposes are in complete contrast to the basic social rules of the island, or is it because deep communication and exchange is deemed possible, in Apiao, only between 'alike' people? Or, is it much more than that?

In a recent book by Fenella Cannell, both Cannell and Olivia Harris (2006: 25ff; 51ff) remarked how difficult it is, when describing popular Christianity, to avoid a certain ambiguity: what can be considered orthodox, and what idolatry or superstition? And how to define a good Christian? A way to escape this conundrum, they suggest, is to explore the specific ways the described people experience their Christianity, something I will do here.³ This paper does not deal with issues of 'true' conversion.⁴ Indeed it would be difficult to decide whether those Apiao people who made the decision to follow the missionaries and their teaching did truly convert to evangelism, as Stoll points out for Latin American evangelical churches in general (1993:8ff). Rather, it concentrates on describing the dialectics of the encounter between two different sets of beliefs and lifestyles, in the background of the small island of Apiao.

³ A semantic note: in Apiao the word *cristiano* is generally used to mean 'person'. Similarly, Gow (2006: 226ff) reports that amongst the Peruvian Piro *cristiano* is used to mean 'human' as opposed to 'animal'. Gow's chapter in this book elaborates further on the meanings of this term. However, the Apiao evangelical missionaries have introduced a new meaning for this word, which they use to indicate 'evangelical Protestant' as opposed to 'Catholic'.

⁴ Throughout this chapter I use 'conversion' and 'converts' for a practical reason. It must be said that Apiao people themselves never used these expressions, and always referred to those who started attending the evangelical temple as '*los evangelicos*' or '*los que se cambiaron (de religión)*', [the evangelicals] or [those who changed (religion)]. The missionaries referred to them as '*los hermanos*', [the brothers], and they referred to each other in the same way.

'Before, on the Island, We Were All Catholics'

Apiao, like the whole Chiloé archipelago, had been colonised and converted *en masse* to Catholicism by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century. People in the region are overwhelmingly Catholic, and there is a growing Protestant minority. Evangelical churches are sending missionaries to various parts of the archipelago, and, in typical evangelical fashion, they work hard to bring more and more people to what they call 'the truth'.

Apiao people, like most Amerindians, are not interested in the past unless they have an experiential, and often visual, knowledge of it.⁵ There is no notion of a past without Catholicism because, in fact, it would deny the very existence of the people themselves. Before the arrival of the Protestants, Apiao people never needed to declare they belonged to a religion. There was only one religion, one church, and one God – and, to their knowledge, it had always been that way. Now things have changed and they have to define themselves against the evangelical converts, they have to distinguish between two religions, and two churches.

'Before, on the island we were all Catholics. Now there are some evangelicals, but generally we are still all Catholics. *Catolismo* [sic] here is very strong' don Julio told me, at the beginning of my fieldwork.⁶ All of a sudden, people that had never been presented with a religious choice were now given the chance to opt for another faith. Quite unexpectedly, some of them did.

In Apiao some people turned to evangelism following the arrival of a married couple of missionaries belonging to the evangelical branch known as La Iglesia del Señor (The Church of the Lord). In 2001 the missionaries, in their late twenties, had been living on the island for five years, and since their arrival they had been active in proselytising and in trying to attract people to their religion. The family of the missionaries lived on a salary paid to them by their congregation, and never took part in much of the island's social world, deeply intertwined with habits that are heavily condemned by the evangelical church, such as drinking alcohol, praying and dancing.

Catholics on Evangelicals

'*Los que se cambiaron*', [those who changed (religion)] were objects of discussion amongst the rest of the island population. They were somehow appearing to have accepted this enormous change within their group, and at the same time tended to dismiss those who had chosen to change religion, as if their choice could not be

⁵ See for example Descola (1997: 67), Gow (1991: 151), and, for Chile, Course (2005: 175). In Gow's book it is argued that history coincides with experienced and remembered kinship. Also see Harris (2000: 33), that reports how in the Bolivian Andes respect for the mortal remains of relatives is contingent on human memory.

⁶ All the names have been changed.

taken seriously. Also, there was some curiosity on their side, towards what really happened in the temple.

On Sundays I attended the morning celebration in the evangelical temple, and then proceeded to the Catholic Church to attend the prayer meeting there. This shifting was considered to be amusing, and people I was close to joked about it, alluding to a switch of religion in a matter of hours. The joke was in fact a reference to what had really happened with the converts, albeit in the opposite direction.

One of the commonly heard opinions on evangelical converts voiced by the rest of Apiao people was that their conversion was an act of convenience and opportunism. As part of their interaction with the islanders the missionaries offered them some material goods, and the prospect of acquiring some more was a strong incentive to convert. A teapot, a piece of furniture, even a stove were said to be acquired through the missionaries, together with clothes. A family was said to have converted because they were promised a brand new stove. Apparently, after receiving the stove, they left the congregation following a disagreement with fellow members, but never returned the stove. This episode was often mentioned, to exemplify the nature of the conversion. Often the converts happened to be amongst the poorer people, and the chance of getting free clothes for children was one of the reasons why they decided to follow the teaching of the missionaries – at least according to people's opinion. All seemed to agree material gain was one of the main reasons for conversion. 'They know how to speak well ... they talk about the doctrine, and are insistent, so that people with weak personalities are easily won', one of the *fiscales* told me.⁷ Another woman was not so diplomatic, and on several occasions she told me that the group of converts was made out of a bunch of foolish people [*los que se cambiaron son unos cuantos lesos no más*]. 'They are so ignorant, that is why they are easily convinced, they have no sense of reality' someone else added. Either poor, or ignorant, or with a weak personality: these were the typical converts in people's opinion.

One day my friend Maria got particularly animated while telling me a story about her childhood. She was working in the field once with her family, and they were busy sowing potatoes, when suddenly a group of evangelical missionaries appeared, carrying guitars and other instruments. Her parents told them that they were busy and could not attend them; nonetheless, the missionaries asked them if they could stay, and started to sing and play their instruments. While the family carried on working, the missionaries went on singing their songs besides the land that was being cultivated. Eventually, during harvest time, they realised that that field had not been fruitful. 'All our work was useless, and the harvest was none for that field! Whenever I remember that, I get so angry! And all because of those evangelicals!' she told me, furious, surrounded by the giggling of her grown-

⁷ The *fiscales* are local church representatives. For the importance of speech, and particularly, of a specific rhetoric used as a 'soul-winning technique' amongst evangelical Christian preachers, see Harding (1987), where it is argued that rhetoric, not ritual, is the primary vehicle of conversion. See also Coleman (2006).

up children. Then she added that recently, during summer, she had received a visit from some evangelical missionaries, and she had invited them to come in for teatime; having received food and drink they seemed reluctant to leave, and eventually she had to 'almost throw them away'.

Both these episodes reiterate once again the basic social imperative for Apiao people: offering drink and food in the household. Sociality equates with the offering and the receiving of food and drink, and the refusal to do so is considered the anti-social act *par excellence*. The first episode sees the family being unable to fulfil their role as hosts (offering hospitality to newcomers), and having to pay for the consequences of their anti-social act. In the woman's words, it was clear that she was attributing the responsibility of the unproductive harvest to the intervention of the evangelical strangers. The denial of hospitality was returned with a subsequent denial of the fields to be productive. In the second case, the woman had offered hospitality to the strangers, but they had somehow abused her time, and were reluctant to go, after having allowed the main social rule to be acted out (offering and receiving food).

Not Like All the Others

Why are 'those who changed religion' different from the majority? Throughout my stay in Apiao, whenever I met people on a path, they generally replied to my greetings, but always kept a respectable distance, and hardly ever stopped for a chat. In fact, it also happened to me that people who had welcomed me and attended me in their households, tended to ignore me when we met on the island's path. I often noticed a sharp contrast between the kind attitude if I was a visiting guest, and the reserve that I observed in a public situation. However, if I met some evangelicals, their greeting would always be distinctive, and loud: '*Hola señorita! Que Dios la bendiga!*' [May God bless you!]. If I asked: 'How are you?', The reply would be: '*Bien, con el favor de Dios*' [Fine, with God's favour!]. This, no other Apiao person would ever tell me. Admittedly, though, such a welcoming greeting would be uttered loudly and clearly only if there was no one else around, especially non-evangelicals. Otherwise, the greeting would be whispered, or directly avoided.

While people who did not know me well made few and generally neutral comments about the island's evangelicals, sometimes jokes about them were voiced. Humorous comments were often made on the supposed restraint of the converts from drinking alcohol, and at the special language that they seemed to have adopted, including borrowings from the city, which sounded out of context on the island.⁸

⁸ Harding (1987: 169, 178) states that conversion can be conceived of as a process of acquiring a specific religious language. Apiao converts certainly acquired a peculiar religious language that strongly differed from the standard Apiao way of speaking.

'Detached' Families

What Apiao people really resented was the refusal to partake in the wishes of the community, in concrete situations. The converts were generally perceived as willing to separate themselves from the group. 'It's been a while since those families have been detached from the community', the *fiscal* told me once. This 'detachment', or separation, he said, was clearly visible on the occasions of two important religious festivals. Twice a year every family contributes an offering of a fixed amount of money to organise the festival and to attend to the priest and pilgrims who arrive from a nearby island. By refusing to take part in the contribution they were officially and publicly showing their refusal to be part of the community in an explicit way. Still, the person in charge of collecting the small offering would call on evangelical families, just in case they would contribute. Being from Apiao means forming a community that at first glance may not appear terribly cohesive, but religious solidarity has always been a matter of principle. And, as we have already seen, hospitality and attending someone is one of the crucial and most sacred ways in which sociality is experienced.

One of the comments that I often heard, to support this idea of the converts as voluntarily separating themselves from the community, was the fact that they wanted to have a separate cemetery, as if they refused to be buried in the existing one, together with the Catholics. I later found the information to be false, but the widespread misrepresentation seems to indicate a clear perception of the converts as a separate micro-community, on the part of the other island inhabitants.

The topic of death and burial of those who changed religion is obviously an important one to Apiao people. One day during a religious festival a man made a joke that was deemed to be quite funny by those present. The man, a Catholic, had acted as a *patrón* for a saint statue in the festival, becoming responsible for that particular statue for that year. At some point the conversation turned to the converts, and someone wondered what was going to happen to them in case of death. Would they be admitted in the cemetery after their death? They must ask permission, someone replied. 'What are we going to do with all those people on the island then? We will hang them and we will smoke them, so that we can store them up!' The man was referring to the regular smoking process of fresh meat and fish to keep it in storage. The terms he used are those used to refer to animal slaughter and subsequent processing. The joke was received with loud laughter, and it was repeated several times and told to friends and family on several occasions. What was deemed hilarious was the fact that the *patrón*, who had committed himself to observe a (Catholic) religious obligation, had his mother and brother amongst the 'converts'; they regularly attended the evangelical temple. 'That was a very good joke!' said the man who told us the story, 'as if he did not remember that he was talking about his own mother!' True or untrue, the notion of evangelicals' self-exclusion from the island cemetery seemed to preoccupy Apiao people. It is significant that in a joke people could project the image of the slaughtering of an animal onto a human being, setting up an inversion that sees men suddenly

become animal-like (either pigs or cows). The image evokes complete surrender, and it is easy to think of the acquiescence and the acceptance of the converts in the temple. To imagine the evangelical dead as if they were animals, and to portray them in the shape of dried and smoked meat is a graphic way to reveal a strong perception of their difference. By joking about his own brother and especially his own mother, the man was somehow symbolically detaching his family from himself, and was at the same time alluding to their own detachment from the community. Through a joke, he was exaggerating in images what the converts had done in real life: showing the rest of the people that they wanted to be different. However, whereas the image of the joke evokes the butcher's table and is in fact quite brutal, what is at stake here is much more than an inversion (with the relative humiliation) of men-animals.

'The evangelicals don't even believe in the dead', an old woman once told me, almost whispering, as if she had just made an almost sacrilegious statement. Apiao people take the dead seriously, and they are careful not to disrespect them, either in words or in behaviour. They can come back and terrify, they can appear in dreams or during the day, they can threaten and obsess the living for several reasons. One of these reasons, and certainly the most important, is not having given the dead a decent funeral, then a proper praying session after death, and again on the occasion of the first anniversary of the death.

The dead are considered frightening and powerful, and as such are respected and honoured. Just like God and the local miraculous saints, they have double-edged powers: they can be benevolent and vengeful at the same time. The dead must be remembered and prayed for, by their living relatives. Whenever there is a funeral, when someone commemorates a deceased relative, or honours a promise made to a saint, the person in charge organises prayer meetings to be held in their household. These are called *novenas* and last up to nine days. Whilst, theoretically, the sessions are offered to the deceased or a saint, the community's participation is crucial. A successful prayer meeting is attended by many people and the hosts would notice, appreciate and carefully remember the presence of neighbours, relatives and particular people. *Novenas* are always held at night, and often people walk through heavy rain, carrying infants or little children, and sit for hours in saturated clothes. During *novenas* three sets of rosaries are prayed and sung, and food and drink is offered. While a dinner is served every other night, alcohol (usually *chicha*, the local apple cider) is offered every day at the beginning, at the end, and in between rosaries. Attending *novenas*, praying and drinking, is done in the name of either the deceased, or the saint; the presence of those assembled in the house is meant to 'accompany' (*acompañar*) the person who organised the *novena*, thereby showing their solidarity. They attend the sessions, and are in turn attended by the host with drink and food. At some point it might be their turn, and the favour will be reciprocated.

The *novenas* imply attending many people and spending vast amounts of money to honour the dead and the saints. The celebrations that accompany the prayers – ritual consumption of food and alcohol – allow individuals to strengthen

their alliances with other individuals complying with the strict reciprocity rule that governs social interaction in Apiao. Offerings and *novenas* represent the chance the living have to negotiate with the supernatural, offering something in exchange for something else, such as peace, tranquillity, and protection. These celebrations also enact the fundamental value of actively remembering, a way to perpetuate relations.⁹ The repetition of fixed-text prayers and the consumption of alcohol are vehemently opposed by the evangelical missionaries. Those who changed do not participate in *novenas* anymore. In changing religion they made a public statement of separation. Suddenly their presence at the various *novenas* celebrated every year is not obvious anymore: not only are they not permitted to drink alcohol, they are also taught that the Catholic praying style is pointless. The refusal to take part in *novenas* implies the negation of reciprocity and mutual solidarity. In fact, what really made the families of converts somehow separated from the rest was their denial of reciprocity, together with the rejection of alliance ties.

‘No-One is Free’ ‘*Nadie esta Libre*’

To be from Apiao means to live like Apiao people do, to be engaged in the same activities, to share the same concerns, the same values. These same values shape the view of sociality, expressed in their everyday lived world. One of these crucial values is reciprocity, that lies at the basis of Apiao life, and it articulates relationships with both human and supernatural beings. All that is obtained must be returned, because nothing is given for free. Whatever is received, calls for a return. The return can be delayed, but it must be respected, ‘*porque nadie esta libre*’, [because nobody is free].¹⁰ I heard this expression several times on the occasion of an accident that happened on the island during my fieldwork. A family lost their house and all their belongings in a fire that had occurred at night, while they were asleep. They managed to escape; however they were left with nothing. Immediately after the accident, a neighbour welcomed them to stay with his family until they could build a new house. The story moved the islanders, who went to visit the family, offering some clothes, kitchenware, and money. Most of the people on the island went to see them, irrespective of their connection, and all brought something to offer. ‘Because no-one is free’ people repeated thoughtfully. ‘Any time, any day, this could happen to us, it could be our turn. One has to be generous and give, because if one is good, people would remember. And if one ever needs help ... if one has always given generously, he will also receive. Because no-one is

⁹ What I call ‘active memory’, and what Apiao people mean with the expression ‘*acordarse de uno*’, [remembering someone], consist of constant acts of love and care towards loved ones. These acts are fundamental towards maintaining kin ties, as well as social relationships in general, active and ongoing.

¹⁰ The Apiao theory of sociality is a perfect exemplification of the Maussian reciprocal gift as a total social fact (1990 [1950]).

free'. The episode of the burned-down house is just an example, useful to illustrate the dynamics at work in people's lives.

Given that reciprocity seems to be the *leitmotiv* of Apiao sociality, it is easy to see how religion is deeply intertwined with social life, to the point that withdrawing from Catholicism equates with dropping out of Apiao social life. Religion and solidarity are intrinsically linked – there would not be religious rituals without reciprocal solidarity.

Denial of Alliance Ties

Severe comments were made about people who, as a consequence of their change, had severed their ties with fellow islanders. My host family told me that one of the converts, a man, made a point of not greeting them whenever they met. Not only was this generally unacceptable: it was a serious fault given that the two families had *compadrazgo* ties (my hosts, years before, had been asked to baptise the children of the family who subsequently 'converted'). I enquired about the possible reason for this behaviour and they told me that it could have been that the man was ashamed. 'They have oiled all their children, and they also have all the sacraments. And now, evangelicals?' The expression Apiao people use to mean 'to baptise' is a direct reference to the act performed by the priest during baptism, to sign the cross on the infant's head with blessed oil. The ritual act is a symbolic welcoming of the newborn into the Catholic community together with the cleansing of the original sin. By using the verb *oliar*, which is characteristic to the local Spanish, Apiao people stress the seriousness with which they approach the ritual of baptism and the act of belonging to the Catholic Church. The use of the word is a direct reference to the 'circular missions' organised by the Jesuits who were in charge of the evangelisation of the archipelago since the seventeenth century.¹¹ Due to the geographical distance from the continent, even nowadays the island is visited by priests only once or twice a year. In the past babies were baptised by the *fiscales*, who could sign and bless the newborn with water. However, the priest alone could impart the oil blessing, or *oliar*.¹² Hence the distinction between 'to bless with water' and 'to bless with oil'. The latter ended up being commonly used to mean 'baptism' in a metonymic reduction.

Given that their *compadres* had taken part in the sacred ritual of the baptism, they could not possibly be 'real evangelicals' in the eyes of my hosts. The 'real evangelicals', *los verdaderos evangélicos*, they said, are the missionaries, because they were born evangelical, and they have always been evangelical. That is like 'the true Catholic'. To be a 'true evangelical' one has to be born evangelical. Otherwise, one is a fake evangelical. A change of religion at this stage (as an adult)

¹¹ For detailed accounts of the Jesuits' activities in the archipelago of Chiloé see, among others, Hanish Espindola (1974) and Urbina Burgos (1983).

¹² Milton Uribe, personal communication.

is fake and nonsensical. In fact, it is a lie, *una mentira*. All the people I spoke to were firm in stating that the change of religion was fake. In their own words, it is impossible to change religion when one is born a Catholic. You cannot possibly change religion as an adult. They would not convert, they kept saying, because they were born within the Catholic religion, and since this is an unchangeable status, a change of religion is simply impossible.

Talking about one man who had converted, along with all his family, people told me:

How can this possibly be true? How can he convert, if he married in church, his parents married in church, all his children received baptism and confirmation? A couple of years ago, despite having changed religion already, he had his daughter receive confirmation in the church, and the next day they all went to their temple! See now what kind of people are these?

In all these comments on the converts, the emphasis was always on the nonsense that the whole phenomenon made to the majority of Apiao people. What is crucial in the discussions concerning the converts is the discourse of descent brought forth by Apiao people. Interestingly, they rarely discuss descent; kinship ties are not necessarily prominent in social life, or in moral discourse. As I have argued elsewhere, kinship ties are made out of values that transcend what are commonly thought of as blood ties (see Bacchiddu 2007). Instead, kinship is experienced as an emotional tie between people that care for one another and remember one another. Family connections are easily overlooked if emotional bonds are not continuously renovated with constant love and care. Descent and blood ties are never mentioned in conversation, except when issues of conversion come up. Discourses of belonging, hardly voiced in family contexts, emerge in religious matters. You cannot be something that, by way of birth, does not belong to you. You can only be what you were born.

In the Evangelical Temple

Apiao's evangelical temple is just another modern building, in sharp contrast with the old Catholic church of the island. Inside the spacious room there were benches and a carpet. No candles, flowers or sacred images whatsoever – just a painting of a man in chains, progressively freeing himself from them, adorned the wall in front of the congregation. Next to the painting, the Gospel quotation 'And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32) was inscribed.

Each Sunday all evangelicals met in the temple and prayed. The praying style that all those who attend the temple practice is called *orar*. This substantially differs from the one called *rezar*, used by Catholics, who pray using fixed-text formulas and prayers including the rosary and the litanies. The missionaries often repeated that it did not make sense to sit down and repeat formulas for hours, like

Catholic people do. According to them, prayers must be in the form of a personal dialogue with God, where each individual begins a spontaneous conversation with the Lord.

The prayers were usually led by one of the Apiao faithful from the altar. Those leading the prayer sang into a microphone in a spontaneous flow according to their own mood and wishes; everyone else around kept their eyes closed and every now and then they all commented by saying 'Yes, my Lord! This is it, my Lord!', 'Glory to God!', 'Amen!' In fact all spoke aloud whatever they felt, and everyone seemed immersed in a personal, direct conversation with God. Some people raised their arms as well. The general effect, from the point of view of a non-convert, was slightly confusing and noisy. One woman got overemotional and started to scream. I wondered if the pastor was prepared in case someone was unable to manage the emotional overflow developed in the temple context. I turned towards him to observe his reaction, but he was sitting quietly, his eyes closed. When the pastor gave a speech, with energy and fervour, the people present commented aloud in the usual way, nodding their heads. After his speech the pastor invited anyone who was interested to go to the altar, which seemed more like a stage, and talk; a woman volunteered and was handed the microphone. She seemed quite at ease and spoke very spontaneously, giving thanks for the beautiful day, for the food she had, and for being at the temple with her brothers. She was used to doing this, and smiled and danced, holding the microphone with one hand while keeping the cable with the other, between two fingers. I was somehow reminded of the starlets that crowd the Chilean TV shows every hour of the day, quite popular with Apiao viewers.¹³ Nothing could be further from what I had so far seen on the island. People are not happy to be the centre of attention; when they are in the household they rather shyly hide beside their stoves and speak little and only whenever strictly necessary, especially in front of people with whom they are not familiar – like I was for all of them. Emotions, either positive (happiness, satisfaction, approval), or negative (disappointment, anger, pain) are hardly ever expressed and people are well accustomed to mastering their reactions.

How could all this radical change of style appeal to some people? How could they cope with the different way of expressing themselves in public? When the evangelicals meet in the temple, their radical difference is confined to the interior of the building. Their singing could be heard by passers-by, but in fact people hardly take that path, unless going to the temple. However, what could definitely be perceived even outside of the temple walls were the social implications of being evangelical, or, rather, of having changed religion.

Speaking with some of the converts, what was immediately noticeable was the adoption of opinions and attitudes that clashed with the local commonsense. Negative comments about the attendance of prayer meetings for funerals, or for

¹³ In Apiao there is no electricity and generally people watch TV daily, for one or two hours, by plugging their TV set into car batteries that they regularly recharge every few months at the nearby small town.

San Antonio *novenas* (the immensely popular main local Catholic cult) were regularly voiced, as well as comments on people's drinking habits. These opinions reflected the missionaries' rhetoric on drinking: they vehemently condemned and opposed the consumption of alcohol and the *hermanos* were expected to follow this rule. However, in Apiao drinking has a sacred aspect that goes beyond mere conviviality. Taking part in *novenas*, celebrated either for San Antonio or on the occasion of funerals, implies offering and receiving food and alcohol, as a token of respect toward the saint, the dead and the Apiao individuals who are hosting the prayer meeting. The reciprocity rule ensures that these events are always well attended.

The refusal to take part in much of island social world was a choice the converts made: this entailed some dramatic changes in their social life. In fact one of the most important aspects of Apiao sociality is religious solidarity. In making a choice of religion, the converts were actively stepping out of a moral universe, made out of obligations both towards the community and the supernatural beings that populate Apiao people's experience of their world.

Chachi and his Pact

One summer Sunday morning, on my way to the church I met don Ernesto, better known as Chachi. Chachi was a characteristic figure on the island: often completely drunk, he used to spend the nights on the path, where he had fallen asleep after heavy drinking. Chachi was nonetheless an excellent worker and was regularly employed by islanders who needed help either with boat building, or working in the fields. When I met him that day we had a long conversation and I eventually asked him if he had any intention of changing religion. He said that it was impossible for him to change religion, because he had already made promises to the Nazareno (a Spanish life-size statue of a Christ, on the nearby island of Caguach, to which Chiloé people are particularly devoted). 'It's like a pact between me and him, I cannot possibly step back now'. Apiao people weave relationships with miraculous saints and these relations are quite dynamic. They do not hesitate to ask for miracles and favours of various sorts, and they always offer something in exchange – something that implies an effort, a sacrifice, and generally a sound expenditure of money. At the same time, if the saints do not give what is asked, people feel free to withdraw their offerings. By negotiating with the powerful beings, in a sense they replicate the pattern of social relations according to which they live in everyday contexts with their fellow islanders.¹⁴

¹⁴ The relationship Apiao people entertain with the miraculous saints differs, for example, from the situation described by Cannell (1991) for the Bicolanos, who engage with the powerful *Ama* Christ through a search of intimacy that they try to achieve by imitation and identification.

Two months later I met Chachi again and he told me that he had given up drinking; he told me that he had been attending the evangelical temple for a couple of Sundays and that he felt welcomed. He vehemently disapproved of those who drank and sold alcohol, and he seemed to be willing to adapt to the new lifestyle.

The Cult of the Images

To return to Chachi's pact with the Nazareno, several Apiao people participate in a *novena* and feast in honour of the Nazareno Christ, held twice a year in the nearby island of Caguach. The Nazareno feasts attract thousands of people from the nearby region and various other locations, and Apiao people, following a tradition that goes back to the eighteenth century, actively contribute to the feast and the *novena*.¹⁵ Several families make promises to the Christ and in order to fulfil them they spend the whole ten-day period of the *novena* and the feast camping in Caguach.

During one such *novena* period, a dramatic episode occurred to one of the Apiao pilgrims. The main Caguach festival is held in August, in the middle of winter – and the weather is often stormy and the sea extremely rough. This was the case one night, so much so that one of the Apiao pilgrims decided to move his boat, anchored in front of the beach, to a more secure position. Once he reached the boat, though, he made the mistake of lifting the anchor before turning the engine on, and when he tried, the engine did not work, leaving him at the mercy of the storm for a whole night. Yet, the next morning we heard the good news: the man had reached a nearby island in the middle of the night; he was alive. This episode raised interesting comments on the missionary's side, once back in Apiao; comments that, while showing the different attitude towards a popular religious festival in which Apiao people are actively involved, do in fact shed light on the different nature of the evangelicals' life project.

In the missionaries' view the festival was a hell in miniature that God was going to punish. 'Every time they go to that festival, something terrible happens,' they commented. 'They just go there to have fun, enjoy themselves, get drunk. The Bible says clearly that the cult of the images comes from the devil.' The man had been saved by God's mercy: he got punished for his *hubris*, and he almost lost his life.¹⁶

¹⁵ More exactly, this tradition originated on 10 May, 1778. A detailed historical report of the events that made Apiao one of the 'five people' (*cinco pueblos*) to organise and celebrate the Nazareno of Caguach festival continuously since then, is given by Cardenas and Trujillo (1986).

¹⁶ The discourse of God's revenge is articulated in a way that is reminiscent of the *hubris/tisis/nemesis* dynamic in classic Greek tragedies. The men (heroes) commit the sin of arrogance and pride (*hubris*) and, thinking that they are similar to the gods commit all sorts of violations; this causes the gods' wrath (*tisis*) and the gods punish such insolence and self-confidence with a terrible and inexorable divine retribution, the *nemesis*.

The cult of the images – what the evangelical missionaries name idolatry – is a crucial aspect of Apiao people's religious beliefs and, ultimately, worldview. By engaging with the saint, enclosed in a sacred image, they engage in a proper social relation: goods are offered in exchange for other goods and pacts made must be honoured from both sides, otherwise the relationship will end. The saints *are* the statues, it is to the statues that visits are made, prayers addressed, requests for miracles made, and money or presents are offered. The statues are brought to places, where people physically engage with them, touch them, hold them while carrying them, and even have them in their own households. This is especially true of the most cherished saint in Apiao, the little San Antonio de Padua, brought regularly to the island from nearby Caguach to be given *novenas* in exchange for miracles. Saints, in their statue form, are treated like people: they acquire nicknames, and are attributed agency. The relationship between Apiao people and their saints is entwined with everyday life and months, even years, are spent getting organised to fulfil a pact. The arrival of a statue, or the approaching of a festival are frequent topics of conversation in Apiao.

Evangelical doctrine condemns the cult of the images. The missionaries argue that people that are devoted to images are ignorant, and that they 'adore a piece of wood'. They are 'tied to a lie' (*están amarrados a una mentira*): devotion to saints is idolatry, and idolatry is to adore the devil. The prayers addressed to the little San Antonio are blasphemous; the only truth is the one of the Bible. Those who do not follow that truth will lose themselves and go to hell.

Freedom

To be 'tied to a lie' brings us to the very idea of freedom sponsored by the missionaries. This was, in fact, the concept portrayed in the only image that adorned the evangelical temple. People are 'tied to a lie', and this lie prevents them from understanding the truth, and keeps them prisoners.¹⁷ Knowing the truth will make you free. 'If you only knew the truth, you would cry out of happiness', the Apiao pastor told me one day. The lie and the chains that are tying up Apiao people's lives, in the evangelicals' opinion, are what happen to be pillars of their social life, and the grounding of their moral world. Devotion to saints (in the form of statues), the repetition of fixed-text prayers for the dead and for the saints, engaging in drinking alcohol during the same prayer meetings: these are the lies that tie Apiao people. Truth makes people free – and their ignorance makes them slaves.

¹⁷ Once again, the missionary's rhetoric brings to mind a classical source: the well-known cave allegory illustrated by Plato in the Republic. Men are depicted as prisoners kept in a cave where they see only projected shadows of what happens outside the cave. Given their status they cannot enjoy the real life that is out there, and are forced to mistakenly believe that the shadows they see correspond to true reality.

The missionaries embarked on a truth-dissemination task, to free more and more Apiao people from the chains of ignorance and paganism, but by 'freedom' those same Apiao people seemed to understand something of a different nature entirely. 'No-one is free' is a statement that proclaims that all people belong to a social group. No-one is a detached individual, all are part of a wider group, all belong to a unit and – although everyday life in Apiao is seemingly experienced in individualistic terms, whenever there is a dramatic event in someone's life, the community always shows strong solidarity. To refuse to take part in a circle of mutuality is a non-existent option, for it would deny someone's existence as member of a group. During crucial events in people's lives the presence of the community is essential and a *sine qua non* condition for the perpetuation of life cycles. Funerals, *novenas* and other private celebrations to honour the dead or promises to a saint are group events that, by definition, involve a big portion of the community. Most people would not be interested in giving up group membership; no one would voluntarily step back from the community, because nobody is free. The statement of Apiao sociality as a collective, mutual experience does not stop there: it goes a step further by indicating an extended project of social commitment to fellow islanders. It is the consciousness of ongoing community life and the project of the continuation of that social life, the projection of that ideal into the future. Something that the evangelicals are actively changing, by proposing a different kind of sociality, based on different premises. With their religious zeal and enthusiastic preaching, they are actively denying what Apiao people demonstrate to be the structures of their sociality. In fact, evangelism is a project that would render social life (as conceived in Apiao) unnecessary.

Conclusion

This article is concerned with issues of conversion and its meaning for Apiao people. The impact of evangelical missionary presence on the island is revealing in that it shows how religious affiliation, far from being a separate sphere of life, is strongly tied up with notions of descent, tradition, identity and community. These notions are actual values, fundamental in the constitution of the moral person in Apiao, and they are enacted in everyday life in all sorts of circumstances, not necessarily limited to mere religious practice.

In half a decade the missionaries could convert only a small percentage of the islanders. This is because of what being evangelical entails for the converts: the adoption of a new lifestyle, special rules in the interrelations with fellow islanders, as well as a different relation with one's own body.¹⁸ All this sits ill-at-ease with the delicate exchange system that supports the social politics on the island. Interestingly, the opposition between the Catholic majority and the evangelicals forced both sides

¹⁸ As seen in the section describing the meeting at the evangelical temple.

to mutually define themselves one against the other.¹⁹ Those who decided to convert were pinpointed as liars and foolish, on the basis that religion, like blood, is inherited and therefore unchangeable. Yet, those families who adhered to Protestantism changed radically in such a way as to somehow cut themselves out of the community. The ethnography shows the re-making of identity, lifestyle and concept of the self of a small group of converts, and the reactions of the Catholic majority to this dramatic change. It is argued that, despite the attractiveness represented by western-oriented missionaries and their material and spiritual offers, people consciously resist conversion on the basis of attachment to tradition, identity and a peculiar sense of the person, inherent in their being Catholic. This is because evangelism goes against some of the crucial rules governing both supernatural beliefs and sociality in the Apiao lived world, and eventually actively denies the very community.

Epilogue

About a year after my previous encounter with Don Ernesto, better known as Chachi, here he was again, one afternoon, visiting someone at the same time as me. He had not been to the Catholic church for a while; therefore the pastor had asked him to preach the evangelical credo to his fellow islanders and he happily accepted: 'I have been sent as a missionary by the pastor, since I have not been to the Catholic church at all, so I am ready to go around inviting people to come to the evangelical cult'. He was telling of his missionary activities, and he said that he used to go around with the Bible, but that one of our neighbours had kept it to read.

Yesterday I went to see Luis, and I ended up spending the night there! ... *Claro que no tendría que tomar* Of course I am not supposed to drink, but still with my friend Jose we talked about the Bible, while drinking a bit of *chicha* to accompany us and so the night came! Now I'll go back home, wash, and will go straight to the temple,

he said, while accepting the food and *mate* drink that he was offered. Then he added, as if to justify himself to his fellow islanders,

Sure that one changes religion for interest more than anything! Yes, because ... for religious matters, not really! It's because they give various things! Everything! Look at my clothes: shirts, trousers, when have you ever seen me with such a good shirt? And food as well: noodles, rice, and other things as well. Someone even got a boat engine!

Look: the religion is almost the same. One has to sit down, and stand up, and then kneel when they say it, just like in the Catholic Church. The only real difference is that in the evangelical church one has to cry. But that is not a problem, really. Of course one just bends over and cries, even if he has to force himself to that. Eventually tears come

¹⁹ As Cannell (2006: 25) points out, this is an historical phenomenon that originated with the Reformation, and continues to date.

up and that's it. Also, the fact that we have to respect them, let them speak when they speak without interrupting, keeping silent. That's all, really.

He thanked his hosts for the food and drink received, took his hat and left. 'Don't pay too much attention to him', I was told once he was gone, 'he's just a bit nuts'. I was left pondering about the universality of the child that 'can only see things as his eyes show them to him' and points out that the emperor is not wearing new clothes: he is stark naked.

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Chapter 4

Money, Loans and Faith: Narratives and Images of Wealth, Fertility, and Salvation in the Northern Andes

Emilia Ferraro

The first time God visited Abigail – a middle aged indigenous midwife and a healer – he was disguised as a man wearing a long dark cloak, his bare feet in sandals; he had long hair, a long beard and white skin.

‘The man was in the backyard’ – Abigail related to me – ‘throwing blessed water on my crops and land and reciting “In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” ... He repeated it three times. “In the name of God”’ – he addressed her – ‘give me something and in the name of God receive a holy blessing’.

Abigail gave him some cheese and two eggs and he thanked her saying; ‘God will pay you back and will give you more; He will pay you with increase’, and went away. She and her daughter followed him, but he had disappeared around the corner; however, she realized that he had visited only her house and nobody else’s.

‘You see’ – she concluded – ‘God tries people, this is why He begs, and punishes those who refuse to give ... but to those like me who have faith, He gives generously Do not ever close your hand to God! Always extend it wide open, ready to give and thus to receive’ – she warned me at the end of her story. From that moment onward, God has visited her regularly, always bringing her something good.

This narrative by Abigail condenses contemporary ideas of wealth, salvation, and fertility in Pesillo, a Quichua village of Northern Ecuador. In this chapter I analyse these ideas in relation to Pesillo’s long term domination by the Catholic Church, that has always played a prominent economic, political, and moral role in the life of the indigenous peoples of the area of fieldwork. Pesillanos have reworked this historical relationship of submission to the Catholic world into local (Andean) forms, in a way that identifies Christianity with the source of material wealth and moral power, and that has given shape to unique categories of exchange and money. I shall discuss these topics through the ethnography of two different and yet very similar practices of lending money: a rural credit scheme, implemented by the local Catholic NGO, that belongs to the modern world of financial institutions, and the ‘traditional’ practice of *el castillo*, a ritualized borrowing of money that takes place once a year, exclusively during the celebration of San Juan, the major

'liturgical' event of the indigenous festive calendar. It is my contention that Pesillanos make sense of the functioning, rules, and relationships involved in these two lending practices according to a similar logic, one that through the centuries has been molded by the intimate hierarchical relationship between Pesillanos and the Catholic Church. The NGO credit scheme is therefore understood according to the morality of local practices of borrowing and lending. These are permeated by Catholic imageries of faith and salvation which, interacting with Andean categories of the morality of reciprocity that requires a compulsory return over whatever has been given, have given birth to a special category of money. Money involved in these practices becomes a metaphor of faith, and both (faith and money) are in the hands of the church and of the characters of the Christian world. In Pesillo, money is a means through which salvation is enacted.

The first part of this chapter describes the socio-economy of Pesillo, followed by the ethnography of the NGO's credit scheme and the practice of *el castillo*. A detailed analysis of the semantics of *pago*, that is, the local term for 'payment' of both types of loans, and of local narratives of Pesillo history, will allow me to show the link Pesillanos have established between the world of Christianity, material wealth, money, faith and salvation.

The Context

Pesillo is a Quichua community in the northern Andes of Ecuador, in the parish of Olmedo, canton of Cayambe. One reaches the village through the old north Pan-American road linking the town of Cayambe to the town of Ibarra, the capital of the northern province of Imbabura. One's eyes are literally stolen by this thin snake-like road among small hills embroiled with all the possible existing nuances of greens, covered by a coloured patchwork that warms the eyes and the heart alike. Dominating this landscape is the cone of the Cayambe Nevado that Pesillanos describe as a fluid, mysterious and jealous woman who hides constantly behind a veil of clouds which – people whisper – opens up only to those whom she really loves. Below her sheltering and maternal shadow, the life of Pesillo and its people has unfolded for centuries.

Once the administrative, ceremonial and ritual centre of a large hacienda, Pesillo lies in an inter-Andean valley, with a typically Andean climate, with temperatures varying between 5 degrees and 22 degrees centigrade throughout the year, dropping dramatically at higher altitudes and at night. Located on the equator, Ecuador has only two seasons; winter, characterized by warmer temperatures and abundant rains; and summer, with draughts, chill dry winds, and frosts which threaten crops. The lower areas are primarily cultivated with potatoes, maize and broad beans, while in the higher areas wheat, and especially barley, are produced. Pesillanos make their living from a variety of activities, of which agriculture is just a minor one; these include seasonal migration to other regions of the country, local

wage labour, and a variety of small businesses supported to a great extent by the Catholic Church, the most active NGO of the area which here I shall call CC.

The Catholic Church Credit Scheme

The CC was started in the late 1980s by the Catholic order of the Salesian Fathers. It is currently operating in the indigenous communities of the whole Canton, with several projects on health, education, production and commercialisation of traditional products. All the projects are supported by a credit scheme that has been in operation since 1988. The scheme offers different types of loans, according to specific needs, including ‘emergency’ loans – usually needed for health problems – and ‘one-off’ loans in support of non-traditional production activities or infrastructure, such as hygienic services, irrigation schemes and the like. The credit scheme is considered highly successful because there are very few defaulters and the volume of capital loaned and repaid is over 90 per cent monthly, with only 1 per cent in arrears.¹

The Imperative to Repay

Pesillanos emphasise the moral imperative to return the money borrowed from the CC scheme. This is in clear accordance with the logic and morality of Andean traditional exchanges that dictate the compulsory return of whatever has been received, be it money, food, or service. The breaching of this law brings about severe sanctions not only for the individual defaulter, but for the entire collectivity.

Traditional exchanges are understood as binding contracts that imply mutual trust and credibility; non fulfillments earn the mistrust of the entire community. When an individual gains a reputation as unfulfilling, they will not find many doors open to future requests, and any potential ally (kin, friend or neighbour) will avoid them. The sanction for not respecting the agreement involves the suspension of all exchanges with said person. This represents an economic loss that few can afford given that the whole of economic and social life hinges on potential alliances among villagers. Therefore, respecting an agreement is the best guarantee of future access to borrowings.

In the case of the CC credit scheme, the delivery mechanism is designed in such a way that those communities whose residents have defaulted on four installments cannot receive new loans until the defaulters have brought their payments up to date. Since it is the entire community that suffers the consequences of individual defaulters, ‘bad payers’ are the subject of a strong pressure from the

¹ For a thorough analysis of the CC credit scheme, its economic and social aspects, see Ferraro 2004c.

whole community. The following case is exemplary. A very popular and well-thought-of couple in the village, whose position as Catholic catechists gave them prestige and moral authority to make suggestions and give advice on individual and community matters, their opinions being much appreciated and respected, took loans from the CC and other NGOs operating in the area. They were not able to repay them, due, they claimed, to health problems suffered by the husband, which meant high expenditures in treatment and medicine, further complicated by his inability to work and earn money. Their neighbours did not believe them and said that they were 'irresponsible' and did not worry enough. When asked about their loans, people always express concern about repayment and say that they will do everything possible to make payments in time. They look for temporary jobs or borrow money from family members or neighbours. But this couple was 'work shy'. Consequently, people told me, they fell into disgrace and lost their honour in the eyes of the community. The situation got worse when the couple, in a desperate attempt to defend themselves and to get their debt written off, spread malevolent gossips about the head of the CC and announced their intention to take legal action against him for usury. There was no basis for a lawsuit, so the matter ended there, but at that point the village ostracized the couple and the social pressure was such that they decided to move to a nearby village.

Pesillanos call the repayment of the CC loans *pago* and attach to it the honour of the borrower. In the words of R.I., an indigenous woman who, explaining why some people do not want to apply for CC loans, said that 'people of honour are afraid of taking loans'. Implied here is that they are afraid of being unable to repay a loan and thus of losing their honour. The moral imperative to repay loans and credits is used and reinforced by the CC through its own radio. Besides supporting the organization's projects, the radio publicly encourages the image of the 'good borrower' through advertisements, congratulations and greetings to those who are up to date with payments. Sometimes the community directorates use the radio to name those who are repeatedly late with repayments and to remind them that they have a repayment pending. People generally respond to these calls bringing *pagos* (payments) up to date promptly. It is not unusual to hear people who are paying declare loudly that they are doing so and thus they must not be named on the radio. The tone in which this statement is made forces everyone in the office to take notice, almost as if they were called upon to witness the repayment. If by mistake someone who is on time with their *pagos* is named on the radio, strong protests are made in the presence of witnesses who may be asked to confirm the wronged party's version.

It is my contention that this strong commitment to repay the loan, which to a great extent determines the success of the CC scheme, is reinforced by its nature as a Catholic institution, which places its credit scheme, and indeed the whole of the institution's work, within the realm of the sacred, as a deeper analysis of *pago* reveals.

Pago: Money and the Realm of the Sacred

Pago is the Spanish term for ‘repayment’, but whereas its original meaning does not imply any specification about either the nature of the transaction or the repayment (if in money, kind, or service), in Pesillan Spanish *pago* is in money and refers to very specific types of transactions. Beside the money borrowed from the CC credit scheme, the term *pago* is used also to refer to the repayment of another type of loan in money, locally known with the name of *el castillo*.

El Castillo: a Ritualized Loan of Money

El castillo, that Pesillanos also call *el aumento* (the increase) is a ritualised borrowing and lending of money that takes place only and exclusively on the 24 June, during the celebration of San Juan which in Pesillo is the main festive and religious event of the whole year. Substituting the pre-Hispanic festivity of the Inti Raymi celebration of the sun, the core of the tremendously complex Catholic celebration of San Juan still retains its original meaning of a thanks-giving and propitiatory rite.² The celebration is spread over the whole summer, with a series of rituals and events, all of which propitiate fertility and abundance. Among them, the ritual of *el castillo* is one of the most significant.

The *el castillo* loan has two unique characteristics: it must be repaid in double and it must be returned only and exclusively one year later, during the celebration of San Juan. Pesillanos repeatedly told me that the main reason why they ask for a *castillo* is that ‘we like the guinea pig and *chicha*, we like the feast’. Guinea pigs and *chicha* (fermented maize beer) are the constitutive elements of any ritual and celebration in the Andes. *Castillos* are immediately reinvested in the feast, to increase its proportions: ‘in general’ – my indigenous friend Estela told me – ‘*castillos* are taken to celebrate and not out of a need, because once people have taken a *castillo* they must repay it dancing’ (that is, celebrating).

The lender, called the ‘owner’ of *el castillo*, receives requests of money in his house where the deal with borrowers is sealed with a drink. It is when *castillos* are returned, one year later, that a real feast takes place. On the day of its repayment, *castillo* payees, accompanied by a group of close kin and friends, gather in the lender’s home, where the *castillo* owner offers alcohol and sometimes a bowl of soup. The lender sits at a table, his back to the wall so that he can see the whole room. Hanging on the wall in a picture behind him, or standing in the shape of a statue, San Juan presides over the exchange of money. From a list, the *castillo*’s owner reads the names of his debtors: as each one is called, he stands and gives

² For a detailed analysis of this celebration in Pesillo see Ferraro 2004a and 2004b. For different interpretations of this celebration in nearby areas, see Crain 1989 and Guerrero 1991.

his due. When the exchange of money is over, the owner and his wife give to each payee the *obligación* (literally, the ‘obligation’), consisting of a huge quantity of food and drinks that the payee will share with his group once back home. The food is of an extraordinary type, not part of Pesillanos’ daily diet but eaten only on special occasions related with the reproduction of individual and collective life, such as marriages, the celebration of the dead, and baptisms. The quantity of food is directly proportional to the amount of the money repaid: the bigger the *castillo* returned, that is, the higher the amount of money paid back, the greater the quantity of food received, and the bigger the feast that will take place in the house of the payee. Each payee brings with them a group of players and dancers, and the houses where *castillos* are given and received become the centre of a feast. As one woman commented, ‘where there are *castillos*, people go in and out all night long ... since one goes dancing to ask for a *castillo* and goes dancing to repay a *castillo*’.

Castillo loans involve a small amount of money that is not enough to be invested in productive activities and thus produce a significant change in a person’s life. Bearing in mind that it is available only once a year, its economic impact is hardly significant for the borrower. On the contrary, the expenditures it implies for the lender are significant, given the huge quantity of food and drinks involved, for which he must use a vast proportion of the annual harvest and of the domestic animals reared during the year. This is why, according to some, the practice is in decline. Yet, in Pesillo every year there are more households and even associations of people granting *castillos*, and very recently, *castillos* have been organized also at Christmas time, in front of the Nativity.

Pesillanos have never complaint about *castillos*’ repayments; on the contrary, they have always made very clear to me that without *castillos* no feast for the Saint could ever take place. Not repaying a *castillo* is simply an inconceivable possibility for Pesillanos, and nobody has ever heard of such a case. People emphasise that the image of San Juan must be present when giving and receiving *castillos* because, Pesillanos made very explicit to me, the real owner of the *castillo* is San Juan himself: it is to him that *castillos* are asked for, and it is to him that they have to be given back.

In the whole of the Olmedo parish, San Juan is very respected, loved, and feared. He is a highly personalised and humanised saint whom people dress, keep warm and feed throughout the year. San Juan is very ‘domestic’, as his permanent presence and participation in the household space and life demonstrates. He is approached with affection, referred to as *el santito* or *San Juanito* – dear little San Juan. His benevolence is constantly sought after, and his anger avoided at any cost. San Juan is, indeed, very powerful and miraculous. He stands at the apex of an ordered indigenous universe, representing the structural equivalent of the Mountain Spirits that inhabit Andean shrines. People ask him for protection and help with all types of problems, needs and general matters concerning humans, animals, crops and business. Like many other characters of the Andean Catholic pantheon, San Juan’s power is two-edged; his positive or negative attitude depends on people’s behaviours towards him. Therefore, people’s devotion (*devoción*) is

an essential notion in structuring the relationship with the Saint: he will respond positively to requests if and when the faithful prove their devotion, and prove it in the proper way, that is, with rituals performed perfectly.

Devotion must be demonstrated in material ways in order to avoid punishment; as is the case for all Superior Beings in the Andes, San Juan is also conceived of as the owner of human life. He can send rain and make the land fertile, or withhold it and make it sterile. He can send diseases to animals, crops and humans, or send abundance and prosperity. As anywhere else in the Andes, in Pesillo too human prosperity is a function of Superior Beings, in this case of San Juan (as shown in: Bastien 1978; Nash 1975; Sallnow 1989; Harris 1989, 1995; Gose 1986, 1994; Rösing 1994).

Borrowing and lending money in the form of *castillos* is, therefore, one way among others to show praise and devotion to the Saint, but one that the Saint appreciates greatly. If pleased with the way the *castillo* has been performed, the Saint will make sure that both the borrower and the lender will always benefit from it and will have the resources to afford its expenses. To those who show their faith and devotion, the Saint always gives more, so in the short term the lender receives the double of the money he had lent, and the borrower a huge quantity of food proportional to the size of the debt; in the long term, the Saint will send prosperity and wealth to both of them. The Saint's benevolence transforms the *castillo* into an increase – hence the reason for its name. In fact, *castillos* are increasingly being used as 'proper' credits, by borrowers who need cash to cover small ordinary expenses, and by lenders as a way to invest money. For example, the most popular women's group in the area decided to invest all the organization's savings in *castillos* 'because it is good, the *aumentos*³ are better than from money put in a bank. The savings of the organisation have been turned into *castillos*', its leader told me, and a woman and a widow decided to invest in *castillos* part of a loan taken from the CC credit scheme. Not repaying the *castillo* would be not only a significant economic loss, but also an unforgivable offence to the Saint whose punishments Pesillanos fear above anything else and reach the entire collectivity. Indeed, during one of my stays in the village, a bus belonging to the local cooperative named after San Juan, had a terrible accident in which the driver died. It was taken as a matter of fact that the accident had happened because the head of the cooperative had refused to sponsor some events in honour of the Saint.

Local Notions of Christianity and the Origins of Wealth

Making a comparison between the *castillo* and the CC types of loans is beyond the scope of this chapter, but for the sake of my argument here it is important to emphasise that their religious nature gives the money borrowed from them a

³ This term means literally 'increases' but in this case it is used as synonymous with 'profits'.

‘special’ quality. Unlike money coming from other sources, the money borrowed from the Church credit scheme and *el castillo* belongs to the realm of the sacred; moreover, it comes from the world of Christianity, a world that Pesillanos identify as a major source of fertility and wealth. In order to fully appreciate this connection, we must look back at the nature of the historical relationship between Pesillo and the Catholic Church, especially as it comes out from local narratives.

History of Pesillo

In 1560 Pesillo was granted by the Spanish Crown to the Mercedarian Fathers as an *encomienda*.⁴ Like many other early colonists, the owners of Pesillo were also granted a permanent assignment of indigenous people to work for them, and had access to additional indigenous labour through the general forced labour draft known as *mita*,⁵ a practice the Spanish adopted from the Incas, and that provided labourers (*mitayos*) for non-agricultural tasks such as construction. Through the centuries, the original Catholic estate grew, thanks to gifts of surrounding lands from the Spanish Crown, and to purchases by the Order itself. By the close of the colonial period, the hacienda of Pesillo equalled the extension of the present day parish of Olmedo (Crespi 1968: 37–9).

Pesillo was a theocratic hacienda. At that time the only recognized authority was represented by the Church personnel, especially by the resident Fathers who considered themselves responsible for the religious education and spiritual guidance of the hacienda workers. The life and daily tasks of the resident indigenous peons were therefore organized according to the religious schedule of the Fathers, starting very early at dawn with the collective prayers of the rosary followed by the mass, after which the catechism class would take place. Those who refused to attend were severely, even physically, punished (compare with: Ferraro 2000a; Yanez del Pozo 1986; Crespi 1968).

⁴ Unlike the *corregimiento* that was a territorial division administered directly by a Crown-appointed official responsible for collecting indigenous tribute and organizing labour for the Crown. The *encomienda* was a private concession granted by the Crown to important individuals and/or institutions, such as colonists, officials and religious orders. The recipient (*encomendero*) was entitled to indigenous labour and tribute, a portion of which went to the Crown. The *encomendero* was sworn to serve the Crown and to provide for the physical and spiritual well being and protection of the indigenous population (Crespi 1968: 36).

⁵ The peculiarity of the northern *encomiendas* was that they created neither a different productive space (like for example the mines) nor a different strategy of production (like the *obrajes* in the central Andes). On the contrary, the existing production strategy was reinforced according to the demand and the internal apparatus re-ordered accordingly. (Ramón 1991: 416. In the same article the author offers an interesting analysis of the transition from the *encomienda* to the *hacienda* system in Cayambe Canton).

In 1908 the then President Alfaro Moreno expropriated all the properties of the Catholic Church and Pesillo, from then on a property of the State, was divided into five smaller haciendas, each rented out to private tenants (*arrendatarios*), who managed the haciendas keeping the traditional social organization of labour and hierarchical structure. It was not until 1964, under the military Government, that the Agrarian Reform took place when, through a more equitable redistribution of land via cooperatives especially formed for this purpose, the traditional social and cultural system of the hacienda was disarticulated. In Pesillo, which had already been divided into several State properties, the land was granted entirely to the local indigenous peasantry.⁶

Native Narratives of Local History

Pesillanos divide their history – which I summarise below⁷ – according to the succession of owners and managers of the land. In local accounts, therefore, Pesillo's past unfolds chronologically through a 'time of the Fathers', a 'time of the Tenants' and a 'time of the Cooperatives'.

Oral accounts sets 'the time of the Fathers' as the starting point of Pesillo history. There is hardly any mention of the native pre-Inca inhabitants of the region, the Carranquis-Cayambis, and although the Incas are acknowledged as 'ancestors', Pesillanos' knowledge and elaboration on them is very sketchy. These native versions start with an 'original' time prior to the arrival of the Spanish and the Fathers, when different races (indigenous and *mestizo* peoples) from different geographical places, and with a different status (resident indigenous peons [*huasipungueros*] and sharecroppers) used to live side by side. Later, a settler of Inca origins came to live in Pesillo. Since he had no iron tools but only wooden and stone implements, he was unable to cultivate the land where only weeds could grow.

The Mercedarian Fathers established the boundaries of the present-day parish; they started the hacienda, and within it they formed the indigenous communities. They brought order and law where there had been chaos and confusion. They separated the different races (*mestizos* from Indigenous peoples) and established different status between them according to the position they occupied within the hacienda hierarchy. They started agriculture; taught people the Spanish language and religion; established the institutions of marriage and the mass⁸ and initiated the feast of San Juan.

⁶ The Agrarian Reform had complex and contradictory effects, one of which was the formation of additional divisions among the indigenous peasants (see: Guerrero 1991; Crespi 1968; Yanez del Pozo 1986; Prieto 1978; Martínez 1995; Furche 1980; Landázuri 1980).

⁷ I summarise and write in chronological order the local version of the history of the area, as it comes out from the interviews with some of my oldest indigenous friends, complemented by the testimonies collected by Yanez del Pozo in his book *Yo Declaro con Franqueza* (1986).

⁸ In the Andes the mass is extremely important in defining the human state as against the non-human.

Therefore, the Fathers provided Pesillanos with the principal means of material and social survival. When they were expelled by the Government in 1908, the potatoes became sick – people say – and the land no longer produced as much as it used to do when the Fathers ‘used to go hand in hand with the Almighty’ and there were good and abundant harvests. If their presence had made the land bear fruits, their departure provoked misfortune and death.

These narratives establish a strong association between the Fathers (members and representatives of the Catholic Church), fertility and material wealth. The Fathers came with the Spaniards in search for gold; in some accounts they themselves are Spanish. In several versions the Spaniards/Fathers used local gold to make money. The Fathers arrived in Pesillo blessing the land and the people; they visited the settlers and performed their weddings and celebrated masses. As a *pago* for these services, the Fathers took the land from the natives, and this is how the initial hacienda of Pesillo became so big and the Fathers rich and powerful. After they left, their fortune was inherited by the tenants, who in this way could buy other haciendas and increase their wealth (see: Yanez del Pozo 1988: 58, 60–62; Ferraro 2000, 2004a).

The association between the world of Christianity and fertility is further evident in the following account by Abigail about her experience of dying and coming back to life. Abigail is a middle-aged midwife and healer, who is well known in the area for having a special connection with God. During one of our many conversations around the hearth in her house, she told me that immediately after delivering her second baby girl, she had died. Her spirit (*espíritu*) left her body.⁹ ‘As in a dream’ she saw ‘this spirit of mine’ leaving the house, walking away along an old path full of plants, some of which her spirit used in order to mark the way. Her spirit arrived at a very rich and prosperous hacienda, as the many cows grazing the pastures indicated. Among the workers there, she recognised three villagers who had been dead for some time. ‘It was like here in this life’ – she continued – ‘This spirit of mine realised that it was morning and greeted them. They were as in life and dressed in white’. In response, looking at her, they said: ‘We are *cuentayos*,¹⁰ we are looking after this property’, and told her to go back home, but her spirit replied that she wanted to go on. Once she reached the hacienda house, the spirit knocked at the door, no one replied, and so she started looking around when she realised that ‘He was coming. He wore sandals without socks and a long cloak ... It must have been God Himself, with a thin face, a long delicate nose and black hair. He spoke to me in an angry manner [and said] “Go away! Go back home!

⁹ Relating the story Abigail always used the third person singular to refer to her spirit, as if talking of someone else.

¹⁰ In the hacienda system the *cuentayo* was the peon in charge of the animals. More than a shepherd, a *cuentayo* was a sort of accountant, responsible for the well-being of animals in his charge. The word comes from the Spanish *cuenta*, that is, ‘account’ and also ‘bill’. When the peon took his turn as *cuentayo*, the animals under his care were counted at the beginning and the end of his watch and if an animal went missing, he had to pay, usually in days of labour.

It is not yet time for you to be here!'''". So the spirit went back following the path she had been marking on her way there, reached her home, entered her body, and Abigail woke back to life.

After this experience, Abigail received the *suerte* (good fortune): her garden flourished with all sorts of medicinal herbs and crops; and she received the power to heal people who started to arrive from all over the area and never stopped, 'and you see' – she concluded – 'I have not let anyone die'. It was after the experience of dying and coming back to life that Abigail started to receive God's visits.

After the Mercedarian Fathers left, for many years there was no resident priest in Pesillo. Residents who wanted to attend mass and other religious services had to go to the Canton seat, Cayambe. It was not until the establishment of the Catholic NGO, in the late 1980s, that the Catholic presence in the area has become visible again. The Fathers have come back to Pesillo in the modern guise of an NGO. The NGO programmes play an essential role in improving the economic conditions of Pesillanos; its head is a priest whom Pesillanos call *padrecito*, that is, 'dear little father', and has a prominent role in people's social and cultural life. He is, in fact, the person who celebrates masses for San Juan, for example, requiem masses for the dead, marriages and funerals, amongst other things. The appreciation Pesillanos feel for him is exemplified by the words of one Pesillano who told me: 'What were we before? We were nothing. No one would care for us, but now there is the dear little father, and now we are what we were meant to be' (J.M.). Before the CC and its head/father started working in Pesillo, people had felt abandoned and neglected, but now the CC has put them back 'on the right track'. Even nowadays, then, the Catholic Church keeps playing its historical role of source of material and social well-being. It is within this long-term pattern that the CC credit scheme must be understood.

Money, Sin and Salvation

Pago articulates the relationship between Catholicism and wealth. In this section I will show that *pago* also expresses the relationship between money and salvation. *Pago*, in fact, refers also to the payment in money for a requiem mass (*el pago de una misa*) and the payment in money for a treatment by local medicine men/women (*el pago de la curación*).

Pagos for Healing and Pagos for a Requiem Mass

The quichua medical system is very complex and articulated. It includes an aetiology, a diagnosis and a treatment of illnesses classified according to their perceived causes

and thus treated by specialists (Estrella 1997).¹¹ Illnesses are ordered hierarchically, according to the degree of risk to which the patient's life is exposed, the more dangerous ones being those that lead to death. *Pago*, then, is required for the treatment of those illnesses that may cause death. Caused by supernatural and strong entities, the treatment of these potentially fatal illnesses requires the intervention of equally powerful entities and the presence of money is compulsory. The amount of money required for the treatment is proportional to the degree of danger to which both the patient and the healer are exposed. The higher the responsibility involved in treating these illnesses, the higher the *pago* required, that is, the higher the amount of money involved. A few examples will clarify this point.

The *huatucayashqua* is an illness caused by a spirit called *duende* entering someone's body. The treatment aims at separating the *duende* from the body of the patient, and it implies several stages, one of which is the offering of food to the *duende*; food that must be left in the place where the *duende* has entered the person's body. If this is not effective, then the patient must be taken to a church to be treated by a priest through a treatment called *conjuración*, a quichua adaptation of the Spanish *curar con*, that is, 'to heal with', but also from *conjurar* that is, to make an exorcism.¹² This treatment requires a compulsory *pago* to the priest. Money is also an important presence in the treatment of those illnesses caused by the splitting-up of the soul (*shungu*) from the body. This splitting may have several origins, and according to its specific cause, the person affected may eventually die or recover.

The money to be paid in these types of treatment, healers told me, is for the *derecho*, the entitlement to be cured by those who have the power to do so: God, the Virgin Mary, and several saints, each in charge of a specific illness. *Pago* cannot but be in the form of money. If the patient does not have any money, and leaves a token, not only will the healing be ineffective, because 'He does not defend the person when the *derecho* has not been paid', but the patient will also catch the *mal aire*, another and more serious illness (compare also Balladelli 1989: 108, 112).

At the top of the hierarchy we find illnesses caused by sorcery. The *brujeashcamanta*, a quichuism of the Spanish word for sorcery (*brujería*), is the worst illness of all, because it is caused by an explicit intention to kill the person

¹¹ There are several medicine men, each with their own tasks, specialization and powers. The *yerbateros* know the medicinal plants and how to use them. The *fregadores* can treat problems of bones fractures and dislocations, through massages. The 'healers of the bad air' treat the illnesses attributed to the 'bad air'. The 'callers of the shadow' treat the illnesses caused by a sudden fright or astonishment (*espanto*). The *yachac* are the most powerful and may treat or cause sorcery. Their closest companions are the *duendes* or Spirits, bad or good according to what they do. Midwives (sp. *parteras*) treat everything concerning pregnancy and the birth, but they can also heal from the *espanto* or can 'call back the soul' if these illnesses are not too serious.

¹² A medicine man has defined the *conjuración* as a 'sacrament' to be given after the baptism and confirmation, in order to take the devil out of the body (Balladelli 1989).

in question through the intervention of a sorcerer (*brujo*),¹³ who calls to his aid some strong spirits including certain Catholic Saints. The following procedure is carried out. The sorcerer writes down the name of the target person on a piece of paper; then he sprinkles on it some salt – a sign of bad luck – and some hair of the person to be bewitched. Then he wraps it.¹⁴ The person who has commissioned the sorcery, or one of the spirit companions of the sorcerer, or a priest who is willing to do so, must leave this parcel in a ‘bad’ place: a busy road where it will be walked on by people and animals; a river; the sea or a church, especially one that hosts an ‘appropriate’ saint such as Saint Bernard for example, whom people define as the Saint of Death (Balladelli 1989: 143).

The sorcerer and the spirits who ‘do the favour’ each need an individual *pago* for the ‘entitlement’. The money must be ready when the sorcerer’s agent comes back after leaving the parcel, and this is why it is normally put on the altar at the beginning of the ceremony. The higher the responsibility of the agents involved, the higher the demand of the person commissioning it, and the higher the payment for the ‘entitlement’. Sorcery can be counter treated by a ‘good’ sorcerer, a *yachac*. The *yachac* likewise heals through the intermediation and help of his companions who, besides the Mountain or the Lake Spirits, are mainly from the Catholic universe: saints, the Virgin Mary or God Himself. The performance of the healing is similar to the bewitchment: the *yachac* prepares the table, calls one of his companions and asks them to help recover the parcel, so that the witchcraft will be cleared and the patient healed. Once back, the agents ask for their *pago*, and the *yachac* prescribes the necessary remedies. A usual remedy in treatments from sorcery is the payment of 12 masses in 12 different churches. Here are the words of M.B., a 42 year-old woman who told me that on one occasion she felt very ill and weak, unable to do anything. So, her children took her to a healer to be treated. The healer asked her to bring a few things necessary for the ritual, such as perfume, alcohol, cigarettes, sugar amongst other things. He healed her but in order to: ‘be able to take the filth away, I had to pay \$10, and another \$60 for the healing’. Pesillanos refer to all of these payments as *pago*.

Any such treatment includes the laying out of an altar, that Pesillanos call ‘table’. A cloth is draped on the ground, on top of which the healer puts flowers, food and money. Tables/altars of this sort are also prepared for the November celebrations of the dead, with food for the dead who, on the night of All Souls, come back to visit their kin (compare with Ferraro 2008). A table/altar is also permanently laid out for San Juan, with his image, candles and flowers; and frequently a similar table/altar is prepared to remember a recently dead kin. It is worth noting that the Spanish word for table is *mesa*, but, due to the grammatical and phonetic peculiarities of Pesillan Spanish, heavily influenced by the Quichua

¹³ A *brujo* is always a *yachac*, that is a medicine man of the highest rank. He can be good or bad; *brujo* however, normally implies a negative consideration.

¹⁴ In the area of my fieldwork, sorcery of the highest level is usually performed by men, and the most powerful healers to treat it are also usually men.

language,¹⁵ *mesa* is actually pronounced *misa* which is the Spanish word for the Catholic mass, a ritual also performed on an altar laid with offerings to God, and that people attend in order to ask for benevolence and help, as well as for the eternal rest of the dead (see Gose 1994).

This linguistic detail highlights more clearly that healing treatments and the Catholic Mass belong to the same world, and that the *pagos* they require are structurally equivalent. Indeed, Pesillanos believe that restless souls who, for a variety of reasons, cannot find peace, wander around at night, crying and bothering the living. The preferred way to assure their eternal peace is the celebration of a mass, for which a *pago* is compulsory. An old indigenous man made this connection even more explicit to me when he said that ‘in the old times, when there was no money, we had to pay the healer in crops or labour, in the same way as we used to give the *diezmo*¹⁶ to the priest to pay for a mass or to pray for the dead’.

The Devil’s Money

Restless souls are also closely associated to money and highlight the ambiguity that surrounds it. These souls are, in fact, found wandering especially around the sites of the ‘buried money’ (*plata de los entierros*).

The belief in ‘buried money’ is widespread across all Andean regions where people explicitly date it to the time of the Incas (see Harris 1995). However, in Pesillo this money is explicitly related to the Catholic fathers. It is believed that the Mercedarian Fathers buried their treasures when forced to leave Pesillo, and went away cursing the land and everything they left behind. There is no evidence that these treasures have ever existed, or that someone has ever found any. Yet, people still look for it. When I first arrived in the area, in 1991, there was a lot of commotion at the (groundless) news that during some work in the chapel of the old hacienda house – now belonging to the village – these treasures might have been found under the altar.

The ‘buried money’ has an ambiguous character. It is believed to bring richness and wealth to the one ‘lucky’ person to whom it is destined, but it also causes illnesses of such a magnitude that they deserve a separate chapter in the indigenous medical system, and their treatment require the highest *pagos* (Balladelli 1989). Pesillanos fear it because it bears a very dangerous association with the world of the devil and of evil spirits. In the words of a medicine man: ‘[the buried money] is always on the devil’s side, since God has not created richness. This is why this money is extracted by the devil’ (also Balladelli 1989: 133). The sites where the Fathers’ treasures are buried are always looked after by the *Cucu* (q. *huacai siqui*)

¹⁵ Quichua is the Ecuadorian variant of the Quechua language.

¹⁶ During the hacienda time, the *diezmo* was a tribute that peasants had to pay to the local priest. The term comes from the Spanish word for ‘ten’ (*diez*) because the tribute had to correspond to the tenth part of the whole crop.

which, unlike the majority of Andean spirits who are double-edged, is exclusively a negative one. Very often the *Cucu* is the devil himself, and he makes sure that only the 'right' person and no one else finds the treasure. If someone else finds it, some one for whom the treasure had not been destined, and if this person insists and succeeds in taking it home, despite all the attempts of the devil to impede it, then he will have troubles and will die suddenly.¹⁷ After a few days, the devil will appear to this person and give him an ultimatum which is also a proposal: to exchange the treasure for his life.¹⁸ These 'devil contracts' are very well known throughout the Andes (see Nash 1975; Taussig 1980; Harris 1989; Crain 1991, 1994). In Pesillo they are also called 'the money contract' (sp. *el contrato de la plata*). 'If the one who finds the treasure wants to enjoy this wealth, then he will give his life away', one of my indigenous friends told me. If this is the case, then after the time conceded expires the devil will claim his part and will take the life of this person away. He will suddenly die; 'he must die' – my friend continued – 'and probably of a bad death because these are the terms of the contract he had accepted' (see also Ballardelli 1989: 92).

Conclusion

My ethnographic data highlight that money in Pesillo is closely associated to the Catholic world. Native narratives seem to indicate that like gold in pre-Hispanic times, in Pesillo contemporary money articulates the mundane with the supernatural world. Money has two important characteristics: it is ambiguous because the temporal and supernatural power it channels is ambiguous, but it also conveys forgiveness, healing and salvation.

The different contexts where *pagos* are compulsory suggest that money can buy services and favours beyond human reach, and these are in the hands of those forces who hold the power of life and death. To achieve the benevolence of these forces, people must necessarily pay, in order to be entitled to their services. This seems to fit harmoniously with the general Andean pattern of hierarchy and sacrifices to the Supernatural Forces (see Nash 1975; Bastien 1978; Harris, 1989; Sallnow 1986, 1989; Gose 1986, 1994; Rösing 1994 among others).

Money is, therefore, strictly linked to the agents and intermediaries of the supernatural world. This is the world of the powerful 'others': the Fathers, the devil, the Saints, the *yachac*. The protagonists of the Catholic world (saints, the Virgin Mary, priests) belong to the same sphere as the spirits of the mountains

¹⁷ The protagonists of these narratives are always men. Women, more than men, tell them (see also Crain 1991).

¹⁸ Krohn-Hansen (1995) reports of these devil pacts also for the Dominican Republic. To the already known criticism by several scholars of Taussig's materialistic and 'class' view of the devil lore (see Parry and Bloch 1989), Krohn-Hansen adds also the point that these narratives may articulate a morality of alterity.

and of the lakes (Gose 1994), of the *duendes* and of the *yachac*. There are bad and good spirits, bad and good *yachac*, bad and good priests, bad and good saints. Being the agents and the intermediaries of life forces, they may be bad or good because their power may be of a negative or positive nature. 'God seems to be a good spirit', a peasant told Balladelli (1989: 87).

Money channels the faith and devotion that humans have for the superior beings upon which their general well-being depends. At the same time, it is the means through which healing, forgiveness and salvation are enacted. This gives money a very strong but also ambiguous potency. It is used in the treatment of fatal illnesses and in the healing from sorcery, but at the same time it is used to cause sorcery, and to harm. As with many other manifestations of the supernatural in the Andes, the mass and the healing ceremonies can be both positive and negative; they can save or cause death, their power being put in action by money. Money is associated with God and the Good, but also with the devil and evil. It is a means through which the Divine operates in its several positive and negative manifestations.

The link between money and Catholicism is very fertile for the whole West, but it is particularly relevant for Pesillo considering that the director of the local NGO is also the person who celebrates the mass for San Juan, the mass for the restless souls, the mass for treatments against sorcery. The priest/head of the NGO, therefore, articulates the three spheres of the sacred that requires a *pago*. What makes this especially relevant for the success of the CC credit scheme is that the priest visibly holds the monopoly of those elements necessary for salvation. In the eyes of Pesillanos, faith and salvation are put in motion by a *pago* in money, and with faith and salvation, money has always been in the hands of the Catholic Church.

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Chapter 5

The Re-Invention of Mapuche Male Shamans as Catholic Priests: Legitimizing Indigenous Co-Gender Identities in Modern Chile

Ana Mariella Bacigalupo

Fabián (a machi initiate): Male machi – Mapuche shamans – are not like other Mapuche men. They can't have positions in the community. They can't drink and get into fights. They can't have women, because it takes away their powers.

Mariella: Are male machi men?

Fabián: Of course they are men. They are special men, like priests who don't have a family because they dedicate themselves to God. Priests can't fight. They can't have women. But they are still men.

Mariella: Some Mapuche say male machi are more effeminate.

Fabián: The men that are chosen to be machi by the spirits of God have certain special faculties. They are sensitive, intuitive, like women. That is why they have to be more effeminate. More exquisite.

By drawing on the parallel between Mapuche male machi's special gender identities and those of celibate Catholic priests, male machi have struggled to legitimate themselves and their practices in Chilean majority discourses and to avoid being labeled homosexuals and witches. During the colonial era, male machi were co-gendered males who moved from and between masculinity and femininity and combined the identities, performances, occupations, modes of dress, and sexualities associated with Mapuche women and men. Both Spaniards and Mapuche established parallels between the gender identities of celibate Catholic priests and male machi. Jesuits associated male machi with their own spiritual militias and machi projected their co-gender identities onto Jesuit priests.

Contemporary male machi actively re-invent themselves as 'celibate Mapuche priests' to legitimate their co-gender roles and ritual transvestism and protect themselves from accusations of homosexuality, justify dedicating their lives to their spiritual calling, and increase their prestige at a national level. The celibate Catholic priest is an acclaimed male figure of authority in Chile who is neither heavily masculinized nor sexualized but holds social prestige. Priests are like male machi in that they mediate between the natural and supernatural worlds on behalf of humans and hold moral authority but also wear skirts and have a sexuality distinct from that of ordinary family men. Although many Mapuche now



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subscribe to the belief that there is a relationship between male gender inversion, transvestism, and homosexuality, they do not ordinarily view Catholic priests in their *soutanes* in those terms.

I draw on ethno-historical and ethno-graphic research with Mapuche machi in southern Chile between 1991–2001 to explore the roots of the male machi-celibate priest connection, to show how male machi draw on the argument of celibacy and priestly robes to legitimate their practice, and how male machi's roles as 'Mapuche priests' allow them to expand their spiritual and healing practices.

Colonial Legacies: Machi Co-gender Identities and Jesuit Priests

When Spaniards arrived in Chile and crossed the Bio-Bio river into the Mapuche homeland, they projected their classificatory schemes onto Mapuche realities and used them as a rationale for domination. Colonial agents used contrasting Spanish perceptions of Mapuche men to advance different political agendas. Their depictions of Mapuche warriors as brave, masculine, barbaric, and dangerous helped to explain Spanish military defeats and justify the enslavement of Mapuche. The Spaniards' sexualizing and demonizing logic was a rhetorical strategy and a weapon against machi and polygamous Mapuche chiefs. If male Mapuche spiritual and political authorities led lives of sexual excess, sodomy, and perversion, then Spanish colonization and evangelization were 'justified'. The discourse of sexuality and evil became a Spanish tool for molding Mapuche subjects to colonial power. Judgments about sexuality are deeply embedded in the history of scholarly explanations of who acquires power, who deserves it, and who gets to keep it (Weston 1998: 20). Lust and leisure are attributed to those 'unfit to rule'; domesticated sexuality and managed sensibilities are attributed to those who stand above – and who label – those troubled categories (Stoler 1995: 194). In Chile, male machi were forced to conform to Spanish notions of sexual propriety, modesty, and decorum and to become Christian to avoid persecution.

Spaniards and Mapuche associated spiritual and political power with gender in ways both similar and different, and both parties used their gendered lenses to represent the practices of the other in their own terms. In Spain, men held the reins to institutions of power. Spaniards viewed practices of politics and warfare as masculine, held by masculine kings and knights. They often associated piety and spirituality with femininity and women, yet celibate male priests held institutional religious power. The Jesuits considered themselves 'soldiers of Christ' who battled against the devil and against the vices and sins of the Mapuche (Olivares 1864–1901).¹ The Spaniards believed that Christian forces had participated in the spiritual

¹ The Jesuits claimed that the devil was responsible for the Mapuche's resistance to colonization and evangelization and insisted that the Spaniards practice 'defensive warfare'. The Franciscans blamed the Mapuche for this resistance and argued that the Indians could be 'saved' only through violence, punishment, and slavery (Pinto 1991: 68–9).

conquest of Chile. They described the Apostle Santiago leading the Spaniards into battle with his cross, and the Virgin Mary blinding Mapuche warriors with light and dust (Acosta 1894 [1590]: 246; Ercilla y Zúñiga 1933 [1569]; Rosales 1989 [1674]: 387–8; Sosa 1966: 180).

In Mapuche society, co-gendered males held precedence. Nevertheless, Mapuche political power was considered masculine and was traced through the male line. It was associated with warring, hunting, cattle herding, and men's dress. Mapuche spiritual power was considered feminine, and though it, too, was traced through the male line, it was associated with healing, horticulture, and women's dress. Co-gendered male *machi* combined feminine spiritual power and masculine political power, contrary to Spanish assumptions about how men controlled both social and spiritual orders.

The special co-gendered identities of male *machi* allowed them to combine the male roles that the Spaniards valued most: roles in warfare and spirituality. For one thing, male *machi* performed spiritual warfare against the Spaniards. They propitiated the spirits of Mapuche warriors and *machi* spirits (spiritual warriors) who continued warring against Spanish souls in the sky, using as weapons lightning, thunderbolts, and volcanic eruptions (Rosales 1989 [1674]: 155–61). With curses, male *machi* blew tobacco toward enemy land. They divined the locations of Spaniards and determined the outcomes of confrontations by performing magic in bowls of water (Rosales 1989 [1674]: 135). They invoked the moon, the sun, and the planets during military divinations to gain power to cure the wounded and take vengeance on their enemies (Ercilla y Zúñiga 1933 [1569]: 45, 147; Oña 1975 [1596]: 15, 21). Male *machi* consistently advised Mapuche chiefs to eliminate the Spaniards (Rosales 1989 [1674]: 384). It is unclear whether male *machi* actually fought alongside warriors like the co-gendered Native Americans that French and English colonizers called 'berdaches' (Callender and Kochems 1983; Katz 1976), but they accompanied Mapuche warriors to the battlefield and performed spiritual warfare from the sidelines. They pierced their tongues and penises with wooden spindles and offered their blood to the spirits (Vivar 1966 [1558]: 134), requesting spiritual protection for Mapuche warriors in exchange.² Male *machi* employed words as weapons, too. Many of them were renowned public orators (Rosales 1989 [1674]: 159–60) who used discourse to call on the powers of their ancestors and belittle Spanish warriors.

Today, Mapuche spiritual warfare against enemy spirits is an essential component in the ritual healing of bodies and communities and a political tool used in contemporary Mapuche resistance movements. *Machi* kill evil *wekufe* spirits using spiritual warfare during exorcisms performed at all healing, initiation, and collective fertility rituals (Bacigalupo 1998).

Mapuche ideals of co-gendered sexual warriors and sexual-spiritual male *machi* clashed with the Spaniards' polarized notions of religiosity. These were embodied,

² The contact-period Maya, too, had a dance of the warriors in which penis perforation and bloodletting were dramatized (Landa 1941; Taube 2000).

on one hand, in the ideal of a hyper-masculine Spanish soldier who should resist sensual pleasure and, on the other, in the purportedly celibate Catholic priest. Yet there were also instances of identification with the other. Both Spaniards and Mapuche established parallels between the gender identities of celibate Catholic priests and the celibate *boquibuye* who carried sacred *foye* branches as symbols of peace during war parliaments and lived isolated in caves, which the Spaniards labeled 'monasteries'. They wore long cloths wrapped around their waists in place of breeches, but the Spaniards saw these as 'priestly robes', not as the garments of putos. They wore long hair, like male machi, or wigs made from seaweed (Nuñez 1863: 361–2; Rosales 1989 [1674]: 168, 209, 1154). The Spaniards considered this hairstyle priestly, not effeminate.

The Jesuits associated *boquibuyes* with their own spiritual militias, in which obedience, poverty, and chastity on the part of men of the same rank encouraged homo-social cohesion and homoeroticism while preventing same-sex practices (Geirola 2000: 160–61). The Jesuits saw their friendships and those between *boquibuye* as traditionally masculine, because they rejected everything feminine and womanly. Mapuche in turn projected the co-gendered identity of the *boquibuye* onto Jesuit priests. Chief Guaquimilla portrayed a Jesuit priest bearing a *foye* branch as a *boquibuye* whose co-gendered qualities were thought to grant well-being to animals, people, and nature in general: 'They called him *father and mother* and filled him with compliments and gifts His happy coming was not limited to the people to whom he brought this enormous good. The animals, herbs, flowers, streams, and brooks, too, were leaping with pleasure' (Ovalle 1888 [1646]: 292; emphasis added).

Mapuche constructed Jesuits as powerful machi, and priests often played with this image to gain Christian followers. Father Alonso del Pozo, for example, claimed that his holy water healed the sick, and he told *chueca* players they would win if they went to mass. When Fray Alonso revived a dying boy, the Mapuche believed his powers were superior to those of the machi (Rosales in Pinto 1991: 55, 58), undermining their prestige. Machi countered that the Jesuits were witches who used baptism and confession to hex and kill Mapuche (Olivares 1864–1901: 289). Some Mapuche destroyed Jesuit robes and Christian images because they were afraid of their 'magical power' (Pinto 1991: 57); others assassinated them (Salinas 1991: 108). Contemporary male machi have fed the priest – machi correlation to assert their masculinity and to aspire to positions of male power and national prestige by legitimating themselves as celibate Mapuche priests. As 'celibate priests', male machi are relatively protected from the labels of homosexual or witch.

In the eyes of colonial Spaniards, however, vaginas were ideally linked to womanhood, skirts, and 'passive' sexual intercourse, whereas penises were ideally linked to manhood, breeches, and sexual penetration. Because Spanish soldiers and Jesuit priests saw gender, dress, and manner as ideally linked to bodies and sexual acts, they sometimes labeled transvestites and gender inverts hermaphrodites, and

they associated both categories with 'deviant' sexuality. The Irish Jesuit priest Thomas Falkner (1774: 117) noted:

The male wizards are obliged (as it were) to leave their sex, and to dress themselves in female apparel, and are not permitted to marry, though the female ones or witches may. They choose for this office those who at an early time of life discover an effeminate disposition. They are clothed in female attire.

The body and its dynamics are sites for the most deeply entrenched beliefs held by a culture. The Spaniards perceived Spanish male bodies, dressed in men's clothing, as natural and correct. Native bodies had to be made to conform, to learn their Spanish gender, in order to be considered part of society.

Twentieth-century Chilean national gender ideologies and their representations of male machi developed from the Spanish colonial association between gender performance and sexuality. If a man displays dress or behavior considered inappropriate to men, it raises doubts about his heterosexuality because it stands outside the stereotype of masculinity and the heterosexual binary model. Scholars throughout the twentieth century depicted male machi as 'inverts', 'transvestites', 'effeminate', and 'homosexuals' (Hilger 1957: 68, 128, 249; Latham 1915: 281). Martin Gusinde (1917: 97) wrote that machi 'follow the custom of sexual inversion, which can be proved by their preference for jewels and womanly adornments'. Machi juggle these majority representations with ritual gender bending.

The colonial Mapuche constructed Jesuits as powerful machi. Priests often played with this image to gain Christian followers. Father Alonso del Pozo, for example, claimed that his holy water healed the sick, and told *chueca* players that they would win if they went to mass. When Alonso revived a dying boy, the Mapuche believed his powers were superior to those of the machi (Rosales in Pinto 1991: 55, 58), undermining their prestige. Machi countered that the Jesuits were witches who used baptism and confession to hex and kill Mapuche (Olivares 1874: 289).

The Feminization of Spirituality

The relationship between gender and political and spiritual power shifted dramatically in the mid-eighteenth century as missionary zeal and sociopolitical and economic change transformed Mapuche communities. As other Mapuche institutions gained political power, machi were stripped of their influence and were re-gendered as solely feminine and spiritual. Various circumstances led to the repudiation of male machi roles and increasingly raised females to these positions of spiritual authority. Local Mapuche clans disappeared, and political power became unified and concentrated in the hands of a few permanent, macroregional sociopolitical organizations with a pan-Mapuche identity (Boccarra 1998). The line of male ancestral spirits whom the male machi invoked for the

benefit of a small, lineage-based community became irrelevant. Socio-political interests replaced the co-gendered warrior ideal as the Mapuche became sedentary agriculturalists, suffered military defeat by the Chilean army in 1881, and were placed on reservations in 1884. The Mapuche then became secondary citizens of the Chilean nation-state. The number of male machi decreased substantially after the final 'pacification' of the Mapuche in the late nineteenth century; spiritual warfare and male military divination were no longer needed (Faron 1964: 154). Missionization by homophobic Catholic orders (Foerster 1996; Pinto 1991) that rejected 'un-masculine' male machi also contributed to the decline in their numbers and the rise of female machi (Bacigalupo 1996). Missionization was facilitated by the division of Mapuche patrilineages among different reservations, so that they no longer had ancestral spirits in common.

Female machi predominated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as land fertility became a major concern for Mapuche (see Augusta 1934 [1910]; Cooper 1946: 750; Faron 1964; Guevara 1908: 245; Hilger 1957: 112; Latcham 1922: 630; Moesbach 1929: 330–49; Smith 1855: 234–6). With pacification, the Mapuche were relegated to small plots of eroded territory, and agricultural production became crucial for survival. Collective *nguillatun* rituals were now performed primarily to ask deities for bountiful crops and fertile animals. Both female machi and male machi were considered *ngenkuyen* – owners of the moon – who controlled the powers of generation and fertility and who were gifted in dealing with problems between the sexes, infertility, and menstruation (Latcham 1922: 433). Sex-based notions of gender, however, and the rejection of effeminate male machi were gradually incorporated into Mapuche gender ideologies. The idea that female machi, who can give birth from their bodies, are more effective in ensuring land fertility became generalized throughout the twentieth century. As machi practice has become increasingly associated with domesticity, land fertility, and women's work, some Mapuche have also begun to reject male machi who wear women's clothes.

Although female machi today are considered to be both masculine spiritual warriors and powerful feminine women, it is their female bodies that give them authority over the fertility of the land. Female machi also hold credibility as healers in the realm of spirits, illness, and witchcraft. The Mapuche believe that female machi are less invested in the male ancestral spirits of competing patrilineages within a community than are male machi. Therefore, they are better suited to be spiritual representatives of the body politic. Female machi have begun to invoke the pan-Mapuche deity *Ngünechen* on behalf of a much larger ritual community beyond the patrilineage.

The switch to predominantly female machi was gradual, but it produced a shift in the way Mapuche conceived of gender and spirituality. When Chile became a nation-state in 1818, national discourses that divorced spiritual and political power became increasingly important to machi practice. Machi were then stripped of their formal political power and regendered as feminine and spiritual. Machi responded

to this process by expanding colonial Mapuche notions about the relationship between femininity, spirituality, and power.

Chilean perceptions of spiritual and political power as contrasting ways of viewing the world had a major effect on the way machi perceived their roles and gender identities. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the spiritual power of machi was seen as conflicting with the political power of male chiefs. Male machi's legitimacy as spiritual intermediaries was threatened by the imposition of Chilean ideals of male roles as political and public. Machi spiritual power, associated with femininity, became independent from political power and was passed down through the female line, often through a maternal grandmother. When machi lost their political power, female machi's spiritual power and bodies alone accorded them status and prestige in other realms of Mapuche society – something that was much more difficult for male machi to accomplish. With the advent of democracy in 1990, machi spiritual roles are increasingly politicized. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of male machi who performed roles as ritual orators in collective rituals and who support different political ideologies or participate in Mapuche resistance movements against the Chilean state.

Current Male Machi as Celibate Catholic Priests: Transvestism and Homosexuality

Majority discourses and some Mapuche, too, stigmatize transvestism and homosexuality as 'deviant', but male machi still need to become feminine to be possessed by spirits. Male machi faced with this predicament struggle for legitimacy and participate in majority-gendered discourses of power by associating themselves with national male positions of prestige while retaining their traditional co-gender identities. Mapuche who are not machi also negotiate contrasting national and traditional Mapuche gender ideologies. They grudgingly accepted male machi's various ritual gendered identities, partial transvestism, and performance of womanly roles for the sake of ritual efficacy. But they also expected male machi to legitimate themselves in terms of the prestigious male role of the celibate priest. Although many Mapuche now subscribe to the belief that there is a relationship between male gender inversion, transvestism, and homosexuality, they do not ordinarily view Catholic priests in their *soutanes* in those terms.

Mapuche interpret male machi's co-gendered identities through the lens of national perceptions of homosexuality in diverse ways. Machi Rocío, for example, in an interview in late 2001, explained that male machi inherit machi spirits from women on the mother's side of the family and that their gender performances become feminized in the process: 'Male machi inherit the spirit of a grandmother machi and then they have to become like women ... because they say that male machi, one month they are like men, but another month they are like women. If they have a woman they have to sleep with the woman. They have to sleep with their patients.' Longko Melinao agreed: 'When men become machi they become

more like women, and men don't like that. ... It is looked down upon and that's why men avoid that profession.' Rocío, too, claimed that male machi's co-gendered ritual identities led them to desire both women and men. Ramón compared contemporary male machi who were 'single and like men' with historically known co-gendered machi.

But Rocío, Ramón, and Fabián also stressed that machi were men in their everyday lives. Fabián referred to male machi as 'special men' chosen by the spirits, and Ramón constructed male machi as homosexual men. Rocío believed that male machi retained the 'sexual appetite of men' and were sexually more active than female machi.

Mapuche sometimes distinguish between machi's co-gendered ritual identities, effeminacy, transvestism, and homosexuality, and at other times they lump them together. Fabián characterized male machi as sensitive and effeminate. He believed that they should not have women because they would lose their powers, but that not all male machi were homosexuals. Ramón, in contrast, argued that being a machi was a punishment, because most of them were homosexuals. He used the term *homosexual* to refer to all same-sex practices by male machi.

Male machi's actual sexual practices are as varied as those of other Mapuche and non-Mapuche men. Some have male lovers, some female, some both; some remain celibate, and a few are married. Sexual acts between machi of either sex are taboo because they share a ritual co-gendered identity. Male machi are aware of the power dynamics involved in the labeling of sexual acts and gender performances. They do not assume permanent homosexual identities, and they readily contest Mapuche or national readings of them as *maricones* (faggots) or *homosexuals* (homosexuals). Male machi self-identify as masculine, heterosexual or celibate men in their everyday lives, regardless of their gender performances and the sexual acts they perform with others.³ By legitimating themselves according to national discourses of gender and sexuality, male machi attempt to avoid being labeled marginal and deviant.

Below, I shall explore how three male machi have reconciled their ritual co-gendered identities, partial transvestism, and special sexualities with the need to masculinize themselves in their daily lives. I analyze how male machi reinvent themselves as celibate priests in order to deflect accusations of homosexuality

³ Holders of Euro-American biologically reductionist views of homosexualities refuse to encompass the variety of cultural specifics that structure sexual behaviors cross-culturally. Callender and Kochems (1986) acknowledged that male berdaches did not have homosexual identities, but they still referred to the genitally organized activities between male berdaches and men as homosexual acts. Lesbians and gay men in the west draw on biological explanations as a culturally authorized and politically potent justification (Blackwood 1986; Weston 1991), but anthropologists should see such claims as a Euro-American folk exegesis on the meaning of homosexuality that speaks to, and through, Euro-American cultural contexts and political dynamics (Elliston 1995).

or witchcraft and how these newfound roles allow male machi to legitimate their spiritual and healing practices.

Male Machi and the Argument of Celibacy

Male machi protect themselves from accusations of effeminacy and homosexuality by identifying as married and heterosexual (two machi named **Pedro and Jacinto** were examples) or as single and celibate like Catholic priests, as in the cases of Machi Sergio and Machi José. Because Sergio and José had had girlfriends in the past, most Mapuche viewed their decisions to become celibate as the result of demands from their respective machi spirits rather than as cover-ups for same-sex desires. One Mapuche man, nevertheless, told me that Sergio was an effeminate homosexual who had secret relationships with men, like many Catholic priests.

Machi Sergio became vulnerable to spirit attack when one of his former girlfriends spurned him. He subscribed to the dominant Catholic male notion of woman as temptress and believed that his machi spirit had enabled him to renounce women. He thought his machi practice was incompatible with marriage:

Before I became a machi I had a dream where I was walking up a path and naked women were beckoning to me, trying to tempt me. I looked at them and then continued my path. This was a test that God had put to me. ... **Machi must go around taking care** of other people and love them like their own family. ... I can't have a family of my own. Can you imagine having kids and a wife and coming back late, or not at all? How could they grow up properly or be happy?

Machi José, similarly, had concluded that God did not want him to have a girlfriend, because he became ill when his high-school sweetheart cheated on him. Since then, he had viewed all women as deceitful, evil creatures, 'like Eve,' and had become celibate. He claimed that male machi should never marry:

A priest does not marry, a monk does not marry. A good machi, who has more powers than a priest, more power than a mother, more power than the pope, more power than a bishop, does not marry. ... The Bible says that a person who adores God should not marry. It is totally prohibited. ... Our ancestors in the time when the Bible was written were unmarried. Jesus did not marry. My inheritance comes from Noah and Jesus. ... I would like to have children but there are certain impositions that tell me 'no'. I have to work for God and for my fellow humans.

At the same time, José did not try to disprove a rumour that I was his girlfriend, in order to assert his heterosexual masculinity in his community and to dispel another rumour that he had a relationship with a young man.

Male Machi, Transvestism, and Priestly Robes

In Chile, male machi's clothing and gender performances have been interpreted through multiple lenses. Some Mapuche view male machi's ritual transvestism and womanly roles as demands from the spirits, not as manifestations of effeminacy or homosexuality. Ramiro told me during an interview in December 2001: 'Machi Jacinto is married and has children. He is like any man. People become scandalized when a machi wears women's dresses to work. That's the issue. Mapuche men make cruel jokes [about homosexuality] without thinking of the consequences.' Other Mapuche view male machi's transvestism as an indication of effeminate homosexuality. In order to protect themselves from this label, male machi remain only partially transvestite in ritual contexts and dress in men's clothes in everyday contexts. A machi's marital status influences the way his clothing and gender performances are read. Married male machi are assumed to be heterosexual and can wear more women's clothes and perform more womanly tasks than single male machi without being viewed as effeminate or homosexual.

Dominant Chilean notions of manly gender performances have also influenced the way machi's clothes are read by others. Ramiro told me that non-Mapuche coded all Mapuche traditional clothing as womanly: 'In olden times Mapuche men didn't wear pants, they wore *chiripas* [traditional pant-skirts]. Now, when men machi wear *chiripas*, people say they are wearing women's clothes. Chileans think that traditional Mapuche clothes are feminine. In order to be treated like a man one has to dress like a Chilean.' Male machi have tried to respond to these multiple expectations. Their practices involve a complex layering of Mapuche and Chilean signifiers of masculinity, femininity, and ethnicity, orchestrated through the clothing of their bodies. In their daily lives male machi wear western-style pants and hats and Mapuche men's *makuñ* (ponchos), which mark them as masculine. Yet their bright scarves and silver bracelets for warding off evil show them to be different from ordinary Mapuche men.

Male machi's gender performances are indeed different from those of other Mapuche men. As boys, male machi rarely participate in national signifiers of masculinity such as fighting and playing soccer. Typically, machi spirits do not allow male machi to perform rural Mapuche men's tasks such as working the land, cutting wood, and doing wage labour. Nor do the spirits allow them to drink in public. Some Mapuche understand male machi's special gender roles, whereas others criticize them for being effeminate because they do not perform 'masculine' roles. Some Mapuche use the term *maricón* to refer to male machi's effeminate gender performances, even though they do not see them as homosexuals. Paulina referred to Machi Abel as *mariquita* (little *maricón*) because he **did not cut wood** or work the land, although she believed that he liked women and would eventually marry. Male machi respond to such perceptions by performing some rural Mapuche women's roles, such as collecting and preparing herbal remedies and cooking, but avoiding others, such as spinning, weaving, sewing, and making pottery, that would clearly mark them as effeminate.

Sergio

Sergio and I waited at the bus stop after two afternoon healing rituals. He wore men's pants, a Mapuche man's *makuñ* over a shirt or sweater, and a hat. His silver bracelet and the coloured scarf around his neck signalled that he was no ordinary man. While he was healing that afternoon Sergio had worn multiple coloured scarves around his neck and head, two *choyke* (Patagonian ostrich) feathers in his hat, and a purple silk cape that he described as 'priest robes'. I asked him why he did not wear a *killa* (woman's shawl) during his rituals, as Machi Jacinto did. He responded: 'I am like a priest. I wear traditional machi clothes that are like priests' robes. I don't wear women's clothes. I am not like machi Marta. ... She is really a male machi who wears a *chamal* [woman's woollen wrap]. That is only for women'. **Male machi do not approve of exceptional male machi like Marta, who dressed in women's clothing every day and assumed the identity of a woman.** By constructing his ritual clothes as traditional machi clothing or priestly robes, and not as women's clothes, and by criticizing Marta's transvestism and gender-crossing, Sergio distanced himself from possible rumours about his own effeminacy or homosexuality (for an in-depth discussion of machi Marta see Bacigalupo 2004).

Sergio had not played soccer or fought while in high school: 'I would see the boys my age run after the ball and I thought how dumb they were. ... I just didn't want anyone to yell or scream at me, I didn't want any fighting. I wanted peace and quiet.' Now Sergio drank at home: '**Being out of one's house makes it easier to have evil thrown to one, especially if one gets drunk. That's why I eat at home, and if I drink, I drink at home.**' He **focused on the restrictions his machi spirit placed on him rather than reflecting on how tasks were gendered: 'I can't do any physical work. I feel dizzy and faint. I have to keep my strength for curing. The other male members of my family plough the land.'** Sergio **cooked occasionally and prepared** herbal remedies, but he performed none of the other chores considered womanly.

Jorge

Jorge was like a typical urban Chilean man in that he ran his household and was its main provider. His other family members performed domestic tasks, tended the animals, and worked the land. Jorge dedicated himself exclusively to his machi practice and performed neither men's nor women's chores. His drinking in public with other men did not enhance his masculinity. Other Mapuche viewed it as a transgression of his spiritual role, which reinforced the notion that he was a witch.

Jorge's masculine everyday clothes and his partial transvestism during rituals were read as signs of his changing sexuality, his moral ambivalence, and his engagement with both positive and negative spirits. Jorge wore men's pants, a sweater, a woollen *makuñ*, and a man's hat as everyday garb. During rituals he replaced the hat with colored head kerchiefs and feathers, changed his *makuñ* for a

women's shawl, and added a silver cross and bracelets to ward off evil. His ritual clothing was similar to Machi Sergio's and more masculine than Machi Jacinto's; the latter wore an altered version of a woman's chamal and a *killa* during rituals. Other Mapuche, however, interpreted Jorge's ritual clothing as effeminate, but not Jacinto's and Sergio's clothing. Sergio avoided being labeled a homosexual by successfully constructing himself as a celibate priest and by drawing on his family's prestige. Jacinto avoided it because he was married, had children, and received the support of his community. Jorge's family, on the contrary, was marginal, and his community viewed him as sexually and morally ambivalent because of his alleged relationships with young men and his inability to construct himself according to socially acceptable men's roles.

José

At five o'clock on the morning of April 21, 1995, Machi José and I drove to the previously Evangelical community of Chanco to perform the first collective *ngillatun* ritual held there since 1960. José borrowed my man's *makuñ* and tied a blue scarf around his neck. 'You are not going to wear a *killa* (women's shawl)?' I asked as I pinned my *killa* on over my black dress and flowered apron. 'No,' José replied, 'they need to know that I am a Mapuche man with special powers. If I wear a *killa* like you or too many scarves, then people talk badly. They say male machi are like women. They need to learn to respect us. They need to understand that we [male machi] heal and give blessings like priests, like Jesus, with our *kultrun* (drum) and our prayers.' In this context, José looked like a traditional Mapuche man.

Machi José masculinized and urbanized his everyday dress and manners to such a degree that it affected some Mapuche's belief in his ability to engage spirits. He wore a parka or leather jacket when he was in the cities of Temuco or Santiago: 'I don't want them to look at me and know that I am a machi and that I am different.' Julio, who later became José's *dungumachife*, remarked that 'most people don't believe in male machi like José because they are not feminine enough.'

José was like Sergio in that he had not played soccer in high school. But Mapuche viewed him as masculine because he worked the land and had undergone training to be an electrician and a mechanic – men's jobs in Chile – prior to his initiation. José justified leaving these masculine jobs by associating himself with Jesus: 'Jesus Christ did not plough, he planted a spiritual seed. I must do the same.' José was not accused of being homosexual although he remained single and often wore a women's *killa* and a purple headscarf during divinations. José believed that 'alcohol is the devil' but drank at home with his family and friends like other Mapuche men.

Mapuche view male machi's gender identities and sexualities ambivalently because of the tension between their spiritual and everyday roles and identities. Mapuche revere male machi as people chosen by the spirits yet criticize them if they abide fully by their spirits' demands that they wear women's clothing or

engage in womanly roles. Mapuche may construct male machi as homosexuals and witches yet expect them to have some degree of sexual or gender variance, like priests, in order to be legitimate machi. If a male machi's gender performance and sexuality is too masculine – as in the case of José – then Mapuche may think he has lost his spiritual powers. Male machi's clothing, gender performances, and sexual identities are balancing acts designed to satisfy the contradictory demands of Mapuche spirits and humans.

Machi Practice as Priestly Roles

Male machi who reconstruct themselves as celibate Catholic priests to justify dedicating their lives to their spiritual calling, hold moral authority and influence community decisions. These male machi compete with psychologists and priests in granting advice about self-improvement, relationships, and spiritual and moral matters. Male machi also use progressive, empathetic, and involved healing techniques which they associate with priestly behavior, while female machi classify the same healing techniques as 'mothering models'.

Male machi perform collective *ngillatun* rituals on behalf of a ritual congregation in the same way priests conduct mass. Machi Nora's son Jaime said, 'The *ngillatun* is the same as the [Catholic] priests who have their church, only the Mapuche do their religion once every four years.' Longko Daniel added, 'Doing a *ngillatun* without a machi is like a mass without a priest, like an Evangelical meeting without a pastor. There always has to be a machi to direct it.' Sergio, José, and many other male machi officiated as machi-priests in the collective *ngillatun* ceremonies in their respective communities.

Sergio

Machi Sergio adhered to a Catholic morality and performed his role as Mapuche priest accordingly: 'I must dedicate myself to God and to prayer. God gives a little light and tells us to follow that path and you will find God, but all of this is guided by God.' He believed that altruism, humility, self-improvement, and forgiveness were crucial for machi practice and opposed witchcraft, ritual revenge and love magic. Sergio initiated three machi into his machi school of practice, which he viewed as a monastic order involving discipline and sacrifice. He expelled evil from patient's bodies and souls but did not denounce evil-doers or practice ritual vengeance, because he believed that 'those who wish evil on others only bring evil back unto themselves.'

Sergio thought Catholicism was a complement to machi practice. He found great similarities between machi rituals and the Catholic mass. He was never ordained, but he began conducting mass in Mapudungu, together with the bishop, to pray for peace when Chile was on the verge of war with Argentina in 1978. In December 2001 he said, 'The bishop still comes and invites me to go to mass

with him. He wants the mass to be played with Mapuche musical instruments. I give people the host; I play my drum in the church.' At the same time, Sergio used predominantly Mapuche symbols, not Catholic ones, when healing. He wore an Archiepiscopal cross around his neck as a contra, to protect himself against evil spirits, but kept no images of saints, the Virgin, or Jesus in his house, nor did he invoke them for healing. Sergio demonstrated that male machi were unlike ordinary men in that they had special insights into women's illnesses and problems and could heal them by using an empathetic, relational model and abiding by the gendered constraints of the social system. At the same time, he demonstrated that male machi were different from female machi by rejecting love magic.

José

Machi José had wanted to be ordained as a Catholic priest. He received his first communion in 1964 at the age of nine and visited the Catholic Church in Quilma frequently. He read the Bible throughout high school and applied to enter the seminary at twenty-one but was rejected. The church keeper threw him out, claiming he made the church dirty. José did not return to the church but instead began to draw on Mapuche notions of spirituality: 'Our race has its own church. They are always trying to impose on us, saying that only the Catholic Church or the Evangelical Church is the real one, but no. God has the face of a Mapuche.' José burned his crucifix because he opposed the use of Christian images, but he drew on the concepts of sin, heaven, hell, and divine punishment. He linked his own illness and suffering to that of Jesus Christ and drew on the Catholic doctrine of Christ as God and man. In this way he synthesized the paradox of divine spirit and human body.

By 1995 José identified himself as a 'Mapuche priest' and 'biblical machi', because he read the Bible and was possessed by the Holy Spirit. He rejected the church and its authorities but believed God had made him a Mapuche priest: 'I have a lot of authority. I can baptize and marry people ... nobody knows what God left me. Only I know.' José believed he was superior to other machi because he read the Bible, and superior to priests because of his spiritual powers:

A good machi like me has more powers than a Catholic priest, because they are chosen here on earth, they decide to take on that role. ... Machi come from the spirit world and are ordained directly by the creator of all of us. Our prayers are stronger. When have you ever seen that a Catholic priest can make it rain or stop raining? But a machi who prays in the ngillatun (collective ritual) can, because God is in nature and listens to the machi. ... I am a true Mapuche priest. Not the kind that killed Jesus. (Interview, December 17, 1995)

Like priests, José exorcised evil spirits, viewed Evangelical practices as devilish, and believed in forgiveness. José emphasized the roles of God and spirits in healing and illness, which protected him from accusations of witchcraft:

I can see the power that God gave me in the urine, in the clothes, in the blood, and in the heart. The heart suffers to adore God. Sometimes one does not realize, and we take remedies to lower blood pressure when in fact the error is that we have not adored our Father.

José could see who had caused evil to a patient or family, but he did not reveal the identity of the evil-doer, take ritual revenge, or perform love magic; he considered these practices to be witchcraft.

Jorge

Machi Jorge, too, claimed a priestly identity for himself, but not altogether successfully. He told journalists that he was “like a priest, an authority” (*Diario Austral*, September 27, 1987). But he was not celibate, nor did he act like a priest. Jorge was not invited to perform as machi-priest in his community’s collective *ngillatun* ceremonies, although he was often a paid performer at other ones.

Whereas José drew on Jesus as a model, Jorge viewed himself as the Mapuche Jesus Christ, which won him the reputation of being *agrandado* – superior, contemptuous, or arrogant. ‘I want to renew my powers the day Jesus was born [December 25]. I am the Mapuche Jesus Christ,’ Jorge told me. He renewed his machi powers on Christmas Day and changed his four-step *rewé* for a larger, seven-step one to demonstrate that he was the most powerful and prestigious of machi. Jorge believed that his identification with the healing powers of Jesus would gain him respect and legitimacy in his Catholic community, but his neighbors could not reconcile his aggressive, authoritarian, and changeable character with that of a Jesus-like figure. One woman said, ‘It is a sin that he says he is Jesus. He is not God. Jesus was giving and sacrificed himself for his people. Jorge does none of this.’ Mapuche engage in direct, reciprocal relationships with spirits; they reject the idea of one powerful Mapuche messiah who represents the entire ethnic group and becomes the sole negotiator between Mapuche and the divine (Foerster 1993: 145–7).

In summation, Sergio and José sought different types of legitimacy in their roles as ‘Mapuche priests’. Sergio wanted the support of the church and the bishop, and he adapted his ritual practices to fit the format of the mass. José despised the church and its authorities but believed he had spiritual and priestly power granted directly by God. Whereas Sergio embraced priests and priestly roles, José used the discourse of priesthood to gain recognition but believed that Mapuche spirituality was superior. Jorge – standing in contrast as usual – was not recognized in his priestly role because instead of seeking legitimacy from the Church or the Bible he drew solely on his self-perceived experience as the Mapuche Jesus.

Conclusions

Male machi who are able to take on co-gendered priestly ones effectively legitimate themselves without threatening their healing practices. As celibate priests, male machi can justify their ritual co-genderism, their transvestism, and their tendency not to marry. But ironically, they simultaneously reiterate the Church's condemnation of all same-sex practices and its belief in the naturalness of sex and gender, the very system that stigmatizes their co-gendered identities. By incorporating the Catholic morality of forgiveness, male machi legitimate their own empathetic, relational healing practices, and they justify their exorcism of evil spirits on the model of the exorcist priest. But Catholic morality has been pernicious to the traditional practice of ritual revenge. Although ritual revenge makes evil-doers accountable and gives victims some control over evil spirits, many Mapuche now view it as witchcraft. Male machi may gain legitimacy by associating themselves with the Church, the Bible, and prayers to God. If a male machi claims to be God or Jesus himself, however, Mapuche believe he is a witch (Jorge) or crazy (José).

Male machi's performances of Chilean masculinity must be carefully balanced with their traditional spiritual roles. Male machi who masculinize themselves too much are believed to have lost their spiritual powers or even to be witches. In order to maintain his status as a shaman, a male machi must boast his unique ability to divine and heal spiritual illnesses and to heal holistically, as no doctor or priest can. The long term impact of the celibate priest model on male machi identities and practices remains to be seen.

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Chapter 6

Protestant Evangelism and the Transformability of Amerindian Bodies in Northeastern Amazonia¹

Vanessa Elisa Grotti

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how Central Guianese Amerindians relate to each other's bodies and how their relations can be analysed in the context of a process of long-term sedentarization and evangelization, which was initiated by a network of Protestant missionaries in the late 1950s. Although my case study focuses on material collected in Suriname, it is useful to think of the wider regional context, which is both highly diverse and deeply interconnected.² The Carib-speaking Trio, whom I shall discuss here, exemplify this diversity as they live across the triple border area separating Suriname, Brazil and French Guiana and, since the early 1960s, have clustered around health and education providers in permanent villages ten times larger than their past settlements; whereas the Surinamese villages were

¹ This chapter is based on my doctoral fieldwork among the Trio, Wayana and Akuriyo of Southern Suriname and French Guiana, funded by the ESRC; Trinity College; the Gates Cambridge Trust and the Smuts Memorial Fund. I would like to thank Robin Wright and Aparecida Vilaça, the convenors of the symposium 'Modes and effects of Christianity among indigenous peoples of the Americas' at the Congress of Americanists (Seville 2006) for inviting me to present the ideas developed herein. I am grateful to Peter Rivière for sharing the missionary reports on the contact expeditions. Many thanks to Cees and Ineke Koelwijn for their reminiscences of the Akuriyo's early years in Tëpu. This chapter has benefited greatly from comments on earlier drafts by Aparecida Vilaça, Robin Wright and Marc Brightman.

² This Guianese interconnectedness has been described as 'networks of relations' elsewhere (see Gallois 2005); although I broadly agree with Gallois' approach to the region as a network and her emphasis on historicity, I disagree with the theoretical definition of social relations which conflates sociality with sociability and the premise that social relations have always existed to their present level of intensity. As I shall argue in this chapter, historical contingency, most notably in terms of sedentarization and evangelization, has greatly modified the social and physical landscape of the Guianas (Freire 2002). Long-distance social relations have always existed, yet in varying degrees and levels of cosmological integration and quality (Grotti 2007; Rivière 2007).

founded by Protestant missionaries, the large Trio village of Missão in Brazil was founded by Franciscans. Meanwhile the predominantly Wayana villages in which the Trio live in French Guiana, attract populations around secular state schools and clinics.

The multiplicity of forms and expressions of Christianity in the region is fundamental to my analysis of the process of conversion from the point of view of the body, because, as I shall argue, the Trio equate conversion to evangelical Christianity with the adoption of certain bodily practices, which they associate with processes of sedentarization.³ As we shall see, this is linked to their understanding of humanity as a state deeply embedded in the body and therefore constantly fabricated; humanity, among the Trio, is more than a concept, it is rather a way of being and an on-going process. According to the Trio, what defines them as Christians is located in the body.

Over the past 30 years, the body has been developed as an analytical category in Amazonian anthropology,⁴ yet it is only recently that it has become a focus of interest beyond the context of 'traditional' Amazonian sociality to facilitate understanding of relations with the wider world of non-Amerindian society. Several anthropologists have recently drawn attention to the materiality of bodies and relations between them such as objects, animals or non-Amerindians (Hugh-Jones n.d.; Kelly Luciani 2003; Miller 2007; Van Velthem 2003); however, there remains a need to give further consideration to relations between human bodies of different kinds in a contemporary context, taking into account complex social networks which engage Amerindians and their Others such as 'wild people' or 'white people'. These kinds of categories also depend on the fabrication of bodies and their humanity, but we need to examine the criteria by which they are differentiated. To this end I will analyse the relation between human bodies by looking at how the Trio relate to the human yet 'intrinsically wild' people. My discussion will briefly outline the context in which a number of missionary-led contact expeditions were conducted, and then focus on how these resulted in the incorporation of three groups of hunter-gatherers now known as the Akuriyo within Trio villages of southern Suriname. I shall examine how these Akuriyo, now in their

³ I would like to stress that when referring to the Trio as being sedentarized, I do not mean that they used to be nomadic hunter-gatherers, but only that they have given up the practice of migrating to another location at the death of the founder of their household, and have developed alternative ways for settling disputes than migration.

⁴ Seeger, Da Matta and Viveiros de Castro 1979 were the first to propose a systematic analysis of the category of the body as a useful comparative tool on Amazonia, although Rivière had already pointed at the connection between bodily decorations and bodily form as central components of humanity in Amazonia (1969); Turner emphasized in turn the importance of the moulding of the person, notably through bodily decorations and the modification of the skin (1995); on the instability of human bodily form, see Vilaça 2005; on the relations between humans and animals and the nature of humanity in Amazonia, see Fausto 2007.

second and third generation as village co-residents, and mostly concentrated in the predominantly Trio village of Tëpu in Suriname, remain a marginal social cluster considered to be undergoing a continual nurturing and educational process at the hands of their Trio ‘guardians’, and how the Akuriyo’s failed social integration rests on their bodies’ incapacity to be moulded into Christian bodies.

My focus is therefore on a fabricated social differentiation which rests on the body, and which has adopted the idiom of Christianity. Accounts of contact expeditions and resulting absorption of distant peoples, or former enemies, through exogamy, which implies a sharing and eventual merging of substance, have usually assumed a homogeneous understanding of the Amerindian body.⁵ I am going to take a different standpoint, and examine how bodies can be attributed differing degrees of stability and strength, differences which can be actively maintained by creating a population of marginals, who can never become commensals and fellow Christians (such as potential kin), but are rather maintained as a separate social group.⁶ I will suggest that through processual relations understood in terms of Amerindian conceptions of the body and bodily development in a sedentary context, specific forms of social interaction can be established between groups of people because of their intrinsic bodily differences. The existence of what we could define as distinct ‘corporeal aggregates’⁷ also challenges the frequent portrayal of Guianese societies as being based on a model of uniform egalitarianism.

These ‘corporeal aggregates’, as well as being based upon bodily distinctions, may be defined in terms of social and bodily stability, and in relation to the propensity that each body has to transform. The transformability of bodily form is a human capacity which, because of its association with warfare and fierceness, the Trio have consciously neglected since they became sedentary and started to live in close physical proximity with their former enemies.

The Trio: Social Pacification as Human Transformation

The ‘Trio’ are composed of different historical groups which have come together through sedentarization and intermarriage over several decades. Those who have fully adopted the Trio language (*tarëno ijomi*⁸) identify themselves as Trio to outsiders although they have several deeper layers of identity which only appear within a local context and under particular circumstances. The majority of Trio in Suriname live in four villages: Kwamalasamutu, Alalapadu, Tëpu and Palumeu. I will focus on Tëpu, a village of about 300 inhabitants, which originated from a

⁵ For a detailed analysis of the Waiwai contact expeditions, see Howard 2000.

⁶ This is reminiscent of the category of ‘true’ affinity (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 157) insofar as the Trio and Akuriyo, notwithstanding two exceptional cases I can think of, do not exchange spouses.

⁷ After Seeger, da Matta and Vivieros de Castro 1979.

⁸ All words in *italic* are in Trio, unless stated otherwise.

mission station founded in the early 1970s by a missionary and some Trio factions that split from Palumeu.

The inhabitants of Tēpu in Suriname speak in positive terms of their present living conditions as being marked by life at peace with residential and distant affines, and say that this condition results from a deliberate transformation from a past state marked by affinal avoidance and warfare.⁹ These two differing social states correspond to the radical change of lifestyle that was brought about by the missionary implantation in the Surinamese interior.¹⁰

As elsewhere in Guianese Amazonia (Freire 2002; Kelly Luciani 2003), settlement patterns in Suriname are different today than they were in the past: the villages are larger in size and more distant from each other than they used to be. The introduction of modern communication technology such as air transportation and the short wave radio network, along with the attraction of wage labour, has led to a movement of people across greater distances than in the past, and there has been a corresponding increase in marriages between people originating in very distant villages. Today's social life is characterized by increased affinal communication, extended conviviality, and a wider and more diversified access to manufactured goods; in short, increase in movement and interaction between previously socially and spatially separated bodies. It is true that the Trio trek in the forest less than they used to, and villages are permanent, and for this reason people feel more rooted and less mobile. But they also travel and are connected over great distances, often following extended kinship paths which are nurtured more than they could have been in the past, through extensive communication by radio, and through the circulation of letters and objects (for example, the sending of food parcels and trade goods by air). With sedentarism, therefore, the patterns of Trio movement and the quality of their mobility have changed in their everyday lives.

In Tēpu, the way the Trio relate to each other's bodies is thus connected to how they establish new forms of interaction with differing sources of knowledge and power, such as that represented by the missionaries, and how these sources of power can be actively sought and used by Trio kinship networks to redefine and strengthen their influence on a regional scale. In this context, the enthusiasm that some Trio converts expressed for taking part in contact expeditions can best be understood by discussing what they did with the 'distant enemies' whom they brought back to settle among them.

Before their sedentarization, the Akuriyo lived in and around a remote area covering about 10,000 km², situated between the headwaters of the Uremari in

⁹ For other Amazonian cases see Gow on the Peruvian Piro (2001) and High on the Ecuadorian Huaorani (2006).

¹⁰ This change is not, however, strictly due to the evangelical missionaries alone; my Wayana informants living further to the east in French Guiana have a similar opinion about their (secular) sedentarization process and the changes it implied on the longer historical scale (see also Chapuis and Rivière 2003). In this light, it can be seen as the latest in a succession of such transformations which have occurred since mythical times.

the east and the creeks of the Oranje mountain range in the west, in southeastern Suriname. They were tracked, displaced from their settlements and sedentarized in 1970–71, after a first contact in 1968. They were brought to Tëpu, the village from which the majority of the senior and ‘trustworthy’ (Anon.b 1968: 7) Trio men who took part in these expeditions came, and in which the missionary Claude Leavitt, known as a ‘contact and bush specialist’ within missionary circles, lived and worked. These expeditions were organized at the instigation and with the financial and logistical backing of several American Baptist missionaries working with Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM). This organization, which specialized in the evangelization of remote peoples, was charged by the Door to Life Mission¹¹ (which had struck an agreement with the Surinamese government), to supervise the sedentarization process of the indigenous communities living in the Surinamese interior from the early 1950s onwards. It coordinated the provision of health care and education, in partnership with, respectively for these two domains, Medisches Zending¹² and the Dutch Reformed Church.

Cumulative Evangelism and the Incorporation of ‘Wild People’

‘Cumulative evangelism’ is a strategy of missionary expansion common to Protestant organizations throughout lowland south America. In northeastern Amazonia, affiliated organizations such as the West Indies Mission and Unevangelized Fields Missions, specialized in targeting populations of the interior: converted Amerindians joined missionaries to ‘contact’ and evangelize other communities (see Conley 2000). The method was first used in southern Guyana among the Waiwai (Howard 2001), whose case is relevant here as Waiwai Christians accompanied some of the American missionaries who crossed the border into Suriname to settle and evangelize the Trio. A few years after the Waiwai and the missionaries arrived among the Trio, a series of Trio expeditions were organized by the missionaries to contact the Akuriyo, who were known at the time as *wajarikure* (wild people). *Wajarikure* is still the name given by Carib-speakers across the Guianas to the reputedly murderous peoples from the forest whose spiritual power put them beyond the fringes of humanity, equated with cannibalistic spirits. The Trio and Wayana describe them in similar terms

¹¹ The Door to Life Mission was taken over two years later by the umbrella group West Indies Mission, which is today known as World Team.

¹² Medisches Zending Suriname (MZ), today funded up to 80 per cent by the Surinamese government, provides health care for populations of the interior, including Amerindian and Maroon villages. MZ grew out of the missionary medical network which was active in Suriname until the war of the interior of the 1980s. It still retains links with its pastoral origins which are manifested, for example, in its attitudes to Amerindian healing practices and reproductive health (see <http://www.medischezending.sr/>).

to other wild beings of the forest such as the *pianokoto*: aggressive, dangerous, cannibalistic, and repulsive because of their thick body hair.

The Akuriyo were a group of several families of hunter-gatherers who had intentionally avoided developing bonds with neighbouring Amerindian and Maroon communities from the Maroni river system until the expeditions of the late 1960s. Unlike other distant peoples who had been contacted in the region, they had entirely shifted to a forest nomadic lifestyle and did not actively cultivate garden products. Their avoidance of other people was reciprocated by the Wayana and the Trio, who, when going deep into the forest and around unknown creeks to hunt, would always be on their guard for signs of the presence of 'wild peoples' to whom were attributed 'fierceness' (*ëire*). Sightings of 'wild people' are today still the object of gossip, but were even more so before any of the Akuriyo were engaged with socially. Throughout the 1960s, with the development of French and Surinamese geological and geographical surveys in the border area of French Guiana, Suriname and Brazil, occasional incidents became the object of fantastical accounts (Cognat and Massot 1977).

Both early expedition narratives (Ahlbrink 1956; Coudreau 1891, 1893; Crevaux 1879) and contemporary sources (Chapuis and Rivière 2003; Koelewijn and Rivière 1987; Magaña 1982 (in Jara 1990) use several names when referring to nomadic forest peoples of the region: Wama, Acurias, Oyaricoulets, to name only the most recurrent.¹³ The 'Akuriyo' themselves distinguish between self-denominated sub-groups, namely: *turaekare*, *akuriekare* and *pëinjekeekare*, and the word Akuriyo, commonly used as a xenonym by the Trio, comes from the second of these.¹⁴

Today, the Trio say that, 'before', the Akuriyo used to be *wajarikure*, and that their peculiar physical attributes confirm or maintain their 'wildness' even though their daily practices have changed since their sedentarization. When after a few years in Tëpu, the first Akuriyo man decided to pluck his facial hair (including his eyebrows) the way the Trio did, it was considered by the Trio as a breakthrough

¹³ 'Oyaricoulets' has often been translated as 'long ears' (Cognat and Massot 1977); earlier sources mention 'wild peoples' with large ears, for instance: when on the Maroni, Harcourt (17th C) heard of Indians with pierced ears, cheeks, nostrils and lower lips who are said to be 'of strength and stature far exceeding other Indians, having Bowes and Arrowes foure times as bigge: what the Indians also report of the greatnesse of their eares' (Harris 1928: 86). The name Akuriyo was among those variously used to refer to 'wild peoples' since the earliest European accounts: in the fifteenth century, John Ley was told of people called 'Acurio' living in the mountains at the headwaters of the Maroni river (Lorimer 1994). However, it is difficult to assess to what extent these names can be taken as reliable references to particular corresponding peoples.

¹⁴ The words *tura*, *akuri* and *pëinjeke* in Akuriyo, refer to capuchin monkey, agouti and collared peccary respectively; – *kare* can be translated as 'people' or 'historical group'.

in his humanising process (Kloos 1977b).¹⁵ As their physical appearance (their 'clothes' in shamanic terminology: *po*) changed, they became more like 'proper' human beings. However, despite these anecdotes reporting a gradual 'socialization' of the Akuriyo to Trio conventional morality and sedentary lifestyle, the former remain in the eyes of the latter visibly and intrinsically 'wild'. This truncated transformation has origins in the modes in which the contact unfolded and the Akuriyo were incorporated into Tëpu.

The Contact Narratives and the Missionaries' Point of View

As in southern Guyana (Howard 2001), the contact expeditions in southern Suriname were organized by US missionaries, however they were tacitly sanctioned by state authorities, which provided some logistical support, notably to help clearing airstrips for planes from the Missionary Aviation Fellowship. Some of the missionary reports which are available today suggest that the original plan had been to encourage the Akuriyo to settle around the contact area first, even by sending a group of Maroons in, to 'establish a manioc-producing farm' (Anon. a.n.d.: 1), as it was believed that their presence producing a new staple food and selling goods such as metal tools would eventually attract the Akuriyo to settle in the vicinity. The initial Akuriyo settlement projects on the Uremari never came to fruition however. It seems that the temporary sedentarization of the Akuriyo at their contact location gradually degenerated over time, as the surrounding forest was being depleted of its game, the supplies flown in by MAF were not sufficient to satisfy everybody, and tensions started to arise between Akuriyo and Trio, as infectious diseases inevitably spread. There is a gradual change of tone in the missionaries' accounts from the initial exhilaration to increasingly negative descriptions both of the surrounding landscape and of the Akuriyo, who seem a little less enchanting and more hostile and savage at each encounter. Eventually, only one long-term solution could be envisaged. The Akuriyo were to be brought to existing Trio villages. By 1971, a significant proportion of the Akuriyo had become gravely ill, and their displacement became for the missionaries the only viable solution to what they had by then acknowledged to have become a sanitary emergency (Schoen 1971). Once the hunter-gatherers had been settled among the Trio, the missionaries considered their duty to have been completed, and apart from strict medical and religious assistance, they let the matter of the education of the new villagers rest in the hands of the Trio.

There is a gradual shift in the missionary accounts from a quite positive early depiction of the Akuriyo in 1968 to a progressively bleaker description of many

¹⁵ The pairing of body hair and potential wildness is found among both Trio and Wayana. A proper person, in their view, is one who, since birth, has been moulded into kin, as a baby at birth can potentially grow into something else, a monkey in particular: the Trio word for a mother's upbringing of a child means 'to undo the spider monkey' (*arimika*).

physical and moral ailments. After his initial 1968 expeditions, Schoen suggested that the search for honey, the only foodstuff that appears to have been scarce, could justify the Akuriyo's mobility.¹⁶ The Akuriyo were described as fit and healthy (Anon.a n.d.: 6). It is only from 1969 onwards, after the first temporary sedentarization attempt, that signs of illnesses and physical deterioration appear to have caught the attention of outside observers. The missionary accounts emphasize the generally miserable state that the Akuriyo were in by 1971 by regularly contrasting it with that of the Trio, who are depicted as strong, healthy and well. For instance, in the 1970 account by Yohner and the 1971 report of what was by then called an 'emergency' expedition by Schoen, the authors use adjectives and phrases which create a dichotomy between benighted Akuriyo and enlightened Trio. The latter are 'to be highly praised', 'humanitarian', 'magnificent'; their motivation and devotion are brought forward: 'these fine Christian Indians' (Schoen 1971: 8), 'dedication to the task of evangelising' (*ibid*: 10). Moreover, the Trio expedition members are referred to in possessive terms: 'our Trios', 'our Indians' (Yohner 1970: 2–3), as if to create the strong sense of an invisible barrier separating the 'civilized' party from the 'wild' people. The influence they have on the Akuriyo is emphasized especially in the willingness of the Trio expedition leaders to evangelize (*ibid*: 4, 6, 12).

The Akuriyo, on the other hand, enjoy little clemency; for the missionaries, it seems that a nomadic lifestyle is closely related to a form of satanic curse which drives humans into a state of savagery, of beast-like existence. As Leach and Ayccock suggested in their structuralist analysis of the Bible, there is a strong correlation in the Scriptures between wildness, animality and evil, and between domestication, pastoral life and inherent goodness (1983). As fundamentalist followers of the Bible (Rivière 1981), the Protestant missionaries who took part in these contact expeditions did let this dichotomy express itself in their writings, in passages in which the Amazonian forest was described in almost viscerally hostile terms. As inhabitants of this dense forest, the Akuriyo are given the attributes of beast-like existence. They are referred to as 'creatures of jungle darkness' (Yohner 1970: 11), 'Stone-Age Indians' (Schoen 1971: 6), who are 'pallid', 'sallow', 'dirty' (*ibid*), with a '[t]errible stench' (Yohner 1970: 8). Their lack of cleanliness is repeated on several occasions: 'never seen them bathe' or 'dirt stayed on them for days' (Anon.b n.d.: 9, 11). The lack of hygiene is then coupled with lengthy and graphic descriptions of skin conditions and infections, to which the Akuriyo seemed to be oblivious. Wounds or cuts are the occasion for slipping in an illustration of inhuman behaviour. For example, Yohner wrote: '[the boy] has three toes missing from his right foot, and burns on his thighs. He told us that his mother got mad at him and burned him. The cut marks on his body are where his father had cut him' (1970: 2).

¹⁶ In fact, like most nomadic forest peoples, the Akuriyo's migrations were partly motivated by a complex geography of resource locations of many kinds, partly by social and political factors, and partly by inclination and taste (Jara 1990; Rival 2002).

In comparison to the missionaries' point of view which highlights the bestiality of the Akuriyo, the Trio accounts which I collected from old expedition members give a differing view. Unlike the missionaries, the Trio never doubted the humanity of the Akuriyo: for them, the Akuriyo belonged to the generic category of human persons (*witoto*) from which non-Amerindians such as Maroons or white people are excluded. However, they were, and still are, seen as not socialized, their lack of any form of social exchange with their distant Amerindian neighbours meant that they were not considered to be capable of conviviality towards affines, a capacity which the Trio refer to as *sasame*.

Indeed, when recalling the events of the contact in which he took an active part, my Trio host repeatedly brought forward the idea that he went to save the Akuriyo, not because of illnesses, or starvation (as missionaries claimed), but because they were not properly sociable (*sasameta*), and therefore had to be taught to live properly. The evidence for this was that the Akuriyo did not have gardens, or manioc bread. Together with the lack of this main staple, Trio descriptions of life in the forest underline the Akuriyo's improper eating practices: according to these, the Akuriyo lived almost exclusively off meat, and roasted it, often badly, leaving blood in it, instead of boiling it. Due to their lack of socialization, their extreme distance from what the Trio had become, the Akuriyo were considered as distant enemies who could only be related to through predation, and my host also described to me how he and the other Trio expedition members 'captured' some of the 'wild people', ambushing them as if hunting prey.

It is significant that the first staple food handed over to the Akuriyo was manioc bread, and that the first exchange, despite the language barrier,¹⁷ was, according to the missionaries, to preach. Whereas the missionaries' accounts focus on the preaching, the Trio accounts I collected focused on physical capture and the handing over of manioc bread. The Akuriyo's fundamental difference was expressed in terms of the body, by the missionaries as much as by the Trio, although in different ways: the former's descriptions reproduce physical ailments accompanied by uncivil social behaviour. Meanwhile, Trio accounts of their first encounters with the 'wild people' focus on the strength of the latter's bodies, their warlike and confident bearing, and the fact that, in contrast to the Trio who had been trading European goods for many generations, the Akuriyo's ornaments and possessions were made entirely of forest products, like the Trio's own ancestors, from whom they strongly differentiate themselves.

In short, whereas the missionaries wanted to humanize the Akuriyo by inculcating Christian knowledge, the Trio wanted to socialize the Akuriyo by inculcating moral convention. But whereas to the missionaries, the Akuriyo were like animals, to the Trio, they were 'fierce' human beings, with great ability to transform themselves in the forest. And it is this very same bodily instability which the Trio set out to nurture in the Akuriyo. The socialization process was warped,

¹⁷ Akuriyo, now almost a moribund language, is very close to Trio.

so that the Akuriyo never became fully integrated and had to maintain some of the potent instability of the Trio ancestors.

Nurturing the Other: Sedentarization Without Conversion

In her study of the socialising processes that the Waiwai make their 'contacted peoples' undergo, Howard distinguishes three levels of social interaction through which education and ultimately integration are achieved: first a prestation of foodstuffs, then of spouses through marital exchange of sisters and later cross-cousins, and finally of knowledge, mainly through the apprenticeship of the Waiwai language, the making of gardens and the Bible (2001). Outsiders are thus gradually humanized, first by transforming their bodies through the ingestion of the quintessential civilising food, manioc, then by integrating them through kin ties, and teaching what Howard argues are the most 'civilising' and the most highly regarded aspects of Waiwai identity: language and Christian practice.

The case of the Trio contains both similarities and differences with this scheme. When the Akuriyo were contacted, they too were handed manioc bread together with other garden products. They were also told about the Christian God by the Trio. When they were brought to the Trio village of Tëpu, they were gradually taught about the making of gardens and the processing of its products. They were given the front benches in church and were supervised in their attendance at services to ensure they would learn about becoming Christians (Kloos 1977a). Indeed, when the Dutch anthropologist Peter Kloos arrived in Tëpu and asked Tëmenta, one of the village leaders, if he could work with the Akuriyo, he was asked by the former 'what he was going to teach (*enpa*) them' (*ibid.*: 20). The term is used by the missionaries to describe their work, as well as their relationship to the Trio. Chapuis relates a similar use in Wayana of the concept of *tuwantaniphe* (meaning teaching and educating) (1998: 450) which the missionaries adopted to describe most efficiently within a Wayana framework what the purpose of their long-term presence in Amerindian villages was. Both Trio and Wayana terms, implying the idea of nurture, suggest an unequal relationship between two individuals, one often being younger and less experienced than the other. And it is in this manner than my Akuriyo informants regard their present condition in Tëpu: as children in need of learning and educating by the Trio.

But the sedentarization of the Akuriyo occurred without their conversion, and this becomes salient in their relation that the Akuriyo have today with Christianity. Although there have been no missionaries in Tëpu since the civil war of the 1980s, church services still take place, even if irregularly, led by Trio 'church elders' (*tamu*). A relatively small proportion of the population attends; among the Akuriyo there is a great deal of variation, although most Akuriyo attend rarely, none of them have learned to read and write, therefore reading of the Bible remains an unattainable goal. Those Akuriyo who do go to church take great care of their appearance but often do so in an incongruous way; for example, I was told that

the only Akuriyo living in Kwamalasamutu attends church services, but for the occasion adorns himself with a full Trio ceremonial garb consisting of headdress, heavy bead necklaces and red loincloth, whereas the Trio wear fresh city clothes and carry a Bible to enter the church building (B. de Vries pers. comm. 2004). For this mistaken appearance the Akuriyo is derided by the Trio, for no Trio would dream of entering the church building wearing beads and feathers; it is as if the Akuriyo has not fully grasped the basic social conventions of the village and is always out of tune. This slip in social convention illustrates that the Akuriyo are still undergoing an educational process, an education for which they are willing to pay through service to the Trio families whose heads participated in the contact expeditions and settled them next to their households.

In his ethno-historical study of trading networks, Mansutti (1986) has shown that one of the most important trade 'items' across large areas of the Guiana region for a long period was people: men who occupied an ambiguous status somewhere between sons-in-law and slaves or servants. In this light the Akuriyo case may not be as much of an anomaly as it might initially appear.¹⁸ The work which the Akuriyo perform for their Trio guardians is indeed similar to that performed by men for their wife's father, this bride-service being the only institutionalized form of subservience among the Trio. It is thus arguable that the Akuriyo owe to their Trio tutors what may be called bride-service without a bride: in this case the exchange of spouses has very rarely occurred. Two generations after their contact, the Akuriyo remain socially and morally distinct: their knowledge of the Trio language and of the Bible is said to be poor, their gardening skills are regarded as inferior, and their state of social integration has remained little better than it was in the early 1970s. Their relationship to material possessions make this very clear; their clothing is scarce, the objects they own are few compared to Trio households and their small thatched houses made of rough planks directly on the ground contrast with the more imposing structures on stilts which characterize Trio houses. The Akuriyo appear to have at best an incomplete control of objects, whether received or, even more significantly, made by them.

In contrast to what has been suggested in other accounts of social absorption in Amazonia, these captured peoples were not gradually integrated, 'familiarized' within their new host community; instead, they were incorporated, as foreign bodies into the mission station. Why the Akuriyo are so marginal, as servants of Christian Indians who teach them the Bible, is difficult to explain. After their capture and relocation in Tëpu, with each family unit settled next to the house of an expedition member in order to supervise them closely, it seems that even though some of the Akuriyo's physical appearance changed, the humanizing transformation never fully occurred. Their not being Christian is deeply associated with them not being socialized and capable of 'proper' sedentary life. I shall now focus on the body of the Akuriyo to suggest further possible ways to interpret their peculiar position.

¹⁸ See Brightman 2007 for further discussion of this point.

Christian Bodies, Fierce Bodies

The process of pacification to which the Trio attribute present sedentary living conditions is closely associated with the concept of *sasame wehto*, which could be translated as a state of social contentment; *sasame wehto* can only be felt communally and aims at suppressing individual anger (*ëire*). As such, commensality during communal celebrations, chanting and praying create a social body, through a domestication of the co-resident affines. *Sasame wehto* has today become closely associated with Christianity, and is achieved in communal practices such as chanting and dancing together, producing and drinking beer; men and women rely on it to express feelings of extended sociability in instances in which unrelated people come to gather within the same walls or in the open, in close physical proximity. That is, social distance is minimized, shrunk with the reduction of spatial distance, in order to extend bonds of consanguinity to affines. Being Christian and being sedentary are conflated for the Trio: for them, the Akuriyo's failure to master sociality by engaging in sedentary activities such as attending church services and chanting hymns, or producing manioc beer and cooking meat, reveal their inherent incapacity to engage in convivial behaviour which is essential to everyday village life.

The Akuriyo's marginality is partly maintained through certain socializing processes centred on foods and the treatment of the body. For instance, apart from one family, which has its own small rudimentary cookhouse, Akuriyo families rarely manage their own households as autonomous units, and have to rely on the cooking space of their Trio guardians. The absence of a cookhouse is a determining fact: game and fish, as well as garden yields, cannot be processed autonomously by the Akuriyo, but are in effect managed and redistributed by Trio, who by doing so secure themselves with a constant source of foods (the Akuriyo are outstanding hunters, better than the Trio).

This dependence is in turn justified by appeal to the supposed incapacity of the Akuriyo to take charge of their own cookhouse. Stories of their failures abound and are centred on their poor cooking and eating practices. Other signs of social marginality are to be found in other everyday practices highly valued by the Trio and the Wayana as a sign of sociability: those involved in the cleansing of the inner and outer body. Older Akuriyo do not go to the river to bathe and enjoy a good swim before meals in the morning and evening, but rather wash near their house with a gourd dipped in their water container. The Trio complain that the Akuriyo smell bad; smell is a strong marker of health, beauty and goodness (*kurano*), as well as social propriety, and bad smells are considered to be polluting when inhaled. One of the most powerful symbols of the Akuriyo's social backwardness is that they do not know how to drink and regurgitate manioc beer the way a Trio would; at drinking parties, individual Akuriyo occasionally give way to uncontrolled drunkenness alone, before a general, communal feeling of socializing tipsiness has spread throughout the group. Their propensity to lone and quick drunkenness attests to their moral incapacity to use this highly socializing substance.

So, these examples illustrate differences in the quality of bodies, differences perceived as both inherent and induced and which intimately tie knowledge and bodily practices. But these social inadequacies are also paired with bodily strength and transformability. This is acknowledged by the Trio who say that as soon as an Akuriyo enters the forest, he disappears, he cannot be heard anymore and turns into an invisible predator. This enviable capacity to remain physically unstable and to transform so rapidly is acknowledged openly by the Trio with disarming sincerity. A relative of my host family in Tëpu once told me, mimicking the action of pulling and firing an arrow into the roof with his arms, that an Akuriyo has stronger arms which never fail him, he *really knows*. He did not just imply that an Akuriyo knows the forest, but that his body *knows*; his body matter is somehow more connected to the forest. The Akuriyo body's extraordinary, transformational strength is inherent to it, to an extent that Trio nurturing techniques do not seem to have subdued. Whereas Trio bodies have become less self-assured, their strength as well as their sight having wavered by becoming sedentary Christians, Akuriyo's bodies remain infallible in the forest.

This was explained to me in terms of treatment of the body; in order to have strong arms and a clear sight, a man requires regular scarification, application of plant preparation and spirit chants.¹⁹ But the Trio are not allowed to do these things anymore, because cutting of skin, together with charms and chants were forbidden by missionaries due to their reliance on 'diabolical' spirit power. These techniques were also used in the past to prepare the body for warfare, and promote a fierceness which cannot be tolerated in the context of sedentary villages where social dynamics rely on principles of conviviality and warfare is considered a thing of the past. To the Trio, this is not because they are sedentary, but because they are Christians, which means a specific form of body constitution and practices. Although similar strength and fierceness are inherent to the Akuriyo, they do not represent a danger because of their position of social dependence.

Akuriyo bodies are different, no matter how long they have been nurtured by the Trio; they remain different in their capacity to transform. In that sense, they are closer to the archetypal ancestors who were known to be incredibly fast, light, so strong that they could make themselves invisible and kill their enemies in their sleep without waking them. In mythical narrative, bodily strength is described as intrinsically shamanic, but also barbaric and unsociable (Chapuis and Rivière 2003; Koelewijn and Rivière 1987). The Akuriyo's sophisticated shamanic knowledge of the arts of warfare had condemned them to a life of un-sociable enclosed endogamy, which contemporary Trio contrast with their own pacification in order to intermarry and live by the side of rivers, in large villages.

¹⁹ Potions and chants are likened to perfume and love songs used to seduce women.

Conclusion: Protestant Evangelism and Bodily Transformations

In this chapter, I have argued that to the Trio of Suriname, conversion to Christianity is understood above all as a change of body, which makes the body more socialized but less transformational. They do not understand Christianity as a set of moral laws or cosmological principles but as a series of bodily practices that change persons and how they relate to each other. Among the Trio and Akuriyo, bodily strength or instability may be connected to an excess of humanity rather than a lack of it, referring to a bodily ability to transform that is only achieved by highly trained individuals such as shamans and fierce ‘wild people’; in this light, the Akuriyo cannot therefore strictly be understood as subordinates in relation to the Trio. Their powerful capacities come into their own as soon as they leave the socialized space of the village clearing to enter the other world of the forest. Strong, fierce, transformable, they reflect the ambiguous perception the Trio in turn have of their own historical process, as deeply marked within their bodies. The Akuriyo never lose their wildness although it is subdued by their constant childlike submission to nurturing processes. Children too are transformable, their souls being regarded as not yet firmly anchored to their bodies, but are vulnerable because of their inability to control this unstable state. Neither can the Akuriyo control their transformability in a social environment, which is why they need to be controlled by fully social guardians; it is only in the forest environment that this quality becomes an advantage.

In lowland south American ethnography, the body is often shown to be a place of incessant modification (Fausto 2007; McCallum 2001; Turner 1995), yet little has been said about differences among Amerindian bodies in a context of sedentarization or Christian conversion. Whereas all bodies are constantly subjected to nurturing techniques, some are attributed different levels of socialization, characterized by varying propensities to transform. The Akuriyo represent for the Trio a further abundance of people to control, a privileged source of game, a display of the Trio’s own influence, and a way of benefiting from sources of shamanic power to which they as Christians no longer have direct access. For Amerindians living in a historical context of sedentarization and evangelization, the transformability of ‘wild people’ can thus become a strategic tool in their sustained management of the social, ecological and cosmological networks to which they belong.

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Chapter 7

The Skin of History: Paumari Perspectives on Conversion and Transformation

Oiara Bonilla

‘The animal follows the owner. So why don’t we obey too?’

Paumari Evangelical leader commenting on the Bible, Crispim Village (14 June 2002).

The Paumari – an Arawá-speaking group – live today on the middle Purus River in the southwest of Brazilian Amazonia. The population is divided between three large regions, located some distance from each other. The Marahã Lake region is the most populous with around 800 inhabitants. A further one hundred people live in two small villages on the Ituxi River, while roughly 200 people live on the Tapauá River, dispersed across three lakeside areas. The present text is the result of fieldwork conducted in the Marahã Lake region.¹

Formerly, the Paumari population lived along the entire course of the Purus, occupying the river’s beaches in the summer, and the lakes and *terra firme* during the Amazonian winter. However, from the mid nineteenth century onwards, this rhythm of life was heavily disrupted by the arrival of the rubber bosses, who forced the Paumari to work exclusively for them to pay off the debts incurred through the provision of industrialized goods. As a result, Paumari labour, previously centred on swidden cropping and fishing for family consumption, became alienated by the bosses. From the 1990s onwards, the Paumari strove to re-establish the annual rhythm of alternating between *terra firme* and the river after more than a century of forced incorporation into the regional economic system.

The Paumari have experienced the activities of two types of missions: Catholics since the 1980s, through the presence of the OPAN (*Operação Amazônia Nativa*) and the CIMI (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*), and the Protestants since 1963. In this chapter, I seek to focus especially on their relations with the Protestants, following the arrival of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL, known today as the *International Linguistic Society*), for the Paumari conceive of the arrival

¹ My thanks to Aparecida Vilaça and Robin Wright, as well as Ronaldo Almeida, Artionka Capiberibe, Luiz Costa, Anne-Marie Losonczy, Patrick Menget, Thamy Pogrebinski, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro for their comments and suggestions, and to David Rodgers for the translation of this text. I am grateful to the Paumari, Shirley Chapman, Meinke Salzer, the Möck family and Gunter Kroemer for their time and for the patience they always demonstrated in responding to my questions.

of the latter as a mark of transformation.² They say that, after the arrival of the Protestants, they became new persons and came to refer to themselves and to the past as the time of the ancients. In this article, I seek to understand the conversion of a section of the Paumari population to Protestantism through the native conception of transformation. My intention is not to discuss the reality of conversion from the missionaries' point of view or the applicability of the concept, nor to focus on its effects or to judge its effectiveness and/or failure. Instead, I analyze the conversion to Evangelism within the context of Paumari cosmology, looking to show how it fits into a wider logic that includes other transformations experienced by the Paumari over the course of their history.

Evangelicals and Catholics

The present-day Paumari describe themselves as either Evangelicals (*crentes*, 'believers') or Catholics and insist on saying that they are different from their ancestors who had lived 'in the old culture'. Believers are those who have 'accepted Jesus' and Evangelism. The majority live in Crispim village. Catholics are those who do not describe themselves as believers: most live in Santa Rita village, São Clemente Novo and the surrounding area.

The *modi operandi* of the two missions is not comparable since the Evangelical work is based on continual visits and stays in Crispim. The Catholic mission, today represented by the progressive Catholic organization named CIMI (Conselho Indigenista Missionário), created in 1972 after the Second Vatican Council, is characterized by occasional visits by the institution's main regional officer to the Paumari villages. Its actions focus on welfare assistance, acting as a mediator and supporting the political organization of the region's native peoples. As a result, CIMI is more often present in the local town (Lábrea), during the indigenous assemblies and training courses run by government agencies for indigenous nurses and teachers. Both missions claim to work with the entire Paumari population, but the former's influence is concentrated in Crispim and the surrounding area, while the latter's impact is more pronounced in Santa Rita and other villages.³

Moreover, there is also a clear difference between the two Paumari groupings in terms of religious practice and the adherence to religious dogma. In the case of Crispim, the commitment to Evangelical Christianity is collective and constantly reaffirmed in discourse, but also in practice through regular worship. On the other hand, the Catholics, in accordance with the progressive view of the Church, are actually rejecting the Evangelical creed more than affirming their adherence to

² The Catholic church has been present in the region since the seventeenth century (see Kroemer 1985) through the action of missionaries of various orders, but we consider here the missions to which the Paumari are related at the present moment.

³ On similarities and differences between Christian missions, see Almeida (2006). On CIMI's activities in particular, see Rufino (2006).

the Catholic Church – an attachment that can be traced, in large part, to the work undertaken by CIMI in these villages.

It therefore seems appropriate, according to Paumari discourse, to call the ‘Catholics’ non-believers, in contrast to the ‘believers’, or Evangelicals. The Evangelical Paumari, for their part, explicitly reject the ‘old culture’,⁴ and they consistently associate this ‘old culture’ with the CIMI’s activities. Catholicism, on the other hand, is affirmed sporadically in discourses and is justified with the argument that it does not prevent people from performing traditional rites. That kind of discourse is a consequence of the so-called philosophy of inculturation that guides the Catholic missions after the Second Vatican Council (Taylor 1981; Vilaça 2002a; Rufino 2006). This principle, the background to CIMI’s work, is based on the idea that faith has been present from primordial times in all native religions, and that the work of the Catholic missionary is to reveal and experience this faith in order to respect it more deeply (Taylor 1981: 674). Consequently, the idea of ‘culture’ has become somewhat sacralized, along with the related actions of recovering and preserving it. This partly explains the reticence displayed by Evangelicals vis-à-vis the ‘old culture’, which has come to represent generically the ‘customs of the ancients’, both through the sacralization promoted by Catholic agents and the opposition manifested by Evangelical missionaries.⁵ Curiously, discussions concerning the ‘old culture’ are less apparent in Santa Rita village where rituals are regularly held, although these are not taken to be crucial to the group’s future identity. The expression ‘old culture’ is much more frequently used by Evangelicals to distinguish themselves from ‘non-believers’. In summation, the ‘old culture’ seems to worry the Paumari Evangelicals and CIMI much more than the Paumari non-believers and the Protestant missionaries.⁶ Let’s examine now what the Paumari mean when they refer to the old culture.

The Time of the Ancients

As I said before, the Paumari refer to the life before the arrival of the missionaries as the time of the ancients. Until the arrival of Siri (Shirley Chapman), only a few of the Paumari had seen beings like her, *Americanos*, with pink skin and who did not speak Portuguese, much less Paumari. These strangers coming from afar are considered among the most dangerous beings, coming from further away than both

⁴ The Arawakan speaking Piro of Peruvian Amazonia also describe the adoption of Protestantism as a water-shed marking the beginning of ‘contemporary civilized life’ (Gow 2006: 211).

⁵ On the Purus, this applies to the performance of certain rituals and the use of hallucinogenic snuff, considered emblematic of the region’s indigenous cultures by Catholic workers.

⁶ To avoid any overgeneralization here, a more detailed analysis is required of the differences between the variants of Catholicism and Evangelism with which the Paumari have been in contact over their history. This I plan to undertake in a future work.

the *Joima* (wild Indians) and the *Jara* (regional population)⁷ who also terrified them. They were famed for capturing Paumari children in order to make tinned meat that was later sold by the rubber bosses and, therefore, consumed by the Paumari themselves.⁸ This is how one informant described the arrival of the missionaries:

The first people who arrived were Siri and Maria. They didn't speak Portuguese. ... All the Paumari were afraid that they had come to drop bombs on us Everyone was covered in pinta up to the eyes The ancients were very afraid ... they thought that people from afar captured children alive and took them to Porto Velho, where they killed them, made them into tinned meat and brought them back for the Paumari to consume.

The pinta mentioned here is a skin disease (caused by the bacteria *Treponema carateum*), a type of non-venereal syphilis that causes skin lesions on the face and the body. It was endemic among the Paumari, who, by that fact, were also identified by travellers as Purupuru, which means 'pintados' (spotted) in *Lingua Geral*. Spix and Martius had described them with this skin infection as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century (Spix 1981). Furthermore, the Paumari also fell victim to epidemics of measles and other deadly diseases. This period of pre-evangelization coincides with the era of submission to the rubber bosses (*kariva*). Many men were employed in *colocações* (work placements) for most of the year, living in debt slavery.

The Paumari establish a difference between *freguês* or client (*pamoari*: also the Paumari autonym) and employee (*honai abono*). In a commercial context, a client is somebody indebted to a boss who has to produce something to pay off this debt. The debt is their only connection. An employee, on the other hand, has precisely the same prerogatives, but is more closely tied to the boss, and vice-versa. He is also bound by a debt, but the latter is repaid here by a form of service (such as the provisioning of 'production').⁹ The employee places himself at the boss's disposition, a relation involving various kinds of assistance from the latter. Employees frequently live for a long time close to the boss, working continually for him. This difference between client (*pamoari*) and employee (*honai abono*) is not always explicit. When emphasized, though, it signals a difference in the intensity of the relation with the boss: more intense for employees, less intense (more sporadic) for clients.

⁷ The term *Jara* is generally used to designate the region's non-indigenous population, but can be used to refer to non-indigenous Brazilians in general.

⁸ Despite this fear having diminished thanks to the long period of living together with the missionaries, anthropologists and other visitors coming from afar, one still hears much spoken of the potential anthropophagic activity of the *Americanos*. Thus, one of the Protestant missionaries described to me the fear that the Paumari felt when they distributed various pots of food prepared for the children. For them, the picture of the blonde baby on the label indicated the human content of what was inside the can. Stories about pieces of hands, fingernails and fingers found in canned meat cans are frequently heard today.

⁹ The Portuguese term 'produção' (production) is used by the Paumari to refer to what they extract from the forest, river or lakes for the purposes of exchange.



Illustration 7.1 Paumari man with the skin disease *purupuru*, or *pinta* (Spix and Martius, 1817–1820)

Most deaths during this period were attributed to the high level of shamanic activity – also one of the features of the ‘old culture’. The Paumari claim that, even today, shamanism remains their only weapon, and continually stress their overall pacifism and placidity.

When the missionaries arrived, they met just a few highly suspicious and nervous men: everyone else had fled into the forest. The two women missionaries were gradually accepted after establishing trade relations with the Paumari by exchanging clothing, utensils and other manufactured objects for forest products, fish, artwork and domestic services. They also progressively introduced money as a means of retribution for those services rendered. Several years later, assistance in the translation of the New Testament to the Paumari language would be remunerated with money. A short time after their arrival, they began their linguistic studies, preparing to translate the Bible and evangelize the group, following SIL’s normal pattern of work (Almeida 2006).

The Skin of History

Understanding the place occupied by the Evangelical mission over the following years means focusing on two key points: a historical-cosmological fact and an ontological premise. The first involves the curing of the pinta infection by the missionaries, seen by the Paumari as a landmark event, one which can be comprehended as a driving force for transformation. The second is the Paumari conception of themselves as prey/pets (*igitha*) – a conception closely related to the client/employee (*pamoari/honai abono*) position (Bonilla 2005, 2007). These two points need to be understood in relation to the Paumari conception of temporality and transformation. Indeed, when people refer to the past, they usually distinguish clearly between three major periods of their history, each era inaugurated by one or more foreign or mythological figures, and involving a transformation that is at once social and corporal.

Today all the Paumari – Evangelicals and Catholics alike – take the arrival of the missionaries as a historical watershed between the past and the present. However, they had already experienced a rupture of this kind much further back in time, an event that marked the passage from ‘mythological’ time to the time of the ancients.¹⁰

Kahaso and the time of the ancients:

A myth tells how seven brothers – sons of Jakoniro, the first mythological woman, and raised by the jaguars – were responsible for teaching the Paumari how to be real people. After Jakoniro is devoured by the jaguars, the brothers are born as small birds

¹⁰ Martius ([1831] 1981). Similar cases are described by Gow (1991) for the Piro, and Costa (2007) for the Kanamari.

and fed by an old female jaguar.¹¹ Later they transform into super-powerful beings and appear in their human form. After exacting revenge on the jaguars, they begin a long trek through the *terra firme* forest in search of fruit capable of salving the wounds and itching of Kahaso, the youngest brother. The skin infection and the search for a cure appear as a motor for metamorphosis and transformation.

The brothers – Kahaso in particular – named the edible fruits found in *terra firme* forest; they taught the Paumari to eat food and how to make arrows and tools; and they gave rise to the different peoples inhabiting the world today, as well as to the blemishes that marked the skin of the Paumari. After freeing Kahaso from the belly of an anaconda that had swallowed him, the seven brothers asked all the peoples to bathe in the snake's blood. Kahaso, very small and previously covered in sores, had emerged from the snake's belly rejuvenated (in the form of a newborn) with clear, pale skin. The Paumari, though, found the idea repulsive and spread just a small amount on their bodies, refusing to submerge themselves completely in the blood. This is why their skin became covered in pinta blemishes.

Some informants add that before going to live in the sky definitively, transforming into the Pleiades, the seven brothers passed on all their technical know-how to the whites, which explains the technological superiority of the latter. Thus the anaconda's blood cleans the skin of the mythological hero and that of all outsiders who agreed to bathing in it, establishes the time of the ancients and life in society, and, by suppression or absence, provokes the skin blemishes that become a visual marker of Paumari identity.

Orobana and the era of the bosses

The time of the ancients is described today as a dangerous period during which the Paumari were relentlessly pursued by other Indians and decimated by diseases, forcing them to rely exclusively on their powerful shamans. This lasted until the arrival of another figure, today included in Paumari mythology as a hero responsible for inaugurating a new era. He begins pacification of the region and enables the Paumari to survive the incessant attacks of wild Indians and the regional population, teaching them to trade with the whites. The figure in question is probably the Brazilian Manoel Urbano da Encarnação, known as the 'pacifier' of the Purus river.

The *Joima* (wild indians) surrounded us during our festivals and killed us. They also lied down in canoes, hidden under mats, waiting for us to get closer. When we approached, they fired their arrows and finished the job with clubs. Then they ate us.

(T., 01/06/2001)

¹¹ Birds are conceived as the prototypical domesticable prey. Thus the word *igitha* [prey/pet] designates birds by extension (*igitha raboki*, flying prey).

Until one day a man arrived. ... he was white, but could speak Paumari. He lived in Manaus. His name was Orobana.

(G., 26/05/2001)

Manoel Urbano was a military officer sent to pacify the region. He had journeyed extensively along the Purus since 1845, exploring the river from its mouth to the Pauini river, extracting plant remedies and founding villages, 'dragging' from the forest 'fourteen indigenous nations to the margin of the river' (Kroemer 1985: 46–7). Later, the same explorer employed '600 Paumari and Juberi' on the Arimã river to make 'a large plantation' and build 'a chapel' (ibid: 60).

Returning to the native account, Orobana learns the Paumari language after drinking a cup of coffee offered by a figure who appears to be an 'owner of animals', since he possesses an enclosure that contains every kind of animal prey.¹² Orobana is instructed by this man and disguises himself as a Paumari in order to approach the latter: however, he gives himself away by brushing his teeth and using a manufactured blanket. He eventually succeeds in pacifying the Paumari by giving them industrialized merchandise and transforming them into employees, establishing long-term trade relationships, receiving their 'production' in exchange for merchandise. The Paumari say that Orobana taught them to wear clothes and use mosquito nets and that: '... from this moment on, the whites began to settle along the shores of the Purus river. The bosses began to sell things to the Indians' (F., 19/09/2001).

The historical rupture introduced by Orobana enables there to be an era of relative peace in day-to-day life, yet exposes the Paumari to dependency and the sometimes violent abuses of bosses and merchants. Just as in the Kahaso myth, transformation and the acquisition of a new sociality is inscribed on the skin. Prominent among the objects brought by Orobana are the mosquito nets and clothing: both protect against the insects that swarm on the Purus (Chandless 1866: 91; Ehrenreich 1929: 299–300) but are equally related to the body and metamorphosis. Here we can highlight the contemporary role played by mosquito nets during female puberty seclusion. Indeed, the net has gradually replaced the woven matting traditionally used as a seclusion hut. Today, the girls remain inside their mosquito nets throughout seclusion in order to screen themselves from sunlight and the male gaze (allowing 'their skin to become clear/pale' before the day they finally emerge). Birth similarly takes place beneath the couple's mosquito net. Like skin and clothing, the mosquito net and woven mat are body wrappings, surfaces that activate transformations.

The theme of swapping one's skin, clothing or another body envelope as a way of adopting an alien perspective or as an ontological transformation is a frequent theme in Amazonia (Chaumeil 1983; Vilaça 1992, 1999; Viveiros de Castro 2002).

¹² Note the importance given to knowing the language. Orobana is able to approach the Paumari because he learnt their language from the owner of the animals. Likewise Shirley, the SIL missionary, ceased to frighten them when she began to speak Paumari.

For the Paumari, changing one's skin enables 'renewal' (*aja'diniki*) of the 'soul-body' (*abonoi*).¹³ This idea can be found in various aspects of their cosmology, such as the posthumous magical bath that enables acquisition of a new body wrapping (*to'ba ja'dini*), or in the ritual seclusion that allows the person's symbolic rebirth, particularly expressed in the extreme paleness of the young woman, whose skin is compared to a newborn's.

After the passage of Orobona, the Paumari became, as the regional population put it, 'tamed Indians'. This means clothed Indians (see Gow, in this volume), preferably converted and baptized with Christian names, and able to trade – that is, capable of being exploited without reacting violently. Hence, the acquisition of mosquito nets and clothing led to the era of merchandise and bosses.

The mission

Each figure inaugurates a new sociality, provoking a cosmological and ontological transformation inscribed on the skin. The fact that these temporal transformations have effects on bodies helps explain the Paumari claim to be different from their ancestors and that the Evangelicals are new Paumari. Hence it is unsurprising that the Paumari evoke the curing of the pinta skin infection¹⁴ by the missionaries as a historical-temporal landmark that enabled the inauguration of a 'new' era marked by compliance with Christian morality, cultivated by the Evangelicals, and the consequent rupture with the 'old culture'.¹⁵

As we have seen, corporal transformation is a recurrent theme and closely linked to skin whitening. Hence, the girl's seclusion enables the renewal of her skin and removal of the residues (*imai daini*) accumulated in her soul-body. On the day she emerges, the girl is exposed to sunlight and the 'aggressive' male gaze. The ingestion of foods is also conceived as a form of everyday micro-aggression. Indeed, every predatory relation leaves residues in the predator's flesh that gradually infest the souls-bodies: meat leaves bones, hairs and claws, while plants leave stones, thorns and husks. This excessive accumulation of residues in the flesh provokes sicknesses, aging and death. Shamans must continually remove these items from the bodies of their patients. The same process occurs during seclusion and after the arrival of the soul-body at the Lake of Renewal, the traditional posthumous destiny. Moreover, the relation between blood, skin and transformation, and the passage from one state to another is made evident in the Kahaso myth.

By curing the Paumari of pinta, the two female missionaries came to occupy the role of mythological heroines. Inaugurating a new era, the mission enabled the

¹³ It is important to remember that in the Kahaso myth, the blood of the anaconda (a skin-changing animal) is the counter-vector of the identificatory mark.

¹⁴ Pinta was cured by injections of penicillin.

¹⁵ The idea of rupture with the past, of abandoning certain practices and adopting others in order to provoke bodily and social transformations is common in Amazonia and is not foreign to the logic of Evangelical conversion (Wright 1999).

conditions for a new sociality. Firstly, the mission offered a viable alternative as a trade partner, allowing the Paumari to escape the economic control of the bosses. Secondly, its supply of medicines contributed to the group's physical recovery, meaning that the mission simultaneously opposed shamanic power. And finally, the mission offered a new form of 'healthy life' in line with the Evangelical interpretation of the Bible, which probably also offered a solution to the excessive accumulation of residues in the soul-body. Being a believer means adopting a 'healthy' lifestyle, with all that this implies for the Paumari: access to healthcare, the rejection of shamanism and food restrictions (particularly during the *couvade*), withdrawal from ritual life, easier access to goods (with the missionary as principal supplier) and submission to the 'Word of God', this referring to the new domesticating boss/father.

Other aspects of this new era should also be mentioned. These include, for instance, contemplation of a new posthumous destiny. In fact, only the Evangelicals can choose between the Lake of Renewal, the traditional destination, and the House of God, the celestial paradise. After death, the soul-body of believers follows the path to the House of God, ascending to the sky. Before arriving up there, the path of the believers splits between the Lake, the House of God and the Fire of Hell, which burns beside the House of God.¹⁶ The conditions for arriving at the Fire of Hell are somewhat unclear and rarely evoked, since non-believers go to the Lake of Renewal instead. This alternative seems to me fairly original given the usually exclusivist nature of Protestant eschatology. Obviously, believers (that is, Evangelicals) sometimes tell non-believers that they will end up in the Fire of Hell, but these assertions are no more than occasional threats. Even if both paths follow celestial routes, however, they point towards opposite poles. The traditional way that leads to the Lake is a path (*Aja'di kahagihi*) along the Purus going upriver. This path is therefore in the opposite direction to that which leads to the House of God, which follows the course of the Purus downriver (*Deus gorana kahagihi*). The Fire of Hell which burns beside the House of God seems to be unpopulated, since non-believers do not go towards the downriver side of their cosmography, travelling, instead, upriver towards the Lake through the traditional route. Once there, they can choose between various types of posthumous existence.¹⁷ Believers, on the other hand, do not explain what happens in the House of God, referring instead to its beauty, size and incomparable luminosity and brilliance (*vagaki*).

The luminosity and brilliance of Crispim village were recently described to the living by a shaman, informed by the soul-body of someone who had died.¹⁸ These

¹⁶ The location of the Fire of Hell in the sky is not exclusively a Paumari notion. The Wari' also situate it on the same level as God (Vilaça 2003).

¹⁷ The deceased who follow the way to the Lake of Renewal can choose between staying in the Lake, with the ancients, dancing and eating eternally, or be employed by the Sun and Rain bosses in order to ensure the meteorological cycles and communication between the living and the dead (Bonilla 2007).

¹⁸ The luminosity of the House of God and the spaces occupied by believers, as well as the brilliance of the New Jerusalem, is opposed to the darkness of shamanism and the

qualities are compared to the darkness and translucence of the spaces inhabited by non-believers. The latter are closely linked to the modes of shamanic knowledge/power (*kohana hiki*), which mobilize darkness and translucence (Rodgers 2002: 110–113; Viveiros de Castro 2007), in contrast to Christian knowledge/power, which continually deploys the themes of clarity (cleanliness) and brilliance (reflection).¹⁹ Shamans explain that luminous reflection not only frightens away spirits, it also dazzles and impedes visibility and thus their knowledge and their power to act.

Considering that the believers declare that they do not know for sure what waits for them in the House of God, I asked them what they would do if they got bored. Believers replied that one can always change one's mind and go to the Lake of Renewal, where more ancient kin and non-believers reside. The question remains of how souls-bodies are renewed in the House of God. Believers probably do not need to extract all the relational residues accumulated in their souls-bodies during their lifetime, since the Christian way of life, which they consider more 'healthy', preserves them from any excessive accumulation.

Today the 'healthy' life of believers seems to be a way of preventing the accumulation of residues and thereby warding off sickness, without having to resort to shamans. Epidemics and common diseases have been neutralized through systematic vaccination. The mission also allowed the Paumari to increase their control over trade relations by learning reading, writing and mathematics. Finally, the prohibition of rites and shamanism provided an alternative for those who found shamanic power excessive. In summation, the new era is a time when shamanism and sicknesses can be controlled. The mission provoked a transformation on the same scale as those narrated in the Kahaso and Orobana myths. It radically transformed social relations and configurations, allowing part of the Paumari population to feel protected from the afflictions of day-to-day life.²⁰

Christian Life

Today the era of the rubber bosses is described as a remote time, remembered as a period dominated by shamans and controlled by the bosses, when the Paumari felt unable to comprehend adequately what happened when they worked to pay

translucence of the magical stones (*ijori*) that contain shamanic knowledge. The latter enable the shaman to 'see' the spirits and the harmful objects introduced into Paumari souls-bodies. An understanding of this contrast is probably a fundamental element for any comparative study of Paumari shamanism and Evangelism.

¹⁹ Classificatory concepts of this type are frequently used by Evangelizers (see Gallois 1999), but here dirtiness/cleanliness are appropriated by non-believers to distinguish themselves from believers.

²⁰ Gow also mentions the rupture with shamanism and the fear that the latter imposed on the Piro before their conversion to Christianity (Gow 2006).

off debts or became the victims of unknown and deadly diseases. At that time, the Paumari knew too little about the life of the regional population to be able to control their relations with the latter: they could not write, read or count, nor use non-indigenous medicines. Pinta stigmatized them vis-à-vis outsiders. Above all, they were ignorant of Jesus and the Word of God (*Deus athi*).

It should be noted that the relationship with the bosses is not described as overly negative due to the abundance of goods and the ease of access to merchandise, aspects valued today. However, what is systematically taken as negative is the way of life during the period that the Evangelical Paumari associate today with the idea of the 'old culture'.

We could say that what differentiates believers from non-believers is not their interpretation of the group's recent history, since both groups evoke the group's 'salvation'; instead, the key differential factor is the Evangelicals' adoption of a lifestyle taken as 'healthy' and 'good' (*jahaki*) and the accompanying repudiation of the 'old culture' – that is, rituals, shamanism, and the consumption of hallucinogens and alcohol. Questioned about the roots of their conversion, one informant replied:

Being a believer is good for me since, when I was younger, I always took part in rituals, smoked and danced a lot. That's why I was always ill. It was only after I accepted Jesus that I stopped becoming sick. ... Before Siri arrived, many people died, especially from malaria. Everyone had pinta But they cured us, ... they cleaned our blood
(F., 25/06/2001)

These days, the power of the Evangelical leaders is compared by the believers and non-believers to the power of the shamans.²¹ It is common to hear the Evangelicals attribute to the shamans sicknesses that the leaders of the Church were not able to cure. The contrary does not seem possible, but the non-believers attribute the believers' survival from various diseases to the power of their Evangelical leaders and their prayers. However, they also claim that they can challenge the latter at any moment: indeed, while I was in the field, various sorcery accusations circulated, indicating probable challenges to the believers from shamans.

The acquisition of reading and writing precedes knowledge and 'acceptance of the Word of God'.²² In describing her life, the above informant mentioned her initial reluctance to become a believer. She first became interested in the work of the missionaries because of the chance to learn to read and write, only later becoming evangelized when she associated missionary action with the curing of various people in the village through prayer, perceived as an attempt to ensure the longevity of the Paumari. This matches the explicit objective of the puberty ritual, which is to

²¹ On the ambiguous equivalency of the positions of the shaman and the prophet/pastor, see Hugh-Jones (1996: 72–3).

²² I am referring to the expression used in Portuguese by the Paumari for 'accepting the word of God'.

provide the girl with a long, healthy and fertile life, protecting her soul-body from the constant external aggressions. She goes on to explain that she had also been hesitant to convert because taking part in rituals was her only chance of marrying, given that matrimonial exchanges generally take place on these occasions.

The Old Culture and Evangelism

In fact, the inhabitants of Santa Rita cite their desire to continue performing their rituals and to live as their ancestors did as their main reasons for rejecting conversion to Evangelism. However, other motives should also be considered, including the difficulty in spatially locating God and the impossibility of seeing Him. God's omniscience and omnipresence disturb non-believers, and His invisibility even to shamans is considered highly suspicious.²³ Shamans express their perplexity in being unable to see God, even when they take hallucinogens. Asked about the potential advantages of being believers, non-believers cited the apparent absence of fights and alcoholism in Crispim village and, in particular, the easier access to goods brought by the missionaries.²⁴ Nonetheless, all non-believers complained about the selfish attitude shown by believers, who nowadays charge their kin money or 'production' in exchange for food or goods.

From the point of view of non-believers, even the healthier life of the believers is at stake. They assert that Evangelical girls become ill much more frequently since they do not undergo the puberty rite, and that Evangelical children have poor health because they fail to respect food taboos. Believers blame tobacco, alcohol and ritual performances for the health problems suffered by non-believers. Today, though, access to medicines is jointly controlled by FUNASA (National Health Foundation) and OPIMP (Middle Purus Indigenous Peoples Organization) rather than the mission. Access to medications is therefore more or less equal in the two communities, although the missionaries always possess reserves in case of emergencies.

Hence, although curing the skin infection and diseases that once decimated the Paumari may have been the driving force for the conversion of many people, these events are primarily interpreted as a temporal landmark that permitted the rupture with the era of the rubber bosses and an even more sweeping cosmological transformation. The repudiation of shamanism plays an important role here: by curing the diseases that had assailed the Paumari for years, the missionaries assumed a position of power previously held by shamans, eventually replacing

²³ As is common in Amazonia, seeing and comprehending are closely connected modes of knowledge. An Evangelical informant explained to me that she had only started to understand the Word of God after experiencing nocturnal visions in which she saw Noah, Jonas and other dead people.

²⁴ The relation between adhesion to Christianity and the search for the consumer goods of the whites has been clearly delineated by Wright (1999) and Hugh-Jones (1996) in the context of the northwest Amazon messianic movements.

the latter as new illnesses emerged which the shamans were unable to cure.²⁵ The missionaries provided – and claimed to provide – another option for those who had lost children and other household members in the hands of shamans. In Crispim village, shamanism was effectively supplanted by the Evangelical religion, therefore, and is explicitly rejected by its inhabitants.

The daily life of the Crispim villagers is based on this new sociality. Believers prefer to marry other believers, even when the latter belong to different local groups. This redefinition of matrimonial strategies has significantly altered the panorama of relations between local groups that still consider themselves as ideally endogamic.²⁶ The prayers led by Evangelical leaders for curing a sick person occupy a special place in Crispim's daily life. When someone becomes ill and no treatment seems to be working, collective prayers for curing are organized in the church or the person's home. Although a better description of these cures is needed in order to deepen the analysis, it is interesting to note that non-believers very similarly resort to auxiliary spirits during shamanic cures when phytotherapy fails to cure the sickness or at least relieve the symptoms.

In both cases, the strength and intensity of prayers and chants (*moro*), in the case of believers, and the intensity of songs (*ahi*) and the power of shamanic auxiliary spirits, in the case of non-believers, are crucial to the cure's success. Believers therefore turn to the biblical knowledge of their leaders and to the potency – that is, the volume and intensity – of their chants in order to activate the curative power of Jesus' blood. Non-believers, meanwhile, resort to their shamans and their auxiliary spirits and to the potency of female songs in order to negotiate with the spirits for them to release the captured souls-bodies.²⁷

Conversion and Adoption

The idea of feeling protected from outside aggressions is related to the Paumari conception of themselves as prey/pets (*igitha*), or victims, in relational contexts.²⁸ Elsewhere, I have showed how the Paumari insist on establishing relations with Others in commercial and clientelist terms – that is, a relation between boss and client,

²⁵ The Indians' attribution of shamanic powers to the missionaries has been widely described by travellers, missionaries and anthropologists for the case of the Tupinambá (Shapiro 1987; Viveiros de Castro 1993). See also the case of the Inuit described by Laugrand, in this volume.

²⁶ For a discussion on Arawá subgroups, see the recent work by Gordon (2006).

²⁷ Today believers generally consult the Health Post nurse first and then the missionaries. If there is no improvement, they may go to the urban health district and, finally, to the church leaders. The non-believers go first to the shaman, then to the health post nurse. If symptoms persist, they may then turn to non-indigenous healers (living along the river) before requesting medical assistance in the town.

²⁸ See also Rival (1999) on Huaorani 'peacefulness' for a similar conception.

or boss and employee, with a clear preference for the employee position (Bonilla 2005; 2007). I went on to show how a Paumari subalternity can be interpreted as a transformation of the Amazonian conception of adopting and familiarizing animals and persons, arguing that, by placing themselves systematically in the position of prey/pet (*igitha*) or client/employee (*pamoari/honai abono*), the Paumari ended up dominating, to a certain extent, the relationship with the interlocutor, forcing the latter to adopt the position of domesticating boss, or adoptive parent, and therefore assume responsibility for supplying them with food and merchandise and for their general well-being.

To understand this point, we need to recall the difference between the position of employee (*honai abono*) and that of *freguês* or client (*pamoari*). The former largely corresponds to the position of pet, which is more productive from the relational point of view, but more constraining than the latter (*pamoari*), which is less compromising but more risky and exposed, corresponding to the position of prey. As noted earlier, *pamoari* is also the Paumari auto-denomination. When the interlocutor is a non-indian stranger (*Jara* or *Americano*), the Paumari therefore look to shift from client/prey-type positions (*pamoari/igitha*) to employee/pet-type positions (*honai abono/igitha*), adopting a posture that is more deferential but that guarantees more commitment to them from the domesticating boss.

This idea can be usefully compared to the Paumari forms of adoption and kinship relations. The practice of adopting children is commonplace in Amazonia (Menget 1988, Viveiros de Castro 1993, Journet 1995, Fausto 2001). The Paumari are no exception: in their case, the practice is typically found between grandparents and grandchildren, or uncles/aunts and nephews/nieces, whether real or classificatory. The relationship established between adoptive parents and children is very often described in the same terms as the relationship between boss and employee. Adopting children or animal young also means raising, teaching, feeding, curing, clothing, giving affection and caring (Viveiros de Castro 1986; Gow 1991, Vilaça 2002b, Fausto 2002). In the Paumari context, this familiarization applies by extension to employment. Thus, the Paumari may use the term *kodihonai abono* (my employee), or my raised child (*kodinavijava*) to describe their relationship with the adopted child.

The positions favoured by the Paumari also help us to understand their description of themselves as eternally abandoned. In other words, by allowing themselves to be adopted by another, they also see themselves as abandoned and defenceless when this other departs. This applies to the three major historical ruptures, experienced by the Paumari as radical social transformations provoked by potentially dangerous and extremely powerful beings that pass through the world, leaving a series of transformations in their wake.

The Paumari describe the departure of Kahaso to the sky as an abandonment by a father who had transmitted knowledge and new experiences to them. Likewise, Orobana's departure is described as an abandonment: the Paumari became orphaned and unprotected following his return to Manaus. They were also left unprotected after the departure of the SIL missionaries Shirley and Meinke. Here

the feeling of abandonment is more intensely evoked, probably since it is still recent. The Paumari say that they became 'motherless ducks'. This is obviously a metaphor, but it suggests the feeling of dependency generated by this systematic positioning as prey and adoptive children in relations with external others. Each abandonment generates a new demand for adoption. As a result, we can conceive of Paumari conversion as, among other things, a collective decision to submit to a new domesticating boss, who is expected to provide attention and care in proportion to his knowledge and powers.

This idea appears to be confirmed when we examine the church services held today by Paumari Evangelical leaders. The latter constantly preach against the laziness of church members, describing them as children, undisciplined apprentices. The emphasis on filiation, obedience and submission undoubtedly corresponds to Christian themes, but it also evokes the polarity between employee/pet and domesticating boss. Paumari Evangelical leaders typically address church members with biblical passages that refer to the theme of familiarization, work and obedience, as we see in the epigraph to this text. The moralizing discourses of these leaders condemn bad followers, in contrast, for their lack of self-control.

The reference to the missionaries and God as adoptive parents is also a recurrent theme in day-to-day life. Indeed, the majority of believers ask the missionaries or Evangelical leaders for advice when taking a decision with potentially important consequences on their lives – though this does not necessarily mean that the proffered advice will be followed.

As ethnographers have shown extensively elsewhere in Amazonia, being a believer means adopting a 'healthy' lifestyle, with all that this implies for the Paumari: the rejection of shamanism, withdrawal from ritual life and submission to God, this new domesticating boss/father. The paternalism expressed in the relation between all Christians, missionaries and Indians is certainly not exclusive to the Paumari (Taylor 1981; Stoll 1983). However, I believe that it has found particularly fertile soil here in terms of its expression in native concepts.

When the Paumari depict themselves as the adoptive children of the missionaries, they are undoubtedly describing a hierarchical relationship typical of paternalism.²⁹ But in so doing, they are also asserting their way of seeing the relationship. Conceiving themselves as prey capable of being adopted, they not only submit to another relationship imposed on them from the outside, they also affirm their capacity to transform the relation into their own mode of parasitically appropriating external knowledge, powers and goods. Making themselves desirable, the Paumari, in their own way, continue to be the owners and masters of their history, forever ready to change skin and develop new forms of sociality.

The situation experienced by the Paumari is replicated by the missionaries who are God's – the divine boss's – employees. Hence, one inhabitant of Crispim, who

²⁹ Which is not very different from the relations that occur with foreigners in general who come into their areas (be they missionaries, nurses, employees, NGO members or anthropologists).

had ‘deviated’ from Evangelism many years earlier, explained to me one day: ‘We are “production” for the missionaries, and God is their boss. Their production is bringing people into the fold’ (A., 09/08/2002).

Following this logic, a crucial question remains: why was conversion to Evangelism limited to part of the Paumari only, leaving the rest of the population virtually unaffected? Perhaps non-believers have preferred to maintain an unstable relation with the new ‘bosses’. Indeed, Catholics establish sporadic relationships with the Evangelical missionaries, visiting them on ‘sale’ days to swap forest and river production for merchandise, but without assuming the position of adoptive children; instead, they conserve their position as clients/prey, more risky, but less constraining. I have yet to discover a reply to this complex question. An answer demands, I believe, a more in-depth description and analysis of various dimensions that had to be left out of the present text: Paumari Catholicism, ritual kinship and modes of adoption, as well as shamanism and the relations between the figure of the shaman and that of the Evangelical leader.

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Chapter 8

Conversion, Predation and Perspective

Aparecida Vilaça

Introduction

The conversion of native peoples to world religions is far from being a new phenomenon, although only recently have anthropologists become truly interested in the topic and produced detailed ethnographies on particular cases. A number of reasons can be suggested for this elision. Authors looking to explain anthropology's general disinterest have pointed to the Malinowskian model of the primeval savage and the historical rivalry between anthropologists and missionaries (Robbins 2004, Van der Geest 1990, Harding 2001). In the case of Christianity, the situation is further complicated by the fact that this religion is the predominant faith in the countries from which most anthropologists originate: the interest in the exotic is incompatible with the study of Christianized natives (Robbins 2007; Cannell 2006: 8; see also Gow, this volume).

The situation in South America is no different. There, as in other ethnographic areas (see, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 on South Africa; Laugrand 1997, 2006; Burch 1994 and Fienup-Riordan 1991 on the Arctic), Christianity has always been an integral part of the process of conquest and domination, a result of the association consistently made by state agents between civilizing native peoples and converting them. For many indigenous peoples, missionaries were the first whites they encountered (see Pollock 1993). In Brazil, Catholic missionaries were the main representatives of Christianity for centuries, the first arriving a few decades after Cabral. Today the scenario has changed somewhat due to the impact of Protestant missions, especially north American fundamentalist churches that began their activities in Brazil in the 1940s, eventually surpassing the Catholic missions in terms of effective presence among indigenous groups. In contemporary Brazil, indigenous peoples without any kind of contact with missions form a small minority.

I should stress that my interest in Christianity as an ethnographic topic was not immediate. In January 2002, I revisited the Wari', a Txapakura-speaking people of southwestern Amazonia, for the first time after a five-year absence. There I experienced something of a culture shock, though not the kind that usually accompanies the first phase of the anthropologist's work among a people. In fact, my recent experience was the complete opposite. This time I found the Wari' of the Rio Negro, where I have been working for 20 years, far too much like my compatriots, frustrating my thirst for difference that they had once so readily quenched. Most of the population had become believers. All they talked about

where Bible stories, while the most eagerly anticipated event was the next church service, conducted entirely by native preachers.

This was not the first time the Wari' had converted. In contact with the fundamentalist Protestant missionaries of the New Tribes Mission since 'pacification', which took place between 1956 and 1962, they lived as believers throughout the 1970s, de-converting at the start of the 1980s. When I arrived there in 1986, few people called themselves believers, though everyone talked nostalgically about the period of conversion (see Vilaça 1996, 1997).

A few rapid outbreaks of conversion, always collective, took place in the 1990s. These were all prompted by fear of the world ending from looming catastrophes (such as an earth tremor that struck the region in 1994). In 2001, a fresh revival occurred, one which has lasted until the present, this time motivated by the 9/11 attacks in the US. The Wari' were able to watch the World Trade Centre being destroyed on community television, as well as the news of war that followed. As soon as I arrived in January 2002, I was quizzed heavily about the state of war, about who the Taliban were, whether they had already reached Rio de Janeiro, and whether the cities were really being destroyed. Even today, the Wari' still express their fear that the end of the world could catch them unprepared – that is, living as pagans or non-believers (see Robbins 2004 on the same fear among the Urapmin). In this case, their certain fate would be the fires of hell.

Once my initial surprise had faded, and as the research progressed, I began to realize that these Wari' experiences allowed a deeper understanding of crucial aspects of their thought. Pursuing this insight, I intend to examine the phenomenon of conversion from a wider perspective of indigenous social and cosmological forms.



Illustration 8.1 Presentation of new converts in Wari' Protestant service (Vilaça, 2007)

Continuity and Rupture

Anthropological studies of conversion have tended to focus on the continuity between native thought and the experience of Christianity, an approach criticized by some students of religion (see Wood 1993: 305–307). Hefner (1993: 5) argues that although Christianity has indeed shown the capacity to assume different forms in different localities, it is clearly more than a set of local traditions, revealing striking continuities across time and space.

As other authors have recently argued (see Robbins 2007), the focus on continuity can be attributed to the fact that the theoretical tools of our discipline, particularly the culture concept, are founded on the idea of permanence and stability (see Viveiros de Castro 2002: 191–6 and Wagner 1975: 20–34).¹ Robbins (2007:7) notes that these premises of cultural continuity enter into direct conflict with Christian ideas, ‘organized around the plausibility of radical discontinuities in personal lives and cultural histories’.

Moreover, discontinuity and rupture are precisely the aspects highlighted by native peoples, who insist on the originality of Christianity – that is, its difference in relation to what is conventionally called traditional religion. And this is not just the case of the Wari’, who nowadays tend to reject the veracity of myths in favour of biblical stories. Among the Ewe of Ghana, according to Meyer, the Pentecostals

understand Christianity as a religion which has nothing in commons with ‘heathendom’ and which separates its adherents from the past. Indeed, for the Pentecostals, the attraction of Christianity lies in the fact that it is a new and strange religion opposed to African religion and culture. (Meyer 1999: 139)

This is also the view of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea studied by Robbins. In his words: ‘**They did not adopt Christianity in bits and pieces seized upon as syncretic patches for a traditional cultural fabric ... Rather, they took it up as a meaningful system in its own right, one capable of guiding many areas of their lives ... a case in which people seemed to grasp a new culture whole**’ (Robbins 2004: 3).

Moreover, native peoples have begun to describe themselves as more Christian than ourselves. Marilyn Strathern (1998: 109) related that she was approached by a Lutheran pastor from Hagen with a message he wished to transmit to England. Papua New Guinea, he suggested, ‘is now one of the most Christian countries in the world, and I [the anthropologist] should return to England where, he knew, there were few believers, and lead the people back to God’.²

My objective in this article is to reconcile the notions of continuity and rupture through my analysis of conversion among the Wari’. I aim to show that, in this case, the adoption of Christianity as something new and external does not contradict the idea of a continuity between this religion and the native culture if we take as our

¹ I return to this discussion in the conclusion.

² See Velho 2003: 1.

basic premise the interest of the Wari' and other Amerindian peoples in capturing the perspective of the Other, whether animal, enemy or white.³ In other words, indigenous society is constituted through a process of continual differentiation (Wagner 1975: 45–8), which in Amazonia takes the form of successive radical alterations involving the transformation into the Other and the adoption of the latter's perspective. Adopting the viewpoint of missionaries is one more instance of this continual attempt to capture external perspectives.

My use of the notion of perspective is based on the formulations provided by Viveiros de Castro (1996, 1998) and Lima (1996). To explain the argument that follows, it suffices to repeat Viveiros de Castro's point (1998: 478) that a perspective is not a representation in the sense attributed to the term in our cultural relativism, which supposes '... a diversity of subjective and partial representations, each striving to grasp an external and unified nature, which remains perfectly indifferent to those representations. Amerindian thought proposes the opposite: a representational or phenomenological unity ... indifferently applied to a radically objective diversity. One single "culture", multiple "natures"' (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478). Instead of a multiculturalism, therefore, we find a multinaturalism (*ibid*: 477).

In perspectivism, there is no material referent or pre-given universe. It is the specific perspective that creates the world and determines its substance. Moreover, perspectives, in contrast to representations, are not related to the spirit and the mind, but to the body. Those who share the same perspective by definition possess the same type of body, formed through a continuous process of constitution and transformation through the exchange of bodily substances, commensality and the sharing of affects and memory. This makes them consubstantial, therefore, and means that they perceive each other as human (see Vilaça 2002a, 2005). The theme of perspectivism is discussed again in the conclusion.

I turn now to what seem to me to be the core aspects of Wari' conversion, looking to situate the experience of Christianity within a wider model of transformation.

Wari' Conversions

I wish to begin by narrating a myth that is clearly about conversion, though not to Christianity. My interest here is to identify the points of convergence between this narrative and those that thematize the conversion to Christianity, emphasizing the

³ The importance of outsiders for the constitution of society is obviously not exclusive to Amazonian systems. Analyzing the nature of political power in various regions of the world, Sahlins 1985 (73–103; 2007) explores the impressive recurrence of the theme of the stranger: typically this figure arrives from afar and is attributed with great powers (in addition to bellicose and violent qualities); through an alliance with the autochthonous people, frequently in the form of marriage, he founds society properly speaking and begins to govern it (see also Rutherford 2006 for a similar process in Biak, Indonesia).

adoption of the enemy's perspective and the institution of humans as predators of animals.

The Lizard Myth

They only eat lizard. They called it white-lipped peccary. They said: "Let's eat peccary!" They killed them. They whistled (with the arrival of the game). "We killed peccary!" "Oh, really?" ... They roasted it. ... When it was ready they gave it to the others.

The child knew. A Wari' child. "Why are you eating lizard? I don't want it! The peccary my father used to kill was different. Lizard is one thing; peccary is another." The child said he didn't want to eat it.

[Was the child kidnapped by the Wari'? I asked]

They took him from his house and raised him. He grew. He saw and said: "You didn't see the peccary that my father killed. That there is lizard." But the Wari' insisted: "This is peccary." He grew and grew. He made arrows. He wandered the forests. An agouti was on the path. He killed the agouti, a real one. He carried it back. The others said: "Release this damned jaguar! Put it down! It's a jaguar!" And he retorted: "No, no it's not. It's an agouti. My father used to kill agouti for their teeth." They fell silent. ... He washed it. "Leave him alone", said the woman who had raised him [his adoptive mother]. The internal parts became cooked. "Give me *pamonha* [maize pudding], mother." "Okay." And he ate it.

[Was he the only one to eat it? Were the others scared? I asked.]

They were afraid. For them, it was jaguar. When the meat was cooked, he said to everyone: "Come to eat! Eat, boys." "Don't eat," people said. "This is going to make you sick." "It's not jaguar," he said. "Jaguar has spots. What you all eat is lizard. You eat anything. What you eat are large lizards."

The Wari' said: "There's peccary! Let's go, let's go!" And the Wari' went after them. Shot them and killed them ...

"No, that's lizard!" he said. "I'm going to hunt." He went alone. He killed a capuchin monkey. He carried it back. "That boy has killed a jaguar, he killed a jaguar" [people said on seeing him].

[Did it look like a jaguar? I asked]

It was a jaguar. The ancient ones did not see well (*kirik pin*/recognize). The person who saw well was the child who ate properly. The ancient ones ate anything. Their children and their wives too. They were the ones who ate lizard.

He whistled (when he arrived back home with the monkey). "Cook the monkey!" "Okay," said the woman who had raised him. ... His mother and father saw properly. They ate. "Ah, this is real game son!" They ate. His brothers ate. The other Wari' didn't want any. They ate their lizard.

His father ate well. ...

"I want to eat game, father. Let's go hunting!" "Let's go!" So they went and saw a jaguar. They called white-lipped peccary jaguar, collared peccary jaguar, spider monkey jaguar, guan jaguar, tinamou jaguar. The ancient ones were truly strange.

The father had never seen a jaguar. He ran away, fleeing from the jaguar. He went to find his father. "This is jaguar, father. I killed it! White-lipped peccary, agouti, collared peccary, are different. This is the true jaguar, father. Come and look. It's dead." "Okay," he said. He looked. "I think the jaguar is beautiful, son. Are you going to leave it there?"

"No. I'm going to take it, so they can see it." "Okay, go ahead then. You know the way. Carry it." "Okay!"

They carried it all the way back. "Go in front and let them know, so they won't run off." "Okay." He arrived and announced: "My son killed a jaguar. You called everything jaguar when it was collared peccary, deer, agouti. You've never seen one before. It has spots. Its teeth are very big. [Sounds]. That's what the jaguar is like. Come and see the jaguar. You called every kind of animal jaguar. Spider monkey, capuchin monkey, saki monkey, guan, curassow. You called them all jaguar. Look what a real jaguar is like." They arrived. They all looked. They didn't like it. They cut it up. They burnt the fur. They divided it. They [the others] didn't eat it. Just them, the father, the brothers, ate it ...

They ate everything, just a little bit was left. There were Wari' who killed game and other Wari' who still ate lizard. They (those who hunted) learnt. They abandoned lizards.

... In other villages they still ate lizard. Like those from here (Rio Negro village) to Guajará [the nearest town, about 12 hours by boat]. ...

The ancient ones did not see (recognize) the animals properly. They only recognized their lizards. Those that they ate. They did not see (recognize) all the forest animals properly. It was he, the Wari', who taught us to eat properly.

We can now examine how the adoption of Christianity by the Wari' can be comprehended as a process of adopting the enemy's perspective analogous to that of the myth, enabled by the bodily identification implied in the creation of ties of consanguinity.

I start with a brief presentation of the missionaries who converted the Wari', the American fundamentalist protestants of the New Tribes Mission.

The Missionaries as Consanguinized Enemies

The New Tribes Mission (NTM) was founded in 1942 in the United States and defines itself as 'a non-denominational agency that sends out fundamentalist missionaries, with the aim of evangelizing and establishing churches among uncontacted tribal peoples. It works in linguistics, literacy and translation of the Bible' (Mission Handbook, cited in Fernandes 1980: 134; see also Gallois and Grupioni 1999).

Its first mission was in Bolivia, in the year the NTM was founded, while its entry into Brazil in 1946 took place precisely on the borders of the Wari' territory, which extends to the Brazilian frontier with Bolivia. The missionaries took an active part in pacifying the Wari' between 1956 (the date of peaceful contact with the first subgroup) and 1961. For many Wari', the missionaries were the main agents of pacification. They quickly established themselves at the attraction posts, supported by the government agency responsible for contact with indigenous groups, the Indian Protection Service (SPI). The dominant ideology of the latter organization, which equated indoctrinizing and civilizing, meant that the missionaries were seen as key agents in the process of civilizing native peoples, as well as suppliers of essential resources, such as boats, medicines, and medical

and educational assistance. They constructed houses, whose surroundings were soon occupied by the Wari', and lived closely with them, concentrating their initial work on learning the language in order to subsequently preach God's message and translate the Bible.

The fraternization intrinsic to the constitution of a Christian community proved to be a key factor in the process of entering the Wari' world. The missionaries called themselves brothers of the Wari', and insisted that the latter were also all brothers to each other, thereby instituting a new morality that condemned all the traditional practices related to affinity, such as usury, marital infidelity, physical aggressions and sorcery. They also promoted rituals of commensality that involved the entire group of converts. Since, for the Wari', commensality produces consubstantiality, this promoted a generalized consubstantialization. This aspect immediately interested the Wari' since the suppression of affinity enabled by generalized brotherhood meant the latter was an ideal always pursued by them, albeit one previously only experienced in posthumous life. The missionaries attracted them with an effective way of making this ideal achievable in life (see Vilaça 1996, 1997; 2002b).

Since the missionaries continued to be classified as enemies like all other whites, despite being brothers, their position can be likened to that of the captured boy in the myth. In other words, although consanguinized, their enemy's origin is always recalled just like the boy, whose mother is called 'the woman who raised him' by the narrator, which is how the Wari' refer to adoptive mothers in contrast to true mothers, who are 'those women who gave birth'. The similarity in treatment is the initial condition for the comparison that I intend to pursue here between these two processes of conversion.

We can turn, then, to the translations of sections of the first chapter of Genesis made by the missionaries with the help of Wari' interpreters, and to some of the comments of the Wari' on divine creation. Like the actions of the captured boy, these imply the establishment of a new relationship between humans and animals.

God and the Creation

Genesis 1.1. In the past there was no sky. In the past there was no earth. There was nothing, nothing, nothing, and so in the past God made. (Bible text in English [King James Bible]: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.)

Genesis 1. 24. He also said: All the animals will stay on earth. All the animals, the strange animals (which are not eaten), the true animals (which are eaten), all the strange animals that crawl across the earth. So it happened. (Bible text in English: And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.)

Genesis 1. 25. This was how God created all the animals. He looked again. That's it! It's very good! This is good, I think. This is what he said. (Bible text in English: And God

made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.)

Genesis 1. 26. He also said: Let's make people. Who are similar to us. He will be the leader/chief (*taramaxikon*) of all the fish and birds and all the strange animals. He will be the leader of all of the earth too. He will be the leader of all the strange animals who crawl across the earth. This is what he said. (Bible text in English: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.)

Genesis 1. 28. He spoke contentedly. Reproduce yourselves many times [...] Spread across all the other lands. Be leaders. Be leaders of the fish, the birds and all the animals. (Bible text in English: And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.)

Genesis 1: 30. Eat all the animals, all the birds, and all the strange animals that crawl across the earth as well. (Bible text in English: And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.)

Although by comparing the Wari' and English versions, we can immediately make a number of observations, these will become more clearly evident if we add a third axis to the comparison: namely, the oral version of Genesis narrated by an old Inuit man and analyzed by Laugrand (1999). Like the Wari', the Inuit are a hunting people (though not horticulturists) for whom the notion of subjectivity extends beyond the human species to various types of animals, including their preferred prey. Although Laugrand was working with an oral account, while here I am using a widely-distributed written translation produced by missionaries with the help of Wari' interpreters, it seems to me that, just as in the Inuit account, elements of the Wari' cosmology affected the interpretation of the biblical text, though these may have gone unperceived by the missionaries (Laugrand 1999: 94).

First of all, we can note that, different to the English version, the Wari' translation of the first verse has to emphasize an original void in order for the act of creation to become possible. As their perplexity during the initial period of catechism makes clear, the idea of creation is foreign to the Wari', for whom things, animals and people always existed in the world. Among the Inuit, emphasis is given to the indifferentiation of the primordial world, where humans and animals appeared like each other and lived together (ibid: 96). Hence, in their version of Genesis, the primordial world emerges 'very smoky' (ibid: 95) and dark until God creates light. We can observe that, different to the Wari', the notion of creation through words is not strange to them: the Inuit have a myth telling how light was created by the word of crow, tired of crashing against the cliffs as he searched for his nest, thereby outwitting the word of fox, who, as a nocturnal hunter, did not want light (ibid: 95).

We can also notice that the difference between wild and domestic animals found in the 'original' biblical text makes no sense whatsoever. The Wari' replaced this difference with the opposition between edible and inedible animals, while the Inuit replaced it with the difference between land animals and those of the sea, a central dimension of their experience (ibid: 97). Nonetheless, Laugrand (ibid: 98) highlights a point that reveals an important difference in relation to the Wari' version: in the Inuit narrative, the part referring to the submission of all animals to humans is omitted entirely, since, the author writes, this would imply a radical transformation of the status of animals for the Inuit, a 'complete transformation of the ontological and cosmological systems' (ibid: 98).

In the Wari' version, the relationship with animals is indeed modified, since men become leaders of all animals, whether edible or not (the strange animals to which the Wari' refer). Here we can turn to the Wari' comments on divine creation.

Surprised by Creation

The Wari' surprise with the idea of creation during the initial phase of catechism becomes evident in their comments on this specific moment of contact with the missionaries. Paletó, a man of about 75 years, describes their astonishment as follows:

Royal (a missionary of the New Tribes Mission) was singing. The Wari' asked themselves: "What is he singing?" We just stared at him. He said: "It was our father who made us." The Wari' remarked: "What's he on about?" The OroNao of the Whites (the first Wari' subgroup to have contact with the missionaries and with the whites in general) did not understand this story of God either. And Royal said: "Our father made us. He made you, myself too, my wife, your women, the fish, frogs and ants and all the animals. God made the snakes. He made our throat and our tongue so we could speak." And the Wari' continued to ask themselves: "What on earth is this about?"

The same man explained to me on another occasion:

We don't know from where our ancestors came. The oldest ancestors did not know from where they came. When the youngsters asked the elders: "Where did we come from?" "I've no idea." "Who made us?" "Nobody made us. We exist for no reason." ... We never thought about God. We never thought: does God exist? No, never.

And his daughter Orowao Karaxu added:

In the past nobody knew that it was God who had created everything. We met the whites and learnt about him. For the elders, the animals always wandered around pointlessly. There was no reason for the animals' existence, they thought.

Today, around 40 years after missionization began, the constant affirmation of divine creation in the church services reveals that the idea of creation still appears strange to the Wari' – meaning that they must reaffirm this idea continually, especially in the prayers spoken aloud at the start of the service. I provide three examples given by three different people in the same service:

“Had there been a *wari'* [person] who knew how to make ... all the fruits, all the fish, all the birds. The stars in the sky, the sun as well....”

“We are very happy with your word. All the animals that you made on earth. The elders didn't know. This is why we eat. Were it not for the animals that you made....”

“Who was the person (*wari'*) who made things? Why does honey exist? We admire God for this. This is his work.”

In this same service, the final prayer uttered by the preacher said: “My father God. We adore you for all the animals that you made on earth. All the animals that we eat, all the fish that we eat, all the fruit that we suck.”

Finally, Paletó remarked while chatting with me one day: “It was God who made us speak. He is the one who makes babies in the womb. The Wari' don't know how to sculpt with clay. It was God who knew how to make us.”

The fact of creation in itself implies the imposition of the perspective of the creator, God, who made men the masters of animals – that is, predators. In Paletó's words:

They used to avoid armadillo, coati. When we encountered the whites, the believers told us to eat everything, since it was God who had made them. They didn't cause sickness. Pregnant women eat armadillo, eagle. The latter animal became a true bird (prey) for us. They eat electric eel and nothing happens. Why? “I created the animals,” said God. “Oh, so that's the way of things, then,” we said.

Predation

As with God, the enemy child in the myth created animals by adjusting the vision of the Wari' so that they could see them properly. God creates the world by fixing the Wari' in the position of predators, just as the captured enemy adjusts the viewpoint of the Wari', transforming them from prey (when all animals were jaguars) into predators (see Bonilla, this volume, for the same model, albeit inverted).

We can conclude, therefore, that the conversion to Christianity was not the first conversion experienced by the Wari' and that both conversions are characterized by a change of perspective, involving the adoption of a foreign point of view. Furthermore, a point crucial to both conversions is the altered relation between humans and animals.

By conceiving humanity and animality as essentially reversible positions – given that both the Wari' and their preferred prey may be located in the position of

humans (*wari'*), defined as predators, or in the position of animals (*karawa*), defined as prey – the Wari' experience life as a constant struggle to define themselves as human and remain that way. As a result, the redefinition of predation in a direction that favours them (situating them as predators rather than prey) matches what the Wari' seek out in their daily life, a movement analogous to the generalized brotherhood or 'de-affinization' also promulgated by Christianity. Comparison with the myth enables us to conclude that, for the Wari', this redefinition is conceived as a switch of perspective instituted by a creative act of enemy origin.

Alteration

As we have seen, a recurring feature in Wari' discourse concerning the introduction of Christianity is that the existence of a God who created the world was completely unknown to the ancient ones. In contrast to some other groups, the Wari' have not reworked their pre-Christian history by claiming that they already knew of God (see Gow 2006). The information brought by missionaries was completely new and is still seen to be so today. Although both the missionaries and the captured boy were consubstantialized in some form, their enemy origin is continually recalled. In this sense, the conversion of the Wari' in both cases meant their adoption of the enemy's point of view, which interested them precisely because of its strangeness.

However, we need to remember that the possibility of incorporating this new perspective depends on the process of bodily transformation implied in consanguinization (see Grotti and Bonilla, this volume, for the same view of conversion as bodily change). Just as the boy's point of view was first incorporated by his parents and siblings, subsequently by his neighbours and only later by more remote people (at a distance such as the Rio Negro and Guajará, specified in the myth), conversion also involved the mediation of kin – although it occurred in sudden fashion (see Vilaça 2002a, 2005) – who entreated others to convert to ensure they would not go to hell.

It is important to add that the perspective's external origin does not explain all the interest that it arouses (see Robbins 2004: 319). Just as the teachings of the boy in the myth would fail to succeed if the new game animals were not tasty, the word of God would not have attracted them had it not opened up the same kind of possibility: of eating more, of everything, without fear.

In the case of Christianity, the new point of view has also involved the possession of new technologies and powers that proved to be highly effective right from the outset. I refer in particular to metal objects, firearms and medicines. The experience of severe epidemics, extremely common during the first contacts with whites (who in Amazonia, and in the Wari' case in particular, were very often missionaries), was normally devastating, undermining traditional therapies, not only in terms of their objective results, but primarily in relation to the cosmological models on which such therapeutic practices are based.

By this I do not mean to lend support to those models that explain native interest in Christianity and conversion as an outcome of disturbances to the worldview caused by contact with the west. According to these models, traditional conceptual schemas are unable to deal with the questions provoked by these new experiences, including the expanded worldview implied by contact. In contrast, these authors argue, world religions such as Christianity offer a more universalist and rational doctrine suited to dealing with this new lived world and its distinct issues (see Weber 1956, 1987; Bellah 1964; Geertz 1973; Horton 1975; also see Hefner 1993 and Pollock 1993 for critical comments).

In the case of the Wari' and various other Amazonian groups, traditional cosmological models were systematically weakened not because of their irrationality or limited scope, but because of their ineffectiveness in a specific historical context. In summation, if people died in large numbers, despite complying with all the necessary taboos and rituals, this suggested that the traditional spirits or divinities were impotent. And if the medicines supplied by whites cured them, they attributed their efficacy to the power of God, particularly since the missionaries themselves made this association explicit (see Fienup-Riordan 1991; Laugrand 1997; Hugh-Jones 1994; Taylor 1981; Viveiros de Castro 1992a; Wright 1999). Consequently, the missionaries were in many cases taken to be powerful shamans, prompting indigenous shamans to try to communicate directly with this God in the same way as they did with their auxiliary spirits.

While keeping in mind all these nuances, we can observe that the core question in the Wari' case, underlying the different interests related to Christianity, remains the same: the constant attempt to stabilize themselves in the position of humanity. Although it may have become more acute during this period, its origin precedes the so-called disruptions of contact. In the same way as eating diverse kinds of animals, the possibility of surviving diseases, having more children (thanks to the end of post-partum sexual restrictions) and using more efficient tools allows the Wari' to maximize the type of production that interests them and makes them human: namely, the production of people and relations (see Wagner 1975: 20–26).

Hell as the Place of Prey

The Wari' interest in securing the position of predators in the **predator-prey** relationship not only explains the two examples of conversion (involving the enemy boy and the missionaries and God) but also the crucial role played by the antithesis of Christianity's ideal world – that is, hell (Vilaça 1997; 2002b). Indeed the fear of hell is much more of a driving force for conversion than the interest in heaven, a strange and sterile place, formed by individuals who have no contact between themselves. The Wari' seem to prefer this heaven to their understanding of hell, a place where people are roasted for eternity (they say: “our soul is left to roast over the fire”). The horror of hell seems to derive from the fact that there they are fixed forever in the position of prey, in precisely the opposite direction to

God's act of creating the world. The same fate of prey-hood is reserved for pagans at the end of the world, when those who have not risen to heaven with God will be eaten by the jaguars who will populate the earth.

However, the Wari' description of heaven retains a particular interest, if not for themselves, then at least for our analysis of their understanding of Christianity. There everyone is young and beautiful, but each person has their own house separate from the rest. Everyone wears new clothes and shoes, and spends their whole time writing God's word. They call each other by consanguine kinship terms, even those who were husband and wife or siblings-in-law while alive. However, the acts that define consanguine relations are completely absent: they do not look after each other, do not sleep together, do not exchange food and do not talk with one another. They are kin without relations; a pre-given kinship, distinct from the type that exists in the lived world of the Wari', where these relations only exist when produced by daily acts (Vilaça 2002a, 2005). Instead, we find individuals of the kind that, as Dumont (1983) has shown, have characterized Christianity since its beginnings: persons who exist prior to relations – as though the complete and definitive elimination of affinity results in the absence of any relation and the production of sterile beings who are not really human. The Wari' seem to have fully comprehended that this idea is a central aspect of Christianity and that it would be incompatible with their relational world, prompting them to confine individuals to the sky, a place of little interest to them. The contrast with the Urapmin case (Robbins 2004) is revealing, since the latter people experience a sharp conflict between their relational values and Christian individualism. By displacing the individual from their world, the Wari' also rid themselves of this kind of conflict (see Vilaça 2007b).

Conclusion

Robbins (2004) argues that those theoretical models which seek to explain native interest in Christianity as the result of disturbances to the indigenous worldview caused by contact with the west fail to address one main problem: namely, that comprehension of the properly intellectual aspects of Christianity is not immediate and that the initial interest derives primarily from a desire to resolve issues related to the traditional culture.

Noting the evident dichotomy between utilitarian and intellectualist explanatory models in the literature on conversion, Robbins (2004: 84–8) in his monograph on the Urapmin proposes a theoretical model for the conversion to Christianity that combines the structuralist models developed by Sahlins (1981, 1985) and Dumont (1983) to explain social change. In his combined model, Robbins proposes two types of motivation, located in two distinct phases. The initial phase can be understood through Sahlins's notion of assimilation where the new events and actors are interpreted via the native culture. In the case of the Urapmin, the driving force for their interest in Christianity was the humiliation they experienced in

relation to both the Australian colonizers and neighbouring Min groups, who for circumstantial reasons had greater access to western goods and knowledge, displacing the Urapmin from their important position in the region's ritual hierarchy. Subsequently, the group realized that making closer contacts with these agents by adhering to Christianity would enable them to recuperate their ritual prestige (Robbins 2004: 20). The process of transformation described by Sahlins forms a second moment within this first phase. Native categories and the relations between them are transformed when applied to the new context, yet it is still the native culture that continues to guide thinking and action.

This is followed by the second, properly intellectualist, phase, which in the Urapmin case occurred with a revival, when Christian culture began to organize various aspects of Urapmin life (Robbins 2004: 30). Inspired by an article in which Sahlins deals with more radical cultural transformations (Sahlins [1992] 2005), Robbins (2004: 11) interprets this as a case of adoption, in which a new cultural system is adopted as a whole and ends up coexisting with the native system.

Dumont's model of a hierarchy of values is used to comprehend the relation between the traditional culture and Christianity via this notion of adoption. Christian values and morality progressively encompass traditional values, the contradiction between them meaning that the Urapmin live in a constant state of moral conflict. There are two central pairs of conflicting values: the valorization of will and desire in native culture, and their condemnation in Christianity; and the conflict between Christian individualism and Urapmin relationalism (Robbins 2004: 291–3). The individualism versus relationalism dichotomy is closely inspired by Dumont's opposition (1983) between individualism and holism. Robbins notes that – as Dumont (1983: 231) had already observed – we cannot speak of holism in the case of the Urapmin or Melanesia in general since, unlike India, the encompassing value is not that of society as a whole, but relations themselves (see Leenhardt 1979, Strathern 1988 and Gell 1998 on the primacy of relations over individuals in Melanesia).

I have gone into some detail in explaining Robbins's model as his is the first attempt to construct a theoretical model for conversion, grounded in a detailed ethnography (but intended for wider application), in which the concept of culture remains central, and which looks to reconcile the apparently opposed cultural movements of continuity and rupture. I therefore believe it is interesting to test the applicability of this model to the Wari', since this will allow us to more clearly define the specificities of the present ethnographic case and, potentially, those of Amazonia as a whole.

The distinction made between these two phases, one utilitarian, the other intellectualist, makes little sense in the Wari' case. Taking the utilitarian phase in its narrower and more generally accepted sense, the interest in the missionaries' objects and medicines cannot be dissociated from the interest in their alterity. The effectiveness of these goods is intrinsically linked to the power inherent in the other. Seen in these terms, the utilitarian phase is still ongoing: the objects are materializations of capacities, which must be revealed continually. Even if we

assume the wider sense of the term utilitarian attributed by Robbins, where the interest in Christianity is based on cultural premises foreign to it (such as the Urapmin concern for their role in the regional ritual system), we cannot assert that the Wari' at any point passed from one phase to another. The interest in Christianity was always based on a problem internal to Wari' culture and independent of the arrival of the whites, as we have seen by turning to myth, linked to the equation they make between humans and predators and the attempt to secure this position.⁴

If the utilitarian phase, in Robbins's terms (2004), is still ongoing, it can also be said that the intellectualist phase comprised by the interest in Christianity as a distinct cultural system has overlapped the former from the very beginning. It is precisely because it forms a system apart, another worldview, that Christianity interested the Wari', making it an intrinsically powerful tool for resolving internal questions. When we are dealing with a culture whose form of reproduction is differentiation (Wagner 1975: 45–52), continuity and difference are, as Sahlins observed (1981: 68), inseparable.

Consequently, we cannot comprehend conversion in the Wari' case through the adoption model developed by Robbins for the Urapmin, where two cultural systems coexist through a hierarchical organization of their values. What we face instead is a system whose central structure contains a place to be occupied by an other which is objectified differently at each moment, as Lévi-Strauss showed (1995) in analyzing the opening of American native peoples to the colonizers at the moment of invasion. According to this author (1995: 220), '...the place of the Whites was already marked in the form of a hollow space within systems of thought based on a dichotomous principle that at each stage forces the terms to become double, so that the creation of the Indians by the demiurge necessitated as well the creation of non-Indians'.⁵

This observation is the starting point for Viveiros de Castro's analysis (1992; 2002) of the conversion of the seventeenth century Tupinambá. Discussing the missionaries' surprise at their rapid conversion, the author asks: 'So why did the savages want to be like us? ... which religion and which system of beliefs were these that contained within themselves the desire for their own perdition?'

⁴ Note that Robbins contemplates this possibility. He argues that it was his decision to focus on the domain of the moral, in which the changes become conscious, that enabled the description of the Christianization of the Urapmin via the adoption model. Had he focused on another domain of Urapmin culture, such as magic, for instance, Sahlins's models of assimilation and transformation would have proven more suitable (Robbins 2004: 316). The author explains that the focus on morality is grounded in the ethnography: 'moral transformation is the overriding preoccupation of contemporary Urapmin' (ibid: 317). This is not a contingent preoccupation, he argues, but one determined by the fact that the domain of morality is where change becomes conscious. In addition, 'the cultural content of Christianity foregrounds the question of moral change' (ibid: 317).

⁵ See Viveiros de Castro (2000: 49–54) for an exploration of Lévi-Strauss's analysis, based on indigenous narratives of the encounter with the whites.

(Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 26; 2002: 193–4). For Viveiros de Castro, the reason why this culture so quickly embraced the theology and cosmology of the invaders was not just the recognition of the technological superiority of the strangers, or any coincidence between native mythology and aspects of the invading society. At root was a more fundamental principle, the ‘opening to the Other’ (Lévi-Strauss 1995), which characterizes Amerindian thought. In the case of the Tupinambá discussed in his text, ‘the other here was not merely thinkable – he was indispensable’ (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 194–5). However, this involved – and this is an essential point – a desire to be other ‘in their own terms’ (ibid: 195).

This peculiar and apparently suicidal way of treating one’s own culture leads the author to question the notion of culture dominant in anthropology – a notion founded, as I mentioned at the start of this article, on the idea of continuity. Thus, while ‘We believe that every society tends to persist in its own being – culture being the reflexive form of this being – and that violent and massive pressure is needed for it to become deformed and transform. ... perhaps for societies founded on the *relation with the other*, rather than *coincidence with self*, where relations predominate over substance, none of this makes the least bit of sense’ (1992a: 27; 2002: 195).⁶

Elsewhere, Viveiros de Castro provides another critique of the applicability of the anthropological concept of culture to Amerindians based on other ethnographic data and other problems, which seems to me even more decisive in terms of highlighting the limitations of the notion of Christian culture used by Robbins (2004) for the analysis of Wari’ Christianity. In developing his notion of perspectivism, Viveiros de Castro (1996, 1998, 2002) argues that native Amazonian peoples tend to invert the Euro-American model of the nature/culture relation. If, as Wagner proposed (1975: 41), every culture proceeds from a definition of the given and the constructed (that is, the effective results of human action), in Amazonia, as in other parts of the world, culture is the given and nature the constructed. This means that the rules determining social and cosmological relations are considered to be the outcome of actions that precede the existence of persons in the present.

This given culture is still common to all those beings considered to be human, including diverse animal species, spirits and enemies. In the case of the Wari’, both they and these other beings live in houses, have families, care for their children and kin, hold festivals and classify beings via the categories of predator and prey. Generally speaking, each being sees itself as human and predator, and the others – beings of other species – as prey, whether animals or enemies. The difference between them resides precisely in the material world projected by their perspectives, not in their practices. While all human beings drink chicha (*tockwa*), the chicha of the Wari’ is maize beer, the jaguar’s chicha is blood, the tapir’s is clay and the whites’ is sugarcane rum. And as I observed at the beginning of this article, perspective is an attribute of the body. Hence, it is because the jaguar (as a species)

⁶ See Clifford (1988: 344), Tooker (1992) and Vilaça (1999, 2007a). Also see Taussig (1993b) on the mimetic compulsion of indigenous Americans.

has a particular type of body, constituted by specific foods and certain habits and affects, that it sees blood as chicha.

Acquiring another perspective implies adopting new corporal habits. Consequently, the idea of transformation in Amazonia is based on body metamorphosis, rather than the cultural absorption presumed by classical western models of acculturation (see Viveiros de Castro 1998: 481 and note 14; Vilaça 1999; 2006; 2007a). In the case of Christianity, by consubstantializing with missionaries and through them with God (who acts as a father), the Wari' are able to experience a completely new world – that is, a new nature – although not a new culture. In this new world, animals are no longer humans, and affines are consanguines. As a result, predation, which previously took place in two directions, becomes a capacity exclusive to the Wari' and directed towards the exterior only, with the suppression of the internal aggressions associated with affinity. Christianity is, for them, at least at this moment, primarily a new perspective on relations, instituted by an act of creation of enemy origin.

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Chapter 9

Shamans and Missionaries: Transitions and Transformations in the Kivalliq Coastal Area

Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten



Illustration 9.1 The igloo Church of Rev. Armand Tagoona as it can be seen today in Baker Lake, Nunavut

Introduction

Using archival and oral sources collected in recent years, we examine the adoption of Christianity by the Inuit of the Canadian Central Arctic from the very first contacts to the 1970s. Since the ethnographical material is quite rich and since we have already documented the case of south Baffin Island elsewhere,¹ we will here concentrate on the Kivalliq coastal area, from Churchill to north Baffin. We will discuss religious changes from a historical as well as an anthropological perspective. We will show how Canadian Inuit from this area received and negotiated Christianity. We will focus on *angakkuit*, shamans, and missionaries and explore how Inuit integrated shamanism in the context of Christianity.

¹ See Laugrand, Oosten and Trudel (2006) and Laugrand, Oosten and Kakkik (2003).

We will show that shamans could become missionaries and missionaries could act as shamans. As such, the Inuit case conforms to a model which is quite common in the Americas (see Viveiros de Castro 1997). But we also argue that Inuit conversion cannot be understood adequately if transformation and transition are not considered as two simultaneous dynamics operating at different levels. These dynamics make it possible for contemporary Inuit to claim that they are Christians in their own way without losing their traditions.

The Adoption of Christianity

First Contacts Between Inuit and Missionaries

The very first contacts between Inuit and Christian missionaries are difficult to date but they probably took place at the end of the seventeenth century with the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries. Since missionaries on the boats did not speak Inuktitut, and the Inuit did not speak French or English, little resulted from these first meetings.

During the early nineteenth century, especially after the Church Missionary Society (CMS) started opening its mission posts in northern Canada in 1820, the Inuit began to encounter Anglican missionaries on an occasional basis. In the summer of 1822, the very first Anglican missionary from the CMS, Reverend John West, met with Augustus, an Inuk interpreter who had just accompanied Captain John Franklin on his trip to the north. From 20 July to 20 August, West may have been the first one to give religious instruction with some effect to Inuit. Archival materials indicate he taught the Gospel to Achshannook, a big family leader, as well as to other Inuit coming to the post to trade their furs. In the 1860s Christian ideas were thus already spreading amongst the Inuit. The Inuit came into contact with Catholic missionaries when they travelled south to Fort Churchill, Caribou Lake, or Athabasca Lake.

During a trip made inland from April to November 1868 from Caribou Lake to Doobant Lake, a French missionary from the Oblate order, Father A. Gasté, reported meeting a powerful Inuit chief who already knew about God (Gasté 1960 [1869]: 2).

The letter written by Father Gasté indicates that the Inuit had welcomed him as ‘a new kind of shaman’: ‘It appeared that my grand black coat, its numerous buttons, as well as the crucifix that I wore on my belt, intrigued them very much. They could not take their eyes from them.’ Father Gasté reports: ‘this chief (the shaman) considered as the greatest magician and the most powerful sorcerer of his nation, immediately wanted to compare his powers to mine’, and he describes the procedure followed by the Inuit leader:

Our magician wished to convince himself (of the grandeur of my character.) To that purpose he insisted on sleeping in my tent despite all my efforts to change his mind. Although I did not know his real motive, I saw no point in resisting further; therefore

I let him sleep in my tent in the company of one of my servants. The next morning our Eskimo chief told anyone who was willing to listen that it was revealed to him during his sleep, that I was not just an ordinary guy, but something much greater. (Gasté 1960 [1869]: 6; our translation)

During this trip, and through interpreters, Father Gasté did his best to instruct the Inuit he met, celebrating mass every day, praying with women and children during the long walks in the tundra and teaching the Christian values as much as possible (Gasté 1960 [1869]: 12–14).

One evening, Father Gasté even accepted to take part in a shamanic feast, unaware of its shamanic nature. The feast started with drum dances that he saw as sign of God's presence (Gasté 1960 [1869]: 12).

The Anglican Mission Post in Churchill

At the end of the nineteenth century, but especially between 1883 and 1894 when the CMS opened a permanent mission, Churchill gradually became a place where Inuit could be in direct contact with Christian ideas, practices and values. The first contacts between a missionary from the CMS, J. Lofthouse, and the Inuit took place in 1886, when a few Inuit came in to trade their furs to the Hudson Bay Company post.

Lofthouse soon realised that he needed more and longer contacts with the Inuit to preach the Gospel to them.² For half a year Lofthouse tried to convey the Gospel to Inuit families visiting the post to trade. Gradually he received more response but the missionary still faced many problems in following the CMS 'Native Church policy' focusing on the training of native people to spread the Gospel. Lofthouse might had some results in the evangelization of women and children and he could baptize a few people, but it was difficult for him to find a suitable Inuk to be instructed in order to spread the Gospel among the Inuit. Inuit enjoyed learning the syllabic system as well as the hymns. And these activities obviously provided a good context for teaching the Gospel.

During the summer of 1888, Lofthouse received some assistance in the language from William Ollebuck³ and succeeded in finding a young girl, 'Ahugsak', to assist him. Apparently word of his mission was spreading around and in 1890 a large party arrived to see him. That same winter, Lofthouse related that even Pauk, a conjuror, 'is anxious to learn and begged for a book so that his children might learn to read' (Laugrand 2002: 89). In June, he reported for the first time about Inuit respecting Sunday as a day of abstention.⁴

² NAC/CMS/Reel A. 114–119/Journal from J. Lofthouse from January 1st to December 30, 1886.

³ NAC/CMS/Reel A. 116/Journal from J. Lofthouse, from June 21 to December 31, 1888.

⁴ NAC/CMS/Reel A. 116/Journal from J. Lofthouse, June 1st to December 31, 1890.

Respecting Sundays apparently was one of the first Christian practices picked up by the Inuit. In 1892, Lofthouse finally managed to make a trip to the north, to Marble Island. His impressions reflect how Inuit were already spreading the Gospel among themselves and probably combining it with their own beliefs and practices. During his trip, Lofthouse met Powow, who had a serious interest in Christianity.

In 1905, when the CMS gradually ended its funding of missions in northern Canada, Lofthouse and many others felt disappointed, but no Anglican missionaries were to be sent back to this part of the eastern Arctic before the early 1920s.⁵ It is hard to assess the impact of Lofthouse missionary activities in the Kivalliq as the CMS did not build further on his work. Lofthouse's journals and letters suggest that after initial scepticism the Inuit developed a great interest in his preaching. Apparently Inuit started respecting the Sundays and they probably adopted more Christian practices and beliefs such as using prayers.

The Missionaries in Kivalliq

In 1912, a Roman Catholic mission was founded in Chesterfield Inlet by Father Turquetil and Father Leblanc. Catholic missionaries targeted the shamans, *angakkuit*, as their main opponents considering them as sorcerers and cheats.

During the first years of the new mission, the Roman Catholic missionaries were not very successful in converting the Inuit. They were even accused of making the game flee from the hunters. The situation gradually improved after a few important local families and local shamans converted in 1917.

Even in areas where missionaries were not yet present, many Inuit camp leaders had already decided to convert their families. The word of God spread rapidly and reached the areas further north at great speed. Influences of both the Catholic Mission in Chesterfield Inlet and the Anglican Mission in Blacklead were at work. North Baffin elders who remember this period indicate that at the time they were not able to clearly distinguish Anglican from Catholic ideas but that they received all these new ideas with enthusiasm. Inuit especially welcomed new Christian principles and rules integrating them in their own traditions. Members of the Fifth Thule expedition such as Rasmussen, Mathiassen and Freuchen were well aware of the rapid developments in the area. Freuchen (1935: 389–90) reported:

We traveled with an old couple, Awa and his wife, and their adopted boy, ... We spent an interesting time along the Melville Peninsula as the natives embraced Christianity while we were there. ... The conversions took place at a meeting, and immediately all the old restrictions fell by the wayside. In fact, it was a great relief to the natives to be able to sew all sorts of skins at any time of day or night, to be permitted to hunt whichever animals they needed, etc.

⁵ Anglican Church of Canada (ACC)/General Synod Archives (GSA)/VII g(ii). Letter from J. Lofthouse to Peck, November 23, 1905.

Siqqitirniq

In some regions in Baffin Island and the northern parts of the Kivalliq and Aivilik areas – especially in the Melville peninsula –, a new ritual, called *siqqitir(niq)* for the transition to Christianity was developed. A meeting would be held by the camp leader or a shaman and the heart of an animal, usually a fresh seal, would be divided into parts and eaten by all the participants. As the eating of a heart was prohibited by traditional customs, especially to women, the ritual expressed the transition to a new way of life free from the restrictions of the old ways (see Laugrand 2002; see also Irqugaqtuq 1978: 16). Noah Piugaattuk from Iglulik recalled:

Shamans (*angakkuit*) were losing their power through *siqqitiq*. Before Christianity, they could not eat certain things from certain animals (*uumajuit*), but after eating they can now do anything they want to. That's how they started Christianity. Back then I went through *siqqitiq* too. Somebody went hunting bearded seal. The man came back with a seal. He brought us a heart (*uummati*), they cut it into pieces. Those people who wanted to go through *siqqitiq* confessed what they did and what they didn't like from the past (*qaqqialiq*). Some even cried while they were confessing. ... Before *siqqitiq* some people could eat heart, but other people, mostly women were not allowed to eat heart. If a woman's relatives died, she couldn't eat some meat for about a year. After *siqqitiq*, hunters would stop to give water to the seal they shot, because that would be Satan's rules (*piqujait*). At that time we did not know what baptizing was.

For Piugaattuk the transition from the old to the new life creates a distinction between Christian rules and Satan's rules. What may have been good in the past has to be rejected now. In retrospect, *siqqitirniq* appears to be perceived as an equivalent of baptism.

Rose Iqallijuq recalled how she celebrated *siqqitiq* with her in-laws in the camp of Ittusardjuat and her accounts connect the *siqqitiq* not to baptism but to a Holy Communion that liberated Inuit from the rules of the past:

As we went inside, the tent was full of people. The whole camp was in there and I saw a plate with walrus meat (*aivirminiq*), like heart (*uummati*), guts (*inaluat*), liver (*tinguq*) and brain (*qarisag*). There were very small pieces on the plate (*mikittukuluk*). First somebody ate, then all ate, and we finished it. Then we said a prayer to God (*Nunaliurti*), that we wanted a new life and that we wanted the good spirit to come down. We were all Inuit there. There was no Anglican minister and no Catholic priest. We were all together, we were using *siqqitiq*. I was baptized later on. ... A lot of people did *siqqitiq* at that time. The plate was really full of meat such as heart, liver, intestines, tongue (*uqaq*) and a lot of people gathered in there. They all ate and they finished the whole plate. They just took the meat together and ate it by themselves. Before, the women could not eat some parts of meat, like tongue, head, or some parts of seal. But when they did *siqqitiq*, they ate this forbidden meat from the plate saying 'let me eat a piece of the body of Christ', and then somebody gave them religion. Now they could eat everything they wanted. After they did this, they said a prayer to God.

Rachel Uyarasuk recalled that people were asked why they wanted to perform the ritual:

After they heard of religion, it was when they wanted to turn towards Christianity.

When they decided they were going to *siqqitiq*, they went to the windbreak. ... They brought a seal to the wind break. They cut the seal open and took out the intestines, the liver, heart, the eyes, the tongue and they were all cut to small pieces. They did not have plates in those days, so they placed them on the seal. They were cut into tiny pieces and put together. In the end, the people were in a line, and each was given a piece of meat to put into the mouth. People were asked why they wanted to go through this ceremony. Every one of them replied,

‘We are going through this because we want to take Christianity.’ My mother told me, if I were asked, to say, ‘I want to go to Jesus’. When the person giving the meat came to me, that person gave me an eye and a piece of intestine. It was cut small enough to chew. I was asked why I wanted to take religion. Here I was, just a child. I was old enough to speak. I replied as my mother instructed me ‘Because I want to go to Jesus when I die.’ Everyone of us was given a piece of meat. The meaning of this was that all these parts of a seal, the meat, the heart, the intestine were all parts of the *pittaili* – the taboos. And they were no longer going to be used or observed. There would be no part of the seal that people would have to refrain from eating. This was not just the case for seal, but for all other animals as well. There were not going to be any more refrainings from eating any parts of any animal. This is why we were given bits and pieces of everything. (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 123)

In all accounts the rejection of the old food restrictions, *pittailiniit*, was the core of the transition to Christianity. Clearly some elements from the Christian tradition were quite meaningful for the Inuit. Here, the ritual evokes the Paulinian contrast between the Law of the Old Testament and Christ, but the elders do not refer to such a connection.

Inuit Parousial Movements

While competition for souls between Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries was intense, religion rapidly spread from the first missionary centres to areas that were never visited by missionaries. The Inuit adopted their own versions of Christianity combining Christian and shamanic ideas and practices. *Angakkuit* played an important part in preparing the transition to Christianity and various attempts to combine Christianity and shamanism were made. God, Christ, angels and even the Holy Trinity might appear to people.

A member of the Fifth Thule expedition, Peter Freuchen (1935: 389–90) relates a report of Awa about seeing the Holy Trinity:

Awa told us that only last summer he had had a remarkable experience, He was sitting outside his tent carving a walrus tusk when he saw three men approaching the settlement. He did not know who they might be, but suddenly recognized them as

the new gods of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Awa shouted for everyone to come out and receive the dignified guests. And then, when a certain little girl discovered they wore pants of rabbit skin and very tall caps, she had to laugh. This made the Trinity angry, and, while they smiled forgivingly, they altered their course so that they passed by without stopping or even speaking a word in greeting. The natives had been greatly disappointed, but they said the Holy Ghost presented such a laughable aspect from the rear that they all gave way to their mirth. His posteriors curved in instead of out. The Trinity had never been seen again.

Freuchen appears to consider Awa's account as a funny anecdote, but for Awa it was probably quite a serious matter relating a missed opportunity of being instructed by the Holy Trinity itself. The prohibition to laugh at a spirit is well-known with respect to Ululiarnaq, the woman with the knife, who cut out the entrails of the shamans who could not restrain themselves from laughter during their visits to the land of the moon spirit. The same prohibition can be found in various ritual contexts such as the winter feasts.

During the winter of 1921–22 more than 35 families among the Inuit in the camps of Ingnertoq, Pingerqalik and Iglulik were converted 'in a flash' (Mathiassen 1928: 235) to Umik's religious movement. It was thus an Inuk leader and shaman who founded the first Christian group in the area. The new religion spread rapidly and reached the Aivilingmiut camps of Ava and Apaq in Itibdjierang (Mathiassen 1928: 236) in spring 1922. Mathiassen (1928: 235) gives a detailed description of the movement:

At Iglulik we met the prophet Uming (Umik) himself, an elderly, intelligent man, who ruled there absolutely. Besides the hand-shake and the flag, his religion included abstention from work on Sundays, gathering now and then in his snow house and singing hymns which he had taught them, and, what is more, the hunters were to bring their booty to him and he would distribute it. ... When people arrived at the settlement or departed from it, all the inhabitants gathered and sang a hymn, after which the hand-shaking commenced; even the dog's paws were taken. Uming was also a liberal man, permitted polygamy, offered to 'lend' us his wife during our stay at Iglulik and continued to exchange wives for a year at a time with another man.

Umik developed its own distinctive practices such as the ritual of handshaking, which included the tiniest child and even the dogs, and the use of flags. When a Catholic mission was founded in Iglulik in 1933, people already were thus already familiar with many basic Christian tenets.⁶

⁶ See Blaisel, Laugrand and Oosten (1999), for a more detailed discussion of the movement of Umik.

The opening of new mission posts

In the early twenties, many new missions opened in the Kivalliq area. Anglicans opened missions in Eskimo Point (1926) and Salliq (1926) and then Baker Lake (1927) and Mittimatalik (1929) whereas Catholic missionaries based in Chesterfield Inlet opened posts in Cap Esquimaux (1924), Salliq (1926), Baker Lake (1927), Mittimatalik (1929), Naujaat (1933), Iglulik (1933) and Pelly Bay/Arviligjuaq (1935).

Although the missionaries usually felt they were entering pagan territory, in most areas, Inuit themselves prepared and facilitated the spread of the Christian ideas. In Chesterfield Inlet, Tuni, Ajaruaq and Paapak and their families soon became Catholic proselytes. Qillaapik in Salliq and Pudlo in Qamanittuaq played a crucial role in establishing strong Anglican communities.

In some areas both Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism acquired strong roots. A good example is Iglulik where in 1933 a mission was founded at the request of Catholic Iglulingmiut. Another example is the case of Kugaaruk mission founded by Father Henri at the request of Catholic Inuit living in that area (see Remie and Oosten 2002).

During his trip in the Chesterfield Inlet area in the late forties the Swiss ethnologist J. Michea (1949: 99–101) related that Christian symbols and rituals quickly replaced traditional symbols and practices. Thus Christian prayer came to be considered as more powerful than the traditional shamanic formulas but serving the same purposes. When Roman Catholic Bishop Turquetil (1954: 322) emphasized the use of prayer for hunting, he in fact confirmed the shamanic technique of procuring game. Now that God was considered as the owner of animals, the Christian prayer was considered as a new powerful formula. Shamanic interpretations of Christianity were thus common and conversion to Christianity did not necessarily imply fundamental changes in the Inuit perceptions of the power of words, and many shamanic traditions were retained.

Missionaries and Angakkuit*Missionaries Competing with Angakkuit*

As soon as they had arrived, the missionaries began to focus on converting the shamans, *angakkuit*. They considered them their main opponents and were often afraid of them. Bishop Turquetil for instance would be rather uncomfortable when he would travel to an area near Promise Island, 40 miles north to Chesterfield Inlet that he described as a 'nest of sorcerers'. Turquetil (1955: 20; our translation) also acknowledged his apprehension when he would meet the well-known shaman Talleriktoq: 'This man was to be feared ... He was an opponent, always laughing at people, I wish not to meet. ... There was no chance to discuss things with such a man.'

In Arviligjuaq, father Henry was quite fearful of dealing with the *angakkuq* Iksivalitark: ‘Meeting him was not without fear. He would ask: “What are you doing among us, you don’t have tobacco nor ammunition to give us?”’ (Laugrand 2002: 420).

Public conflict with *angakkuq* was avoided, but sometimes occurred as in the case of Iksivalitark, the son of the famous shaman Allakannuark. Iksivalitark wore the *kigluraq*, a little tattoo between the eyebrows that signified that he had slain a *tupilaq* (a bad spirit), and he constantly challenged the religious authority of Father Henry. Finally, he renounced the Catholic faith by saying that he didn’t want to be reprimanded by Father Henry (Van de Velde 1981: 241).

In fact, the shamans were often quite open to Christianity but it was not easy for them to give up the practices that had proven their value in the past. Rose Iqallijuq remembered that Qimuksiraaq was trying to be a Christian as well as a shaman. Sometimes, Inuit shamans wanted to test Christian ideas and compare the power of the new spirits with the old ones. In August 1923, a shaman participated in a meeting organized in honour of the visit of the Catholic Bishop Ovide Charlebois, because he had in mind to ‘**compare his power to the power of the Catholic Bishop**’ (Turquetil 1954: 325, 1955: 22).

The missionaries themselves also engaged in competitions with the shamans in order to defeat them with their own weapons. Thus Father Ducharme (1954: 7–10) tried to impress an *angakkuq* by his use of magnesium as a flashlight to prove that his tricks were superior to those of the *angakkuq*. Father Rio outran an *angakkuq* in a running contest to show that the amulets of the *angakkuq* did not avail against him. Kopak from Naujaat related: ‘**Talleriktoq and Father Papion were competing.** He would use the abundance of caribou to challenge Father Papion. “I can find caribou? Can you?” Father Papion said, “All I have to do is pray and there will be more than you can give me”’ (Kopak 2001).

But the priests did not always get the better of their opponents. Pisuk related:

There was a priest called Mikilaaq [Father Lionel Ducharme]. There was an old woman who had a *qallunaq* (a white person) for a *tuurngaq* (a helping spirit). When she missed going to church, he went to her and told her she had committed a sin. Then her *tuurngaq* punched him and he almost fell. The bishop told him later that he should not be scolding people who were so much older than he was. He stopped doing that after that (Kolb and Law 2001: 191).

But Pisuk from Rankin Inlet did acknowledge the power of the missionaries:

Father Thibert told people not to constantly pray for animals. He said that just praying once would be enough. There is a place called Sattiumanittuaq. Father Thibert was waiting there to see if we got any caribou, and prayed for my father. He said that he hoped he would get enough. He said that when my father shot his rifle, none of the caribou would flee. It seemed as though it was the priest who was doing the *manilirijjuti* [procuring of game]. (Oosten and Laugrand 2002: 109–10).

As a consequence Inuit considered priests as *angakkuit*. The missionaries were aware that they were often considered as *angakkuit* and did not mind too much as long as it helped them in their competition for souls with the Anglicans. Turquetil observed: 'These Inuit consider us as shamans and think we could kill them if we're unhappy about them. When they see us preaching outside, they believe we practice some sort of shamanic rituals'.⁷

Thirty years later, in 1956, Father Van de Velde wrote:

I think that to the Eskimo mentality there is a very close link between their conception of the sorcerer and the priest ... and that the acceptance of the priest in place of the sorcerer is usually easily accomplished, either consciously or unconsciously. A missionary, an expert on the Eskimo language, one day said that the true translation of the word priest should be 'angakok', that is sorcerer, and not 'iksirardjuar' the expression actually used and which, when literally translated means 'the great writer' (Van de Velde 1956: 8).

Confession and The Power of Seeing

Uyarasuk related that when she met a priest at Mittimatalik, she expected him to be able to discern all her faults and transgressions just as an *angakkuq* would do (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 137). Once people discovered that the priests were not able to see the transgressions, they tended to hide them. Van de Velde argued that the Inuit accepted the sacrament of penance with ease, not only because they were accustomed to making confessions, but also because under Catholicism the element of fear, intrinsic to the shamanic confession, was absent:

Now that he knows that the priest is unaware as to whether or not his confession is good or bad, he may make an incomplete confession, because he is no longer incited to confess through fear and because he does not clearly understand the consequences of an incomplete confession (Van de Velde 1956: 8).

Today, elders stress the power of the shamanic vision and its efficacy in revealing transgressions. Aupilaarjuk from Rankin Inlet observed:

Before that, we had *angakkuit* who could see if we had done something wrong. Even if we didn't want to talk about it, it was impossible to keep a wrong-doing hidden. We had to confess it. If I only confessed part of it he would know there was still some left, and I had to tell everything until there was nothing left. This would not be brought up again. This is how we were. That is how an *angakkuq* would *iqqaqtui*, question, you. Now we keep things hidden. Only God knows. These things will all come out on Judgment Day (Oosten, Laugrand and Rasing 1999: 22–3).

⁷ Turquetil, *Les Cloches de Saint Boniface* (1914: 134), quoted in Morice (1935: 102). See also Michea (1949: 99 and 101).

Pisuk, from Rankin Inlet pointed out the superiority of shamans over the new religious groups. He remembered the famous *angakkuq* Qimuksiraaq interviewed by Frederiksen in the 1960s:⁸

If I were to go to an Evangelical or Anglican or Catholic Church service, even if I really wanted to be made to see something, I wouldn't see anything. I was able to see Qimuksiraaq's *tuurngaq* (helping spirit). It was in the shape of an Arctic hare. He would go and get it from outdoors after we heard the sound of it moving on the ground. He held it in his arms and brought it inside. It was alive. The tips of its ears weren't black at all, just like a *qallunaat* rabbit. He would put it in his parka as though he was going to take it with him. Nowadays when I go to church and I want to see something, I don't see anything at all (Kol and Law 2001: 46).

This capacity of shamans to see and make non-human beings visible is essential to understand the value of shamanism and its continuity.⁹

Although shamans might become Christians, this does not necessarily imply that they gave up all their practices. Pisuk was trained as an *angakkuq*, although he never became one. During all his life he observed specific rules to protect his life:

One time I was sick and I wasn't getting any better. This was after there was the Grey Nuns hospital in Igluligaarjuk. Qaviajak cured me, and then she said, "If you want to die, eat a caribou liver or heart." From then on I believed in her words and I have never eaten caribou liver or heart. Sometimes I could have thought, 'Those were just words,' but I believed her. I didn't want to die. Not wanting to die, I have never eaten caribou heart or liver to this day.

In fact, many people appear to have followed specific rules. Qalasiq from Rankin inlet mentions the case of her brother Itinnuaq.

My brother Itinnuaq had many things he had to follow because he was cured by an *angakkuq*. Even though he had a *qallunaat* father [a white person], there were many things he had to follow. Nobody could borrow his clothing. I have never borrowed any of his clothing at all. I have never even put on his mitts as I was not supposed to. Even after we became Christian and Catholic, even today, we still follow this. Even though it's been a long time since our parents died we still follow their words. (Kolb and Law 2001: 62)

Qalasiq emphasizes that now they have to move to prayer and Christianity.

⁸ See Saladin d'Anglure and Hansen (1997).

⁹ See for instance Vilaça (2002: 75) for the Wari' and Viveiros de Castro (2007). See also Oosten and Laugrand (2005–2006) for an analysis of Inuit Non-human beings through the visual code.

Some *angakkuit* wanted to hang on to their powers. Their powers started to diminish with the introduction of prayer. The *pittailiniit* [i.e. the rules] that are attached to Christianity are different than the *pittailiniit* imposed by shamanism. The Christian way of life is so much more comfortable (Kolb and Law 2001: 41–2).

Shamans and Preachers

Even though Christian missionaries spent much energy in fighting shamanism, they often accommodated these shamanic traditions. Many *angakkuit* continued their practice after the conversion to Christianity.

A few entries in various *Codices Historici* and other missionary accounts show that the missionaries were aware that some *angakkuit* were still practicing.¹⁰ Remie (1983), writing on the persistence of traditional religious beliefs and practices among the Arviligjuarmiut of Pelly Bay, provides ample evidence that the shamanic ideology was still very much alive in Pelly Bay in the 1950s and 1960s. Recourse to old beliefs and practices frequently occurred, particularly in crisis situations (sickness and death, bad hunting, and serious conflicts in social relations).¹¹ The examples of Suluk and Tungilik are significant.

Donald Suluk

Donald Suluk was probably born around 1925 in Chesterfield Inlet. He gained quite a reputation as a musician and a preacher. He became rapidly became a controversial figure in the Kivalliq.

In Kangirsludjuar, in 1945, Choque (1985: 117–18) reported the actions of an Inuk called Suluk, who was considered as a shaman by some and a Christian preacher by others. Suluk would ask people to pray. He would use a crucifix and bibles and at the same time perform shamanic rituals claiming to be an agent sent by God. A few Inuit families followed him in Kangirsludjuar putting a Christian crucifix in front of each igloo. During a trip made in the area from 31 October to 14 November 1946, Father Buliard reports the success of Sulutnar, another name for Suluk, which he found difficult to oppose.¹² In a letter dated 20 November, 1949, he

¹⁰ See *Codex Historicus* of Igluligaarjuk: January and July 1944; see also the *Codex Historicus* of Mittimatalik (20 June 1952) referring to the case of Kautainum. Inuit and missionaries attributed about six murders to him.

¹¹ Similar observations have been made for other areas in the Kivalliq by Steenhoven (1959), Vallee (1962), Balicki (1967) and Williamson (1974). See also Oosten, Laugrand and Remie (2006).

¹² Archives Deschâtelets (AD)/HEB 1933 J83C 10b, Journal du père Joseph Buliard, 17 octobre 1945 au 20 juillet 1949.

seems even a bit depressed about the situation describing the movement as a mixture of Protestantism and shamanism and the followers as illuminated people.¹³

Dominic Qasaluq recalled:

I know he would perform by making something visible. As a young person I saw something I tried to run away from. I have learnt from him that there is a good way of living and a bad way of living. Although the people would often say that he is not an *angakkuq*, I have seen him teaching people about the good and the bad path. He told us that there is Satan, the evil, and he would show us what evil looks like if we do evil things. For him, Satan was the master of people who do evil things.

Sulutnar [i.e. Suluk] explained to the people who were at the drum dances that if we do evil, the master who makes us do bad things would come in so the people would see how it looked. It was a big *tuurngaq*, a *tuurngaquaq* [a big shamanic helping spirit]. When I saw this being, I jumped to the back of the bed right at the edge of the igloo. Sulutnar told us never to get involved with this being. Seeing this being the way it looked made you wish to have a good life. That being had a tail and hands. I could see it, it was very close from me. Then Sulutnar called other good helpers that cast this evil spirit out. These spirits tied something around his neck and sucked it out, cast it away of the igloo. (Qasaluq 2006)

According to Norman Atungalaq from Baker Lake (Atungalaq 2006), Sulutnar would use his dog to make people confess in the Chesterfield area. Suluk met a lot of resistance from some Inuit and missionaries, but today many elders speak with respect about him and emphasize his deep involvement in Christianity.

Victor Tungilik

The late Tungilik from Naujaat also practiced as a healer and as an *angakkuq* for several years. His parents were Anglicans and told him he should be raised as a Roman Catholic. His father also was an *angakkuq*. After his father died, Tungilik became an *angakkuq* too.

I don't know how I became an *angakkuq*. It was not that somebody made me into an *angakkuq*. I don't know how it happened. In the evenings there would be a brightness on the ground behind me and it would follow me. It turned out that this was my *ikajuqti* [my helper]. When I mentioned to someone that I would see this when I was alone, I was told that it had been my father's *ikajuqti*. I wasn't scared of it. I didn't think about being scared of it. It was given to me by someone. It would come to me whenever anyone was sick. I would heal people who were ill. (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 89)

¹³ AD/HEB 1933 J83C 10b, Journal du père Joseph Buliard, 17 octobre 1945 au 20 juillet 1949.

Tungilik relates that his *tuurngait*, helping spirits, did not oblige him to observe ritual rules:

When my *tuurngait* would help me they did not have me observe any time of abstaining. They did not have me abstain from eating or doing any type of work. Because of this, I felt I was different from others. It seemed like my *tuurngait* were similar to the Christian religion, they did not make me abstain from anything. When I was given an item to help someone, then it was up to me to heal the person. That's the way it was (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 94–5).

He practiced for several years, but finally he decided to stop. As a child he had heard a sermon by a priest stating that sinners would be thrown into a great fire. This made a great impression upon him and contributed to his decision to stop his practice as a shaman even though he was quite effective as an *angakkuq*.

After I had got rid of them, there was a time that I regretted it for my two in-laws died at the same time ... That was the only time I felt regret. I thought that maybe if I had not sent away my *tuurngait*, one of them might have remained alive, and I would continue to see him. ... If I continued to be an *angakkuq*, I would end up in Hell in the great fire. Because I didn't want this to happen, I let my *tuurngait* go. (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 11)

The missionary perspective that shamanism and Christianity were incompatible was clearly at work here and had long term consequences as well. Such a perception became particularly stronger after the few Inuit religious movements combining the two traditions were repressed. Later on, Tungilik discovered that not all priests rejected his shamanic activities out of hand but that was too late:

I told a priest that I had been an *angakkuq* in my past. I told him that I had sent away my *tuurngait* even though they were there to help me. The priest told me that what I had done was wrong because they were there to help me heal people, and that any way of assisting and healing people was a gift from God. When the priest told me this, I believed him. But, as I had already sent my *tuurngait* away, I was not going to request their return. (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 109)

Tungilik himself never doubted the power of shamanism, but acknowledged that the power of God was greater:

As I understood more about religion, I let go of my *tuurngait* who were really powerful and really helpful, because I knew there was someone who was even more powerful and even stronger than my *tuurngait*. That made me decide to follow religion. (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 75)

But Tungilik was sure that the *tuurngait* had protected him and because of them he was still alive. The accounts related by Tungilik suggest that shamanism was not rejected by Christian Inuit, but subordinated to a Christian framework. Thus Tungilik could argue that the good *tuurngait* come from God and the bad *tuurngait* from Satan (Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 93). The continuity of shamanism was to some extent based on a continuing belief in its efficacy. People felt that without it they would be helpless. According to Uyarasuk:

I heard one person who went through the *siqqitirmi*q ritual say that he was going to let go of all his healing powers that he used when he was an *angakkuq*. Someone else said we would be helpless, because there would no longer be anyone to find out the causes of illness. I remember someone saying this.

Missionaries felt they had to eradicate shamanism so Inuit could become good Christians. Inuit felt much more the need to retain from shamanism what was good and to integrate it into their Christian tradition. The incompatibility of the two traditions, postulated by the missionaries, remained a point of debate among Inuit. Even today many elders feel that the good parts of shamanism should be integrated into their Christian faith (see Oosten and Laugrand 2002).

Conclusions

1. Inuit began to receive Christian ideas once the problems of language and understanding were solved. They were attracted by the new ideas and adopted very easily the syllabic writing system introduced by the missionaries when they first translated the Bible. Some Christian ideas were clearly attractive to the Inuit. For example:

- the possibility for people to see their dead relatives after death. The first Christians were called the *majulajuit*, ‘those who can go up in heaven’;
- a more comfortable life, without too many rules and without fear since shamanism was always – and still is – closely related to fear, ambiguity, revenge and danger;
- the conviction of the superiority of Christian prayers and hymns over shamanic formulas in contexts of hunting or healing.

2. Inuit leaders and shamans played an important role in spreading the Christian ideas and converting others before and after the missionaries came. They interpreted the Christian ideas (see Blaisel, Laugrand and Oosten 1999 on parousial movements) and adapted them to their own traditions. The naming system which is so essential in Inuit culture (one’s full identity depends on the names connecting a person to the deceased as well as living namesakes) was never abandoned. On the contrary, new Christian names were introduced and used. But the practice of tattooing related to the transformation of the body in the context of marriage and to the sea woman *inua* in the context of shamanism was quickly left behind. Now

that God was considered as the owner of all the animals, the sea woman lost her central position in Inuit cosmology. The winter feasts (*tivajut*) were abandoned and Christmas gradually became the most important celebration.

3. In the *siqqitirniq* rituals, Inuit shaped their own conversion. Eating the liver, for instance, was usually a practice intended to avoid revenge from a person in case of a killing or from the *inua* (the owner) of the animal after a successful catch (see the common practice to eat the liver after a fresh seal had been killed). In the *siqqitiq* ritual, Inuit ate the heart or the liver of the sea mammals as in the old days but also transgressed important rules. Since especially shamans and women were usually not allowed to eat certain parts of an animal such as the liver or the heart, they were given these very parts of the animals.¹⁴ Thus the *siqqitiq* ritual connects and disconnects. In the past, abstaining and refraining rules known as *pitailiniit*, *tirigusuusiit* and *maligait*, primarily had to do with animal products such as skins, bones, meat, entrails and sinews and often applied to people facing transitional states such as birth and death, menstruation, shamanic initiation. Through the *siqqitiq* ritual, most of these prohibitions related to animals were lifted. Inuit ate the forbidden parts of the meat, transgressing openly their most fundamental cosmological rules. But during this process, they also adopted new rules, such as the prohibition of work on Sunday.¹⁵

As Inuit integrated new practices, new discourses and values emerged. *Siqqitirniq* not only renounced the notion of *inua* (owner) of the animals, but instituted a new connection with God who is now considered as the main owner of the animals. Through this transfer the idea that animals should always be treated with caution and respect was not altered.

Today, after more than a hundred years of Christian influences, contemporary Inuit still identify as hunters and consider animals as close to humans, the main difference being that animals – with the exception of dogs – do not have *atiit* (names) like human beings (see Tookoome 1999).

Respect for the prey is a core value in modern Inuit society. As Aaju Peter and her Inuit co-writers put it with respect to the seal, 'The seal, however, provides us with more than just food and clothes. It provides us with our identity. It is through sharing and having a seal communion that we regain our strength, physically and mentally' (Peter et al. 2002).

¹⁴ It also inverts rules connected to death and shamanic initiation and also to the ariserpoq practice which is described by Rasmussen (1929: 175) in the following terms:

On the first occasion of eating raw meat after childbirth the woman must, if her child is a boy, ariserpoq, i.e. a piece of intestine about 1. ½ metres long, and a piece of liver, are placed in her cooking pot, taken out again quickly, so as to be hardly more than dipped in the boiling water, and the women must then swallow the intestine whole, without cutting it, and immediately after eat the liver, which must likewise not be masticated, but swallowed rapidly (she must not cut either one or the other).

¹⁵ See Uyarasuk's statement and details in Oosten and Laugrand (1999: 34–5).

Hunting is still perceived as the foundation of Inuit existence and eating and sharing game remain essential practices as ever. Today, like in the old days, Inuit and animals are considered as connected in a cosmic cycle maintained by hunting, sharing and various abstaining rules.¹⁶ Old rules still apply in some families¹⁷ but new rules are now predominant. Society, however, is not possible without respecting rules, and the fear of the end of the world if we do not respect the rules is very present in Arctic communities.

The transition from shamanism to Christianity was perceived as a break with the past by missionaries as well as Inuit. However, it was a gradual process largely controlled by Inuit themselves. The transition to Christianity allowed for transformations as well as continuity. Although today Shamanism is less visible in term of practise, it remains very much alive in the discourse. Elders take it for granted that in desperate need people will take recourse to the well-proven shamanic knowledge of the past. They emphasize that shamanism continues and that each community will have its shamans until the end of time, as stated by Kappianaq, and elder from Iglulik. Indeed, some shamanic beliefs and values remain very much alive. Divination and healing practices such as the qilaniq, or meeting and experiences with non-human beings are good examples of practices that continue.

Today, Pentecostal movements such as the Glad Tidings Church are completely opposed to shamanism. Yet they remind the elders of the old shamanic traditions. This may partly explain its attraction to the Inuit. In these movements they can, as in the old shamanic tradition, closely associate their daily life and practises with religious rules, experiences and values, and express their deep emotions collectively and openly (see Laugrand and Oosten 2007).

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¹⁶ Imaruittuq explained, 'If you legitimately hunt wildlife and don't cause them to suffer, if you respect them, then it is fine. There will be suffering on occasion but you have to try and minimize this out of respect for the animal. We should not even make nasty comments about wildlife. We shouldn't quarrel about them amongst ourselves. Wildlife has been placed on this Earth for us to use, but we must treat them with respect.' (Oosten, Laugrand and Rasing 1999: 38).

¹⁷ See Pisuk in Oosten and Laugrand (2002: 29).

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Chapter 10

Baniwa Art: The Baniwa Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Sustainable Development

Robin M. Wright

Baskets are part of a very ancient weaving tradition that clearly links the Baniwa of the northwest Amazon to their natural and spiritual environments. For several generations now, the Baniwa (pop., approx. 12,000) have sold these baskets on the market, to purchase the things they need; recently, they created a whole new form of organization to commercialize these baskets, through a sustainable development project called ‘Arte Baniwa’, or Baniwa Art, with the assessment of the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), a major NGO in Brazil. The goals of this project were to enhance the value of the Baniwa basket-making tradition, increase production within the limits of the sustainable use of natural resources, generate income for indigenous producers and their political associations, and train indigenous leadership in the skills of business management. This very successful project was initiated shortly after the creation of the Indigenous Organization of the Içana River Basin (OIBI), and essentially involves 16 of the more than 100 Baniwa communities of the Içana River and its tributaries in Brazil.



Illustration 10.1 Baniwa baskets in different shapes and sizes make excellent home and office decorative pieces (Wright, 2008)

The Baniwa Art project was an initiative of Protestant evangelical communities in partnership with the ISA. Although Baniwa basketry was sold on the market well before the creation of the OIBI and Baniwa Art project, it was often through an exploitative system controlled by river merchants. Following the regional, pan-indigenous political movement of the 1980s and the expulsion of the river merchants, Baniwa evangelical communities both assumed control over the local indigenous association, initially founded by young Catholic leaders, and the production of Baniwa basketry. Since the implantation of the Baniwa Art project, young evangelical leaders, supported by the NGO, have rapidly risen to power.

This chapter reflects on how evangelicalism has encouraged the rise of individualism, as well as the introduction of western values of economic and political success. This has generated conflicts with more 'traditional' values and practices of egalitarianism and witchcraft accusations. The case of a young Baniwa leader who coordinated both the political association and the Art Project illustrates extremely well the sorts of grave conflicts that emerged. This chapter will also reflect on modifications in human/spirit relations following the introduction of evangelicalism and sustainable development projects. For this, I shall cite extensively from a recent interview I conducted with a Baniwa political leader regarding his perceptions of the relations between evangelicalism, the political movement, and the notion of 'sustainable development'.

This case study clearly illustrates the *interpretive/heuristic value* of taking the Baniwa cosmological framework seriously prior to and during the implementation of such projects. It is not simply a case of how a set of 'capitalist' relations 'went bad' or 'failed' as a result of native ethics. My argument is that, had the development planners – in particular, the NGO – seriously taken into account the notions (discussed here) of 'egalitarian' relations, 'power', 'inequality' and the probable outcome of exacerbating pre-existing religious tensions between Protestant and Catholic communities, as well as the active and aggressive role of the spirits of nature in reacting to human excesses, – perhaps the leader would not have suffered such attacks. Perhaps it would have resulted in a project that was more sensitive to the nature of balance the Baniwa strive to keep amongst themselves, and their potential foes (be they rival clans or spirits of nature).

Context

Anthropological analyses of 'development' projects and so-called 'sustainable development' have a long tradition, going back to at least the 1970s and 1980s. This article draws from these discussions as well as my own work in international NGOs in the early 1980s, such as the Anthropology Resource Center (ARC, Inc.), one of the first international NGOs to link the question of indigenous peoples' rights, environmental protection, and the human consequences of large-scale

‘development’ projects in the Amazon. It also focused the question of ‘alternative models for development among indigenous peoples of the Amazon’. (See my article in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (v. 17: 365–90, 1990). for a more complete analysis of this history.) ‘Alternative models’ or ‘ethnodevelopment’ had been the subject of discussions among Latin American anthropologists (Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira) since the 1970s, while indigenous peoples were organizing international conferences on this subject in the early 1980s.

A key actor in the situation we will be discussing was the NGO in Brazil, known in the 1970s as the Ecumenical Center For Documentation and Information (or CEDI), a consortium of social, environmental, and pastoral projects connected to various Protestant churches in Brazil. The most important of their projects was called ‘Indigenous Peoples in Brazil’ (*Povos Indigenas no Brasil*) or ‘PIB’ program which, much like the ARC, was dedicated to documenting the situation of indigenous peoples (a dramatically poor situation in the late 1970s), publishing an encyclopedic series of volumes on their situation, and assessing various indigenous peoples on their land rights, control over natural resources, amongst other things. With the fast-growing environmentalist movement on the global scene in the late 1980s, the PIB Program began seriously discussing the possibility of changing its structure and form, by separating from the CEDI consortium and setting up its own base in the city of São Paulo. It changed its focus too, by explicitly allying its internationally-known and respected tradition of research and indigenist activism with large European NGOs and funding organizations interested in supporting local-level efforts in Brazil and other Latin American countries connected to indigenous peoples and the environment (for example the European Community, Alliance for the Climate, Horizont Foundation, Norwegian Rainforest Foundation, Gaia Foundation, and many others). The new organization became known as the ISA, or Socio-Environmental Institute – which is today, one of the most successful and powerful NGOs in Brazil, operating on a budget of over 13 million Reais (or 7.5 million US\$) per year. Its slogan marked the new alliance – ‘Social and Environmental are written together’. The history of Amazonian Indians and Eco-politics in Brazil can only be partially understood without taking into consideration the critical role of the ISA and its allies. In some areas of the Amazon, it actually performs the role of the state government itself in assessing indigenous affairs, such as in the northwest Amazon. In this regard, the ISA, allied with a few important indigenous NGOs of the northwest Amazon (the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro, or FOIRN, and the Indigenous Organization of the Içana Basin, or OIBI) created a ‘middle-ground’¹ through which a direct link was forged between transnational and local-level politics. As I

¹ For a good analysis of the emerging ‘middle-ground’ between eco-politics and indigenous people in Brazil in the early 1990s, see the article by Beth Conklin and Laura Graham, ‘The Shifting Middle-Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics’, *American Anthropologist* 97(4): 695–710.

shall show in this article, this 'middle-ground' was shaky in many ways because of the symbolic dominance of certain key figures in the politics, and the imposition of a model that privileged and shaped specific indigenous organizations, while excluding others.

The case study and interview with native leaders presented here illustrate what Conklin and Graham have pointed to as the 'structural tensions in transnational-local alliances that view indigenous aims through western lenses and rely on a few bicultural individuals as leaders'. (1995: 704) This article seeks to go beyond this observation by: firstly presenting native analyses of this shaky transnational/local alliance; and secondly critically analyzing the construction of a system of symbolic dominance in which certain NGOs, indigenous and non-indigenous, are privileged over others, and the problems this has produced. While the ISA should be praised for its exemplary commitment and achievements on behalf of the indigenous peoples, nevertheless it does not escape a more critical lens for its *not* dealing adequately with pre-existing rivalries and tensions and in fact – by privileging some organizations – has exacerbated these tensions.

In 1997, I was invited by a local association of Baniwa Indians, called the ACIRA (Association of Indigenous Communities of the Aiary River) to assist them in preparing a book of their sacred traditions and stories of creation. This was part of a larger project to publish the traditions of all the 22 ethnic groups of the northwest Amazon region, in a series called 'Indigenous Narrators of the Rio Negro Region', organized by the ISA and the regional pan-Indian organization called the FOIRN, and funded by several European foundations. By that time, the ISA had conducted a massive survey of all the indigenous communities in the northwest Amazon region, as well as directed the operation of demarcating the entire indigenous area. It was then discussing with the FOIRN the critical question of what sorts of sustainable development projects might possibly be implanted in the region which could utilize or generate resources with which the native peoples could sustain their economic, nutritional, and educational needs. Several pilot-projects had already begun by that time: aquaculture (fish-raising) in several communities; alternative schools in others; and the sale of indigenous artwork. For the Baniwa, who had had many years of experience in the latter, this was of most interest to them.

It seems to have been the strategy of the ISA that, once the community surveys had been done, the coordinators in consultation with the local leadership, would select certain communities where such projects for sustainable development could be tested, as in 'pilot projects'. Amongst the Baniwa communities, the communities of Pamhaali on the middle Içana River, for reasons which I will explain below, were selected to be on the receiving end of the line of a massive input of financial and material resources which would presumably attract other Baniwa communities to participate and establish their own local projects.

Several years after finishing the book of Aiary traditions, I began to receive telephone calls from the Baniwa with whom I had worked expressing sincere disappointment that they were not part of any of the projects and asking me

to help them set up their own schools and aquaculture tanks. It was thus that I returned to working on this subject with Baniwa communities who had *not* participated in the Baniwa Art Project, but have sought to set up a similar project on their own. Many of the critiques which these communities have voiced to me about the Project are, in large part, the justification for writing this article. These ‘outsider’ communities were exactly those who defended their ‘traditions’ (myths, shamanism, rituals) against the attacks of Protestant pastors, and who were excluded from the growing political movement coordinated by predominantly evangelical communities. My overall question, then, seeks to relate the religious tensions to the undeniable political and economic success of the Protestant communities.

This article is divided into two main parts: the first discusses the relation of Baniwa economic history and religion beginning with the introduction of evangelical Christianity in the 1950s and the exploitation of basket-weaving by outside merchants in the 1970s. The second presents a brief description of the objectives and structure of the BAP, its successes and problems. These problems arose from social and political setbacks primarily affecting the indigenous leader. These setbacks can be seen in terms of an imbalance in the ethic of reciprocity in human-animal-spirit relationships, and the rise of individualism in the prophetic, evangelical, and – now corporate – movements. I shall illustrate these points by analyzing how the young indigenous leader and coordinator of the project – whom I shall call Maurilio – struggled through grave attacks by witches against his leadership and success; and by presenting the reflections of a leading Baniwa intellectual and political figure, whose real name is Gersem Santos, who, at my request, discussed his perceptions of ‘sustainable development’ projects in general among the Baniwa, and the Art Project in particular.

History

While Baniwa baskets have had an important presence in regional markets since at least the 1970s, it has only been since the late 1990s that the principal Baniwa political organization, called the OIBI (Organization of Indigenous Communities of the Içana River Basin), in collaboration with the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), sought to stimulate production within environmentally sustainable limits, organize commercialization of the baskets along fundamentally different economic and social principles from the predominantly exploitative system of the past, and encourage the professionalization of the basket-weaving economy.²

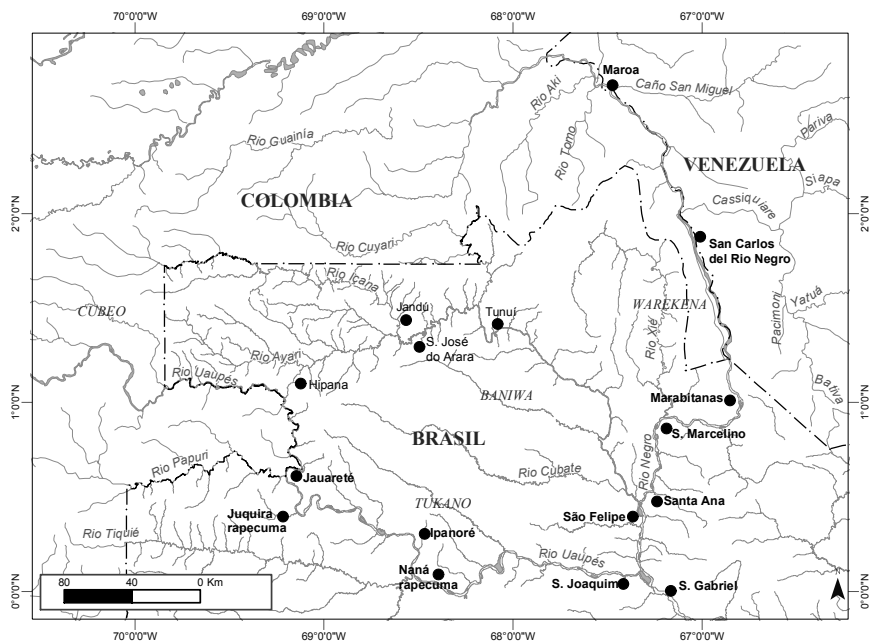
This enterprise has been very successful – and may grow even more in the future – largely due to the extraordinary collaborative efforts of two individuals,

² I have written about Baniwa religious and economic history extensively in numerous publications but see especially my two monographs – Wright, 1998, 2005.

the coordinators of the indigenous organization and the NGO – whose vision, competence, and skills turned the Baniwa Art Project (BAP) into a viable and sustainable enterprise. There is strong reason to believe that religious and socio-political reasons also shaped the ways in which the project was conceived and evolved. The indigenous leader, an evangelical Christian, is a member of a culture which has a well-established prophetic tradition,³ and I believe it is possible to show how he was strongly influenced and affected by his religious beliefs and his people's tradition in the manner in which he negotiated the Baniwa Art Project. In some ways, the programs of spiritual reform advocated by the prophets of the past bear similarities to the sustainable development project advanced in the BAP. Both of them had among their objectives, political and economic autonomy; both, however, confronted strong obstacles from within Baniwa society that have to do with imbalance in the individual's relation to society and nature, as expressed in cosmological terms and specifically notions of sickness.

About a generation after the Baniwa had converted to evangelical Protestantism in the 1960s, I and a French ethnographer Nicolas Journet conducted our doctoral field researches in the northwest Amazon, he on the Colombian side of the border, I on the Brazilian side. Both of our ethnographies sought to reconstruct from the memories of the elders what seemed to us either to have disappeared altogether from religious practice or had gone underground and was only practiced in secret.

³ Regarding Baniwa 'prophets' (see especially my books 1998 and 2005, but also 'The Wicked and the Wise Men', in Whitehead and Wright, 2004 (Duke), and 'Prophetic Traditions in the Northwest Amazon', in Hill and Santos-Granero, 2002), I am referring to a continuous tradition that dates to at least the mid-19th Century. We may speak of 'prophets' because each of them led a movement consisting of Baniwa and other Indians (and mestizos in some cases) of the Northwest Amazon who sought profound changes in morality and social life, through the eradication of undesirable practices especially assault sorcery, who were considered miraculous healers (all were shamans), who *foresaw imminent great changes in the world* (one prophet spoke of the cataclysmic end-of-the-world through fire and the descent of God to earth; another spoke of the definitive end to witchcraft and sorcery; another spoke of the imminent coming of the whites to Baniwa lands; another spoke of the end of sickness among humans). All of them maintained constant communication with the creator divinity who would advise them of events about to take place in the world of humans, and with the deceased. These are prophets, by any dictionary definition.



Map of Northwest Amazon/Brazil region

One of the first things to strike both of us was the enormous amount of time the Baniwa and Kuripako⁴ were dedicating to basket production for sale. Mostly, but not exclusively, the men were deeply engaged in this activity in the majority of the villages. Several hundreds of dozens of baskets were being produced every three months for sale to Colombian traders. Following the *aviamento* system typical of the Amazon economy, the Indians would buy goods on credit, which was noted in the merchants' ledgers. In one of my first field notebooks, I wrote (1976):

In most villages where they stopped, the merchants left ‘collection notes’ for baskets which, they claimed, people owed. Sometimes these notes, I was told, were merely old and paid-off debts rewritten on new paper and handed out by other merchants. Each basket – which takes 2–3 days of work to produce – was purchased at about 50–60 cents apiece regardless of size and quality. It was common for people to stare in shock at the 200–300 dozen baskets loaded up in specially-rigged canoes, and say, ‘they’re robbing us’. (Fieldnotes, 1)

⁴ On the Brazilian side of the border, the people are known as Baniwa; in Colombia, they are Kuripako and speak a different but mutually intelligible dialect; and in Venezuela, Wakuenai, an ethnonym meaning 'Those of Our Speech'. Another ethnonym used on the Brazilian side is Walimani, 'Our Descendants'.

Journet recorded his views around the same time that:

since 1972, they [the Kuripako] have had such success on the national and international market that the basket-weaving has turned into a permanent occupation among the Kuripako and at the same time, has extended to neighboring Cubeo, Wanano, and Tucano groups

In 1975/76, the market provoked a fever of production. This fever has diminished now [1980] and the production of baskets is considered by the Indians to be very unucrative. It is worth noting that the price for the baskets has not changed in more than ten years, while the merchandise sold by river merchants has gone up from 30 to 100 per cent. (my transl. 1980: 172)

Journet analyzed the consequences of increased market production among the Kuripako of Colombia at the beginning of the 1980s: the Kuripako had developed a new productive sector, exclusively commercial, which was interfering with traditional subsistence activities; the Kuripakos' purchases were not restricted to production objects but rather consumer goods the renewal of which produced a constant dependence on the financial market; the debt that governed most transactions introduced a system of deadlines and fixed quantities that contributed to disorganizing subsistence activities; and the calendrical nature of the model of acquisition and appropriation of white goods fomented unequal accumulation of goods which were not getting redistributed.

Journet concludes by observing that:

what we can see clearly is a deep contradiction between the development of new material values and old cultural values The new religion plays a kind of intermediary role between the two, given that it requires certain aspects of sociability but it also comes from the same origins as the white merchandise and promotes its valorization. (*ibid.*)

Thus the critical transformation that the Kuripako faced was one of values: 'a contradiction exists among the Kuripako between the development of production for internal use and commercialized production'. Journet's outlook at that time was negative on the issue of commerce in Kuripako lives for in his view it could only lead to the pauperization of the Indian.

By the mid-1990s, Protestant missionaries in Colombia had clearly made inroads to implanting a Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism. Commerce and salaried labour were the activities that most interested converts and the missionaries supported them in numerous ways (training mechanics, cattle-raising, for example), particularly if they were individual initiatives.

On the Brazilian side, the intense production of baskets in the 1970s was replaced by gold prospecting in the 1980s. Violent conflicts marked the relations between the Baniwa, prospectors, and gold-mining companies (see Chapter VII, Wright, 2005). Protestant missionaries did little more to control these conflicts

than to advise the Indians to seek the help of the FUNAI which was notoriously in support of mechanized gold-mining at that time.

It was in this context and the growing military presence in the northwest Amazon as a result of the 'Projeto Calha Norte'⁵ that the indigenous peoples mobilized politically through the formation of the FOIRN (Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro), the priorities of which were land demarcation, health, education, and cultural rights. The FOIRN was strategically supported from the beginning by the ISA, and both witnessed the extraordinary process of the formation of over 50 local political associations to represent the different ethnic groups and communities of the area. At the General Assembly which created the FOIRN, the young Baniwa leader Gersem dos Santos voiced the objection of his people to the abrupt changes in Indian policy and imposition of large-scale development projects in the area without previous consultation with the indigenous leadership:

Why this new change, and why the unclear definition on the part of the authorities and principally of this new indigenist policy? Why such urgency at a moment when we also are being confronted by serious problems with regard to the mining companies and mineral works?⁶ Our community that is here, which is seeking the well-being of the communities on the Içana, votes for the non-acceptance of the Northern Channel Project.

And further:

Why is there a need for a new indigenist policy, and from the information that we have just received, within this new indigenist policy, the demarcation of land will be done in a different way, not as extensive areas, but in small areas? We understand that the need of our people of the Içana, living along the riverbanks, it's clear that we have to secure above all what we most need, our habitat, which does not only mean just a piece of ground, but a population that lives by hunting, fishing, and gardens. So, why this new change, and why the unclear definition, on the part of the authorities and mainly

⁵ 'Projeto Calha Norte', or the Northern Channel Project was a large-scale and complex development project introduced into the Northern Amazon region by the military sectors of the Brazilian government in the 1980s. It included the building of highways, airstrips, colonization, the redefinition of indigenous lands, and a series of other geopolitical measures intended to integrate the Amazon region more effectively with the rest of the country. The massive upheavals resulting from the military buildup in the region provoked the reaction of the indigenous communities in the sense of an increased political mobilization; in the Northwest Amazon, this resulted in the creation of a region-wide indigenous federation called the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro (FOIRN), created in 1987 which has lasted until the present day.

⁶ Gersem is referring to a recent invasion of Baniwa and Tukano lands by thousands of gold prospectors and by large mining companies who disputed amongst themselves and with the Indians control over gold found in the region.

the creators of this new indigenist policy? (Transcription of the tapes from the Second Assembly of the Peoples of the Upper Rio Negro.)

Finally, Gersem pointed to the heart of the problem, with admirable clarity: if development was producing divisions amongst communities, as it was because of the mining companies' presence in the region, then the Baniwa were against it:

Our community of the Içana asks in what way will these benefits, these favors, these social works come to us, even in the near future?⁷ The communities of the Içana have noted recently that with the coming, with the presence of something that is called development, a certain difference from several years ago, among the communities of the Içana, because even today, just a few minutes ago, we have just seen differences amongst groups, groups of indigenous brothers⁸ there are some who no longer agree with each other, is that what will be brought by what we call development? And our community can leave it clear here, for the well-being of the communities of the Içana, we do not accept the Calha Norte Project. (cited in Wright, 2005, chapter VII)

The first local political associations emerged among the Catholic communities of the Aiary River and the lower Içana River; however, not more than a few years after they had initiated their activities, those associations were overshadowed by a group of Baniwa evangelical communities, nearly all from the central region of Baniwa territory, and nearly all from the same high-ranking clan, the Waliperedakenai. This group became known as the OIBI which assumed leadership in the Baniwa political movement as a whole, and, with the assistance of the ISA, created the project 'Arte Baniwa' in 1997.⁹

The Baniwa Art Project (BAP): Structure and Objectives

The central objectives of the Baniwa Art Project (BAP), as stated in the pocket booklet, and on the website of the NGO, are to produce and commercialize Baniwa basketry on the national and international markets. It seeks to enhance the value of the Baniwa basket-making tradition, increase production within the limits of the sustainable use of natural resources, generate income for indigenous producers and their political associations, and train indigenous leadership in the skills of business management.

⁷ Gersem is referring to the fact that the mining companies and the military had promised, in exchange for the exploitation of mineral resources on their lands, the Baniwa would receive a series of material benefits and social services, 'for the betterment of the communities'.

⁸ Gersem is referring to the fact that just a few minutes before he stood up to speak, there had been a heated discussion amongst the representatives of several communities over whether 'development' was a 'good thing' or just another lie.

⁹ For an excellent interview with one of the first leaders of the OIBI, see Boyer, 1999.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the BAP in principle would put Baniwa experience with the white man's economy on a different historical track: it represented a break from their long history with predatory and exploitative economies. In a sense, too, it would complement their religions of resistance such as prophetism and evangelicalism which always had, as one of their main goals, to break the stranglehold the white man's economy had over their lives and to introduce moral reforms into their communitarian way of life.

The Baniwa Art Project was implemented at roughly the same time as a series of other alternative projects, such as a new school, the pedagogical objective of which was to provide a 'differentiated' education that would better suit the needs of the Baniwa people; an aquaculture (fish-raising) station built in the same community as the new, alternative school (so that the children could participate in a sort of hands-on kind of education useful for their practical needs of nutrition); training in computer communications, amongst other things – again, in the same community as the fish-station and the alternative school. All of these projects were spearheaded by the formidable alliance of the OIBI leadership (predominantly evangelicals, as I've said), and the Socio-Environmental Institute, with its direct links to major funding organizations in Europe (Horizont, Alliance for the Climate, European Union, Norwegian Rainforest Fund), the United States (the Moore Foundation) and Brazil. What was clearly happening in all of this was a re-shaping of Baniwa social, political, and economic geography: the key community amongst the Baniwa on the Brazilian side of the border was Pamhaali, a community of predominantly Walipere-dakenai.¹⁰

The conjunction of these projects was a major success, a model for what could happen in other areas of Baniwa territory as well as in the Tukanoan peoples' communities on the Uaupes River, where ISA has also had a long-term involvement with sustainable development and local political associations. But, in reflecting on the success of these projects for the Baniwa, Gersem Santos – who, we recall, was so critical of the kind of top-down development that characterized the national government's relation to his people – stated in an interview with me in 2006:¹¹

¹⁰ The Baniwa are organized into four or five large phratries, each consisting of five or more clans, which are ranked according to the order of ancestral emergence in mythical times. Historically, the middle Içana has been the territory of the Walipere-dakenai phratry and the Dzauinai phratry; the Aiary River has been the territory of the Hohodene phratry.

¹¹ Gersem, who received his Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Brasilia in 2006, is from the Walipere-dakenai clan. Gersem himself founded one of the early political associations among the Baniwa. He is well-known in the indigenous movement in Brazil for his role in the national project for support to sustainable development amongst indigenous peoples. He was an important leader in the Baniwa struggles against the Projeto Calha Norte and corporate mining on Baniwa lands in the 1980s and was a key political figure on the local and national levels throughout the 1980s and 90s.

I have no doubt that the projects whatever they are, in terms of their concepts and applied methods, bring material benefits to the Indians and that is what they want, in their post-contact perspective. I understand that the Baniwa life ideal has changed substantially since contact, and is guided at the present time by the life ideal of the whites: consumption, technology, knowledge, values, and so on. I would say that from the ideal point of view, there is a strong tendency and desire for integration, as an approximation to the White way of life without losing otherness or ethnicity. Recently I asked a Baniwa leader if he could choose (without any pressure) between sending his child to a Baniwa school or to a high-level city school, he answered right away that he would choose the city school because it offers better conditions for preparing his child for the future in terms of studies and profession. I don't think that's the Baniwa ideal of twenty years ago. In this sense we can say that the present-day projects do in fact bring benefits. But there is a big problem in this mid-field here, because everything indicates that the Baniwa would like to have these initiatives implemented in their way, according to their customs and traditions in effect and their present-day objectives. One thing is to have an ideal similar to that of the whites, another thing is how we want to go after that ideal (which in fact they're not going to attain that quickly, since the whites themselves impose strict limitations, which for the time being are impassable. I see that the formal indigenous authorities who have gained space in the official and formal power structure, aren't even able to break the social barriers of the whites in São Gabriel [the municipal capital city, where the headquarters of the FOIRN, the ISA, and the OIBI are all located]). For that reason, the benefits that I am referring to have a very high cost for the indigenous leaders who coordinate and conduct these projects, because they are obliged to follow the principles, methods and logics of the projects based on the techno-bureaucratic rationality that violate the principles, methods and logics that guide Baniwa social and political relations, corporative loyalties, forged through unanimous and collective decisions and following group hierarchies, because of formal and artificial decisions, generating disputes of power. The leaders of the projects are basically getting burnt and gradually removed from their communities as a result of this, through threats and persecutions (witchcraft and poisoning). I think that this is the limitation of the projects. Either they turn out perfectly well and thus definitively conclude the process of integration or they do not fully attain their objectives because of the resistance which still exists from the Baniwa culture. They are projects of intervention with established forms, functions, uses and meanings, in which the actors involved confront conflicts of interest, perceptions, strategies, distinct and antagonistic socio-cultural horizons. The projects are a kind of post-contact necessity, like access to material goods that may even facilitate people's day-to-day work. In principle, the Indians do not conceive of the projects along the lines of wealth accumulation and income, although the leaders of organizations may already have incorporated that and may be trying to convince everyone that that is the way-out for the future of the communities. (interview with G. Santos, 2006, my transl.)

Gersem's reflections are extremely important to keep in mind as we continue with the narrative of how the Baniwa Art Project got off the ground.

The initial challenges of the project were daunting: to get by marketing the baskets on the regional markets, which were typically exploitative, transporting them over the enormous distance from the northwest Amazon to the southeast of Brazil, a distance of 6,000 kilometers; to establish a system of commerce based on

principles of fairness, until then non-existent in that region; to test the ecological sustainability of intensive production of the aruma plant, which is the principal resource for the baskets; and perhaps most importantly, gauge what impact a project of this size and complexity would have on Baniwa society and culture as a whole – social, economic, political, and religious organizations and more generally, the relations between humans and nature as these are defined in Baniwa cosmologies (plural sense: evangelical, non-evangelical, prophetic).

Just in terms of the logistics of the project, it represented a major feat of planning and coordination for it involved training and organizing local artisans to produce a market-quality product, which introduced a new form of organization without precedent in Baniwa history. Then, to transport by canoes, trucks, and boats the hundreds of dozens of baskets, all packed with materials of local origin, from one extreme of the country to another, passing through various critical points of transference. Then, organizing and supervising the sale of the baskets in large chain-stores in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and finally, making sure that the proceeds got back to the northwest and were correctly distributed into the hands of the artisans.

The project had seed support from two major foundations, one Austrian the other Dutch, and was assessed at every step of the way by the ISA with its many years of experience in working on complex projects of this type. It had the support of the Brazilian Environmental Ministry and the backing of the regional indigenous organization, the FOIRN (Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro), which was especially interested that the project succeed because it was part of its more global, 19-point Program for Sustainable Indigenous Development of the Rio Negro, a proposal which had been presented to the state government of Amazonas.

Regarding the ecological sustainability of intensive aruma (*Ischnosiphon spp.*) production, although it is probably sustainable in certain environments, the question is a genuine concern, and probably should continue to be in many environments of the Içana. In much of the Baniwa territory, at least that of the OIBI, there is no aruma, despite an abundance of humid or partially flooded lands. This has to do with the poverty of the soils. In certain conditions, the plant grows well, in others not (see Hoffmann, 2000, for detailed description; personal comm., 2006). Some communities have just a little aruma, and it could easily be depleted. This ecological heterogeneity certainly contributes to the problem of project-related social inequalities that I shall describe later in this chapter.¹²

¹² Another ecological factor is worth mentioning: the plants seem to sprout exceptionally well even after cutting, at least the first time. But this is because they have an underground rhizome which stores food and energy, and new sprouts are already developed under the soil. Studies of a related species in the lower Rio Negro, however, suggest that the plants are very slow in recovering from subsequent cuttings. In this region of the Amazon, even the ‘good’ soils are actually extremely poor, and aruma does not grow or recover

Like any project that seeks to break away from deeply rooted patterns of dependence on intermediaries in an exploitative system (as is typical in Amazonia), the BAP had its share of difficulties in getting started. One economic analysis mentioned that the failure to market baskets in the early 1990s (before the BAP actually got started) was due in part to the 'low quality of the product': 'since they still were in a state of economic dependence, artisans continued to produce low quality objects'. Yet, the Baniwa had already decided they had had enough of gold prospecting (in which the returns were very small) and were willing to invest their time and energy, with the support of the FOIRN and the ISA, in basket-weaving – which, truth be said, was not a get-rich-quick economy, but was both ecologically and socially more interesting than the kind of exploitation they were used to. But that meant taking all the preparatory steps necessary: on the one hand (the Baniwa) organizing workshops to train local artisans, and producing a manual for the artisans; on the other hand (the ISA), doing market research for potential outlets outside the northwest Amazon.

One potential outlet was the annual flower fair, called ExpoFlora, held in the town of Holambra, interior of São Paulo (a community predominantly of Dutch descendants); the idea was to sell the baskets as flower-holders, a beautiful decorative piece for homes and offices. A large order for baskets was placed, and 200 Baniwa artisans produced the baskets on time. But problems with the shipment and the lack of any corporate sponsorship at the fair resulted in poor sales, unsatisfactory for the artisans, many of whom quickly abandoned the Project.

One result of the market research was the identification of the major chain of furniture and home decoration stores in Brazil, called Tok and Stok. With the ISA's intermediation, the store bought all of the products that hadn't been sold at the fair and put in an order for more, paying triple the local sales price for each dozen of baskets. Tok and Stok thus became the privileged outlet. At a later point, the major chain of supermarkets, Pão de Açúcar, entered the scene which, besides contributing to the visibility of the products, introduced the element of competitive pricing. Long discussions were held on both sides, the Baniwa and Tok and Stok, regarding fair prices, and a completely new concept was introduced of 'fair commerce' (for an analysis of this market concept and its implementation on the local scene of the northwest Amazon, see the article by Unterstell and Martins, two economists from the Fundação Getulio Vargas, a major institution of higher education specializing in economics in Brazil).

According to Unterstell and Martins, there was a short boom in basket production between the end of the 1990s and around 2004/5, a boom which greatly benefited the indigenous organization, the Baniwa communities affiliated with it, and the ISA – the latter, in the sense that it demonstrated the possibility of developing socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable alternatives,

quickly unless it is in a light gap or in a garden site following a burn. (Hoffman, pers. Comm., 2006)

thus materializing its belief in the interdependence of biodiversity and socio-diversity. Thus, the project realized the NGO's mission statement.

Despite the initial difficulties of establishing connections with a consumer market, the Baniwa Art Project began a period of accelerated growth and public recognition. The number of artisans grew from its initial 20 to 143; the total number of baskets commercialized rose to at least 10,000 per year. What Baniwa artisans received in return doubled, which meant not only greater buying power but also improvements in the organization of the artisans.

In 2001, important recognition of the project came in the form of two major prize awards in national competitions. Both recognized the innovations achieved by the BAP in terms of resource mobilization and the administration of social projects. The money received from the prizes went to purchasing equipment, greater publicity, and expansion of the Project's facilities. The prizes, according to ISA's coordinator, represented 'the results of experiences in formulating a management plan, integrating [local] communities on the one hand and [national] buyers on the other'. Other local communities (such as Itacoatiara-mirim, a small community on the roadside near the municipal capital city) which previously had no participation in the Project, demanded the technical assistance of the ISA in training indigenous researchers to do environmental analysis for the purposes of intensive use of local stands of aruma. This experience showed in an important way how the Baniwa could themselves do the local research necessary for production. Finally, in 2006, OIBI leadership went beyond the expectations of technical assessors that the market outlet would remain national at least for the time being, and began personally contacting markets in Austria and Holland to enhance the possibilities of exportation of the baskets.

In short, the project more than demonstrated its sustainability both ecologically and for the estimated 20 per cent of the Baniwa population participating in it. It's important to be clear about this however: initially, between 11–16 communities out of the more than 100 on the Brazilian side of the border were benefited by the BAP. A report on the project by two researchers of the FGV (Bresler and Oliveira) leaves it clear on every page that the project was entirely directed by the OIBI. Communities that are associated with the OIBI are all located within approximately the same region of the central portion of Baniwa territory. Communities upriver, downriver, and on adjacent streams were, frankly, not included and, for various reasons, objected either to being left out (which did in fact create social problems) or to the way the OIBI leadership was conducting the Project (which resulted in setbacks for the leaders, as I will describe shortly).

A good part of the reason for these internal divisions had to do with religious rivalries: OIBI communities are predominantly evangelical (though one community, which contributed significantly to basket production, is Catholic). Catholic communities outside the orbit of OIBI influence have had long-standing enmities with the evangelicals (for which, see my book, 2005), including violent conflicts, and because the OIBI literally took away the political power of these communities, which had been responsible for the first Baniwa political organization

(the ACIBRI, Association of Indigenous Communities of the Içana River Basin). OIBI communities are predominantly members of a large and prestigious clan; they have had traditional rivalries with other large clans both upriver and on adjacent streams. This clan, it can be shown, spearheaded Baniwa conversion to evangelicalism; besides assuming hegemony in Baniwa political organization, it has assumed leadership in the Baniwa Art Project, in aquaculture projects and in an alternative schooling project (the Pamaali). It is no exaggeration to say that, in all of this, the OIBI was favored by outside institutions and NGOs, which explains in large part its rapid growth.

Other evangelical communities upriver from the OIBI also resented OIBI's hegemony in the BAP, but for different reasons: being more fundamentalist evangelical, they disagreed with OIBI's insistence on creating strong relations with the NGO and external market. The first evangelical missionary among the Baniwa, after all, had preached that contacts with the whites would lead to the damnation of the Baniwas' souls.

The Catholic communities, predominantly of the Aiary River, were the principal defenders of Baniwa traditions against attacks by Protestant missionaries and their converts in the 1960s. The young Baniwa leaders of the Aiary were the first to be summoned by the Catholic missionaries in the 1970s to form local political associations but through a somewhat suspicious sleight-of-hand manoeuvre, the young evangelical leaders of the Içana took that power from them and formed the OIBI. This local coup was highly resented by the Catholic leadership of the Aiary River, but perceived differently by the Baniwa communities of the lower Içana who had formed one of the first political associations, the ACIBRI. The founder of the ACIBRI, Gersem Santos, analyzed the situation as follows:

As far as the discontent of other communities – in the case of the upper rio Içana there is, yes, amongst those of the Içana and Ayari, and it is very strong and unprecedented. The Ayari is the area that has felt most excluded in this story. And there are clear signs of conflicts and threats. But, amongst the Catholics of the lower Içana, with whom I have lived the most, I don't perceive this. They understand that it is their turn and this ends up motivating them to seek to deepen their perspectives, a sort of positive competition and they have other priorities. They have perceived that the collective 'community' projects did not produce the desired results, so today they have changed their strategies and seek individual initiatives and promotions in the field of economic survival, and the role of the associations and their leaders has come to be to struggle for training projects such as schools, political participation that they can capitalize on and train individuals in the solution of their problems. Community projects don't enchant them anymore. On the other hand, the financial advantages – although they are not insignificant – are compensated for those who do not participate, by the peace of mind that they have gained, without having to confront and involve themselves in conflicts. From the point of view of the productive environment, for example, the Indians say that in the past, it was the white bosses who would exploit them, but today it's their own 'children' (young people) kin, which for them is more serious.

While the evangelical communities of the Içana were and are in a phase of 'enchantment' with the projects and the new forms of political organization, the Catholic communities, according to Gersem:

are in a phase of disenchantment, clearly because they have experiences with other project models (communitarian, ecclesiastical, amongst others) but it really is because for the Indians, it's all the same thing. I think the evangelicals (young leaders) seek to invest in the projects in an attempt to recover the time lost in the period of political confinement to which they were submitted by religion and as a strategy for getting out of the invisibility or negative visibility of being considered backwards, illiterate. The projects are a way of recovering self-esteem to show that they are capable. This is a very positive thing and has enormous potential that the indigenous movement has to potentialize and capitalize on. I think there's another factor that's extremely important in this story, that has to do with the anthropological view. The evangelical communities are considered excellent partners by the support groups and financiers, because they have been very little corrupted by the surrounding society, thus they are more docile, obedient, and honest for the development of the works of the projects. A kind of ideal of the primitive Indians When we look at the geographical location of the projects on the upper Rio Negro, we can see this very clearly. No-one is interested in working with the Bares or other communities that are more influenced by the cities and the missions.

The case of the OIBI leader and coordinator of the BAP (until recently), however, is particularly revealing of the contradictions faced by the project from the beginning. This leader, whom I will call Maurilio, had considerable success and prestige as the coordinator of the OIBI, the head of the alternative school, and the head of the BAP. He had led Baniwa community participation in deliberative councils on public health policy; he was a technical and pedagogical coordinator for the group, and was well-known outside Baniwa communities. His work is recognized by NGOs and outside professionals as being highly qualified, efficient, and always resonant with the communities' needs and demands. He is now the vice-president of the regional indigenous organization.

With his experience in various training courses, he is actually one of the most qualified leaders of the regional indigenous movement. He uses his knowledge in an innovative way, demonstrating an enviable ability to facilitate communication and to develop a kind of 'intercultural translation' regarding social policies in Brazil. He assists village leaders in understanding the proposals and decisions of government authorities, which affect the lives of the indigenous population. People trust his correct management of financial and material resources obtained through projects and partnerships with the NGOs and government entities. He is thus a powerful mediator between public power and indigenous societies.

Despite – or even as a result of all of this – several years ago, Maurilio was the victim of assault sorcery (by poisoning). The physical symptoms included diarrhea, digestive indisposition, acute weight loss and intermittent headaches. Psychological symptoms included nightmares, difficulties in concentration,

sensation of weakness, depression, and an overwhelming certainty that he, or one of his relatives, would die from sorcery. In his dreams, he would see strange, menacing people eating tapir heart (the tapir is the symbol of his clan) or he would see the boat in which he was travelling sunk in the waterfalls.

During his sickness, he tried several kinds of treatment: medicinal plants, a folk healer, Christian pastors, and chanters. One folk healer diagnosed his ailment as being the result of an attack by the spirits of the forest, called *Iupinai*. These include spirits of all plants, animals, and insects which, it is said, are constantly at war with human beings for their aggression on nature. It makes sense that this leader, coordinator of the aruma project, would suffer their attacks.¹³ All of these procedures alleviated, but did not cure his sickness. Since he is Protestant, Maurilio hesitated in consulting a shaman but finally did and it was diagnosed that another powerful shaman had been hired to kill him. The shaman/healer prescribed a rigorous diet which the leader was unable to follow because of his constantly heavy schedule of political activities.

His symptoms worsened; consequently, he renewed his treatment with medicinal plants which improved his health. But, when he attended an assembly of the local indigenous movement, he ate the meat of a furry animal, which is a type of food strictly forbidden to a person who is recovering from a sorcery attack. His condition went from bad to worse within several months.

He then sought treatment by a shaman, his maternal uncle. The shaman identified the focus of the digestive lesion which had resulted from the poisoning, but he said he would be unable to cure his nephew if the latter continued with his political activities. It was his political activities and success that made Maurilio the target of sorcerers, who envied his influential position and the goods obtained through his work. Even if he could be cured, there was no guarantee that he, or another member of his family, would not suffer another attack. Assault sorcery was thus a retribution (in the form of aggression) for the inequality produced by his political work.

Maurilio had to decide whether to continue or abandon the work to which he had dedicated all his efforts. If he continued, he and his family would have to live with the constant threat of chronic or fatal sickness; if he abandoned his activities, he would preserve himself and his family but sacrifice the ideals that are his life and future. Accumulating wealth and prestige was never a stated concern of his; rather, he tried to avoid perceptible differentiations and the kinds of behaviour that would incite people's envy or jealousy, and thus deflect attempts at assault sorcery. But he knew that, although his actions were governed by his concern

¹³ There is a relation of negative reciprocity between these spirits and humans, which results in various sicknesses and misfortunes to humans. These spirits, it is said, lost their humanity because of their impatience and arrogance which led them to disobey the rules of shamanic apprenticeship. The sicknesses they may give to humans are often skin infections. Misfortunes include storms, accidents (like the sinking of canoes), and frightening children.

for redistributing goods obtained by the OIBI and the BAP, just the prestige and financial success of both were enough to generate that kind of reaction.

The final result of the case: Maurilio was cured of his symptoms through biomedical treatment, although he expected a new attack at any moment afterwards. In an unexpected move, he decided to confront this constant threat by discussing the problem in an assembly of the villagers of the area. As one observer, a medical doctor and – at the time, my advisee – who was perhaps the closest to the leader during this whole ordeal, observed:

... [assault sorcery] is a key element in the social structure of the group which offers a means for action in managing disputes derived from ancestral hostilities, is updated in the context of the appropriation of goods and services generated by public policies, in the dispute for employment, industrialized products and alliances with institutions and non-indigenous spaces of power.

The sick leader is stuck on the crossroads of history. On the one hand, he is inserted into the wider context of the Brazilian indigenous political movement, that seeks to provide Amazonian indigenous peoples with mediators, capable of generating creative solutions for the improvement of public policies which are slowly established on indigenous lands. On the other, he is the member of a specific culture that is governed by the inhibition of social inequality. His culture has in [assault sorcery] an important support for egalitarianism, the control of individualism, and the accumulation of symbolic and material power. [Assault sorcery] thus becomes a safeguard for such contemporary initiatives. But this strategy that impedes differentiation also hinders the actions of innovative members of the group who are internal sources of social transformation. Changes brought about by the political movement contain the seeds of subversion of a social order which tries to protect itself through strategies such as [assault sorcery]. (Garnelo, n/d)

Like the prophets of the past (Wright, 2005), who sought to change their society in order to protect it from external change agents and to produce a regime of harmonious conviviality, but were sacrificed in return by the very mechanisms of society that paradoxically guarantee egalitarianism, the political leader of the present sought to introduce a new form of social, political and economic organization in order to receive benefits from external markets but was sacrificed in exchange for the differentiation that he, as an individual, was believed to have produced. The model of this leader's story can be found in the stories the Baniwa tell of their prophets. Both Gersem and Maurilio agree that the stories of their culture-heroes, warrior ancestors, prophet ancestors serve as models for them to strategize and plan their next moves. As Gersem said:

I think that our ancestor heroes are indeed our inspirers and serve to motivate us and as a reference. ... I am very proud of them and I think they pass on to us energy and strength to continue, conscious that today our instruments, weapons, strategies and context are very different in terms of perspectives, possibilities and challenges. Today our main weapon is the same weapon of the White man, in the sense that we seek to

appropriate for ourselves their knowledge, to our benefit, whether it is to defend our rights to live our way of being and thinking, or to incorporate techniques that help us to improve our working conditions and our daily lives. I think there is a very strong relation from the spiritual point of view with our ancestors mainly from their courage and daring in confronting external and enemy forces, and our greatest fear is that there be no continuity in this with our children, because of our own strategy, when we judge that to dominate the power and knowledge of the Whites, we will prevent them from dominating us.

In the end, the BAP benefited a number of communities but left quite a lot more out, and left many questions to be answered by future experiences, and by deeper understandings of how to calibrate Baniwa cosmology with the logic of the market. Gersem analyzed the situation in the following way:

There are concrete, measurable, positive results, if we take into account the volume of resources that several dozen families could benefit from and can continue to generate income and benefits. Nevertheless, it is producing serious problems for everybody, and mainly the leaders that coordinate and manage it, re-kindling ancient inter-clan conflicts. This occurs, first, because it meets the needs of only a few who are benefited, which produces sentiments of exclusion and betrayal of loyalty, and second, because the young leaders do not have sufficient recognition of their authority to impose the procedures and logics necessary to implement market strategies, which generates discomfort, distrust and accusations, as is typical of Baniwa culture. Besides that, in terms of change in the way of thinking about life and material conditions (economy), any project that affects production, commercialization, money, consumption, and accumulation has the same consequences as a goldmine, that is, it introduces new forms of social and economic relations. Everything revolves around payment, even if it is for an exclusively communitarian use. The challenge is how to reconcile this gap. I don't see much of a way-out, the ideal would be to think of projects that somehow could involve and benefit at least a specific corporate group and get over the ways of financing and administering of bureaucratized projects, allowing the methods of implementation to follow the organizational forms of work, distribution of goods produced and mainly the decision-making that today are centralized in the owners of the projects, the leaders of the organizations and the technicians. I understand that the problem is more complex than that.¹⁴

The Baniwa Art Project has just recently shown signs that its popularity and successes have reached a plateau and may even be on the downswing. The latest information we have is that about 350 dozen of the small baskets continue to be produced per year and that, although the number of artisans has increased, demand and production have not simultaneously increased.

On the other hand, two surprising developments have recently occurred: one is that another 'fever' has broken out, so typical of the Amazonian economy,

¹⁴ I understand Gersem to mean that the local associations should be governed more by traditional forms of organization and decision-making than by the current, centralized leadership of NGO-supported individuals.

this time for extraction of the forest vine called titica (*Heteropsis spp.*) used in the production of chairs, baskets and bags. In the recent past, in the state of Amapá, the exploitation of titica vines got to be so violent to the ecology (titica is not sustainable if exploited intensively) that the Environment Ministry severely regulated its exploitation in that state. On the upper Rio Negro, where exploitation is just beginning, the first surveys indicate that returns from the sale of the vine have been quite high (B. Ricardo, pers. comm.).

The second is that gold prospecting has once again sparked the Baniwas' interests. One ex-leader of the OIBI actually has a proposal circulating to implant 'sustainable gold prospecting' (ibid.). There seems to be little likelihood that this proposal will be accepted by the state government, or approved by the federal government given the disastrous consequences of diamond prospecting on Cinta-Larga Indian land last year and given that the federal government has still not taken any steps yet to regulate prospecting of any kind on indigenous lands. Even if in the very unlikely possibility that gold prospecting would be regulated in a 'sustainable' way, specialists doubt whether the Indians would ever really have full control over it, and would more likely fall into the hands of the white merchants as has happened so often in the past. Nevertheless, the proposal is circulating.

This case study clearly illustrates the *interpretive/heuristic value* of taking the Baniwa cosmological framework seriously prior to and during the implementation of such projects. It is not simply a case of how a set of 'capitalist' relations 'went bad' or 'failed' as a result of native ethics. My argument is that, had the development planners seriously taken into account the notions we have discussed here – of 'egalitarian' relations, 'power', 'inequality' and the probable outcome of provoking inequalities, as well as the active and aggressive role of the spirits of nature in reacting to human excesses, – perhaps the leader would not have suffered such attacks. Perhaps it would have resulted in a project that was more sensitive to the nature of balance the Baniwa strive to keep amongst themselves, and their potential foes (be they rival clans or spirits of nature).

Final Reflections

In the particular case of the Baniwa Art Project, how did Baniwa religiosity – especially the relations of humans to nature – come into play in the dynamics of the BAP, and how did 'sustainable development' fare in the evolution of the Project?

First of all, it's clear that both Baniwa Protestant evangelicalism and their beliefs in nature-spirits were key elements. Protestant ethics – in the sense introduced by the first missionaries of a moral Puritanism – defines a way of life which the Baniwa adapted to meet their own spiritual needs. It is undeniable that this has been influential in the orderliness and efficiency with which the Baniwa Art Project has been carried out, and this was from the beginning seen in a positive light by the NGO and international funders whose views of sustainable indigenous

projects are largely based on modernity and efficiency. But the simple fact of being evangelical in the terms set out by the first evangelical missionary among the Baniwa, Sophie Muller, and her early followers, as we've seen, was not necessarily conducive to establishing friendly terms with 'the white man'; to the contrary, it positively hindered these relations for a good many years.

Secondly, the history of Baniwa religiosity, I think it is safe to say, served as a basis for the manner in which the BAP 'took off' and was, for awhile, a great success. We have compared the historical rise of prophets and of individualism, coupled with the objective of relief from debts, to the rise of individual OIBI leaders whose projects brought in money to purchase much-desired merchandise as well as contributing to Baniwa empowerment. OIBI's principal leader expressed his millenarian vision in an interview in the late 1990s when he is quoted to have said, 'The Whites will arrive amongst us, they'll help improve our living conditions. Once we reach this objective, the world will end.' (cited in Boyer, 1999) By which I understand him to mean that a specific socio-economic-political-religious configuration will 'come to an end' to be replaced by a modified form of the corporate, organizational mentality, but not the 'end of the world' in a cosmological sense, which was never a tenet of previous prophetic messages. One can easily conclude, however, that such a corporate mentality will lead to the 'disenchantment of the world' as Weber had predicted for traditional societies undergoing socio-economic change like those of the Baniwa evangelicals. What is puzzling about the statement, though, is that Sophie Muller preached avoidance of the Whites, while Andre postpones the 'end-of-the-world' drama to sometime after the Whites bring prosperity.

Thirdly, Baniwa prophetism and evangelicalism, as universalistic forms of discourse and praxis, resonated with the equally universalistic discourse of the NGO regarding bio- and cultural diversity, and sustainable development. D. Pollock, writing of the Siriono and Kraho, has observed that conversion illustrates how, paradoxically, a universal religion can become 'a way of preserving local and traditional identity, as well as their microcosmic social integrity'. A similar sort of process seems to have occurred in the resonance between the discourse of the NGO and the prophetic/evangelical traditions.

Fourthly, regarding the OIBI leader's near-fatal illness: local explanations and, more importantly, the local dynamics involved in his misfortune were most clearly related to the dilemmas he faced during the evolution of the BAP. Local explanations referred, firstly, to assault sorcery by the spirits of nature, the *Iupinai*, in a sort of negative reciprocity for the intensive use he had made of natural resources. Secondly, assault sorcery came from sorcerers, enemy shamans, who in the form of animals, poisoned the leader. Negative reciprocity clearly came into play as a result of the leader's violation of the social norm that favours the egalitarian ethos. Like the prophets of the past, the leader's ascension to a position of power and prestige – despite the denials by all leaders that this was what they sought – was exacerbated by the BAP, to the point of triggering the local, traditional levelling mechanism of assault sorcery (conceived of as attacks by shamans, or animal-souls).

Finally, independently of religiosity, the whole episode highlights the dichotomy between, on the one hand, a complex and briefly successful sustainable development project (which still has, I believe, a great potential to grow IF local rivalries could somehow be more effectively dealt with) which is part of an equally complex and promising regional sustainable development program sponsored by the regional indigenous organization (the FOIRN) and supported by enormous external resources – and, on the other, the sporadic ‘fevers’ of extractivism which have characterized the Amazonian economies since the 17th and 18th centuries, and which, today, assume ever more violent forms (titica extraction, for example, which is eminently non-sustainable, or the so-called ‘sustainable gold prospecting’). The question remains of whether the indigenous organizations can somehow control these ‘fevers’ or whether they will be witnesses to replays of the past.

On the more general level, it is obviously of great importance that Baniwa cosmology and religious belief in a significant way shaped historical praxis. Had these been taken into account in a more effective way by the planners of the project, perhaps many of the tensions, rivalries and personal sacrifices could have been avoided. There are certainly many positive aspects of the development program underway, particularly with regard to education. Nevertheless, there is still a good deal of room for improvement with regard to: firstly the question of inclusion of those who have been ‘left out’ until now, secondly the spirituality, that is, the relations between humans and nature, and thirdly the democratization of the projects. Somehow, the ‘pilot’ model of sustainable development must be overcome so that more communities can reap the benefits of the new age.

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Chapter 11

Divine Child and Trademark: Economy, Morality, and Cultural Sustainability of a Guaraná Project among the Sateré-Mawé, Brazil¹

Wolfgang Kapfhammer

According to German anthropologist Richard Rottenburg (2001), in his article ‘The Culture of Development Collaboration in Africa’, the mode of communication between western and non-western partners involved in development collaboration could be called a ‘technical game’. Its leading differential is the distinction efficient/inefficient, while *culture* is at best referred to as ‘socio-cultural factors’. *Culture* could challenge the contents of the ‘technical game’ as the latter is based on the master narrative of progress and emancipation. Rottenburg draws on examples from Africa; in the Amazonian case I am relating here, it seems as if things would be just the other way round: the narrative the European partner adheres to testifies to scepticism against progress and valorisation of tradition. The ideal of ecological sustainability within this narrative is seen to be lived by the indigenous partner in an exemplary way; *culture* – as grounded in ‘local knowledge’ – is the basic rule within *this* game.

In an impressive ideological turnabout, the so-called ‘traditional populations’, especially those of Amazonia, have recently advanced from being an ‘obstacle’ to, or, at most, ‘candidates’ for progress and development, to becoming the ‘avant-garde’ of an increasingly sceptical modernity. This turnabout is due above all to the association of these populations with traditional knowledge, which have recently been revalorised by western modernity in the face of its own errors and its current efforts to preserve the environment and encourage the sustainable use of resources. This change of mind is based above all on the environmental ethics of western industrial societies, and, at the local level, has created a willingness to allow these ‘traditional populations’ to have control over wide territories in return for ‘environmental services’ (Carneiro da Cunha/Almeida 2001: 184).

To begin our discussion, in order to speak of ‘traditional populations’, one does not necessarily have to refer solely to indigenous groups, but rather a kind of modern ‘*Erntevölker*’. They are specialists in a certain crop, such as rubber

¹ I wish to thank the Sateré-Mawé for their generous hospitality and support and the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* for funding my research.

tappers in the Brazilian state of Acre (like Chico Mendes; Schwartzman 1989), who, because of their economically sustainable production methods, meet western expectations with regard to preservation of the environment and bio-diversity. Here we are confronted with the first problem: the two partners involved in the process obviously adopt different perspectives, which may converge, at least ideally, but which are in no way identical. While in local terms, for example, something like the 'production of bio-diversity' or the 'production of nature' may be a contradiction in itself (because one cannot 'produce nature'), this is exactly what is expected, supported and concretely financed by supporting organisations (Carneiro da Cunha/Almeida 2001). Bio-diversity is a 'by-product' of a certain way of living, or in western economic terms, a 'positive externality', that is, a positive, external effect on an enterprise; however, it is usually ignored by the market (loc. cit.: 192). While there is a certain market for 'existential values' like bio-diversity and preservation of natural environments, the members of the so-called 'traditional populations' are by no means paid to act as 'guardians of nature parks'. A solution to this problem consists of the construction of a combination of high-quality forest products (supplied by the forest peoples) together with the global preservation of biological diversity (the main demand of western consumers) (loc. cit., see. Molnar/Scherr/Khare 2004).

For the actual indigenous groups of Amazonia, this package deal of territory in return for bio-diversity is not immediately relevant, insofar as indigenous land claims tend to be legally based on historical circumstances, at least according to the Brazilian Constitution. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly important for indigenous groups to come up with some valid answers to the question '*muita terra para pouco índio*' (a lot of land for a few Indians). In the face of a very successful struggle by a demographically small minority (indigenous peoples comprise 0.5 per cent of Brazil's population but have gained control over 11 per cent of the country's territory) this question can be heard ever more frequently these days. Thus, a position such as 'environmental service provider' would carry some persuasive power. The guaraná project among the Sateré-Mawé, an indigenous group of some 8,000 people on the Middle Amazon River south of the city of Parintins, also has to do with the fact that the territory of this group forms the only existing biological gene-pool for the entire guaraná industry of Brazil (Fraboni 2001).

In this chapter I try to understand the cultural role of the guaraná fruit among the Sateré-Mawé by making inferences from the indigenous myth of origin of the plant and the discourse actually surrounding this myth, and from the 'mythopraxis' (Sahlins 1983, 1992; Friedman 1992) of a recent 'fair trade' project of the commercialisation of guaraná. Instead of a 'symbolic' analysis of guaraná mythology, which would misrepresent the cultural and social embedding of the project, I suggest an 'ethno-trophological' approach that associates qualities of this food with its consequences for the ontological and moral status of the consumer (see Hugh-Jones 1995, Fausto 2002), in order to understand the field of economic, social and political praxis, in which the project is unfolding. I will show that it is not primarily 'sustainable' human-nature-relations, commonly

associated with tropical forest dwellers in an essentialist way, that can be held responsible for the acceptance of a successful project, but rather the embedding of project praxis in an encompassing strategy to establish certain social and moral standards within the context of an evangelical conversion movement. The profound societal changes accompanying conversion do not necessarily result, as might be expected, in the expectation of capitalistic pecuniary reward (as Max Weber would have suggested). The ‘social capital’ (Braun/Grote/Jütting 2000) invested in a market-oriented economy derives from a pre-existing indigenous potential for the universalistic construction of consensus as opposed to the particularism of a society differentiated into a number of exogamous clans.

Product Information

In Brazil guaraná is an ingredient and flavour of an immensely popular soft drink and forms an important part of the product range of big breweries such as *Antarctica* and *Brahma*. The vegetal raw material is produced on industrially managed plantations in Amazonia, particularly in the region of Maués, near the *Área Indígena* of the *Sateré-Mawé*. There is a certain volume of export to the US; but mostly, distribution of the beverage is restricted to the Brazilian internal market. In Europe guaraná first held only a niche market as a kind of vegetal stimulant or ‘upper’. Given this somewhat disreputable image, guaraná had a hard time establishing itself on the alternative eco-market which tried to push guaraná as a milder alternative to coffee and tea. Furthermore, only products from sustainable and ecologically acceptable cultivation were offered, and it was the ‘ethical’ quality of the trade, which offered Brazilian peasants adequate remuneration for their product, that was emphasised. At some point, another supplier entered this market, namely the Sateré-Mawé themselves, the originators of cultivation and processing of the guaraná fruit. Thus, a further promotional argument was added to the high product quality and sustainable cultivation: the ‘authenticity’ of an indigenous origin of the product. After having lost a viable position on the regional market many years ago (that is, petty trade to towns near the indigenous area; the Sateré not being involved in agroindustrial production of guaraná) the guaraná project of the Sateré-Mawé now distributes the beverage with increasing success to European markets (GTZ 2000).

Guaraná (*Paullinia cupana*) prospers almost exclusively in Amazonia and is a bushy climbing plant that twines itself around the trunks of trees, or around racks made of wooden beams in the indigenous plantations. The fruit of *Paullinia* contains a relatively high concentration of caffeine, which is responsible for the stimulating and energising effect of the beverage. Because the caffeine is firmly bound to the fruit material, it is only slowly released into the organism and thus has a gentle but enduring effect (Henman 1982). Among the Sateré-Mawé, guaraná is traditionally cultivated in separate plantations, that is, distinct from the manioc plantations. When a new plantation is set up, or periodically renewed, new seedlings from wild forest varieties are introduced. In order to be able to reproduce and yield a good crop, the

plantations have to be regularly cleaned of undergrowth and weeds. The fruits are about the size of a cherry and are collected before they drop; then, they are peeled at home. After being washed and soaked for a few days, the fruits are roasted on large Amazonian hotplates. Then, after adding a small amount of water, the fruits are pounded to a thick paste and rolled by hand to form a kind of bar. These bars, about 20 cm. in length, are then smoke-dried over special woods. The end product is as hard as stone and resembles a salami in size and colour. For non-indigenous consumption the dried fruits are mechanically processed to a fine powder (Da Silva Lorenz 1992). With the exception of the washing of the smoked bars, all steps of the production are done by men, while the preparation of the beverage, in *sateré* called *sap'o*, is women's work. To make the drink, the women rub the guaraná bar against a wet stone and continuously dissolve the rubbings in a calabash filled with water. The result is a whitish, nutty and bitter tasting beverage. On more formal occasions, *sap'o* is offered in a calabash by a man. Each person in turn takes a drink, expresses his or her satisfaction by saying '*waku*', 'good', and returns the calabash. During these drinking ceremonies, the prevailing mood is solemn and concentrated, as an expression of inner composure and contemplation of common values.



Illustration 11.1 Guaraná plants (*Paullinia cupana*)

Growth Societies

The more or less ritual serving of guaraná actualizes mythical reality. Such ‘mythopraxis’ organizes ‘the present in terms of the past’, but a past already organized by the present (Friedman 1992). The agency-orienting discourse on guaraná, as it is maintained by the spokesmen of the evangelical conversion movement, who are at the same time the actual political avant-garde and advocates of the guaraná project, does not emphasize the symbolism of the main motif of the myth – the origin of the plant from the body of a killed mythic being – but instead the prophetic content of the narrative, summarized as follows:

Immediately after the emergence of the aquatic and riverine landscape, the woman Uniawāsap’i goes to the river where, without her noticing, she is impregnated by a little snake. Her pregnancy deprives Uniawāsap’i of her capability to prepare ‘medicines’ for her brothers, who are shamans. They disclose the secret of her pregnancy and drive her away out of jealousy. Uniawāsap’i is forced to deliver her baby alone, assisted only by an opossum. She bears a son.

In the following episodes of the myth, several cases of death occur. The first chestnut tree grows out of the body parts of one of the victims.

As soon as the ‘serpent’s son’, Uniawāsap’i’s child, discovers the chestnut tree, he picks some of the fruits and by doing so further arouses the wrath of his jealous uncles, who consider the chestnut tree as their possession. They ambush their nephew and kill him with arrows as he returns to collect more fruits. They cut his body in two with a rope. The grieving mother, Uniawāsap’i, hurries to the spot, takes the eyes from her son’s corpse and plants them in the soil. The first guaraná shrub grows out of the eyes. Uniawāsap’i then reassembles the remaining body parts and puts them into a vessel in order to revive them. After a few failures, which give rise to the koata monkeys and the peccaries, the first human couple slips out of the vessel, the ancestors of the Sateré-Mawé. [vide Sateré-Mawé drawing of the origin of guaraná below]

A primordial being gives rise both to a cultivated plant and to the first human couple: in an almost redundant way, the narration exhibits a mythological motif, which is well known to German-speaking ethnologists as the ‘*Hainuwele* motif’ [Hainuwele is a female being in a myth from Ceram. She is killed by crushing her body, and out of the buried body parts grow the first coconut tree.]. This motif was elaborated by German anthropologist Adolf Ellegard Jensen as the pivotal mythological topos in the world view of early horticulturalists (Jensen 1951, 1965). Jensen himself recorded the corresponding myth among the Wemale of Ceram, according to which the divine maiden *Hainuwele* was ritually killed and her corpse dismembered. After the body parts had been interred in different places, the first tuber plants grew out of the graves. With this first killing, primordial time had come to an end, death had come into life and the present form of being began (Kohl 1998:194). In his comparative works, Jensen gathered numerous examples of myths from Asiatic, African, Oceanic and South American ‘horticultures’

(*Pflanzerkulturen*). The dramatic climax of these narrations was the killing of a primordial being, whose dismembered body parts transformed themselves into cultivated plants. Central to this religious belief, held by Jensen to be a creation of the first horticulturalists, is the cultivated plant. In accordance with its importance for humans it is taken to be divine, but nevertheless or *because* of this, the divine being has to be killed, for growth would only be conceivable in close association with death. For Jensen, the 'Killed Deity' (idem 1965) embodies one and the same idea: killing is a prerequisite for growth and the primordial killing, which brought food and life to humans, has to be perennially repeated in ritual (Streck 1997).

In his recent reflections on Jensen, German anthropologist Bernhard Streck (1997) considers the common feature of these 'archaic' cultures to be their contrast to modern industrial society, as well as their 'non-participation in world religions founded on written doctrines and secular salvationist promises' (146). Their alternative conceptions of the world would have produced allies in the western environmental movement: tribal societies as 'guardians of the world' (Burger 1991) and 'guarantors of biodiversity' (see Forest Trend 2004). Streck shuffles the terms in an inspiring way: While modernity uses the word '*development*' to refer to one-sided growth, which 'would make life without death, or increase without decrease, conceivable and desirable' (1997: 158), from the perspective of anthropology these contrasting societies conceive of '*growth* in its ancestral, natural quality, as the coming and going of life, as life that is continually renewed but never really augmented' (l.c.). Instead of being referred to as 'developing countries', these societies should be called 'growth societies' in a deeper sense, rather than our industrial societies which long for economic growth (l.c.). This 'archaic' cosmovision would keep in check 'nature destroying economic power'.



Illustration 11.2 *Uniawasap'i* plants the eye of her child, giving rise to guaraná

The 'archaic' ideology with its basic social mode of reciprocity (between humans and nature) would in the end form the cultural dispositive for ecological sustainability.

Consumer Societies

Although the central mythological topos of the 'Killed Deity' is very common among Amazonian societies (see Zerries 1969), one is hard pressed to find its 'ritual recapture' (in the sense mentioned above: that *killing is a prerequisite for growth and the primordial killing, which brought food and life to humans, has to be perennially repeated in ritual*) as Jensen had it. As I have said, in Sateré-Mawé mythology there is continuous mention of dismembered, butchered or otherwise crushed up primordial beings, from whose testicles, breasts or intestines a variety of plants originate: from manioc to cotton, from palm fruits to guaraná. Judging from the mythological importance of these culinary-mythological concepts, one has almost the impression of some kind of vegetarian cannibalism. Nowadays this may only be cultural background noise, but nevertheless it seems worthwhile to consider Amazonian societies not so much as growth societies in Streck's deeper sense, but rather as *consumer societies*, as societies which attribute to the food they ingest special, ontologically transforming qualities (Hugh-Jones 1995, Vilaça 1992, Fausto 2002, Conklin 2001).

Fausto describes the process of (re-) production of Amazonian societies as a process of the production of kinship embedded in the dialectic of predation, the conflictive relation with the affinal Other, and familiarisation, the transformation of the Other into a consanguineal confidant. The decisive differential in this struggle over the direction of (mutual) predation is the mode of consumption: either *eat somebody* (predation) or *eat with, or like somebody* (commensality) (Fausto 2002). However, this dialectic must be differentiated from yet another consumptive category: a kind of non-eating or *anti-meal* (Hugh-Jones 1995). This consumptive mode triggers a process of transcending society and kinship by dissolving affinal, predatory relations as well as convivial consanguinity (Overing, and Passes 2000) and opens out to the universalism of *communitas*.

Now, what follows promptly leads us in a direction opposite to that of the ideology of archaic growth societies: instead of the impassive acceptance of death and decay as a prerequisite to life, we have anxious or even desperate attempts to negate and circumvent death and the human condition altogether (Biersack 1996). Within this context the quality of food adopts an almost eschatological importance.

In the ritual praxis of Tupí Guaraní societies in particular, the so-called prophetic movements are a well known phenomenon, in which whole populations migrated on a quest for a Land Without Evil (H. Clastres 1978). Much has been written on the religious fervour and enthusiasm of these movements and their tragic failures. However, one aspect has usually been neglected: besides singing and dancing, it

is the ingestion of light food that enables one to overcome earthly heaviness and enter the Land Without Evil (without having to die first!). Nimuendajú's classic text (1914) on the prophetic movements of the Apapocuvá-Guaraní reports that the cataclysmic catastrophe these movements tried to escape, is caused by the collapse of the earth's disc under the weight of the many corpses it has already had to consume:

'I have already have eaten too many corpses, I am sick and tired, make an end, my father!' (loc.cit.: 335)

As has been said, ritual means to escape the cataclysm consist in abstaining from certain types of food or in limiting oneself to certain types:

Through this way of living, their (the medicine chiefs of the Apapocuvá) bodies became light, ... the animal soul was suppressed and the ayucué (name soul) went back to where it came from. In their medicine dance the soul left the earth and went to Nandecy, Nanderyquey or Tupã. Sometimes their dead bodies were found, sometimes they ascended alive. Mostly they departed alone, but sometime they took along their followers, in some cases the whole dance house along with everybody in it ascended to heaven. (loc.cit.: 328).

In some cases the practice of ritual cannibalism converged with this quest for overcoming death. In an early source on the Chiriguano (Guaraní of Bolivia) it is said: '*... dicen que por ser ligero*' – 'they say it is to become light'; that is, if they consumed human flesh, which is considered to be 'good food', it would make their body 'light', capable of ascending to heaven (Combès 1987). The desired effect of this ritual dietetic food is always ascension to heaven, return to a paradise lost, and it is the entanglement in the processes of earthly growth, in the cycles of birth and death, that corrupt the body and make it heavy. The fundamentalist prophets of the Guaraní orated against the human condition, which – through the weight of its 'bad existence' (*teko achy kue*) – would prevent ascension to the Land Without Evil. Making the body light, its Dis-incarnation would lead to the condition of perfection (*aguyje*), necessary for the entrance into the Land Without Evil without having to die (*kandire*) (H. Clastres 1978, Combès 1992).

In the cosmology of the culturally related Sateré-Mawé (Da Silva Lorenz n.d., Texeira 2005), of whom no prophetic movement has been reported, the idea of a lost, ideal world without death can nevertheless be found, albeit a world that has been dislocated to the heavens above since primordial times. This immortal world is in sharp contrast to the earth which is associated with death, corporality and mortality, originating from the bodies of two sisters. Attempts to ascend to the perfect world always fail, which, as I have been told, explains why this earth contains so many dead.

Economic Crisis

The Sateré-Mawé had plenty of reasons to yearn for a Land Without Evil when, in the 1960s and 1970s, they were threatened with extinction as a social and cultural community. In a fundamental economic crisis, their capacity to ensure their own subsistence had collapsed. The Sateré-Mawé had increasingly become victims of the regional economic system, which in the typical manner of Amazonian boom-cycles recklessly exploited rose-wood (*pau rosa*, *Aniba roseadora*). The Sateré-Mawé had sunk ever deeper into debt bondage due to the *aviamento*-system; held in slavery-like dependency by their patrons, they were forced to neglect their own plantations, overcome by hunger and – as it is said – they decided to stop having children in this world. It is largely due to the efforts of the Catholic mission that Sateré-Mawé society did not disappear. What I would like to stress here is that many of the societies focused on by the west as ‘guardians of the earth’ have to fulfil their role not on the basis of intact but rather largely destroyed structures.

A certain consolidation notwithstanding, Sateré-Mawé society continued to be deeply involved in the regional market economy: anyone who does not want to suffer hunger needs cash to be able to buy food. Until recently there were two possible ways of access to financial resources: firstly by tapping into the local system of *assistencialismo*: that is, passively awaiting aid from the national authorities or international organisations, without ever really understanding why they distribute free gifts in this way; secondly by commercializing manioc flour, which despite the high work input (especially by women) yields only a low price on the regional market. In addition, there is the ecologically critical solution of extending the cultivated areas.

The resulting ‘monocultures’ are just one example of violating the ethic of balanced mediation between humans and nature and the social ideal of reciprocity, which in our world has become proverbial for the cultures of Amazonia.

In view of the urgent necessity of social and economic reconstruction of Sateré-Mawé society, with approximately seventy villages along the Andirá and Marau rivers, the Tribal Council (*Conselho Geral da Tribo Sateré-Mawé*, CGTSM) decided on the ambitious guaraná project. This project intended not only to satisfy the economic demands of the people, but also to preserve the only existing gene-pool of this industrially important plant through sustainable management of the anthropic space of traditional guaraná cultivation. The project consists of selling locally produced guaraná as an organic, native product of unique quality at a differential price. In the long term, the funds obtained through a rigorous pricing policy would be used exclusively for the general benefit of the Sateré-Mawé. To put it simply, one third of the price goes to the producers, one third to the Tribal Council (for recurring expenses as well as for matters of common interest to the community), and finally one third for commercialisation, consulting, promotion, environmental monitoring, quality control and research. This scheme of dividing up the earnings, which – in spite of all the immediate necessities of the producers –

does not lose sight of long-term development, requires a high degree of persuasive work on the part of the activists in the Tribal Council.

The basic idea of the project is that the guaraná of the Sateré-Mawé should be seen on the international market as more than a product of high quality; it should be seen as an ethical product, associated not only with ecological and social costs, but also with social and cultural values, qualities that should justify a high consumer price. Thus, the French importer *Guayapi Tropical* changed from a supplier who offered guaraná for 10 US\$ per kilo to the Sateré-Mawé, who sell for over 40 US\$ per kilo. In the context of its strategy of 'fair trade', the Italian *Cooperativa Terzo Mondo* declared itself willing to advance 100 per cent of the price of the anticipated amount of production before delivery, in order to ensure the functioning of the project without having to borrow outside capital. According to the Italian project partner, Mauricio Fraboni, the social or cultural sustainability of the project is due not only to the deep cultural identification of the Sateré-Mawé with guaraná, but also to the attitude of the Tribal Council, which believes that legal and political recognition can only be constructed on the basis of economic autonomy. This economic autonomy in turn provides the Council with the necessary credibility (Fraboni 2001).

As has been said, the '*Projeto Guaraná*' is exclusively self-financing. This self-financing can be ensured only by the altruistic '*fair trade*' ethic, in which the final consumer in Europe is prepared to pay a little extra for existential values such as ecological safety and the preservation of biodiversity. However, we must remember that this is the European morality of the project, based on principles agreed upon in the Kyoto Protocol or Climate Alliance by western groups and organisations with a critical stance against industrial growth and consumption. This morality cannot necessarily be derived from indigenous ideological premises. In order to better understand the indigenous perspective it is advisable to take up the thread again that led us on the quest for the Land Without Evil.

As we have already suggested, the consumer behaviour of Amazonian Indians, at least the Tupí-Guaraní or Tupían groups, have moral connotations which are related to a series of dilemmas intrinsic to indigenous Amazonian cosmologies:

The reports on consumption and prophecy among the Tupí-Guaraní exhibit a kind of puritanism, seeking salvation in the sense of overcoming, or freeing oneself from periodic processes of vitality, growth and reproduction. Entanglement in these processes is considered as corrupting, sickening and burdensome in the true sense of the word. It is obvious that these ideas are contrary to a cosmo-vision that celebrates life, growth and reproduction complementing death and violence, as among the horticulturalists discussed by Jensen.

To this ontological dilemma is added a sociological one: an attempt is made to overcome the social configurations of reproductive, periodical life within matrimonial relations and their potential for rivalry and violence among affines. In a Sateré-Mawé myth, the origin of clan organisation is explained by the appearance of a jaguar-monster threatening to extinguish primordial mankind. An old woman manages to kill the beast and then bestows plant and animal names on

the survivors, according to the places where they hid from the monster. This was the origin of the exogamous clans (*ywānia*); from that moment on, people could freely marry each other, the sterility of primordial times was overcome, but so too was its peacefulness: according to the myth, the clans immediately became entangled in bloody wars.

The cosmological dilemma of an inter-marrying but quarrelsome society after the fall finds expression in Sateré-Mawé discourse in the form of a kind of archaism, that is, the effort to return to an harmonious '*Urgesellschaft*' (primordial society) before the fall. The context for this archaism is the ongoing conversion movement to evangelical or pentecostal denominations among the Sateré-Mawé.

The final dilemma is a political one – namely, the effort to create enough authority and persuasive power within a politically egalitarian society to transcend social differences and particularistic interests, touches directly on the cultural sustainability of projects such as the *projeto guaraná* in an indigenous society of Amazonia. In these societies, the lack of institutional means to reach consensus signifies that it can only be reached discursively: for the Tupí, veritable masters of speech, consensus is obtained through the use of the 'good words', in Sateré-Mawé: *sehay wakuat*.

In Sateré-Mawé cosmogony, it was good words that let the ideal world ascend to heaven, and good words were also spoken in the guaraná myth, words that are immediately connected with chiefly authority. After *Uniawasāp'i* had planted the eyes of her son, she spoke the following words:

"Now you are dead, but one day you will be in this world to organise all work.

You will be a leader (sat. *morekuat*)!

All your descendants will gather together in your name forever!

You will show yourself responsible for your descendants when their time for work comes,

for constructing houses, setting up plantations, clearing the land, for every kind of work, and when the authorities gather together!"

In this context, 'work' means not so much the drudgery of the peasant's daily routine, but rather the construction of a specific kind of sociality, a disposition to communal work, that can only be induced by the 'good words'. In former times, the context for uttering the '*sehay wakuat*' was the *purati-g* ritual, an indispensable part of which was the ritual consumption of a very thick *sap'o* or guaraná beverage.

The so-called *purati-g* first of all is a tangible object, a ceremonial club with an incised decoration of a type well known in the Guayana area. But the interesting point is that this object is by no means regarded by the Sateré-Mawé as a weapon. In Portuguese the *Satere-Mawé* use the expression '*patente*', meaning 'patent', 'document' or 'certification'. Why is this so? The myth of the origin of the *purati-g*, as it is told today by the evangelical elite, can be summarized as follows (Kapfhammer 2004): A fight took place between the culture hero *Wasiri*

(also called *Anumare hit*) and a demon (*ahia~g*). This fight raged right up to the edge of the world, where *Wasiri* managed to throw his adversary down. After his victory, *Wasiri* carved a kind of 'crutch' (*muleta*) to use on his way back home. While resting during the night under a tree [in one version a guaraná tree!], *Wasiri* had a kind of auditory experience [that is, he heard a message], and he incised what was revealed to him on the wooden stick with the tooth of an *agouti*. By so doing *Wasiri*, created a text which, according to the Sateré-Mawé, has to be understood literally: the incised design is considered as the script of *Wasiri's* revelation which was received in primordial times. What originated is an all-encompassing text of reference: on one side of the *purati~g* everything good is 'written' down, concerning social unity and collective work, while on the other side is everything evil, concerning feuding and war.

The club was handed down from mythical time and space to the present time in direct line from *tuxaua geral* (great chief) to *tuxaua geral*. A *tuxaua geral's* position of power essentially depended on his ability to 'read' this 'text'. In ritual 'readings', which mainly took place on the occasion of a summons to communal work or at the settlement of a dispute, the 'text' was recited, but only the 'good side'. At these meetings, adult people gathered in the house of the *tuxaua geral*, a solemn and sober mood prevailed, and a very thick guaraná *sap'o* was consumed. It seems as if the 'good words' may have been engendered by the consumption of guaraná, as for example they are engendered – by the ingestion of special, sacred food such as coca or tobacco among the Tukano, Baniwa, Uitoto and Miranha-groups in the northwest Amazon.

The readings were structured in the form of a ceremonial dialogue, in which one person, the *tuxaua geral*, read, and another person confirmed what had been read. Due to the unshakably persuasive power of this supernatural knowledge, no opposition was possible against the moral guidelines given in the text. Any person who was wrong or who had done wrong would inevitably become entangled in contradictions. Refusal to submit would inevitably lead to death from supernatural causes.

In recent times the ability to read this text has become lost, due to immoral, self-interested use of this powerful knowledge, and this has also led to a loss of the foundation of the *tuxaua geral's* integrating power. The structures of Sateré-Mawé society began to dissolve, particularistic interests of groups and individuals triumphed over common goals, resistance against invasion from outside started to crumble. Indeed, as we have said already, the culture and society of the Sateré-Mawé were in a deep crisis at the beginning of the sixties, at the time the first protestant missionaries (SIL) appeared.

Yet today it is the *crentes*, the native evangelicals, who are convinced that the power of the *purati~g* has been restored. This is due to two interdependent factors: firstly, the translation of the Bible into the language of the Sateré-Mawé: once again a morally binding text has been made readable. Secondly, the foundation of the Tribal Council, *Conselho Geral da Tribo Sateré-Mawé*, whose representatives, the *crentes* refer to the powerful knowledge of the *purati~g* in order to present their political programme in persuasive and integrating terms. As I have argued

previously (Kapfhammer, in Wright, ed., 2004), this reference is explicitly made in *the discourse of the Evangelical leaders*. One cannot say the Evangelicals are against ancient beliefs. They are against beliefs which they think are against their new moral standards while readily revitalizing ancient beliefs which they think support these new morals.

The Tribal Council and the general chief consider the text of the Bible analogous to the text of the ancient *purati~g*. This kind of morally unambiguous knowledge and its unselfish use legitimises the power of the Sateré-Mawé leaders (or should do so). Their commitment to the common weal and their 'love' (*wo'oky'e* – the fundamental moral concept each *crente* holds) for the people bestow form and content on their power of knowledge and persuasion (Santos Granero 1991). Not in the least it is guaraná, whose ritual consumption constructs such universalistic sociality. Guaraná belongs to that category of 'anti-meal' as Hugh-Jones (1995) calls the sorts of food and stimulants, the consumption of which counters earthly weight, transcends everyday life and establishes nearness to primordial conditions of *communitas*.

Conclusion

This discourse of the Sateré-Mawé *crentes*, more specifically the chiefs and main activists in the guaraná project, is centred on different forms of legitimating power: While in the context of shamanism, the legitimation of power functions in a very ambiguous manner, power in the context of political leadership – a field increasingly congruent with the field of evangelical influence – is legitimated by transmission of morally unambiguous knowledge according to the model of the ancient *purati~g* complex, in order to transcend social differences. The increasing influence of evangelical denominations – nowadays largely dominated by the indigenous authorities themselves – is causing the abandonment of cultural institutions such as shamanism in an attempt to escape its endlessly violent cycles of revenge, and of the male initiation rite (*dança da tucandeira*), which ritually celebrates the latently violent social differentiation into clan groups. It is obvious that the abandonment of this cultural complex causes the rupture of its social parameters: a consanguineal society is trying to emancipate itself from the affinal society of the *ywãnia*, with its conflicting clan groups and latent violence between brothers-in-law; this 'new' society covers up social differences, or, to put it positively, tries to overcome them in favour of a community of 'brothers and sisters' (see Vilaça 1997) – an idea which refers back to the primordial community of the *anumareria*, the children of *Anumare hit* or *Wasiri*, as it existed before the appearance of the jaguar monster.

In the context of this discussion it is necessary to refer to the two recently proposed theories of Amazonian sociability: on the one hand the 'symbolic economy of alterity' with its category of affinity as social operator and its heavy potential of violence (Viveiros de Castro 1996), and on the other, a 'moral economy

of intimacy’, or peaceful attempt to establish conviviality marked by consanguinity (Overing 1999; Kapfhammer 2004, Wright and Kapfhammer 2004; Wright 2004). Nevertheless, I would like to propose a somewhat different emphasis here, one that has more to do with the ‘range’ of the social fields created by these different ‘economies’. The ‘culture of mediation’ (*Vermittlerkultur*) of shamanism and clan organisation with its ‘short range morality’ (Santos Granero 1986) has a structural tendency towards symbolic as well as real delimitation against the ‘Other’. It therefore has a particularising effect, without doubt historically contingent on regional socio-political forms such as the tutelary regime, economic and political clientelism, amongst others. On the other hand, a ‘movement of immediacy’ seems to originate from the mythopraxis of the *purati-g*-complex, that claims social, economic and political power in a universalistic way.

The former strategy of legitimating authority in Amazonia at least implicitly bases its life-giving power on an exchange of life for death and by doing so can at least tentatively be associated with the world view of tropical horticulturalists and its basic notion of violence and death as a prerequisite for new life, as Adolf E. Jensen had it. The second strategy of power legitimation is implicitly based on the contrasting idea that life-giving power lies within the ritually enforced negation and overcoming of death. To a certain degree, we are reminded here of Pierre Clastres’ idea (1976), according to which the prophetic movements of the Tupi-Guaraní served to dissolve particularising structures and differentiations. I would again point out that the ‘right words’ (beautiful and morally correct) as well as the ‘right consumer behaviour’ (in the sense of consuming only ‘foods’ that would propitiate the transition to the desired world without evil) were the decisive ritual measures within these prophetic movements.

While from a historical point of view these ‘universalistic’ tendencies in Amazonian societies may be exacerbated in times of crisis, structurally it seems that both tendencies are embedded in the rhythm of annual and economic cycles. A final example of the interlocking of manioc and guaraná production schemes among the Sateré-Mawé illustrates this:

Guaraná – Manioc – Cycle

	Allocation of work season	Allocation of work gender	Social formation	Work formation
manioc	dry season	Women	dispersion: life in the gardens	collective work <i>puxirum</i>
guaraná	rainy season	Men	concentration: life in the village	individual work

Manioc demands the allocation of work mainly during the dry summer months (July–December), guaraná during the wet months of winter (January–June). Cultivation of manioc and the production of manioc products is mainly the work of women, in the case of guaraná, it is the work of men. While during summer many families live scattered in individual gardens, during the winter, the community lives together in the village. While the allocation of collective male work (clearing, burning, planting) is necessary in the manioc cycle, production in the guaraná cycle is more individual. Here the structural scheme adopts a temporal dynamic: during the time of social concentration in the rainy season, it is by way of producing and consuming guaraná that ‘universalistic’ consensus is created, a ritual necessity for overcoming ‘particularistic’ tendencies, in order to be able to recruit the large working parties needed for manioc production. In other words: *ritual* consensus, created by the ‘right words’ and by ‘right consumption’ precedes *practised* consensus.

These new morals, contrasting with the ambiguous, usually shamanically mediated morals of balanced relations between humans and nature and/or supernatural typical of indigenous Amazonian cultures, are indispensable in their integrating function for what I would like to call the ‘cultural sustainability’ of the ‘*projeto guaraná*’ among the Sateré-Mawé. While the ethics of archaic societies of growth as illustrated above may be better suited to western ecological expectations, from an indigenous perspective it is of all things the conversion movement to evangelical denominations that contributes to the sustained success of the guaraná-project among the Sateré-Mawé. The key word is ‘persuasive work’ that is required by the indigenous authorities to carry out these projects. The main factor in revitalizing chiefly authority is the conversion movement that reintroduces the universalistic strategies necessary to overcome the economic, social and political particularisms of previous social consensus formation. The central mythological notion and ritual praxis concerning chiefly authority revolves around the purati-g. Ritual consumption of guaraná is an important part of this complex. This is why in the discourse of the evangelical spokesmen, the prophetic content of the origin myth, which alludes to chiefly authority and *communitas*, is emphasized rather than the symbolism of death and regeneration (the killed divine guaraná-child), which – following Jensen and Streck – could be much easier related to the notions of ecological sustainability of the western partner.

As stated in the first paragraph citing Rottenburg, development collaboration often functions only under conditions of conceptual heterogeneity. The ‘game’ between development partners seems to work only under conditions of conceptual heterogeneity (Rottenburg 2001): what for one is an alternative to the ecological predation of industrial society, to the other is the basic structure of social predation. The latter then tries to emancipate itself from predation, at the same time constructing the social capital for ‘best practices’, so often frustrated in development collaboration.

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Afterword

Joel Robbins

I am very grateful for the opportunity to write an afterword for this important collection focused on conversion and Christianity among the indigenous people's of the Americas. I am grateful first because of the quality of the work collected here, and second because I am confident the book will have an impact on how Christianity is studied in the future in relation to Amerindian societies and beyond. And I am also grateful for a third reason, one that is a little more complicated to express and that turns on what an unlikely candidate I am for being given this opportunity. Let me begin by explaining what I mean.

In his chapter in this volume, Gow points out the similarities between the regional systems of the Bajo Huallaga and the Alto Xingú, which he sees as both articulated through a 'combination of local heterogeneity and global homogeneity' (Gow, p. 48). It makes a certain sense to describe anthropology as similarly structured, at least in the more successful of its intellectual endeavors. Such successful endeavors tend to be ones in which anthropologists bring together strong, often divergent traditions of regional ethnography in theoretical conversations that, even if they are not always based on a homogeneity of theoretical outlook, at least share enough conceptual common ground to allow for fruitful comparative discussion. The intellectual issues on which the discipline is able to operate successfully on both of these levels changes through time: while once kinship might have been a prototypical domain for this kind of treatment, or myth, more recently it is others such as, for example, gender or local appropriations of the global that have held pride of place. Yet even as the anthropological spotlight that brings significant ethnographic accomplishment and theoretical ferment into a single focus shifts its aim through time, there are some corners of the world of human practice upon which it never falls. Christianity has until recently been one of these corners: there was some (though not much) good ethnography of Christian peoples, but there was no wider theoretical, comparative dialogue to speak of. African Christians were Africans first and foremost, Melanesian Christians were Melanesians, Amazonian Christians were Amazonians, and so on. One might compare Christians with others in their regions, and particularly with others who had not converted so that one could determine the extent to which an indigenous 'substrate' existed beneath the Christian overlay. But one would rarely examine Christians from one part of the world in connection with Christians from other places. There was no global framework of intellectual 'homogeneity' that would allow such a comparative examination to develop.

Over the last decade, the intellectual situation I have just described has been changing. There has arisen what a number of scholars have referred to as an anthropology of Christianity the very mission of which is to provide a framework in which ethnographic studies of Christians as Christians can flourish and can lead to broad comparative discussions. In a small way, this effort to turn the anthropological spotlight on a corner it once happily left in the dark has been a move to restructure one region of anthropological thought. The fact that someone like me – a Melanesianist and student of comparative Pentecostalism who has also done work in the anthropology of Christianity – has been given the opportunity to write an afterword for a book that is focused neither on a region in which I have worked nor particularly on Pentecostalism indicates that this restructuring effort has met with some success. This, then, is the third reason I am very grateful for the opportunity to write this piece.

Turning to the volume at hand, I want to mention at the outset two among the many common features that unite its chapters. The first is that, as the editors note in their introduction, the vast majority of them are focused squarely on indigenous views of the conversion process and of Christianity more generally. As the editors put it, echoing Gow's chapter, the authors whose work is collected here 'do not seek to know what Christianity does to native culture, but rather what native culture does to Christianity' (p. 5). The second common feature I want to mention is that with the exception of the introduction and Vilaça's chapter, the work collected here does not engage significantly with the literature currently being produced under the rubric of the anthropology of Christianity. With a focus on indigenous views of Christianity, the authors of these chapters ask comparative questions that remain largely regional, and often unfold with matters of indigenous cosmology and social process at the forefront, rather than dwelling on the differences and commonalities that might have been produced in part by various forms of Christianity themselves. Almost certainly these two common features of the chapters are linked. One of the primary struggles in the development of the anthropology of Christianity has been to encourage anthropologists to take seriously the influence of Christian categories on the cultures of converts: if one is focused almost exclusively on indigenous categories, the anthropology of Christianity literature will be less relevant to one's project.

Having noted the absence here of much dialogue with the anthropology of Christianity, I want to add that I do see many bridges that might be built between the work collected here and the discussion that has unfolded under that rubric. In what follows, I want in two different ways to go about building a few of those bridges. First, I want to consider some matters of concern within the anthropology of Christianity that might be brought to bear on these chapters, and correlatively I want to consider what the standing discussion in the anthropology of Christianity can learn from the sustained effort here to examine Christianity from a position that makes indigenous categories analytically fundamental. Second, I want to briefly consider the possibilities for a controlled inter-regional comparison of processes of Christianization in Melanesia and Amazonia – two areas that anthropologists have

sought to compare on other grounds in recent decades. Such a tightly drawn inter-regional comparison would be something new in the anthropology of Christianity, and the work presented in this volume indicates its great potential.

In considering how work in the anthropology of Christianity might be brought into dialogue with that presented in this volume, let me begin by contrasting Greer's and Gow's contributions. Greer's chapter is animated by a spirit very close to the one that has driven the development of the anthropology of Christianity. His claim that 'the global scope of the Jesuit enterprise ... provides a unique opportunity to undertake comparative and intercontinental research on contact, colonization and religious transformation' points to one of the great promises of anthropological work on Christianity: that the global spread of versions of this world religion opens up possibilities for comparison where few or none may have existed before (Greer, this volume p. 21). Greer's work is also salutary from the point of view of the anthropology of Christianity for the way he refrains from arguing against the value of comparison on the basis of his finding that processes of missionization in New France and in Paraguay unfolded quite differently from one another, suggesting instead that these differences make comparison all the more interesting (see Robbins 2003a: 193).

In contrast to Greer's chapter, Gow's is a very elegant presentation of precisely the kinds of arguments the anthropology of Christianity has largely had to leave behind in order to get up on its feet. Setting aside 'conversion' as an analytic tool useful to missionaries but not anthropologists (pp. 46, 50, see also Bacchiddu this volume p. 54, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 250; Robbins 2007: 13), he suggests that being Christian in the Bajo Huallaga has been about maintaining a place in a traditionally recognized social classification in which humans (now read 'Christians') are distinguished from wild people and dead people. To the extent that the Jesuits were successful at all in leading the peoples of the Bajo Huallaga to think of themselves as Christian, this was so only because they were able to 'release' the social potentials represented by this pre-existing classificatory scheme (p. 49). Christianity's own meaningful schemes of social classification and cosmology have thus done very little to shape local ways of thinking or living.

Although very intellectually rich in its details, in form Gow's chapter is built around a kind of dismissive argument anthropologists have long made when confronted with Christianity in the field; an argument that holds that Christianity has not really taken root, or has not changed very much about people's lives (see Robbins 2007). My point in bringing this up is not to question whether Gow's account is true for the Bajo Huallaga, for I would have no grounds for raising such questions and the importance of related schemes of social classification in the other Amazonian chapters argues for its validity. It is rather to ask whether, assuming it is accurate, the Bajo Huallaga can be of any interest to those studying Christianity comparatively – or whether they simply do not belong in a comparison set with people whose encounter with Christianity has been of more moment for their understandings of and ways of acting in the world. One effect of the rise of the anthropology of Christianity has been to bring such questions to the fore.

Intriguingly, Grotti's analytically and ethnographically rich chapter has much in common with Gow's, while describing a case in which Christianity has more decidedly taken hold. Like the Bajo Huallaga, the Trio of Guiana have put Christianity into play in articulating a three-part social categorization, theirs involving themselves, wild people, and whites (Grotti this volume). In this scheme, Christianity appears to allow the Trio to identify themselves with whites in their relations with the wild Akuriyo they have taken in. It has also aided them in developing a concern with the kind of sociability that their move to sedentarism requires. Grotti perhaps underplays the extent to which Christianity may have supplied some of the content of Trio ideals of sociability (just as Gow may underplay the role of Christian ideas of peace in shaping Bajo Huallaga notions of peacefulness). But it remains the case that Christianity is clearly operating more profoundly in the Trio case she reports than it is in the Bajo Huallaga case Gow focuses on. This suggests one kind of issue work like Gow's might usefully raise for anthropologists of Christianity, which is how it comes to pass that some people have a lot of contact with Christianity, adopt it as some kind of identity, yet find it possible to keep almost all its cultural content at arms' length, while others embrace it more tightly. If the Trio can take up some of the content of Christianity, we cannot rest easy with the assumption that it is natural for Amazonian people not to do so, and cases like that of the Bajo Huallaga require explanation just as much as do those like that of the Trio.

The contrast I have established between Gow's and Grotti's chapters touches on an issue that has been central to debates within the anthropology of Christianity. This issue has to do with role of cultural discontinuity in the process of conversion. A number of scholars have noted the frequency with which converts, particularly those who join Protestant churches, understand their worlds to have changed radically (Bonilla this volume, Engelke 2004, Meyer 1998, Robbins 2003b, 2007). Furthermore, they have shown that this sense of a break with the past is often expressed ritually, as in the Inuit *siqqitirniq* discussed by Laugrand and Oosten here (Robbins 2003b). For anthropologists, the existence of such claims for and rituals expressive of discontinuity raises the question of how this folk rhetoric of change relates to actual processes of cultural transformation. Long-standing habits push for anthropologists to see cultural continuity as dominant even where such rhetorics of change are in play (Robbins 2007). As Gow's chapter demonstrates, such arguments for continuity are generally based on assessments of similarities that hold between contemporary forms and older ones. Yet Grotti's chapter at least implicitly evidences how complicated judgments of similarity can be – for such judgments always dwell on some features rather than others, and involve choices between levels of abstraction (see Robbins 2003b: 227–30). Both Bacigalupo's and Laugrand and Oosten's fine chapters push the same issue in another, less philosophical direction, by providing detailed, processual ethnographic accounts of the ways 'similarities' between indigenous and Christian cultural features, similarities that can allow traditional ideas and social roles to draw strength from conversion, are very much made rather than found. In the Mapuche and Inuit cases

these authors discuss, both the converts and the missionaries who converted them have laboured to fashion the similarities and differences between shamans and priests. In these cases, then, we see that continuity as much as discontinuity can be fruitfully analyzed as a cultural project, rather than simply described as a fact on the ground.

On the issue of continuity and discontinuity, a number of the Amazonianist chapters collected here also make important contributions to the other line of argument I want to draw out here: the one that shows how a focus on indigenous understandings can transform the anthropology of Christianity. Bonilla, Grotti, and Vilaça, in three very finely realized chapters, all demonstrate the existence of indigenous models of radical transformation in the societies they study, and show how these models have profoundly shaped the way the people of those societies have experienced conversion to Christianity. In all three cases, changes in the body are central, and this is related to traditional notions of bodily change and perspectival transformation (about which more below, when I discuss the Amazonia/Melanesia comparison). As Bonilla suggests, an emphasis on conversion as a radical historical break may have come to the Paumari from the evangelical form of Christianity they have taken up, but it is realized in conjunction with a traditional notion of 'historical-cosmological transformation' as something that must be inscribed 'on the skin and in the body' if it is to be realized. Others studying Christianity have emphasized the role of the body in conversion on general theoretical grounds (see Csordas 1997), but the arguments being made here are different in character: they suggest that anthropologists need always to consider the ways indigenous models of change, involving in these Amazonian cases the body, influence processes of conversion that the spread of Christianity sets in train.

Vilaça, in her chapter, in effect makes this argument for the necessity of studying indigenous models of change as part of a tour de force intervention in debates about continuity and discontinuity within the anthropology of Christianity. What do we make of a case like the Wari'? One in which Christianity has made real changes in how people construct themselves as human, but in which it has done so only by operating along tracks laid down by indigenous models of change. Do we count this as a case of continuity or of change? Or does Vilaça's argument indicate that this is the wrong question? Even in the absence of ready answers to these important questions, one conclusion anthropologists of Christianity can take from her work, and from that of Bonilla and Grotti as well, is the necessity of recognizing, as I noted above in my discussion of judgments of similarity, the extent to which claims for continuity and discontinuity are always relative, depending on what features of a situation we choose to emphasize and how much we choose to abstract from the details on the ground. These chapters show that if in analyzing Amazonian societies we focus on indigenous models of change – a choice that seems to a reader like myself to be necessary given how important they are in local social life more generally – we will find that projects of continuity are always present, even when what is carried forward is indigenous models of change that give Christianity important cultural space in which to operate.

Another topic that has been widely taken up in the anthropology of Christianity is the extent to which Christian social values either come into conflict with traditional values or exacerbate conflicts already underway between traditional social values and those introduced by the market and other institutions of western origin. Most often, such conflicts are framed as ones in which Christian individualism is set against indigenous values focused on social relationships or broad clan or community solidarity (for example, Keane 2007, Meyer 1999, Robbins 2004). Bacchiddu's interesting chapter indicates how close to the ground these concerns often are – showing how Apiao people use these very terms to discuss the differences that hold between traditional Catholics and recent evangelical converts – while also indicating that forms of Christianity that arrive before others can sometimes hold down the side of 'tradition' in these struggles. Wright's historically detailed and closely argued chapter is the most attentive in the volume to the changing political and economic structures alongside of which Christian transformations take their place, and like Bacchiddu's it also raises important issues related to the rise of Christian individualism. In the Baniwa case, conversion to evangelical Christianity is tightly linked to the rise of a major local community group and a development project that fosters precisely the kinds of inequalities Christian individualism generally stands ready to charter.¹ The revenge of Baniwa nature spirits and sorcerers against one of the project leaders, however, demonstrates that wider Baniwa society is perhaps not ready to acknowledge that charter. Nor are the Wari', who, as Vilaça reports, have banished individualism to heaven and given it no role to play on earth (see also, Kapfhammer this volume). All of these chapters might usefully be contrasted to Ferraro's carefully laid out presentation of the Pesillo case. Here Catholicism and development work hand in hand, and money remains socialized through sacralized relations of debt. Is the less conflicted picture the Pesillo present a result of the absence of evangelicals among them, or does it have to do with a different relationship to the market? Taken together, these three chapters very productively raise such issues, and in doing so make valuable contributions to the developing discussion in the anthropology of Christianity on Christian individualism and its local discontents.

A final way in which I want to bring these chapters and the anthropology of Christianity into dialogue has to do with what looks from the point of view of the anthropology of Christianity like a curious pair of related absences in these chapters. One of these has to do with the link between Christianity and globalization. The anthropology of Christianity literature contains many discussions of the ways converts understand Christianity to connect them to wider worlds in which they hope to participate (for example, Englund 2003, Jacka 2005, Robbins 2004). The people whose lives are discussed in this volume do not seem to share this hope,

¹ In passing, I should note that the link between evangelical conversion and politicization is relatively rarely reported in the literature, and its appearance both in Wright's and Kapfhammer's chapters raises interesting questions for future research (see Kamsteeg 1998).

or at least not to see it as tied up with their practice of Christianity. A second issue that has been important in the anthropology of Christianity is the role that notions of transcendence play both in different forms of Christianity and in how converts take up those forms of Christianity (Cannell 2005, 2006, Robbins 2003a). Again, this theme is not much present here, at least in Christian terms. I take these absences to be related, inasmuch as both have to do with how issues of alterity, the foreign, and the 'outside' are thematized. Why is an explicitly Christian dialogue on these topics evidently of so little prominence in the lives of the indigenous peoples of the Americas?

The chapters of this volume suggest an important answer to this question. In most of them issues of alterity, the foreign, and the outside are in fact very prominent. They are taken up by way of ideas and practices connected to relations with animals, affines, wild people, and the dead. Concatenating the proper relationships between various of these categories is, for the groups of people represented in this volume, a crucial aspect of social life, and one that all individuals work on themselves and that they also turn to specialists such as shamans for help with. The introduction of Christianity seems not to change these frameworks for thinking about alterity very much. Rather, Christianity appears to have been readily absorbed within them. Christianity can transform the way one deals with wild people, as Grotti notes, or can become a way to stabilize a human perspective on the world, as Vilaça tells us, but it does not significantly alter the frameworks of difference these categories instantiate nor does it provide a transcendent vantage point from which people might relativize them. The coming of Christianity does not, one might say, seem in the cases discussed in this volume to expand the cosmos much. In the terms of Horton's famous argument about conversion to Christianity following on a social shift from microcosm to macrocosm, one is led to surmise that either this shift has not occurred, or, as seems more likely on the evidence of these chapters, indigenous cosmologies that always afforded alterity an important place have handled this shift on their own.

Connected with this failure of Christianity to transform people's sense of what is beyond or outside their own social experience, one also gets a strong sense from many of these chapters that Amerindian converts have generally put Christianity to use in solving longstanding problems of their own, rather than using it to address new problems brought by globalization or by its own appearance on the scene. Kapfhammer's powerful chapter provides a paradigmatic illustration of this phenomenon, as he shows that the Sateré-Mawé have found in Evangelical Christianity a way to move toward accomplishing their traditional dream of returning to an original state free of affinity and its attendant conflicts and finding a way to cooperate beyond particularistic social interests (see also Vilaça, this volume). Christianity is very much something new for the Sateré-Mawé, but in putting it to use to solve traditional problems, they motivate their adoption of it in ways that do not follow from Christianity itself. There are other examples of this in the literature (for example, Tuzin 1997), and I have argued that it is perhaps generally the case the people's initial motives for engaging Christianity have to be

embedded in indigenous understandings and motivational schemes (Robbins 2004, Vilaça, this volume). But many of the chapters in this volume show this dynamic to be very forcefully at work, and in a number of cases discussed here this dynamic has also continued to operate over long periods of time. Demonstrating the nature and importance of this dynamic is another contribution to the anthropology of Christianity that this book makes by virtue of its focus on the role of indigenous viewpoints in the process of conversion.

In their introduction to this volume, Vilaça and Wright note that a number of its chapters implicitly point to the great potential value of comparing Amazonian experiences of conversion with Melanesian ones. Before concluding, I would like to very briefly consider some possibilities for such a comparison. As Vilaça and Wright discuss, this kind of comparison has already been going on in relation to a number of issues such as gender, but issues of cultural change, and particularly of Christianization, have not been part of the agenda (though see Knauff 1997 on change). What are some of the bases on which the two regions might be compared in this regard?

An initial basis, and perhaps the most interesting, would be to look at the broad socio-cosmological emphases that hold for many of the societies of each region and ask whether they may have been guided different responses to Christianity. A number of the chapters here support Vilaça's observation that a key value for many Amazonians is stabilizing a human position in a world in which shifting perspectives with non-human alters such as animals, wild people and the dead is sometimes necessary (see also Viveiros De Castro 1998). Furthermore, as I have noted above, in many cases these efforts at stabilization turn on creating specific kinds of human bodies, and change is registered as bodily transformation (see also Vilaça 2005). As Strathern (1999: 252–3) has argued, Melanesian socio-cosmologies tend to be different. In them, the human position is taken to be largely stable, and it is relationships between humans that at once afford diverse social perspectives and also require work. In these societies, realizing relationships is the primary value (Robbins 2004), and it is mostly those who, like sorcerers, destroy relationships that are imagined to take non-human perspectives.

It is difficult at our present state of knowledge to determine how these broad socio-cosmological differences have shaped differences in the process of conversion. It is noteworthy, however, that a number of studies from Papua New Guinea appear to demonstrate that in the process of becoming Christian people there sometimes do find themselves exceeding what they themselves take to be their traditional 'native' points of view in ways the chapters collected here indicate that some Amazonian people have not so much found themselves doing (for example, Eriksen 2008, Jacka 2005, Jebens 2005, Robbins 2004, Schram 2007). If we are dealing with real differences here – and perhaps we cannot yet completely rule out the possibility that what we are really looking at is differences in regional styles of ethnographic argument – one might hazard that the Amazonian interest in producing humanity and the Melanesian one in producing relationships could help to explain them. From the point of view of the Amazonian project, Christianity

arrives as yet another perspective that both promises increased grasp of the various worlds beings can inhabit and threatens to throw people off course in their effort to stabilize a human one. Ultimately, the most reasonable way to handle the new religion from the point of view of this project is to make it serve the human effort without allowing it to complicate the already too differentiated cosmos in which human beings live. For Melanesians, by contrast, every expansion of the world is an invitation to make new relations. Christianity is welcomed precisely for its ability to further open up the world in this way, and for its promise to help people in making relations across the broader canvass that globalization more generally has bequeathed to them. Like Amazonians then, Melanesians put Christianity in service of their own project, but in doing so they make no efforts to protect their indigenous cosmologies against the challenges Christianity presents; they welcome its cosmological excess for the relation-making possibilities it affords.

This comparison is very rough. It does not take into account intra-regional differences in indigenous socio-cosmologies, and it disregards historical differences within and between the two regions as well as between the different kinds of Christianity people have been exposed to within and across both regions. But it does touch on a broadly observable difference between the work collected here and much of the work on Christianity that has started to come from Melanesia, and it speaks in favour of the general value of the comparison the editors have suggested undertaking.

Taken as a whole, this volume is an important contribution to the study of Christianity among the indigenous peoples of the Americas. It should also be read, I have argued, as a major contribution to the developing anthropology of Christianity. One might say it makes this second contribution through a side door – for almost none of its chapters address the anthropology of Christianity literature directly. Yet by virtue of the many convincing arguments it offers about the key role indigenous understandings play in the process of conversion, it makes a wide range of important points that those studying Christianity elsewhere cannot ignore. I have tried to review a number of these points here, and I look forward to the wider discussions the appearance of this book is sure to generate.

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