

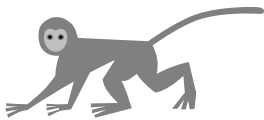
Trekking Through History

THE HUAORANI OF AMAZONIAN ECUADOR



Laura M. Rival

Trekking Through History



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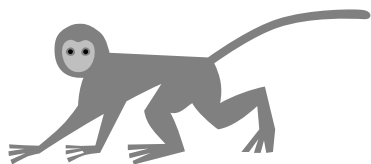
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To Léa, my little daughter

On connaît mieux la pensée des sociétés que leur corps.

—ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN

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Preface

This monographic study on the Huaorani intends to situate them ethnographically within Amazonian anthropology. It focuses on the description and interpretation of their trekking way of life, approached from the perspective of concepts about the person, death, predation, incorporation, and growth. Concerned with the fact that Amazonian anthropology has been split between studies of human adaptation to their natural environments and studies of the ways in which nature is used symbolically and ritually to signify society or transcend human finitude or both, I have tried to grasp the Huaorani's contemporary ethnographic reality and historical agency by articulating history and cosmology, ritual and ethnicity, and symbolic and political economy analysis.

This book is an attempt to present ethnographic data on a small-scale society characterized by a high degree of mobility and disengagement from horticulture and to offer generalizations valid for other highly mobile societies of the Northwest Amazon. The theme of natural abundance, a cultural category in terms of which the Huaorani organize their own experience of the ongoing relationship they sustain with the forest in the course of provisioning their society, is central to understanding their mode of trekking. Mobility is not primarily determined by economic or ecological factors but represents the historical development of a distinct mode of life that the notions of archaism and agricultural regression cannot explain satisfactorily.

While a number of anthropologists influenced by postmodern thinking consider the monograph an entirely obsolete form of scholarship linked to early twentieth-century colonialism and ways of thinking, I can see no better way of conveying a nonindustrial culture in all its difference, integrity, and unique aesthetic, moral, and political response to the human condition. This is especially true for the Huaorani who, from their tragic encounter with North American missionaries in 1956 to this day, have held a special place in sensationalistic journalism and popular imagination as "Ecuador's last savages." I will never forget that the first talk I was asked to give in Ecuador as part of my research cooperation commitments with the Ministry of Culture and Education did not concern their culture or social organization (of which they were assumed to be lacking, either because of their extreme savagery or because of their advanced state of acculturation by Quichua neighbors) but the various media discourses about them.¹

Norman Whitten wrote in 1978² that "more than any other native people of the Oriente [Ecuador's Amazon region], the contemporary Huaorani exist not only as a people facing new cataclysmic changes in their territory, but also as a people

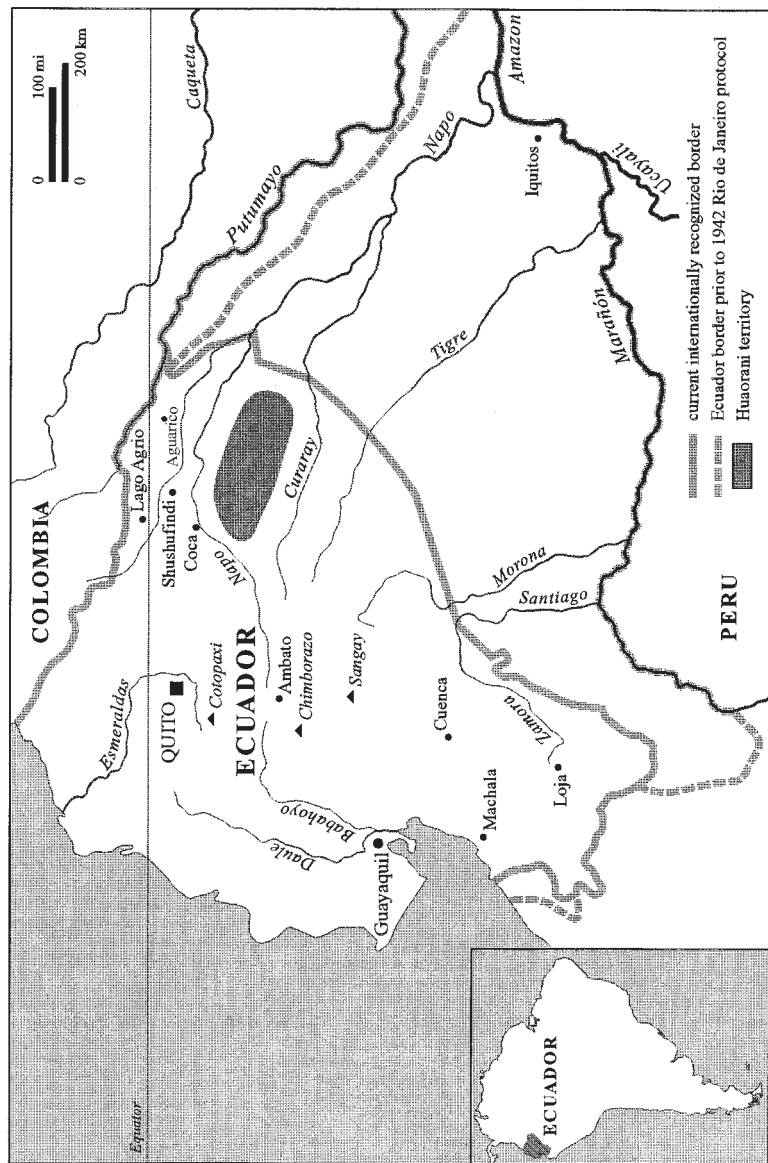
known primarily by false and distorted myths which present their culture through the eyes of those seeking to convert it and subvert it.” I hope this study will convince the reader that despite the “civilizing” efforts of missionaries and school-teachers, the Huaorani have largely retained their distinctive way of apprehending the world.

Approximately fourteen hundred, today, with 55 percent of the population under sixteen (compared to a population of under six hundred when first surveyed in the early 1960s), Huaorani people have lived as forest trekkers in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon for hundreds of years (see maps pref.1 and pref.2). More foragers than gardeners, they traditionally cultivate garden crops rudimentally and sporadically for the preparation of ceremonial drinks, while securing their daily subsistence through hunting and gathering. Formerly called ‘Aucas’, the Huaorani have been confused with the Zaparo and Aushiri Indians, and very little is known about their past. The core of their ancestral territory was the Tiputini River, from where they expanded, in the aftermath of the rubber boom, east, west, and southward, until they occupied most of the hinterlands between the Napo and the Curaray rivers, from the Andean foothills to the Peruvian border (see map pref.1).³

Like much of Western Amazonian rain forest, Huaorani land has no marked seasons. Annual precipitation, averaging 3,500 mm (120 in.), is evenly distributed throughout the year. Atmospheric humidity (80 to 90 percent) is constant, and soils, renowned as the least fertile in Ecuador, permanently damp. During fieldwork, I found the contrast between June–July—supposedly the wettest months of the year—and November–December—supposedly the driest—hardly noticeable, and, given the relatively high rainfall averages, seasons almost nonexistent. What was striking, however, was the sharp fall in temperature after heavy rains, when it felt as cold as during the coldest nights (around 13°C). And so was the dramatic transformation, after a heavy downpour, of the riverine landscape into a vast, desolate marshland. On the western side of Huaorani land, numerous streams and creeks cut across rugged terrain featuring sizable hills to form the Curaray’s headwater. On the eastern side, rivers meander through marshy lowlands. Game is abundant and biodiversity exceptionally high. Both the density of palms and bamboo groves and the frequency of potsherds and stone axes suggest that large tracks of forest are anthropogenic, that is, transformed by past human activities.

In 1969, a decade after having “pacified” the Huaorani, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) was authorized to create a 66,570-hectare [169,088-acre] protection zone (the ‘Protectorate’) around its mission. By the early 1980s, five-sixths of the population was living in the Protectorate, which represented one-tenth of the traditional territory. Since the creation of primary schools, which has accelerated the process of sedentarization and riverine adaptation, the population has gathered

PREF. I
Huaorani territory
in Ecuador.



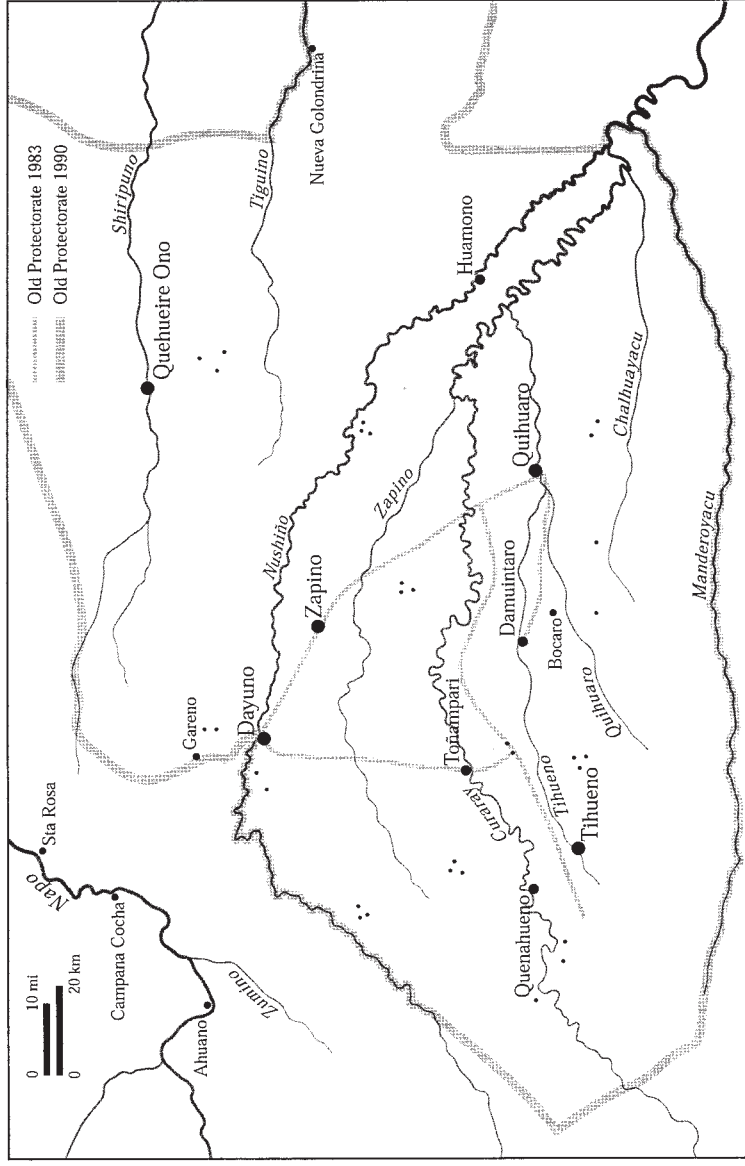
into twenty communities, almost all located within the boundaries of the former Protectorate (see map pref.2). In April 1990 the Huaorani were granted the largest indigenous territory in Ecuador (679,130 hectares, or 1,098,000 acres). It includes the former Protectorate and adjoins Yasuní National Park (982,300 hectares, or 2,495,000 acres).

Despite predictions that the national society would quickly absorb this reduced, egalitarian, and foraging group, Huaorani people are, thirty-five years later, flourishing. The population has expanded demographically and spatially, recuperating lost territories. Of course, their reality and identity has become fragmented and complex, but they cannot be said to have simply become Ecuadorian citizens, generic Indians, or civilized Christians.

Compared to other Amazonian Indians, they have retained a substantial land base; their native language was never suppressed, nor was Spanish ever forced upon them. They never experienced religious boarding schools or the alienation of hacienda life. Surrounded by migrant farmers whose unskilled labor is always on offer for the short periods when the oil industry requires manpower, they have largely remained outside the labor market. Moreover, their settlements are too remote from urban centers, roads, and main rivers to market cash crops or forest products profitably. Tourism, which was limited for the same reasons, has expanded in recent years under the guise of ecotourism.

Caught between the conflicting objectives of petroleum development and forest conservation, they are confronted with pernicious and contradictory economic and political interests. Not unlike the SIL, the oil companies operating in their territory are trying to exercise complete control over them, providing funds and coordinating all governmental and nongovernmental actions concerning health, education, and economic improvement. Much paternalism and rhetoric accompany these "modernization" programs, which, far from promoting self-development, are undermining what constitutes the core of Huaorani culture: their unique relationship to the forest and their hunting-gathering way of life.

In 1991, in the wake of receiving territorial rights from the government after a protracted international campaign, young schooled men formed the ONHAE (Organization of the Huaorani Nation of Amazonian Ecuador). Five years later, the organization was operating almost entirely under the auspices of Maxus, a company exploiting petroleum in the region. Maxus was paying a salary to ONHAE's leaders, rented an office equipped with telephone, fax, and electronic mail, and employed a nonindigenous secretary to run it. Given that political decisions are normally taken through consensus rather than by majority vote, agreements passed between Maxus and elected representatives have often been denounced and declared null and void in the communities. The political influence of ONHAE lead-



PREF. 2
Huaorani
settlements in the
Old Protectorate
in 1990.

Map of the Huorani territory in April 1990. The map shows the Napo, Tiputini, Yasuni, Curaray, and Cononaco rivers. Key locations marked include Ahuacero, Cacataro, Dayuno, Zaplino, Toñampar, Quenahueno, Tihueno, Bocaro, Acaro, Huamono, Tiguino, Nigra Golondrina, Nueno, Cardhue Onco, Huifame Onco, Quehueire Onco, Ahuemuro, Dicaro, Mima Onco, Quemperí Onco, Bahumano, and Tiputini. The map also shows the Napo, Tiputini, Yasuni, Curaray, and Cononaco rivers.

Huaorani territory April 1990

ers, viewed as too young and immature to deserve respect, remains somewhat limited. Conscious of the ONHAE's inadequacies, Huaorani people are searching for an organizational form more in tune with their own political dynamics.

My central argument in this book is that certain distinctive practices of the Huaorani can be understood only in terms of social and symbolic structures internal to their own society. In this I disagree with two recent schools of thought concerning Amazonian societies. One of them interprets contemporary social formations as the result of disruptions caused by European penetration of the region, disruptions that led to widespread cultural devolution and the ethnogenesis of entirely new societies. The other interprets contemporary social activities in terms of adaptations to the natural environment.

There always were two possible responses to incursions by powerful, expansionist societies: accommodation in order to obtain trade goods and weapons in exchange for jungle produce and slaves or mobility and flight. Most of the arguments made by ethnohistorians concerning ethnogenesis in the wake of European impact concern those who chose the former response, in part because it is such groups that were most closely involved with Europeans and about whom Europeans have left historical records. The Huaorani are archetypes of the latter response: They have chosen autonomy above all else and are known for choosing suicide over settlement when forcibly assimilated. I show that arguments concerning groups that assimilated to European presence do not apply to those that chose autonomy.

In the Amazon, autonomy has long meant a readiness to abandon fixed settlements and engage in long foraging treks through the forest. In the absence of historical sources, the foraging groups have tended to attract the interest of the cultural ecologists, who began by studying the contemporary adaptations of groups to their natural environments. In this approach, the environment is interpreted as imposing a set of rather severe constraints on human behavior. It has been argued, for example, that tropical rain forest areas are naturally scarce in proteins, or some other nutrients, and that these scarcities explain patterns of movement and conflict over scarce resources leading to warfare.

More recently, historical ecology has shown that the environment is itself the result of long-term human intervention and that movements through the forest take advantage of the manipulation of the forest by previous generations. I go beyond the historical ecologists to show that the Huaorani view the forest as the product of past generations and as naturally abundant and that they have been able to incorporate the presence of oil camps into their basic worldview, since the oil companies have become sources of spontaneous abundance much like the forest itself. The Huaorani preference for relying on slow-growing perennial tree crops over annual crops like manioc is in part a preference for a kind of society in which egalitarian re-

lationshps are valued over hierarchical ones. Thus the structure of the forest itself reflects a long-term historical commitment on the part of foragers and trekkers to the maintenance of social autonomy.

I thus argue against both the ethnohistorians and the cultural ecologists that trekking cannot be reduced to the effects of either environmental constraints or the history of European penetration of the region. Huaorani lack of institutionalization, ritualization, and mythological elaboration must be confronted comparatively and in all its complexity without resorting to hypotheses about simplification by depopulation or regression. I thus locate myself firmly in the tradition of the *Année Sociologique* of Durkheim and Mauss by arguing that movement through space has a social and ritual value in itself quite apart from whatever economico-environmental or politico-historical benefits may be derived from it. Relations between people and between people and their environment should not be studied as two separate domains of interaction. The Huaorani's relation to their environment is in many ways a social relation with themselves across generations; it is therefore eminently historical.

Chapter 1 presents the main ideas of historical ecology as they relate to current rethinking about indigenous adaptation to the Amazon rain forest, and proposes to modify the historical ecology paradigm in a way that gives it greater explanatory force, especially regarding the nature of Northwest Amazon trekking and foraging societies. Chapter 2 reviews critically existing work on the impact of colonial processes on the native populations of lowland South America, and offers a summary of existing ethnohistorical sources relating to the Upper Napo region. Chapter 3 focuses on the Huaorani's own vision of warfare and history, and on trekking as patterned by cultural and historical modes of violence. Chapter 4, which examines trekking as a "coming back" complementing the movement of withdrawal caused by predation, shows that residential mobility is related to management practices that transform the forest into a giving environment. The principles regulating social life in the longhouse, the basic social unit, which is characterized by great intimacy, sharing, and equality among co-residents, are reviewed in chapter 5. Marriage alliances, as argued in chapter 6, are fundamental to Huaorani politics. The egalitarian nature of Huaorani society derives in part from the preferential marriage pattern between ambilateral cross-cousins and in part from the renewal of alliances across endogamous boundaries, celebrated in drinking ceremonies that require horticultural intensification. Chapter 7 explores the effects of modern forces such as petroleum development, the expansion of agriculture, tourism, and the creation of airstrips and schools on settlement patterns and sense of identity. Chapter 8 concludes this study by providing further comparative and theoretical reflections on the rejection of predation as an aspect of regeneration and as the driving force in the cosmos.

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I am particularly indebted to my former teacher, Blanca Muratorio, and my former supervisor, Maurice Bloch, for their valued guidance and much needed encouragement. I am also exceedingly grateful to Peter Riviére, Tim Ingold, Marilyn Strathern, Roy Ellen, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and Anne-Christine Taylor for their insights into and constructive criticisms of my work.

To thank the Huaorani sounds somewhat lame, as this book could not have been written without their time, energy, and generous hospitality. Social life among the Huaorani has a human quality that is not easily translatable into words but from which there is so much to learn. I shall never forget the many moments of *huaponi quehuemoni* ‘good and happy living’ I shared over the years with Amo, Ahua, Onepa, Bebantoque, Dabo, Huepe, and Huiro, as well as with their brothers, sisters, children, mothers, and fathers. In this study, I have tried to protect the identity of my Huaorani friends, teachers, and informants in the field by using pseudonyms or titles. Should they some day read this book, I wish to assure them of my most sincere gratitude and admiration. I hope that what follows does not fall too short of what they expected.

Finally, I wish to thank my “big daughter,” Emilia, who shared my first months of fieldwork in Dayuno, my “little daughter,” Léa, whose coming into the world delayed the completion of this project by two years but added much joy to my life, and Ningui, grandson of Dabo and great-grandson of Tamaye, whose vivid memory helped me carry this project through.

Note on Orthography

Linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and linguists working within the Ministry of Education for the DINEIIB (Dirección Nacional de Educación Indígena Intercultural y Bilingüe; in English, National Direction for Indigenous Bilingual and Intercultural Education) have defined the Huaorani alphabet as comprising ten vowels (five of which are nasalized) and eleven consonants. A number of spelling systems have been designed over the years to represent the Huaorani language, some using a North American English alphabet (for example, Waorani) and others using a Spanish one (for example, Huaorani). Whereas earlier alphabets tended to use a phonemic system of translation, more recent ones have adopted a phonetic system for the sake of simplicity and clarity, given that vowel nasalization is phonemic in Huaorani, but consonant nasalization is not.

As I have mainly worked with Huaorani informants trained by the Catholic University of Quito and with schoolchildren who have learned to read and write in Spanish, I have used the Spanish alphabet. I have spelled Huaorani words as my informants wrote them down. When more than one spelling was used for a word, I selected the most common one.

VOWELS

a as in 'garage'
e as in 'red'
è as in the French word 'lait'
i as in 'leash'
o as in 'alone'

NASALIZED VOWELS

ã as in the French word 'enfant'
ãë as in 'sample'
ẽ as in 'men'
ĩ as in the French word 'câlin'
ö as in 'pond'

CONSONANTS

b as in 'book'
qu as in 'cake'
d as in 'dot'
gu as in 'go'
m as in 'moon'
n as in 'moon'
ñ as in the Spanish word 'niña'
p as in 'place'
t as in 'tips'
hu as in 'warm'
y as in 'youth'

Trekking Through History

CHAPTER ONE

Trekking in Amazonia



“**T**oday I go walking in the forest” (*ömere gobopa*), usually implying “I cannot stay in the longhouse conversing with you,” is an apologetic explanation I heard repetitively during fieldwork, and it is not before I felt confident enough to accompany my Huaorani friends on day expeditions or longer treks that I truly started to understand their society. Men, women, and children spend a great part of their lives slowly exploring the forest. They hunt and gather, of course, but they also simply *walk*, observing with evident pleasure and interest animal movements, the progress of fruit maturation, or vegetation growth. When walking in this fashion, that is, when being in and *with* the forest, the body absorbing its smells, people never complain about getting tired or lost, which they do when transporting food loads from trading posts back to their homes or when marching off at the fastest pace possible to visit distant relatives.

I came to understand that the Huaorani territory is not definable from without as a well-demarcated space bounded by clear limits on all sides. It is, rather, a fluid and ever evolving network of paths used by people when ‘walking in the forest.’ Walkers keep these paths open through many small and careful gestures, such as the picking up of a thorny leaf fallen during the night, the breaking of bending branches, or the cutting of invasive weeds. As soon as they have fallen into disuse, paths revert to the forest, undistinguishable from the vegetation cover. Well-trodden paths, located at strategic intersections, have become the repositories of traumatic memories, in the same way that physical landmarks, such as creeks, particularly tall and old trees, lagoons, or hill formations recall bloody attacks or spearing raids. Other paths form a network criss-crossing unknown or forgotten land; they lead to exciting discoveries, especially food plants said to have been planted by past people. Trekking in the forest is therefore like walking through a living history book in which natural history and human history merge seamlessly. Walkers, while keeping the paths clear, move from direct observations of animals or people to detecting their presence; they also note material signs evoking violent deaths of times long gone.

It is walking through the forest with informants that I came to realize that there was no clear boundary between wild plant foods and cultivated crops or between gathering and cultivating. What Huaorani people call *monito ömë* 'our land' is a large stretch of forest comprising palm groves, patches of fruit trees, untidy and minimalistic manioc plots, abandoned gardens that still produce edible plantain, and crops once cultivated and now growing with no or very little human intervention, as well as a great number of useful plants, wild and domesticated, found in hunting camps or along river banks. In terms of choices and priorities, horticulture is often less important than foraging. People like moving through the forest and subsisting on wild food. They would not let cultivation prevent them from trekking. This is why, perhaps, my informants and their indigenous neighbors agreed that the Huaorani are poor gardeners because "they cannot stay put for very long." Moreover, manioc gardens are planted not so much to obtain staple food but as part of wider alliance strategies involving feasting with unrelated or distant groups.

Maybury-Lewis's (1967:48) remark that for the Xavante "the harvests were thought of less as providing the essentials for the life of the community than as bonuses to be used for celebration" applies equally well to the Huaorani. In the course of fieldwork, I saw family groups abandon their village dwellings and gardens without hesitation before harvesting their crops of manioc and plantain when the pleasure of aggregating and interacting suddenly gave way to fierce divisions and antagonism. I heard about the Tagaeri, a splinter group that separated itself from the rest of the Huaorani population in the 1960s. They have not only kept to themselves fiercely, refusing all contact and killing those who have attempted to contact them, but they have also given up gardening. And I spent time with families living in "modern" communities along airstrips or around state schools who complained bitterly about their growing dependence on agriculture and who were doing everything in their power to resist sedentarization, often choosing to use food crops primarily for ritual and political purposes.

The Huaorani lifestyle, not unlike that observed among other highly mobile native Amazonians (for example, the Cuiva, Maku, Sirionó, or Aché), entails a high degree of nomadism associated with a mode of subsistence based on foraging. They cultivate but spend more time, and are far more interested in, hunting and gathering. The primary objective of this book is to document and analyze these specificities and to show that they cannot be explained away with reference to the environment and its conditionalities, nor to history as a source of disruption and disintegration. A proper analy-

sis of nomad foragers entails taking into consideration the anthropomorphic nature of their environment, as well as their cultural orientation, which strongly emphasizes life in the present.

Cross-Cultural Generalizations About Amazonian Societies

There is a staggering tendency in Amazonian anthropology to stress the cultural homogeneity of lowland South American societies. It is as if the more we ethnographically know about the societies of the Amazon-Orinoco drainage, the more we are inclined to agree that indigenous Amazonia is socioeconomically uniform. Cross-cultural analyses present Amazonia as a distinctively hunter-horticulturalist cultural area, with societies sharing the same broad material culture, subsisting through hunting, fishing, and cultivating gardens, and sharing the same basic social organization of small, politically independent, and egalitarian local groups formed through cognate ties (Overing 1983; Rivière 1984; Descola 1994; Descola and Taylor 1993; Viveiros de Castro 1996). Authors stressing Amazonia's socio-technological homogeneity typically assume that variation in technology, systems of production, or social organization is not significant. A number of specialists also argue that Amazonian societies share a similar mode of representing their collective identity and ensuring their symbolic reproduction through warfare and ritual predation (Menget 1985; Viveiros de Castro 1992).

Authors who propose to show the limiting character of the environment¹ and those who oppose environmental determinism and try to prove the independent and irreducible nature of social structures and symbols² equally share the view that the tropical forest cultures of Amazonia correspond to societies in which politically independent residential groups, subsisting through shifting cultivation and foraging, and living in small and semipermanent settlements, constitute the basic social units. Furthermore, both schools of thought equally ignore the sociological significance of mobility patterns.

Whereas the proponents of these two conceptual frameworks implicitly agree, albeit for different reasons, that Amazonian societies are today socially and culturally homogeneous, archaeologists and anthropologists working in the cultural ecology tradition stress the social and cultural discontinuity between pre-Columbian and contemporary Amazonian societies, and discuss trekking as an indicator of historical change. The seminomadic, for-

aging-based lifestyle of interfluvial groups, they argue, does not reflect the pattern that predominated in pre-Columbian Amazonia, where elaborate autochthonous chiefdoms developed and flourished (Roosevelt 1991; Carneiro 1995). In the rest of this section, I discuss three main currents of thought on hunting, gathering, and trekking in Amazonia.

Mobility as a Sign of Regression

Authors working in the cultural ecology tradition, which combines environmental and historical factors to account for the higher mobility and lesser reliance on cultivated crops of some Amazonian societies, interpret trekking and foraging as part of a general process of agricultural regression. In this particular form of cultural evolutionism, contemporary foragers and trekkers are seen as resulting from the wreckage of former agricultural societies. Far from being surviving ancient foragers, they are the last representatives of late prehistoric complex societies destroyed during the European conquest (Roosevelt 1991:103–5, 1993:256, 1994, 1998).

The idea of agricultural regression grew out of the early observation that whereas the first Europeans who have had contact with Amazonian communities described them as intensive agriculturalists producing large quantities of manioc flour and living in densely populated settlements, later accounts (as well as many contemporary ones) mention the existence of communities far less engaged in the pursuit of agricultural activities. The thesis was further developed by Steward (1948), who used the contrast between moderate and intensive cultivation to differentiate “marginal” from “tropical” forest groups, thus correlating stages of cultural evolution with degrees of agricultural commitment (Rival 1999b). This thesis has subsequently gathered considerable momentum with the archaeological discovery of elaborate autochthonous chiefdoms. The work of Roosevelt (1991), in particular, is used as evidence to prove that prehistorical and historical Amazonian societies did achieve a certain degree of complexity and that historical events, rather than the poverty of tropical forest resources, prevented their sociocultural development.³

Sponsel (1989) deplores that the strange breed of factual archaeology and evolutionism, which has now become the dominant paradigm to analyze pre-Columbian Amazonia, has done away with the environmental dimension that was at the core of the Stewardian model. If the historical key to the concept of agricultural regression as a form of cultural devolution is the European conquest, the ecological key is the contrast between the rich soils of

the floodplains (*varzea*) and the poor soils of the interfluvial habitat (*terra firme*). Lathrap (1968b) suggested that a natural increase in the human population on the floodplains eventually led to resource competition resulting in warfare. Weaker groups were expelled from the fluvial zone and took refuge in the deep interior of the forest. In this poorer habitat, they were reduced to scattered, small, and mobile bands of hunter-gatherers. Consequently their horticulture was rudimentary, inefficient, and unproductive. These societies reverted to a much lower level of cultural complexity. In other words, it is through competitive exclusion from fluvial zones that societies underwent a process of cultural devolution.

Lévi-Strauss's (1948) interpretation of Nambikwara seasonal treks, as well as his understanding of Bororo society (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 1963b) and, more generally, of "pseudo-archaic" societies (Lévi-Strauss 1963a), reflects the same view that groups disseminated by warfare and disease were forced into unproductive habitats, abandoned agriculture, and regressed from tribal to band societies. Consequently underneath the egalitarian social forms found among many Amazonian societies, in particular those of central Brazil, it is possible to uncover more complex and hierarchical constructs representing survivals from the past.

It is worth noting that cultural evolutionists challenge environmental determinism only to a point. If Roosevelt, for instance, is able to refute Meggers's (1971, 1996) hypothesis that chiefdoms from an Andean origin devolved in Amazonia because the ecological conditions of the lower part of the Amazon River were not feasible to sustain their level of socioeconomic integration, and to claim that the ecology of *varzea* floodplains was rich enough to support the endogenous development of chiefdoms such as the one that gave rise to the Marajoa culture (Roosevelt 1991), ultimately she accepts the thesis that Amazonian societies are determined by environmental conditions and that the lack of complex and hierarchical sociopolitical systems is attributable to a lack of resource potentials. As she herself admits, whereas the poor-resource tropical rain forest model is inappropriate for much of the tropical lowlands in both South America and Mesoamerica, cultural ecology cannot be proven wrong until it can be shown that such complex developments occurred in resource-poor regions. Roosevelt even concludes that "these alternatives, however, all consider developmental and cultural processes in the environmental context. The problem for the future, then, is to improve, not to eliminate, the environmental determinist paradigm" (Roosevelt 1991:487-38).

An additional problem with cultural evolutionism, and with its assump-

tion that the carrying capacity of the environment restricts cultural evolution by limiting the size, distribution, and permanence of the human population in the different environmental zones of Amazonia, is its normative and ethnocentric character (Sponsel 1989:38–39). If the shift from sedentariness, intensive agriculture, and relatively high population density to nomadic foraging can be seen from a cultural and historical viewpoint as being equivalent to devolution and social breakdown, from an ecological viewpoint it means survival and adaptation or, in Sponsel's (1989:39) words, "the restoration of equilibrium."

The Maximization Perspective on Mobility

Amazonian anthropologists who stress functional adaptation give priority to ethnographic information over cultural evolutionary theories and, in the process, tend to ignore historical factors. It is the unfounded character of much historical reconstruction underlying models of cultural evolution, particularly the correlation of environmental conditions and levels of cultural development proposed by Steward and his collaborators, that has led researchers working in this tradition generally to ignore historical factors (two notable exceptions are Ross 1980 and Ferguson 1995, 1998). If they accept that Amazon foragers and trekkers were excluded from fluvial zones by politically more powerful and aggressive riparian societies, and that consequently these populations shifted their adaptive strategy, what to them remains to be explained is the types of adaptive strategies and social development that are possible in resource-poor tropical rain forest regions. This is why they continue to argue that low population density, incipient warfare, transient slash-and-burn horticulture, and food taboos are all manifestations of human adaptation to environmental limiting factors, particularly to the depletion of critical natural resources.

The environmental explanation, reformulated during the 1960s and 1970s and known as the "limitation hypothesis" or the "optimal foraging theory," is based on a range of cost/benefit models inspired from biological ecology and the study of animal populations. These models are used to develop a conceptual framework within which researchers can carry out real cultural ecology research (rather than hypothetical reconstructions within a cultural evolutionary perspective) "as a means to the end of documenting and explaining human adaptation" (Sponsel 1989:37). Departing from Meggers's narrow focus on soil fertility to look for other limiting factors in the environment, authors such as Hames and Vickers (1983), Harris (1984),

and Ross (1978) have examined the social and ecological factors that lead groups to favor adaptation to environmental unpredictability through flexibility and exploitation of heterogeneous resources, and have differentiated the groups who stress specialization in the obtainment of high yields from stable resources. Other authors have looked more particularly at the relative costs and benefits of collecting and cultivating.⁴ Even Meggers (1995:19), who now stresses that the strength of Amazonia's environmental constraints is reflected in the large number of traits these horticulturalist societies share with hunting-gathering societies, by which she implies that hunter-gatherers subsist in environments that do not allow for cultivation, a more evolved and complex system of adaptation to, and exploitation of, the environment, seems to have adopted an optimal foraging perspective.

Cultural ecologists who have shown an interest in the relative mobility of Amazonian foragers (Hill and Hurtado 1996, 1999), trekkers (Gross 1979), and hunter-horticulturalists (Vickers 1989) correlate a region's natural resource base with the cultures and social structures of its peoples. They frame their research using the basic questions of cultural ecology, notably: (1) How do tropical forest horticulturalists meet nutritional needs such as protein?; and (2) What is the carrying capacity of various Amazonian sub-ecosystems and particular environments? Gross (1975) interprets the form of Amazonian indigenous settlements, which are typically small, widely scattered, and often deserted for months by residents who have gone off on long treks and foraging expeditions, as evidence of cultural adaptation to game scarcity. But Milton (1984), who notes the relatively low accessibility of most wild plant resources in the interior forest, identifies carbohydrates as a limiting factor for the Maku Indians of Northwestern Amazonia. Hill, in the article he wrote with Hawkes and O'Connell (Hawkes, Hill, and O'Connell 1982), and in his subsequent work on the Aché (Hill and Hurtado 1996), advances the hypothesis that the rational economic behavior of Amazon foragers is expressed not in their tendency to maximize proteins but in their inclination to minimize time. Instead of arguing, as Gross (1975) would have, that faunal resources are a limiting factor for the hunter population in its local environment and that game availability, which influences population dynamics and culture, is an adaptive challenge to foraging societies, Hill formulates his deductive thinking on protein procurement in cost-benefit terms and explores the reasons why, according to this model, Amazon foragers value meat over plant food.

By contrast, Gross (1979) analyzes trekking in central Brazil from an ecological perspective informed by a cost-benefit approach. He contrasts hunt-

ing-gathering, a risk-minimizing subsistence strategy, with agricultural techniques, which are production-maximizing, and explains the lack of fit between the nomadic and simple subsistence economy of Gê speakers, who spend much of the year dispersed into small nomadic foraging units, subsisting on wild plants and animals, and their complex social structure, as a particular form of adaptation to, and opportunistic (i.e., maximizing) use of, their transitional environment. Gê speakers trek seasonally into the savannah to take advantage of its unique hunting and gathering potential, while cultivating their crops in forest galleries along rivers. During much of the year, they split up into small, highly mobile foraging groups to exploit food resources far from the village and its cultivated fields; when the harvest season approaches, they congregate back in the village. The alternance between seasonal trekking, with its predominantly foraging subsistence activities, and village life, with its predominantly horticultural way of life, corresponds to two distinct social forms. In other words, seasonal trekking represents a form of environmental adaptation, which allows for the development of elaborate social structures corresponding to ceremonial life among central Brazil Amerindians. Gross concludes that his model of seasonal cycle and cultural adaptation, or trekking, can take either the form of band-size units that move among various habitats year-round or village-size units that disperse into band-size units seasonally.⁵

Vickers (1989) uses cost-benefit studies of animal foraging behavior to account for the specific dynamics of the Siona-Secoya subsistence economy and its spatial organization. Whereas the Siona-Secoya subsistence economy is principally based on horticulture, it also, and to a large extent, depends on hunting-gathering activities. Vickers's basic argument is that the shifting horticulture of the Siona-Secoya, which provides the bulk of their food intake, "requires quite low investments of labour and does not impose true sedentism or any rigid form of spatial organisation" (49). Consequently their hunting activities are quite similar to those found in hunting-gathering societies. In terms of settlement dynamics, their degree of mobility and their residential flexibility is intermediate between agricultural and hunting-gathering societies (Vickers 1989:58). Mobility strategies related to foraging behavior are influenced by the fact that the acquisition of plant foods (more than game) requires high residential mobility and thorough coverage of a particular area, since carrying plant food over long distances is not practical.⁶ Vickers concludes that what differentiates these hunter-horticulturalists (or cultivator-hunters, as he calls them) from hunter-gatherers such as the !Kung is not so much the way they rely on hunting wild game

but rather the way in which gathered plant foods have been replaced by garden crops. This is possible because manioc cultivation is so constraint-free in terms of spacial and temporal requirements that Amazonian horticulturalists can maintain their hunting activities in the same way as if they were pure hunter-gatherers. Mobility may be thought of as being positive for foraging but negative for farming. However, societies dependent on a mixed subsistence economy such as the Siona-Secoya have solved the tension between foraging and farming by combining the two. Having adapted to resource-poor areas that do not permit intensive land use, Vickers concludes, the Siona-Secoya have developed an appropriate system combining hunting and horticulture.

On this basis, Vickers, like Wilbert (1961) before him, proposes that hunter-horticulturalists represent a form of adaptation corresponding to an intermediary stage of development between foraging and farming. If, as we saw earlier, cultural evolutionists tend to fall back on environmental considerations, cultural ecologists end up basing their arguments on developmentalist considerations. This shortcoming in Vickers's account of Siona-Secoya farming-foraging becomes even more striking when his work is read alongside Bellier's (1991) painstaking reconstruction of eastern Tukanoan ethnohistory, for it highlights both Vickers's silence on the group's long history of contact and his ultimate preference for evolutionary explanations.

Gardening Before and After the Introduction of Metal Tools

Denevan (1992) has recently argued that we should not be fooled into believing that swidden horticulture, as practiced by contemporary native Amazonians, is traditional. In his own words, "long-fallow shifting cultivation in the upland forests was rare" (Denevan 1998:3), and "Indian shifting cultivation as we know it today is the product of the steel axe, and also the machete" (9). His view on the matter is that the postconquest adoption of metal tools⁷ explains in great part the simplicity of manioc gardening today, as well as the ease and flexibility with which gardening and hunting are combined today. He argues that given the inefficiency of stone axes, two forms of cultivation must have characterized pre-Columbian Amazonia: intensive, monocultural swiddens, on the one hand, and house gardens, on the other (Denevan 1992, 1996). Intensive swiddening (he uses the term *semi-permanent short-fallow systems*) was practiced in fertile but high-risk floodplains and on adjacent low-risk bluffs where soil fertility was maintained and enriched through a wide range of techniques and practices.

Denevan adds that, contrary to what earlier cultural ecologists thought, intensive agriculture must have been practiced in interfluvial areas subjected to intensive human management. These areas, whose rich black soil made continuous cultivation possible, were transformed into zones of anthropogenic black earth (*terra preta do indio*), whose very existence depended on continued horticultural activities. The soil was further enriched with household refuse (Denevan 1998:9). These lands were cultivated by, and fed, large and densely populated sedentary settlements not unlike the one identified by Roosevelt (1991) on Marajo Island. In addition, carefully weeded permanent plots of mixed annuals and perennials were cultivated next to houses. Denevan (1998:11) mentions two other forms of cultivation in prehistoric Amazonia: "patch cultivation," or the planting of small natural clearings such as tree falls, and "food forests," or forests managed through intentional planting and unintentional management as agroforestry reserves.

Whereas Denevan envisages one type of population maximizing their adaptive strategies by using these four different models of terra firme agriculture based on stone axe technology, I suggest that intensive horticulturalists may have developed house gardens and intensive monocultural swiddens, and incipient gardeners may have specialized in patch cultivation and agroforestry. According to this hypothesis, the hinterlands were simultaneously used both by indigenous populations living in sedentary, densely populated village settlements and by small, mobile groups dispersed throughout the forest. Denevan's contribution may be used to support a view of the dynamic history of plant/human interaction according to which foraging with incipient horticulture is as much a cultural choice as intensive, sedentary agriculture is. Furthermore, Denevan's work may be interpreted as offering an important corrective to Roosevelt's thesis which de facto leads to the implicit conclusion that, had it not been for the conquest, Amazonia's native populations would have continued to develop intensive agriculture and would have become increasingly complex. My reading of Denevan's model is reinforced by his statement that "probably all these forms of agriculture and agroforestry were present in the terra firme in a mosaic of variable population densities that may have included sectors of sparse semi-nomadic foragers; small but permanently settled households and extended families; and in some selected places large and permanent fields and associated villages" (Denevan 1996:159–61).

Denevan's contribution to the debate between cultural evolutionists and cultural ecologists consists in showing that were the evolutionary general-

izations of the Stewardian model to be rejected, as optimal foraging theorists profess, viewing subsistence economies synchronically and functionally without taking into consideration historical factors would be erroneous as well. This is precisely what Balée, a prominent advocate of the historical ecology approach to the interaction between environment and society in Amazonia, has tried to achieve.

Balée's Model of Cultural Regression

Balée (1989, 1992, 1993) has turned to history to understand present-day interactions between native Amazonians and the rain forest and, by so doing, transcend the vexed opposition between environmental and historical explanations. His main contribution has been to demonstrate empirically that a number of Amazonian forests are cultural artifacts (Balée 1988, 1989, 1992, 1993; Posey and Balée 1989).⁸ Starting with the twin proposition that species distribution is a good indicator of human disturbance and that foraging bands have adapted to disturbed forests, Balée has shown that history has not only affected postconquest migratory movements but also the very interaction between environment and society. He has also argued that far from having been limited by scarce resources, the indigenous people of the Amazon have created biotic niches since prehistoric times. Evidence from observation of contemporary gardening activities, the wide occurrence of charcoal and numerous potsherds in the forest soil, the greater concentration of palms, lianas, fruit trees, and other heavily used forest resources on archaeological sites, and inductions about the long-lasting effects of past human interference have all lead him to argue that, far from having been limited by scarce resources, the indigenous people of the Amazon exploit "anthropogenic forests."⁹

Moreover, and of particular relevance for the study of trekking, Balée (1994, 1999) contends that one can best account for the existence of Amazonian foraging bands by focusing on the close and long-term association between certain plant species and humans. Nomadic bands do not wander at random in the forest but move their camps between palm forests, bamboo forests, or Brazil nut forests, which all are "cultural forests," that is, ancient dwelling sites. Amazonian foraging bands such as the Guajá, the Kainang, or the Sirionó are able to subsist in the rain forest without cultivated crops thanks to a few essential "wild" resources (palms, fruit trees, or bamboo), which, in fact, are the products of the activities of ancient populations. If, in maximization terms, hunting-gathering mobility is closely re-

lated to the structure of food resources in a particular environment, this structure is not a natural given but rather the outcome of human actions that have altered the distribution of resources within the forest.

In his historical reconstruction of the colonization of the Amazon's lower course between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, Balée (1988: 158–59) argues that the Indian populations of Brazil responded to political domination with five basic strategies. Those living along important rivers allied with the Brazilian military, whom they helped in the capture of slaves from rebellious tribes. Less-powerful groups fled, some adopting a wandering, nonhorticulturist way of life, while others continued to cultivate fast-growing crops such as sweet manioc and maize. The two other strategies were to either resist domination violently—and risk extermination—or migrate to remote forested areas where settled villages, organized around the production of bitter manioc, could be maintained. On the basis of this historical reconstruction, Balée (1992), not unlike Lathrap (1970, 1973) and Roosevelt (1991, 1993), proposes a model that accounts for the progressive loss of cultivation by wandering marginal tribes through disease, depopulation, and warfare.

Finally, his study of the Maranhão's indigenous agroforestry complex in Brazil defends convincingly the idea that forests of biocultural origin can be treated as objective records of past human interactions with plants, even if the local population does not have any social memory of such history and cannot differentiate old fallows from patches of undisturbed forest (Balée 1993). The presence of surface pottery and charcoal in the soil, the distribution of species, the size of trunks, oral history, and native classifications of forest and swidden types can all be used to differentiate old fallows from high forests.

To summarize, Balée uses historical ecology to counter the ahistorical explanations offered by both cultural ecology and evolutionary ecology while freeing history from the normative reconstructions proposed by tenants of the devolution thesis. If Amazonian foragers exploit “wild” resources, they are not preagriculturalists, and their agricultural regression, which follows a recurrent pattern, can be documented. There are four important sides to this argument. First, it is claimed that the environment does not limit cultural development as extensively as previously believed. An ahistorical view of the environment blinds us to the fact that what we take to be a “pristine” environment might, in fact, be an ancient agricultural site. Second, better explanations can be offered by taking into account nonenvironmental factors, particularly historical ones, that stress sociopolitical dynamics. Third,

the historical evidence of past agriculture is twofold: It is both linguistic and botanical. Living foragers do not remember that their forebears cultivated, but their languages possess cognates for cultigens. In other words, amnesia affects two types of knowledge: the cultural past of the group and the group's technical *savoir faire*. The only cultural transmission that seems to have worked and continued through time is unconscious linguistic knowledge. However, even linguistic knowledge may be erased over time. Balée (1992) mentions, for instance, that the Guajá, who still have a cognate for maize, have lost the term for bitter manioc. Fourth, the process of agricultural regression—and of regression from sedentism to nomadism—is progressive. At each stage a cultigen is lost, and dependence on uncultivated plants increases. If the argument for the loss of cultigens is essentially similar to that of Roosevelt, the great merit and originality of Balée's work is to have shown that the increased reliance on uncultivated plants is not a return to nature but an adaptation to "vegetational artifacts of another society" (Balée 1988:48).

Let us examine Balée's arguments critically. Whereas he insists that history is far more relevant than evolution to understand the changes that occurred in Amazonia in the relationship between human societies and their natural environments (Balée 1995), what he really means by history is indigenous adaptation to the Spanish conquest and to postconquest biological and political dynamics. History in his model is never envisaged as resulting from preconquest social contradictions or political conflicts but always as a reaction to external events that invariably affect developmental and evolutionary trends "backward," that is, by reversing the pace of development. The primary historical constraint native Amazonians faced after the conquest was the severe demographic collapse they experienced. All other regressive changes are seen as consequential: the loss of agricultural knowledge owing to defective cultural transmission and the regression from agriculture to trekking to pure foraging because foraging is the only option available for small numbers of people if they are to survive (Balée 1992:51).¹⁰ Balée therefore correlates lack of agriculture and mobility. People who farm intensively are not highly mobile; conversely, people who hunt and gather are highly mobile. While I agree with his insistence that mobility be considered an adaptive strategy to historical, rather than environmental, conditions, I lament that he overlooks preconquest historical dynamics triggered by conflicts between highly mobile and less mobile native populations.

Another critical aspect of Balée's model is that it is still cast in the mold of optimal foraging. What Balée really objects to in the work of optimal for-

aging theorists is not that maximization of benefits or minimization of costs are at the root of Amazonian subsistence strategies but rather that optimal foraging theory fails to recognize that trekking and foraging may be adaptations to cultural, rather than natural, environments. What differentiates the adaptation of Amazonian trekkers and foragers is that, although they depend on domesticated and cultivated crops, they need neither to cultivate garden products nor to exchange game or collected forest products for garden products. The resources they gather in the wild exist as the result of the activities of past agriculturalists, who have modified the forest environment to the point that it is better described as a cultural landscape than as a natural habitat.¹¹

In this sense his view of human adaptation is not substantially different from that of Hill (Hill and Hurtado 1996), for instance, who analyzes the mobility of Aché foragers as a function of their adaptation to a particular type of biocultural landscape. Trekking and foraging as envisaged by Balée can still be analyzed as a form of economic adaptation to a particular environment; in this case former agriculturalists such as the Aché have maximized their adaptation by adapting the environment to their needs rather than adapting their needs to the environment. In other words, there is no room in Balée's model for understanding the subsistence activities of trekkers and foragers in cultural terms, that is, for including in the analysis their own conceptualization of gathering and hunting in cultural landscapes or their own discourse about their subsistence practices. We need to explore, first, whether groups, who are known to have been intensive horticulturalists in the past but who now mainly forage, hunt, and gather, do so similarly to those who are still intensive horticulturalists and, second, whether their symbolic representations of hunting, gardening, and foraging are identical to those heralded by intensive horticulturalists. In short, does hunting and gathering in old fallows, that is, in environments modified by previous human intervention and management, make a difference practically and symbolically?

Balée's main concern is to understand the shift from agriculture to foraging in Amazonian societies that are found today on archaeological sites once inhabited by ancient chiefdoms for which agriculture must have played a central role. He shares this concern with a number of authors, particularly Roosevelt, Lathrap, and, to some extent, Lévi-Strauss. Like these authors, because he sees the progressive abandonment of village life and horticulture by a number of Tupi-Guarani societies of whom we know from ethnohistorical sources that their intensive horticultural systems were destroyed by

warfare and epidemics, he assumes that Amazonian societies are fundamentally of Denevan's "intensive horticulture" type. Foragers, in his view, are deculturated, and their botanical knowledge, that is, their knowledge not only of garden crops but also and more generally of the forest environment, is poorer than that of gardeners.

The major problem I see with his attempt to typologize terra firme groups on the basis of their relative botanical knowledge is that it tends to disregard social, religious, and political considerations. If, for Gross and other cultural ecologists, mobility is caused by environmental limitations, for Balée, as for Lathrap, Roosevelt, and Lévi-Strauss, it is caused by historical constraints. In either case ecological differences such as those between terra firme and varzea become historical differences, and mobility is seen as imposed from without. My main dissatisfaction with this model, as I argue throughout this book, is that it leaves no place for sociocultural processes. Mobility is as much a product of historical *will* and religious belief as it is a form of adaptation to the environment or to historical circumstances. What deserves analytical attention is the fact that people *decide* to leave a resource-rich area for one that is relatively poorer in order to remain independent, to preserve a separate identity, and, as in the Huaorani case, to resist assimilation. Whereas it cannot be denied that the conquest favored dispersion and fragmentation, the reasons for centrifugal processes are in part endogenous. It is through their decision making and choice exercising that social groups face historical forces and, for that matter, environmental constraints as well. Mobility and the social forms it engenders need to be envisaged as part of the historical development of a distinct mode of life. Balée's enormous contribution has been to highlight the fact that higher mobility in Amazonia is linked to two choices: that of using resources that are not "wild" but "biocultural" and of replacing cultivation with gathering. We now need to determine how such shifts in social and economic practices are reflected at the level of collective representations and, in particular, in the formation of distinctive identities.

Amazon Trekkers

Discussions of mobility in Amazonia are few, and these tend to focus on the Indian populations of central Brazil, who, in Maybury-Lewis's words, have always been something of a mystery (1979:1). They have been found to be "marginal" because they lack basic cultural traits such as agriculture, pottery, tobacco, canoes, or hammocks (Steward 1948), yet they exhibit highly

complex social structures (Nimuendajú 1939, 1942, 1946), an anomaly that led Lévi-Strauss (1955) to formulate the hypothesis that these populations are deculturated remnants of a higher South American civilization. As already mentioned, the archaeological discovery of elaborate autochthonous chiefdoms has reinforced the view that a greater mobility of residence and a lesser degree of reliance on cultivation are signs of regression. Having briefly presented above the ecological perspective on trekking in central Brazil (Gross 1979), I review here explanations of Kayapó communities, which are alternately nucleated and dispersed, with small bands foraging independently during the dry season.

As documented by their main ethnographers (Vidal 1977; Bamberger 1979; Turner 1979; Posey 1984, 1985; Lea 1986; and Verswijver 1992), the Kayapó traditionally spend part of the year away from their villages on treks. They would come together again for the first rains and remain in the village throughout the wet season, a time for agriculture and ceremonies. In fact, it can be said that Kayapó society is traditionally composed of numerous trekking groups that congregate in ancestral villages to carry out elaborate ceremonial activities. For instance, Verswijver (1992:249) notes that before their “pacification,” the Mokrāngoti, one of the Kayapó subgroups, who occupied several villages dispersed over large distances, used to move constantly from village to village, occupying each for a period of one or two years according to the ceremonial cycle.¹² Today economic development has forced them to give up their transhumant way of life for a more sedentary lifestyle in fixed villages and to intensify their horticultural activities, which are no longer seasonal.

Turner (1979) argues that the seasonality of Kayapó subsistence activities and the dual social organization it entails originate in the contradictions created by uxorilocal residence. When a young man marries, Turner explains, the structural opposition between old and young coincides with a conflict opposing the lineage of the young men entering the household of their wives’ parents with the lineage of their wives’ fathers. He adds that, more generally, Gê speakers use trekking to establish the authority of “fathers of many” (that is, fathers-in-law) over “fathers of few children” (that is, sons-in-law) and concludes that hunting and gathering food for naming ceremonies plays a key role in articulating the hierarchical affinal relationship between men who are mature and whose offspring are numerous and men who are immature and have yet to engender children in wedlock.

Verswijver (1992:220), without interpreting seasonal treks in structural terms as expressing the father-in-law dominance and control over the son-

in-law in a society where residence is uxorilocal, agrees with Turner that trekking is intimately linked to the male life cycle. Kayapó trekking, therefore, is strongly gendered. Verswijver indicates that young unmarried men are the most active partakers in long ceremonial treks, hunting and raiding expeditions, and, more generally, communal activities. As for Bamberger (1979), who focuses on village factionalist politics, trekking itself may lead to village fission. Both Bamberger and Verswijver therefore link high mobility not only to annual trekking parties but also to factional disputes leading to village fission, dissidence, and warfare. And, as we have just seen, Turner's (1979) discussion of trekking as an expression of Kayapó social structure represents an important attempt to analyze trekking with reference to the determining role not of the environment or postconquest history but of social structures. On this basis I would not criticize Turner for deriving the ideology-sustaining Kayapó dual organization entirely from the control exercised by older men over younger men through their daughters, as Maybury-Lewis did (1979), or for overlooking the matrifocal nature of Kayapó residential units, as well as the central political role played by women as mothers-in-law (Lea 1995), but rather for ignoring the nonritual forms of trekking and mobility identified by Bamberger and Verswijver.

Another widely discussed structuralist explanation of trekking in central Brazil is the one put forward by Lévi-Strauss (1948), who noted that Nambikwara seasonal treks were part of a wider pattern of cultural dualism. What Lévi-Strauss exactly meant by this has been the subject of much controversy. This is in part because he has reformulated his position over the years and because other authors, in particular Rodney Needham, have developed a closely related, yet different, theory of dualism as an abstract principle.¹³ The basic issue at stake here is the nature of the relation between collective representations and social structures in the context of seasonal bimorphism (or dual social morphology) as found throughout the Americas and as first discussed by Mauss and Beuchat (1927).

In their exchange on Nambikwara seasonal trekking, dual economy, and nomadism, Aspelin (1976), Price (1978), and Lévi-Strauss (1976, 1978) at least agree that the Nambikwara are highly mobile. However, they disagree on the exact nature, cause, and sociological implications of their transhumant way of life. Price and Aspelin, who give primary explanatory power to environmental adaptation, criticize Lévi-Strauss for his deductive use of ethnographic observations, which portrays Nambikwara trekking as a systematic and seasonal behavior tied to gender specialization. They insist that the Nambikwara are not seasonally nomadic and that they heavily rely on

horticulture all year-round. In replying to his two critiques, Lévi-Strauss insists on the significance of internal differentiations between groups and on the role of intertribal and intratribal hostility in accentuating Nambikwara mobility. It is worth noting that Bamberger (1979:130), in her discussion of Kayapó trekking, stresses, like Price and Aspelin, that the Kayapó do not trek as long and as far as reported and that they rely heavily on garden crops for their daily subsistence throughout the year. Verswijver (1992), very much like Lévi-Strauss, replies that whereas higher levels of hostility and factionalism in the past led to greater mobility, territorial losses and missionary influence in the present have led to greater sedentism and greater reliance on horticulture.

The correlation of mobility and warfare, on the one hand, and of peace, gardening, and village life, on the other, is not unique to the Kayapó or the Nambikwara. Such correlation seems to be very common throughout Amazonia, both as a set of contrastive practices and as a social discourse. Journet (1995), for example, notes that the Curripaco, who identify horticulture with peace and the foundation of society, equate the nomadic lifestyle of the Makú, seen as antithetical to culture and anterior to civilization, with warfare, hunting, and isolation in the forest. Fausto's (1998) study of two Parakana groups, who have chosen, after splitting, to live according to two divergent ways of life—nomadism and sedentism—illustrates the same association between pacific village life, horticulture, and sedentism, on the one hand, and, on the other, mobility, foraging, warfare, and nomadism. Several Yanomami ethnographers point to the same close relation between intense warfare, a lack of internal differentiation, nomadism, and a lesser reliance on garden crops (Ferguson 1995; Colchester 1984; Albert 1985; Good 1989).

Mobility strategies need not be automatically related to foraging behavior. Kent's (1989) discussion of mobility in relation to patterns of aggregation and dispersal is very useful to understand seasonal trekking and the dynamics of village fragmentation. She examines the social, political, economic, and religious ramifications of nomadism and sedentism, and the political function of mobility, which is often used as a way to segregate and avoid conflict. What is characteristic about farmers and horticulturalists, she contends, is not so much that they cultivate domesticates but rather that they are relatively immobile and chose storage techniques accordingly. In the course of her research in the Kalahari Desert, she observed farmers who sometimes did not store more food than foragers did, and foragers who stored food in quantities equal to those of farmers and according to tech-

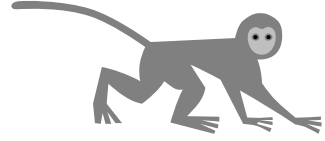
niques identical to farmers' methods. These foragers, interestingly, were quasi-sedentary. Such facts have led Kent to formulate the hypothesis that relative mobility is a function of *anticipation*. Farmers and foragers who anticipate to remain in the same place for relatively long periods store significantly more than farmers and foragers who anticipate traveling. It is anticipated sedentism, she concludes, that leads to an investment in a particular place and to the transmission of property intergenerationally. Anticipated sedentism therefore acts as a centripetal force (Kent and Vierich 1989:124–30).

Kent's observation that mobility is not automatically determined by subsistence strategies, even where groups with very different levels of sociopolitical organization and subsistence strategy coexist, is readily applicable to the Amazon context. And so is her observation that both foragers and shifting cultivators seem to move not in relation to game but in relation to plants, whether these are gathered or cultivated. As I shall argue in the rest of this book, and more particularly in chapter 4, these two generalizations go a long way to illuminate Huaorani trekking in terms of their own social understanding of space and their relation to their forested environment, especially the way in which mobility through the landscape relates to the use of old fallows.

Recognizing the importance of the dislocating effect of the conquest, which led to the artificial isolation of groups, even where extensive trade networks and other types of exchange existed, I examine in the next chapter ethnohistorical data concerning the Upper Napo region. I pay particular attention to the relative power and number of the various groups that inhabited this region, to the introduction of metal tools, and to the correlation underlined by many authors¹⁴ between, on the one hand, nomadism, foraging, and warfare, and, on the other, sedentism, horticulture, and pacific village life. When first contacted in the late 1950s, the Huaorani were very mobile and cultivated sweet manioc, maize, and plantain only sporadically. Today they are still resisting both sedentarization and the intensification of horticulture. My purpose, then, is to attempt to establish whether such behavior is continuous or discontinuous with the past, both as it is historiographically recorded and culturally encoded.

CHAPTER TWO

The Upper Amazon from Omagua Expansion to Zaparo Collapse



Chapter 1 has reviewed some of the environmental and historical explanations put forward to account for the form of Amazonian settlements, in particular, their small size, dispersion, and the predilection of some for long treks. For authors writing within the tradition of environmental determinism, history constitutes a mere background, a given that does not require explanation. More recently, however, interest in historical determinations and historical outcomes have superseded attention to environmental constraints. The chapter has also reviewed new historical arguments put forth against the proponents of environmental determinism. This renewed interest in history, which expresses a general trend in anthropological thinking over the past fifteen years, also reflects the political impact of the fifth centenary of the “discovery” of the Americas.

As mentioned in chapter 1, archaeologists have found in the flood plains of the Lower Amazon traces of both late prehistoric chiefdoms (in particular, pottery predating Central Andean pottery by four thousand years), and Paleoindian hunters and shellfish collectors of non-Mongoloid Asian origin, who moved in the area some eleven thousand years ago (Roosevelt 1998). These discoveries not only challenge once and for all the thesis that Amazonia's first inhabitants were Andean agriculturalists, but it also leads to hypothesize a developmental link between the early prehistoric bands of shell collectors and the late prehistoric chiefdoms, thus reinforcing the popular notion that aboriginal South Americans, particularly those who populated the Amazon basin, achieved high levels of political and cultural developments in preconquest times, and that, consequently, isolated and nomadic bands are a postconquest phenomenon.

Following Lévi-Strauss (1963a, 1968, 1993) who, having noted a profound disharmony between rudimentary technological achievements and complex kinship systems and sophisticated cosmologies, argued that cultural devolution affected first and foremost productive practices, leaving intact the representation of social relations as encoded in kinship systems and myths, a number of anthropologists have attempted to find the traces of such former social advancements in the thought, if not the institutions, of

contemporary Amazonian societies. Viveiros de Castro's (1992) ethnography of the Araweté, a "devolved" Tupi-Guarani society whose shamanic rituals perpetuate the memory of the great Tupi cannibalistic complex, can be read as arguing precisely this (Rival 1993b). However, most Amazonian anthropologists interested in ethnohistory have focused their attention on the historical consciousness and social memory embedded in myths, challenging in the process the Lévi-Straussian divide between "cold" and "hot" societies, and the view of indigenous peoples as the conquered, colonized, and passive victims of white-man history.¹ Furthermore, Amazon specialists have actively discussed the extent to which the historical past of indigenous Amazonia can be reconstructed (Schwartz and Salomon 1999; Carneiro 1995; Renard-Casevitz, Saignes, and Taylor 1986; Drennan and Uribe 1987; Roosevelt 1987, 1991), explored native historical consciousness (Hill 1988; Gow 1991; Brown and Fernandez 1991) and evaluated the nature and time-depth of Amazonian collective identities, as well as their postconquest transformations (Whitehead 1988, 1993; Salomon 1999; Ferguson 1995; Hill 1996).

In this chapter I present a summary of the ethnohistorical information available on the Upper Napo region, including Huaorani land, before exploring Huaorani representations of their own historical trajectory. By confronting historical sources with Huaorani constructions of the past, I hope to identify the meaningful elements used by Upper Napo peoples to constitute themselves into distinctive societies over time. Such elements, which articulate ethnicity and ritual, cosmological beliefs and historical events, and political structures and symbolic schemes into powerful "ethnographic imaginations" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), should help the anthropologist examine the available historiography while taking into account the recent shift from adaptationist to historicist interpretations of native societies in Amazonia, but without overstressing or generalizing historical discontinuities between past and present Amazonian social worlds.

Historiography and Isolationist People

Owing to its relative proximity to centers of colonial power (Quito, for example), the Upper Napo region has had its ethnohistory unusually well recorded, and this since the beginning of the European occupation. Moreover, the Napo River has been extensively surveyed by archaeologists (Porras 1961, 1971; Lathrap 1970). Furthermore, knowledge of this region has greatly progressed in recent years, thanks to the scholarship of a few histor-

ically minded ethnographers, such as Renard-Casevitz, Saignes, and Taylor (1986), Bellier (1991), Santos Granero (1992), and Chaumeil (1994).² All stress the great cultural diversity found within, as much as between, the ethnic blocs that early voyagers and chroniclers identified.

While stressing the discontinuities between clearly distinguished historical periods, these historical accounts follow a roughly chronological presentation of the geographical distribution of the ethnic groups that came into contact with Europeans at particular times in history, give information about the socioeconomic and political structure of the groups, and mention how these groups reacted to the presence of colonists, explorers, and missionaries (i.e., whether they traded, allied, were willing to sedentarize, attacked, fled to the forest, and so forth). Taylor (1992), for instance, broadly contrasts five historical periods. The first period corresponds to the first decades after the 1541–42 expedition launched by Gonzalo Pizarro and Francisco de Orellana, during which riverine groups seemed to have welcomed the Spanish as new trade partners. This period ended when epidemics, death, and terror forced the Amerindians to suppress their exchange networks, burn their fields and villages, and disperse far from river banks. The second period, characterized by missionary expansion, corresponds to the creation of the first interethnic mission villages and the beginning of “transculturation” and “ethnogenesis.” The collapse of the missionary front at the end of the eighteenth century, when native peoples were left free to live in relative isolation for several generations, recovering some autonomy, growing demographically, and reoccupying some of their riverine territories, constitutes the third period. The fourth period Taylor identified corresponds to the rubber boom in the second half of the nineteenth century, which brought a new wave of destruction, death, violent changes, and migrations. It was followed by a few decades of relative peace and isolation before the start of the modern period, which was characterized by economic development and national integration.

To follow Huaorani footsteps through history involves sketching somewhat hypothetical and conjectural reconstructions of regional preconquest tribal dynamics and postcontact interactions between native societies and sociopolitical structures. People who, like the Huaorani, did not accept contact or did not intermingle with the conquerors and their helpers, are, on the whole, absent from European written memories. Thus the summary below focuses on the historical traces left by peoples who were *not* Huaorani.

Two elements struck me when reading historical materials on the Upper

Napo region. One is the seeming confusion of Spanish observers as to whether they should use subsistence criteria to classify the kinds of native peoples they met and with whom they interacted or other criteria, such as the language they spoke. For instance, the Spanish seem to have met and known both the Abigiras and the Zaparos since their initial expeditions and to have clearly distinguished them as two distinct groups, despite the fact that the Abigiras spoke a Zaparoan language. It is perhaps because the Abigiras were, like the Omagua (but unlike the Zaparos) a riverine, agriculturally developed population whose material culture was closer to Omagua culture than to Zaparo culture that the Spanish classed the Abigiras and the Zaparos in two different ethnic blocs.³ The second striking element is the relative persistence of spatial relations between various ethnic blocs. Maps 2.1 and 2.2, compiled from various sources, show the geographic distribution of the different indigenous groups of the Upper Napo at, respectively, the time of contact with the Spanish and during the seventeenth century. Map 2.3 locates indigenous groups in the Upper Napo during the rubber boom. These three maps are evidence of the persistence of an ethnic frontier between, on the one hand, the Zaparoan and Western Tukanoan groups along the river Napo, and, on the other, Zaparoan and Jivaroan groups along the river Pastaza. These maps also attest to the progressive eastward movements of the Quijos and Jivaros, and the northward movements of the Zaparos, as well as the relocation of groups of Omagua (Tupi-Guarani) and Encabellados (Western Tukanoan).⁴ Such continuity is important, because we know that ethnic identities in the Upper Napo region, a region already ethnically very complex in the fifteenth century, became even more intricate when Jivaroan and Zaparoan groups started incorporating unrelated fugitive groups and individuals during the colonial era.

The Presence of Tupian People in the Upper Amazon

It is on the Omagua that the Spanish left the most extensive records. This is not surprising given that their most intense contacts were with the Omagua—at least until the relationship deteriorated. The Spanish, who established a garrison in Omagua territory, employed allied Omagua men in all their expeditions. Moreover, the Jesuits founded a mission among them (Newson 1996b:218). The Omagua, a Tupi-Guarani population originally from coastal Brazil, may have migrated to the Upper Napo and Coca in the twelfth century (see map 2.4).⁵ They were almost certainly preceded by other Tupi, however, as attested to by archaeological remains that signal the

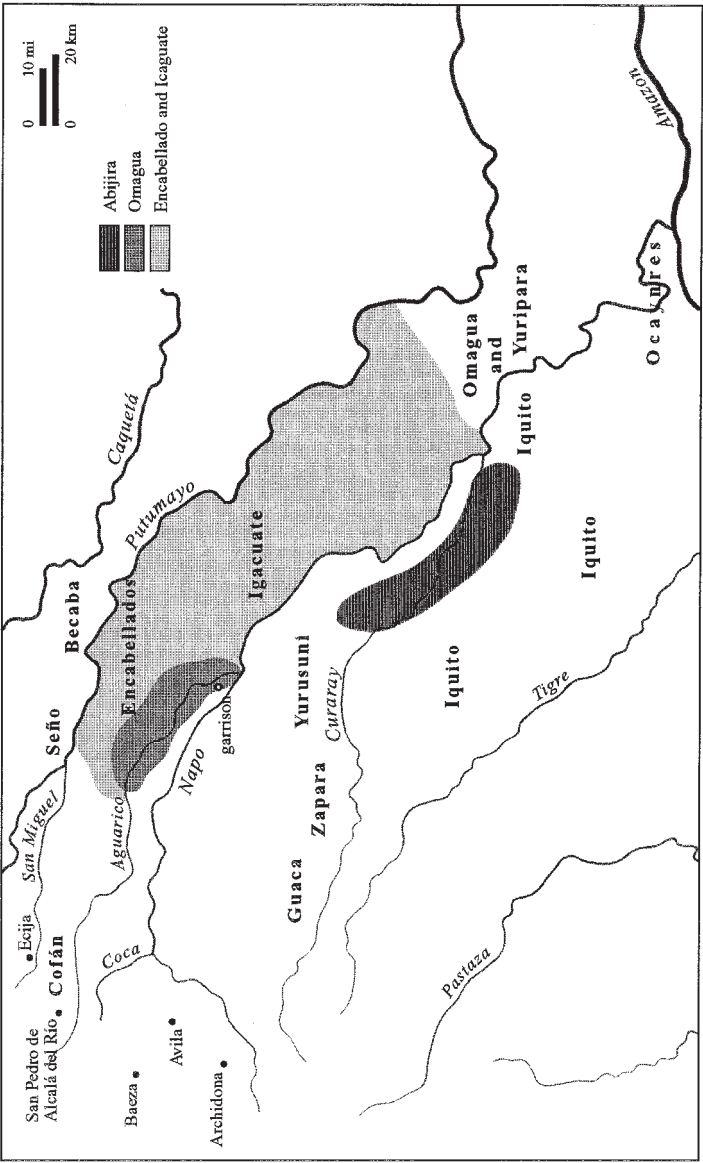


FIGURE 2.1
Location of major
ethnic groups in the
Upper Napo region
after the Conquest
and during the
16th century
(after Newson, 1966a).

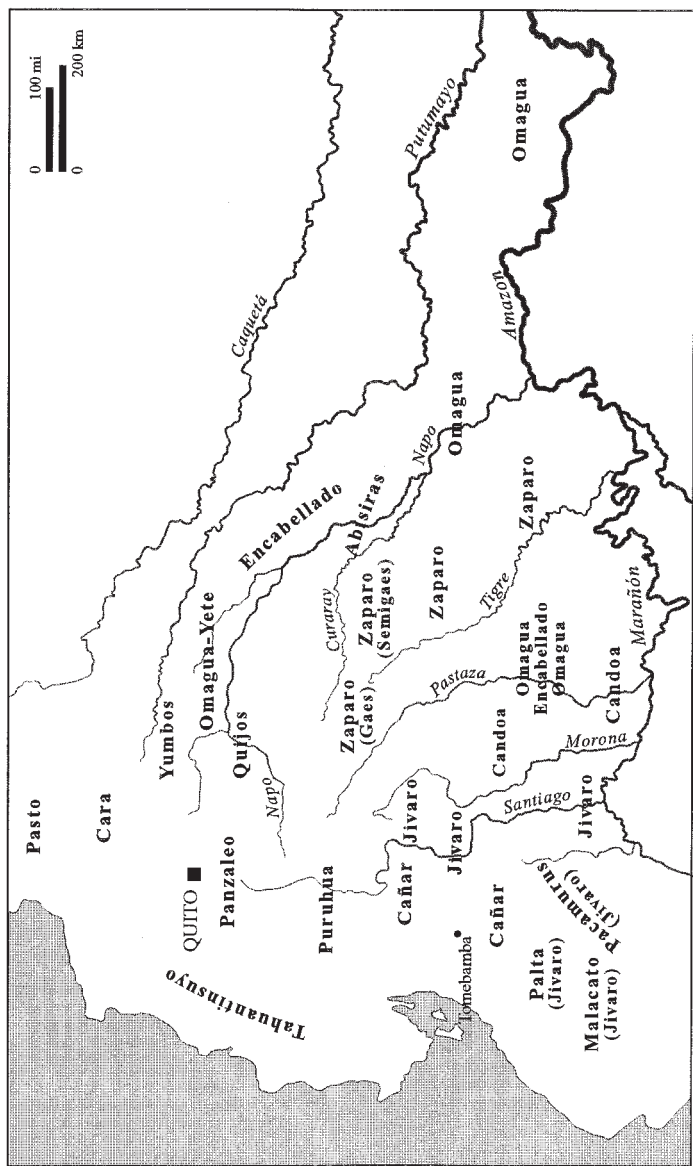


FIGURE 2.2
Post-Conquest
location of major
ethnic groups
in the Upper
Napo region
(after Cabodevilla,
1994).

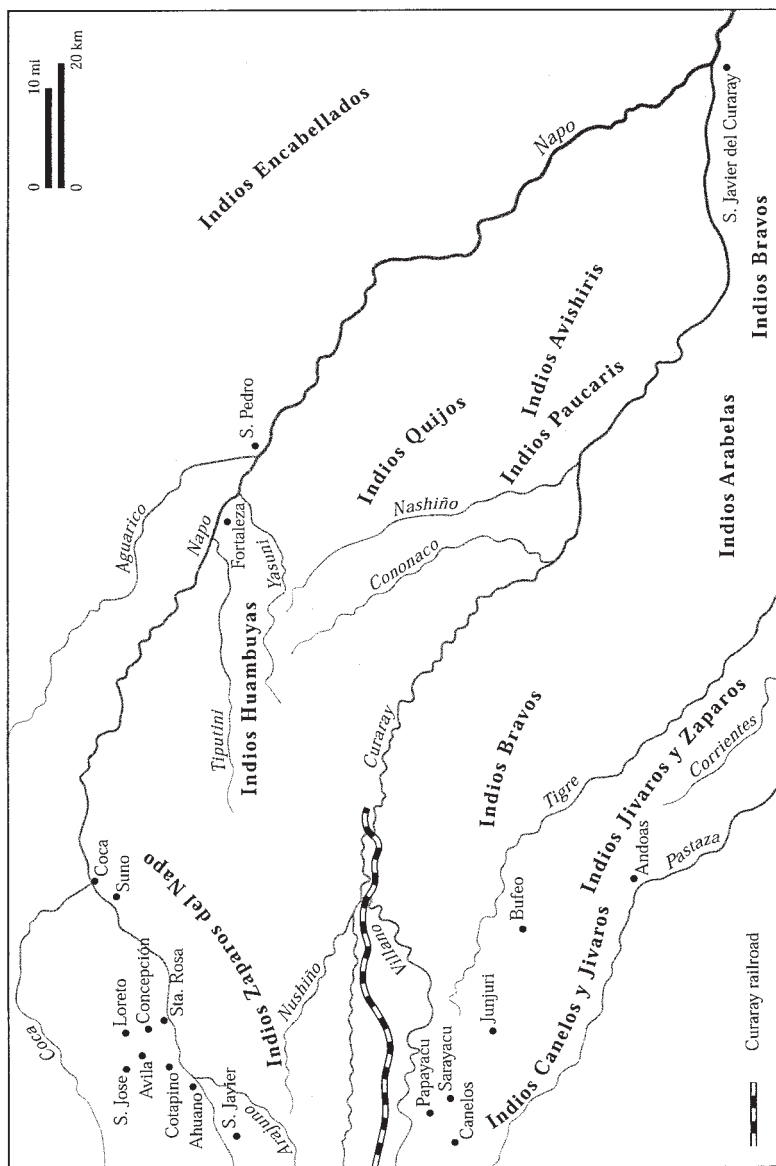


FIGURE 2.3
Location of
indigenous groups
in the Upper Napo
region during the
rubber boom
(after Father Vacas
Galindo, 1906).

presence of Tupi populations in the area since the tenth century and as confirmed by the high number of toponyms of Tupi origin⁶ along the rivers Napo and Coca.

The Omagua, who were divided into three main subgroups,⁷ dominated trade networks along the Napo, Coca, and Upper Amazon rivers throughout the sixteenth century (see map 2.2). They settled in dense and fortified villages along the banks of the Napo and the Coca, where they cultivated large fields of bitter manioc, maize, chonta palm, and cotton, kept large stores of dried fish and meat, and maintained impressive merchant and military fleets. Their trade with the Quijos of the Andean Piedmont was already extensive long before the arrival of Europeans. The Quijos, renown goldsmiths, held weekly fairs on the lower flanks of the Andes at which they traded their gold jewelry, other luxury items, and highland agricultural produce for Omagua cotton cloth, fine-glazed pottery, and cinnamon. Both trading nations were selling and buying slaves. If the exact degree of Omagua political centralization is unknown, it is clear from the chronicles that their multivillage chiefdoms were characterized by social stratification and intensive agricultural production, and that their political and economic ambition was to achieve complete monopoly over long-distance trade between the lowlands and the highlands of what is now Ecuador.

On the basis of what we know of Tupi-Guarani cosmology, we may infer that the Omagua have, in their search for the land of immortality and abundance, expanded territorially through a combination of peaceful incorporation and military conquest. Chronicles mention that Omagua settlements were built around temples dedicated to the sun. The Omagua and their neighbors regularly brought offerings of cloth and precious stones to these temples, which were covered with feathers of all colors and contained idols. Chiefs were highly respected. They had the authority to carry out punishments and to impose the death penalty (Newson 1996a:20). A mixture of mystical antagonism, armed hostility, and marriage alliances characterized the relations of these feared traders and warriors, who moved goods and foods over great distances to their less-powerful riverine and hinterland trade partners. The Omagua, like their Tupinamba relatives, raided neighboring tribes and maintained vast areas of no-man's-land around their territory—and they took war prisoners. Santos Granero (1992:12) estimates that war prisoners constituted between 16 and 25 percent of village populations. Captured enemies, who were not eaten but were reduced to a state of domesticity, worked as servants within house groups whose family life they shared, often as dependent in-marrying spouses.

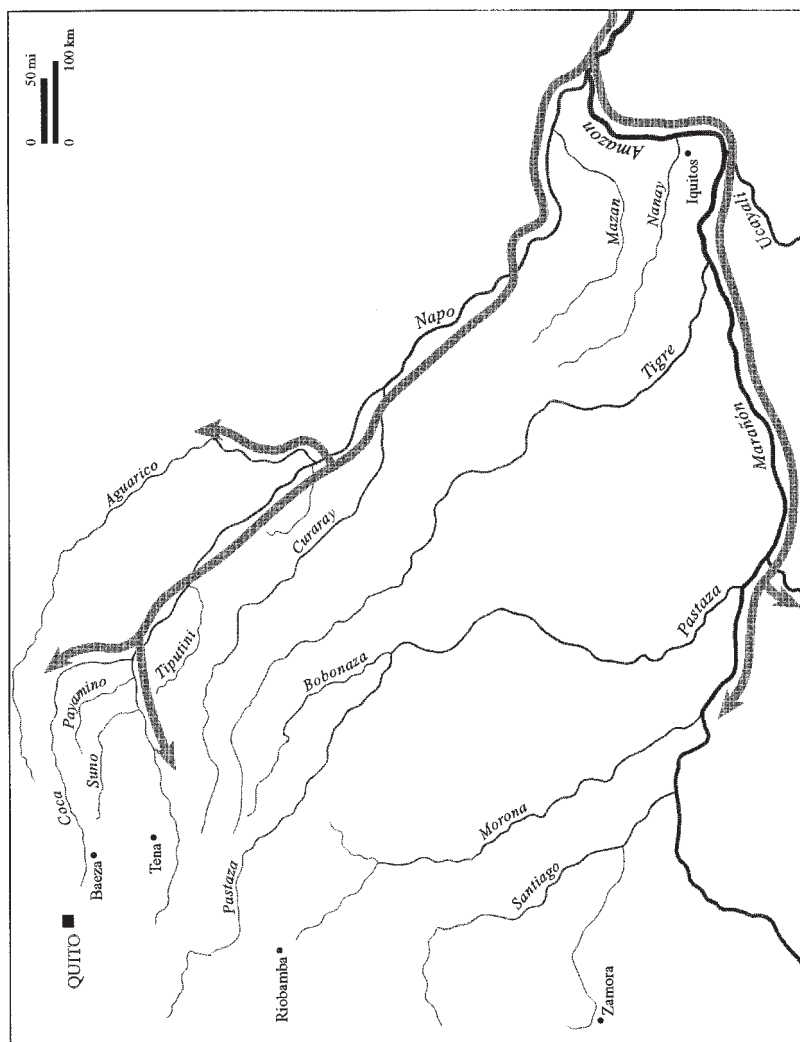


FIGURE 2.4
Pre-Columbian
Tupi migrations
in the Upper Napo
(after Grohs, 1974).

These indigenous conquerors initially treated Spanish conquerors as allies and trade partners. Like the Quijos, they first responded favorably to the Spaniards' desire for gold and servants, and found immediate use for European metal tools, which allowed colossal increases in production. The same capacity to produce great surpluses for trade, and the same mystical drive to intensify their complex and hierarchical orderings founded on sacred power, seem to have characterized the two aboriginal social formations, who became increasingly dependent on a trading partnership that initially had allowed them to reproduce their own socioeconomic systems on a higher scale. The new market opportunities called for larger supplies of goods and slaves, but more could be produced in less time with European tools, and European weaponry made raiding and the capture of war prisoners more efficient. Trading with the Spanish, however, altered alliances within, and between, Quijos and Omagua groups. There are records, for example, of conflicts arising between Quijos, who had the monopoly over goods of European origin, and their Omagua-Yeté trade partners, and of Quijos moving permanently into Omagua territory. Quijos who left the Andean Piedmont for the Omagua's eastern lowlands fought fiercely with the latter, each tribe stealing the women and children of the other (Santos Granero 1992).

Although information on what happened after the first period of contact and trading is scant and confused, it appears that competition for domestic labor and conflicts over who controlled the trade in metal goods increasingly opposed groups of Omagua and Quijos to missionaries and colonists. Omagua people must have reached the point when, having lost their allies to the Spanish, having been forced to sell all their servant slaves, and having themselves been enslaved, they no longer could maintain their village societies based on intensive agriculture and ritual. Persecuted by colonists, they fled from the river banks and settled, quite against their custom, in the interfluvial zone between the rivers Napo and Coca, where they fought with local populations. Along with other refugees, they also established themselves along the river Tiputini, which they occupied between 1550 and 1680. During this time they led numerous war expeditions against Christianized Quijos, from whom they stole metal tools and weapons. From a great riverine culture, the Omagua had become the "pirates of the Napo" (Cabodevilla 1996:107), the unrelenting attackers of colonists, missionaries, Quijos, and numerous other tribes—all of whom never failed to counterattack. They eventually left the area at the end of the seventeenth century to join a related Tupi-Guarani group on the river Marañón (Santos Granero 1992).

The Napo-Curaray Geopolitical Landscape at the Time of *Correrías*

There is no question that the sporadic European colonist and missionary penetration resulted in the demographic collapse of numerous indigenous peoples through epidemics and enslavement, the drastic depopulation of the main river banks, increased confrontations between aborigines and refugees in the interfluvial zones, and, despite internal differentiations, the consolidation of ethnic frontiers between the large Quijos, Tukano, Omagua, and Zaparo blocs. Archival materials also show that tensions and disagreements between missionaries and colonists, whose interests and objectives partly conflicted, rose steadily throughout the seventeenth century. The acquisition of Indian laborers, through purchase or coercion, to work in their economic centers based on extraction and agriculture (*encomiendas*)⁸ was vital for colonists. Missionaries also needed Indians to create settlements of Indians converted to Christianity (*reducciones*), or to repeople these after epidemics or mass escapes. There were too few Indians to sustain both the *encomiendas* and the *reducciones*, so missionaries resorted to incursions to kidnap or slave raids (*correrías*) as often as colonists did. Hunting indigenous peoples down and forcing them to remain settled and work under their control were the two main concerns of white peoples. To escape from epidemics and bad treatment, and to remain free while securing and controlling access to European goods, were the central preoccupations of most indigenous peoples.

Such contradictory aims and tensions were almost certainly cast in moral and cultural terms. On the one hand, it is known from the written records that despite their disagreements colonists and missionaries were agreed that the European treatment of captured or traded Indians was morally superior to traditional Omagua practices (i.e., more human) and that, in their view, Amerindians were better off working for, and living with, the Europeans. On the other hand, one may infer from contemporary ethnographies that indigenous groups, no matter how decimated, mixed, and weakened, continued to use symbolic and ritual practices, including the violent and aggressive incorporation of exogenous elements, to reproduce their distinctive societies (Chaumeil 1994; Erikson 1993).

But what happened exactly in the world of *correrías*, *encomiendas*, and *reducciones*? How did the decimated Amerindian populations of the Napo-Curaray region survive through the decades separating Orellana's downriver voyage and the arrival of rubber mercenaries? How did their families,

longhouses, villages, societies, political coalitions, and cultures fare? And what became of the orphans, fugitives (*cimarrones*) and young adults educated by the missionaries (*viracochas*)? What we learn from ethnohistorical records enables us to infer that the main river banks became depopulated, that social units became smaller, more atomized, and dispersed over greater areas, and that social forms, rituals, and institutions that required large, sedentary populations to exist simply disappeared, except, perhaps, in the memory of survivors. Ethnohistorical records also testify to the disappearance of previous indigenous collective identities through ethnogenesis, ethnocide, and tribal fragmentation, and to the formation of new generic identities in the face of postconquest destruction and colonial domination. And, as in other parts of Amazonia, the Napo-Curaray geopolitical landscape saw the emergence of transethnic village communities molded by missionary influences and by the transformative effect of Christianity on indigenous time and space organization, demographic and kinship structures, and relations of production (Taylor 1986, 1992).

To overstress the historical discontinuity between the bewildering intra- and intertribal cultural diversity of preconquest groupings and the ethnic standardization resulting from dispersion, transculturation, and detribalization would, however, be misguided. Whereas new groups were formed historically such as the Napo Runas (the mixed descendants of Quijos, Omagua, and other groups) and the Canelos Quichua (the mixed descendants of Zaparos, Jivaros, and Quijos), the large ethnic blocs formed by the Western Tukanoans, the Zaparoans, and the Jivaros remained basically stable well into the nineteenth century. As briefly mentioned above, the missionaries of the great Jesuit mission of Maynas established Encabellado settlements at the confluence of the rivers Tiputini and Napo in the early part of the eighteenth century, settlements that Omagua refugees living along the Tiputini regularly attacked and raided. By the time the Jesuits left in 1767, the confluence of the rivers Napo and Curaray was the scene of constant and fierce battling between Zaparoan groups (Avigiras, Zaparos, and Iquitos), the last Omagua (to their east), and transcultural groups formed under Jesuit tutelage, particularly the Encabellados (Bellier 1991). Records of Encabellado and Abigira rebellions against the Spanish in 1635 and 1667, respectively, mention that groups of Western Tukanos had found refuge among Abigiras. Consequently the Abigiras, who fought against other Zaparoan groups as much as they fought against Western Tukanoans, nevertheless allied with some Western Tukanoan clans in their wars against other Western Tukanoans.⁹ Bellier (1991) signals that Encabellados were at war against

the Omagua and the Avigiras, Yururies, Zaparos, and Iquitos (all Zaparoan groups) throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Western Tukanos and Zaparoans continued to be at war until the beginning of the twentieth century. As shall become evident below, conflicts between Zaparoans (Aushiris) and Encabellados continued well into the nineteenth century, although some missionaries report the alliance of one Tukanoan group known as Santamarías with Abigiras, both allied against other Tukanoans.

Therefore, and despite the difficulty of both documenting it in detail and interpreting it correctly, warfare continued unabatedly, including between “transcultured” populations. To conclude this point, the well-documented case of the frontier that separated Encabellados (Western Tukanos) from Abigiras (Zaparoans) along the upper course of the river Napo illustrates not only the longlasting nature of the ethnic frontiers that have perdured throughout the region’s history but also the complexity and fluctuating nature of tribal alliances, which, although affected by European intervention, were not caused by it.

My own reading of these documents and of the secondary sources that discuss them is that if trading with the Spanish increased tribal conflicts and tensions and caused the emergence of new ethnic polarities, it is the changing nature of man hunting that affected most profoundly the indigenous peoples of the Upper Amazon and the social forms they had created (Newson 1996b:205). Ramírez Montenegro (1992) offers a fascinating account of the ways in which slave trading (i.e., the exchange of war prisoners for metal tools) during the colonial expansion intensified the hostilities between riverine and hinterland populations in the Upper Magdalena region of the Colombian Amazon. The same dramatic escalation of interethnic conflict and warfare occurred in the Napo region. The Omagua raided downriver populations such as the Yagua for prisoners to exchange for trade goods throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ramírez Montenegro’s description of how the intense commerce of orphans replaced the common precolonial practice of abducting young children equally applies to the Upper Napo region. And so does his discussion of the way the Spaniards morally justified slavery as a humanitarian undertaking aimed at both saving war prisoners from being eaten by their abductors and saving their souls from Satan by making them Christian.

We do not know the extent to which native peoples of the Napo parted with orphans and refugees (who were, under normal circumstances, treated as equal coresidents) in order to secure, as they did in the Upper Magdalena,

the welfare of true blood kin, but we do find the same transformation of the war prisoner who, from a ritual object to be incorporated within the fabric of society, becomes a slave caught for his labor force and exchanged for manufactured goods. The new institutionalization of slave raiding during the rubber boom, briefly discussed in the next section on the Zaparos, while continuing similar trends, highlights a perhaps more transhistorical dimension of man hunting: The kidnapper is considered morally superior and culturally more developed than the kidnapped. I say transhistorical, for if the superiority of slave takers is clearly present in the colonial world of *correrías*, *encomiendas*, and *reducciones*, partitioned by colonist and missionary ideologies into two large homogeneous ethnic blocs, the Christianized, sedentary, and collaborating *runas* on the one hand, and the Savage, nomad, and insubordinate *aucas*¹⁰ on the other, there are reasons to suspect that this dual opposition preceded the conquest, and even accounted in part for the Omagua's motivations and justifications for raiding neighboring tribes.

The Fate of Zaparoan Peoples During the Rubber Era

Zaparoan historical trajectories are of special interest for a number of reasons. Zaparoan groups, who formed the most dynamic and diverse ethnic bloc of the Upper Napo region, remained largely free from colonist and missionary influence well into the nineteenth century, when they mysteriously and rather suddenly disappeared as a collective identity through miscegenation and genocide. Moreover, they occupied what is now recognized as Huaorani territory.

The Zaparos and the multiethnic character of some of the Zaparoan tribes are mentioned in early Spanish chronicles.¹¹ During the sixteenth century Zaparoan territories (roughly the headwaters and the upper courses of all the rivers comprised between the right margin of the Napo and the left margin of the Pastaza) adjoined those of Jivaroans to the southwest, those of Quijos and Omagua-Yeté (Napo Quichuas) to the northwest, those of Western Tukanoans (Encabellados) to the north, and those of Tupi-Guarani (Omagua) to the northeast (see map 2.2).

The classification of Gaes, Semigaes, Yameos, Masamaes, and Iquitos as Zaparoan subgroups sharing the same basic cultural traits is largely accepted, even if the extent to which their dialects were mutually intelligible is unknown. By contrast, the Zaparoan affiliation of three groups that have often been confused with the Huaorani has been far more controversial. As mentioned above, one, the Avigiras (also known as Avijira, Auxiras, Abiras, and

so forth), was already existing in preconquest times. The second group, the Aushiris (also Awishira and Awishiri), is in fact almost certainly made of Abigira descendants. The third group, the Arabelas, came into contact with the Europeans much later, during the rubber boom.

Although some authors have related these three groups to the Western Tukanoan ethnic bloc, others have simply treated them as entirely distinct and separate. One explanation for their classification as Western Tukanoans lies in the fact that Tukanoan groups (Encabellado, Icaguate, and possibly others) found refuge among the Avigiras on the right margin of the Napo River after their 1635 rebellion against the Spanish. They were still mixed together with the Avigiras when the latter rebelled against the Spanish in 1667, and when the Franciscans came to pacify them in 1689. Another reason is that the Jesuits created the mission of San Miguel among the Abigiras in 1666. Although this missionary contact did not last more than a year, it added to the uniqueness of the Abigiras within the Zaparoan ethnic bloc. In sum, the Abigiras were notably different from other Zaparoan groups on three accounts: their choice to live along a major river (the Napo), their cultural and political affinities with some Western Tukanoan groups, and their tentative experimentation with mission life.¹²

Some issues concerning Zaparoans, such as, for example, that they appear to have been less affected by the history of contact and reduction, and that, to the possible exception of a few individuals (and of the special case of the Abigiras to which I briefly alluded above), no Zaparoan tribe was converted to Christianity or relocated under the control of missionaries or colonists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are easily extracted from ethnohistorical records. But ethnographic accounts are conspicuously missing.

Zaparoan groups were divided by marked cultural and linguistic differences, as well as by intratribal political hostilities and mutual accusations of anthropophagy. Despite the incompleteness of ethnographic data, enough is known to portray the Zaparos tentatively as people who spent much of their time fishing, hunting, and collecting forest products, and who remained highly mobile, relying, it seems, more on maize and plantain than on sweet manioc. They gradually expanded both demographically and spatially over the centuries, eventually controlling vast territories. Shamanism was particularly important and developed. Zaparoan shamans were numerous, powerful, great consumers of *ayahuasca* (*Banisteria caapi*), and much feared by their neighbors, particularly the Naporunas. Ethnohistorical sources mention the diversity of Zaparoan languages and dialects. The material culture (basketry, weaponry, houses, hammocks, dress, food, and bod-

ily decorations), which is relatively well documented, shows both marked internal differences and strong similarities with the material culture of the Jivaros, the Canelo Quichuas, and, to a certain extent, the Huaorani. A number of Zaparoan bands were actively involved in trading with Europeans during the rubber era.

There are also clear indications that if there were few Zaparos in the growing Dominican reducciones of the Pastaza (Canelos) and the Upper Curaray during the decades of the 1790s to the 1800s, contacts between free Zaparos and mission Indians gradually increased during the same period. A number of Zaparoan subgroups seem to have specialized in stealing children in exchange for steel tools and other European goods in the 1880s, leading to the development of a new indigenous trade network. The population of incoming explorers, settlers, and Christianized Indian laborers grew to unprecedented levels in the Curaray just before the rubber era. These incomers were closely involved in the indigenous trade network. In exchange for European goods, they received from Zaparo trade partners forest products and abducted youth. As a consequence the great Zaparoan ethnic bloc, which had remained unscarred by the missionary and colonist activities of previous eras, underwent a radical transformation during the rubber boom, to the point of virtually vanishing from the ethnic map and leaving, as shall be evident below, their vast, now emptied territory almost exclusively to the Huaorani.

Rubber tapping in the area under discussion started along the main, better-known rivers like the Tigre, Pastaza, Curaray, and Upper Napo. With the progressive exhaustion of rubber trees along these rivers, tributaries were explored as needed. The rubber trade in the Napo-Curaray region, unlike the situation in Peru or in the Putumayo, was carried out by small traders indebted to large commercial houses based in Iquitos. Given the relatively small volume of rubber in the Napo region, a majority of rubber tappers were small traders who combined rubber extraction with farming. They engaged in a variety of complementary activities, such as the collection of various other gums, subsistence farming, rice cultivation, cattle ranching, and gold panning, and lived with their gangs of debt-dependent indigenous laborers (*peonada* or *peonage*).

Indigenous laborers were recruited through a range of more or less coercive means. Some became *peones* after having been abducted, captured, or sold; others joined their bosses more or less voluntarily. The peonadas were formed of Runas, Abigiras, Tukanos and Zaparos who, working and living together, married each other and kept an eye on free lands where they hoped to settle once their debts cleared. Map 2.3, which plots the main

farms and rubber depots established along main rivers and small tributaries, gives some measure of the unprecedented economic development of the region during the rubber era.

Commercial success depended primarily on the quality and reliability of the attached labor force, which, however, proved to be far more volatile than the sales of rubber or other products and less secure than the advances in cash and goods from the large trading centers in Iquitos. Rubber-tapping expeditions, which could last from six months to one year, were carried out with more or less frequency. If the risk of being attacked by free Indians was high, white settlers would let their laborers explore small tributaries and collect rubber alone. Consequently the Napo-Curaray region, which had remained isolated and undisturbed through 350 years of European rule, was finally penetrated. Natives of this last refuge counterattacked. Rubber depots and trade centers were burned down along the Curaray and its tributaries, settlements were destroyed on the rivers Cononaco and Nushino, farms were raided on the rivers Napo and Yasuni, and intruders were systematically harassed everywhere.

Although there is abundant evidence of Indian resistance to invasion between the 1880s and the 1940s, few reports concern the Tiputini watershed, which seems to have remained relatively protected even during this new wave of colonial penetration. This is partly because rubber bosses, traders (*regatones*), and farm owners (*hacendados*) took their enslaved laborers (*peones*) of Tukanoan, Quichua, and Zaparoan origin hundreds of kilometers downriver from their original lands, where *Helvetia* rubber trees were more abundant and where the major trading centers (in particular, Iquitos) were located. This new wave of Zaparo migration furthered the long process of detribalization and ethnogenesis. Epidemics of smallpox, measles, and yellow fever added to the depopulation of the Upper Napo, which became almost exclusively inhabited by a few uncontacted tribes, among which figured the Huaorani.¹³

An intriguing aspect in the testimonies left by settlers, rubber bosses, travelers, explorers, and missionaries is that whereas some stress the Zaparos' reliability and cooperation, others report their fierceness and indomibility. A reason for this apparent contradiction may be that the nineteenth-century economic frontier, structured by the capitalist demand for natural rubber scattered over wide areas of previously unexplored headwater lands, divided Zaparoan people into those who attached themselves to white bosses, became Christians, and joined the large mass of bonded Indians, together with Quichuas and Tukanoan people, and those, less numer-

ous, who fiercely defended their independence against invaders and the new demands for Indian labor. Whereas the former joined the multiethnic peonadas engaged in the mixed economy of rubber collecting, farming, and gold panning and launched attacks on the groups still hiding in the forest, the latter categorically refused to mix with non-Zaparos or to trade with, or work for, the whites. The first category of Zaparoans lived on the south side of the Curaray watershed, from where they waged a merciless war with their white allies against Zaparoan enemies. Decimated through epidemics and displaced from their native lands, they eventually disappeared through miscegenation. Their descendants can still be found in the Quichua communities of the river Conambo. The second category of Zaparoans lived along the tributaries of the left margin of the river Curaray. Except perhaps for a minority who surrendered, they fought for their independence until being entirely wiped out.

By sharply contrasting Christian-rational-working-cooperative Zaparos and savage-indomitable-nomadic-unproductive Zaparos, historical writings both reflect and create a divergence of identity among indigenous peoples of the Napo-Curaray region. They also almost certainly reflect an autochthonous cultural division between those who ally with the powerful and embrace domination, and those who reject power and supremacy, who fight the powerful to the end in a desperate effort to eliminate hierarchy altogether. Clearly too little is known about the culture of the large, diverse, and now almost vanished Zaparo ethnic group to propose anything else than conjectural hypotheses. But the enthusiastic willingness of the riverine Zaparoan clans to work for rubber traders, that is, to ally with the whites in order to raid enemies, particularly hinterland groups (Zaparoans and non-Zaparoans), and to exchange prisoners for European goods must also be understood as an endogenous process linked to forms of predatory reproduction such as those explored by Taylor (1994) and Descola (1993) among the Jivaros, Chaumeil (1994) among the Yagua, or Bellier (1991) among the Mai Huna.¹⁴

Recorded Huaorani History

Recent historiography—since the end of the rubber boom—which essentially consists of a series of reports of Auca or Aushiri attacks and counterattacks, can be divided into three periods. The first period roughly corresponds to the rubber boom decades between 1880 and 1920, when various adventurers, explorers, missionaries, and military and government officials

described and mapped the Auca territory with its “fierce inhabitants” (Pierre [1887] 1983; Michaux [1928] 1980; Up de Graff 1921; Tessman 1930; and Granja 1942). It is also during this period that major population movements occurred with the intensification of extractive activities on the Napo and the Curaray rivers and the development of large haciendas owned by Catholic missions, Ecuadorian and Peruvian traders, and rubber tappers. The movement of lowland Quichuas corresponds both to the establishment of rubber estates, haciendas, and military posts, and to the beginning of oil exploration. All these activities demanded the use of Indian labor. The violent clashes with Zaparoan and Huaorani Indians were undoubtedly caused by the intensified economic exploitation of the jungle and by the eastward migration of montaña Quichua Indians (Tessman 1930; Granja 1942; Blomberg 1956; Yost 1981a; Muratorio 1991).

The second period starts with the wave of oil exploration and covers the eight years (1941 to 1949) during which Shell was active right at the heart of the Huaorani territory. A new mini-rubber boom also took place during this time (owing to East Asian rubber shortages caused by World War II), and military posts multiplied (particularly in the Curaray and the Yasuní) to prevent further Peruvian invasion. It is during this period that the Huaorani became unambiguously identified as a separate cultural group. But even then, while the Huaorani, fierce isolationists, strictly confined themselves to the hinterlands, explorers and missionaries on the whole restricted their visits to riverine Indians.

Huaorani expansion from the Tiputini watershed north to the Napo and south to the Upper Curaray and Villano rivers, where a group intermarried with the last indomitable Zaparos, came to an end with the beginning of the geophysical explorations conducted by the Royal Dutch Shell Company. One or two groups found themselves on the Peruvian side of the border after Peru gained half of Ecuador's territory with the signature of the Protocol of Rio de Janeiro in 1941. Reports from this period wrongly attribute attacks that were almost certainly perpetrated by Zaparoan groups to the Huaorani (Cabodevilla 1994:283–304). Yost's (1981a:678) statistics, based on genealogical surveys recording 17 percent of remembered dead lost to the guns of outsiders and 44 percent killed in intertribal hostilities, reflect the situation of intense and violent conflict marking this time.

Not until the development of the oil industry under the auspices of the Ecuadorian state, which assumed a new productive and administrative role in the Ecuadorian Amazonian region, and at a time when the need for Indian labor had intensified, prompting the eastward migration of montaña Quichua Indians into territories that had been depopulated for

more than half a century, were the Huaorani recognized as historical actors.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Huaorani became unambiguously identified as a separate (and feared) cultural group when expansionist encroachments into their land resulted in violent clashes (Tessman 1930; Granja 1942; Muratorio 1991).

As will become evident below, if Huaorani oral history does not give much precision at all about external aggressors (rubber tappers, military, or oil engineers) or their activities and deeds, it has a rich and vivid body of stories recounting the exploits of a cultural hero, Moipa, who launched countless attacks against enemies, both external and internal. Reports indicate that Shell encountered great difficulties in contracting the labor force it needed to carry out its ambitious and extensive plans not so much because most of the indigenous labor force was tied to bosses but because Naporunas simply refused to work in the Napo-Curaray region, which they called the "paths of death." Shell had more success with Jivaros (almost certainly Zaparos or descendants of Zaparos), who did not flee or lose their mind while tracking uncontacted Indians in the hinterlands but who, on the contrary, at least according to Blomberg (1956:95–96), engaged in the man hunt with passion.

In order to secure new oil reserves by extending their northern fields southward, oil companies have prospected the Huaorani territory (particularly the Tivacuno and the Yasuní) extensively throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This is also when the Capuchin mission based in Coca started paying regular visits to the Huaorani living along the Yasuní River. The mission's effort, however, remained fruitless with the Tagaeri.¹⁶

A great deal has been written by journalists and authors of popular or missionary books on the third period, which starts with the killing of five North American evangelical missionaries and the creation of a modern type of *reducción* with Christianized and pacified Huaorani living under the control of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (see chapter 7). The SIL era officially ended in 1982, but evangelical missionary work has continued to the present day in school villages and oil field settlements. From then on, we are in the present or, as it were, history in the making. As the next chapter will reveal, neither these more recent events nor the old ones have given rise to indigenous chronological narratives.

Historical Isolation, Adaptation, and Continuity

In concluding this brief ethnohistorical overview, I would like to come back to the issue raised at the beginning of this chapter, that is, of whether

(and how) to distinguish the Huaorani from the remnants of insurgent Zaparoan groups (i.e., Aushiris, Arabelas, Tivacunos, Shiripunos, and so forth) with whom they shared the same broad geographical area. Are the Huaorani the descendants of the Zaparoan societies fragmented under the impact of colonization? Did they disperse and flee riverine homelands in search of security and sanctuary? And did they lose their complex social institutions because of depopulation and forest internment?

In my view the Huaorani are not the direct descendants of the Abigiras; they are not yet another of the diverse, indomitable Zaparoan tribes but quite a different group altogether, one that has maintained its separate identity and survived the vicissitudes of history by retaining access to the headwaters of the Tiputini,¹⁷ its core base, from which it has expanded south-eastward and, whenever conditions permitted, northward.¹⁸ I am inclined to think that if the Huaorani were at all connected to the Zaparoan ethnic bloc in the past, they separated from it and chose isolation long before the post-Orellana cataclysm, perhaps at the time when (if not before) the Abigiras left Zaparo land to migrate northward and develop a riverine culture molded by Omagua and Encabellado influences, and based on intensive horticulture.

A number of arguments may be cited in support of the thesis that if the Huaorani and the Zaparos shared the same broad Amazon headwater region, they remained politically and socially distinct throughout history. First, historical evidence suggests that the Tiputini watershed, which the Huaorani consider their ancestral homeland, remained protected from white intrusions much later than any other region of the Upper Napo. This river, neither very accessible nor very navigable, especially in its upper course, did not attract rubber tappers any more than it attracted Spanish conquerors. It is reasonable to assume that such a remote region, costly to access, dangerous and depopulated, with no major deposits of gold, no large food-producing Indian settlements, and no great concentration of good rubber trees was devoid of missionary or economic interest before the advent of modern transport and communication.¹⁹

I have already mentioned that the lower course of the river Tiputini, at the mouth of which the Jesuits established a *reducción* with Western Tukanoans known as Payaguas, became an Omagua refuge in the eighteenth century and that the Omagua knew and occupied the upper course of the Tiputini, possibly all the way to its source. However, this in no way implies that the region was not already occupied by other groups, who, too small and too divided to repel the Omagua, were forced to share their terri-

tory with the latter. Mentions of such forced cohabitation with non-Huaorani occupying river banks (and sometimes competing with Huaorani for hilltop locations) are a common feature of Huaorani oral history. Similarly, reports of Zaparo attacks on rubber tappers in the river's middle and lower courses at the end of the nineteenth century should not lead us to exclude the possibility that other groups, the Huaorani in particular, were also living in these areas.

That the Zaparos lived along the rivers Curaray and Tiputini, as well as along their tributaries, for instance, the rivers Nushino, Shiripuno, Tivacuno, Cononaco, and so forth, which, incidentally, are all Zaparo toponyms, is not incompatible with the fact that Huaorani groups lived on hilltops dominating these rivers, as well as along smaller tributaries. There is no doubt that the Tiputini became a refuge for Napo Indians from the seventeenth century on; but it does not follow that it was not already a refuge for other groups fleeing Omagua and Encabellado raids before the arrival of the Spanish nor that it was a refuge similar to those found in the Pastaza, where fleeing Indians tended to intermix and create the postconquest transcultural identities discussed by Taylor (1992) and others.

Another important argument is that the Huaorani language is an isolate, with only two borrowed words in their language when first contacted by the SIL (Peeke 1973).²⁰ Of course, analysis of Huaorani syntax and semantics has been greatly impeded by the lack of data on Zaparoan languages, and future linguistic research may link the Huaorani language to known phyla. However, word lists in Zaparo, Aushiri, and other Zaparoan languages show no correlation whatsoever with Huaorani vocabulary (Beuchat and Rivet 1908; Rivet 1930; Steward and Métraux 1948:639; Granja 1942; Tessman 1930). Given that it is almost certain that the Aushiris are the descendants of Abigiras, one may venture to infer, simply on the basis of linguistic evidence, that the Huaorani are not descendants of the Abigiras. It is true that, given the high linguistic diversity of Zaparoan languages (it is known that some were mutually incomprehensible), no definite conclusion may be drawn. Whatever caution one exercises, it remains nevertheless certain that Tessman (1930) and the travelers cited by Rivet (1930, 1946) made contact with Huaorani speakers, whom they correctly distinguished from Zaparo speakers. The word list Tessman obtained from two Ssabela adults in Vacacocha, at the confluence of the rivers Napo and Curaray, is indeed in Huaorani, and so is the word list of *Tuei* (the language spoken by the *Inemo Dikama*) mentioned by Rivet (1930; see Steward and Métraux 1948). This is further confirmed by the fact that Rivet's classification of Tuei speakers as

Tukanoan, which is purely based on geographical criteria, is erroneous (Chaumeil, personal communication).

Contemporary Huaorani have confirmed, in two ways, the existence of a Huaorani-speaking group at the mouth of the river Curaray in Peru. First, people who settled in the Yasuní area talk about an allied group that migrated downriver and with whom they lost all contact fifty-five years ago. Second, a young leader who went to Peru to a COICA (Confederación de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazonica) meeting in the early 1990s told me with great excitement that there he had met a delegate from the Curaray who spoke a language he could understand. He added that the youth, who was better dressed and better educated than he was, and who spoke perfect Spanish, was Ssabela. The Ssabelas are mentioned in the ethnohistorical literature as an "ancient" Huaorani group who stayed in the lower Napo after the rubber boom. They were willing to "civilize" and work on the hacienda of a rubber boss with whom they agreed to live.

An additional argument is that the Huaorani contacted by the SIL missionaries in the late 1950s had no trade goods or metal tools other than those dropped by the missionaries from airplanes a few weeks before contact (Wallis 1971). There is also the fact, perhaps not as irrefutable but nevertheless significant, that Huaorani people look markedly different from, and are slightly taller and more stalky than, their indigenous neighbors. Furthermore, medical evidence (Davis and Yost 1983:279) tends to suggest that, in contrast to the Napo Quichua, Shuar, Siona, and Secoya Indians living around them (i.e., all postcolonial, transcultural ethnic groups), they did not experience viral epidemics of smallpox, measles, chickenpox, typhus, or typhoid fever before their recent contact. In fact, Davis and Yost (1983:279) note an even lower amount of antibodies in the blood samples of Huaorani men and women from the Upper Yasuní area.

Somewhat contradicting such evidence is that no element in Huaorani material culture has unique features unseen among neighboring groups, except perhaps for the shape and size of their blowpipes (Rival 1996b). Body decorations, balsa earplugs, weapons, hunting gear, fire-making sets, the style of houses, hammocks, and so forth, belong to the same broad Amazonian genre as those found historically (or even today) among Zaparos, Quichuas, Western Tukanoans, and Shuar. Some Huaorani cultural traits, for instance, myths and ear plugs, are remarkably similar to those found among some Western Tukanoans such as the Mai Huna (Bellier 1991).²¹ Such evidence indicates, at least in my view, that the Huaorani must have

lived in the midst of various other peoples, some of whom (for example, the Omagua) were culturally different from them and others (for example, the indomitable Zaporos) more similar to them; or, to be more precise, they formed nomadic and autarkic enclaves living in the interstices between larger and more powerful groups with whom they refused contact, trade, and exchange. One instance of their fierce refusal to interact with non-Huaorani in the past is the fact that abducted men, women, and children between the 1870s and 1930s (a period for which we have written records) systematically committed suicide (Blomberg 1956). A group of “uncontacted” Huaorani, the Tagaeri, of whom I shall speak more in the rest of the book, are still living in hiding ever since missionaries and oil companies have become active in the Tiputini area, fleeing all contact, even with other Huaorani, their direct blood relatives. They are now living in the southeast, close to the border of Peru.

In sum, I suggest that instead of accepting uncritically the thesis that the Huaorani, like the Tupí-Guarani foraging societies studied by Balée, descend from an agriculturalist society, we should consider seriously the hypothesis that they may have constituted an isolated, territorially discrete, small-scale, and culturally and linguistically homogeneous society since preconquest times. Such historical isolation and cultural continuity are difficult to document. A spirit of insularity, by definition, leaves no historical traces in books written by missionaries and travelers.

Current theory is so dedicated to the examination of postcolonial ethno-genesis, that it is almost blind to the possibility that some cultures may have remained self-contained over long periods. It is easy to understand why Amazonian postcolonial studies tend to ignore the existence of refractory societies refusing miscegenation and to overemphasize the processes that led to the emergence of transcultural and multiethnic societies in the missionary settlements established throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Authors who currently combine Amazonian history and anthropology, and who are primarily interested in the role native historical agency plays in replacing older aboriginal sociopolitical models and institutions with novel forms of organization,²² understandably prefer to focus their analyses on geographic areas for which there is a wealth of archival materials and good ethnographic records. The primary interest of Spanish conquerors and subsequent colonists and missionaries in relatively large, sedentary aboriginal groups producing for trade and willing to barter and ally with the Europeans explains the unequal coverage of postconquest history.

Consequently, if ethnohistorical archives help to document the larger groups that interacted the most with Europeans, they contain very little on people who, like the Huaorani, fled contact.

As a result, ethnohistorians of the Americas, who now possess an improved knowledge of native sociopolitical models and are better equipped to examine political processes over time, tend to present the indigenous experience of the colonial situation in terms of historical processes such as ethnogenesis and tribal fragmentation, stressing, in other words, discontinuity over continuity. Authors such as Whitehead (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996) and Hill (1993, 1994, 1996), take historical processes as being essentially about the postconquest destiny of the vast multilingual and multicultural regional trade networks that developed throughout the Amazon and Orinoco basins before the arrival of the Europeans, as well as the development of generic identities after it. Not only do they exclude the environment from their considerations (in marked contrast to the previous generation of ethnohistorians and archaeologists), but their conception of the complexity of preconquest indigenous social formations does not allow for regional complexity, that is, for the simultaneous coexistence of differentiated chiefdoms and acephalous, elusive, and centrifugal tribal formations.

In the brief survey of the Upper Napo ethnohistory offered above, I have stressed four aspects that make the conceptualization of such long-term coexistence possible. The first concerns the continuity of abduction practices, from Omagua slave raiding in preconquest time to Zaparo slave trade during the rubber boom. The second aspect relates to the co-occurrence of two modes of subsistence, namely, groups identified as foragers coexisting with others who are cultivators, the latter also being more involved in trade relations than the former, and this independently of their respective linguistic and ethnic affiliations. The third aspect pertains to the endemic character of warfare and the hostile nature of intercommunity relations in the Upper Napo region. The fourth aspect is the ethnogenetic process by which the Zaparos disappeared as a distinctive and separate ethnic group, not only through their absorption by other composite groups, such as the Canelo Quichuas, but also through the extermination of indomitable Zaparo groups.

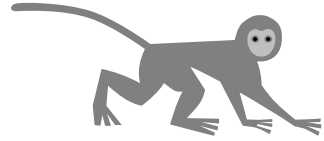
By isolating these four aspects in the ethnohistorical records, it becomes possible to distinguish groups not as discrete cultures but on the basis of their political acceptance of, or resistance to, outsiders.²³ Like other researchers working with isolationist populations,²⁴ I understand historical and cultural experience as having worked together to produce an ethno-

graphic situation in which isolation has become an essential component of identity and ethnicity, to the point that endogenous and exogenous forces are no longer experientially distinguished.

In the next chapter I examine Huaorani ideas about history and show that neither the turbulent events of the rubber era, nor the more recent events linked to SIL missionarization, have given rise to native chronological narratives. From a Huaorani perspective, there is only one long history of predatory attacks perpetrated by cannibal outsiders and internal destruction caused by homicidal madness, interrupted here and there by truce, growth, and recovery.

CHAPTER THREE

The Time and Space of Huaorani Nomadic Isolationism



As shall become evident in this chapter, Huaorani people are not devoid of historical consciousness, in the sense that they see themselves as having survived as a distinct and autonomous society despite the violence and aggression of non-Huaorani bellicose tribes. Their survival through time, which they attribute to self-segregation, is not conceptualized as the outcome of history, in our post-Hegelian, European sense, but is expressed through tales of warfare and myths, and, more implicitly, through a shared cultural discourse on anger, homicide, and death. It is this overall construction of history as violence that I explore here, first by examining styles of storytelling, then by explaining the contrast made in indigenous discourse between “exowar” and “endowar,” and, finally, by exploring cultural representations of killing and dying.

Knowing, Remembering, and Representing the Past

My knowledge of Huaorani past from a Huaorani point of view derives from their endless tales of war expeditions. Given the Huaorani lack of interest in exact quantification (on which I have more to say in the next chapter), which is matched by a lack of precision in recording time, such tales form a heterogeneous collection of old-times stories (*durani apene*, literally ‘the stories told by those who lived before’). *Durani* is the plural form of *dubè* ‘past’, and most *durani apene* recall ancient, as well as chronologically fairly recent, raids and killings. Like so many other people around the world, the Huaorani do not distinguish between myths and historical tales, which are all stories handed down from generation to generation.

Different terms corresponding to different time depths are used to express the past. *Durani*, *durani bai*, or *monito memeiri anobain duranibain* (‘like the time when our grandfathers lived’, that is, in traditional time) are used to talk about the beginning of time, that is, mythical time. Another expression, *huiinè huiinè*, is also used sometimes. These expressions may be combined, such as in the phrase *huiinè durani*, which typically starts the telling of myths and legends.

The terms *huarepo* (literally ‘again it comes’ or ‘annual cycle’) and *apaïca* ‘moon’ or ‘month’ are used to give what appears at first to be more precise information about the length of time separating the present from the past event being remembered, but this is often an illusion. I soon realized while in the field that *huarepo* could mean anything from several months to several years, and that the conscientious repetition of *apaïca*, while counting one’s fingers, was very seldom related to the actual number of months that had elapsed between two events. The counting of chonta palm seasons (*daguencia tèrè*),¹ by contrast, usually gave a more accurate notion of years passed, and so did the use of *iimo* ‘yesterday’, *ñuhone* ‘right now’, ‘at present’, ‘today’, and *baane* ‘tomorrow.’ To my amazement, I found no word other than *baane* to express the distant future.

To remember is to think again (*wëëte pönè*) and believe (*pönè*), a verb that is contrasted with the verb *to know* (*ĩñi*, literally ‘to hear’). I formed the strong impression while living in Huaorani land that forgetting was more common than remembering, a point illustrated by the fact that when someone was reminded of something, the person would answer laughing “*duubè . . .*,” which is an exaggerated pronunciation of *dubè* ‘past’, by which the person meant, “It happened so long ago that I have completely forgotten about it.” This “so long ago,” however, often stood for a period of several weeks and never extended beyond several months.

To recapitulate, *durani*, the term commonly used to talk about ‘history’, marks a distance in time that could range from ten years to one hundred years. Since the passing of time is considered an unquantifiable process, past events do not need to be recorded with precision. Such imprecision is remarkable in a culture that shows great reluctance to make general statements about society, culture, or ways of life. Whereas Huaorani informants do not answer questions of the type “What do Huaorani people think about . . . ?” or answer with one concrete, particular case of which they have direct knowledge, they answer questions about the past using information-poor, fixed narratives that are too vague to lead the listener to feel as if she or he had been there. These narratives construct a transhistorical, archetypal event that can be summarized as follows:

Huaorani people (1) are subjected to outside predation; (2) they endlessly wander on or across enemy territory, settle temporarily out of reach of cannibals, and brave the enemy in order to celebrate the palm fruit season on hilltop sites formerly occupied by long-dead Huaorani; and, finally, (3) times of warfare, destruction, and depletion (*piïnte quèmente* ‘making—in the sense of manufactur-

ing—the state of rage’) are interrupted by periods of peace and expansion (*piiyène nani quèpamo* ‘our anger no longer is’).

Or, in the words of one of my Huaorani guides: “A long time ago, there were many Huaorani people, who defended themselves fiercely against cannibals and protected their land from encroachers. They began to kill each other. Only a few people were left. They said: ‘We have killed enough, let us stop being angry, let us grow children and become many again.’”² Historical narratives based on this archetype leave out important sociological information, such as the fact that women actively participated in raids, sometimes finishing off, dismembering, and cutting up enemy corpses and vandalizing or destroying their enemies’ material property. They omit the fact that looting sometimes occurred, that children and women were in some cases abducted, or that some raids, represented as acts of retaliation, self-defense, or revenge, were *initiated* by Huaorani men.

If Huaorani history, or the collective memory of spearing and killing, cannot be precisely located in time, its spatialization is less problematic. The connection between a specific historical event and a particular river or hill, despite its public character, is invariably commented on during forest treks. For instance, trekkers may comment that “this creek is called Nemonpare [Nemo’s creek] because Nemo, having escaped from Ahuane, found refuge here; this river is named Quihuaro [Quihua’s river] after Quihua, who died here of the wounds inflicted by Munca’s spears,” and so forth. Of course, the travelers’ conversations also include numerous remarks on other human imprints, as people point to the hunting trail of Nahuane, the old house site of Menga’s group, or the spot where Gume killed a one-hundred-pound collared peccary. And such conversations are invariably interspersed with exchanges on animal displacements and plant maturation.³ As a result, the forested landscape is “read” not so much as knowledge of the past, which can be phenomenologically recalled and shared within the context of trekking, but rather as a space alive with human activities (past and present, destructive and productive), as well as with the ever changing presence of fauna and flora.

This should not lead one to think, however, that there is nothing distinctive in the way that human activities connected with physical violence and death are inscribed in the landscape. In particular, they are recalled through the association of certain named individuals with vaguely defined places, such as a stream or hill, and not with specific spots where the killing actually occurred. Although not used as toponyms, the names of the killers (al-

ways men, and usually several for each victim) are nevertheless remembered as vividly as the names of the victims (always isolated, male or female, individuals) that have become the names of parts of the forest.

The landscape resulting from such “historical” memory is as crucial to the understanding of Huaorani culture as the totemic geography is for Australian Aborigines (Morphy 1995). In both cultures the landscape links together people and place, and time is spatialized. However, topography does not embody living mythology in the Huaorani historical landscape, as it does in the Australian Aborigine case. As I shall explore in more detail, if the landscape is represented in myths, it does not, however, represent the myths. Although Huaorani primordial ancestors and cultural heroes created the earth as it is known today by causing the giant world tree to fall or by raising hilly lands above the flooding plain (Rival 1997b), they have long ceased to act on the landscape and are not acknowledged as the authors of their topographical creations. The forest exists because of the lives and deaths of ordinary people.

If normal life creates the forested landscape (more on this in the next chapter), history and a separate collective identity result from Huaorani people’s immemorial efforts to protect themselves from predators by fleeing, hiding, and trekking. People have survived by moving on. They have had to hide and escape from the external violence of powerful, destructive neighbors, as well as from the irruptions of internal fury, two types of aggression against which they feel powerless, and, when combined, periodically bring the Huaorani nation to the brink of extinction. More than historical accounts, these self-representations constitute declarations of identity: Huaorani people have had to defend their lives and their collective difference against annihilating and predatory forces. They constitute, in other words, their historical truth, which the rest of this chapter now explores.

Primeval Predation and Survival

A great number of narratives, including myths, reiterate one fundamental fact: there is neither beginning nor end to the Huaorani’s flight from predation and destruction. It is often difficult to differentiate historical narratives that recall true violent encounters with non-Huaorani attackers (Zaparos, Naporunas, white explorers, colonists or traders, military, and so forth) and those that depict the cannibal attacks perpetrated by dangerous demons or spirits known as *huene*. A story I recorded, for example, started in the mode of a reportage and recounted a raid carried out by inhabitants

from the town of Coca on the Napo River against the Ñihuai in the early forties, but quickly it turned into a fantastic epic of savage slaughter involving what appeared to be half-animal, half-human, imaginary beings, who dove from their hiding places in trees onto passing Huaorani, cracked their skulls to eat their brains, sucked their blood, and carved up their dying bodies into pieces to be roasted on big open fires. In other words, these non-Huaorani attackers were behaving no differently from the evil huene spirits about which the old Quěne told me the following story:

Ñene Yere are demons who break stone axes into pieces, kill the Huaorani, and eat them. At some point in the past, over a thousand of these demons came and killed most of the Huaorani. I know this story to be true because my grandmother used to sing about this. The demons came to visit, and the people had to serve them manioc drink from dusk to dawn. There was never enough drink to satisfy them and quench their thirst. That's how the Huaorani knew they were not real people but demons. The Ñene Yere hid behind trees and started to kill the Huaorani. As they kept coming through the house jumping around like monkeys, an old man was chanting. People tried to kill the Ñene Yere with their soft spears. They would jab and jab and jab, but the monkey demons would not be killed. Downriver Huaorani came to the rescue and tried to kill the Ñene Yere with their wooden machetes and poisoned darts, but the demons did not die. Alive as they were, they killed more and more Huaorani. Only those who kept chanting saved their own lives; singing, they escaped from death. The demons who listened to the chants died. The women, who had gone to hide in the forest, came back full of joy, as soon as they realized that the demons were dying. If it had not been for these demons, we would be like the Quichuas; we would speak the same *runa* language.

A related and popular corpus of myths recount the deadly actions of demoniac vampire bats (*tonquitay*). Here is a short version collected in the field:

Tonquitay caused a lot of hardship in former times. People's lives were miserable, for, despite all their care, the bats would come at night to steal their young children to kill them and eat them. The bats lived on a giant rock as hard as cement in the sky. The sky, attached to tree tops by climbers, was close to earth. What people took to be wild turkey bones thrown on the ground by birds of prey were, in fact, the bones of Huaorani children. The children had to work hard for the bats. The bats were the bosses, the children the slaves. Those who refused to work were killed and eaten up.

Many of these stories stress the Huaorani's helplessness in the face of enemies, who could be scared away but not killed off. Huaorani people could not defend themselves because their spears were made of soft balsa wood. They could survive only by living divided and separated from non-Huaorani, at least until the son of the sun came to their rescue:

At the beginning of their history, Huaorani people had only spears made of balsa wood, which were too blunt and soft to kill. They were at the mercy of numerous cannibals and under constant threat of being killed off. Their only protection against these powerful enemies was to live in hiding. One day, the son of the sun visited them and taught them the existence of peach palms. Having learned to make hard palmwood spears, they were able to defend themselves. This is how, until this day, they have survived as a separate group. With hardwood spears, they could defend themselves and remain different from the *cohuori* (non-Huaorani).

What these narratives tell us is that at all times, that is, in mythical times, in former times, and in the world today, Huaorani people have been continuously subject to the aggression of predators. They, the *huaorani* (literally 'true human beings'), are under constant threat of being captured and eaten by *cohuori* 'non-Huaorani', who are, as the old Aca once told me, *quènhuè* 'cannibal predators' who live "on the other side." They steal people (especially children) to butcher their bodies, smoke and cure their flesh, and eat it exactly like monkey or peccary meat.

It is not possible to differentiate real human attackers (for example, Zaparo slave raiders, rubber tappers, military, or colonists) from imaginary ones, and fights with outside enemies are no different from mythical encounters with huene demons because all attackers behave in the same predatory way and have the same evil intentions; they kill real people, suck their blood, and eat them. Stories about predatory bats and other kinds of huene may easily be interpreted metaphorically as a mythical discourse on real historical events. As noted in the last chapter, native people of the Upper Napo region, especially children, were abducted to be used as bonded labor even before the arrival of Europeans. Moreover, mythical tales about the spirits of dead relatives, or relatives who left a long time ago, come back for a visit, ask for food and shelter, and end up killing and devouring their hosts, may also be interpreted as cultural reworkings of real historical occurrences connected with postconquest epidemics. These huene devils or ghosts are said to trick their hosts (particularly women and children) by as-

suming the bodily appearance of relatives. Other visiting huene are identified with distant Huaorani groups whose habits and dialect differ from those of their hosts. Examples are the *Taromenga* (*Taramongui*),⁴ monstrous people who have no mouth and live underground in holes, or the *Huiñatare*, a tribe of giants who live at the border of Peru and are said to raid Huaorani for women in order to satisfy their incontinent sexual appetite. To deceive, harm, and kill constitutes their real motive for visiting.

It is tempting to interpret beliefs about cannibal tricksters as cultural devices whose function would be, on the one hand, to prevent contact and interaction between contaminated kinfolk returning after a long absence and noncontaminated individuals, and, on the other, to protect uncontacted groups from the predatory raids of their abducted relatives supposedly working as slave traders or guides for colonists and rubber tappers. But even if there were a correspondence between such function and the specific historical circumstances that may have given rise to it, we are nevertheless left with the task of explaining why all these tales articulate the same cultural anxiety toward being attacked, beset, bled to death, butchered, and eaten as game, in a word, devoured. Moreover, conversing with old informants convinces any field-worker that predation, far from being a figure of speech or a vague belief, is experienced with a real sense of victimization. Old people are adamant that facing an outsider *is* facing someone belonging to a more powerful species, someone who is set to kill and consume its Huaorani victim. Furthermore, all these tales seem to justify the radical exclusion of those who have left the group and the militant opposition against all contact, exchange, or trade with outsiders on the ground that all outsiders are cannibals whose sole motivation is to prey on insiders, the only true people.

Culturally framed in this way, the social universe comprises two basic categories: huaorani and cohuori. The Huaorani, as a people, are radically different from all non-Huaorani, who are defined as predators and hence others. The difference is categorical, or essential, in the sense that huaorani are victims of cohuori (including huene). Huaorani and cohuori are like two different species, two different kinds of beings. Their only possible relationship is unilateral predation. Literally, cohuori are predators and huaorani prey. This is continuously repeated in everyday conversation about the past, especially when trekking along rivers where violent fighting with Zaparos, Quichuas, rubber tappers, and explorers occurred. Moreover, the vivid collective awareness of having to engage periodically in violent confrontations with outsiders is always expressed from the victim's standpoint, even when Huaorani expeditions are in fact not merely to defend them-

selves but to initiate the hostilities and attack first. As the long-time warrior Cugui once put it: "Our grandfathers used to flee or to fight back." The relation of predation is unilateral and nonreciprocal; one species is always the predator, the other always preyed upon.⁵ All differences are erased in this unequal and perpetual duel opposing two—and no more than two—subject positions, to use Viveiros de Castro's terminology (1998a).

The immutable and endless combat between predator and prey, presented from a victim's perspective, takes on a natural, that is, inevitable, character, as if interlocking two asymmetrical destinies. The absolute and quasi-ontological character of the dual opposition of huaorani-cohuori is confirmed by the myth of origin, which tells about the tree of life and the great flood.⁶ The myth starts as follows:

In the beginning of time, the earth was flat; there were no forests, no hills. The earth was like a dried, barren, and endless beach, stranded at the foot of a giant ceibo tree. This tree, attached to heaven by a strong vine, was the only source of shade against the strong sun. Only seedlings growing under its protective shade could escape the sun's merciless heat; this is why there were no hills and no forests. There was also no moon and no night either. All that was alive dwelled in the giant tree. It was like a house. The living slept in the tree and fed on its fruits. There were no gardens, no need to visit, and food was shared by all. In those times of beginning, people formed one big group. Humans and animals were not yet separated. Only birds were different and lived apart: the doves, the only game obtainable, and the dangerous Harpy Eagle, who swooped down on people and doves alike. Life in those times would have been good to live, if it had not been for the giant preying bird.

Without suggesting that this brief summary should be reduced to a single, univocal message, I feel confident in asserting that the myth about the world tree is significant in that it presents the prey-predator relation as so primeval that it even precedes speciation, that is, the moment when *Hue-gongui*, the creator god, transformed proto-Huaorani into different animal species which he then sent downhill, ordering them to live apart.

As noted earlier, ontological predation is also at the center of the myths on the origin of deadly, hardwood spears and on the predatory activities of bat demons. The myth about spears stresses that because the Huaorani military capacity of resistance is limited, their autonomous existence as a separate, viable collectivity is constantly under attack. Flight and self-segregation are therefore essential to survival. The very same social anxiety is

expressed in the myth on bats, with anxiety about biological reproduction focused in this myth on the survival of the young. Thus, taken together, both myths highlight an important aspect of the relation of predation. Other myths mentioned in the discussion above, particularly huene myths, also reiterate the message that true people (the Huaorani) are victims, at the mercy of cannibal predators who kill them and their children to consume their strength and vitality.

In sum, there is only one kind of humans, the Huaorani. All other peoplelike beings are predators who take on anthropomorphic characteristics. On this basis I suggest that it is conceptually more precise to speak of predation (the treatment of another species as game) rather than cannibalism, and to avoid focusing on substance incorporation, which, for us Westerners, represents the most horrifying and extreme form of violence and domination. In Huaorani thinking, predators kill ontological others to reproduce themselves biologically; the prey-predator relationship is not thought of in terms of a categorical shift from one ontological category (i.e., human) to a lower one (i.e., animal), as entailed in our own conception of cannibalism. Predators (in vernacular *tenohuenga*) are animal killers; they kill to eat raw flesh. The animals on which they prey are simply *quenguinani* 'food.'⁷ This term, it should be noted, stands in contrast to the term *queninga* 'pet', translated, literally, as 'that who is fed' or 'that who has received food from humans.' The prototype predator is not the jaguar (*miñe*, from the root *mii* 'raw', which also means ayahuasca) but the harpy eagle (*quenihue*, literally 'that eats live flesh'). Harpy eagles are taken as fledglings from their nests and attached on high platforms at the entries of longhouses, where they are fed live hunted monkeys and birds. Their cries are said to protect longhouse residents from invaders. Jaguars, which are not considered a separate species as other animals are but rather are viewed as individual animals, each potentially incorporating a human soul, are symbolically adopted as the sons of shamans, as discussed in the next chapter.

Naturalized in this way, the relation of predation is clearly ahistorical. It has neither beginning nor end, and nothing alters or transforms it. Moreover, it is not developmental. Not only is it fixed, but it is always lived from the same point of view, that of the victims. The Huaorani never represent themselves as predators, never take on the position of predators, even when they retaliate in self-defense, for if they kill the enemy thanks to the material means provided by the son of the sun, the act of killing is an end in itself. The cannibals are not preyed upon but are simply exterminated. They are not consumed, nor are they symbolically reincorporated within Huaorani

society. Predation is timeless and perpetual, but history as irreversible change and transformation does, however, erupt. In the myth of origin, when Squirrel inadvertently severs the liana attaching the world tree to heaven, the giant tree falls and is irremediably transformed into the Amazon River. The environment and the fate of living beings are changed forever; there is no going back to the pre-fall era (Rival 1997b). Similarly, the creation of animal species and the separation of proto-humans into different groups (i.e., animal species) is irreversible, even if individuals sometimes can, and in certain circumstances do, transform themselves across the boundaries between species. It is understood from these myths that there will not be a return to the time when both humans and animals were proto-humans. The separation is definitive. However, if these transformative events constitute a watershed, a before and after, predation preexisted them.

Anger and Homicide

Ontological predation does not explain why real people (i.e., Huaorani) kill each other. Intratribal warfare is explained by invoking a form of anger (*pīi*) that drives men to make spears and to use them to kill enemies (*huarani*, literally ‘unrelated others’) or even at times their own kin (*guirani*)—either by blood or by residence. For instance, common answers to the question “Why did people kill each other before?” are these: “When they were angry, they killed”; “Their disagreeing about a matter made them so angry that they would get their spears out and kill”; or “If someone in the longhouse became sick and died, the men would get angry to the point of being driven to murder someone, anyone.”

Three main ideas continued to recur in the discussions I had with informants on warfare. First, *pīi* ‘anger’ drives one to kill “enemies,” that is, unrelated people. Second, the untimely death of a kin should be avenged by killing as many *huarani* ‘enemy others’ as possible, no matter how direct or indirect (according to emic criteria) was their responsibility in causing that particular death, the goal being to kill as many others as possible, as an end in itself. Nothing should be taken away from the enemy, not even the spears used to kill them, which now form an integral part of the victims’ bodies. There is no snatching here of anything belonging to the enemy: no bodily parts such as Jivaro heads or Yagua teeth; no acquisition of symbolic possessions, for example, names, chants, or other types of ritual property as among Tupi-Guarani groups, and no women or children as occurs in so many Amazonian societies.

The Force to Carry on Living and the Drive to Kill

Men have to be under the influence of *pïï*, a mixture of courage, fearlessness, anger, and force—both moral and physical—to kill with a spear. *Pïï*, as raw energy or vitality, is felt by men and women alike. But only men become *pïï inte*, that is, become the fit of rage itself (rather than just feeling its presence in the body), a transformation that, if sustained long enough, drives them to “spear kill” one or more victims. Once *pïï* takes over the killer’s body, he no longer listens and kills blindly; it does not matter who the victims are, for the goal is to bring on death.

Pïï, or homicidal furor, is represented as something natural, the body’s emotional response to a particular change in the social environment, more precisely, to the death of a relative. I witnessed men becoming *pïï* on several occasions. Each time, the first manifestation of rage was directed against the man’s young children. His wife or wives and other co-residents had to contain him, stop him from seizing his spears and killing in his own house. Once I heard a man, infuriated by the death of his son who had drowned in the Curaray River, sing: “I want to kill, as a result you die. My becoming angry drives me to want to kill, resulting in your dying.” Today, while *pïï inte* men seize their shotguns and shoot aimlessly above their heads, women prevent tragic accidents by fleeing to the forest with their youngest children. Older children run away to hide in the forest or seek refuge in a related longhouse, and they do not come back until rage has deserted their father’s body.

After the first fit of rage, men usually channel their *pïï* energy by planning a killing raid.⁸ Their rage and determination to kill, which they sustain through chanting, spreads contagiously to other men in the longhouse. They need to remain in a state of rage throughout, from the fashioning and decorating of spears to the finding of and spying on victims. Victims are ambushed and killed when they are most vulnerable or least suspicious. More often than not, however, war parties are aborted, as men cease to feel *pïï* while looking for, or spying on, the enemy. The feeling may even wane earlier, for example, while sharpening their spears.

The death of a kin, which causes *pïï*, is always interpreted as having been caused directly or indirectly by some human agency, which, in turn, triggers the homicidal emotion. Compared to deaths by predation, which are caused by external powers, all deaths are conceptualized as murders that cause further murders, except deaths in old age, which, as I discuss in chapters 4 and 5, are voluntary deaths. Whereas a *cohuori* predator killing a

huaorani prey is seen as committing a natural predatory act similar to those found within the animal kingdom, a Huaorani killing another Huaorani is not viewed in this way, even if the embodied drive to kill is considered to be a natural phenomenon beyond reason. Said differently, non-Huaorani prey on Huaorani in the same way as jaguars or harpy eagles prey on monkeys and birds. Huaorani are killed as prey and consumed as food, and their bodies are used to feed other bodies, whose nature it is to kill and eat. By contrast, a Huaorani killing another Huaorani does not consume his victim but reciprocates an unwanted death with a death he causes.

Language usage confirms the equivalence between death and homicide; to be dead or to be killed are interchangeable notions, both translated as *hueni*. *Tapaca tenonani* 'to kill with spears' (literally 'to spear kill'), is the most common expression used for death. Another word for 'to kill' is *hueno*, a word that also means 'to be anxious or preoccupied.' Finally, the expression *huenonga huentapa* 'he killed hence he/she died' is often used to mean 'to kill.' This grammatical structure, which corresponds to the common Huaorani way of expressing an action followed by a reaction, translates perfectly the notion that death, far from being "natural," is caused by human (re-)action. All deaths, whether resulting from spearing, illnesses (fever), or accidents (snake bites, being crushed by a falling tree, or drowning) are thought to be the direct results of a particular kind of human agency.

The unwanted death (*daicaho abuante hueni*, literally 'dying of fever and illness') receives very little elaboration in comparison with the "willed" death (*tapaca hueni*, literally 'spear killed') or *hueno tenongui* (literally 'causing someone to die by spearing'), as if it were pure physical sensation or raw desire that created meaning. The cultural stress is unambiguously on the rage, which, located in the killer's body, transforms him from a kin, a co-resident, and an insider into an external aggressor who kills indiscriminately. The killer and his fate are not very important either, except in the extreme case in which he becomes a kind of cultural anti-hero, mythologized as a fierce, perfectly autonomous, and dreadfully lonely individual who lives kinless and without society, alone with the trees, and drinking his own urine. Killers who, under the influence of *pïï*, have become that wild, that uncontrolled, and that decorporated from the shared substance of the longhouse are commonly said to be orphans.⁹ In addition to the role of *pïï*, it is the victim's experience that is emphasized in Huaorani culture, as revealed in the collective representations relating to the scarred but surviving body of the victim and to the dying warrior buried with his young child.

The Scarred Body

When survivors tell about past wars, they invariably illustrate their story by exhibiting their scars. The very fact of seeing, and letting their interlocutors see, the ancient marks is often enough for the victims to start giving detailed information that is often left out when they just talk about “the angry times.” In other words, scars trigger the communication of facts that allow nonparticipants to internalize as accurately as the protagonists, and share in, the experience of deaths resulting from pīi.

More than mnemonic devices, scars are bodily imprints reminding whoever sees them that spears are weapons purposefully designed to cause suffering and to kill.¹⁰ Huaorani spears are thin nine-to-ten-feet-long pieces of hard palm wood. Double-handed, they end in two fire-hardened heads of a triangular shape. The heads, of which one is usually notched, are as sharp and cutting as metallic blades. They can be sharpened again but generally break off in the victim’s body. Once a spear is thrust, it cannot be recovered easily. This is owing as much to the way it is designed as to the strength with which it is thrust. Thrust fiercely and designed to kill by inflicting deep wounds at close range, tearing organs, and spilling blood in profusion, they are left in the bodies of dying enemies. As I learned from demonstrations on dummies, the barbed points, aimed primarily at the lower abdomen, are moved to and fro to cause maximum internal hemorrhage.

Victims’ bodies are left exposed to the elements and to scavengers, with, on average, eight to ten spears deeply buried in the trunk. Corpses (*tomen-ga baō ini huinte yōme*, literally ‘this person’s flesh is rotting away’) are left to rot. All the stories and accounts I collected, as well as the numerous informal conversations I had with guests, informants, and friends on the subject, all agree that enemies are left to rot, their bodies riddled with spears. The flesh gets partly eaten by vultures, and the rest decays in “juices” that filter into the forest ground. Soon only the bones remain; they look like tapir (*tītē*) bones and are quickly found and eaten by the giant anteater (*ōto*). At least this is what happens if the victim is not found by kinfolk. If the victim is already dead when found, he or she is buried in a shallow, east-west oriented grave, with the face turned toward the east. The grave is covered with rotten wood and dried palm leaves.

A surprisingly high number of victims, however, are reported to have survived by gathering enough strength to pull spears out of their bodies. Victims may also be saved by relatives who arrive in time to cut the protruding spears at notch level. The wounds heal over the barbed heads that remain

inside the body, until they are expelled some weeks after the attack. The suffering inflicted on the speared body culminates in the excruciating pain and slow death of moribund victims, unless these are found by compassionate kin and co-residents who dig a fairly large and deep grave, and bury them alive. When the victim is male, as is most often the case, female kin line the grave with bamboo mats on which they lay the dying body to hasten his death and put an end to his suffering. There are many stories of dying fathers buried alive with one of their children, usually the last one,¹¹ so, I was told, “the father does not leave the land alone, so he does not feel lonely in the afterworld.” My classificatory sisters once showed me how this was done, and as they were putting a young infant on the pretend grave, they explained to me that the *onohuoca* ‘body-soul’¹² of a buried speared victim who dies by suffocation does not go back to its birth place but stays right there. The burial place, with its trapped ‘body-soul’ becomes a place vividly remembered.

Warfare, History, and Kinship

In addition to the ethnographic data exposed in the previous section, numerous conversations with men and women of all ages, have led me to think that people understand *pīi* to be triggered by the departure through death of a blood kin and/or a co-resident (*guiri*). Like in so many places in Amazonia¹³ anger is widely associated with bereavement, and the desire for revenge with grief turned to anger. Anger also flares during drinking festivals in which marriage alliances are contracted outside endogamous boundaries.

Killing in Anger Makes Kinship Visible

As already explained, death is experienced as the violent and intentionally caused loss of a close person, almost as if what caused death caused the person to abandon his or her house group.¹⁴ Although no one expressed this explicitly and quite in the same terms, death enrages men for it turns kin into non-kin, and co-residents into unrelated, departed others. No longer *guiri*, a dead person becomes *huaca* ‘other.’ At the same time, men possessed with rage at the news that one of their close kin has died retain their kinship connection with the missing loved one, hence also becoming ‘other’ to the living with whom they share substance. Retaining kin ties to the dead who has become *huaca* ‘an other’, they have temporarily lost their

ordinary attachments. Said differently, when a Huaorani kills another Huaorani, they stop being related; no longer ‘us’, they are now ‘enemies’ or ‘others.’

The death of a father, mother, or sibling affects particularly children and adolescents. Kinless individuals are in a weak social position and become easy targets; no one would avenge their deaths. Their position, therefore, is similar to that of affines, for the deaths of affines never call for revenge. But when a dying warrior is buried with one of his children, his soul fused with the soul of his child, he leaves accompanied by a kin, that is, as a fully incorporated uxorial kin, and not as an affine. Orphaned bachelors are more likely to form male sibling groups and dedicate their lives to killing as a way of life by avenging the deaths of their parents.¹⁵ Whereas fraternal interest groups become the basis for the development of a peaceful society among, for example, the Parakana (Fausto 1998), they lead to warfare among the Huaorani.¹⁶ To conclude this point, killing transforms insiders into outsiders, and killing creates kinship. Furthermore, by creating kinship, killing creates history.¹⁷

When examined beyond the micro-history of particular families, in its wider historical and cultural context, endowar, or the killing of Huaorani by other Huaorani, is emically represented as the succession of times of war and destruction (*pīi inte quëmente*, literally ‘we live in a state of anger’), followed by times of peace and expansion (*pīiyëñè nani quepamo*, literally ‘no longer angry, we live well without spearing’). The story below, told by an old man from the Yasuní (see map 3.1), illustrates the cyclical alternation between war and peace:

People killed each other because of lies. *Nanicaboiri* ‘longhouses’ fought against one another. Those who lived north and south were healthy and normal. Those who lived west and east always caused trouble. Before, there were more Huaorani than ants. But they would kill each other periodically. . . . wiped out they would end. Then, they would grow a little bit, then a little bit more. Houses were so large then, full with people. . . . Hunting territories were carefully looked after and protected. Manioc was planted on all sides. People were happy. . . . far from them the idea of splitting or leaving their grandparents’ land. The longhouses were crowded, and there were many *abuene* [senior house heads]. The greatest was Queyebè. He used to say: “do not kill, live in harmony and grow more children.” But when he died, the furor of killing caught the people back. You see, it’s like when the great ceibo tree falls in the forest. Everything gets torn off. The vines are pulled away. Everything around is destroyed. Exactly the same happens

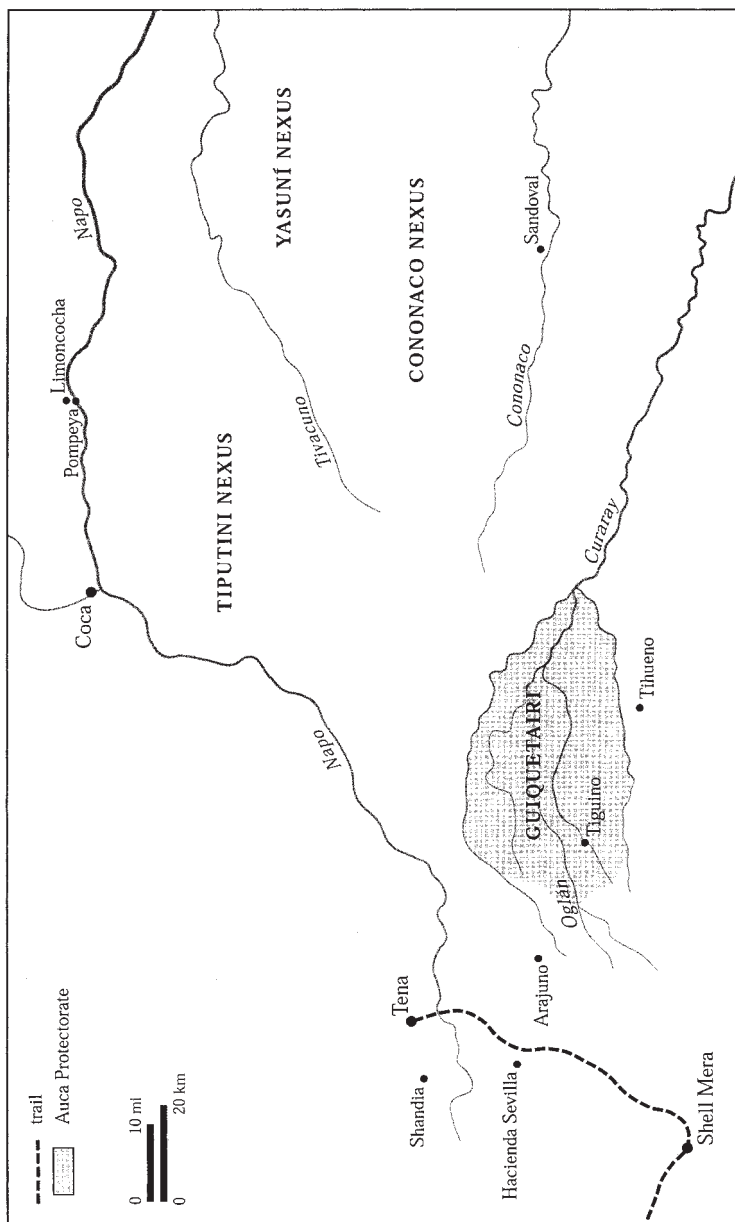


FIGURE 3.1
Endogamous
nexi in 1956.

with the Huaorani. If it was not so, we would be as numerous as the Quichua or the Shuar. We true human beings have destroyed ourselves with fallen trees, snake bites, malaria fever, fighting, and spearing each other. The forebears left, some heading south. They all left, some heading east, and, so, few people now remain.

As the story above illustrates, warfare is explained as the inevitable and cyclical outcome of social reproduction: Endogamous groups expand and prosper, but their growth is not sustainable past a certain level. People who once defined themselves as co-residents and *guiri* suddenly become *huarani*. Killing creates otherness and marks the boundaries between those who, living apart, are or become unrelated, and hence potential enemies.

As best as I could judge from field observations and conversations with Huaorani friends, hosts, teachers, and guides, killing and destruction fare much higher in people's memory than growth and peace. People are far more expansive on the subject of war than on peace, as if peace were not meant to be discussed but experienced. They are willing—more, eager—to share their memories of homicides. In contrast, they have very little to say on how it was when the *nanicaboiri* lived in great numbers and in peace. The only information I could get (confirmed by the above testimony) is that peace was often the making of great men and women who “owned” drinking ceremonies and were successful at maintaining peace among sons and nephews, and at ensuring growth and prosperity for all. More is said in chapter 6 on the peace-keeping role and skilled handling of marriage alliances by heads of longhouses. I focus next on the conflicts that arise over marriage agreements and postmarital residence.

When Marriage Alliances Fail . . .

Whereas Huaorani people view the *cohuori* as an undifferentiated class of cannibals, which stands in absolute opposition to them, they see themselves as relatively differentiated in *huaomoni* ‘us’ and *huarani* ‘others.’ The traditional system of social alliances is based on a strict closure of the social world onto itself, as well as on the partial isolation and mutual avoidance of the regional groups. The overall population is divided in dispersed networks of intermarrying longhouses separated by vast stretches of unoccupied forest (see map 3.1 referring to the pre-contact situation). For greater security and autonomy, longhouse residential groups tend to isolate themselves from most other groups. Longhouses not related by marriage avoid

meeting and often ignore one another's exact location. However, their isolation from one another is relative, as they are connected—at least potentially—through personal relationships; further, cognate kin living in nonallied longhouses reactivate their ties whenever spouses are scarce or social disruptions caused by warfare too acute. The following stories illustrate the close link between failure in securing marriage agreements and cycles of war and peace. As these three stories show, whereas the huaomoni-huarani opposition structures marriage alliances, killing raids are directed against *huarani* 'enemy others.'

In the late 1950s two large huarani groups were at war with each other, the Moipairi 'those of Moipa' and the Guiquetairi 'those of Guiqueta', despite the fact that Moipa had been living with Guiqueta as a child. Only two women from Moipa's group were living with the Guiquetairi. Eight years after a raid, in which many of the Moipairi died, the two groups had largely forgotten about each other, including their respective location in the forest. The Guiquetairi tricked the Moipairi, who needed spouses for their young adults, into accepting an invitation to a manioc-drinking festival they were organizing. But far from allying with the Moipairi, the Guiquetairi killed them off before the end of the drinking festival.¹⁸

An informant from the Babeiri group told me the following story:

Ima was my father. He was very good, a man of peace. He kept telling us to live in peace, to never kill each other, but live well, planting and growing manioc in abundance to prepare large *ëëmë*. He became very ill and eventually died. After the great man's death, the men of his *nanicabo* [longhouse] were fuming with rage; they wanted to avenge his death. One of them wanted to marry Omene's daughter. Omene was a relative, but Omene was mean, mean, mean, stingy; he said the girl was too young to be given in marriage yet. On the very day when my father Ima died, the frustrated prospective groom and his friends killed Omene. They were huarani. They, too, had promised us a spouse, but they lied; no spouse was given, so we became enemies.

The third story about failed attempts to establish marriage alliances involves the Tagaeri, a group still defending a strict autarky and refusing all contact, including with their "civilized" kin. The Tagaeri live in hiding, with no cultivated crops, their fires burning only at night. They refuse marriage alliances outside their own group, and each year, despite the danger of being spotted by the oil crews now working on their land, they try to go back to their palm groves for the fruiting season. Recent attempts (1995–96)

by some of the Tagaeri's missionarized relatives to "pacify" them and exchange marriage partners failed, causing one death on each side. This occurred despite the close ties (i.e., classificatory brothers) existing between members of the two huarani groups. This is how my informants tell the story. Several men from the Babeiri group (a group now settled along the oil road)¹⁹ raided a Tagaeri longhouse and kidnapped a young woman, whom they brought back to their settlement.²⁰ They organized a drinking party in which she was wedded to a young Babeiri bachelor, but the marriage could not be consummated, as she refused not only to prepare food for the groom but also to feed herself or to talk. She was kept in captivity for a few weeks, but her fierce determination to refuse all social intercourse with her kidnappers finally induced the latter to bring her back to her native longhouse. The girl's relatives attacked the kidnappers as they were heading back to their own part of the forest, spearing a young Babeiri man to death.

From the Victim's Point of View

This chapter has presented the structural processes that give meaning to Huaorani history. History in this particular context is envisaged as an endless series of predatory attacks perpetrated by cannibal outsiders and the continuous destruction caused by homicidal madness, interrupted here and there by truce, growth, and recovery. From an interethnic perspective, historical time is represented not as a linear and cumulative process but, rather, as the symbolized and repetitive battle opposing true humans (i.e., Huaorani) and cannibalistic killers (i.e., powerful neighboring tribes). From an intraethnic perspective, history is lived as the cyclic alteration between times of war and destruction, characterized by increased trekking, and times of peace and expansion, when endogamous groups become more localized and intensify their horticultural activities, an aspect examined further in the following chapters.

Like a growing number of South American specialists,²¹ who have followed—or not—Sahlins's (1981:8) ground-breaking proposition that history is organized by structures of meaning, I have shown here that mythical structures are essential components of Huaorani consciousness of the past and, in particular, of people's memories of violent deaths. I have also argued that it is through the unifying theme of predation and killing that myth and history become complementary forms of consciousness (Wright 1998:100; Gray 1996:200) and that the Huaorani make history by creating a moral link to the past in defiance of dominant powers. The true people, endlessly

killed and consumed by powerful predators, go through periods during which communities at peace with one another grow and expand and times when death, anger and homicide split house groups apart and bring the population to the verge of extinction.

The ethnographic data presented here confirm, in important ways, the Amazonian cultural logic identified by a number of authors (Menget 1985; Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Vilaça 1992; and others), namely, that killing functions as the prime mechanism for inserting memory into social life,²² that predation is the main model of interaction with the outside (Viveiros de Castro 1996), and that warfare is a moment in the general process of the production of persons (Fausto 1998).

Although the Huaorani seem to share the same cultural obsession with predation and alterity as their neighbors and many other Amazonian societies, their view of warfare as fostering a moral continuity with past history is, in my view, radically different. Their cosmology does not equate the inside and identity with a lack of fertility in such a way that their social reproduction becomes symbolically dependent on a predatory relationship with the outside and with alterity. In Huaorani cosmic history, predation predates human existence and structurally conditions their collective existence as a separate and autonomous ethnic group.

It is possible to think of cohuori as the necessary enemy for the constitution of Huaorani collective identity, for the Huaorani define themselves in opposition to cohuori; but, as I have argued, we are dealing here with an ontological other who *cannot* be incorporated within Huaorani society in the way Tupinamba victims, for instance, were (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985). Cohuori reproduce by preying on Huaorani, both biologically and socially, but Huaorani exist as a separate collective identity by denying the need to incorporate the outside to constitute the inside. They resist being incorporated in cohuori societies by fleeing and counting on their own vitality and fertility. They take the subject position of prey and accept the fact of predation as a purely non-Huaorani reproductive strategy. This is why nothing is taken from the enemy. There is no attempt in Huaorani warfare, which is aimed at the partial destruction of those who do not count as “us,” to snatch the life force of the enemy or to prevent the enemy from being properly buried. The Huaorani kill reactively as many cohuori as they possibly can in the hope of containing the predatory “plague” by decreasing, even if only minimally, the imbalance between “humans” and “cannibals.” Rather than balanced reciprocity between exchange-

ing groups through tit-for-tat vengeance, the balance being restored is that of unwanted deaths matched with wanted ones. Moribund victims are abandoned to their fate. They may survive, they may be devoured by vultures, or they may be found by relatives who then give them a proper burial. To use Fausto's (1998) terminology, whereas *cohuori* consume *huaorani* "productively," *huaorani* do not appropriate their enemies' external subjectivities; they do not incorporate aliens.

From a *Huaorani* perspective, the victors are always aliens, the victims always insiders, and warfare always productive of victims. *Huaorani* are victims who neither turn into predators nor use warfare as a form of negative reciprocity. They accept that their powerful neighbors reproduce themselves through "rebounding violence" (Bloch 1992) but choose to resist the predatory logic by reversing the symbolic order and putting the prey at the center, in other words, by subjectifying themselves as victims. The language of vengeance is used to explain to the anthropologist why a particular act of "intentional life-taking" was perpetrated; it is not because killing obeys a logic of retaliation but because victimhood and identity are intrinsically related. As the discussion of funerary rites has demonstrated, the focus of attention is on the victim, not the killer. The victim of internal warfare is typically a dying warrior, either the one who was attacked by surprise, defenseless and unprepared, or the one who attacked but was fatally wounded in a counterattack, the former being far more common than the latter. In both cases, however, it is the killed, not the killer, who is culturally and socially valued. Dying warriors belong to their kin, who remember and keep alive the tale of the circumstances in which they died (killing raids are always described by the victims and their kin, never by the instigators). Tales of warfare are stories about men who, buried alive by their kin, die as cognate kin, now fully transformed into members of their wives' groups and attached forever to their wives' homeland. If being killed is the most human death (Albert 1985), it is because one dies as a victim and a kin, in short, as an insider.

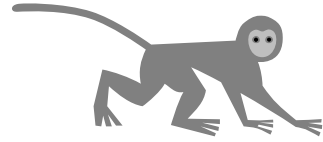
The fact that to be killed is culturally more significant than to kill is even true of male insiders who, possessed by *pĩi*, turn into alienated killers, become as wild and nonhuman as jaguars and *cohuori*, and create otherness from within. For even then, it is the victims buried alive (with or without a child) who are remembered as insiders worth avenging, whereas the wild killers are not. When killers are eventually killed, their death is an end in itself, and they are remembered as cultural anti-heroes featuring in storytelling. Homicide is not presented as an exploit, an act of bravery, or the

source of mystical vitality, as it is among the Ilongot (M. Rosaldo 1980; R. Rosaldo 1980:138) but, rather, as an uncontrollable bodily drive, the unfortunate outcome of *pïi*.²³ *Pïi*, which is beyond human control, explains why violence, a necessary part of human interaction with the nonhuman world, is also inevitable between *huaomoni* 'us' and *huarani* 'others', despite the moral anxiety this causes.²⁴ As in other Amazonian societies, we find degrees of social alterity rather than the static interior-exterior opposition. However, there is a substantial difference: The enemy is not incorporated but expelled. The mad killer, insider turned outsider, represents otherness created from within and expelled without. The Huaorani system, with its focus on the killed and the fate of the killed, does not incorporate outsiders that it turns into insiders but, instead, expels insiders who have become outsiders, a fascinating reversal of the Amazonian theme of incorporation of externality and otherness.

To conclude, if warfare is used in Huaorani society as it is elsewhere in Amazonia to produce symbolic capital essential for social reproduction, it is so only in so far as it produces not temporality as such but discontinuities in time (times of peace and times of war), as well as violent memories inscribed in human bodies and enshrined in the landscape. This is not incompatible with Carneiro da Cunha's and Viveiros de Castro's (1985) thesis that Amazonian societies refuse history and temporality by using warfare to produce "non-history" or, to use another of their expressions, "projections toward the future," in the sense that their conceptualizing effort, inspired by the work of Lefort (1978), was to (1) differentiate Western from non-Western forms of history; and (2) explore the specificities of Tupinamba historicity, which, they argued, was in fact a longing for future immortality. Huaorani historicity, by contrast, is concerned with the hazards and contradictions of social reproduction. In the next chapter I examine activities that create temporal continuities between the lives of humans and the forest.

CHAPTER FOUR

Harvesting the Forest's Natural Abundance



As shown in the previous chapter, the permanent threat of predatory attacks and other types of aggression, as well as death, particularly violent death, cause people to flee, often abandoning everything behind. In this chapter I intend to present an aspect of Huaorani mobility linked to processes of life and subsistence. Trekking in this sense is more a coming back than a moving away. Living people, the forest, and past generations are linked together through trekking and the continuous abundance of foodstuff and other useful resources.

An Economy of Procurement

Distinguishable from both animal foraging and agricultural production, Huaorani subsistence economy is, as I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, disinvested from future-oriented concerns. Following Bird-David (1990, 1992a, 1992b) and Ingold (1996), who have argued that the subsistence economy of hunter-gatherers is best described as an economy of procurement, by which they mean a distinctive way of engaging in subsistence activities, whatever these are (i.e., wage work, trade, cultivation, stock keeping, hunting, and gathering), I wish to argue that Huaorani economic practices are closer to hunter-gatherer “food procurement” than to horticultural “food production.”

Like all Amazonian Indians, the Huaorani hunt, fish, gather, and cultivate. But this says very little, because these activities can be organized and thought about in many different ways. The Huaorani way of carrying subsistence activities is characterized by a striking lack of specialization, the preference for extractive activities over agricultural production, and the fact that men, women, and children spend hours “cruising” in the forest, alone or in groups, slowly exploring almost every inch of forest along their trails, while checking with evident pleasure and interest the progress of fruit maturation, vegetation growth, and animal movements.

Forest trips are considered successful and productive as long as useful products are brought back. People spend a great part of their time collecting food within a radius of 5 kilometers (sometimes going as far as 20 kilo-

meters away), an occupation they call *ömere äante gobopa* (literally 'forest visiting in order to bring something back') and that encompasses all their—in practice undifferentiated—hunting and gathering activities.¹ Omere äante gobopa is as much a style of walking as it is a means of subsistence. When walking in the "cruising" fashion, a style of displacement markedly different from the one used when visiting distant kin or when transporting food from one place to another, people are not simply checking the state of their "larder." They collect what they need for the day, recording patches of resources for later use, and monitor vegetation growth and changes in general. If they are not already familiar with the area, they also look for old cultigens and other plant species denoting former human occupation.

Living in the Forest Again

It is not before my adoptive house group² left Dayuno for good and asked me to join their trekking expedition that I came to appreciate fully the extent to which Huaorani livelihood depends on forest resources. After years of residence (more than twenty years) in this relatively old sedentary village with a school and an airstrip (see map pref.2), the Ñihuari chose to revert to a more nomadic way of life or, in their own expression, *ayè ömere queènte quehuemoni* 'live in the forest again', a change of circumstance they described to me as illustrative of the *durani bai* 'traditional' (literally 'as was practiced by past generations') way of subsisting. Having left Dayuno essentially for political reasons—they no longer wished to support the village chief, a female affine whom they found domineering and exploitative—they lived their nomadic forest existence with jubilation; they had regained freedom. They trekked for some months through a part of the forest they had used as hunting territory in the past and that they associated with the lives of their forebears, and, finally, they decided to create a new community along the Shiripuno River (in Huaorani, *Quehueire Ono* 'the river of the cannibals').³ The exact site of the community was changed three times before its final location was established northeast of their old village, Dayuno, at a two-and-a-half day walking distance.

For a year or so, Quehueire Ono was nothing more than a large hunting camp. Like most of the western part of Huaorani land, Quehueire Ono is characterized by rugged terrain featuring three sizable hills dominating the narrow valley that has formed along the Upper Shiripuno, and by red and unfertile soils (Sourdat and Custode 1980; Cañadas 1983; IGM [Instituto Geográfico Militar] 1986). Twice during my first stay I saw the water levels

rise sharply and cause severe flooding, transforming the landscape for a few days into a vast, uneven, and desolate marshland. Once, in September or October 1989, we were caught in a brief but intense windstorm associated with a heavy downpour that was moving from east to west, causing many trees to fall around the camp and along the river.

For the first three or four months, wildlife was abundant and visible everywhere around the camp. It was then that I saw groups of monkeys at close range for the first time. Howler monkeys (*iwa*, *Alouatta seniculus*) remained in the trees surrounding the camp for several weeks, and their nocturnal calls could be heard for much longer. It was common during this period to see toucans (*yawe*, *Ramphastos* sp.) and macaws (*ehue*, *Ara macao*) flying over the camp, or river otters (*ompure*, *Pteronura brasiliensis*) basking in the sun on almost each piece of drift wood that cluttered the Shiripuno in its upper course. Early-morning river crossings by solitary tapirs (*titë*, *Tapirus terrestris*) was another familiar sight. By the end of my stay, and on subsequent trips, wildlife was still abundant in the region, given local hunting success rates, but it had moved far away from the community and was not easily seen along the Shiripuno or along hunting trails.

The Nihuairoi spent the next eight months surveying the region with obvious pleasure and a great sense of contentment. They had left tensions and hostile feelings behind, and were now discovering a new part of the forest, slowly locating its animal resources and dwelling places, as well as salt licks, and fruit trees that would attract different species in the forthcoming ripening season. They explored the forest systematically, looking for useful plants, and, more important, for evidence of previous occupation, such as potsherds, stone axes, and plant species all taken to be unmistakable signs of previous human occupation. During evening conversations, after having shared a copious meal cooked from forest food, they would exchange news about resource-maturing states and locations, and laugh heartedly with no trace of regret for the producing gardens and well-equipped houses they had left behind. They were also largely indifferent to the malicious gossip divulged by rare visitors from Dayuno or to the news that their houses and gardens had been looted by the chief and her remaining followers, infuriated by the Nihuairoi's desertion. And they had yet to show a sense of urgency regarding their new geopolitical situation. Nothing, it seemed, could disrupt the bliss of living in the middle of the forest again, not even the need to forge alliances with new indigenous neighbors, ecotourist agencies, and companies prospecting for oil.

Hunted animals formed an essential part of Huaorani diet in the Shiripuno, as they did in Dayuno, but in a different way. The diet consist-

ed essentially of forest food, tree-dwelling game, numerous fruits, germinated seeds, wild roots, and so forth. Now in a part of the forest not yet transformed by sedentarization and agriculture, people hunted mainly monkeys and birds, and used their blowpipes more often than they did in Dayuno. This is perhaps because blowpipes, which are much longer and heavier than shotguns, were too cumbersome for hunting around Dayuno. In Dayuno, because hunters had to walk longer distances to find game and because it was more convenient to hunt ground—rather than tree—animals, shotguns were used much more frequently.⁴ Another significant difference between the hunting behavior I observed in the recently formed Quehueire Ono was that hunting seemed to be a much less specialized activity than in the old Dayuno. Hunting in Quehueire Ono was carried out alongside a whole range of parallel activities such as exploring the forest and extracting useful resources.

The hunting and gathering I observed during these months of trekking, far from representing separate and differentiated productive activities corresponding to a fixed division of labor by gender or age, formed a single process, not just of extraction but also of knowing and discovering the forest. Considerable time was invested, and great interest shown, in all kinds of collecting activities, conveniently subsumed under the above-mentioned expression *ömere äante gobopa* 'forest visiting in order to bring something back.' Almost every day, someone in the longhouse would hunt small arboreal species and gather. Both men and women had a great knowledge of the habits, habitats, and feeding cycles of most arboreal species. Inferring from fruiting cycles, weather conditions, and many other signs, they could predict animal behavior and locate animals they could not see precisely. Thanks to their acute senses, especially those of hearing and smell, they could feel the presence of animals and anticipate their next move. Children tended to hunt and gather in bands, never going beyond a five-kilometer radius around the longhouse.

Table 4.1 summarizes quantitative data of what adult members of nine house groups hunted and collected over twenty days in November–December 1989.⁵ During these—not all consecutive—twenty days, 59 monkeys, 33 birds, 10 collared peccaries, 2 deer, and 4 river turtles were hunted; 50 middle-sized and large fish and 8 kilograms of small fish were fished; 150 kilograms of morete palm fruit, 113 kilograms of ungurahua palm fruit, 28 kilograms of ubillas and 9 kilograms of other unidentified fruits were gathered; and, finally, more than 750 *omacabo* leaves, at least 810 *mö* leaves, more than 24 chambira leaves, 20 unidentified palm leaves, and 50 bamboo stems were collected (see table 4.2 for Huaorani and scientific names).⁶

TABLE 4.1
Extractive Activities Carried Out in Quehueire Ono
in November–December 1989.

	GAME	GATHERED FOOD	GATHERED MATERIALS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED
day 1	3 birds (1 petoba, 2 cuhue)	petomo 15 kgs	omacabo 130	2 hunters 2 mt. collectors 4 food collectors
day 2	1 amo, 4 cuhue, 2 barè, 4 deye, 2 cuhue, 3 kgs small fish, 21 middle-sized fish, 29 large fish		omacabo 110	6 hunters, 1 also fished, 1 with his wife Fishing PARTY: 4 adults and 5 children 3 mt. collectors
day 3	—	—	omacabo 240	8 mt. collectors
day 4	1 cuhue	obohuenga, 2 kgs icahue palm fruit, 7 kgs		1 hunter 1 fruit collector
day 5	3 cuhue, 2 amo	nantoca, 50 kgs		2 hunters 10 fruit collectors
day 6	1 iwa, 1 paquë		mõ leaves 110 20 oõña	2 hunters 3 mt. collectors
day 7	3 birds (2 nahuañe, 1 abamo) 1 paquë, 2 iwa	oõnè		2 hunters 2 mt. collectors
day 8	1 gata, 1 cuhue		mõ leaves 350	2 hunters 2 mt. collectors
day 9	1 gata, 3 barè, 3 amo 1 paquë		1 leaf oõnè, 21 palm trees for house construction, omacabo	5 hunters 6 mt. collectors
day 10	2 iwa, 1 barè		1 leaf oõnè, mõ leaves, omacabo	2 hunters 4 mt. collectors
day 11	1 gata, 2 iwa	petomo 18 kgs	3 leaves oõnè	2 hunters 2 mt. collectors 2 fruit collectors

TABLE 4.1 (continued)

	GAME	GATHERED FOOD	GATHERED MATERIALS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED
12	5 kgs of very small fish, 3 amo, 7 deye, 2 gata, 1 barè		4 leaves oönè	2 fishermen and wives 3 hunters 4 mt. collectors
13	3 gata, 2 deye, 1 toucan	petomo 5 kgs nantoca 20 kgs		4 hunters 1 fruit collector
14	1 deye, 1 gata, 1 barè	nantoca 80 kgs	4 leaves oönè	2 hunters 2 mt. collectors 5 fruit collectors
15	1 gata		350 mö leaves, 50 omacabo leaves	1 hunter 10 mt. collectors
16	1 deye, 1 barè		20 palm leaves	1 hunter 2 mt. collectors
17	5 deye	10 kgs petomo		3 hunters
18	1 amo, 1 deer, 1 gata	20 kgs yohuè	1 oönè leaf	3 hunters and 2 boys 1 fruit and mt. collector
19	1 deer, 1 barè, 2 gata, 4 iwa	5 kgs petomo, 3 kgs yohuè	200 omacabo leaves, 1 oönè leaf	1 hunter (smoke for D. wedding) 2 fruit collectors 15 mt. collectors
20	10 gata, 1 barè	petomo 60 kgs yohuè 5 kgs	6 oönè leaves 30 oönès	2 hunters (smoke for D. wedding) 5 fruit collectors 11 mt. collectors

Their diet consisted on the whole of monkey meat and morete (*petomo*) fruit, which made people remark with delight that they were living like before, during those blissful months. As the chonta palm (*Bactris gasipaes*)⁷ season approached, the Ñihuaiiri, who had destroyed their planted groves before leaving Dayuno (except for one grove that was bequeathed to a son who had decided to remain in the old village) and kept the hardwood for future use, searched neighboring hilltops for *ömere daguenca* 'wild chonta

TABLE 4.2
Huaorani Names Mentioned in Table 4.1
Compared with Common and Scientific Names

HUAORANI NAME	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
petoba	common potoo	<i>Nyctibius griseus</i>
cuhue	blue-throated piping guan	<i>Pipile pipile</i>
amo	collared peccary	<i>Tayassu tajacu</i>
barè	curassow	<i>Mitu salvini</i>
deye	black spider monkey	<i>Ateles paniscus</i>
iwa	red howler monkey	<i>Alouatta seniculus</i>
gata	woolly monkey	<i>Lagothrix lagothricha</i>
paquë	river turtle	<i>Podocnemis expansa</i> , <i>Podocnemis unifilis</i>
abamo	gray tinamou	<i>Tinamus tao</i>
nahuañe	gray-winged trumpeter	<i>Psophia crepitans</i>
yahue	toucan	<i>Ramphastos sp.</i>
cõhuañe	red brocket deer	<i>Mazama americana</i>
obohuenga	fruit of an unidentified tree	—
nantoca	fruit of morete (nantohue)	<i>Mauritia flexuosa</i>
petomo	fruit of ungurahua (petohue)	<i>Jessenia batava</i>
ichahue	chontilla palm	<i>Bactris spp.</i>
yohuè	uvas del monte, ubillas	<i>Pourouma cecropiaefolia</i>
omocabo	palm, unidentified species	—
oõnè	chambira	<i>Astrocaryum tucama</i> , <i>Astrocaryum chambira</i>
mö	palm	<i>Geonoma tamandua</i>
oõña	bamboo	<i>Bambusa sp.</i>

palm.’ A few ancient groves, which they recognized as *monito memeiri qui* (literally ‘our grandparents’ belongings’) were restored by clearing weeds and shrubs and felling old dead trunks. Peach palm fruit, collected on the site or brought from elsewhere, were repeatedly cooked and eaten there, which further encouraged the propagation of the favorite palm (Rival 1993a). On the top of a hill where we were collecting “wild” chonta palm fruit, my old friend and classificatory brother, Yatehue, once told me that the palm “was of” his maternal grandparents. He added that he was going

to prepare the seeds by smearing them with woolly monkey blood and plant them next to his house in Quehueire Ono as well as in the ancient grove that he and his brother, Cugui, had restored.

As life became increasingly settled in Quehueire Ono, individual families started their own short treks, creating new pockets of useful plants along their hunting trails and around their camps. Small patches of plantain and manioc were planted whenever stalks and shoots could be obtained from Shuar and Quichua neighbors or whenever planting material was traded for forest products, curare poison, or handicrafts. Approximately one year after having split from Dayuno, together the new community built a vast traditional *duranibai onco* 'feasting longhouse' around which a large manioc plantation was established, in preparation for a political meeting to discuss Huaorani land rights to which were duly invited all Huaorani villages, as well as representatives from regional Quichua and Shuar organizations and leaders of the CONFENIAE (Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana) and CONAIE (Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador).

Later, Quehueire Ono villagers also obtained garden produce from neighboring Shuar and Quichua villages, as well as donations of rice, sugar, oil, flour, and canned fish from oil companies. However, and as I explain in chapter 7, this food was extorted, stolen, or accepted more as a means of establishing political ties with surrounding groups than out of dire necessity. Not only was forest food plentiful, but people had chosen to rely on it, a decision they freely made as part of their political choice to live in the forest 'among pure kin' (*huaponi huaomoni toma quehuemoni*, or, in Spanish, *vivemos puras familias*), while leaving behind not only the authority of the chief and garden produce but also seeds and other planting materials.

Close and Distant Game

Like the Ñihuaire discussed in the previous section, most Huaorani have access to abundant forest resources. To gather and to hunt are not generally experienced as hazardous occupations. Hunters rarely come back without game. In fact, returns are high, and everyone eats at least 200 grams of meat each day. The localized distribution of favored species of game animals in different areas of the forest is well known and fairly predictable.⁸ If hunting is not experienced as the risky and unreliable business depicted by maximization theorists for whom hunting is largely a matter of luck (game animals being few and far between), it is because the location of game and

other useful resources is well known and broadly predictable. On the one hand, species habitats, movements governed by foraging and mating habits, and the way that seasonal cycles of forest fruit influence the distribution of game animals is well understood, and, on the other, the forest, which is inherited as a place full of resources, is exploited in a way that keeps resources in constant and adequate supply.

Huaorani traditionally avoided main rivers and lived on hilltops, so fishing, an activity undertaken more by women and children than by men, was marginal. Small fish were—and still are—stunned with a variety of plant poisons and then scooped out in nets knotted by women. Larger fish were sometimes speared from water pools by men with long, flexible lances made of palm wood. Since the creation of primary schools, which has accelerated the processes of sedentarization, riverine adaptation, acculturation, and market integration, fishing has become central to the subsistence economy in many settlements (Lu 1999:136–39). Hence one of the greatest changes in their subsistence economy has been their recent adaptation to the riverine habitat.

Before the introduction of shotguns in the mid-1970s, the Huaorani hunted birds and monkeys exclusively with blowpipes, and white-lipped peccaries (*Tajassu peccari*) with spears, although the white-lipped peccary (the only ground animal considered edible) was hunted only occasionally. The Huaorani had no other weapons—no traps, bows and arrows, or clubs. As the following testimony from Pegonca makes clear, most other animal species were taboo:

Traditionally, people only ate birds and monkeys, never tapir. Today, Huaorani see river people (Quichua) eat everything, any kind of meat, so they do the same. In the past, we hunted *deye* [spider monkey], *gata* [woolly monkey], *iwa* [howler monkey], *urè* [white-lipped peccary], *cuhuè* [guan], *barè* [curassow], and *yahuè* [toucan]. We did not hunt *amo* [collared peccary], *titè* [tapir], nor *ompure* [giant river otter], which is like a brother; we have similar bodies, it would be like you eating your dog. We never hunted tapir with spears for the same reason, it would walk near the longhouse like a brother, we could not eat it [see table 2 for these animals' scientific names].

I learned to civilize in Tihueno [mission base of the Summer Institute of Linguistics—L.R.; see Rival 1992]. I was taught to sew my clothes and to use a shotgun in hunting. It's amazing how the monkey falls from the tree right away when you shoot it with a gun. It doesn't cling onto the branch. My son worked for the Company. I waited for the money, and I bought a new gun. That was not long ago, when I was still living in Damuintaro.

As a civilized person in Tihueno, I was taught how to eat all kinds of meat that walked on the ground. At first, I vomited. But Babe's wife taught me the Quichua ways. She got us a dog, so we could hunt peccaries. We had seen dogs before, but we were very scared of them; they attack and bite people like jaguars. Dr. Vela [an Ecuadorian anthropologist who was working for the Ecuadorian national oil company, CEPE—L.R.] got us a German Shepherd. We gave the puppies away to my relatives. I kept one; it grew big, and I went hunting with it. With the dog, I could now chase *cōhuañe* [deer], *tota* [capybara], *amo* [collared peccary]. We all learned little by little, each for his own benefit.

Like the Makú (Silverwood-Cope 1972), but unlike the Cuiva (Arcand 1973), the Huaorani have specialized in tree game hunting.⁹ If birds are hunted as often as monkeys (both birds and monkeys are hunted more often than squirrels and other small arboreal mammals), monkeys are by far the favored game. Of the three largest monkeys, the woolly monkey (*Lagothrix lagotricha*), the howler monkey (*Alouatta seniculus*), and the spider monkey (*Ateles paniscus*), the first is especially praised.

Hunting consists of two distinct forms of activity—blowing and spearing. Hunters say that they “blow” monkeys and birds when hunting them with blowpipes, by which they imply that, unlike predators such as jaguars and harpy eagles, they do not kill monkeys and birds but retrieve them from the forest and carry their meat back to the longhouse, simply another way of harnessing the forest's bounty. Hunting with a blowpipe establishes a close, nonaggressive relationship with arboreal species, which, like people, feed mainly on forest fruits. By contrast, white-lipped peccaries (*Tajassu peccari*), the only ground animal traditionally hunted, are killed violently, in a fit of driving rage, with spears of chonta palm wood, like human enemies are killed. The meat of this omnivorous animal with an uncontrolled appetite, considered highly intoxicating, is consumed only infrequently, in a kind of orgy (Rival 1996b:156).

Blowpipe hunting is based on the idea that a balance must be found between human groups and the animals they hunt, for when human settlements become too large or too sedentary, tree animals flee.¹⁰ This is achieved through management activities, and through shamanic practices. First, people say that they share food resources—particularly fruit—with hunted species, principally by ensuring that trees in the ripening season are never fully harvested, so that some fruit is always left for birds and monkeys to feed on. Such pragmatism (keeping game close by providing them with food) is not devoid of moral ambivalence. Monkeys and birds feeding on fruit relished by people are said to be “stealing” food from humans. In this

context, stealing means that animals help themselves to food that is not theirs but to which they are entitled, in the logic of demand-sharing, a principle of exchange I discuss extensively in the next chapter. In other words, fruits legitimately belong to humans, but humans have to put up with animals' demands, not only because animals need food to subsist, fatten, and reproduce but also because if people were to stop sharing fruit with animals, *the animals would steal the seeds*, hindering the reproduction of fruiting plant species. Several myths explicitly elaborate on the need to share fruit with monkeys to keep them close and to ensure the continued symbiotic relationship between people, arboreal game animals, and fruit trees (Rival 1993a:642–43).

Second, game animals are kept close and in plentiful supply through shamanic practices. Jaguars, who are believed to control the distribution of animals and to attract troops of monkeys or flocks of birds close to human settlements, become the adoptive “sons” of shamans. When “visiting” their “parents” (shamans in a trance and their wives), they tell hunters where to find abundant game resources (Rival 1998e:627–28). It appears, therefore, that Huaorani shamans, unlike their Tukanoan counterparts (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1990; 1996:82–99; Arhem 1996), who use their power to ensure the constant regeneration of game, are primarily concerned with controlling the spatial distribution of game animals and, in particular, *attracting* them back when they flee from people. In other words, Huaorani shamans use filial relations to keep animals close, such as monkeys, which are already quite limited in their distribution and ecological requirements.

Further insight into Huaorani hunting may be derived by comparing it to Makuna hunting. Arhem (1996) shows that an ethical code he calls “the cosmic foodweb” underlies both the Makuna shamanic system and hunting practices, as the Makuna believe that hunters use shamanic means to empower species to reproduce and multiply. Given that animal Spirit Owners allocate their “animal children” to human beings, killing for food, Arhem explains, involves an act of reciprocity (192).¹¹ For the Makuna, killing a game animal and eating its flesh liberates its essential, spiritual essence, which can then be reembodied (i.e., reborn) in another animal.

Human and animal reproduction are not so directly and obviously interconnected for the Huaorani, whose shamanic system does not represent reciprocity as the most appropriate mode of exchange between humans, spirits, and animals. Whereas hunting is a kind of male gardening for the Makuna (Arhem 1996:199), it is a form of gathering for the Huaorani, whereby using and consuming natural resources does not impair—and pos-

sibly even encourages—their continued reproduction. The Huaorani say that monkeys and birds reproduce unproblematically as long as humans leave them enough food to eat and as long as interspecies population dynamics are balanced, that is, as long as human settlements remain relatively small, interspersed, and transient. Furthermore, the jaguars, who help keep the game close, are conceptualized as generous “ancestral spirits,” rather than as allies with whom the souls of dead humans are exchanged for the live bodies of animals.

Men become shamans (*meñera*, literally ‘parents of jaguars’)¹² at a mature age, when, with several of their children already married, they are fully incorporated into their wives’s house groups, a condition *sine qua non* for acquiring the ability to establish consanguineal ties of a more personal and mystical nature. A man does not choose to be a shaman but, rather, is chosen by a jaguar spirit who first appears in his dreams and wants to adopt him as his father. If the dream recurs, the jaguar spirit feels welcome and is encouraged to come back; the man is now considered to have accepted him as his son. From now on, the jaguar spirit visits his human father, his “mother” (i.e., his human father’s wife) and his “siblings” (i.e., his human father’s children) regularly at night in their longhouse. Such visits make the man “die” temporarily, as the jaguar spirit/son takes the place of the man’s soul and uses his body as a “tape recorder” to broadcast his visions and conversations with longhouse co-residents. He speaks and chants, referring to the unconscious man whose body he possesses as “my father,” while addressing the man’s wife as “mother,” and the man’s children as “siblings.”

Jaguar spirits choose adoptive fathers who not only are mature men with a family of their own but who also have “known death” at an early stage in their lives. When a child is so ill with *daicaho* ‘fever’ that he¹³ is thought to be close to dying, his parents take him to a *meñera* who gives him the ultimate remedy, *mihi* (*Banisteriopsis muricata*). If the child survives thanks to the ingestion of *mihi*, he becomes a different kind of person, literally a *survivor*, who, in mature age, becomes susceptible to visits by jaguar spirits. Furthermore, it should be noted that the *mimo* ‘heart souls’ of dead shamans and warriors killed while fighting are said to “give birth” to several female jaguar cubs, which are adopted and raised by “real” forest jaguars as their own cubs. In short, the spirits that live in jaguar bodies, adopt certain men as their fathers, visit humans, make animal game stay closer to humans, and tell humans where to find game in the forest once lived in human bodies, that is, in the bodies of shamans or warriors.¹⁴ I show in the next section that this construction of shamanic power concords

with other management practices that transform the forest into a giving environment.

The Management of Plant Resources

Huaorani ecology is to be primarily based on people's experience of how different tree species grow, mature, and reproduce, and which animals are related to which plant species. Although people's understanding of the rain forest ecology seems limitless, special attention is given to a few features, all associated with growth and age. The forest, *monito ömë* 'our land' or simply *ömë* 'homeland', 'territory', or 'forest', is conceptualized as a patchwork of successional fallows. People call the forest around Quehueire Ono, and, in fact, the whole of the old Protectorate *ahuene* 'the place where trees have grown again', that is, secondary forest.¹⁵ Secondary forests are further divided into *huiyencore* (four- to ten-year-old clearings characterized by the frequency of balsa trees), *huyenco* (ten- to twenty-year-old clearings), *huiñeme* (twenty- to forty-year-old clearings characterized by the high incidence of adult palms), and *durani abuhè* (forty- to a hundred-year-old clearings, remarkable for their big trees). *Huiñeme* forests were traditionally the preferred sites in which to establish main residences. However, all types of forest were—and still are—continuously visited and lived in, for longer or shorter stays.

Much more research is needed on ecological zoning according to local perception, but the preliminary and rather superficial data I was able to gather while in the field indicate that the Huaorani recognize that short- and long-term disturbances such as tree falls and river activity influence the distribution of animals and plants. In fact, changes associated with gap dynamics and vegetational succession, that is, ecological processes, are manipulated and used as additional exploitable forest resources.

A great number of cultigens that are not planted in gardens are consumed daily, and numerous plant species are encouraged to grow outside cultivated areas, as people engage in various daily activities (planting, selecting, transplanting, protecting, using, and discarding) that have a direct or indirect effect on the distribution of species, be they fully domesticated or not. For example, I saw women plant part of the vine they had brought for stunning fish near the stream before going home with their catch. One threw the seeds of *cuñi* (a bush whose leaves are mashed and mixed with clay to produce a stunning poison) along the stream where she had fished. She had also thrown some of the same seeds in her manioc plantation the previous day.

Cultivars are found—discovered—throughout the forest. This further indicates an evident strategy of resource dispersion within specific regions. Fish poison vines are found along the creeks where people fish, semiwild fruit trees near hunting camps, and numerous useful palms (such as *oönem-pa*, *Astrocaryum tucama*) along trails. People regularly leave their longhouses for hunting and foraging trips and move through vast territories in such a way that distinguishing between “extraction” and “management” becomes almost impossible. Wherever a Huaorani finds herself in the forest, she chances upon needed plants. She is particularly vague on whether these strategic and handy resources were planted by someone or just happened to grow there. She is even vaguer on *when* it was that people lived in the area marked by human activities. What matters to her is that the occurrence of useful plants can be related either to individuals or to house groups, or even to indeterminate users of a particular area. For instance, when young Huaorani unexpectedly discover useful plants in a part of the forest with which they are unfamiliar, they often attribute them, with noticeable pleasure, to the activities of past people. If they decide that these cultigens were left by dead forebears—usually great-grandparents—they may see these plants as an invitation to move permanently and legitimately into this part of the forest and to create a new longhouse. When no certain link with past or present human activity is established, the wide occurrence of cultigens is linked to animal activity. For example, an edible wild root vegetable is said to “belong” to the tapir.

Many useful plants, however, are not connected to any human or animal activity, even when their distribution affects human distribution. For instance, an informant who once told me, “We remain within the limits of the *oonta* (*Curarea tecunarium*) territory,” was nevertheless adamant that the vine, which he gathered to prepare his hunting poison, just happened to be where we found it. However, given the cultural importance of curare poison, one wonders whether the *Curarea tecunarium* vine has not been subjected to indirect human management. Although this cannot be solved before thorough botanical research is undertaken, the denial of plant management is interesting in itself.

Another species, which does not seem to be managed in any intentional way but whose spatial distribution greatly influences the Huaorani's movements and choice of residence, is the ungurahua palm (*Jessenia bataua*; in Huaorani, *petohuè*). A number of informants have told me that one reason why longhouses are built on hilltops is that this is where ungurahua palms grow. The ungurahua palm provides rich food, building materials, and raw

materials for the making of a wide range of artifacts and remedies. Besides being an extremely useful plant resource, the unguurahua palm offers protection. Its wood makes a good fire, even under the wettest conditions. The safest place to spend the night when lost in the forest is under a unguurahua palm. People say that unguurahua palms, which have deep roots and grow in fertile soils, can stop violent winds from felling emergent canopy trees. Finally, informants stress repeatedly that those who flee from wars and spear- ing raids would not survive without the unguurahua fruit (*petomo*). It ripens throughout the year, an obvious advantage over the chonta palm's (*Bactris gasipaes*) seasonal fruiting, and it is rich in fats and proteins. Moreover, the fruit is greatly appreciated by woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*), a favored game animal. The unguurahua palm is never planted but grows along ridge tops, where people collect the fruit during their gathering expeditions. It is brought back to a camp or longhouse hearth to be simmered. People are perfectly aware that these cooking activities encourage the germination of unguurahua pits, hence facilitating its propagation.¹⁶

More generally, the Huaorani have a clear dietary preference for fruit, and gathered fruits form an important part of their daily food intake, as well as germinated seeds, a relished food dug from beneath certain trees. The fruits of at least 152 species of palms, trees, or epiphytes are regularly harvested and eaten (Lescure, Baslev, and Alarcón 1987). In addition to the unguurahua (*petomo*, *Jessenia bataua*) and the chonta palm (*daguencia*, *Bactris gasipaes*) managed in forest groves, other palm fruits, including morete (*nantoca*, *Mauritia flexuosa*), and a wide range of fruit species are collected and consumed. Like the unguurahua and the chonta palm, a large number of these food plants are propagated through human consumption rather than direct planting. For example, the favored *daboca* (*Solanum pectinatum*, *Solanum sessiliflorum*) fruit grows where it has been discarded. A very sour fruit, it is never completely eaten, and the seeds remain on the forest floor until the right heat and light conditions cause them to germinate. There are numerous *daboca* bushes in manioc gardens, around houses, and along rivers, but, according to my informants, none of them were planted.

It is in this context that the Huaorani, not unlike the Cuiva (Arcand 1973:51ff.), consider gathering a low-risk, anxiety-free enterprise and a fairly predictable daily routine. Huaorani subsistence techniques, like those of many hunter-gatherers throughout the world, are remarkably simple yet allow people to obtain what they consider a sufficient quantity of food without expending much time or energy. Numerous plants are also collected as building materials or raw materials for the making of handicrafts and,

to a lesser extent, for medicinal purposes. For instance, referring back to table 4.1, a total of 300 kilograms of palm and other fruit (an average of 2.91 kilograms for each of the forty-five adults and fifty-eight children), and a total of 1,604 palm leaves for house construction (an average of 118.46 per house) were collected during these twenty days. My field notes, however, mention numerous other plants for dyes, medicine, fish and hunting poison, quivers, bark cloth, and so forth.

The examples of plant resource use given here indicate various forms of landscape management without direct domestication or cultivation. The productive growth of wild edible plants (and, to some extent, the multiplication of animals such as birds and monkeys) is promoted through a range of strategies which over time, may result in the evolution of plants such as ungrahua (*Jessenia bataua*), chonta palm (*Bactris gasipaes*), ubillas (*Pourouma cecropiaefolia*), chambira (*Astrocaryum chambira*), or ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis muricata*) into crops. Indeed, indigenous peoples living in the Napo region do cultivate all these species.¹⁷

It is well known that crop evolution started with humans being attracted to eat and disperse the fruit of crops without necessarily growing them and that humans inadvertently caused plant mutations by harvesting individual wild plants possessing desirable qualities to an exceptional degree.¹⁸ What is particularly interesting in the Huaorani case is that, on the one hand, they recognize past sites of consumption and dwelling sites as major sites of plant reproduction, and, on the other, they consciously choose not to grow plants in gardens but rather to exploit plants where they find them in the forest. As a result, they actively manage the forest by collecting wild natural produce as well as plants resulting from past human activities, including former cultivation activities. By cultivating wild plants while managing domesticated species in the wild, they establish a perceptible continuum between undisturbed and disturbed forest. In conclusion, the Huaorani are primarily mobile food collectors who obtain their food and other requirements directly from the forest by altering the natural distribution of plant and animal species in a way that creates patches of concentrated useful resources (Balée 1998; Rival 1999b).

Furthermore, as the example of the group that left Dayuno illustrates, the Huaorani easily shift from food production to hunting-gathering, and vice versa. However, growing food by agriculture is not as valued as hunting and gathering wild foods. People trek and revert to the predominant hunting-gathering lifestyle whenever they can and never rely exclusively on food production or on crops growing in areas they have cultivated themselves,

preferring to depend on wild food, that is, on food encountered in the forest while trekking. Moreover, noncultivated food supplies are not considered to be a form of safety food to be relied on when cultivated food has failed. Quite the contrary, noncultivated food is the main staple, and cultivated food is used essentially for political reasons, as I explain in chapter 6. Finally, the shift from cultivation to hunting-gathering (or vice versa) does not necessarily correspond to a shift from sedentary living to nomadism. People trek to patches of wild, abundant resources (such as ubillas) to plant foods indicating former cultivation (such as banana plantations or ancient chonta palm groves) or to manioc gardens (planted and cultivated by the consumers themselves, by their enemy, or by non-Huaorani). And, as mentioned earlier, people trek to get access to certain animal—as well as plant—resources, given that birds and monkeys, the favored game, tend to occupy areas of forest rich in fruiting plants, away from human settlements and their associated food-production systems.

Chonta Palm Groves, Fructification, and Forest Bounty

For a Huaorani, it is on hilltops where one looks for marks left by past humans. There people notice, as if chronological time did not matter, a hunting trail still in use, secondary regrowth on an old garden site, or the site of a longhouse dating back several generations. Productive activities and forest vegetation unfold in each other and form a single process of growth, decay, and regeneration. A hilltop is covered with producing palms because,

the grandparents used to live there, they built their longhouse on it, they lived together without splitting up, and they made gardens to feast with the enemies. . . . Do you see this fish poison vine? My grandmother must have made it grow here, look, there used to be a creek down there, she fished in it.

I heard similar remarks over and over again while walking through the forest with informants. In the course of living, a residential group hunts, gathers, and manages a whole range of useful plants along hunting trails and streams. People cook and eat, discard fruit seeds, throw roots, and cut down trees, which gives light for other tree species to grow. People are totally aware of these processes and of the intimate, symbiotic connections between their being alive (i.e., producing and consuming) and the state of the forest.

Collective memories of past house groups, specific forebears, and memo-

able drinking ceremonies are especially aroused by chonta palm stands still growing in formerly cultivated forest patches. Like many Amazonian Indians, the Huaorani grow chonta palm seedlings (usually from the *stone*, but rarely from a basal sucker), which they replant later in the clearing surrounding the longhouse. It is likely that most chonta palm groves start in this fashion. But, as forest regrowth would cover over the palms one or two decades after the dwelling site has been abandoned, the groves would not endure without human intervention. These groves are, in fact, old dwelling sites managed with a view to encourage the continuous growth of specific plant species. They exhibit scattered potsherds and broken stone axes, which are proudly excavated and kept as the secure signs that "the grandparents lived there."

Every year, at the beginning of the fruiting season (which generally starts in January and lasts until April), groups related through intermarriage converge toward these palm groves, generally at a two-to-three-day walking distance from their main residences. *Daguenca*, the chonta palm fruit, becomes their main staple, and hunting is discontinued. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the years are counted in *daguencaterè* 'new chonta palm' seasons, which are also a time when both people and game animals fatten, and when female monkeys gestate. Given their seasonal periodicity, chonta palms punctuate the time dimension linked to the reproductive cycles of natural and human resources. Related house groups spend the whole season collecting and preparing the fruit for their daily consumption and, more important, for drinking ceremonies and marriage celebrations. Social reproduction and human fertility is thus assimilated to the ecological time of seasons, when forest resources increase.¹⁹

As people prepare and consume vast quantities of fruit in season, new seedlings develop around the temporary hearths, year after year. The chonta palm fruit is inedible, unless simmered in water for a few hours. Fruit at the top of the pot that is not properly heated, hence not completely freed from proteolytic enzyme inhibitors or calcium oxalate crystals, are discarded. Some of this fruit is eaten by animals, but a substantial amount is left to germinate on site. Young saplings of *macahuè* (unidentified species, probably of the *Bombacaceae* family) are planted at the side of the thorny chonta palm trunks to provide easier access to fruit bunches. Younger chonta stems (*tehuè*) are used to make blowpipes (Rival 1996b). Older ones are felled for the quality of their hardwood, which is used to make spears and a whole range of smaller piercing or cutting tools. Cutting down mature palms has the additional advantage of promoting the growth of new shoots. In

wartime, palm groves are destroyed to make spears. Enemy groups destroy each other's groves as a means not only to increase their stock of precious hardwood but also to suppress social memory. Without these landmarks, a group loses its sense of continuity and its claim to a particular part of the forest.

Although chonta palm groves could not persist without human intervention, they are not *cultivated*. Maintained through activities of consumption, they are the products of the activities of people from the past whom those who come to feed on the fruit identify as their deceased grandparents or great-grandparents. Despite the fact that the current practice in sedentarized villages is, like in many other Amazonian societies, to plant chonta palms in swiddens and backdoor yards, the old cultural meanings have not completely died out. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, when families like the Ñihuaiiri leave a community after a dispute with its leader, they never abandon their gardens without felling all their chonta palms, a precaution they do not take for other crops; large banana and manioc plantations, cacao, coffee, and groves of citrus trees are simply left behind. This practice indicates that chonta palms do still stand for social continuity. Moreover, planted palms, which are treated like introduced food crops, are still distinguished from the ancestral groves to which people continue to go every year. Resulting from symbiotic relations perpetuated through consumption, chonta palm groves are not willfully planted but may be destroyed deliberately.

Palm fruits, and most especially the chonta palm (*Bactris gasipaes*), play an important role in the fertility rituals held throughout northwest Amazonia, for instance, among the Shuar (Pelizzaro 1983) or the Yagua (Chaumeil 2001) but most notably among the groups of the Vaupès-Rio Negro region pertaining to the Yuruparí cult complex (S. Hugh-Jones 1979). Pelizzaro (1983:56, 81) notes that Uwí, the chonta palm's spirit, reproduces itself without ever dying and that the Shuar celebrate in this palm the life of plants that germinate and grow without human intervention. To the Shuar, the chonta palm is the tree of life, the seed that fecunds the whole of nature (Pelizzaro 1983:135). Ethnographers of the Yuruparí cult complex have paid more attention to the role of sacred flutes and to the symbolism of cultivated plants—such as manioc, tobacco, and coca—than to the use and meaning of palm fruits. However, and despite the scarcity of comparative descriptions, it can easily be established that ritual dances to the sound of sacred flutes often involve the bringing in the longhouse of large quantities of wild or cultivated fruits in the ripening season, most often of chonta

palm or inga (*Inga* sp.) fruit (Hugh-Jones 1979:66). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the best descriptions of fruit harvest festivals are by the ethnographers of two mobile food collectors, the Makú and the Cuiva, who, like the Huaorani, seem to use palm fruits extensively in rituals celebrating the fertility of the forest.

Although the Makú consume large amounts of manioc beer that they prepare with traded manioc or with manioc stolen from river Indians, they perform a fruit-offering ritual which suggests that forest fruits may have played a greater ceremonial role in the past. Silverwood-Cope (1972:53) adds that when the pupunha palms (local term for *Bactris gasipaes*) are in fruit, drinking bouts take place as often as every six or seven days. Furthermore, the Makú believe in a fruit power or fruit essence (*elu*) that all humans must have laid on them to grow strong and as protection against illness (Silverwood-Cope 1972:272). Similarly the Cuiva, who hold dances whenever drugs are plentiful and enough people are in camp, organize a special dance when there is *yaweiba* 'plenty of meat.' This ritual involves hunters dancing with young girls (a father cannot dance with his own daughter) and offering them "plenty of meat." A myth indicates that *yaweiba* was originally celebrated with a "bitter" palm fruit called *naharebo* that had to be cooked or roasted to become edible and that acted as a symbolic marker of natural fertility (Arcand 1973:230, 238).

Similar to the argument I developed some years ago (Rival 1993a) regarding the Huaorani's use of *Bactris gasipaes* groves as symbols of slow growth,²⁰ generational continuity, and memory of the dead, Erikson (1996:189) has recently stressed the significance of the continued exploitation of ancient *Bactris* groves by the Matis, who consider the palms to be the receptacles, if not the transformed bodies, of their ancestors. Chaumeil (2001) has further analyzed the relationship between chonta palms, the living, and the dead among the Yagua, and, more generally, in a number of Northwest Amazon groups. In this new publication Chaumeil notes that even in their present sedentarized state, the Yagua return periodically to their ancient clearings, which are located near abandoned sites containing graves, to harvest palm fruits and exploit palm wood. He adds that the first and main ripening of the chonta palm fruit, called *pürendanu* 'Bactris time', inaugurates the year's ceremonial cycle and orders the calendar of ritual activities, and that 'Bactris time' is lived as a time of abundance. Chaumeil concludes that the Yagua associate the palms with the self, ancestors, and intergenerational continuity.

On the basis of these ethnographic facts, it can be said that Northwest

Amazon horticulturalists, such as the Yagua and the Matis, and Northwest Amazon trekkers and foragers, such as the Makú, the Cuiva, and the Huaorani, broadly share the same symbolic association between old chonta palm groves, fertility, abundance, and continuity. However, and as I try to demonstrate in the next section, the relationship between the living and the dead is conceptualized quite differently by forest fruit harvesters, whose cultural representations stress the benefits of relying on naturally plentiful resources, and by chonta palm cultivating groups, who are primarily concerned with timeless ancestral essences and unchanging modes of reciprocity.

The Giving Environment

The “natural abundance” of the forest is made manifest in that *omere gomonahuaorani* ‘people trekking’ do not have to cultivate, for they *find* useful plants and cultigens in old camps and abandoned house sites or along rivers or trails. Although a thorough botanical survey of Huaorani land has yet to be conducted, it is quite clear that the Huaorani, like other Amazonian trekkers and foragers (Balée 1994), have traditionally depended on anthropophytes and semidomesticates, and have used a whole range of more or less intentional management practices to encourage the continuous growth of certain fruit trees and palms in old sites while facilitating the propagation of certain plant species. As explained in earlier sections, the environment is not fully exploited (only a small array of what is available is eaten), but food sources are plentiful in Huaorani land, for the forest, modified by the past activities of long dead people, is rich in resources.

Natural Abundance

There is no word in Huaorani to translate literally what I call *natural abundance*, but this does not mean that the term does not capture the indigenous representation of the relationship between living people, the forest, and past generations. A number of superlatives, emphatic suffix markers, adverbial forms, and, above all, speech diacritics (tone of voice, wordless exclamations, gestures) are used to convey the ravished pleasure and enthusiastic excitation caused by the sight—or the recall—of an abundance of useful resources and foodstuff. Handmade objects or processed products do not cause such admiration and enthusiasm. For example, none of the aforementioned superlatives would apply to a large manioc garden under production or a hip of hunted game or collected nuts. A peccary herd

passing by may cause much excitement ("there were so many, many, many of them!"), but no one would exclaim "there are so many of them!" at the sight of twenty hunted, dead peccaries awaiting to be butchered and cooked. Similarly a palm grove with ripening fruit will cause people to exclaim: "There is so much fruit, and it is ripe!" but no one will marvel at the five or six big jars of fruit drink lining the longhouse wall.

A rapid survey of manioc cultivation highlights the meaning of natural abundance contrasted to the reasons behind the Huaorani dismissal of crop production as a mode of obtaining the resources necessary to sustain human life. It is through hunting and gathering that daily subsistence is secured²¹ and that manioc cultivation is (1) neglected in practice (Rival 1998f) and (2) largely confined to the growing of foodstuff needed in the elaboration of ceremonial drinks used in festive attempts to forge alliances with enemy groups (Rival 1998c); besides, (3) manioc is associated with fast, unreliable growth (Rival 1993a).

What is striking about Huaorani manioc cultivation is that, unlike their Quichua and Shuar neighbors and so many other Amazonian horticulturalists, they do not seek to obtain a constant and reliable source of foodstuff, which becomes essential to the very definition of identity.²² Gardens are small in size, poor in crop variety, hardly weeded, and abandoned after only one harvest. The soil is not cleared of all its vegetation cover, nor is it burned. Moreover, manioc production is eminently sporadic. Instead of using the convenience of natural storage by which manioc—unlike maize—can be left in the ground for months after root maturation (Rival 2001) and instead of planting different varieties with different maturation rates in order to secure a continuous supply of roots (Elias, Rival, and McKey 2000), the Huaorani use only a few varieties maturing at the same rate and generally harvest their gardens all at once, often weeks before the roots are fully developed and have reached their maximal size. Moreover, they do not keep a constant stock of manioc stalks to replant and, given their general lack of planning and concern for securing regular and continuous supplies of garden crops, may end up spending months at a time without any. Finally, and as I have argued elsewhere (Rival 1993a:644–48), they assimilate manioc to the category of fast-growing, short-lived species that are propagated over vast, boundless areas and associated with political instability. Because of its fast growth and easy dispersion, manioc is considered undependable. It is culturally contrasted with the long-term reliability of concentrated resources that grow slowly and reproduce over generations in the same biocultural locations. This cultural contrast represents, in many

ways, the core meaning of natural abundance: People should not subsist on food created by themselves in the present. There should be a time lag between nature's generative fructification and its use by humans. This is why food dependence on perennials is preferred to reliance on short-lived crops.

What makes Huaorani thinking so different from Amazonian societies, who stress the moral value of human labor,²³ and, indeed, from our own is that the natural environment is thought of as comprising elements that are the direct manifestations and concrete objectifications of *past* human work. Here, there is no mystical regeneration through death or through predation and appropriation of the life essence of others by killing them. Whereas, in many Amazonian societies and throughout the world,²⁴ life is represented as a limited good and death seen as necessary to the regeneration of life, here we have a system that stresses the past of a dead person, rather than death itself, as conditioning resource increase. When an old person dies, it is not the work of death nor the spirits and forces being detached from the body that are the source of life and nurturance for the living. Rather, it is the activities that were carried out as part of the business of living that have a continuous and generative effect and that are at the origin of the natural resources eventually used in the future.²⁵

In other words, the presence in the forest of abundant resources is envisaged as resulting from the subsistence activities of people long dead. People are also conscious that their present activities are making similar activities in the future possible. Such awareness, however, is devoid of moral implication and has nothing to do with the modern notion of planning for the benefit of future generations, for the future and the past are encapsulated within a timeless present (Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1998). The dead do not ask for anything, so no exchange takes place between the living and the dead. Besides, what they "give" to the living is not really a gift;²⁶ it is more like a by-product, a consequence of the fact that they spent their lives giving to, and receiving from, one another. In short, today's useful resources are the legacy of the past sharing economy (more on this notion in chapter 5).

So the living owe nothing to the dead. In fact, if the living can recognize past activities in the forest, they can never be sure of their authors. My insistent questions were often met with hesitant answers ("yes, such plant grows in such place because this is where 'X' *nanicabo* lived," "X" standing for a named [great-] grandfather or [great-] grandmother), as if my Huaorani friends and guides were aware of the conjectural character of their assertions. How can we know with certainty whose activities have generated

abundance when residential groups are so mobile, and when so many different historical groups (not all Huaorani) lived in the region? What matters, in any case, is that human work can be recognized in the landscape and identified as *the* source of abundance for the living.

As discussed so far, the Huaorani notion of natural abundance shares many traits with Bird-David's (1990) concept of a *giving environment*, a term she coined to define the economic system of hunting-and-gathering populations, which she analyzes as being "characterised by modes of distribution and property relations that are constructed in terms of giving, as within the family, rather than in terms of reciprocity, as between kin" (189). Starting from Mosko's (1987) structuralist analysis of Mbuti religion, and using Gudeman's (1986) theory of local economic models organized around root metaphors, Bird-David generalizes the contrast between gatherer-hunters and their cultivating neighbors on the basis that whereas the subsistence economy of the former is centered around the "giving environment" metaphor, the subsistence economy of the latter is centered around the "reciprocating environment" metaphor. The distinctiveness of Nayaka, Mbuti, and Batek economic systems, therefore, is not so much linked to their mode of subsistence (i.e., that they hunt and gather instead of cultivating or herding like their neighbors do) but to their particular view of the forest as ever providing parent rather than as reciprocating ancestor. In other words, their relationship to the environment, like the social relations structuring distribution, is based on sharing, that is, requests to be given. By contrast, their neighbors organize distribution in terms of reciprocity, balanced or unbalanced.

Bird-David's thesis that demand-sharing, a particular form of nonreciprocal exchange characteristic of egalitarian foragers, equally structures relationships among people, and the relationship between people and the environment is fully supported by the Huaorani case material. As discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, the Huaorani, too, make demands on people to share more—not to produce more—and they differentiate sharing from forms of generosity based on obligatory reciprocity. However, it would be misleading to say in their case that "the environment gives as a generous parent" or that "the forest is parent" (Bird-David 1990:192).

Huaorani people are not offered, but decide to receive, nourishment from the past. In turn, they ensure the feeding of future generations simply by going about their lives, by consuming products of the forest day after day. Past people are thought to provide in abundance for their descendants, but such abundance is not regarded as the outcome of moral relations. The

emphasis is on people's domestic skills and practical knowledge, not on a moral contract between past and present generations or that between people and animals (Hugh-Jones 1996). Huaorani emphasis on the role of past generations in making the forest a giving environment is therefore devoid of any idea of both ancestral or spiritual sanction or of ancestral benevolence. The forest is not apprehended as a unitary category as it seems to be by the Mbuti, who establish a metaphorical parent-child relationship between nature and human society.²⁷ Rather, specific parts of the forest are known to be the legacies of the everyday lives and domestic activities of past dwellers. Again, what turns part of the forest into a giving environment, that is, an environment that gives profusely without asking anything in return, is the life activities of past people. Past people *què* 'did' and *huè* 'lived' in such and such part of the forest, and their activities "have made the forest grow," by which it is meant that subsistence and ceremonial activities have encouraged the *natural* growth of useful forest plants. In short, the forest, which stands as the historical record of past human activities, is inseparable from the people who have lived in it, and with it.

Trekking and History

In this chapter I have addressed the specific ways in which the Huaorani involve themselves practically with their forested environment and have shown how these practices are intimately connected with a cultural construction of the environment as the domain of natural abundance, providing them not only with food and useful materials but also with the means of establishing physical links with the past. I have used the term *natural abundance* to describe the social practices by which the Huaorani engage with the forest and participate actively in its biocultural production and reproduction, and to express that, in their view, the forest, far from being a pristine environment, is the product of the life activities of past generations that have transformed it into an environment rich in resources. These resources can be tapped without any sanction or moral obligation, and without anything being asked in return.

Whereas the previous chapter linked trekking to the disruptions caused by violent death and warfare, which trigger centrifugal movements, dispersion, fleeing, and wandering, this chapter has explored the links between trekking, congregation, and attraction to life and natural plenty. The past is encountered while cruising in the forest, and history is made as part of the intricate relationship between the dependence on ecological cycles, such as

massive seeding or fructification, and the cultural recognition of past activities, which naturally increase forest resources. The past, however, is eminently continuous with the present, for subsistence procuring relies on the tapping of natural resources perceived as being plentiful and as having their origin in the past.

Huaorani subsistence strategies are entirely adapted to the historicity of the landscape. Trekking, a central activity by which the forest is culturally transformed without following a preset design is intimately related to foraging in anthropomorphic forests. Whereas internal warfare unambiguously belongs to a bygone past known through mythical or biographical narratives, hunting, gathering, and cultivating leave human marks on the forest that are continuously inscribed in the landscape. The past and the present, as a result, are not easily distinguishable. And whereas violent deaths function as mnemonics that fix particular events to particular places and genealogical ties to particular names, the reading of human activity in the landscape encourages the naturalization of social relations, the forgetting of specific kinship ties, and the development of vague intergenerational associations with *monito memeiri* (our forebears).²⁸

Loci of natural abundance to which people periodically return are at once important sources of raw material and food, ancient dwellings, and burial sites. These places thus link together, on the one hand, generations of dead and living people, and, on the other, interlocking life processes. These life processes "tell" the nonviolent and continuous history materialized in the forest environment, beyond the short-lived genealogical and biographical memory of specific persons and house groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

Coming Back to the Longhouse



When the Ñihuairi decided to leave Dayuno definitively (see chapter 4) and to create the new community of Quehueire Ono along a particular bent of the Shiripuno River, they chose to build their two longhouses where the mother of the oldest brother's wife had lived her youth. Her name was bestowed onto me during an improvised naming ceremony, as a sign of my formal affiliation to one of the two house groups forming the new settlement.

Although not located on hilltops away from rivers, the two collective dwellings (*nanicabo onco*) were built traditionally, as large A-frame structures about 15 meters long, 8 meters wide, and twice the height of an adult, with a thatch palm roof reaching to the ground, and two doors. I spent my first mornings in Quehueire Ono collecting from the forest, with the other women of my house group (*nanicabo*, pl. *nanicaboiri*), vine ropes and the long and flat *mö* (*Geonoma tamandua*) palm leaves. Meanwhile, men were felling trees (among others, *bagahue* [*Abuta grandifolia*], *huinëmecahue* [*Brunfelsia grandiflora* var. *schultesii*], or *mancahue* [*Cecropia* sp. *Trecúl*]) and palms (*omaquehue* [*Phytelephas macrocarpa*] or *tepahue* [*Iriartea deltoidea*]) to make house poles. Women traditionally contribute vine ropes to attach the house poles that men erect, as well as *mö* leaves to make the water-tight inner roof that lines the external palm roof woven by men.

Back from the gathering expeditions, we would work together at leveling the ground underneath the great roof, digging out all root remains and pulling out stones and debris. Each unearthed bits of clay pot or broken stone axe was discovered with great pleasure and excitement, and precious-ly kept by the women. They were the material signs that *mono memeiri* (literally 'our grandfathers') had once lived here.

It is in the tight community formed by these two longhouses (*nanicaboiri*) that I experienced the living intimacy that constitutes the core of Huaorani sociality and that I came to understand the ways in which *nanicabo* 'togetherness' is expressed and continuously reasserted through sharing practices. This chapter explores the function of longhouses as places where people converge and resources accumulate to be shared and consumed. Furthermore, it discusses the sociological importance of attachment and be-

longing to dwelling places that escape death, desertion, destruction by fire, or decay while showing the link between residence and adaptation to a forest rich in plants and other natural resources attributed to the activities of forebears.

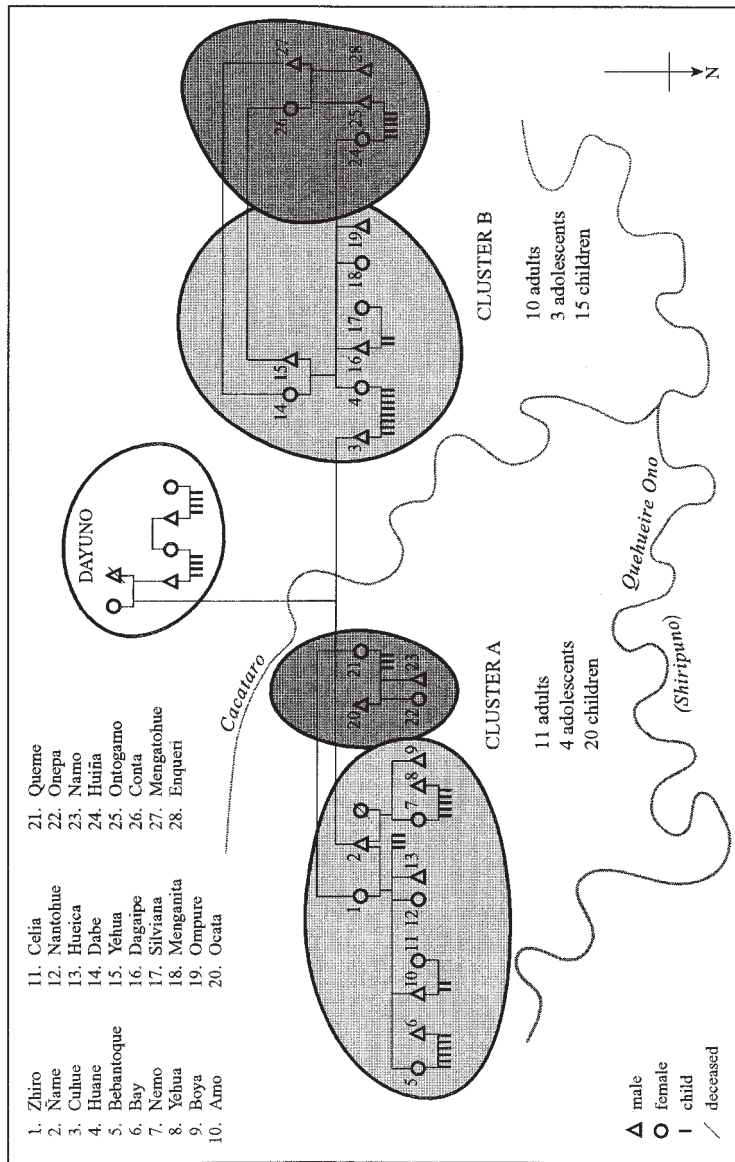
The Longhouse: To Belong and to Reside

One of the two longhouses the Ñihuai built was to shelter the old Ñame, his wife, Zhiro, and their children. Ñame's younger brother, Cuhue, was to dwell in the other with his wife, Huane, and their children, as well as Huane's parents and younger siblings (see figure 5.1). A third brother had stayed behind in Dayuno with his wife and children, his wife's brother's group, and with the three brothers' old mother.

Ñame's and Zhiro's house group, known as *Ñameiri* 'those of Ñame' or Ñame *onco* 'the house of Ñame' (literally his 'house-group's dwelling place') for some, and as Zhiroi or Zhiro *onco* for others,¹ included their unmarried adolescent son and daughter, their two young children, their daughter, Bebantoque, her husband, and their six children; their son, Amo, his wife, Celia (she was not happy to have joined her husband's folks and longed to return to her native house group), and their two children; and Nemo, daughter of Ñame from a previous marriage, her unmarried brother (he was physically disabled, yet an excellent hunter), her husband, and their five children. This house group thus numbered a total of nine adults, two adolescents, and seventeen children. There were four hearths (one for each married woman), two that I used indifferently (Zhiro's and Bebantoque's), one that I felt all right using (Nemo's), and one that I learned to keep clear of (Celia's).

Eight adults, two adolescents, and fifteen children lived in the second longhouse. Residing in the same house as Cuhue, Huane, and their eight children were Huane's mother, Dabe, and her father, Yehua; Huane's unmarried adolescent brother and sister; her brother, Dagaípe, his wife, and their two children; and her sister, Huiña, her husband, and their five children. Although not the oldest members of their house group, Cuhue and Huane were the *ahuene* 'househeads' (or owners of the house), which meant that Dabe and Yehua were living with them rather than the other way around. If Dabe and Yehua had headed the house group, there would have been no connection between the owners of the two longhouses forming Quehueire Ono. It was clear to everyone, however, that the community had been created jointly by the two brothers, Ñame and Cuhue, and that

FIGURE 5.1
Location and
composition
of the two
founding
manicaboiri,
Quehuerei Ono
(December 1989).



Cuhue's in-laws, who had come to live in his house, had joined his and his brother's community.

A Huaorani longhouse generally contains approximately ten to thirty-five residents, typically an older couple (often a man married to one, two, or three sisters), their daughters (with, when married, their husbands and children), and their unmarried sons, with an additional few orphans, refugees from killing raids, and more or less permanently attached visitors. It is fairly common for a younger brother to help an older brother establish an independent settlement, or cluster of longhouses, each cluster representing a community of extended kin or *huaomoni* 'we-people' that protects its independence and maintains its isolation by surrounding itself with a large buffer zone. In this case, Ñame and Cuhue had put a safe distance between themselves and the brother they had left behind with their old dying mother, Ehuenca. The split had infuriated the brother's wife, whose kindred was now, she felt, too reduced to maintain a large modern village with an airstrip, a school, and a health center.

Soon Ocata, Ñame's classificatory brother married to Zhiro's classificatory sister, Queme, also left Dayuno to come to live next to Zhiro and Ñame with his wife, their unmarried adolescent son and daughter, and their three young children. Then Huiña's in-laws decided to move next door to Cuhue's and Huane's, which prompted her husband, Ontogamo, to take her and the children to live with his parents, Mengatohue and Conta, and his younger brother, Enqueri. Because Huiña and Ontogamo are double cross-cousins, this change of residence was not a shift from matrilineal to virilineal residence. Instead, the two intermarried brother-sister pairs (brother-sister Mengatohue and Dabe married brother-sister Yehua and Conta) lived next to each other, each with one married daughter, her husband and children, and unmarried adolescents. This arrangement was strengthened a few years later when Dabe's and Yehua's adolescent daughter, Menganita, married Conta's and Mengatohue's adolescent son, Enqueri, thus uniting the two houses through a second double cross-cousin marriage.

There was far more visiting and resource pulling between Ñame-Zhiro and Ocata-Queme houses (cluster A), on the one hand, and between Cuhue-Huane and Mengatohue-Conta houses, on the other hand (cluster B), than between, for instance, Ñame-Zhiro and Mengatohue-Conta houses. Similarly it was not unusual for individuals belonging to the same cluster to go off on a trek together for a few days or to visit common relatives in other settlements. But individuals from cluster A (or B) would rarely leave their house group to go on a trek with individuals from cluster

B (or A). No one from either cluster A or B ever returned to Dayuno, even for a visit.

Soon the longhouses housed not only people but also a growing population of pets, almost as many as there were children. These *queninga* 'pets' (literally 'it receives food from humans'), mainly monkeys² and parrots, were the surviving offspring of hunted animals, given by hunters to their children, who were responsible for feeding the orphans, at times assisted by breast-feeding mothers when the captured baby animals were too weak or young to ingest mashed fruit.

No matter how transitory the longhouses of the Ñameiri and the Cuhueiri on the Shiripuno were as physical structures, their nanicaboiri existed long before I first met them, and, a decade later, they are still the same, strengthened and enlarged by the marriages of the children who have now become adults and who are having children of their own. In the sedentarized village they had left, Ñame and Cuhue had been living in nuclear family houses, composite structures made of planks and corrugated iron. Not all the Ñameiri lived under one roof at the time, and the Cuhueiri were spread in four different houses, but they nevertheless formed two distinct neighborhood clusters. And less than two years after their arrival in Quehueire Ono, as the settlement grew and as more families joined the new community, the two longhouses fragmented once more into smaller units; the two enlarged kindreds had reformed, as related nuclear families began living in separate, yet clustered, houses.

The longhouse is the common dwelling place of the *nanicabo*, literally 'group' or 'bunch', a term also used to refer to groups of monkeys and parrots, schools of fish, or swarms of bees.³ Longhouses do not last and are often rebuilt on new sites, but house groups remain fairly stable. The house group is composed of an older couple and the couple's followers. The older couple "owns," or "leads," the nanicabo, by which is meant that they have initiated the move, the construction, or the formation of the residential unit. The nanicabo derives its identity from the old wife's mother, whose house, in a sense, it rebuilds, and from her husband, whose name, used in the plural form, often serves as a referential term (but see note 1 to this chapter).

Longhouses, as physical structures or as enduring nanicaboiri, embody the unity of house groups, serving as fixed points in the fluidity of nomadic life, places where one belongs and to which one returns. They develop as clearings in the rain forest, around hearth places where food and materials are processed and transformed, used or consumed. They are residence units that husbands join, where children are born and raised, to which pets are

brought to be housed and fed, and to which orphans and refugees attach themselves. Despite how often one goes on a trek or visits relatives living elsewhere, one belongs to one, and only one, longhouse. When dying of old age (this is especially true of widowed women), one should decay within and with the house, both the corpse and the abandoned dwelling returning to the rain forest.

People identify with a particular longhouse, regardless of how often they go on treks or stay in their forest or garden shelters, for the longhouse physically embodies the principle of unity among its residents. How often, but not how long—it is this subtle difference wherein lies the unbreachable gap between being a longhouse resident and being a stranger. Staying away from the longhouse should be temporary. Those who sojourn in a distant hunting lodge are not establishing new nanicaboiri, and visitors eventually go back to their own longhouses. Those who stay away for extended periods risk losing their identity; they are in danger of becoming others. Far from the great fluidity observed among African egalitarian hunter-gatherers (Woodburn 1968), we find here the same pan-Amazonian suspicion of groups other than one's own as the one found among the Cuiva (Arcand 1973) or, for that matter, the Jivaros (Taylor 1985). Belonging to a nanicabo implies restricted visiting, especially for women, and spending much time in residence. The longhouse is never left empty or uninhabited, even if its residents come and go in turn. If some members leave for good, either to join another nanicabo or to create a new one, they become others (*huarani*). Their "social death" is signaled by their taking on a different personal name, as discussed in more detail below.

The Sharing Economy

To be part of a longhouse means not to be from somewhere else, and co-residence creates a form of togetherness that is expressed and continuously reasserted through sharing practices. As argued by a number of authors,⁴ sharing a common residence is a paramount principle in ordering relationships in many Amazonian societies. It is this morality of social proximity that I examine thoroughly in this section.

Personal Autonomy

A bewildering aspect of Huaorani social life and, arguably, of life in most Amazonian societies (Rivière 1984; Overing 1993) is the unique combina-

tion of communality and personal autonomy. The act of residing creates a definite sense of identity and membership while promoting a high degree of individual freedom.⁵ Individuality makes sharing within the *nanicabo*, which also means ‘we live united, we live like one’ (*ayeromonqui quehue-moní*), possible. Given that Western cultures have always equated difference with asymmetry, and given that since the 1830s these same cultures have assimilated individuality (differentiating individuals by any number of characteristics) and individualism (differentiating oneself from the masses by accentuating or acquiring distinguishing traits and developing nonconformist behavior)⁶ to describe the Huaorani relationship between the individual and society adequately is particularly difficult. I attempt to do so here by examining the social recognition of idiosyncrasies in oral expression, child socialization and productive work, and, finally, pathological forms of self-sufficiency.

“Chanting in the home” (*amotamini*) illustrates perfectly well what personal autonomy means in Huaorani society. People usually chant several hours a day when resting in their hammocks or when busy with some home-based activity. In this form of chanting, people talk about the manual activities they are performing (for instance, “the twine I make, the twine I make, the young palm leaf is changed in fibrous rope, the rope that makes the hammock, the rope for the hammock . . . ,” etc.), sometimes praising their own skilled practices (for example “I am a great hunter, what a great hunter I am, I kill so many monkeys, they fall off the tree after just one blow, other men are so bad at it, they miss their target, my darts never miss . . . ,” etc.), or elaborating on the intrinsic characteristics of the materials, objects, or plants they are manipulating (for example, “this is hardwood, hardwood I am carving, hardwood I am carving . . . oh, what a hardwood . . . ,” etc.).

The chants refer to productive activities after they have been carried out and as they relate to the life of the *nanicabo* or to craft-making and other domestic tasks that are being executed. Melodies and basic themes are standard, but the rest is pure improvisation, as verses are endlessly repeated with small variations. Sometimes people decide to sing in the way a departed co-resident, a dead parent, or a sibling who lives a long way away is remembered to have sung. Chanting styles, like manufacturing styles, or, for that matter, intonations, voices, footprints, or any other particular way of doing something, are idiosyncratic features attributed to specific individuals that can be recognized, remembered, and imitated. Another interesting feature of *amotamini* ‘personal songs’ is that several people may chant simultaneously while indirectly referring to the content of one another’s song (for example,

singer A chants about the chambira twine she is making, and singer B chants about how much better than an old hammock a new one is), thus engaging in a nondialogical form of communication (see Rival 1992:348–54).

Seeger (1979:378, 390, 392; 1987; 1991) has stressed the musical emphasis of Amazonian social life and has argued that music, which plays an active role in the creation and life of society itself, must be analyzed as central to the understanding of Amazonian societies. In the Huaorani case, individuals not only communicate their feelings to co-residents in the combined action of chanting and making objects, but they also share with them their personal interpretations of Huaorani symbolism. A person expresses her feelings, inner thoughts, and ideas whenever she feels the need to do so (even in the middle of the night when everyone else is asleep!), and co-residents hear without necessarily listening, for respect and tolerance of individual expression is what is expected, rather than reciprocal engagement and response. In short, chants combine technical enskillment and many idiosyncratic versions of the ways persons come to experience the world. As such, chants constitute a potent form of cultural knowledge through which it is their very personal autonomy that co-residents come to share.

Chanting also accompanies a favored home occupation, simply relaxing in one's hammock. In fact, some people seem to specialize in lying in their hammocks chanting gently, in a state of perfect stillness, tranquillity, inaction, and "contentment" (*huentey*).⁷ *Huentey*, the opposite of activity and movement, is a form of "social work" that helps to restore harmony in the longhouse. As such, *huentey* is considered essential for preventing tension, bad feelings, and the risk of scission. When someone is in a *huentey* state, tranquillity flows outward from the person who is lying down, and everybody feels it. It is thanks to *huentey* that internal disputes, contradictions, conflict, physical violence, and discord are prevented from developing within the *nanicabo*.⁸

So far I have presented the Huaorani's great interest in, and profound respect for, individual differences as they are expressed in bodily manifestations such as chanting and making artifacts. The same is true more generally of work. As might be expected from a society that values so highly the state of *huentey*, work is considered productive and creative only in so far as one engages in it freely. Self-reliance is a paramount value, but no one can be forced to work, not even by oneself. Whenever I tried, faithful to my Catholic upbringing, to prove that I was a participant worth having on-board and could, despite my physical weakness and inability, cut firewood, clear the bush with a machete, or fell a tree, my Huaorani friends and teach-

ers would simply ask me to stop, sit down, and cool off. In a similar vein, reluctant children are never forced to work. To help their parents or anyone else, they first have to be able to do so, and then they must volunteer their help. Hard work and toil, which are considered to lead to dangerous failure, are socially disapproved of, and tasks must be performed willingly and effortlessly. The belief that harmonious social life should be based on the full respect of personal expression and free choice to act corresponds to the fear that actions performed under constraint result in social harm.⁹

Furthermore, the individuation resulting from child socialization enables persons not so much to be independent and self-reliant but, more important, to be so in order to interact in a prolonged and intense way with co-residents. When children are “old enough to go on their own” (*piquëna bate opate gocamba*), that is, when they can walk, talk, and eat meat, they are encouraged to participate in subsistence activities and to carry back, in their own little palm-leaf baskets (*oto*), enough food to share with their grandmothers, mothers, older sisters, and other members of their nanicabo (Rival 1996a). As already stated, forest food is generally abundant, easily obtained, and simple to prepare. Moreover, the rich natural environment is tapped using individualized modes of procurement. Not only are food-gathering activities hardly differentiated, as noted in chapter 4, but people also tend to hunt, fish, and gather alone or in small groups, as none of these activities requires cooperation. Hunting, in fact, is performed more efficiently alone. It can thus be said that personal autonomy and the sharing of naturally abundant food are two sides of the same coin. Finally, given that personal autonomy necessarily implies that individuals produce or control enough foodstuff, not simply for their own consumption but also to share with others, it is understandable that the extreme self-reliance of angry warriors who take to the woods, live alone with the trees, and survive on their own urine (see chapter 3) is considered pathological, fundamentally antisocial, and destructive. Their independence, born out of grief, anger, fear, and anxiety, is absolutely antithetical to the personal autonomy and sharing sociality promoted within the nanicabo. Killing becomes their identity, and to give and receive death their destiny.

Demanding and Sharing Food

Huaorani social life could be summarized in one short phrase: procure alone and consume together. The following excerpt from my field diary illustrates the practices that constitute nanicabo food sharing:

The first impression one gets after a few hours inside any longhouse is that of a constant mutual giving away of food.

Since her husband died of pneumonia several years ago, Mima has lived with her married daughter, her husband, and their two children, and with her unmarried adolescent daughter and son. Mima, her unmarried daughter, and her son all cook on Mima's hearth and prepare food for one another. The married daughter has her own hearth on the other side of the house, and she eats with her husband and children. Food is continuously offered from one hearth group to the other, but neither Mima nor her daughters would ever think of saving time and energy by taking turns to cook for the whole family on the same hearth. When at home, each woman cooks all day long (sometimes the men cook) and gives samples of what she is cooking to whomever is around.

Food sharing, the continuous receiving and giving away of food, is a core element of ongoing co-residence. Five or six hearths, each identified with a married woman and equally used by her husband and children, occupy the two longer sides of the longhouse.¹⁰ Hammocks are slung around the hearths, generally one, two, or three per hearth group, depending on the number of grown children. Men, women, or children cook the food they bring back, before sharing it with whomever happens to be around. Cooking generally takes place on several hearths simultaneously, and food is transferred back and forth between hearth groups.

The sharing of cooked food may be preceded by the sharing of unprocessed food, especially meat. In this case, the person who brings raw food to the longhouse may give part of it to specific co-residents, who are free to use it as they please—cook it for themselves and others or redistribute it further. If someone feels entitled to a share but has been ignored, that individual may assert a claim by openly asking for some gathered fruit or hunted game. In this way, givers may be free to redistribute their catch according to their own priorities, but they also have to respond to co-residents' claims.

Sharing within the nanicabo is intense and exchange with the outside minimal. To share is *ēbatē ēbatē gorō* (approximately 'a path that goes around and around'). The expression *gorongamē quē* 'to help' further illustrates this fact, as does the post-contact term for *neighbor*, which is "we give/offer to he/she who exists so he/she may keep on living" (*ne gorongamē quehuenga*). All these expressions clearly convey the sense that living close is about giving, the primary condition for existence. The special terms *queñe ba anani* 'those who say they will not give any food away' and *pèè gompoça*

‘a greedy person’, that is, one who does not want to give food away, an offense considered far more serious than hiding one’s belongings out of sight so as not to be asked to give them away, further illustrate the significance of giving food away on demand. Generosity (*bequi queñe gorocampa*, literally ‘give away food and drink’) toward *guirinani* ‘co-residents and visiting kin’ is expected as a right to sameness, which is the same as the right to live. By the same token, no food or drink is shared with those who are different (*huaca*), potentially hostile others (*huarani*), or foreigners (*cohuori*).

Food sharing on demand is not based on reciprocity, for the act of giving and receiving are totally dissociated.¹¹ Social partners equally disengaged from property relate to one another by sharing food in a way that creates neither competition nor dependency. Nonreciprocal relations produce a collectivity (the *nanicabo*) in which givers never become creditors, nor receivers debtors. The independent co-occurrence of these two social actions is inscribed in the syntax of the language. Two expressions, *pono* and *goro*, are used to mean “to give.” When *pono* is used, the grammatical subject (the verb nominative) receives something. The morpheme *po*, which also exists as a verb form meaning “to come,” may be used to mark a movement “toward.” *Goro*, which means that the speaker is giving something away, is derived from the verb *go* ‘to go.’ The morpheme *go* marks a movement “away from.” To give is therefore either “to give” or “to be given,” an action expressed in the active rather than the passive mode. Giving and receiving are conceptualized grammatically as acts of displacement. The focus is on the movement of objects, not on who owns them.

The generosity the Huaorani people value, therefore, is based more on “demand sharing,” to use Peterson’s (1993) felicitous expression, than on unsolicited giving. Giving away, to a Huaorani, is not altruistic behavior, for personal autonomy is at least as important as generosity. Individuals always have the possibility of feeding themselves. The ideal communal life combines the ability to find food for oneself without help, eat whenever one feels hungry, and, in general, rely on oneself, with the pleasure of being with others and caring for them. As a result, co-residents do not feed themselves (this would be the logical outcome of personal autonomy) but offer the food they have procured to fellow co-residents, from whom they receive food. In this way, individuals retain full control over what they decide to do, including eating. Food sharing, therefore, is structured by principles similar to those that order *amotamini* chanting and, indeed, other forms of personal expression.

Furthermore, Huaorani food sharing is wholly consistent with patterns

of sharing observed among egalitarian hunter-gatherers, which is by demand rather than by unsolicited giving and in which “the whole emphasis is on donor obligation and recipient entitlement” (Woodburn 1998).¹² Moreover, the political implications of this form of exchange, in which demand sharing corresponds to the assertion of egalitarian principles and by which receiving does not bind the recipient to reciprocate, are identical.¹³ If I stress this characteristic here, it is because Huaorani sharing patterns are strikingly different from those found among Amazonian groups for which reciprocity constitutes the dominant pattern of exchange. The Barasana, who, according to Steven Hugh-Jones, their ethnographer, do not barter but share food and lend or give their possessions freely within their own community or longhouse, do so because, I quote, of “the *obligation* of sharing among co-residents, which corresponds in fact to a two-way reciprocal compelling duty” (Hugh-Jones 1992:60; my emphasis). Demand sharing, a cultural characteristic common to most egalitarian hunter-gatherers, by contrast, is not morally constructed as a reciprocal obligation to help and share.

Conjugal Pairing

To a Westerner's eye, Huaorani married life appears intense and highly demanding. Husbands and wives spend most of their time working together and are almost inseparable, especially at the beginning of their married life. Couples spend far more time together than they do with their own children. And whereas children spend weeks with people other than their biological fathers and mothers, newly married men and women cannot spend more than a few days away from each other without this being a source of conflict and tension. This is partly explained by the fact that when a man and a woman get married, all the husband's brothers, as well as all the wife's sisters, become a “spouse” (*nanoongue*). The term *nanoongue*, which is gender neutral and sociocentric, defines classes of people who are in a potential spousal relationship to one another. Their affinal potentiality is realized as the extension of the rights and obligations contracted upon marriage to the entire set of siblings. *Nanoongue* can sleep with each other, even if they are not living together as husband and wife. It is therefore not surprising that spouses must spend much time together for the marital relationship to acquire its normally remarkable degree of strength and stability.

Indigenous discourses stress the reproductive function of married life when accounting for its reciprocal nature. The marital relationship de-

mands the rigorous respect of mutual obligations because conjugality is, first and foremost, joint parenting. As in many Amazonian societies, post-marital residence is uxorilocal, so men must progressively integrate the sharing economy of their wife's house group. Women do not leave their native house, but, as mentioned earlier, acquire their own hearth upon marriage. When sisters are married to the same man, each has her own hearth, and the husband has equal access to both. The hearth symbolizes a new set of rights and obligations, and a new complementarity of tasks, between wife and husband, as well as between the new couple and the rest of the nanicabo. The hearth also signifies that marriage is about producing children, that is, increasing the number of nanicabo residents. As I have shown elsewhere (Rival 1998e), husbands and wives sleep together as part of growing into an organic unit that will eventually produce children. Sexual intercourse is overtly geared toward reproduction. Having babies is not seen as a by-product of sexual pleasure but as a reward in itself, for adulthood is about pairing and giving birth to children (Rival, Slater, and Miller 1998).

Married couples, although embedded within the nanicabo sharing economy, are distinguishable by the more ritualized way in which they give to, and receive from, each other. The manner in which a man returning from a hunt throws the game at his wife's feet is distinctive. He does not challenge other women kin with the same daring expression when offering them game. With a faint smile of pleasure, the wife gets up and mixes several bowls of banana drink which she holds out toward him defiantly. Already lying in the hammock, he does not look at her. The hunted game is hers; she may give some parts to her mother, daughter, or sister, or prepare and cook it right away. This ritualized reciprocity between husbands and wives is hardly noticeable when they have been together all day in the forest. They put the food on the floor, near the hearth, the man relaxes in the hammock, and his wife prepares a drink for them both. He may go bathing right away, or he may prepare the game with his wife and then go with her to the river. In their daily activities, husbands and wives often work together, not side by side but as pairs of unmarried brothers and sisters do. Brothers may cook something on their mother's hearth and offer some of their cooking to their sisters. It is far less frequent to see a married man cook and offer food to his wife. Unmarried male adolescents planting manioc stalks or carrying manioc roots may offer food to those present, but I have never seen married men do so. Whereas married women on a forest trek set their own separate fires, youths of either sex and adult men cook together on one big fire. In Huao-rani society, it is conjugal activities that are gendered.

Reciprocal exchange between spouses is closely related to the complementarity of their productive activities. Men and women know how to, and can, do almost every item of their society's cultural repertoire. I have never heard of a woman making blowpipes and spears (or, for that matter, any wooden implement) or of a man making claypots or fishing nets, but women use blowpipes and men use clay pots. It is the making, not the using, that is gendered. When married, however, men and women tend to specialize in certain activities. Many activities become the regular task of one member of the conjugal pair, although this implicit division of labor may vary from one couple to another or from one longhouse to the next. For example, in one conjugal pair, the husband may be in charge of chopping firewood, in which case the wife will fetch water, while in another it is the wife who collects firewood and the husband who fetches water. The same is true for twisting palm fiber into string, weaving cotton wristbands, and making baskets or hammocks. But a married woman will not go hunting on her own while her husband stays home, and a married man will not prepare fruit drinks (he is more likely to cook meat or foreign food) or harvest a garden unless his wife is ill or absent.

It is important to stress that conjugal division of labor and balanced reciprocity are relaxed when the couple's children are all married. Then they may sleep in separate hammocks and cook on their own hearths (this is the only time that a man has his own hearth). The old spouses are now equal and independent nanicabo residents. They no longer form an economic partnership differentiated from the nanicabo sharing economy. In sum, if conjugal complementarity introduces a certain division of labor, it is not normative in the sense that different domestic and productive tasks are equally valued. Difference is not translated into hierarchy, and general practice is not converted into a rigid code of conduct.

A careful examination of the whole productive system highlights that the amount of shared tasks more or less equals that of complementary ones. Balanced reciprocity between husbands and wives ensures a real increase in work output. Moreover, it ensures that fathers and mothers share equally in the procreation process and the growth of children. Whereas the association of autonomous and self-sufficient producers sharing their products forms a suitable base for nanicabo sociality, it is not sufficient to bring new members into the world. For this, married couples must turn into productive units and *work harder*, a fact continuously stressed throughout the wedding ceremony. This concern with equal participation in the procreation process is obvious in the way Huaorani people talk about the *couvade* as an expres-

sion of men's involvement in the act of bearing children and parenting (Rival 1998e).

To be married to only one woman or to her sisters as well makes no difference from the man's viewpoint, except that he must work harder and produce more. When a man marries several sisters, only the first union is celebrated with a marriage ceremony. The dividing up of wifely tasks among sisters also contributes to increasing production output. The great advantage of sororal polygyny is that more sedentary tasks (such as gardening, caring for your babies, and manufacturing artifacts) may be combined more easily with foraging activities. The most significant division of labor is no longer that between husband and wife but that between the "sedentary" and the "foraging" wife. It should be emphasized here that sororal polygyny is most often initiated by younger sisters, who see it as their right to share their older sister's husband (he is, after all, legally their husband). The most common reason cited for sororal polygyny is husband scarcity. Such scarcity is induced by the high value women attach to living with their mothers and sisters. They value their native house group above all and would do everything in their power to remain there. In addition, it seems that the first sons-in-law and their wives' parents both feel, albeit for different reasons, that the inclusion of more in-marrying men would be politically deleterious. If husbands reinforce their political position by marrying several times in the same house, their polygyny is always perceived as an act of generosity, for they will have to work harder.

Although the conjugal pair forms a productive unit, each spouse remains an independent food sharer within the nanicabo. Conjuality does not affect the autonomy of individual producers; husbands and wives have equal rights to the products of their common, shared labor. For instance, when a married couple gather and hunt together, they return to the longhouse equally loaded with hunted game and other forest products. Each controls what each carries and is entitled to give some away to any nanicabo member. This becomes particularly clear when guests are visiting. Given the uxorilocal nature of postmarital residence, most visits are for in-marrying men or by married men returning to their native nanicabo. It is married men who generally cater to their visitors. They do not expect their wives to act as a hostess to individuals whom they consider *huarani*, that is, unrelated folks, nonresident affines and non-kin.

To sum up, conjuality may affect production patterns but not nanicabo sharing or visiting patterns. In the shared life of the nanicabo community, transactions between husbands and wives, unlike those practiced with other

co-residents, are strictly reciprocal. Spouses give to each other in response to what they receive from each other. Whereas co-residents tend to obtain food independently and then share it, married couples engage in complementary activities, each reciprocating the other with goods and services of a different kind. Sharing in the longhouse, unlike marital exchange, is not based on reciprocity. As giving and receiving are entirely dissociated, non-reciprocal relations produce a collectivity, the *nanicabo*, in which givers never become creditors, nor receivers debtors. Social partners equally disengaged from property relate to each other by sharing in a way that creates neither competition nor dependency. The social life of the longhouse, organized around the collective sharing of food individually produced, encompasses reciprocal exchanges between spouses. This is largely owing to the fact that whereas conjugal pairs form productive units, each spouse remains an independent food sharer within the longhouse. Marriage organizes the production of goods, not their circulation. Huaorani conjugality therefore illustrates the limitations of Collier and Rosaldo's (1981) thesis that marriage, a political contract at the core of kinship, organizes rights and obligations in such a way that, whatever its form, it becomes a source of social inequality between men and women.¹⁴

The Sharing of Substance

People say that by living in the same longhouse they gradually become of the same substance, literally "of one same flesh" (*aroboqui bañ anobain*). Food sharing corresponds to the undifferentiated feeding process, itself part of a wider organic process. The principle by which people become related and come to share a common substance through acts of feeding is general: Fathers feed semen to fetuses, mothers breast-feed infants, and *nanicabo* co-residents continuously feed one another. The physical reality of eating the same food and sleeping together builds up into a common physical essence, regardless of blood ties. By continuously feeding one another, eating the same food, and sleeping together, people who live together develop a shared physicality of greater import than that resulting from genealogical bonds.

Nanicabo members share the same substance not only because they feed one another but also because they sleep, work, live, and defecate together. They share illnesses, parasites, a common dwelling, and a common territory. Everyone partakes in everyone else's care and well-being, and the more time people spend together, the more they become alike. Sensual bonding, as diffuse as food sharing, unfolds as one aspect of the pleasure of living in

one another's company. Sensuality is practiced not as the realization of private fantasies but as the bodily expression of sharing. When Huaorani people talk about sensuality, they mean "we live well" (*huaponi quehuetemonipa*); to them, sensual pleasure, or promiscuous well-being, is simply one of the ways in which the longhouse sharing economy materializes.

The need for comfort and physical contact is never construed as sexual, nor is the desire for affection taken to be a desire for sex. Bodies are socialized to experience diffuse, unfocused pleasures, and low-level sexual energy in this cultural context does not appear to be caused by the fear of losing life force or other vital substances through intercourse. In this society autonomous individuals do not become subjects through loss or through narcissistic satisfaction of erotic desires, and both sex and sensuality are directed to the making of other people, not oneself. Sexuality is never used in Huaorani society to create power differentials or to transgress social norms; it is embedded in the care of reproduction. Sensuality, the physical pleasure of harmonious living, is neither caused nor expressed in sexual desire, nor is it restrictive: All longhouse residents, whatever their age, gender, or kin affiliation, behave sensually toward one another. Entirely engulfed in the domestic and its organicity, sensuality is the *art de vivre* of individuals who have chosen to share a common residence. Again, it is promiscuous well-being, one of the ways in which the longhouse sharing economy materializes. (Rival, Slater, and Miller 1998).¹⁵

The principle by which people become related through common living applies to diet restrictions as well. Relatedness may result from either consuming together or avoiding food together. In other words, relatedness results from the fact of collectively consuming or avoiding food, and collective fasting also expresses sharing. It is not so much the kind of food eaten that matters, but the relation of consumption it creates. When a member of the longhouse residential group is sick, all residents must respect the same food prohibitions to help that person recover. The patient recovers his or her good health thanks to this collective, curative effort. By contrast, cognatic relatives living elsewhere have no such restrictions.¹⁶

Each nanicabo is known to others under a collective identity derived from its corporeity and communal existence. Members of a residential unit are described as having a certain smell, a certain way of dividing up the work among themselves, a funny way of cutting their hair. They are said to be taller—or shorter—than the norm; their skin is darker or lighter than the average; and so forth. Of course, such merging of individual selves within a singular collectivity is stereotypical. It is not insignificant that residen-

tial solidarity, which social actors see as based on the moral principles and social practices attached to the experience of togetherness, be represented in organic terms.¹⁷

Finally, if living together turns people into the same substance, the process is not irreversible. Some people may spend more time away visiting distant relatives and may become estranged from their own nanicaboiri. Physically distant kin, who have not interacted with one another for a long time, are socially distant, to the point of being "others." By disengaging from the intense economy of sharing, and by residing less constantly within the nanicabo, they lose some of the common substance, and differences surface. The sharing of a common substance is not permanent and can be discontinued. It lasts only as long as it is sustained through continuous sharing practices. However, reversing the process is an extremely serious matter. Individuals who leave one group for another cease to be kin; they may become "enemy other" (*huarani*). They undergo a change of identity marked by the adoption of a different personal name and the acquisition of a new spouse. Having reverted to the separate condition of otherness, they have lost all potential for incorporation and are, in fact, more *hua* 'other' than potential in-comers. It is not even possible to return to the longhouse one has left to visit former co-residents, for they would see in the returning visitor a "malevolent spirit" (*huene*), whose sole purpose is to kill and devour his former kin associates. So, for the Huaorani, it is not affines who may turn into dangerous "cannibal others," but kin who live with "others."

What I have tried to show in this section is that the longhouse, as a unit of sharing, represents a moral (in the Maussian sense of the term) person created through biosocial processes, that is, a series of domestic actions involving the body. Sharing is the organic binding of autonomous selves, and substance sharing a process by which embodiment creates collective identity. Whereas those who live together become alike, those who live apart, no matter how closely related they are in genealogical terms, turn into "others." Although lived intensively, the experience of substance sharing never becomes essentialized. Sharing is comprised of acts of giving in the present, by which the fact that co-residents become one another has no past or future. There can be no memory of sharing, for sharing exists in the lived moment, in the immediacy of intimacy. This is entirely consequential with the thesis that bodyliness, "in the sense of participation in the life of the body, is not restricted to the individual body, but may involve the individual in direct participation in the living bodies of others, specifically others involved in producing her or his own bodily existence, or with whom she or he is in-

volved in (re)producing the bodily existence of others" (Turner 1995:150). Far from being asociological (Viveiros de Castro 1992:9–12), this form of sociality is highly political, for it actively works at leveling political and economic differences within residential groups while protecting the blooming of true individual differences. Idiosyncrasies are not only fully recognized but are also highly appreciated.¹⁸

Affinal Pairing and Maternal Multiplicity

We have seen so far that relations between longhouse co-residents are more intimate, caring, and close than those between blood kin living in different longhouses, that gender and inter-generational differences are played down, and that personal autonomy, egalitarianism, and longhouse sharing are highly valued, all of which clearly indicates that living together seems more prized than being related genealogically. In other words, residence principles seem to be structurally far more important than kinship. In fact, the endogamous and cognatic nature of Huaorani society and its stress on co-residence make it an ideal example of restricted exchange with elementary structures¹⁹ ordered by a logic of ego-centered kin terms and cross-cousin marriage within the kindred (Hugh-Jones 1993:114). In continuation, and before I outline the naming system, I examine the terminology system, with its vague and allusive character as well as its openness to interpretation, and discuss one of its properties that "genderizes" consanguinity and affinity.

Personal Use of Kin Terms

Huaorani kinship terminology is, to use Henley's (1996) model, Dravidianate (see figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5). But, as Bourdieu (1977) has demonstrated more than three decades ago, kin terms are meaningful in the way they are used. Because people use terms strategically, to discuss terminology systems in the abstract is always problematic. In the Huaorani case, the most striking property is the "reversing" of nonreciprocal kin terms, so that the relationship is always envisaged from ego's point of view. For instance, if I ask a mature male informant "Is X your child?" he answers "I am the father of X" (*boto huempo imopa*), not "X is my child" (*boto hui*).

Another remarkable feature of this system is that it encourages diverse interpretations. Among my informants, I found the greatest variations to be between parents and children, and among ten- to fifteen-year-old children,

FIGURE 5.2 Dravidian Nomenclature (after Dreyfus 1993)

GENEALOGICAL LEVELS		CONSANGUINEOUS KIN		AFFINAL KIN	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
G+2			1(Male)	2(Female)	
G+1		3	4	5	6
	>Ego	7	8	9	10
G0					
	<Ego	7'	8'	9'	10'
G-1		11	12	13	14
G-2		15(Male)	16(Female)		

FIGURE 5.3 Huaorani nomenclature

GENEALOGICAL LEVELS		[MEMEIRI] CONSANGUINEOUS KIN		AFFINAL KIN	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
G+2		1	2	1	2
G+1		3 3'	4	5	6
	>Ego	(8) 7	9	10	11
G0					
	<Ego	8'	(9')	—	—
G-1		12		14	13
G-2		16		16	

who were endlessly debating who, in the co-resident bilateral kindred, was “other,” “cross-cousin,” or “sibling.” Their disagreement often related to the fact that cross-cousin marriages imply that consanguinity is continuously being transformed into affinity, and affinity into consanguinity. The Huaorani kinship system is, in this respect, entirely consistent with Amazonian kinship systems, particularly with their “two-line” (Dravidian) relationship terminologies representing the alliance between two socially defined cate-

FIGURE 5.4 Huaorani Kin Terms

1. mèmè (huèmè)	9. menga
2. ñèñè (huèñaña)	8' bihui
3. mempo (huempo)	9' bihuinque (rarely used)
3' maapo	10. menqui (huenqui)
4. bara (huaana)	11. mengui (huengui, miye)
5. bè (huane)	12. huĩ (huĩnenani)
6. mentera (huentera)	13. minato
4 to 6. yaa	14. biyonè
7. toniya	15. biyonga
8. mimo (rarely used)	16. nanomoco

FIGURE 5.5 Huaorani Nomenclature with Kin Terms

	FF/MF MĒMĒ
	FM/MM ÑĒÑĒ
FB MAAPO	MB BĒ
FZ MENTERA	MZ BARA
Be MIMO	MBS/FZS MENQUI
By BIHUI	MBD/FZD MENGUI
Zc MENGA	
Zy BIHUINQUI	
for male ego: S, BS, BD HUĨ	for male ego: ZS: MINATO, BIYONGE
(huane) for female ego: D, ZS,	ZD: BIYONGA, MINATO
ZD HUĨ (huenga)	for female ego: BS MINATO, BIYONGE
	BD: BIYONGA, MINATO
	(quera, children of monato, biyonè
	or biyonga)
	NANOMOCO

gories, “self” and “other,” to use Arhem’s (1996:187) elegant formulation, and with their kin terms, which, neither entirely sociocentric nor completely egocentric, are especially vague, allusive, and open to interpretation (see figures 5.4 and 5.5).

In Quehueire Ono, most people were defined as *guirinani*, that is, as relatives to whom kin terms applied. However, some members of cluster A (see figure 5.1) continued to call members from cluster B, with whom they considered to have no kin ties, *huaca* (singular) or *huarani* (plural).²⁰ Some older villagers, for instance, insisted that, although they lived in the same village, Ñame and Mengatohue were not *guiri* but *huaca* ‘different’, ‘other’, ‘with no known common forebear.’ Those who had direct genealogical ties to Ñame and considered themselves “true” inhabitants of Quehueire Ono tended to refer to Mengatohue as *hua* (implying that he was a kind of migrant or refugee, that is, not a native but Zhiro’s and Ñame’s protégé); those who were genealogically related to Mengatohue tended to refer to the Ñameiri as *guiri*; Ñame referred to Mengatohue as *mempo* ‘father’, and Mengatohue referred to Ñame as *toniya* ‘brother.’

I found the same individualistic and situational use of kin terms throughout Huaorani land, with possibly one general rule: while “natives” tended to call “refugees” *hua*, the latter tended to call the former *guiri*. On the whole, those who are seen as “in-comers” (refugees, orphans, or affines of affines with no strong connection to the core group of kin that makes up a particular settlement) use kin terms to refer to “aborigines.” Once a kin term is used for a particular person, and no matter how far-fetched, potential, or actual the purported genealogical tie is, ego and his or her spouse apply the Dravidianate terminology systematically to all the relatives living in the clustered longhouses. However, given that calling someone *guiri* or *hua* is largely a matter of personal choice, there is rarely consistency between the way in which ego and ego’s cognates chart kin ties, especially in the large settlements where unrelated bands have intermixed under missionary influence.

When asked by the anthropologist to list their kin exhaustively, informants first mention people who live in their house, then those who live in the same neighborhood cluster, then those who live in the same village, and only then, if at all, those who live elsewhere in Huaorani land. Numerous examples may be given to show that genealogical reckoning beyond the residential unit is minimal and that people living together or close to one another justify their proximity by invoking consanguineal, rather than affinal, ties. Cognates and consanguines are defined in terms of spatial proximity rather than genealogical proximity. Someone as close as a true sister may be

omitted if she lives elsewhere and has not been in touch for some years. In fact, it soon became clear that informants mentioned nonresident, spatially distant cognatic kin when they were thinking of reestablishing contact and visiting them.

Therefore, nonresident cognates and consanguines are not altogether forgotten. In fact, they are, to use a popular term in Amazonian anthropology, “potential” kin, that is, kin who are sufficiently remembered as such to make it possible to reactivate genealogical connections if and when needed.²¹ In other words, they are people with whom it is possible to become close again, both socially and physically. Interestingly, this “if and when needed” most often corresponds to a search for spouse. In fact, links between nonresident kin are most often reestablished to contract marriage alliances. Potential kin, therefore, are at the same time potential affines.

Pairing and Generative Properties

Figure 5.4 shows that, with the exception of *maapo*, kin terms for G+2 and G+1 come in a “double set,” which has led SIL linguist Catherine Peeke (1973) to speak of a term-set for address and one for reference. Like Peeke, I have found that although people say, for example, *bara* when they talk to their mothers and *mempo* when they talk to their fathers, they refer to their mother in conversation as *huaana* and to their father as *huempo*. In my experience, however, *ñěñě* and *mèmè* are used today both as terms of reference and address. And because, in everyday conversation, people tended to address one another using their personal names, rather than terms of address, I could not establish for sure whether *bè* and *mentera*, among others, were exclusively terms of reference. It is possible, although I do not have enough evidence to substantiate this intuition, that reference terms, which all start with the root morpheme *hu* (literally ‘alive’ or ‘sentient’) express the idea of a vital, organic link between cognatic kin. This would explain why a mother’s sister is, like the mother, referred to as *huaana*, whereas a father’s brother is not *huempo*, like the father, but *maapo*.

Peeke (1973:128) further notes that a number of kin terms either derive from demonstrative and possessive pronouns or are always used in conjunction with them. Figure 5.6, which summarizes the pronominal system as described by Peeke (1973), illustrates its distinctive plural forms and their close association with the kinship terminology. Subject, demonstrative, and relative pronouns can be singular, dual inclusive, multiple, or dual exclusive. Of particular interest is that the dual-exclusive type, which has hon-

FIGURE 5.6 Huaorani Pronominal System (after Peeke 1973)

FIGURE 5.6A Subject Pronouns

	SINGULAR	DUAL INCLUSIVE	MULTIPLE	DUAL EXCLUSIVE
[I]	botö	monato	monito	monö
[you]	bitö	minato	minito	minö
[she, he]	tomë	tomëna	tomenani	tomëna

FIGURE 5.6B Demonstrative Pronouns (ego-centered, emphatic possession)

	SINGULAR	DUAL INCLUSIVE	MULTIPLE	DUAL EXCLUSIVE
[my very own]	tomemo	tomemona	tomemoni	tomemo
[your very own]	tomemi	tomemona	tomemoni	tomemo
[her, his very own]	tomë	tomëna	tomenani	tomëna

FIGURE 5.6C Huaorani Pronominal System (after Peeke 1973)

	SINGULAR	DUAL INCLUSIVE	MULTIPLE	DUAL INCLUSIVE
[my kin _]	botö	mona	moni	mönö
[your kin _]	bitö	mina	mini	minö
[her, his kin _]	nänö	nana	nani	nänä

orific connotations, must always be used when addressing or referring to one's mother or grandmother; the correct form for "my mother" is *tomemo huaana*, not *boto bara*. The dual-inclusive type, however, is typically used between "male cross-cousins" (*mengui*), that is, potential brothers-in-law, and, by extension, to address or refer to relatives belonging to the affinal *bè*, *mentera*, *biyonè*, and *biyonga* categories. Finally, the plural-multiple set is typically used between female affines who refer to, and address, one another in reciprocal terms, for example, *mengui* 'sisters-in-law'

Although this is rather conjectural, I would like to propose that the pronominal system and its use in conjunction with kin terms may be sug-

gesting that whereas men create pairs of affines, women are maternal and multiple. Whereas no collective kin term derives from the “male affinal” pronouns, two (*monocaya* and *nanacaya*) derive from the “mother-source” pronouns, and four (*nanicabo*, *huaomoni*, *guirinani* and *huinenani*) from “mother affinal” pronouns. Female affinity, multiplicity, and abundance are interrelated, and mother as genetrix is thought of as a source, or a root stock, like the womb (*huñegāncoo* ‘the place where children multiply’). If there is no Huaorani term for the nuclear family or even, as in a number of Amazonian languages, for the hearth group, there is a special term, *tè huè*, to talk about a mother and her children. Moreover, while the first chonta palm to grow from a planted seed is called “mother” and the shoots “children,” the clump they form is known as *tè huè*. All this tends to suggest that women are associated with “source,” “generation” and “multiplicity,” notions that undoubtedly color Huaorani ideas about uxorilocal residence and must relate to the fact that nanicaboiri build their longhouses at the “mother’s mother-life place” (*ino dubë dubë nänä ñëñë huecantapa*). And it is perhaps because of their “mother-source” quality that maternal forebears tend, in my experience, to be remembered more often than paternal forebears.

Personal Names: Private Knowledge and Public Use

As in the rest of Amazonia, Dravidian kinship terminology is only one of the components making up the kinship system (Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993:144), the naming system playing at least as important a role. If in many parts of the world the anthropologist, like other “long-term outside associates,” is considered socially integrated when referred to and addressed by a kin term, this happens among the Huaorani when an individual is named after a dead kin.²² Personal names carry some genealogical information, for names are given by the grandparents to their grandchildren, either directly or indirectly, via the parents (personal names may be passed on to one’s sons and daughters for future use in naming their offspring). Grandmothers name granddaughters, and grandfathers name grandsons. As shall be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, grandparents arrange the marriages of their name bearers. In fact, the implicit rule is that once a woman or a man has allocated all her or his names to her or his grandchildren, and once these grandchildren marry, she or he should die. A grandparent is not supposed to live past the birth of the first great-grandchild.

The naming system, however, is almost as imprecise as the kinship ter-

minology system, for the same name may be inherited from entirely unrelated grandparents. The way Dahua's baby received his name (Ñame) is illustrative. Dahua is a daughter of Ñame and Zhiro, who lives with her husband and parents-in-law in a distant settlement, which is quite unusual. In this particular case, Ñame, a Ñihuairi with fifteen different names, chose to give his public name to his nonresident grandson. However, the personal name "Ñame" is also part of Mengatohue's name stock. Therefore, Mengatohue, a Baihuari with twelve names who has no obvious or recent kin ties to Ñame (Zhiro's husband), might also call one of his grandsons Ñame. Today, *huarani* 'unrelated' children bearing the same Huaorani personal name (but different Spanish names) live in the same village and go to the same school. This would not have occurred in the past, as the greatest care would have been taken to ensure that no one living close was known by the same public name. In the same way as two children may end up with the same name, obtained from completely different and unrelated grandfathers, it is almost certain that Ñame and Mengatohue received their Ñame name from entirely unrelated forebears.

If the information contained in a single name is too ambiguous to convey useful genealogical information, such is not the case for the whole name-set. By comparing their entire name-sets, people who have never met before are usually able to trace genealogical connections existing between them. Knowledge of entire name-sets, however, is very restricted. I was never able to chart a complete name-set, given that such private information may only be obtained with some accuracy from the person herself. Another interesting characteristic of the private/public structuring of name stocks is that people (especially men) who change residence change their public name as well. If very few people in Quehueire Ono knew that one of Mengatohue's names was Ñame, everybody knew that before he joined the SIL missionaries in Tihueno, and when he was still living in the Cononaco with the "down river folk" (*ënomënant*), Mengatohue was called Gomo.²³

The Dialectics of Incorporation and Separation

So far I have emphasized the centrality of biological reproduction for the constitution of social relations within the nanicabo. Normal social intercourse is characterized by "heightened mutual interaction," to use Turner's (1995:152) inspired phrasing. Persons and communities, or the sharing bodies of autonomous beings, are conceptualized as processes that unfold in time, through the cumulative experience of living side by side, day after day.

TABLE 5.1
Comparison of Marriage Alliances in Five Communities

	QUEHUEIRE ONO	QUIHUARO	TOÑAMPARI	YASUNI	CONONACO	TOTAL
Double Cross Cousin	(6) 23.07%	(3) 15.78%	(1) 2.70%	(5) 27.8%	(7) 50%	(22) 19.30%
Bilateral Cross Cousin*	(5) 19.23%	(3) 15.78%	(15) 40.54%	(3) 16.7%	(1) 7.14%	(27) 23.7%
Intermarrying sets of cross-sex siblings	(5) 19.23	(3) 15.78	(2) 5.40%	(3) 16.7%	(0)	(13) 11.40%
Intermarrying sets of same-sex siblings	(3) 11.53	(4) 21%	(4) 10.81%	(1) 5.55%	(5) 35.71%	(17) 15%
Repeated alliances in the same generation B/Z + BB/ZZ(8)	(8) 30.76%	(7) 35%	(6) 16.21%	(4) 22.25%	(5) 35.71%	(30) 26.40%
Unrelated single alliances	(3) 11.53%	(6) 31.6%	(9) 24.32%	(6)** 33.33%	(1) 7.14%	(25) 22%
Marriages with non-Huaorani	(4) 15.38%	(0)	(6)*** 16.21%	(0)	(0)	(10) 8.8%
Total alliances	26	19	37	18	14	114

* Most bilateral cross-cousin marriages are between "real" brothers and sisters (i.e., of the same mother and father).

* The majority of bilateral cross-cousin marriages are between BS and ZD.

** Most of these marriages are with partners from the Cononaco (informants claim that Cononaco people are unrelated to Yasuni people).

*** Three of these six alliances concern the two daughters and son of the "tribal chief" Dayuma. She arranged the three other alliances between some of her Huaorani and Quichua "godchildren." (Dayuma fled from her people when she was fourteen and spent many years in a Quichua community.)

Consanguinized co-residence, however, cannot entirely negate the role played by marriage and affinity in social reproduction. Huaorani society is highly endogamous, and most marriages are uxorilocal and take place between cross-cousins (see table 5.1). As I shall now argue, house groups and the forest groves in which they dwell are mutually constituted through the complementary processes of incorporation and separation. Death in old age, or the progressive transformation of an abandoned longhouse, and uxorilocality, or the gradual incorporation in the wives' house groups of men

who start their married careers almost as strangers, epitomize each of these two processes.

Death in Old Age

When an old person dies, she is said to die “for no good reason” (*ononqui [hueigamba] hueni*).²⁴ Such death is contrasted with homicide, when a killer spears his victim to death or causes her or his death through disease, accident, snake bite, and so forth. *Oononqui hueni*, in fact, implies that the death was suicidal²⁵ in that it was *willed* by the victim herself, who was finding herself simultaneously forsaken by her living relatives and “called” by long-dead kin. In the usual scenario, an old woman²⁶ is left behind in a decaying longhouse, while the rest of her house group moves to a new location where a new house is built. She is abandoned by mutual consent; she can hardly walk or see and chooses to stay in her hammock, where she dies of starvation. Several months later, the house group treks back to the—by now—entirely decayed house structure, which, reclaimed by the forest, is invaded by all kinds of weeds and saplings. The skeleton is wrapped in the hammock where it was found, in a fetal position. It is then buried facing east in a shallow grave at the center of what used to be the longhouse, and the house and human remains are set on fire. The intimate connection between communal living and solitary death in old age is then manifested in the wealth of useful plants found in formerly inhabited parts of the forest—especially hilltops, as discussed in the previous chapter.²⁷

In Quehueire Ono, the old Aca, who died shortly after one of my visits, was not left behind, given the new circumstances and influences prevailing in contemporary Huaorani villages. Over the years I had seen her trek less and less and become increasingly bound to the house, looking after her youngest grandchildren and their pets. The older she grew, the more sedentary she became, forming almost an organic whole with the house. She had refused to feed herself for about a month before her eventual death, alleging, in response to the pleas of her son, daughter-in-law, and other co-residents, that dead relatives she was naming as if they were still alive had already given her plenty to eat and drink. When the old Aca was buried, facing east, in the village’s cemetery on a hilltop, her kin abandoned the house in which they had lived with her and built a new one closer to the airstrip. During a subsequent visit I asked her grandchildren (aged four to nine) where she was. Although they knew perfectly well the location of Aca’s grave, they unanimously pointed to the old abandoned house. As this ex-

ample illustrates, old dwelling sites are also burial sites, both physically and conceptually.

Interesting parallels may be drawn between the burial of a victim speared by the enemy (as discussed in chapter 3) and that of a person dying of old age. First, in both cases the sociological significance of killing is more on the side of the victim than on the side of the killer, or, put another way, dying is more significant than killing. Furthermore, both deaths are seen to involve intentional human agency causing the separation of particular individuals from domestic groups. But whereas the former is caused first by a furious warrior armed with a spear and then by compassionate kin who suffocate the moribund victim, the latter is caused by the victim's own determination to cease all eating and movement once she has been abandoned by those with whom she shares a common substance. Stories, myths, and memories tend to associate each of these two forms of death and burial with a particular gender. Whereas men are more commonly represented as dying warriors buried alive with a child by their kin, old women are thought to end their lives by being left alone to die in rotting houses. In both cases, however, death is associated with the continued existence of certain plants and animals, in particular chonta palm groves.

Men, Women, and Uxorilocality

Parents, whenever they are asked why their sons live in such and such location—and not with them—invariably answer *nano mentera hueca* 'because this is where his wife's mother lives.' By this they mean that a married man takes up residence with his wife in the longhouse where *her mother* lives, for mothers and daughters (hence sisters) are not to be separated.²⁸ That women remain in their native nanicabo, however, does not mean that their status does not change upon marriage. As was pointed out in an earlier section, by acquiring her own hearth a young bride starts a new economic partnership with her spouse and has a new role within her house group.

Male adolescents start distancing themselves from their natal house groups just after the ear-piercing ceremony (Rival 1993). Far from being the hopeless bachelors described by Collier and Rosaldo (1981), they continue to be active and independent producers. They sling their own personal hammocks away from that of their parents and siblings, and may even build a small dwelling beside the longhouse, where they sleep and eat with companions. Even when they still live with their parents and sisters in the same house, the fact that they have moved their hammocks away from the

parental hearth, and that they spend much time away hunting or visiting on their own, introduces a certain physical distance that turns them into part-time co-residents. Disengaged from the nanicabo sharing economy by their constant going and coming, their food contribution is now targeted to their mothers and sisters. It is at this point that brothers and sisters pair themselves for specific productive tasks (for example, gardening) and engage in complementary economic activities as if bound by conjugal reciprocity.²⁹

Conjugality, the long-term association of a woman with an in-coming man within a house group, lasts as long as the two marriage partners live and work together. Married men end up belonging to the group where they reside with their wives, and cease to be affines (Rival 1998e). In Huaorani society, like in other Amazonian societies, uxoriolocality does not result from bride service. The in-marrying husband does not work for his in-laws; he has no debt to repay. He works for the new unit he and his wife constitute, and, participating in the nanicabo sharing economy, he gradually becomes part of his wife's house group.³⁰ Uxorilocality, as practiced by the Huaorani, concerns the domestication of male others and their incorporation within uxori-matrifocal kindreds. What uxoriolocality does is to attach individuals to groups. The political relation being articulated here is not one of domination but of balanced reproduction. Uxorilocality is so highly prized that, it would seem, men have little choice but to accept their gradual consanguinization and progressive transformation into members of their wives' matrikin. A mature man, in his role as husband and father, eventually becomes the head of his wife's native longhouse, and he achieves full kin status by giving his name to the nanicabo or even to the *huaomoni* group. Allied with women (their wives and sisters), men become respected leaders, and their longhouses increase. They have metaphorically taken root in affinal land.

After marriage, men's visiting patterns, focused on the partnerships they have formed with their sisters, continue almost unchanged. Given the uxori-local nature of postmarital residence, men's visiting rights are more extensive than those of their sisters. Because uxoriolocality forces men to separate themselves, one by one, from female-associated collective groups (their native nanicaboiri) in order to reattach themselves to other groups (their wives' nanicaboiri), men not only separate themselves from their brothers but also enter into open competition with them. Ties between brothers, who are either competing for the same bride or marrying into different nanicaboiri, are weakened. In other words, uxoriolocality, which makes brothers-in-law close, causes the relations between brothers to be particularly fraught with ambivalence.

Another consequence of uxorilocality is that it makes sisters so close and structurally equivalent that they often marry the same man, or, *à défaut*, the younger sister marries a substitute of her sister's husband, his brother. Another aspect of this asymmetry is that children of sisters are considered to be "more the same" (*anobain huaponi*) than children of brothers. Although both are technically classificatory siblings, children of brothers are not as similar as children of sisters because "they grow in separate houses and their mothers are different." And, because the continuous practices linked to domesticity, shared residence, and frequent or prolonged visiting turn people into the same shared substance, stringent restrictions exist on female visiting and feeding so as to maintain a clear-cut boundary, both physically and socially, between consanguineal women, who are close and solidaristic, and affinal women, who are absolutely different.

Gender asymmetry, therefore, is located neither in the husband-wife relationship nor in age hierarchies among siblings but results from the post-marital residence rule, which affects *all* sibling relationships. And were it not for the links men maintain with their sisters, mothers, and male kin, self-sufficient residential units formed around consanguineal women would stand as unconnected forest islands.

Brothers, Sisters, and Affinity

Uxorilocal residence causes real differences not only between husbands and wives but also between brothers and sisters. It is the brother who leaves the natal nanicabo; it is the husband who must slowly gain his place as a true and trustworthy kin within a new house group. If uxorilocality makes sisters closer and separates brothers, the division between brothers is never as absolute as it is between sisters-in-law. For one thing, brothers may end up as allies about as often as they become potential enemies avoiding each other. The formation of Quehueire Ono around the two brothers Ñame and Cuhue and their separation from their younger brother who remained in Dayuno is a good example.

Huaorani oral history, presented in chapter 3, is filled with references to groups of brothers who allied against elders and potential in-laws, destroyed matrifocal groups, abducted wives, wiped out entire house groups, and adopted surviving orphans. When brothers decide to avenge their father's death, they invoke vengeance to explain their madness and rage, and to justify their agnatic residential alliances. By forcing their wives to move away from their matrikins, they also escape the uxorial dictate.³¹ The lives of

refugees, particularly women, forced to flee or to commit suicide, become precarious. Whereas women, as mothers and daughters and as younger and older sisters, form the core of longhouses and ensure their continuity through maintaining reciprocal ties with their brothers and husbands, such ties may be broken by men who do not consent to reciprocal contracts with wives and sisters, refuse their incorporated status, and become violent and destructive. The alliance between brothers creates asymmetry between two categories of inhabitants, legitimate residents and dependent refugees.

However, these alliances are always unstable and short-lived, and brother-sister alliances reformed in the warrior's generation itself or in that of their offspring. Whereas brother-brother alliances lead to violence, conflict, and chaos, the alliance of brothers and sisters is safe. It limits the proliferation of affinal ties, and favors marrying-close strategies. And when groups of brothers and sisters intermarry and live close, uxorilocality gives way to neolocality, like in Quehueire Ono.

The process by which brothers and sisters become potential affines and the best allies under an uxorilocal regime is as gradual as the process transforming husbands into kin. When a brother and a sister successfully move into an affinal relationship (by marrying another brother-sister pair or by giving each other one or two children in marriage), the relationship between brother and sister is exactly reflected by that between husband and wife. The symmetry becomes perfect if two of their children marry each other, thus completing the cycle of transformation from affinity into consanguinity and consanguinity into affinity. Double-cross cousin marriage represents the delayed reunion of a sister and her brother via their descendants. A great advantage of this type of marriage is that sisters-in-law are drawn into close affinity, for one's husband is the other's brother. Moreover, they are potential co-mothers-in-law. More significant, the divisive effects of uxorilocality are tempered because the parents of one brother-sister pair often decide to move in with their daughter, hence creating an ambilocal situation and realizing the ideal of *huaomoni* endogamy. Brother-sister alliances are highly significant in that they bring about the right social and physical distance—not too close, not too distant—which enables society to exist and last (Rival 1996b).³²

Marriage between cross-cousins (especially double cross-cousins) is highly valued, and the intermarriage of sets of same-sex or cross-sex siblings is common (see table 5.1). Of course, grandparents do not expect all their grandchildren to replicate their own marriage, but the occurrence of just a few such alliances in each generation is enough to realize the ideal. Such

preferences are consequent with the fact that the only units to be unambiguously exogamic are the longhouses and, more generally, with the fact that Huaorani society is highly endogamous and autarkic. In this context, there is no marriage prescription but rather a gradation of strongly prohibited to strongly approved marriage alliances applying to both men and women. Double cross-cousin marriage is not prescriptive but preferred, for it balances out the father's wish to marry his daughter to his sister's son and the mother's wish to marry her daughter to her brother's son.³³

A number of authors have mentioned that, in Amazonia, sets of siblings re-create themselves down through the generations, for example, the Panare (Henley 1982) and the Pemon (Thomas 1982), to cite just two. In Huaorani society, this process involves not only the regulation of marriages within endogamous kindreds through brother-sister alliances but also the maintenance of anthropomorphic patches in the rain forest that bring about the materialization of the crucial link between past, present, and future generations of *huaomoni* people. When social dynamics lead to the disappearance of a particular *huaomoni* group, their peach palm grove, for example, no longer maintained, disappears as well.

A Gap in the Canopy

This chapter has highlighted the way anthropogenic forests result from the domestic activities of house groups whose relative permanence gives its members a strong sense of shared identity. The longhouse is the place par excellence of sociality and domestic reproduction, a place in which everyday domesticity is creative of sociality. The longhouse, the symbol of harmonious domesticity, is the site where people who live together develop, through the cumulative experience of living side by side, day after day, a shared physicality of greater import than that resulting from genealogical bonds.

A great deal has been written on Amazonian modes of recruitment to genealogies, and, in particular, on the common occurrence in the region of Dravidian terminology systems.³⁴ The Huaorani material I have presented here further confirms the existence of a strong correlation between geographic and genealogical endogamy, bilateral cross-cousin marriage, very short cycles of reciprocity (between brothers and sisters who become affines by exchanging their children in marriage), and Dravidianate terminologies. Henley (1996) has argued that Amazonian Dravidianate kinship systems are primarily found in the marginal areas of low population density. The Huao-

rani case supports his thesis, with the corrective addition that low population density and spouse scarcity are neither natural givens nor historical phenomena to be taken at face value. For one thing, and as we saw in chapters 2 and 3, political choices, particularly the choice of fierce isolation and the refusal to exchange, result in scarcity. Moreover, the determination of many young sisters to marry their older sisters' husbands, resulting in sororal polygyny, is also best interpreted as a political choice, the choice of limiting the number of male outsiders within nanicaboiri. The Huaorani are conscious of the demographic consequences of their preference for a particularly drastic form of endogamy, and often remark that they could have been "as numerous as ants," like the Napo Runas or the Shuars are.

It has also been shown in this chapter that the social world of the longhouse interacts dynamically with trekking, which is conceptualized as a temporary and partial movement away from the communal dwelling. A trek would have a very different meaning if walking in the forest was not organized as a moment before returning to a base where the food procured in the forest is consumed, and where other raw materials are used and manufactured. The longhouse, the place where children, men, refugees, and pets are progressively incorporated, is inscribed both in the natural and the sociological landscape. The more time people spend together, the more they become alike, but consubstantiality through absorption is not irreversible nor is consanguinity fixed or genetically based. However, the estrangement of co-residents who leave is definitive. If forest camps are deserted on and off, longhouses, which materially embody the corporeal unity and collective identity of house groups, are never left unoccupied. Longhouses are always under the guardianship of old people who feed the pets, look after the young children, and keep the bad spirits at bay. Pets,³⁵ which are rarely taken on treks, complete the process by which longhouses are turned into feeding places that cannot be abandoned or left empty.

Finally, I have tried to show the connections in Huaorani thought between dwelling in the forest, trekking, death in old age, and natural abundance. Old age somewhat contradicts the ideal of nanicabo shared autonomy and adds another dimension to the dialectics between incorporation and separation. It is hard for old persons (*piquënanì*) to assert their self-sufficiency and continue to navigate between personal autonomy and sharing, individual production and collective consumption. With old age, potential dependencies become increasingly real. Old people do not expect their children and grandchildren to keep them alive; they do not expect to live past their age of productive self-reliance. Old age starts when a married

couple no longer producing children starts to grow apart. When a husband and wife cease to function as a conjugal pair, each cooks food separately on a different hearth and shares with the other as with any other co-resident. Instead of weaving the conjugal hammock jointly, each now weaves his or her own hammock. Now considered “parents” to all the adults in their *huaomoni* group, and “grandparents” to all the children, they tend to live apart, on a hill, alone or with a married son or daughter, often visited by their other children and grandchildren, who bring them food. They gradually hunt, gather, fish and eat less, and have almost never enough food to give away.

Traditionally old people with married grandchildren about to become parents were considered *too old* to go on living and avoided decadence by consenting to being abandoned and left to die.³⁶ But as long as one’s spouse is still alive and shares in the same house, one is “not really old” (*piquè piquè inga*). Very old age is associated with widowhood—more precisely, with the condition of solitary, widowed, or abandoned aging women. Ideally, and as already mentioned, men die in warfare, whereas women are imagined to survive men and die alone in a decrepit and deserted house.³⁷ Huaorani burial practices thus indicate that if the domestically created, naturally existing, continuous and timeless abundance discussed in chapter 4 is at all related to the power and energy supposedly released by death (Bloch and Parry 1982), this is the case only in a mediated and delayed form, as abandoned communal dwelling sites, before turning into managed forest groves, become places where old persons die.³⁸

CHAPTER SIX

Eëmə Festivals: Ceremonial Increase and Marriage Alliance



The previous chapter on the longhouse presented a familiar picture in Amazonia of a “residential society,” in which society is basically coterminous with the group of people living together. But, as elsewhere in Amazonia, this house society opens itself for festivals and celebrations, during which autarchy is temporarily breached. In chapter 4 I examined festivities that take place in ancestral palm groves, and here I explore the other major type of festival: manioc drinking ceremonies (*ëëmë*). I present ethnographic data on the manioc drinking festival, examine the relation between marriage and social distance, and discuss the fact that whereas the longhouse functions as an exogamous unit, the feasting group, in which marriages take place, should ideally be the endogamous one.

The prospect of participating in an *ëëmë* is very exciting, and people await the day impatiently, as opportunities to meet people other than co-residents and familiar visitors are infrequent. In fact, drinking ceremonies are the only occasions when otherwise isolated and dispersed house groups congregate. Going to an *ëëmë* is invariably thought of as synonymous with having a good time, even if, as discussed later, *ëëmë* regularly end in bloodshed. The excitement, even exhilaration, linked to such events is conveyed in the expression used to talk about them, *huaponiahuaquimba huatape toca inte* (literally ‘we drink-dance well and a great deal, we are happy’). *Huaponi*, one of the most common words in Huaorani, expresses the feeling of contentment generated by togetherness and abundance, that is, by drinking and eating plenty, and dancing and singing with many people.¹

As briefly examined in chapters 3 and 4, it is in a social context marked by fierce isolationism and structured by the opposition between *huaomoni* ‘us’ and *huarani* ‘they’ that the togetherness experienced in drinking ceremonies leads to marriage. Ceremonial drinking corresponds to the moment in social life when togetherness becomes as essential for survival as flight and self-segregation. It is the moment when relations and alliances between nanicaboiri are renegotiated, and when individuals are ritually paired. Marriage, or the celebration of a new tie between two young adults belonging to different nanicaboiri but part of the same *huaomoni* group and mature enough to have children of their own, must take place when mutual interaction is heightened and normal social intercourse substantially intensified.

Marriage does not represent the mere union of two individuals but rather the alliance of two nanicaboiri, for two intermarrying house groups necessarily become huaomoni. Conversely, house groups disagreeing on a marriage alliance are likely to become enemies. Marriage therefore plays a pivotal role in the making and remaking of boundaries between endogamous units, and in defining the huaomoni-huarani configuration.

In the ideal and traditional representation, marriages are celebrated every year in the huaomoni-claimed chonta palm groves.² It was mentioned in chapter 4 that such marriages typically unite sets of brothers and sisters or the children of a brother-sister pair. And, as discussed in chapter 4, house groups who rarely see one another during the rest of the year converge in palm groves during the season of plenty to eat fruit as it ripens and to spend time together on the sites where their forebears lived and died. These groves, lasting longer than human lives, are a source of security and rejoicing, the concrete and material sign of continuity.

It is my understanding that drinking ceremonies in palm groves were—and still are—more informal and gradual than manioc festivals. Two or three related house groups would camp for up to six weeks together in the groves, harvesting ripe fruit and cooking it in great quantities to prepare drinks for impromptu singing and dancing sessions. Hunting and gathering activities were almost entirely suspended, as palm fruit became the staple food for as long as it lasted, after which people gradually left the groves and moved back to their respective hunting territories and longhouses. Today plantain, a staple grown to be eaten before it is ripe as a vegetable with meat or fish, or, when ripe, as a kind of soup (*pëënë biqui*), plays a similar role. If too many plantains ripen at once, closely related house groups invite each other to unplanned drinking parties in which the staple is overconsumed rather than being left to waste.³ In a way, Huaorani feasting in palm groves or in plantain plantations may be compared to the feasts organized by the Kwakiutl or any other Northwest Coast Indians, if these Indians had decided to hold their big ceremonies in the late spring along the coast, inlets, and river shores where they were catching salmon, instead of preserving great quantities of salmon for their winter ceremonies, and spending the summer inland, hunting and gathering in small bands.

Ahuene: The Tree Couple

A manioc drinking festival takes place at the initiative of a particular hosting couple, *ahuene* (literally ‘those of the tree’).⁴ Ahuene was also trans-

lated by my informants as *los dueños de la fiesta* 'the owners of the feast.' The couple typically leads a nanicabo that has moved to a new house at the edge of its hunting territory, even perhaps into the stretch of forest separating its land from the land of an enemy group. Eëmə drinking festivals are also organized when a house group has just replaced the roof of its longhouse.

Through various means and with the collaboration of kin and allies, the group has stocked enough manioc stems to replant in a collective garden whose size depends on the number of guests it intends to invite. The clearing of the garden patch, the planting, and the subsequent weeding are all tasks undertaken collectively by the nanicabo and executed in a festive and anticipatory mood, signaled by the wearing of a simple leaf crown (*puganta*). Then the couple, with its co-residing kin and allies, undertake the building of the feasthouse, which, once the ceremony is over, becomes their new longhouse (*nanicabo onco*). By supervising preparations for the manioc drinking festival, the ahuene do more than act on behalf of their house group; they initiate the event. It is their organizing talents, energy, and skills that galvanize their co-residents into collective action and motivate allies to participate as guests. And, as in many other parts of Amazonia, people joining the construction team are, de facto, pledging allegiance to the ahuene or house "owners," thus confirming the political complementarity of leader and follower roles.

When the manioc is half grown, a delegation that includes at least one direct consanguineal kin to an individual living in the *huarani* (enemy-other) group is sent to renew contact, talk about marriage, and issue a formal invitation to participate in the forthcoming eëmə." When the manioc roots have grown to the desired size (six to nine months after planting), they are dug out. The harvest is transported, under the leading wife's supervision, to the feasthouse, where she, along with her husband and their helpers, prepares several hearths to roast slightly the unpeeled manioc roots over embers, as well as pits in which to stock them between thick layers of green leaves for about two weeks. Once stored in the pits, the manioc is ready for "gestation," and so are the leading husband and wife, who remain alone in the feasthouse, lying in their respective hammocks, where they diet, sleep, and sing until the roots are "done." They must sleep apart, each in his and her own hammock, and restrain from all human contact and form of work. They may not bathe. They may only leave the house to relieve themselves, and no one is allowed to visit them, except to bring the food they are allowed to ingest. The diet, consisting of boiled manioc and manioc broth, is stringent. But they are in a *huentey* state, a state of perfect inaction and con-

tentment, which is considered essential for the roots to become sweet without rotting or being infested with insects or fungi. An informant told me: "The *ahuene* live half dead in their hammocks, as sick people do. They mustn't eat, drink or speak for some days. If they do, the manioc fills with blood, rots away, and there is no *eëmə*." When I tried to prepare "old-time sweet manioc" during the summer of 1997 with the help of my adoptive mother and her husband, I realized how hazardous the operation is, as the roots easily become infected with numerous plagues, mold, and larvae. Great care and talent are indeed required to ensure that months of effort devoted to growing and harvesting a large manioc plantation, as well as building a new longhouse, result in feast food and not rotten supplies.⁵

The manioc is ready when it smells "strong and sweet," at which time the women come to help peel the roots and the men go on a big hunt. The resulting mash is stored in large clay pots made especially for the occasion. The way people talk about the transformed manioc ("It is so juicy, so fleshy, so sweet and perfumed," etc.) reveals that it is no longer seen as a root, but as a fruit. People even say that when extracted from the pits, the manioc is "as sweet as a fruit," which I interpret as being consistent with the fact that the couple who looked after the manioc is called "of the tree" (*ahuene*), as if they had been undergoing the organic processes by which trees come to bear fruit. In this sense, if ceremonial drinks are always fruit drinks, sweet manioc drink is no exception. When the festival is about to begin, there is no trace of hearths in the feasthouse; hammocks have been rolled up or taken away, and the dance floor is kept free of the usual domestic clutter. In one corner only are there large clay pots, some filled with manioc mash and some with water, and a number of gourd drinking bowls (*ohueta*). The *couple* (and not the two separate individuals forming it) hosting a manioc drinking festival in the feasthouse empty of domestic life symbolizes, as an indivisible unit, a tree undergoing the slow biological process leading to maturation and fruiting, which is no different from the process by which a couple performs the *couvade*; bearing a baby (gestation) and bearing fruit (fruiting) are conceptualized as identical processes (Rival 1998e).

In sum, whereas ceremonies in peach palm groves are generally small-scale affairs unfolding over several weeks and involving close relatives, *eëmə* festivals do not last more than a day and a night (often just one night). They are not organized whenever there is abundance of fruit but require careful planning, calculation, and great diplomacy; to initiate new alliances between groups and start up new cycles of spouse exchange is one of their stated purposes. People plant manioc with the explicit intention of using it for

diplomatic and Amphitryonic purposes. And instead of being occasions during which a marriage *might* be celebrated, manioc drinking festivals are organized for the very purpose of consolidating a marriage agreement between house groups who are now visiting each other after a period of having no contact.

The Human Birds

If the couple responsible for organizing an ěmē is symbolically assimilated to a fruiting tree, the participants are likened to birds gorging themselves during the fruiting season. Throughout the night, people chant endlessly about birds gathered on a tree covered with ripening fruit. The vivid descriptions insist on the colors, noises, and movements of the flying creatures, as well as the sweetness and abundance of the juices that compelled them to congregate. When no fruit is left, they all leave and fly away, each bird going back to its own business. The following is one verse repeated twenty times or more by the dancers:

tomēmo behuenqui ponga abi
 tomēmo behuenque bamenenga abi
 eēmo amina bamenguina amina
 mintairi nani tehueninque
 mintairibai nano tebeninque
 huenomenē cahui namo tebeninque
 tomēmo behuenque bamenenga abi

The approximative translation reads: “When a tree is heavy with ripening fruit, birds of all species gather on it. They sing out of joy, and they sing to call more birds to partake in the feast. We true humans are like birds, we drink fruit and enjoy abundance. And when no fruit is left, we people, like birds, leave separately, each one going his or her own way.”⁶

The festival starts with women (led by the leading wife) and men (led by the leading husband) alternately chanting the above verse and dancing. When the women perform, the men are the audience, and vice versa. Then the two groups chant simultaneously, but not in unison, in their two different styles. The women, solemn and restrained, dance in compact rows, entwining their hands. The ahuene wife is in the center of the first row. The men dance in a queue, the ahuene husband in the lead, each with his hands on the shoulders of the man in front.

Between each session of chanting and dancing, the singers are offered bowls of drink by the *ahuene* husband, who serves while his wife (or wives) mixes the manioc paste with water. As the festival unfolds, the men's and women's groups move on to perform their simultaneous sing-dance, dancing back and forth from the two ends of the room toward the center where they meet before moving back again. Because they sing at the same time but in a different style, the two groups are, in a sense, "talking past each other" (see chapter 5).

In one festival for which I have extensive field notes, more than one hundred songs were chanted between 6:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. the following morning. The chants covered seven topics. The women of this house group, who had just recently relocated outside their territory, spent the first quarter of the ceremony chanting about finding the skulls of their forebears and about living together, living apart, and then reuniting. Then they sang about marriage and conjugality. When examining all the approximately one hundred songs as a corpus, it becomes clear that one theme predominates for both gender groups, the meeting of many different types of birds on a fruiting tree. The chants in this topic invariably ended with the line, "We humans are like these birds, we enjoy celebrating together and then we leave, each one of us going about his own business. In this way lived our grandfathers, and so do we" (*tomëmo behuenque bamenenga abi, monito memeiri anobain*).

In this representation of themselves as a feasting group, feast goers stress their individual freedom and independence. The feasting group is no more than a momentary collectivity made up of free and independent individuals who share no more than the transient pleasure of consuming abundant food together. The only thing that binds them together is the pleasure of consuming abundant and delicious food. No obligations or rights make them dependent on one another. People chant for hours about the vivid colors of feathers and fruit, the sounds emitted by, and the movements of, the flying creatures, as well as the sweetness and abundance of the juices that have brought them all to congregate. The message of these endless sensuous descriptions is that no obligations or rights bind feast goers together. They are independent, indeed *unrelated*-similar to many different birds species. If food is abundant, there is congregation and sharing.

Eëmə food sharing, however, is not comparable to the daily practices of *nanicabo* food sharing described in chapter 5, which is characterized by repetitive acts of giving away that create bonds of shared substance. Feast goers, who through the performance of dance and song transform them-

selves into birds gorging on a fruiting tree, do not share food; rather, they jointly consume from a natural source, a tree. Feast sharing stands in contrast to longhouse sharing, and each relates to a different construction of autonomy. Feast sharing is not really sharing at all; rather, it is the partaking of naturally abundant food from a treelike source. “Human birds” are unilaterally consuming from a naturalized source (a tree-couple), in total freedom and independence. Nothing binds them to the source or to each other, except the gregarious pleasure of congregating and celebrating. By contrast, within the longhouse, each person is in turn receiver and giver; the daily practices of this particular form of food sharing, characterized by repeated—but not reciprocated—acts of giving away, create lasting bonds of shared substance, crystallized in enduring social units.

Birds and Wild Boars

An important aspect of any drinking ceremony is that it ritually creates gender groups. Contrary to everyday life, proper *eëmə* conduct demands gender solidarity and cross-gender avoidance. Whereas in everyday life men and women belonging to the same longhouse are in close contact and hardly differentiated in gender terms, they now avoid one another and stand apart throughout the night. Conversely, women from different house groups, who would normally never visit one another, spend the whole festival together. Men form a compact group, in fact a bawdy pack. Men stomp their feet on the floor, rub their chests on their neighbors’ backs, tread on their heels, laugh loudly, and generally behave in an extroverted manner, becoming increasingly noisy and excited as the festival unfolds. Men and women are ritually differentiated not only by their general behavior and avoidance of the opposite sex but also through bodily decoration and their dancing and chanting styles.

Men and women, whether hosts or guests, spend much time adorning themselves with tooth necklaces, bright feather crowns, bracelets, woven cotton armbands, body paintings, scented plants on arms and hair, and other items too numerous to cite here.⁷ These, as well as flutes and rattles, are made of jungle plants, bark, fiber, seeds, and leaves; they must all be thrown away at the end of the ceremony. Bachelors wear a loosely coiled bundle of ready-made hammock string across the chest to indicate that they are looking for a spouse. Adolescents make themselves beautiful to attract the opposite sex.

Whereas gender differences are blurred in the everyday context, they are

meant to constitute the single most significant sociological difference during drinking ceremonies. In the feasthouse, the normally powerful oppositions between kin and non-kin, or co-residents and unrelated visitors, are played down. In preparing their bodies for a drinking ceremony, party goers remove all smells and traces of the intimacy and body sharing that goes on within the nanicabo. Cleanliness and the use of scented plants signal that the surface of the body becomes a social filter, to use Terry Turner's (1995:149) felicitous expression. Unlike the Kayapo, however, the Huaorani are not concerned with filtering culture out of nature. It is public appearance that becomes filtered out of home intimacy, as a necessary step before encountering nonfamiliar, potential affines.

Each invited man makes four to six spears that he offers to the leading husband, who in turn redistributes them to his male co-residents after the ceremony.⁸ On their way to the feasthouse, invited men and women find scented plants and beautiful, shiny leaves with which to adorn themselves. Traditionally the men arrive at the feasthouse chanting forcefully and holding long macaw feathers in the hand not carrying the spears. Before entering, they thrust the spears in a banana trunk prepared for this effect.⁹ Women arrive singing as well, and holding long, shiny *mö* palm leaves normally used to line the longhouse's inner roof (see chapter 5).

From the start of the ceremony (at dusk), until its end (when all the manioc drink has been consumed), participants are divided into women's and men's groups. Everyone within each gender group behaves uniformly (in striking contrast to ordinary behavior, with its stress on individuality and idiosyncratic expression), sings in unison, dance the same steps at the same time in harmony, and generally imitates what the song-dance master and mistress do. Moreover, whereas same-sex relationships are normally accompanied with more physical reserve than cross-sex ones, the exact opposite occurs in the ritual context. Here, women (especially affines and cross-cousins), who usually maintain a cold distance often tainted with overt hostility, display exceptional kindness and quiet affection toward each other, united in a new kind of complicity. Similarly men exhibit a tight "one-for-all" esprit de corps colored with sexually suggestive gestures. Men affines (particularly cross-cousins) sometimes hold hands and caress affectionately. The more gender solidarity grows, the more men and women avoid each other. Husbands and wives, or fathers and daughters, who are usually intimate, refrain from addressing or looking at each other. These behavior patterns contrast with co-residential intimacy and with cross-sex joking during visits. Being part of the woman's group during *eëmə* events,

and holding hands with women who, being my classificatory cross-cousins (*mengui*), had always avoided me and treated me extremely coolly when I happened to visit their nanicaboiri, I felt a real warmth, a mix of friendliness and solidarity. In other words, I never felt as accepted and befriended by the women as I did during an Ēēmē,” as if being a woman mattered much more than being a cohuori. By contrast, men who were always open toward me and with whom I normally felt comfortable, now avoided or ignored me.

As far as I know, despite the fact that men perform three different styles of dancing and women a fourth style, there is a single expression for “dance,” *anhua* (or *pancarani yanhuanga perani*). Whereas women’s singing is called *toripe*, men’s is called *amotamini*. As described earlier, in the first part of the ceremony the two gender groups act alternatively: One watches, the other performs. Then they start facing each other in the center of the longhouse, moving simultaneously backward and forward in two symmetrical tidal movements. In some of the Ēēmē in which I participated, toward the end of the ceremony (that is, around 4:00 or 5:00 A.M.), the women started behaving more and more like birds (their chants becoming like *yohue*, a kind of parrot), as the men were increasingly becoming like white-lipped peccaries (*urè*).

Finally, I should mention that gender avoidance culminates in strong prohibitions against sexual encounters, in marked contrast to the erotic character of drinking parties in Northwest Amazonia.¹⁰ Throughout the entire Ēēmē,” men and women do not look at each other, nor do they speak to each other directly. Falling asleep before the end of the drinking ceremony is not permitted, except for young children.¹¹ According to two informants, in former times flutes were played while festival goers awaited the sunrise. Sexual intercourse between feast participants, although strongly disapproved of, does occur. Throughout the night, couples discretely leave the feasthouse and find privacy for their *marivaudages* at the edge of the forest. Girls tease boys, and vice versa, asking for body decorations or simply ripping them off those they fancy. Cross-sex interaction, particularly sexual encounters, are strongly disapproved of, for, as I was told, men and women should stay in their respective group; as one informant put it, “This is what the Ēēmē is for.” Sexual license occurs privately, not as an expected, ritualized, and erotic part of the drinking festival, as it does in Amazonian societies that eroticize affinity. In the Huaorani context, sex is, first and foremost, reproductive; lauded in wedding songs, it is erased as a mark of difference from the androgynous ahuene couple.

All this indicates that with the ritual creation of gender groups, men and women lose their individual identities as kin, affines, friends, or enemies, old or young.¹² As new social distinctions are forming, and old ones being erased, one type of social difference predominates, that between two basic categories of people, men and women. In short, the feast group is sexually dimorphic, and sexual difference cuts across differences between us (*huaomoni*) and others (*huarani*). The fusion of male and female within the ahuene couple, who symbolically becomes a fruiting tree, and the grouping of participants are in turn made possible by the overall dominance of sexual dimorphism over all other differences.

It is worth noting at this point that Huaorani gender symbolism, as expressed either in cosmological belief or ritual behavior, lacks the sexual antagonism found in many Amazonian societies, as vividly described in Murphy and Murphy (1974) and Kensinger (1995), among others. Rather than an expression of hostility between the sexes, gender here is being used ritually as a means to overcome potential conflict and transform social division into necessary complementarity. And, as I understand it, if the cosmological and ritual complex is saturated with sexual and other bodily images, it is so as an expression not of male supremacy but of the importance of organic life, fertility, and biological reproduction.¹³

Tying the Knot

Two-thirds through the ceremony, if a marriage celebration has been planned, the elders, who somewhat secretly plotted the alliance, throw themselves on the bride and bridegroom to be, make them sit in a hammock, seize their ankles, and firmly tie their feet together with the same palm fiber cord used to make hammocks. The Huaorani term corresponding to what we call "marriage" is *hua ñoö imba* (literally 'it is a good thing that they should sleep together in the same hammock'). Amid great excitement and commotion, the grandparents, parents, married aunts, and married uncles of the new couple assemble around the hammock and start singing wedding songs as loudly as they possibly can. Like during the ear-piercing ceremony,¹⁴ the songs stress the necessity of hard work. The newly formed couple is urged to help their parents, to listen to their older relatives, and to be generous hosts; they will spend most of their time in each other's company and be faithful. The songs describe ad nauseum the ways that pairs of macaws (*miinta*), epitomes of the married couple, fly together, care for each other, feed each other, and never separate.

As the last song ends, a short silence, pregnant with danger, ensues. If the alliance is agreeable to all, the festival resumes, and bowls of ceremonial drink are offered to the stupefied newlyweds. If the bride's mother has not been consulted and looks on the alliance disapprovingly, she may run away with her daughter.¹⁵ Any participant who feels despoiled by the marriage arrangement may voice his or her anger. Huaorani oral tradition is full of stories of outraged men resorting to their spears and turning marriage celebrations into bloodshed. Such outcomes are characteristic of alliances across regional boundaries, as mentioned in chapter 3, but, as we saw in chapter 5, these tragic failures are avoided when grandparents unite the child of one of their sons to the child of one of their daughters. Another way to avoid such failures is not to invite those who might oppose the marriage and face them later with the *fait accompli*.

The new spouses continue to chant and dance within their respective gender group until the festival ends. The marriage is truly consummated the following day, when the bridegroom, who has gone hunting for his bride, receives from her a bowl of banana drink (*pëënë*) or any other fruit drink in exchange for game. The new couple is now ready to leave and trek back to the bride's native longhouse, where the bride makes her own hearth, separate from her mother's. Both parties must consent to marriage, and, if the young couple refuses to perform the ritual that marks their economic complementarity, the alliance is aborted. Either the bride or bridegroom may precipitate the termination of the marriage by not engaging in the reciprocal giving of complementary food. Although marriage is a collective affair, initiated by members of the grandparent generation, and publicly sanctioned, it must be agreeable to all parties. Marriage occurs if, and only if, the collective and the individual are in accord. Thus it follows that marriage as a process, that is, as the progressive unfolding of the conjugal bond, the most common pattern in Amazonia (Kensinger 1984), starts *after* the marriage alliance has been celebrated, and after husband and wife have ritually agreed to become economic partners.

Huaorani marriage, therefore, may not be explained as public recognition of sexual partnership. Quite to the contrary, public recognition in the form of a wedding ceremony engenders the social space in which conjugal intimacy develops. By agreeing to the conjugal economic contract, the young husband and wife proclaim their adulthood; they are now mature enough to bear children. Finally, it should be noted that wedding ceremonies of the kind just described are only celebrated for the first marriage (that is, for the first sister a man marries), but if a man leaves his wife's nan-

icabo and joins a new group, he will be wedded in his new residence in exactly the same way as he was in the previous one.¹⁶

Ceremonial Drinking, “Wild” Marriages, and Social Distance

Marriage alliances create solidarity and unity between longhouses exchanging marriage partners. It might be said, in a sense, that manioc drinking festivals are organized in the hope that people who were huarani before the *eëmë* become huaomoni after, thus succeeding in uniting their house groups, as well as their children, in marriage. Although no marriage rule is explicitly stated, a good marriage is generally defined indirectly with the precept: “If the mothers are different (i.e., not sisters), the children may marry.” Another implicit condition is that a woman must not marry her younger or older brother nor a man of her parents’ generation. That the bride and bridegroom must come from different longhouses was so obvious to my Huaorani friends and teachers that they did not even mention it. Marrying someone from one’s longhouse would be tantamount to brother-sister incest.

Another condition is that grandparents should arrange marriages. Three main ideas kept recurring in my older informants’ explanations. First, it is legitimate to take an interest in the marriage of one’s name-bearers and to decide where they will live and with whom. This is why naming and marrying grandchildren are two grandparental prerogatives. Second, grandparents are best positioned to think about marriage alliances and to make good matches, that is, those that will satisfy most people (all marriages unavoidably cause some unhappiness and anger). And third, if the young were left to make their own choices, they would run off with their lovers, and then what difference would there be between the Huaorani and collared peccaries (*amo*)?

Like in so many societies around the world, Huaorani marriage transactions involve entire social groups. Despite their de facto right to refuse to be wedded to a particular person, or their freedom to risk elopement, the bride and bridegroom have little say in marriage arrangements, which are generally treated as delicate and complex political matters to be handled by elders. Given the general informality of Huaorani politics, marriage is generally not preceded by formal negotiations. Interested parties simply visit allies to uncover their expectations and views. Individual aspirations (especially those of the prospective bride, bride’s mother, and bridegroom) are taken

into account and balanced against the constraints of the overall alliance complex which dictates that marriage exchange between longhouses in a given generation be rigorously reciprocal.

Finally, marriage with someone too distant (and hence an enemy) is highly dangerous and should be avoided at all cost. In an ideal world, *huaomoni* ‘we-people’ stay together, feast together, marry endogamously, and avoid meeting *huarani* ‘others’ (or ‘enemies’). When sets of intermarrying brothers and sisters continue to live close to each other, forming the core of festive groups, and “keeping” their children for each other, bilateral cross-cousin marriage, from the ideal norm, becomes a common practice. This practice ensures that the principle of balanced reciprocity, equivalence, and symmetry found in conjugal intercourse equally infuses marriage alliances. As discussed in the last chapter (see table 5.1), a significant proportion of contemporary marriages are double cross-cousin marriages, and many marriages are still uniting, in sequence, pairs of brothers and sisters.

Distant marriage, that is, marriage with a *hua* ‘unrelated other’ person, is considered “wild” (*huine huine huaquimba*, literally ‘they are not behaving like true humans’), even when kin ties have been reactivated.¹⁷ It is worth noting that those who took the time to converse with me on this matter did not condemn “wild” marriages on moral grounds, in the way they, for instance, strongly disapproved of incestuous brother-sister marriages. A marriage with an unrelated man or a cross-cousin living in a different regional group is neither prohibited nor approved of: It is simply extremely dangerous. And the possibility of marrying a non-Huaorani was, until recently, hardly thinkable at all, for they were defined as dangerous cannibals. In practice, however, marriages do occur between *huarani* house groups that have tried to establish a link between the future spouses, expressed as *tomen-ga mona huenquicaya impa* (literally ‘he is potentially my brother-in-law [cross-cousin]’), who, if the marriage is successful, become *huaomoni*. However, these alliances are said to be unstable and short-lived, unless subsequent brother-sister alliances rapidly ensue and strengthen the ties between the two exchanging longhouses.

Braving the potential risks of forging alliances with a *huarani* group, the Huaorani, who live today in Yasuní Park, successfully renewed contact in the 1980s with those who live along the Cononaco River (see map 1.2). Before then, the three Cononaco groups and the two Yasuní groups were enemies, and a large no-man’s land separated their respective territories. No one in the Cononaco knew exactly the position of those in the Yasuní, and vice versa. Each regional group dichotomized the intratribal social space

into *huaomoni* ‘we-people’ and *huarani* ‘enemy-others’ and suffered from a lack of suitable marriage partners for their young members. One day, forced by a severe shortage of potential spouses, Quempeiri and his cross-cousin, Menga, both belonging to the Cononaco house group “constellation,” journeyed North to renew contacts in the Yasuní. Menga wanted to remind Inihua (of the Yasuní group) that they were kin (*guirinani*).

When someone in Menga’s group referred to someone in Inihua’s group as *huaca* ‘other’, he meant that there was no common name between this person’s name-set and his. Just as grandparents give their names to their grandchildren, this reference indicated a lack of genealogical connection between him and this person. By the same token, he also implied that his parents and grandparents, and this person’s parents and grandparents, lived in distinct parts of Huaorani land and thus probably never met. The dual opposition *huaomoni-huarani* is not categorical but results from what I would call a statistical effect. Cognatic kin living in nonallied longhouses reactivate their ties whenever spouses are scarce or when social disruptions caused by warfare are too acute. But this consanguineal link, recognized and reactivated by just a few individuals, must be accepted by all as the basis for alliance, with one marriage reconfiguring *huarani* into *huaomoni*. Menga, unlike most of the people in the *huaomoni* group, recognized Inihua as a relative and referred to him as *boto guiri* ‘my close kin.’ It is on this legitimate ground that he decided to visit the Yasuní nanicaboiri. The operation, which was dangerous and could have ended in bloodshed, was successful. The Yasuní and Cononaco nanicaboiri celebrated several *Ēmë* together, and a number of intermarriages have taken place between the two regional groups since. However, and as discussed in chapter 3, not all marriage alliances are “success stories” (*loin s’en faut*). Here I shall explore some of the reasons why this should be the case.

Marriage forms an integral part of alliance politics, that is, of group formation politics.¹⁸ Marriage, like death, constitutes a moment in social life when individuals can affect the course of social reproduction. Each marriage and each death affects the boundaries between allied and nonallied house groups, given the negotiable and open character of *huaomoni-huarani* clustering formations. On one level, marriage politics and the politics of group formation revolve around the question of *reciprocity*. In many ways, what makes a marriage with an “other” a “wild” marriage is that the group who is “giving” the spouse cannot trust that a spouse will be given in exchange; in other words, the “spouse givers” cannot know whether this first marriage will indeed begin a new cycle of exchange or, rather, merely be an isolated exchange advantaging only the “spouse takers.”¹⁹

To intermarry not only implies social closeness, which in turns implies trust, but it also implies finding a solution to the thorny issue of where and with whom the new couple will reside. While probing informants as to why marriages with huarani are dangerous, it became clear that the point of contention was postmarital residence. Men who, like Menga, initiate contact with an unrelated house group are not proposing to give a youth in marriage but are demanding a wife or husband for their unmarried children or grandchildren. In other words, as noted above, they are spouse takers, not spouse givers. As my informants saw it, the main problem with marrying a distant kin is that the wife is expected to leave her native nanicabo and to accept virilocal residence.

Marriage implies the absorption of one spouse into the other's family, and women on the whole refuse to marry "out" and leave their native nanicaboiri. As was thoroughly discussed in the last chapter, uxorilocal residence means the progressive taming and incorporation of in-marrying men into matrifocal longhouses. As was also discussed, sororal polygyny, which is frequently initiated by the wife's younger sister(s), reinforces the uxorious nature of the marital bond. Other forms of polygyny, which are much rarer, also reflect the politics of exchange. Men with many sisters may end up taking several wives to ensure that all their sisters get married, and male orphans, who find it particularly difficult to find a spouse, may actually mount raids to capture wives, usually marrying several at once.²⁰ Uxorilocality thus introduces an asymmetry in a relation that should be symmetrical and reversible. Parents who want to retain their sons enter into conflict with parents who do not want to give their daughters away, except when the two sets of parents are neighbors and thus part of the same huaomoni group. In the end, marriages are said to be "wild" not so much because they violate reciprocity (a spouse is taken without one being given in exchange) but because they violate uxorilocality (the wife, rather than the husband, has to leave her kin to live with her affines). From the way they are talked about, one can also guess that "wild" marriages occurring during an ěmē with huarani further imply that the guests are spouse givers and the hosts spouse takers, which exacerbates the latent antagonism between hosts, who normally are those who give, and guests, who normally are those who receive and consume.

Interestingly enough, marriages between Huaorani men and Quichua (Naporuna) women are not considered "wild." In a fascinating reversal of the definition of a proper marriage, several young men also told me that they could no longer marry Huaorani women anyway, for all Huaorani were cousins sharing the same surname; God was against such *huine huine*

“wild” marriages. Although I do not have data on marriages between Quichua men and Huaorani women, which in any case are far less frequent than marriages between Huaorani men and Quichua women, I venture to guess that they, too, are considered “wild.”²¹

It is striking that Huaorani-Quichua marriages are, without exception, virilocal, with the in-marrying wife unambiguously living in and belonging to her husband’s nanicabo. Mixed Huaorani-Quichua couples are usually quite content with their conjugal life. Quichua wives say that life in Huaorani land is relaxing and peaceful, and that they do not have to work very hard. They feel well treated by their husbands (who do not drink, are gentle, and do not beat them or the children) and respected by their in-laws. They particularly enjoy their husbands’ exceptional hunting skills, as well as the abundance of animals and forest products in Huaorani land. Moreover, Huaorani men are generous with the money they earn from tourism or from their work in oil companies, which is lavishly spent on new clothes for their wives and children, and other consumer goods. Huaorani men say that Quichua women are more reliable, more obedient, work harder, and do not sleep around when their husbands are away. They are excellent gardeners, manage the household well, and speak Spanish. And, above all, they do not resent living with their parents-in-law.

Undoubtedly, from the Quichua point of view, such interethnic marriages correspond to a strategy of social reproduction through progressive incorporative exogamy, characteristic of politically and demographically dominant post-Conquest Amazonian societies (Henley 1996:71 n. 22). From the Huaorani point of view, however, it is the virilocal nature of such marriages that makes them both “good” and acceptable. Moreover, in contemporary Huaorani society, these interethnic marriages may signal a shift from “wild” marriages contracted during eëmə festivals to distant marriages with outsiders as the necessary complement to the policy of marrying close, that is, of marrying cross-cousins who are at once classificatory *and* genealogical kin.

The Asymmetry Between Hosts and Guests

Insight into the relationship of autonomy and unilateral feeding between feast goers (birds) and the couple (fruiting tree) who has taken responsibility for organizing the drinking ceremony is gained by examining the term for “guest” (*ne eñaca*, ‘the one who is born’) and the term for “host” (*ne ocoinga*, ‘the one who is at home’). Hosts are in the house, or of the house,

and, as such, are required, unilaterally and on request, to give to their guests. A host, by giving to the guest without expecting anything in return, is like a reproductive couple, a nurturing parent, a tree. A guest, on the other hand, is a pure consumer, just like a newborn baby. Moreover, the *eëmë* is lived and represented from the vantage point of guests (receivers), who sociologically take precedence over the hosts. The latter, ritually reduced to a single couple, disappear altogether in botanical imagery. The *ahuene* are not represented as generous givers, or as social actors who have coordinated the collective production of food surplus for the feast, but as naturally producing trees. There is ground, therefore, to contend that their role establishes a symbolic equation between the biological processes by which trees produce abundant fruit and the daily productive activities of dead people who encouraged the growth of trees whose abundant fruit is now harvested and consumed by the living. A number of factors pertaining to host-guest relations echo further this fundamental connection between trees and past human activities.

For a start, it is worth mentioning that manioc cultivation in present-day sedentarized villages, which, as explained in more detail in the next chapter, structurally correspond to feast groups, is still indirectly linked to a festive complex. That manioc is now grown on a larger scale and used almost daily is in great part because village life intensifies visiting, and hence the regular consumption of “food drinks.” Families manage to evade new obligations and constraints by trekking away from the village and its school as often as possible, and by maintaining a sharing system by which one household produces manioc for, on average, five households. Consequently the majority are still behaving as “guests” in relation to a minority of “hosts,” thus sustaining the antiproductivist vision of an abundant, giving world.

Guests are exogenous to the *nanicabo* they visit, but they would slowly become part of it were they to prolong their visit. The rule of demand-sharing mentioned in the last chapter entitles visitors to anything they see and would like to have. But if they stay on past one day, visitors must start giving away as much as they receive, thus entering the ambiguous category of “half-visitor, half-refugee residents.” Visiting creates tension and uneasiness, because guests are suspected of wanting to prolong their visit with the intention of shifting allegiance from one longhouse to another or to find refuge there after a raid. This may explain why affines are generally not visited outside formal attendance at drinking ceremonies. Visiting connects close kin who, having ceased to live together, now partake in the sharing economy of different longhouses. The connection is never between the vis-

itor and *all* the members of the visited longhouse. The visitor, rather, is the guest of one, or, at most, two or three, longhouse members.

To understand this point fully, we need to go back to the issue of gender asymmetry resulting from postmarital residence. Given the uxorilocal nature of postmarital residence, the visiting patterns of married men and women are asymmetrical. Visiting is especially restrictive for women. Since men live with their in-laws, they frequently visit their mothers and sisters, thus continuing the partnerships they formed with their sisters before marriage. As a result, most visiting involves married men going back to their native nanicaboiri. Not only are men's visiting rights more extensive than those of their sisters, but women's relatives tend to be concentrated in one or two longhouses, whereas married men's are dispersed in a number of them. Furthermore, it is more acceptable for brothers to visit their sisters than vice versa. As a result, men are welcomed guests in more longhouses than their wives, who, considered *huarani* 'unrelated others', must stay outside and wait for a child to offer them a drink. When no child is available or willing to help, a female affine goes to the door and holds out a bowl full of drink, silently and looking in the other direction. The social distance separating the two women is thus clearly indicated. Even when visiting kin, women tend to remain close to the door, as if forbidden to penetrate fully in the longhouse.

Hosts give food to kin who visit, that is, in most cases, to male visitors, who share it with their accompanying kin. Children, who are generally considered kin, receive food directly from the hosts, as well as from their fathers. Wives, by contrast, often assert their independence and self-sufficiency by giving the food they have received from their husbands to their children instead of eating it and by overtly munching on a piece of meat they have brought along or some fruit they have gathered on the way. Unless they have married a bilateral cross-cousin, women have very little to do with their in-laws.²² More generally, female affines remain distant and aloof. Boundaries between matrifocal house groups are maintained by women who are the absolute affines. As Taylor (1983; 1994:95) remarks, the sister-in-law relationship is the only relationship that cannot be consanguinized.

In his discussion of Cubeo drinking parties, Goldman (1963:202) appropriately remarked that "leadership comes from giving and subordination comes from receiving."²³ Among the Huaorani, visiting is highly restricted in order to limit the asymmetry of power that is built in to the host-guest relationship, which can too easily turn into a leader-follower relationship,

especially during an *eëmë*, in which hosts are in fact wife takers who pledge to initiate a new cycle of exchanges. Everything in the Huaorani ritual complex is made to stress that alliance is about celebrating abundance together. In their performance as birds gorging on a fruiting tree, *eëmë* participants blur the distinctions between hosts and guests, leaders and followers, spouse takers and spouse givers, kin and affines. Their performance, which creates the conditions for social integration at a higher level than that of the longhouse, forms a part of the process by which the circulation of young adults ensures social reproduction. The distinctions between hosts and guests, however, far from being erased, resurface as the opposition between life givers and life takers, when those who refuse to give a spouse kill and destroy, leaving, in place of the feasthouse, an open grave (see chapter 3).

Alliance and Residence: A Comparative Perspective

In many ways, the drinking ceremonies examined here confirm the fundamental ethos of Huaorani society. *Eëmë* bring together people, who are normally distant, to celebrate the generous forest as the here and now, which can be reaped without having been sown. It is not human labor but the affluent physical environment that appears to guarantee the future and that makes possible the togetherness of so many distinct people, as if they were one big, enlarged *nanicabo*. Furthermore, *eëmë* commensality, the transformative force that fuses hosts and guests into one large group through chanting and dancing, and shifts the visible divisions from groups of “us” and “others” to groups of men and women, creates the right conditions for marriage. Individual producers/consumers are transformed into sets of gendered reproducers who will complement each other in their reciprocal work exchange but will, in any case, remain primarily consumers of naturally abundant food. Drinking ceremonies are always, at least potentially, wedding ceremonies as well. Alliance presupposes not only the coming together of two independent—albeit allied—longhouses but also abundance, which makes marriage acceptable. Marriage, a key moment of social reproduction, calls, in real terms, for reciprocal obligations and exchange but is ritually experienced as a short-term commitment, the freedom of the present, and the pleasure of shared, conspicuous, and immediate consumption of naturally and abundantly occurring fruit. This explains why, contrary to what seems to occur in other Amazonian societies, where the concept of cementing the affinal bond with a single ritual has been described as entirely foreign (Kensinger 1984), Huaorani marriage is brought into being

by a ceremony. Manioc drinking festivals are unmistakably public celebrations of the affinal bond and, indeed, the only elaborate rituals found in Huaorani society.

To recapitulate, and to introduce a comparative dimension, ěmë drinking festivals are best understood as ceremonial events that both create and celebrate increase as a necessary condition for the exchange of people in marriage and, ultimately, social reproduction and survival. Furthermore, there is ground to interpret the ěmë not only as a ritual of alliance but also as the final puberty rite marking the moral and physical readiness for parenting, directly linked to the ear-piercing ritual briefly mentioned in chapter 4, which is performed within the longhouse on adolescent boys and girls by their grandfathers and visiting paternal uncles. However, unlike Amazonian rites of passage,²⁴ which unambiguously focus on the growth, maturation, and eventual dissolution of the bodies of *individual* members of the society, the ěmë is a marital ritual that celebrates the maturation of a young woman and a young man by pairing and wedding them together. Their bodily transformation and coupling is both preceded and elucidated by the ritual transformation undergone by the ahueñe couple, the owners of the ceremony, who become one gestating body or fruiting tree, in fact, the cosmic tree of life (Rival 1997b). In fusing biological reproduction and social reproduction, as well as increase, replacement, and replication, the ěmë, while celebrating the collectivity, is thus simultaneously concerned with the construction of persons, their changing social status, *and* the constitution of social groups.

Instead of acknowledging the need for an “other” to act as a catalytic agent in the transformation effected in ritual, and instead of recognizing relationships of alterity as essential for individual and collective reproduction, the ěmë seems to strengthen the endogamous ideology and its premise that huaomoni groups are perfectly self-sufficient, self-sustaining, and capable of managing endogamy so as to enable marriageable categories of persons to be continually available. Endogamy is achieved, first and foremost, by marrying close, which, whatever the form, entails the direct, reciprocal exchange of marriage partners between people who live close by (the ideal type being a sister and a brother bringing two of their children together in marriage). When this is not feasible, there is the attempt to incorporate more distant in-marrying spouses, along with the pledge that young adults belonging to distant groups be circulated fairly and that an initial marriage exchange be both reciprocated and leading to subsequent exchanges. Ideally, however, such marriages should remain rare occurrences corresponding

to extreme situations when no other option is available. Moreover, the politically sensitive issue of postmarital residence needs to be solved. Conflicts arise from the contradiction between the favored rule of uxorilocal residence and the expectation that when marriages are arranged with huarani, eëmə guests are not mere spouse providers but wife givers.

Why should uxorilocal postmarital residence be the real point of contention between potentially allied nanicaboiri? My answer to this question is that Huaorani marriage politics is not a politics of exchange as such but one of *placing*, that is, a process by which one belongs to a group through the body. Whereas women remain with their mothers and sisters attached to the nanicabo where they were born and will die of old age alone and abandoned, men leave their native nanicabo as part of their development cycle, maturation, and growth, to be progressively incorporated in the nanicabo of their wife or wives, which they leave upon death fatally wounded by the enemy as fathers. Affinity therefore bears the promise of closeness, that is, of potential consanguinity, and even of reconsanguinization of distant kin, not unlike the Wari system of general cognation discussed by Vilaça (1992). Affinity, as the closing distance between a man and the group in which he marries, corresponds to the expectation of sharing substance and becoming alike. Alterity, or pure difference, which characterizes the unbreachable distance separating female cross-cousin, or, in other words, the nonrelationship between sisters-in-law, also characterizes the impossibility of alliance with cannibal predators (*cohuori*). This, to me, is a clear indication that affinity, far from being defined as the pure domain of alterity (Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993, Viveiros de Castro 2001), is, rather, stressed as the domain of potential rapprochement and similarity. In this sense, it is akin to the French notion of *affinité*, which, according to my Petit Bordas dictionary, has been used since the twelfth century to mean neighborhood.

To conclude, Huaorani endogamy is defined as the safe distance of cross-siblingship. In other words, affinity corresponds to the safe distance between sisters and brothers, and between men and women born of sisters and brothers. The Huaorani marriage system, with its clear preference for symmetric exchange and for marriages that renew alliances, unambiguously belongs to the Amazonian draviniate systems, which Henley (1996:46) characterizes as corresponding to the sparsely populated settlements found in headwater areas. The Huaorani marriage system, however, points to a missing element in Henley's correlation of marriage preferences with population densities, that is, the rule of postmarital residence. In the Huaorani case, if

endogamy means living close, as well as marrying close, it is ultimately uxorilocality that is responsible for reducing the social field. This confirms Peter Rivière's (1984) argument that postmarital residence is a key variable in lowland South American political economy of control and that uxorilocality is a much more cautious and inward-looking policy than virilocality, which potentially allows for a much greater development of alliances.

Arhem (1987; 1989; 2001), who notes that the Makuna are despised by their decent-oriented and virilocal Tukano neighbors for co-residing with their affines, has also found that most marriages among the Makuna take place between close affines within the local group of adjacent longhouses, a form of marriage that he calls "gift marriage." Marriages that occur outside the endogamous unit may only be achieved by direct exchange (less than 30 percent) or capture (less than 15 percent), leading in the former case to uxorilocal residence, and in the latter to virilocal residence. There are striking parallels between the Makuna and the Huaorani forms of marriage exchange. Whereas Makuna gift marriages look structurally identical to Huaorani double cross-cousin marriages, that is, to the "sharing" of children in marriage by a "reproductive" brother-sister pair, Makuna direct sister-exchange is similar to the Huaorani system of intermarriage between sibling groups. Finally, Makuna "bride capture" shares many traits with Huaorani "wild" marriages between huarani groups, starting with the ritualized expression of affinal hostility and distrust, the instability of such marriages, and that they lead to virilocality. Arhem's (1989) analysis focuses on the structural transformations between Guianese, Makuna, Maku, and Tukano marriage alliance systems. Following Honborg (1988), Arhem concludes that symmetric alliance is "a fundamentally dynamic and unstable structure offering a wide range of logical possibilities which may be realized not only in different societies, or in the same society over time, but in the same society at the same time as parallel or alternative social models, consciously elaborated and operative in particular social contexts" (1989:20). However, like Barnes (1999:67), I am reading Arhem's ethnography and analysis as a confirmation of Tylor's (1889:267, 258; as cited in Barnes 1999:67) observation that endogamy is a policy of isolation and that capture is incompatible with matrilocal residence. Consequently what is so interesting in Arhem's comparative analysis is that the Makuna, who marry by capture, in a way choose (or are forced) to behave like the Tukanos by emphasizing both virilocality and the unity of co-residential agnates, instead of stressing, like the other Makuna, the alliance bond and the unity of co-residential affines resulting in a cognatic, endogamous, and uxorilocal system.

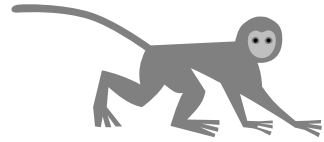
Huaorani *eëmë* drinking festivals and the ensuing “wild” marriages are part of a similar political strategy that places brother-brother alliances above brother-sister ones, and favors virilocality over uxorilocality.

A further and final point needs to be pursued in order to understand Huaorani marriage alliances fully; it concerns the practical and symbolic correlation between marriage forms and subsistence activities, or, said differently, the precise correlation between endogamy, uxorilocality, and hunting-gathering, as opposed to exogamy, virilocality, and manioc cultivation. It is remarkable that while gathered fruits, and the chonta palm in particular, are associated with the most endogamous forms of marriage, manioc cultivation is strongly related to more exogamic forms of marriage exchange.²⁵ When commenting on the difficulties of marrying outside the huaomoni group, people occasionally referred to the fact that neither manioc gardens nor alliances forged with distant relatives last, thus implying that, by contrast, marriages celebrated within the huaomoni group during chonta palm drinking festivals are stable and lasting unions.

As discussed earlier in the book, the Huaorani, indifferent cultivators who open small gardens throughout their territory, regardless of the season—and not every year—tend to keep manioc as an exceptional crop for ceremonial purposes. The Amphitryonic function of chonta palm groves is similar in many ways to that of manioc gardens. But whereas chonta palm fruit celebrates the seasonal encounters of endogamous regional house groups, manioc is used to forge new political alliances. The two plants, with their contrastive practical and symbolic qualities, enable the formation, or the renewal, of very different types of alliances. This difference in use is related to the fact that manioc and chonta palm grow at different rates (see Rival 1993). Manioc, like all garden crops, is fast-growing and short-lived. Chonta palm, like most tree fruit, comes from a slow-growing plant whose bounty turns the forest into a giving environment. Manioc, full of vital energy, is highly productive and may be cultivated at any time of year, almost anywhere. However, manioc fails to reproduce *in situ*. Never planted twice in the same place, it migrates throughout the forest, at the mercy of human alliances. Chonta palm groves, by contrast, grow slowly and continue to give fruit in the same place, year after year, as long as house groups care for them. The slow-growing legacy of past generations, the chonta palm provides the perfect fruit to drink and celebrate *entre nous*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Schools in the Rain Forest



I had no idea when I first set off to do fieldwork that state schooling was to become a major focus of my doctoral research. But the role of primary schools in producing cultural forms that seemed to undermine the Huaorani way of life increasingly caught my attention and forced me to reflect on the ways in which institutions structure social praxis and condition identity.

Between 1989 and 1991 I slept in many houses and observed a large number of children getting ready to go to school. At dawn (around 5:30 A.M.), when the sky is still dark blue, people gradually wake up, and children do their homework while breakfast is being cooked. They read in a loud and hesitant voice by the light of bits of candle, generally standing in a tight group around the book holder seated on a stool or in a hammock. Then they put their uniforms on or simply give them a good shake if they have slept without undressing. After breakfast, they swiftly walk toward the schoolhouse through the forest and along paths criss-crossing banana and manioc plantations. Trails around villages, now built on flat land along rivers, are heavily used and almost always muddy. Children, who come from far away and who, after a walk of an hour or more, arrive at the village center with dirty legs, hastily rinse them in puddles before putting their school uniforms back on. Having approached the school shyly and quietly, they go to the lavatories to wet and comb their hair over the sink. On Sundays they undergo the civilizing ritual along with adults who have come for the church service, which is usually held in a classroom. On this occasion, as they go through the last grove before the airstrip, men, women, and children wash their feet in puddles before putting on running shoes or plastic sandals, and women slip on a new, freshly washed dress.

Children, with combed wet hair and legs, feet, and hands left shiny by the soapy water, line up in front of the Ecuadorian flag, waiting for the bell to ring. It is 7:45 A.M. At the sound of the bell they fall in to form separate age and gender groups. The next fifteen minutes are spent moving their erect bodies at the commands shouted by the head teacher: "Heads to the left! Turn to the right! Arms up! Down! Two steps to the right!" and so forth. As they enter their respective classrooms, they go to the shelves where their

individual toothbrushes, plastic cups, and toothpaste lie under their name tags. Schoolwork does not start before this last cleansing rite is performed. In fact, I often thought that all this body care *was* what schoolwork was really about.

Math, reading, and writing lessons unfold throughout the morning. The teaching style is authoritarian. Teachers discipline and order, perhaps using coercion to reaffirm their cultural and moral superiority, even when there is no apparent need for it. As soon as Huaorani children are placed in the schooling context, they become shy, quiet, and reserved. They smile a great deal at their teachers but never insolently; rather, they seem to enjoy being at school and being ordered about. I never calculated the percentage of teaching time spent in uttering commands, but it must be high. Thinking that schoolchildren understand better, and hence conform more readily, if ordered in their own language, some teachers have invented a whole set of imperatives, such as *ponamai* ('stay where you are', literally 'don't come') or *anamai* ('don't chat').¹ Such expressions have no meaning outside the school context, as they represent nonvernacular developments built on the suffix *-ramai* (here phonemically realized as *-namai*), which does not normally express orders but is used to communicate verbally the wish to involve someone in the fulfillment of one's needs (see chapter 5). Rather, they pertain to a new school dialect expressing power asymmetries. Mild corporal punishment is also a common practice. Children, who have not worked well or have forgotten something, have their ears or hair pulled. They are castigated for not paying sufficient attention or for not listening to what is said. In the teachers' minds, such practices are necessary, for mental work and intellectual development cannot occur without physical discipline.

Schoolchildren are clearly not afraid of their teachers; to the contrary, they seem to enjoy the latter's display of authority. In this nonconfrontational atmosphere, teachers order and smiling children conform, delighted to learn by command and standardized task performance, and eager to perform rote-learning exercises to acquire or retain knowledge. Where I saw pedagogical devices contributing less to the acquisition of mental skills than to the creation of a social context in which hierarchical control, authority legitimation, and collective norms take precedence, there was as well, as I realize now, a definite will on the part of schoolchildren to consent to their "acculturation" and to accept the power and knowledge of teachers.

In this chapter I discuss the fact that Huaorani villagers actively resist and manipulate formal schooling, an alien social form which they recognize as a source of power and whose influence they hope to contain. The indige-

nous notions of “civilized” and “savage,” partly explored in my doctoral work (Rival 1992), are discussed here as part of the transformative process by which insiders are turned into outsiders, and vice versa. Finally, I examine the role schools play in social reproduction within a context broader than the one offered by classroom ethnographies or discussions in educational sociology. I show that the sociological implications of the ceremonial complex discussed in the last chapter, in particular the link between manioc cultivation and decreased mobility, increase of scale, and the redefinition of production and consumption, equally apply to the context of formal schooling.

Schooling, Identity, and Cultural Politics

Before leaving for the field, I had prepared myself to work on ethnicity and new forms of indigenous politics in the Ecuadorian Amazon. I was particularly interested in the political integration of the “Huaorani nationality” within the CONFENIAE (Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana, the Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon), which, in 1987, had launched an international campaign in support of the Huaorani people’s land rights and right to self-determination. As mentioned earlier, the campaign resulted in their being granted the largest indigenous territory (960,000 hectares) in Ecuador on April 10, 1990.

While I was in the field, the Ecuadorian indigenous organizations increasingly focused their activities on educational policies, which at the time almost superseded land rights, self-governance, and control over natural resources as the main arena for ethnic activism (Rival 1997a). Indian leaders and ethnic activists dedicated all their efforts to transforming the perception of mass state education for Indians. From a primary mechanism to achieve modernization and bring about economic growth, it was to become the principal device for achieving a national, bilingual, and intercultural education for all. Whereas the former objective was to provide skilled laborers and modern citizens freedom from ignorance, backward religious beliefs, and divisive ethnic allegiances, the new goal was to valorize Indian communities and their cultures, and to secure their continuity within a modern and developed, but also multilingual and pluralistic, Ecuador.²

In the Huaorani villages where I worked, children spent half their days in school (159 days per calendar year by law), during which time they were exposed to highly repetitive socialization drills. These learning experiences

lasted throughout their primary education, that is, six or seven years. People valued the state of being civilized, and attending school was definitely *the way* to become *gente civilizada* 'cultured, civilized people.' As a result, habits created by school routines were lived as a quest for modernity.

What struck me most at the time, however, was that the newly introduced school institution was creating around itself a community in which social relations, subsistence activities, the very mode of existence and identity were being restructured in ways that undermined the reproduction of core local, kin-based social forms and cultural meanings. Schools were not just about education; they were sites of struggle, where the view that education is necessary to human progress, emancipation, and democracy was reinterpreted and where competing interests, values, and power relations were expressed. More than mere educational institutions, schools formally linked Huaorani villages to the state, simultaneously integrating nuclear families and individual citizens within the national society. Furthermore, teachers were assuming the role of community leaders and rural developers. As a result, school issues were inseparable from socioeconomic development (Rival 1992, chaps. 5, 6). School villages, as I called them (i.e., schools and the villages they created around them), were places where relationships between family, community, and the state were articulated and negotiated. This led me to see in primary education a central institution of the Ecuadorian state, and in education policies the reflection of conflicts over political representation, legitimacy, cultural identity, and nationalism.

Observing the introduction of state schools in Huaorani settlements was a fascinating exercise. I was witnessing the penetration of a Western institution and observing its regularized practices in a social environment completely different from that imagined by, for instance, Althusser, Foucault, or Bourdieu. The simple fact of separating children, who were learning how to read, write, and count, from the rest of the community, a measure so alien to Huaorani ideas about socialization and the transmission of culture and knowledge, well illustrates the type of clashes that exist between indigenous and Western types of education. I concluded that schoolchildren in villages and children raised in longhouses in the forest acquire a different knowledge of their culture because the learning activities they engage in take place in contrastive environments (Rival 1996a; 1996c).

My focus was on the ways that culture is externalized for political ends, a process well illustrated by the Huaorani experience of state schooling as the institutional context of cultural transmission. Consequently, rather than directly addressing the issue of multicultural education and bilingual curricu-

lum design, which form the bulk of writing on the role of education in Latin American societies, I looked at the functions fulfilled by schools in the way educators and psychologists do, that is, as organizations that developed historically to provide the supporting environments necessary for the acquisition of “hard-to-learn,” decontextualized systems of representations that require deliberate and often long and difficult learning, as well as formal teaching. But if all children become competent adults by acquiring metarepresentational information, the cultural transmission of such information occurs in many societies without the help of institutionalized teaching. So I also analyzed the formal transmission of knowledge as a political process, showing that if, at the national level, primary schools symbolize ethnic resistance, at the local level they have powered, by the force of habit, new social forms that undermine indigenous knowledge and practices, and restructure the Huaorani society and sense of identity.

Although I do not disagree with this conclusion today, it now appears to me as lacking an indigenous perspective. The mechanisms by which the school, a catalyzer of modern influences articulating all kinds of changes into a coherent system, which then become institutionalized and reproduced as a persisting configuration, are fascinating in their own right. But they should not detract the anthropologist from the task of understanding what is particularly Amazonian in the Huaorani's eagerness to send their children to a state school and settle more or less permanently around it. Rather than being unduly impressed by the hegemonic power of centralized and impersonal institutions, I would pay more attention today to the fact that local people use schools as part of their long-term strategies to ensure the reproduction of their kindreds and alliance networks.

Legacy of the Summer Institute of Linguistics

It is impossible to understand contemporary Huaorani society without referring to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which “pacified” the Huaorani in the early 1960s. As mentioned in previous chapters, before their “pacification” following the death of five North American missionaries in 1956 (Rival 1994; Stoll 1982; Wallis 1965), people lived in highly dispersed, semi-autarkic, and transient collective dwellings located on hilltops away from rivers. Each of these self-sufficient and dispersed residential units formed strong alliances with two or three other ones, while avoiding contact with all others. In this way, allied houses formed regional groups within which most marriages took place. As noted in chapter 3, Huaorani con-

ceptualization of society-in-history is based on the contrast between, and the sequential repetition of, times of war and times of peace. We have also seen in chapter 6 that "peace" is associated with larger and more permanent longhouses or longhouse clusters, as young married men may choose to live neo-locally or virilocally, and house groups tend to grow and settle together instead of fragmenting. Peace, stability, demographic increase, and intensification of both cultivation and host-guest relations are therefore closely inter-related.

The relocation from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s of a large proportion of the Huaorani population on the mission-base in Tihueno corresponded with the progressive introduction of new garden crops, shotguns, dogs, and Western medicine, as well as the intensive use of air transport and radio contacts. The fundamentalist Christians vehemently advocated monogamy, sexual modesty, and praying, while strongly discouraging feasts, chants, and dancing. Relocated sometimes hundreds of kilometers away from their traditional lands, long-feuding bands had no choice but to coexist and intermarry. If the "mixing" of traditionally antagonistic groups and the high number of monogamous marriages between former enemies put an end to warfare, it also severely undermined the long established boundaries between endogamous groups. The SIL did more than trigger changes in traditional alliances, subsistence activities, and residence patterns. It habituated converted Huaorani to lead a sedentary existence in communities under the guidance of powerful outsiders, who, through their ability to "attract" large flows of free manufactured goods, were able to secure social unity and stability (Rival 1992:15–22). Let us examine in more detail the impact of missionary work on social organization, subsistence patterns, and interethnic relations.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Rachel Saint and Elizabeth Elliot (sister and wife, respectively, of two MAF [Missionary Aviation Fellowship] pilots killed in 1956), accompanied by a few Huaorani women, including Dayuma, who had left Huaorani land after a particularly intense period of internal warfare, regularly made their way to a site on the river Tihueno, where their camp was visited for increasingly longer periods by Dayuma's relatives (Elliot 1961). The site was more or less half way between an old settlement of Dayuma's native group (the Guiketairi) and the Quichua village where she had found refuge and lived for many years, and where the missionaries were also based. As most of the men had been killed, the Guiketairi band essentially comprised women and children at the time.

A new community, Tihueno, emerged from these regular gatherings,

when Dayuma finally decided to stay and live permanently with Acahuo, her mother, and Guiqueta, her mother's brother, whose son, Quimo, she married soon after. Dayuma, however, did not come without Rachel Saint (her sister in "peace after revenge"), Betty Elliot (the "widowed spouse refugee"), and Valerie, the latter's three-year-old daughter. To this day, the Huaorani trace the legitimate presence of evangelical missionaries within their communities to the lifelong relationship between Dayuma, the Huaorani woman who had lived for many years with the cohuori—and hence taken for dead—and the North American missionary Rachel Saint, a relationship sealed, as they see it, in the death of their two brothers. Dayuma's brother speared Rachel's brother to death and was injured by a bullet Rachel's brother shot before dying. He died from the injury about a month later.

If it is with Rachel that Dayuma eventually came back to live among her people, it is also with her that she led the new Christian community where the rules, as summarized one day by Quimo, were "no more killing, one wife only, foreigners' food eating." For Rachel Saint, the creation of Tihueno was a missionary victory, the triumph of the Christian command, "Thou shalt not kill," which she once expressed in the following terms: "For us to be willing to live with them cut straight across the pattern of revenge. They killed our men. Dayuma's brother had killed my brother. Yet we were asking to live with them instead of taking revenge" (Stoll 1982:289). Of course, such a version of the events omits that *her* brother, too, had killed, a fact still vivid in Huaorani memory. It also leaves out the fact that the welcoming of women, who have wandered for months in the forest following the killing of their brothers, fathers, or husbands, is common practice. Furthermore, in the Huaorani understanding of the sequence of events, Dayuma came back to live with her mother in her mother's longhouse, which is customary and legitimate, and her classificatory sister, Nemo (Rachel Saint was named after Dayuma's younger and deceased sister), was tolerated mainly because of this special connection.

After some years of happy endogamous living in Tihueno, the Guiketairi (the "community of believers," as they were known in missionary circles) were joined in 1968 by enemy bands, in particular, 104 Baihuari. This rapprochement, which Rachel Saint and Dayuma engineered and orchestrated, followed consanguineal lines between mothers and daughters, on the one hand, and between brothers and sisters, on the other (Rival 1992:17–19). Nevertheless fear and the desire to leave Tihueno soon threatened the stability and unity of the Christian community, now made of two

enemy bands of equal size. Their cohabitation was finally secured under the twin leadership of Rachel and Dayuma, who celebrated numerous weddings between new-comers (Bahuai) and old-timers (Guiquetairi), and who urged everyone to follow the two fundamental rules of no more spear-*ing* and monogamous marriage. These inter-band wedding ceremonies were celebrated both in the Christian way (with a church service and the consumption of special food, such as canned pears in syrup and wedding cakes) and according to Huaorani tradition (with the bride and groom seized by their relatives during a drinking ceremony, seated in a hammock, and tied together).

As discussed in chapter 6, mistrust and mutual hostility can only be overcome by marriage. In Tihueno in-coming men, anxious to legitimize their new residential affiliation, sought to marry new spouses. Monogamy, however, meant that Bahuai men and women, if already married, could not take another Guiquetairi spouse to consolidate their position within the new community. It also meant that younger sisters, who were prevented from marrying their older sisters' husbands, had little choice but to marry the latter's younger brothers instead. By the early seventies Tihueno's population had tripled. As many as 525 people were living there in 1973, of which 350 had arrived after 1967, while the number of people still remaining outside the Protectorate was around 100 (Yost 1979:14).³

Through conversations with informants, I was able to reconstruct life in Tihueno in the 1970s and identify some of the social problems affecting the community. Whereas missionaries especially remembered epidemic outbreaks, my Huaorani hosts tended to remember food shortages most vividly. Huaorani inflationary demands for mission aid spiraled to the point that, in 1976, the SIL decided to isolate the population in the hope that such a measure would curtail their increasing economic dependency (Yost 1979). This left Dayuma and Rachel, legitimized outsiders placed at the center of the new Christian society, in a difficult position. They had founded a large Huaorani settlement (three or four times larger than traditional ones) by attracting and retaining followers for about fifteen years through their ability to control marriage alliances and secure flows of manufactured goods and foodstuff (Stoll 1982; Kingsland 1985; Yost 1979; 1981a).

When the SIL development policy changed and when missionary material wealth ended, many Guiquetairi and Piyemoiri left Tihueno with their Bahuai and Huepeiri allies to create new dispersed settlements throughout the Protectorate. They established clearings in forest sites that had been occupied a few decades earlier by their "grandparents" (Rival 1992:18–19).

As village sites were chosen according to whether these were sites where Guiquetairi and Piyemoiri ascendants lived and died, in-marrying men and women from the Tiputini, Yasuní, and Cononaco regions found themselves in the position of refugees, incorporated guests, and followers of those who, having “up-river” (*irumenga*) roots, formed the political core of newly formed villages. Said differently, the settlements founded by Guiquetairi and Piyemoiri, who were the legitimate inhabitants of this part of Huaorani land, resulted from the induced dislocation and recomposition of precontact bands. They grew strong during the 1980s, and many became “school villages” in the 1990s. Equipped with radios connected to the mission hospital in Shell Mera and to the SIL headquarters in Quito, with airstrips and state schools, these villages, which are now marked on Ecuador’s national map, benefit from legal government recognition.

When SIL missionaries progressively resumed their activities in the new settlements, they proceeded with extreme caution, so that Bible translation work⁴ would not lead to food dependency. But the process of sedentarization and riverine adaptation accelerated. The missionary unilateral giving of gifts had started in 1955, with gifts dropped from MAF aircrafts. After 1982 manufactured goods were no longer given away but had to be paid for in cash or traded. However, and as shall become clear below, reciprocal exchange never supplanted demand sharing. The Huaorani have not ceased to want to tap freely of God’s wealth or of school riches.

At first sight, these villages appear similar to many Amazonian hunter-horticulturist communities. However, to analyze them in purely ecological and adaptive terms (see chapter 4) would miss the fact that, built as they are around airstrips, away from hilltops, and in the vicinity of main rivers, they correspond to a new form of adaptation to localized resources and new sources of political control, as well as to a shift from nanicabo sharing to host-guest relationships. Without denying that adaptation to riverine biotopes and horticultural intensification have played an important role in sustaining the viability of relatively large and lasting human settlements, I wish to stress that Huaorani sedentarized settlements are rooted in political processes, of which the intensification of gardening is just one of the manifestations. Village life is not only impossible but, more important, *unthinkable*, without the cultivation of crops to make the food-drinks that sustain host-guest relations. Gardens are not what keeps the village together, however. Functioning airstrips, churches, and schools are really what binds the population together in larger village agglomerates. Without their existence, village life, peace, and expansion, which have to be created from without,

would rapidly come to an end, as factional splits, scissions, and warfare, caused by anxiety, fear, suspicion, hostility, or internal conflicts, would quickly ensue.

We Want Schools to Become Civilized

Many Huaorani say that the SIL “civilized” them.⁵ The SIL developed vernacular literacy as a sign of salvation, which means a chance to become Christian, but also, although more implicitly, to progress to a modern, civilized state, which does not include speaking a foreign language or abandoning one’s ethnic origin. For the SIL, God has created people as ethnically different and thus naturally speaking different languages. Becoming a Christian, therefore, does not require the kind of cultural transformation promoted by Catholic boarding schools. Believers in God belong to essentially different linguistic communities or cultures. Pre-Christian religious beliefs, such as shamanic beliefs, however, are not seen as essential components of a distinctive culture; they do not represent the work of God but, rather, the dark actions of the devil. However, for most missionaries and Christianized Huaorani alike, to sustain a sedentarized, village-based way of life is a condition *sine qua non* for becoming civilized. Being civilized is more or less implicitly associated with a sedentary lifestyle, canoe traveling, and a physical appearance that cannot be readily differentiated from that of other Ecuadorian lowland indigenous people. It is contrasted with a life of trekking, hunting, and gathering in the forest. To those living in large mission settlements, a civilized lifestyle is quickly detected in someone’s physical appearance, as is a traditional lifestyle as well. The hairstyle, elongated ear lobes, chanting, and nakedness of those living in the Cononaco region make it obvious that they are not civilized.⁶

When people tried to explain to me why they wanted to have a school in their village, they systematically invoked the notion of “civilization.” They would say in Spanish “*para ser civilizados*” (to become civilized), sometimes saying, more precisely, “Now that we are civilized, our children must go to school.” But in the villages where people had opposed the creation of a school, no one invoked reasons such as, “We do not want to become civilized.” They would say instead, “We want to be left alone, in peace, doing our own things” or “We do not want to live with *cohuori*; teachers are *cohuori*” or “We live well as we do here; we do not need schools, for they bring trouble and division.” Two anecdotes further clarify what seemed to have been meant by *civilizados*.

I once was looking through some SIL biblical texts translated into Huaorani, in which the term *nano peinga* figured, which, as I had learned it, meant “descendant.” But various teenagers, who knew some Spanish, told me that in fact it meant “civilized.” I inferred from this that some people considered today’s youth to be civilized, and hence different, like a new type of “others” (*huarani*). On another occasion, a young Huaorani leader told me—half in Spanish, half in Huaorani—that he wanted to contact the Tagaeri (Tagae was his father’s parallel cousin, i.e., brother), so that they would become *mansos* ‘tamed’ and *civilizados* ‘civilized.’ This he proposed to achieve by giving them rice and oats to eat. He added that if the Tagaeri did not accept peaceful contact and continued to behave wrongly, they had to leave Huaorani land and go to live in Peru. Young Huaorani often express traditional intergroup disagreements over territorial rights in nationalist terms, modeling their sense of group identity and their understanding of alterity on anti-Peruvian sentiments inculcated at school. For instance, they may say, “I am Ecuadorian and free to go wherever I please. No one can stop me from hunting, working, or going to such or such a place. I have as much right to be here as they do. If they do not accept this and are unhappy, they must go away and live with the Peruvians” or “You’re not part of us; you’re behaving like a Peruvian.”

Civilizado is clearly a complex, multivocal term, synthesizing a whole range of emic and historically evolved notions. On one level, and as in other parts of Amazonia,⁷ a dual opposition seems to operate between those who have accepted contact and peaceful village life and those who are still hiding in the forest, do not cultivate gardens, and kill. On another level, the opposition is between an old generation of “traditional” Huaorani and a new generation of young, modern Huaorani, whose “Huaoraniness” is uncertain and open to question. Members of the old generation often told me that the bodies of young Huaorani were bland and soft (rather than tough and strong), for monkey meat was no longer the basis of their diet; they were eating too much manioc, oats, sugar, and rice. Older Huaorani also said that young people no longer knew how to walk in the forest; that they married “like peccaries,” that is, choosing their own partners and running off with them (instead of being properly married in a wedding ceremony arranged by their older kin); and that they had too many children, for they refused to wait for at least three chonta palm seasons between each pregnancy. On yet another level, *huaorani* stands for “civilized Huaorani,” in opposition to *auca*, a Quichua word meaning “savage,” which many people used in the 1950s and 1960s to refer to the Huaorani. This opposition, also

found in fundamental evangelical discourse, expresses the contrast existing between those who are civilized and believe in the existence of *Huegongui* 'God-Father',⁸ who orders not to kill and to have only one spouse, and those who are still savages and follow the old rule.

A final example illustrates the key role played by body appearance in marking the difference between "civilized/modern" and "savage/traditional," while showing how different ideas work together in a way that makes it difficult (and perhaps unnecessary) to separate the various meanings of the word *civilizado*. In the early 1980s the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education supported a national education program for the development of vernacular literacy called MACAC ('warrior', in Quichua), in which about fifteen Huaorani men participated. The program, inspired by Freirean ideas about social justice and knowledge as a tool for social change, aimed at the psychological and cultural revalorization of indigenous organizational forms, traditional knowledge, and social practices, understood to constitute a valid model for social progress. The men I interviewed vividly remembered the MACAC period, in particular their literacy training in the capital city, Quito, where some of them, strong enough to support the cold weather, the new routines, and the long stays away from home, lived for two and a half years. Apart from learning Spanish formally and training to become "literacy leaders" (*promotores de alfabetización*), their main task was to participate in the design of a "prereader" for Huaorani schools, lavishly illustrated with drawings representing "precontact" naked Huaorani living in longhouses, sleeping in hammocks, and hunting with blowguns.⁹ The purpose of these images was to cue dialogues and other forms of prereading oral activity, isolate shapes and forms to inspire first prewriting graphic exercises and pre-mathematical classifications and orderings, and ensure the fast transfer of literacy skills from Huaorani to Spanish. Those who still had copies of these experimental textbooks did not like them and showed them to me only reluctantly. They did not like being represented naked, as it made them feel ashamed (*nos da vergüenza*). One added: "It's alright to remember the old days, I suppose, *but we are civilized now*, we do not look like these drawings; these drawings were not made by us, we only helped with the translations."

Civilized Bodies in the Making

Teachers represent a powerful civilizing and modernizing force, albeit more out of conviction than coercion. As both products and agents of the national education system, they are the willing instruments of its further

application. They firmly believe in formal education as a source of social mobility, and as a key instrument for the improvement of indigenous life conditions. Trained as “frontier teachers” (*maestros fronterizos*), their duty is to (1) live in the communities where they work; (2) teach children (and, if they have time and sufficient resources, adults as well) basic numerical and literacy skills; and (3) work for the communities’ development and progress. Like in many third-world rural areas, their task is not limited to giving instruction in the classroom; they must educate integrally, promoting new social habits and agricultural techniques, while creating a new frame of mind. In this particular context, they also represent the state and execute simple government functions (Rival 1992:236–38).

Convinced that Huaorani children do not do well at school because of their deprivation of proper food, hygiene, and medical attention, teachers work with government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to obtain medicine, clothes, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and “nutritious” food (rice, powdered milk, porridge, and sugar) for the communities in which they teach. In their view, the Huaorani’s very low proficiency in literacy and numerical ability is caused by a lack of proper discipline, concentration, and adequate socialization. It is to remedy this situation that they dedicate a large part of their teaching time to reforming the diet, hygiene, and general behavior of their pupils.

Huaorani parents and children fully agree with the teachers that to be educated is to be modern, and to be modern implies the consumption of a whole range of imported, manufactured goods. It is not possible to separate the learning of new skills from the learning of a new identity, so one becomes educated, modern, and civilized all at once. One cannot learn how to read, write, and count without having access to school uniforms, bookcases, school dinners, and toothpaste. So if schooled Huaorani are keen to eat food provided by the state (or by oil companies, missions, and so forth), it is not so much because they have been convinced by their school lessons that it is more nutritious or that they need it because, like all Indians—at least according to government agencies—they are endemically undernourished; rather, it is because such food makes their bodies whiter, fatter, and softer, that is, modern. If they thrive on reading aloud their lessons in hygiene and civic behavior, which tell them “be very polite with your teachers and comrades, love and respect your teacher as if he were your father, raise your hand before speaking, dress with care, do not throw papers on the floor, do not masticate chewing gum, and so on,” it is because such habits and performances turn their bodies into modern and civilized ones.” In-

deed the stories they learn to read in their primers and readers and to copy down in their notebooks about mothers and little girls cleaning the house, boys taking showers, children brushing their teeth, or doctors warning against flies, rats, and other infectious pests do turn them into Ecuadorian citizens. They are fascinated by the hygiene and civility advocated in school and eager to apply to their own bodies new forms of body care, foreign foods, clothing, and courteous manners. As a result, the transformation they routinely undergo as pupils is more physical than spiritual. From their vantage point, schooling represents the collective dramatization—or ceremonial performance—of their mode of incorporating modern citizenship, that is, this new social form they call *ser civilizados*. This is particularly clear in youths who have completed their primary education and still hang around the school, showing off, with a hint of nostalgia, their decisive way of crossing the airstrip while looking straight ahead and holding a pen and a notebook in the characteristic manner of literates.

The school routines evoked here,¹⁰ and their obsessive concern with the body and cleanliness, may call for a Foucauldian analysis of the embodiment of power and of the individual's historical constitution through the institutional domination of the body and its sexuality. But, as I have come to realize, such an approach fails to account for the fact that the adults and children whose lives I shared are willing subjects perfectly at ease with their new experiences and zealously engaged in their bodily transformation. If there is symbolic violence in this particular case, it does not reside in the absolute and coercive power of carceral organizations that repress individuality, brutalize bodies, and control minds (Rival 1992:252). Nor can the desire to become modern be interpreted as resulting purely from indoctrination or other forms of ideological coercion. The transformations caused by contact and resulting from the dialectical interplay between endogenous and exogenous forces form an integral part of society and, as such, shed light on historical dynamics. "Huaoraniness" is not lived in a vacuum but in the context of shifting definitions of what being human means. The desire to be modern and civilized, that is, to be like any other national one might meet in the streets of any jungle town, relegates cultural authenticity to the shrinking realms of autarkic privacy, both in the home and in the forest.

More important, there was something uniquely Amazonian in the way my Huaorani hosts and friends were learning to be modern by memorizing textbook lessons on hygiene, executing commands such as "Brush your teeth before entering the classroom!" and, above all, imitating the teachers, something I did not comprehend fully before reading recent analyses of the

continuous fabrication of the body in this part of the world.¹¹ Rather than being spiritually conquered, in the sense discussed by Althusser or Bourdieu, Huaorani schoolchildren were actively assimilating the bodily practices of teachers and other nationals, and working at incorporating modern dispositions through rote learning and other repetitive school exercises that negate individuality. In this sense, they were acting as the authors of their own acculturation, understood as the acquisition of another body, with new affects and capacities. Literacy, which to them transformed the body before altering the mind, was just one such capacity along with many others, for example, knowing novel ways of speaking, eating, walking, dressing, building houses, and so forth.

Schools as Public Centers of Wealth

There is no performance without a stage, and it is in the school compound, which comprises the teachers' living quarters, that modern dispositions are rehearsed and performed. The school compound, unquestionably modern, constitutes the village's center (Rival 1992:226). It often comprises the only buildings with a concrete floor, plank walls, and corrugated iron roof. The canteen is equipped with modern kitchenware in sufficient quantity to prepare and serve "proper meals" daily to the children, occasionally to the parents after a working party, and two or three times a year to competing football teams and festival guests. In all villages, behind each school is an experimental plantation where children and their parents cultivate introduced crops such as coffee, sugar cane, and coconut trees. A vast area has generally been deforested around the school compound and the airstrip, both to ease aircraft landings and take-offs, and to satisfy the teachers' ambition to "urbanize the forest." Their concern is to transmute wild people into civilized ones, and, by removing from villages all traces of forest cover and animal life, transform wild spaces into modern environments. In marked contrast with Huaorani cultural understandings, teachers consider the forest a nonhuman space detrimental to the ideal of urbanity and civility.

Villagers of all ages in bright and clean clothes enjoy meeting up near the school after classes, a space where they can come together as members of the same community, regardless of their kin connections. They like peeping through the windows at the modern and precious items stored in the warehouse or in the headmaster's office. Absorbed in the domesticity of the tolerated cohuori and taming themselves into becoming like them, they listen

to the teachers' tropical music. Or they take a long, hard look at the modern amenities, which, they know, are also found in the jungle towns surrounding Huaorani land (Tena, Misahualli, or Coca). One day, so they have been told, they, too, will have electricity, running water, showers, and toilets in their own houses.¹²

Much active learning thus goes on around the school before, during, and after normal school hours, when off-duty teachers (getting ready in the mornings or relaxing in the evenings) become involuntary masters eagerly modeled by unwanted apprentices (children, youths, or passing villagers). The teachers' ways of waking up and dressing, washing, cooking and eating, playing the guitar, conversing, reading, and listening to the radio are scrutinized, endlessly commented on, and even parodied. The same occurs whenever a group of visiting outsiders (tourists, traders, government officials, missionaries, and so forth) is temporarily lodged in a classroom. This eagerness to imitate and use one's body in the manner of foreigners observed in their homes partly explains why the schooling of Huaorani children does not involve reforming their nature through the imposition of disciplined obedience. Children, like adults, are natural conformists when it comes to embodying the biocultural processes that make up the domesticity of modern others.

There is, as already noted, another side to the Huaorani's cultural interest in transformation and change as a bodily process: the consumption of a vast range of goods that brings about the materialization of modernity and activates the incorporating powers of civilized, town-dwelling demeanors. The manufactured goods necessary for the embodied performance of modernity are thus valued as an essential, material component of the new modern identity. They are also valued for the way they are acquired, which should be through the equal and individual distribution of aid or through tapping sources of natural abundance, such as the material wealth associated with oil companies. In fact, manufactured goods are obtained from two main sources, oil companies (Rival 2000) and schools, with new flows of exchange connecting the Huaorani population, the teachers, and various outside agencies—government institutions, charity organizations, and corporations.¹³

Villages clustered around a school compound and an airstrip are marked on the map of Ecuador, linked to major towns by modern systems of communication and transport (contact-radios and airplanes), and are much more likely to be included in various aid distribution networks, with teachers serving as intermediaries. Goods obtained from charity or relief organi-

zations are publicly distributed in schools, generally on Sundays, after the weekly meeting of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The practice of preparing parcels for each household and handing them to household heads, common in Ecuador, has never been accepted by the Huaorani population, who has demanded that identical parcels be made for every villager, regardless of age (the rule applies to children old enough to engage autonomously in the food quest, that is, at least four years old), status, or sex. The parcels are publicly distributed by the teachers, following a roll call. But, as charity sources are neither sufficient nor regular enough to satisfy the new demand, many teachers, who require that their pupils come to school adequately dressed and equipped, have developed their own trading business. I have analyzed elsewhere (Rival 1992:278–81) the continuous conflicts between the clashing moral economies of teachers, who advocate reciprocal exchange, and the Huaorani, who try to impose demand sharing.

Oil Camps' Riches

Quite clearly, Huaorani villagers would like schools to be, like oil camps, patches of abundance in the forest. North American and European oil companies, which have worked south of the Napo River since the late 1970s, have resigned themselves to the fact that native forest dwellers form an integral part of their industrial environment. They treat Huaorani villages as additional camps to be serviced and provisioned in the exact same way as any other working site. By delivering food and equipment to villages whenever they operate within Huaorani territory, companies hope to avoid the looting of their forest camps and the occupation of their well sites. During the seismic survey programs of 1989 and 1990, I saw helicopters fly weekly to every village and deliver what was usually given to oil workers: rations of food, pots, axes, gardening tools, tents, medicine, and so forth. The goods, wrapped in individual bundles, were publicly distributed by company employees and schoolteachers. These gifts were extremely appreciated, and the donated food (rice, oats, and sugar) was traditionally prepared, either as "food drink" (*bequi*) or "dry food" (*quengui*).

Camp visiting blends smoothly within foraging activities and nomadic movements, and Huaorani workers are frequently visited by their relatives. Given the prohibitive cost of helicopter freight, camp equipment (tents, plates, cooking pots, blankets, containers, etc.), and seismic survey equipment (electric wire, tubes, iron sheets, etc.) are simply left behind, most often for the Huaorani's exclusive use. The discarded gear is used as raw ma-

terials from the forest in the making of a wide range of traditional artifacts. During fieldwork, I saw hammocks made of electric wire, nylon cord used as vines in a number of ways, and festive crowns made of plastic bands instead of palm leaves. And where body designs made with vegetable pigments had traditionally ornamented legs, arms, or shoulders, company names were now tattooed. Goods and foods acquired through direct tapping of new sources of wealth in the forest while trekking, hunting, or gathering and those received as gifts in bundles brought weekly by helicopter¹⁴ equally fit the economy of procurement discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Sometimes oil camps and well sites become the objects of fierce disputes among villages. For example, when the platform for PetroCanada's exploratory well was built in the spring of 1989, about one hundred Huaorani from four villages (Dayuno, Huamono, Zapino, and Golondrina) were employed for two months. Fierce competition developed between the four villages, each claiming exclusive rights over the well site and the goods it contained. Each wanted the company to give it food, clothes, tools, outboard motors, and chain saws in exchange for the right to work on Huaorani land without disruption or disturbance. But villagers could not agree either on who had the legitimate right to make such a demand or to share the benefits equally among the four settlements. Traditional longhouses were divided by the same hostility and aggressive competitiveness when they had to redefine their hunting territories and their rights to access the peach palm groves left by ascendants.

It is far more difficult, if not impossible, to turn schools into impersonal sources of unlimited supplies of useful things. Schoolteachers, who can give unilaterally only a limited amount of goods, cannot be treated as natural patches of wealth. Villagers nevertheless elude the demands of teachers and try to evade reciprocating the goods and services they receive from them. Pretending that they do not understand the rules of reciprocal exchange between trade partners, they are constantly trying to redefine trade and reciprocal exchange as "unilateral giving away" through visiting and asking for gifts which they do not reciprocate (Rival 1992:281–84).¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, therefore, teachers involved in commercial dealings with Huaorani villagers are not making worthwhile profits. Angry and frustrated at what they take as the Huaorani's lack of hospitality and gratitude, they demand that children bring to school daily contributions of manioc, plantain, and firewood, but with little success. Many end up practicing demand sharing themselves. For example, they visit parents, who have just come back from hunting, and wait stubbornly until they are finally offered a share. On late afternoons and

Sundays, they tour more distant neighborhood clusters asking for fruit, game meat, or bunches of plantain. When they, in turn, are visited by villagers asking for fishing hooks, medicine, or sugar, they make a point of asking for food in exchange. It is through this continuous process of negotiation that the teachers progressively force Huaorani villagers into accepting reciprocal exchange and distinguishing two categories of people: those who are at school and do not have the time to grow food and those who cultivate, fish, and hunt and must provide for the whole village community, non-kin included.

Feast Givers, Consumers, and Producers

It is during school festivals, which combine old and new ways of feasting and have now replaced the traditional *ëëmë* feasts discussed in the last chapter, where teachers come closest to being impersonal donors. School festivals usually last three days, blend school and Huaorani cultures, and involve as much planning and food surplus production as the old drinking ceremonies, if not more (Rival 1992:241–48). The clash of values becomes obvious during festival preparations. Whereas teachers emphasize hard work and production, villagers try to deny the need for extra work; they prefer to rejoice at the thought of consuming naturally abundant food. A woman once said to a teacher: “This is your feast, this is the teachers’ feast, you are the owner of the feast. We shall follow you, we shall help you and contribute as much manioc, plantain, and bananas as will please you. The day you stop living with us, there will no longer be a school celebration.” Her speech reflected the local understanding that school festivals are “owned” by the teachers, very much in the same way as manioc feasts are owned by the *ahuene* couples who organize them. Teachers live in, and hence control, the school compounds where such festivals take place, and where many invited villagers sleep and eat for three days. They also own and control the distribution of the food offered during the celebrations, whatever its origin (game from men who received cartridges to hunt; garden produce from mothers of schoolchildren; rice, sugar, and oats from government authorities). Teachers as feast givers are subjected to the host-guest politics discussed in the previous chapter. Vociferous Huaorani guests complain, for instance, that food and drinks are being served in pitiful and ridiculously meager quantities. If villagers donate garden produce, game, and fish more or less willingly for the organization of school festivals, as they would to their own *ahuene*, they, at all other times, resist having to supply the teach-

ers with food and artifacts. In short, they refuse the economy created around the school compound, which is based on difference and scarcity, productive work, and reciprocal exchange.

Whereas villagers have no difficulty accepting new sources of wealth, as long as no additional labor is involved, they resent having to work and produce substantially more than they traditionally do (Rival 1992:264–66) and actively resist the intensification of agriculture. Through its workings and its ideology, the school institutionalizes the family as part of its civilizing project and divides the village population into children and parents, that is, into consumers and producers (Rival 1992:282–84). Children are those who work mentally all day long and consume the products of the labor of their parents, who, defined on school registers as *campesinos* ‘farmers’, become responsible for the village’s agricultural production. This new social division of labor, explicitly presented as rational and progressive, is reinforced in the teachings dedicated to changing the children’s conceptions of work, production, and gender. Children are taught, for example, that agriculture (the creation of abundance and welfare through hard labor) represents an evolutionary stage superior to that of hunting and gathering, and that if their parents intensify horticultural production, food will be more nutritious and varied. Furthermore, schools are built and maintained through considerable labor, and parents are expected to offer their labor for the common good. All this leads villagers to complain that schooling removes children from subsistence activities and leads to the creation of social divisions.

Teachers (especially Quichua teachers) advocate the virtues of hard work for one’s family and community, and shun not only laziness but also forms of working that are, in their view, performed too leisurely.¹⁶ There is an obvious link between the teachers’ work ethic and their preference for transforming part of the forest into something else, such as cultivated fields and housing compounds. Relatively large and permanent settlements supported by the production of substantial food surpluses (especially manioc) for domestic and ritual consumption and for trade require hard work. Huao-rani thinking about human work has already been discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Rather than “work” as we understand it, we find in this cultural context a whole range of creative activities corresponding to the specific making of particular objects and the doing of particular tasks. The moral connotations attached to such doing and making is that it should be undertaken with pleasure and, consequently, that individuals should choose freely when and how to work (Rival 1998f:73).

Trekking Away from School Villages

As soon as school holidays start, or whenever school is closed because teachers are ill or absent, the village fragments, as people quickly abandon the deserted center to resume their favorite activity: trekking in the forest. And if for some reason the school ceases to function, the various neighborhood clusters forming a village progressively shift away from one another, with each kindred forming a separate endogamous nexus with little or no contact with others. When school stops functioning, the center withers away, and the village becomes deserted. The closing down of a school, like the school festival, thus highlights something that does not appear as clearly in the daily functioning of a school: that it keeps people together as long as wealth pours out of it.

For Huaorani parents, who are forced to become sedentary agriculturalists and to produce food for children who are no longer autonomous food producers, village life and schooling are, by definition, "anti-trekking." A school cannot function unless enough children (at least 24 school-aged children) attend classes regularly. On average, a minimum of 150 to 170 adults, with at least 56 school-aged children, are needed for a school to be viable. Then teachers become upset if children miss one day of school or arrive late. Parents are therefore strongly encouraged to build their houses as close as possible to the school and the airstrip. This is why, I was told, people have a small house right by the school and a bigger one along the river or on the top of a neighboring hill. However, during term time, people cannot go to their "real" house as often as they wish; nor can they go on long treks. Teachers usually do not mind the men's hunting or fishing expeditions, especially when stocks of smoked game and dried fish run low, and may actually order them to go. Similarly, they accept that fathers and young men join the oil crews to earn some cash, particularly when these men's families run high debts with the teachers' shops. However, they strongly discourage mothers and children to stay away from the village for any length of time. Finally, life in school villages hinders trekking as there is always so much to do, for example, maintain and repair the school buildings, keep the grass short on the airstrip, playground, and sports fields, or cultivate crops to feed the children, the teachers, and the teachers' families, as well as prepare food for school dinners and school festivals. This is why people often confided to me, with some resentment, that schooling was forcing them to live in the village. They resented sedentarization, blamed it on schools, and reverted with pleasure and facility to a trekking mode of life

whenever school was closed for holidays or as soon as the teachers were no longer around.

In one particular village, for example, there had been no teacher for several months. I saw families abandon their houses temporarily and disappear on long treks in the forest. Others rebuilt their houses several kilometres away from the school compound. The only occupied house left in the ghost village was that of the village chief, a fierce woman who had lived for some years in a jungle town before moving back to Huaorani land and marrying a classificatory cross-cousin. She was left alone with her husband and children, with the arduous task of keeping the public buildings and airstrip in good condition despite the heat, high humidity, and lack of any labor force. She was, as expected, furious with her followers for having gone away.

The school had been closed because she had had the teachers removed from "her" school. They had, she felt, challenged her authority, so she had complained about them to the local education board. The real reason, apparently, was that the headmaster had infuriated her by refusing to marry her younger daughter, and hence become her son-in-law. New teachers were finally appointed, but only half the villagers returned to live in the village. While some had joined close relatives living in settlements where their children had been allowed to enroll in the local school, others had decided to form a splinter community downriver. In the end, the village, which had one of the most developed infrastructures and oldest schools, was completely abandoned. Even the chief, her husband, and her children ended up leaving. As far as I know, they are now living along a new oil road in the Tiputini, a region where the grandparents of the chief's husband had once planted chonta palms and held their drinking ceremonies. Although extreme, the closure of this school well illustrates the dynamics that trigger sedentarization in villages with schools, temporary trekking during school closure, and the eventual dissolution of a community that has lost its wealth-generating center.

Only as long as teachers are present in villages is sedentary life maintained through the daily practice of sending children to school. Villagers would like teachers to turn the schools into sources of natural abundance, that is, centers of wealth that could be tapped on demand, without requiring anything in return. When teachers are away for any length of time, the supply of manufactured goods and foods stops almost instantaneously. When children are not in the classrooms, the school ceases to "produce" wealth, and village life ceases altogether. House groups move back to their

hunting grounds, very much as they traditionally did once the chonta palm fruiting season was over. When a school closes for good, the village loses the center around which houses and gardens have slowly drifted over the years; instead, it fragments in various household clusters. With no teacher and no school, not only does village life come to an end but so does modern life. The school deserted, the village abandoned, and the performance over, villagers trek back to the forest.¹⁷

The centripetal power of the functioning school is better understood with reference to the airstrip, which in many ways fulfills the same magnetic function, enhanced by its historical and present connection with gift giving and goods supplying. In fact, many settlements, including those without primary schools, have an airstrip. And the building of a new, enlarged landing strip constitutes one of the top demands put forward by delegations sent to lobby transnational companies and other aid donors.

The aerial map drawn by a village leader on the blackboard during a PTA meeting to represent his village after the installation of running water and electricity in all the houses illustrates his vision of an external giving force becoming the center. With its large extensions of grassy lands and cultivated gardens, and three main neighborhood clusters separated by a river and a wood, the village in question looked like any other school village in Huaorani land. But the village endowed with amenities drawn on the board was similar in its layout to a Yanomami shabono or to any other Amazonian house-village where peripheral domestic units surround a central plaza (Rivière 1995). On his map the houses had been moved side by side all around the airstrip, the reason being that it was not possible to deliver water and electricity to houses dispersed in the forest.

Was it fortuitous that the leader's dream village was made of three concentric circles, the outermost circle made of cultivated land encroaching on the forest, the innermost circle made of domestic houses, and in-between the school compound sharing with the airstrip the sacred center? Needless to say, the utopian vision was never realized, Huaorani social life being antithetical to aggregation based on substantial work investment. Huaorani communities become real villages, and remain villages, only if they are established around a geographical, social, political, and cultural center that produces wealth without any actual human labor. Schools and airstrips fulfill this function only partially, and are seasonally or permanently abandoned whenever they stop becoming a source of natural abundance or when outsiders, failing to "deliver the goods," start demanding work and food from villagers.

The Naturalization of Impersonal Donors

This chapter has examined the role played by formal schooling in the transformation of Huaorani society from hunting, gathering, and trekking bands to semi-sedentary villages. In many ways, this process of transformation began with the SIL, whose activities preceded state education by at least two decades. One reason why local groups have been pushed to accept state schools and a sedentary existence is that the “mixed” communities created by the SIL could not be maintained without the centripetal force exercised by outsiders such as teachers, who alone can lower tensions and smooth animosities between old factions. A second reason is that, willing or unwilling, people feel that they are now part of a wider society of modern citizens. The school provides the public and secure arena people need to rehearse and perform modern ways of being. Third, people hope that schools will provide them unilaterally with all the goods and foodstuff they need to become “civilized.” It is difficult to imagine an institution other than the primary schools created in Huaorani land during the 1980s and the 1990s that could have filled these objectives better.

State schools are modern centers that “civilize people.” They institutionalize village life around a public domain and constitute villages as political and productive communities by transforming their members into parents and children, producers and consumers, as long as they can function as centers of wealth. But schools cannot entirely displace centrifugal tendencies that are related to the following truth: whereas Huaorani people express a strong desire for an identity that requires the performance of civilized behavior and the consumption of a wide range of Western goods, they do not see hard work, surplus production, agriculture, and reciprocal exchange as essential components of a modern identity. Throughout Huaorani land, the population, habituated to a sedentary existence in communities organized around airstrips and led by powerful outsiders whose ability to “attract” large flows of free manufactured goods secures unity and stability, tries to reproduce with oil engineers, tourist guides, teachers, shop owners, and colonists the demand-sharing relation it so successfully imposed on the SIL for so many years.

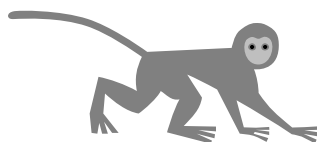
Statements like “the school is what keeps us together” but “with the children going to school, we no longer trek” and “schools give us rice and sugar to eat, mosquito nets to sleep under, soap to wash ourselves, and so forth” illustrate the Huaorani’s ambivalent quest for civilized life, a quest they are prepared to embark on only in the presence of teachers. Teachers in Huao-

rani land are usually single males of indigenous extraction, who involve themselves fully in community affairs wherever they teach and live. In a way, they have all the qualities of an ideal son-in-law. However, in practice, villagers want them to remain *potential* sons-in-law, for were they to marry, they would be incorporated within one particular nanicabo, and hence no longer keeping people together by belonging to the whole community. Furthermore, and without, I hope, appearing to push the argument too far, I suggest that it is in their quality of virtual brothers (for women) or brothers-in-law (for men) that teachers are charged to socialize the village's children and to turn them into "others" who can then integrate the national society. In this sense, teachers, like North American missionaries whose male kin were killed by the Huaorani with whom they chose to live, are accepted as not-so-distant outsiders, that is, as potential affines (Rivière 1984:56; Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993).

Economic conflicts between villagers and teachers reveal the former's wish that schools, like companies prospecting for oil, function as impersonal, reliable, and wealthy institutions external to society. In this sense, schools are structurally similar to the feasthouse of manioc feast givers, who ritually transform themselves into trees fruiting abundantly for their bird-like guests to gorge on, in the hope of gaining additional in-marrying spouses and new followers. Schools, like festivals in which manioc is drunk with the enemy, seem to promise unity and lavish generosity, but the objective is to obtain allegiance and productive work in exchange, that is, to replace the consumption of wealth external to the living community with wealth produced by the living. Abundance is created artificially as a means to attract and incorporate, that is, to transform unrelated others into allies and followers. Schools make the whole system deriving from manioc feasts viable by restructuring time and space in a new geopolitical context characterized by contact and encapsulation. In a Huaorani settlement socially reorganized by a school, the outside is incorporated and made into a center that acquires a degree of durability. However, and as I have tried to show in this chapter, schools cannot easily be turned into sources of natural abundance. The increase in scale characteristic of school villages functioning like extended and overlasting feasthouses is inherently unstable. The ritual attempt toward concentration, sedentarization, intensification, and horticulture cannot be solidified for long before the trek is resumed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Prey at the Center



A huane recently told me: “Huaorani people have always wanted to go farther . . . beyond and away . . . This is no longer possible. We have to stay where we live, until death comes for us, until we depart this world.” These words were ushered as he hastily unpacked the forty or so boxes of clothes, canned tuna, biscuits, sugar, flour, oil, and bottles of soft drinks he and his young brothers and cousins had purchased in the least distant jungle town a few days before, and brought back after a perilous and exhausting journey by truck and canoe, and on foot through the forest. The U.S. \$800 recently left to the community by an ecotourism tour operator had been just enough to cover the purchase of manufactured goods and the transport costs. Ahuane’s words stayed with me, unintelligible, for a long time. Young Huaorani men and women are traveling today much more than when I started fieldwork in the late 1980s. Many spend their time going back and forth between villages and jungle towns, and many travel farther away than before, through the highlands of Ecuador, on the coast, and even abroad, without mentioning the increasing number of those who are settling permanently outside Huaorani land.

What Ahuane implicitly meant, it now dawns on me, is that such displacements are individual journeys, not collective treks in search of sources of abundance, mutually accessed. Today natural abundance is celebrated in new centers of wealth and new supra-local political institutions, the school villages marked on the map of Ecuador, where outside goods may be temporarily accumulated and consumed. It is too early to say whether mobility through the landscape has acquired new meanings. But for the young generations at least, space is no longer socially constituted with exclusive reference to abandoned materiality. As boundaries between human culture and material nature are shifting, the materiality imparted by the circumscribing national society seems to take precedence over the forest and its embedded memories.

I have tried to show in this book that the Huaorani have lived as highly mobile forest hunters and gatherers in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon for hundreds of years. Forming interstitial, nomadic, and autarkic enclaves between the great Zaparo, Shuar, and Tukanoan nations of the Upper

Marañon, they have developed a historical consciousness characterized by a fierce refusal of contact, trade, and exchange, as well as avoidance of interethnic political alliances or insertion in regional networks. Having given evidence that large tracks of Huaorani land are anthropogenic and that horticulture is economically marginal (garden products are mainly cultivated for the preparation of ceremonial beverages), I went on to discuss the notion of natural abundance. I explained that slow-growing plants, fruit trees, in particular, such as the chonta palm (*Bactris gasipaes*), are perceived as the legacy of past generations whose bounty turns the forest into a giving environment. I then endeavored to draw correspondences between the Huaorani's particular mode of subsistence and use of the forest and their system of social alliances based on a strict closure of the Huaorani social world onto itself, as well as on the partial isolation and mutual avoidance of *huaomoni* 'we-people' clusters. It is in this context that I have analyzed trekking, not as a mundane activity relating to the pragmatics of subsistence and to environmental or historical adaptation but, rather, as a fundamental way of reproducing society through time.

The historical ecology paradigm (Balée 1998) has framed my analysis of Huaorani trekking, which I offer as a contribution to its further development. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, Balée has taken maximization theorists and other cultural ecologists to task for understanding adaptation to the environment in purely evolutionary terms, and for failing to recognize that a part of the Amazon Forest to which indigenous people have adapted is not pristine, wild, or natural but, rather, is an environment historically transformed by human productive and consumptive activities. For Balée, historical factors explain the presence of foraging and trekking populations in Amazonia. His work with a number of Brazilian marginal groups has led him to conclude that the fifteenth-century European invasion caused not only the demographic collapse of lowland South American populations but also their massive cultural devolution, with surviving societies adapting to biocultural forests resulting from the dynamic interaction between history and ecology (Balée 1992). On this basis, he has put forward the hypothesis that foragers can survive without cultivated crops, thanks to a few essential nondomesticated resources (palms and other fruit trees) that are in fact the product of the activities of ancient populations.

Although Balée's model of foraging bands adapted to disturbed forests partly illuminates some aspects of Huaorani trekking, the notion of cultural loss fails to explain the cultural logic embedded within their unique system of resource use that drastically reduces dependence on cultivated crops.

Like the Brazilian groups discussed by Balée, the Huaorani have chosen to flee from coercive powers and to adopt a wandering way of life. Although we will probably never know whether they descend from sedentarized and sophisticated cultivators, there is little doubt that they have wandered for centuries and have always depended more on foraging than on agriculture. Their way of life and their long coexistence with more powerful, stratified, and complex agricultural societies cannot be explained with a model that aims to account for the progressive loss of cultivation by marginal tribes affected by disease, depopulation, and warfare.

I find the devolution thesis embraced by Balée—and many others—unsatisfactory on a number of accounts. The first problem with this mode of explanation is that historical causes are always postconquest, never preconquest, historical causes. In other words, devolution to a simpler, less hierarchical social form and to a more nomadic, less agriculture-dependent way of life is envisaged only as the outcome of European expansion. That there may have been processes of regression from sedentism to nomadism and loss of cultigens *before* the Spanish Conquest is simply not envisaged. Consequently intensive, sedentary agriculture is premised as being logically and historically anterior to the forms of trekking and foraging observed today. And whereas the sequence foraging/sedentary horticulture is naturalized as evolutionary, and hence, in a sense, de-historicized, the sequence sedentary horticulture/foraging is interpreted as having been induced by the historical encounter between Europe and prehistorical Amazonia.¹ Like much postcolonial historico-anthropological writing, which assumes that history started with the Spaniards' arrival, and, by way of consequence, that contemporary Amazonian societies necessarily result from ethnogenesis (Hill 1996), this position impoverishes the actual diversity of historical trajectories in the region. It has been my contention that nomadism and a hunting-gathering way of life need not be postcolonial, for they may represent cultural and political choices already present in preconquest values and social forms.

Furthermore, the devolution thesis fails to explain why *both* sedentarized horticulture (as practiced, for example, by Quichua communities) and trekking (as practiced, for instance, by Huaorani bands) represent successful adaptations to the Upper Napo ecology. I have noted that the exploitation of wild resources through hunting and gathering, although qualitatively different from the exploitation of domesticates through cultivation, nevertheless affects species distribution and, consequently, systematically modifies the environment (Yen 1989).² Finally, trekkers who continue to

rely on noncultivated food develop forest-management practices that lead to greater concentrations of favored resources within specific areas. In so doing, they do transform nature, albeit in a distinctive way, for their techniques are not geared to intensify production outputs.

Another, related problem with the devolution thesis is that it overemphasizes the evolutionary significance of domestication and treats swidden horticulture as a homogeneous and empirical category, ignoring the importance of subsistence modes in defining group identity. Foragers and sedentarized cultivators have developed radically different means of associating with plants and alternative ways of being in the world and knowing it. Rather than a continuum of intensity of resource exploitation, foraging and cultivation constitute alternative strategies of resource procurement and modes of practical and intentional engagement with their environment (Ingold 1996). This significant difference does matter in terms of identity formation, as well as in terms of interethnic relations, given that, on the whole, gardeners feel morally superior to foragers and trekkers (Rival 1999b:82).

Last but not least, the devolution thesis entirely ignores the fact that the Huaorani do not experience or represent their lack of intensive horticulture as a regression to a presocial state.³ Their lesser reliance on garden products results from specific representations of the world and from political choices predating the conquest. As a result, they contrast trekking and village life as two different types of sociality, linked to different styles of feasting and celebrating natural abundance. Moreover, they practice and represent trekking not only as a conscious form of adaptation to a landscape modified by past occupants but also as a form of protection against predators. Animal predation and plant fructification thus become the contrastive sources of cultural representations that mediate the relation between environmental change and historical events. A central thesis of this book is that a good understanding of Huaorani history and of its relationship with the natural history of the forest requires not only the examination of historiographic documents, as defended by postcolonial historians, and a botanical study of forest dynamics, as so cogently argued by Balée, but also an analysis of their religious ideas about life and death. For it is with such ideas in their minds that they have become ecological and historical agents of change.

We saw in chapter 3 that the Huaorani think about history as a succession of times of peace and expansion followed by times of war and destruction, and that violent death, a source of discontinuity that creates history, is basic to their representations of the past. The bipartite social world comprises two kinds of beings, the *huaorani* (true people) and the *cobuori* (non-Huaor-

rani or cannibal others); not only are huaorani ontologically different from cohuori, but they are the latter's prey. From the Huaorani point of view, which is that of the victim, cohuori socially reproduce by preying on huaorani and appropriating their life force, while huaorani continuously try to escape being consumed by these numerous and powerful predators. By resisting the dominant social order, fleeing, and defending their political autonomy, huaorani prey avoid becoming cohuori-like predators, and, as a result, predation remains unilateral. Fully accepting their own finitude, the Huaorani have defended their collective existence, as well as their individual lives, by maintaining a separate identity. If they have invented more cohuori adversaries than those actually existing in their social environment (Erikson 1993), they have done so not with the purpose of incorporating them into their society but, on the contrary, in order to flee from them and survive without needing anything from the cohuori world. Huaorani people trek to escape predation, not to perpetrate it.⁴

Oral narratives also mention that the "true people" have survived through their continuous effort to circumscribe irruptions of internal fury and homicidal drives, which periodically have brought the Huaorani nation to the brink of extinction and against which they feel powerless, even if the taking of lives internally differs from external predation. As discussed in chapter 3 and subsequently, killing produces internal difference in the sense that the killer, his body overtaken by rage, turns, in the eyes of his fellow co-residents, from insider to outsider, while his victim, if buried alive and dying with one of his children, departs, in the eyes of his house group, as a true insider, a father, and a cognate. In this sense, the father-child sacrifice is productive of kinship memory. More generally, the violently killed are remembered as individuals whose deaths are there to be avenged. Further, as I showed in chapter 6, internal killing is also represented as being caused by the political will of men who, in their attempt to control the composition and localization of residential units, refuse their peaceful insertion as uxorial husbands and fathers. I have concluded, on this basis, that Huaorani society is not characterized by the appropriation of alien subjectivities but, instead, by the internal fabrication of otherness as a complementary process to the production of selfsameness.

The distribution and mobility of the Huaorani population, as I have argued in this book, is linked as much to the continued existence of long-houses, forest groves, and seasonal rituals of congregation as it is to predation and destruction. Unlike the Parakana, among whom nomadism, foraging, and warfare are closely interrelated phenomena (Fausto 1998:327ff.),

Huaorani trekking cannot be solely attributed to cannibal beliefs that intrinsically cause centrifugal dynamics. The Huaorani sharing economy is not based on the devaluation of productive labor but, rather, on the radical attempt to eliminate reciprocity. Society is structured by demand sharing, by reciprocal exchange confined to marriage alliances between two long-houses united by cross-sex sibling ties, and by daily transactions between husbands and wives. Within the longhouse, co-residents are both producers and consumers. Their creative power, which derives from production and consumption, is neither denied nor devalued. On the contrary, it is seen as prolonging its effects beyond death, for the forest, far from being a pristine environment external to society, exists as the product of the productive and consumptive activities of past peoples. Both the forest and society are regenerated through the business of ordinary life, without need for accumulation, surplus, stealing, or the transfer of life energy from one sphere to another. The Huaorani vision of life is not limited fertility but natural abundance.

In opposition to the notion of devolution, which brings to mind derogatory images of parasitic travelers living off the residues of long extinct, wealth-producing cultures, the notion of natural abundance encapsulates the essential meaning of adaptation to a giving environment or the fact that the forest is enriched with useful natural resources thanks to past human activity or, in other words, that living Huaorani use vegetational forms that they have inherited from the past. I have examined this multifaceted notion in some detail in chapter 4 and summarize here the most important aspects.

Natural abundance first implies that socially recognized work occurs in the past and not in the present; that is, work affects and shapes nature retrospectively. The plant world, made in the past, produces in the present, and past social activities become nature. By tapping wealth created in the past, the living downplay productive work and investment in the long term. Concomitantly, people take part in radical forms of sharing, such as sharing on demand, a form of exchange bound entirely in the present, with no past or future. Furthermore, work is a life-sustaining activity rather than productive labor in the Marxist sense of the term. Work, which in this context means "to do" or "to make" in order to sustain life, is an all-encompassing category; it includes domestic activities and "relations of existence" that we would classify as consumptive. The forest, known to include both biophysical and cultural elements that are in relation with each other, is produced through dwelling and living.⁵ Rather than managing scarcity and shortages, people encourage resources to grow in places where they can be transformed

through sharing into more fructifying vegetation. The Huaorani political economy, based on immediate consumption, blurs all distinctions between exchange and use, and tunes social life to the fact that human consumption forms a part of the reproductive cycle of plants.

In addition to the fact that work, a life-sustaining activity, plays a central, albeit retrospective, role in creating and re-creating the forest, and in addition to the fact that past work is read through its material effect on the flora (and indirectly on animal life), there is also the idea that useful perennial species encountered in forest groves are closely associated with one's forebears. In other words, past human activity in the landscape is always read as indicative of the presence of long-dead kinfolk. Time, far from being an abstract property, is embedded in space and concretely represented by the forested biotope (see Rivière 1984:99). The anthropomorphization of the forest is not achieved through naming or other symbolic practices. Rather, the transformation of people's activities in vegetation is a product of a "time lag" marking the historical continuity between being part of an environment and transforming it. If, for both the Huaorani and the Arawete (Viveiros de Castro 1992), human beings are in perpetual becoming, the Arawete emphasize the transformation of the soul, whereas the Huaorani focus on the transformation of the body and the flesh.

Such interpretation is not fetishistic in the materialist or Marxist sense, for no intentional purpose or desire is "mistakenly" or superstitiously attributed to material entities of the natural world. That past human activity continues to yield in the present and that previous human occupation makes the forest more amenable to human life today are verifiable facts. Another reason why it is not fetishistic is that the identification of past people as direct kin, although often more a belief than a reality, does not entail any mystical principle causing plant life and fertility. Although recognized as kin, dead people, whose activities have enabled the concentration of resources in places where they can be shared, have no authority over living consumers. By sustaining the biological life of their shared bodies, they have unintentionally caused these to "release" natural wealth, which, not owned, cannot be offered as a gift and thus cannot be reciprocated.⁶

Finally, natural abundance is not a limited good. It results from the ongoing process of domestic living, longhouse sharing, and seasonal cycles of resource use, which, unless disrupted by warfare, unfold from past to present to future with no sharp discontinuity. The productivity of nature corresponds to the historical outcome of past consumption as part of human procurement of subsistence. Like economic self-sufficiency, political au-

tarky and endogamous sociality, natural abundance, or the denial of surplus production through human labor, fulfills the Huaorani ideal of social closure. As abundantly discussed in chapters 4 and 6, fruiting palm groves, which materialize the domestic activities of past generations, correspond spatially to the festive amalgamation of intermarrying house groups and to social reproduction through the formation of long-lasting, cross-sex sibling pairs. Cognatic ties are actualized through the use of resources from the past; kin are transformed into affines and affines into kin.

The constitution of society around the consumption of natural abundance represents a model that reverses the dominant Amazonian ideology according to which it is the violent incorporation of enemy *alter* that creates society. Whereas their predatory enemies must kill in order to live, the Huaorani profess through their cosmology that living is the source of life, and affirm through their rituals that their own social reproduction does not depend on cannibal appropriation. I am thus not inclined to use Fausto's (1998) concept of "productive consumption" to theorize the Huaorani mode of social reproduction, which does not depend on the taming of the predatory outside or on its incorporation. Aggressive and destructive strategies coexist with strategies based on the autonomous growth of plants and their apparently inexhaustible capacity for spontaneous regeneration.

There is no place here to engage in a full comparative analysis, but the originality of the Huaorani solution to the Amazonian problem of exchange and production may be illustrated by contrasting it with two representative cases. Unlike the Uitoto, who are obligated to perpetuate the life of the crops they cultivate and for whom human labor has the religious function of cleansing the environment from evil forest-dwelling forces (Griffiths 2001), the Huaorani incorporate the past as a source of material wealth in support of the production of persons; they literally grow with the forest. And unlike the mixed-blood, cultivating people studied by Gow (1991), who work in collaboration with the whites at cutting the forest down to exchange its products for manufactured goods as part of their ordered transformation of natural resources and ethnic relations, the Huaorani engage in transformative activities built on the continuum between social and ecological relations.

The thesis that society in the Amazon is constituted through predation as negative reciprocal exchange automatically implies the premise that life and fertility are limited goods that must be recycled (Descola 1992; Bloch and Parry 1982). By fleeing, hiding, and trekking, the Huaorani protect themselves from predators. By appropriating the human activities generative of

forest life, they define a social and symbolic world in which their own regeneration does not depend on rebounding violence (Bloch 1992) or on recycling the world's limited fertility and life force (Arhem 1996). Rather, these persecuted subjects depend entirely on their own inner vital resources. My argument here is that if predation is central to Amazonian sociology and social philosophies, and if we apply perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998b) consistently, then we must allow for subject positions other than that of predator, in particular, for that of prey.

Bruce Albert, whose doctoral thesis on the Yanomami (Albert 1985) launched the predation approach to Amazonian warfare, argues in a recent publication (Albert 1993) that symbolic predation relates to the "fetishism of cosmological reciprocity," as well as to a particular type of historical consciousness that conceptualizes change in terms of radical metamorphoses and not in terms of progressive mutations. My endeavor in this book has been to show that Huaorani ethnohistory embraces both conceptualizations of change. Violent death, viewed as a catalyst for change in structures and social relations, precipitates the mutation of times of peace and expansion in times of war and destruction. The return to peace, however, does not occur through a radical metamorphosis but through a gradual process of dwelling in, and growing with, the forest.

Interestingly, and as discussed in chapter 5, the same contrast applies to the social relations by which people part or coalesce. It is far easier to leave Huaorani society, or a longhouse within it, than to become incorporated. It is much easier to cease to be a Huaorani than to become one. One becomes an outsider almost instantaneously, as soon as one leaves Huaorani land⁷ or as soon as one departs from one's nanicabo to join another longhouse residence. Anger equally turns a man into an "other" (*hua*), even if the instantaneous transformation is, in most cases, temporary. The process by which uxorial husbands become insiders (*guiri*) within their wives' house groups (and one cannot be a *huao* person without being a *guiri*) is, by comparison, long and slow. It seems to me that the scalar opposition between inside and outside (Rivière 1984) or between affines and cognates (Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993) relates, in this case, to a fundamental temporal asymmetry between detachment and attachment or incorporation. Whereas the latter is swift and fluid—in fact, as easy as it is to move through the forest and through history—the former is a gradual process of shared living, which takes time.

Furthermore, a similar contrast is found in the classification of natural categories. As I have discussed elsewhere (Rival 1993a), Huaorani ethno-

botany differentiates plants that grow slowly and perdure from those that grow fast but die off. In the same article I touched on the political implications of this contrast, as trust in leaders of manioc-drinking ceremonies (manioc being a fast-growing crop) is limited—indeed, as short-lived as their garden supplies. The present study has gone a step further in showing another way of modeling social relations on two distinct natural processes, which adds the distinction between vegetal and animal life to the contrast between slow, long-lasting growth versus fast, ephemeral growth. The aggressive relation between preys and predators, as found in the animal kingdom, is marked by extreme hostility and separation. It is in the nature of powerful *cohuori* to reproduce themselves by continuously snatching the creativity, vitality, and life force of *huaorani* people. The latter can do no more than elude contact with cannibal attackers, move about as much and as often as possible, and count themselves among their own forces, hence the political choice of radical isolationism. By contrast, the life-sustaining relation between people and forest plants, particularly fruiting trees (and the impersonal agencies perceived as fulfilling a similar function), is characterized by great lavishness. It is in the nature of trees and other food plants of the forest to give continuously to humans without asking anything in return. This new finding leads me to formulate a few general remarks on the symbolic reproduction of societies marginal to central powers.⁸

Marginal people such as the *Huaorani* constitute themselves in collectivities whose essential, embodied qualities are not derived from productive labor but from shared experiences of consumption, construed as celebrations of abundance. Like other social groups discussed in Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart (1998), they create and reproduce their separate and autonomous identity by devaluing their participation in social relations of production and by giving priority to nonproductive forms of sociality. Concomitantly they treat powerful outsiders and dominant forces as sources of endlessly renewable wealth. To value sharing in consumption over cooperating in production and to treat oppressive political and economic agents as free sources of wealth and creativity are two sides of the same coin. It is by tapping external, dominant powers turned into expansive productive forces, and by eliminating reciprocal exchange through various naturalizing processes, that the *Huaorani* peripheral collectivity reproduces itself.

Huaorani culture naturalizes social relations on various levels. Starting with the most inclusive level of social interaction, that between longhouse co-residents, we find a system of representations focusing on common liv-

ing (from food sharing to substance sharing) as an organic process. The notion of shared substance naturalizes—indeed, biologizes—social bonds; as described in chapter 5, nanicabo sociality is in part biotic. At the most exclusive level, the absolute lack of sociality between cohuori and huaorani is naturalized as the animal-like relation between predator and prey, albeit more metaphorically than metonymically. The naturalization of the diachronic relation between past and present people consists in making the dead the source of plant food freely tapped by the living, as in the ritual association of huaomoni groups with chonta palm groves created by forebears.

Such naturalization of power by the Huaorani offers an interesting corrective to the thesis that naturalization strategies are used by the mighty to impose their hierarchical and coercive power over the weak, and that identity is naturalized or essentialized with reference to a narrative of origin that hides power differentials (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). The first problem with the constructionist argument⁹ put forward by Yanagisako and Delaney is that it is blind to the political and ideological use of “naturalness” by marginal, weak, or oppressed groups as a means to destabilize—or at least challenge—systems of inequality. The second problem with this argument is that it precludes any attempt to define social fields comprising human and nonhuman agencies. Starting from the premise that institutions and cultural domains are the basic building blocs of society (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995:11), constructionists cannot think that natural categories are anything other than metaphors for social categories. To them, therefore, the “natural” is a particular social domain debarred from open contestation. It makes no difference that the natural, logical order be construed as being biological or God-given, for, in the end, biological and religious categories are equally cultural. The radical constructionism of Yanagisako and Delaney, combined with a discursive interpretation of the relationship between knowledge and power, leads them to equate the effects of biology to those of religious ideas. Social relations, they conclude, cannot be natural; they are made to appear natural.

What the present ethnography has shown, however, is that the Huaorani, in their identification with slow-growing plants, which form part of society and through which the vitality and power to live and reproduce is generated, engage in social relations that *are* natural, for the forest has already been lived in by people. There is no separation, in their eyes, between a “first nature” and a “second nature,” for the forest is—and has always been—a patchwork

of ancient dwelling sites or forest groves, where people have dwelt, married, and died, and where people will continue to interact with other life forms and produce the world as it is.

Huaorani society has expanded both demographically and spatially since the 1950s. It also has, despite the present situation of intense contact, achieved a remarkable degree of isolation. The present state may be described as one in which units of sharing are reproduced with their egalitarian and antiproduktivist structures, and this fairly independently from one another. Each maintains its own autonomy and self-sufficiency by securing direct access to the new sources of natural abundance, a strategy of reproduction favored by the present political and economic context. There has been no attempt to domesticate exchange—people have simply shun away from it—and trekking has remained the fundamental axis articulating time, space, and social organization.

However, one important element of the social world seems to have changed radically. Surrounding colonists and indigenous groups are still called *cohuori*, but they are no longer perceived as predators or cannibals.¹⁰ It seems that the partly mythic, partly historical, cosmic hierarchy of predator and prey, which has constituted the outside of Huaorani society and has kept it separate and isolated for a very long time, has become obsolete, flight no longer being an option. In its place, and as explored at length in chapter 7, we find the incorporation into Huaorani society of wealthy outside agencies or external ceremonial centers such as schools and evangelical churches, which are treated as sources of natural abundance and harassed with continuous and vastly inflated requests for manufactured goods. It seems that since the necessity to trek has disappeared, as the outside no longer threatens the population's vital forces, enabling the population to expand peacefully and exponentially, society no longer relies on its own inner forces but, rather, constitutes itself around an alien source of wealth and power. Still, Huaorani villagers can sometimes be heard saying: "What does not grow decays. The times of war and destruction will not be long in coming."

Notes

Preface

1. This analysis was published later in an edited volume on Ecuadorian national representations of indigenous peoples (Rival 1994). Joe Kane's highly praised *Savages* (New York: Knopf, 1995) sadly fits all the stereotypes and myths I deconstruct and discuss in this essay.
2. N. Whitten, *IWGIA* (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs), no. 34 (1978): 44.
3. Longitude 76° East to 77°30' West.

1. Trekking in Amazonia

1. For excellent examples of this type of research and a comprehensive bibliography, see Hames and Vickers 1983.
2. See, for example, Lévi-Strauss 1968; S. Hugh-Jones 1979; C. Hugh-Jones 1979; Seeger 1981; Basso 1973; and Descola 1994.
3. A particularly lucid summary of the cultural evolutionist argument can be found in Sponsel (1989:37):

In the majority of ecologically oriented anthropological studies on indigenous societies in Amazonia, cultural ecology serves as a means to the ends of the cultural evolutionists. Their principal end is to document and explain the processes through which cultural complexity and related phenomena develop over time. Within this conceptual framework, foraging societies in Amazonia are considered to be either survivors of a lower and simpler stage of cultural evolution antecedent to farming societies, or the end product of devolution from farming to foraging through competitive exclusion from the richer floodplains into the poorer interior forest.

4. See, in particular, Kelly 1983 and Hill 1996.
5. See also Moran 1989.
6. See also Kelly 1983:301.
7. See also Colchester 1984, Ross 1978, and Ferguson 1998, for a discussion of the impact of trade and the introduction of metal tools on Amazonian native economies and warfare patterns.

8. See also Sponsel 1986; Eden 1990; and Posey 1985. Some researchers even argue that many soil features underlying these forests are also the outcome of human intervention (Hecht and Posey 1989).
9. The existence of anthropogenic forests, the product of a dynamic history of plant/human interaction, is further supported by two factors: the wide occurrence of charcoal and numerous potsherds in the forest soil, and the greater concentration of palms, lianas, fruit trees, and other heavily used forest resources on archaeological sites.

Balée's hypothesis can be related to Posey's (1984) characterization of Kayapó subsistence economy, not as hunting and horticulture but as "agro-forestry," that is, as an integrated system of forest management in which the limited, shifting, and periodic removal of the forest cover to cultivate food crops represents *one* moment of a complex cycle.

10. He says: "The smaller a society gets, the more nomadic it becomes" (Balée 1992:50).
11. In the "wild yam" controversy, Balée's thesis would therefore side with Bailey (1991) and Bailey and Headland (1991) against Bahuchet, McKey, and Garine (1991), for it supports the contention that no hunter-gatherer could have adapted to tropical rain forest habitats without being surrounded by cultivators.
12. Each ceremony comprises four phases: the learning of ceremonial songs; the ceremonial trek (*ontomor*, literally 'to go away for several nights'); the preparation of meat, fish, manioc, and corn drinks for the feast; and, finally, the all-night dance. Verswijver (1992:249–55) defines the ceremonial trek as a hunting-gathering expedition taking place preferably at the end of the dry season (from August to October) during which large quantities of meat and fish are gathered, particularly tortoises and wild pigs. Verswijver further differentiates two types of trek: 'circular trekking', when trekkers travel in a circle around the village site and come back to the village for the final ceremony; and 'linear trekking', when trekkers progressively leave one village site for another or, as seems to have been the most common case in the past, for a new village, the ceremony coinciding with the first harvest of manioc or corn.
13. To simplify, there are two aspects to dual opposition, (1) dual organization as a principle constitutive of social structure in the Durkheimian tradition; and (2) symbolic polarity as a basic form of collective representation following the theory of structural linguistics. Maybury-Lewis (1979) follows Needham in seeing dualism as a general symbolic structure proper to most Gê speakers.
14. See, for example, Journet 1995; Fausto 1998; Flowers 1994; and Ferguson 1998.

2. The Upper Amazon from Omagua Expansion to Zaparo Collapse

1. See, in particular, contributions to Hill 1988 and to Carneiro da Cunha 1992. But also see Bernan 1992 for a critical review of Hill's misinterpretation of Lévi-Strauss's ideas about history.
2. Cabodevilla (1994; 1996), although not always acknowledging his sources and sometimes misinterpreting them, has usefully contributed to this effort by using all available published and unpublished materials to reconstruct, if only hypothetically, what may have been the Huaorani historical trajectory from precolonial to modern times.
3. In the years preceding the Pizarro-Orellana expedition (see map 2.2), the Coronados moved to the lower Pastaza, and the Zaparos expanded southward and eastward, with one group, the Abisiras (Abigiras), colonizing the right margin of the river Napo, where they fought hard against the Encabellados in their attempt to achieve exclusive control over these lands.

The Spanish confusion as to the identity of the Abigiras in relation to the Zaparos may have arisen from the presence of the Abigiras at the confluence of the Napo and Curaray rivers, and from the fact that Abigiras and Omagua villages may have looked extremely similar. Ethnohistorians disagree on the exact location of Omagua settlements along the Napo River. For Newson (1996b:218), they were located at the confluence not of the Napo and Curaray as previously thought (Myers 1992) but of the Napo and Coca rivers.

4. The Omagua went to the Tiputini, and the Encabellados settled on the right margin of the Napo. Other Tukanoans, the Oas and Coronados, fled in the early part of the sixteenth century to the lower Pastaza, where they learned a Zaparo dialect (Taylor 1986:303).
5. But see Chaumeil 1994:203 for a much later date.
6. Jorge Trujillo (personal communication), an Ecuadorian anthropologist who has done years of research in the area, is of the opinion that the Tupi language was the *lingua geral* along the Napo until the eighteenth century and that Zaparoan languages probably derived, at least in part, from Tupi.
7. The Omaga-Yeté on the lower course of the Coca and Upper Napo; the Omaga proper or Irimara at the confluence between the Napo and Curaray rivers; and a third group, the most numerous, east of the confluence of the Putumayo and Amazon rivers. See Viveiros de Castro 1992:24–29, for a brief survey of sociological variation and cosmological unity among the Tupian populations, whose numbers approximated four million at the time of the European invasion.
8. The term originally meant a large extension of land given by the Spanish

crown or the Creole authorities to a colonist, along with the indigenous population originally living on it. The major problem tropical lowland colonists faced was the lack of Indians on their lands.

9. See Cabodevilla 1994:126 n. 62.
10. In Quechua, the Incaic language used by the whites, *runa* means 'human', in the sense of 'tame', and *auca* means 'savage', in the sense of 'fierce.'
11. Information about the Zaparoan tribes of north Pastaza and of the headwaters and middle courses of the rivers Tigre and Curaray is scant. The only certainty is that they were already in this location in the fifteenth century, surrounded by two Tukanoan groups—their trading partners—the Coronados to the north and the Tukanos proper to the east.
12. See quotes from chroniclers in Cabodevilla 1994:87, 88, particularly notes 51, 53, 62.
13. Quoted in Cabodevilla 1994:178. See also Cabodevilla 1994:135–61, for a synthetic summary of the impact of the rubber boom on the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region of Ecuador, and, most particularly, on the Zaparos.
14. Discovering the exact nature of these processes should also provide an understanding of why the Zaparos were more willing to mix with the Jivaros and the Canelos Quichua than with the Naporunas.
15. That economic and political control of the Ecuadorian state has not been extended to the Amazon region before the mid-twentieth century bears a series of consequences for the indigenous populations of the area, particularly for the Huaorani (Muratorio 1991).
16. From Tagae, the band's oldest member, who was almost certainly killed in the early 1980s by security guards working for Braspetro. The Tagaeri are closely related to a number of Christianized Huaorani who chose to live in the Protectorate. When their land, found to be rich in petroleum, was invaded by a mass of illegal settlers in the mid-1970s, the Tagaeri marched farther south, eventually penetrating the hunting grounds of the Cononaco bands with whom they fought before retreating even farther south, where this time they clashed with oil workers. In July 1987 the Capuchin missionary and Archbishop Monseñor Labaca hoped to prevent further physical violence by meeting the Tagaeri, with whom he had had a few peaceful encounters in previous months. He was dropped from an army helicopter with a Colombian nun in one of their clearings; both were speared to death before the night. The Tagaeri retreated even deeper in the forest after the killings, where they are still in hiding. Their fugitive condition is very difficult, and they restrict cooking to nighttime, when the smoke cannot be easily detect-

ed. They cultivate sporadically under the canopee, without felling trees or opening a clearing.

17. *Tiputini* is apparently a word of Tupi origin that means sandy river (Jorge Trujillo, personal communication). There are, to my knowledge, two Huaorani toponyms for this river, Yeyero (river of the yeye fish) and Guiyero (river of the small guiye fish), which are used by different subgroups.
18. The missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Peeke 1963; Kelley 1988; and Yost 1979) and the Capuchin priests (Labaca 1988; Ortiz Santos 1991; and Cabodevilla 1994), who have interacted with Huaorani people for many years, share this opinion.
19. Carlos Sevilla, on whose farm Huaorani women found refuge just before the arrival of the SIL North American missionaries (see Rival 1992), was the only settler bold enough to establish a farm and rubber-collecting center (called El Capricho) on the Tiputini. Some of his Zaparo laborers married Huaorani women and men in the 1950s. Their descendants are still living upriver from Toñampari on the upper course of the river Curaray.
20. I have often wondered what these two words were. During my first spill of fieldwork in 1989–90, Huaorani language comprised numerous words derived from Spanish and Quichua, some of which had entirely replaced existing native terms.
21. I even found in Reinburg (1921b:210) an intriguing reference to a Western Tukanoan group, the Kobeua, who used the same word for the ayahuasca vine (*Banisteria caapi spr.*) as the Huaorani do, *mihí*. However, this information is spurious, for we do not know who these “Kobeua” were nor the criteria Reinburg used to determine their Tukanoan identity. Are they the Cubeo studied by Irving Goldman (1963)?
22. See, in particular, Hill 1996.
23. This approach is in total agreement with Viveiros de Castro (1996:194) who rightly states:

If Amazonia can no longer be seen as the exclusive habitat of egalitarian hunting-horticulturalists living in small villages, it would be just as misguided to take for granted the vestigial, degenerative, and marginal conditions of the *terra firme* people. Above all, it should be stressed that such phenomena as “agricultural regression”—or, more generally, present-day Amerindian ways of life—are not evolutionary events but rather the consequence of political choices, historical decisions that privileged certain values (e.g., political autonomy) at the expense of others (e.g., access to commodities).

24. See, for example, Gibson 1986 and Grinker 1994.

3. The Time and Space of Huaorani Nomadic Isolationism

1. The chonta palm (*Bactris gasipaes*) season lasts from January to April; it is followed by the season of fat monkeys (*yepenga tèrè*) from June to August and the season of wild cotton (*bohùèca tèrè*) from September to October.
2. See Rival 1992, chap. 2, for additional transcripts of Huaorani war narratives.
3. Seeger (1981:77) has similarly remarked for the Suyá of Mato Grosso, Brazil, that

Through naming of places, a large geographical area is in a sense socialised. The names do not represent merely an individual's becoming acquainted with a new terrain; they also form a cultural map complete with significance. In learning to identify places and their names, a Suyá learns history and the practical art of where to obtain food and other objects of collecting trips.

4. The SIL missionaries have translated "hell" as *taromenga onguipo*, that is, 'the land of Taromenga.'
5. Even in their representation of the peccary hunt, which is thought of and carried out as a war expedition, the Huaorani see themselves not as proactive hunters but as defenders of their longhouse territories unpredictably invaded by the ferocious beasts (Rival 1996b).
6. A fuller version and analysis of this myth can be found in Rival 1997b.
7. Informants class animals into two broad categories: the killers (who eat their prey) and their game, or food. The first category, in addition to harpy eagles and jaguars, includes the river otter (*ompure*), and a number of fish and birds that eat fish. Some informants also include snakes in this category. The second category includes all the species that are preyed on. Birds fall into two further classifications: birds of prey that eat raw flesh and birds that consume fruit, the rotten-flesh-eating condor being an exception.
8. The leader of a killing raid is *aroquangui anga tenonte huegarai nimba* 'the one who says to kill, as a result they die', and a declaration of war is *pĩĩ inte huenacaimba* 'their becoming angry resulted in making others die.' Great warriors (*guerrilleros*, as young Huaorani now say in Spanish) are *mono hue-meiri ingatimba onguiyè nangui tenonte onte huegarainimpa* 'our past male relatives who spear-killed many, an expression that stresses the act of killing rather than valour, courage, or glory.
9. Moipa, a fierce warrior who killed many Huaorani and non-Huaorani in the 1930s and 1940s, has become such a cultural hero. Interestingly, whereas Huaorani stories stress the process of transformation through which he became less and less Huaorani and more and more a wild killer, less and less kin

and more and more other, Canelo Quichua shamans from Sarayacu, who have about as many stories on Moipa as the Huaorani have, represent him as a man turned jaguar, which they see as the essence of Huaoraniness (Jorge Trujillo, personal communication). This representation is not entirely wrong, but it essentializes what in fact is a temporary state, as the following remark by an old warrior illustrates: "When I am angry, I am like a jaguar. I can go on my own and live alone in the forest, like a jaguar. I can go down to the Curaray. Not even the jaguar can threaten me or harm me, for I am so angry."

10. Spears, which are made for one kill, are highly individualized. Decoration patterns and the shape of notches are distinctive markers by which owners can unambiguously be identified. In an earlier publication (Rival 1996b), I argued that spearing was a technology of exclusion designed to slaughter savagely those with whom alliances were impossible.
11. I was told of one case in which a mature woman, who had been speared to death by the enemy, was buried with her granddaughter, so as "not to let the grandmother die alone." See Rival 1992:69–70, for additional accounts of children buried alive with their dying parents or grandparents.

Interestingly, the ritual burying by women of a dying brother or husband with his child may be compared to the birth myth in which the roles are reversed: Men kill their wives to give birth to their children, whom the men nurse and raise on their own (Rival 1998e). Among the Wari, the identification between the killer (see Vilaça 2000:103) and the dead enemy occurs by means of figurative cannibalism, where the killer incorporated and digested the blood of his victim, who thereby became his consanguine kin.

12. Upon death, the *onohuoca* 'body soul' in the sense of *guima* 'life force or breath' leaves the speared body to return to its birth place. The *onohuoca*, also called 'spirit soul', of a dead person travels to heaven, which is located north of the river Napo. Only if the deceased inserted a splinter of chonta palm in one of the nostrils will she or he be able to pass over the giant snake worm who bars the entry to heaven. The spirit soul otherwise returns to Huaorani land, where it is eaten by termites.
13. For a particularly poignant rendering, see Clastres 1972, chap. 6.
14. A dead person is referred to by his or her last public personal name, followed by the suffix *-huori* (literally 'is no longer alive'). For example, after the old Coba died, people referred to him as Cobahuori. It is under this name that he was remembered for his idiosyncratic ways of singing, dancing, making spears, and so forth. Such ways could then be talked about and imitated. Neither a cultural hero (someone who died so long ago that all particular

connections have been erased) nor an enemy are ever referred to as X-huori but simply as X.

15. For a parallel among the Yanomami, see Ramos 1995:108.
16. Journet (1995:109–11) describes a similar ideology among the Curripaco of Colombia, whose orphaned war hero, Iapirikuri, wages a generalized war of vengeance against the whole world.
17. This is an interesting contrast to the Piro for whom kinship creates history not through remembering deaths to be avenged but through the memory of caring and nurturing (Gow 1989).
18. This is how one of my informants (a descendant of Moipa) tells the story:

Guiqueta was living in the upper Tihueno at the time. Moipa was invited to his *ëëmë* ['manioc-drinking ceremony'] along with Nihua and others. They entered the feasthouse chanting. Nihua got angry because two women in his group had been killed by Guiqueta, but he nevertheless said: "We want to exchange our children with you, so we can live well, in peace, and put an end to the times of war." The *ëëmë* went on, people chanted and chanted, but everybody was afraid. Suddenly, a man caught his spears, and the elders slew the two brothers, Moipa and Iteca. Quite a number of people died during that *ëëmë*.

19. See Rival 1991.
20. I had the opportunity to speak with the raiders a few years after the event and can confirm that there was no wife shortage in this case. The Babeiris' action was entirely motivated by their decision to force the Tagaeri into reintegrating into Huaorani society and to put an end to thirty years of fierce isolationism.
21. Most notably Schwartz and Salomon 1999; Hill 1988, 1993; Ramos 1995; and Wright 1998.
22. See Salomon 1999:56, who cites the 1985 article by Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro on Tupinamba cannibalism, summarizing their argument as "no other institution but warfare locates past, present, and future in an intelligible world of change." Although Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro's main argument against functionalist interpretations of Amazonian warfare is that death is not a relation to the past but a relation to the future, not a kind of ancestor cult but a longing for future immortality, I agree with Salomon that they also show in their discussion of the Tupinamba cannibalistic complex that warfare creates a sense of history, hence a relation to the past and not just to the future.
23. However, as among the Ilongot, anger, a force that destroys residential links,

maintains ties between agnates (R. Rosaldo 1980:137). Similarly Arcand (1973:151) discusses the link between Cuiva postmarital residence, band solidarity, the drive to avenge the death of a brother, and the belief that all deaths are the result of cursing.

24. By contrast, the Buid, who, in many other aspects, are socially similar to the Huaorani, consider violence and aggression absolutely illegitimate within their own society. Speech and communal peace represent life and unity just as eating (a one-way relationship of domination incompatible with mutuality) and individual desire represent death and division (Gibson 1986:73–75).

4. Harvesting the Forest's Natural Abundance

1. Similarly the Cuiva do not differentiate the techniques they use for obtaining food. For them, food production is *heita* (literally 'get food'), a term they use to refer to the hunting of large animals as well as to the collecting of small fruit (Arcand 1973:51).
2. For a full account of fieldwork circumstances, see Rival 1992:2–11, or, alternatively, 1996c, chap. 1).
3. This is an allusion to the countless raids and counter-raids waged by the Ñihuairi's grandparents and great-grandparents against riverine Zaparoan groups.
4. Lu's (1999:104–13) findings that 65.2 percent of hunts practiced in Quehueire Ono in 1997, that is, eight years after my field observations reported here, indicate that by then Quehueire Ono villagers were more settled and hunters behaved as they had when living in Dayuno.
5. There were thirteen house groups, totaling forty-five adults and fifty-eight children in the first Quehueire Ono camp. My sample comprises data on nine of the thirteen house groups and excludes the monitoring of children's hunting, fishing, and gathering activities. The monitoring of gathering activities was restricted to fruit (food collecting) and palm leaves and bamboo (materials collecting). Extractive activities were monitored on twenty days over a two-month period (November–December 1989) during the "season of wild cotton."
6. These quantitative data entirely support the findings and conclusions of Mena Valenzuela et al. (1997), who monitored hunting activities in Quehueire Ono five years after I did, as well as Cerón and Montalvo's (1997: 280–81) remark that palms were less abundant than expected in the one hectare primary forest survey plot they studied, owing to the Huaorani's

- intensive use of palm leaves and stems as building materials. They are also in agreement with Lu's (1999) study which shows that primates and Cracid birds, the Huaorani's favored game, are the most vulnerable to overexploitation.
7. *Bactris gasipaes* was formally known as *Gulielma gasipaes*. In Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, and Brazil, it is commonly known as *pupunha*.
 8. See Rival 1996b for an extensive discussion of Huaorani hunting.
 9. The Makú, for whom a large proportion of the animals that are considered game are birds and monkeys, say that these animals, which represent 60 percent of the Makú's average kills, are the most plentiful in the forest (Silverwood-Cope 1972:91). A notable difference between the Makú and the Huaorani is that the Makú trade large quantities of hunted meat (40.1 percent) with river Indians (Silverwood-Cope 1972:96).
 10. In the long-established villages found in the old Protectorate, the forest is no longer rich in game within a day's travel (or more) of the villages. People explain this not by saying that they have hunted animals to an extreme but, rather, that the animals have fled and found refuge elsewhere in the forest.
 11. He adds that life and vitality on an individual level are exchanged for renewal and essential continuity on the categorical level (e.g., clan, species, etc.). "This . . . is the Makuna philosophy of life: predation, reconstrued as exchange, explains death and accounts for the regeneration of life" (Arhem 1996:189). Implied in this view, Arhem concludes, "is a wholly interactive, interconnected and interdependent cosmic society: human beings depend for their physical survival on fish and game animals (and plant food). But fish and game animals also depend on human ritual and shamanic practice for their reproduction" (Arhem 1996:198).
 12. The term for shaman, *meñera*, may derive etymologically from *miñe* 'jaguar' and *bara* 'mother.' Although no particular case was cited to me, informants said that women, too, could become *meñera*.
 13. I only know of boys who have received such treatment, but this does not exclude the possibility that girls may receive it as well.
 14. *Miñe* 'jaguar' and *mibi* 'ayahuasca' are morphologically related to *mii* 'raw.' See also chapter 2 n. 21.
 15. Only in the Yasuni, I was told by some informants, are there *omere* 'pristine forests' with really high and old trees. Other informants think that some forest areas in the Western part of Huaorani land, including those in the old Protectorate, are also *omere*, which accords with Cerón and Montalvo's (1997) study. Unless natural or man-made gaps are found, cultivated plots are seldom located in primary, mature forests because of the difficulty of felling large trees.

16. In a similar vein Balée (1988) mentions that Guajá foraging bands camp in babassu (*Orbignya phalerata* ch.) forest enclaves, where it is possible to find vestiges of previous settlements and horticultural fields left by the Ka'apor. He goes on to remark that many Tupi Guarani marginal bands depend heavily on babassu for leaves (with which they make roofs), fruit (which are rich in carbohydrates and proteins), and rotting trunks (in which they find edible grubs).
17. See, for example, Irvine 1987, 1989.
18. See Diamond 1998:114–30, 434–39, for a summary of current scholarship on the origin and domestication of cultivated plants.
19. Huaorani chonta celebrations may be compared to Shuar celebrations of Uwí, the chonta palm spirit. Pelizzaro (1983) mentions *anent* 'chants' in which it is said that all animals relishing the chonta palm fruit will, like the palm itself, benefit from abundant life force and that Uwí fosters the matrimonial link between man and woman, which is the origin of new life (137).
20. Since this publication I have found a Shuar anent that says: "My dear chonta palms have grown slowly, very slowly they have developed; in the same way my children have slowly grown" (Pelizzaro 1983:94).
21. Plantain and banana plantations are used very much like chonta palm groves. This concords with Bergman (1980:98, 128), who notes that these food crops are much less labor-intensive than manioc and produce about four times as many kilocalories per man-hour, with the added advantage that plantations continue to produce for decades. As for maize, it grows in about three months, that is, even faster than manioc. The seeds are thrown straight onto the freshly cut forest vegetation, and the harvest is consumed almost in one go, very much like forest fruit harvested from one tree.
22. See, among others, Whitten 1985; C. Hugh-Jones 1979; Descola 1994; and Griffiths 1998.
23. See, for instance, Griffiths 2001.
24. To cite just a few, see Crocker 1985:45, 117; Descola 1992:118; Bloch and Parry 1982:8.
25. Consequently there is no notion here of dead bodies contributing to soil fertility, nor is there an opposition between cemeteries and garden sites (A. Strathern 1982:118). Such a system can also be contrasted to the Southeast Asian head-hunting complex in which the snatching and incorporation of an enemy's vitality is not only necessary for securing male individual fertility but also life in nature, as discussed by R. Rosaldo (1980) and M Zimbalist Rosaldo (1980), and as so vividly observed by Barton (1930:185–86):

There is a sense of well-being in the circle of dancers . . . For their star is in the ascendant. The whole region has gained life: not an individual life, but life that is diffused throughout the fields to better crops, life that will vitalize the domestic animals, life that will make the folk themselves more nearly what they want to be. No longer theirs to worry about an uncollected debt of life.

26. The Huaorani view of the relationship between death and fertility is thus very different from that of the Melpa, for instance, who sacrifice pigs "as a sign of . . . the proper reproduction of the cycles of fertility between the dead and the living, for although fertility is realised by the living, it is essentially a gift to them from the dead" (A. Strathern 1982:121). It is much closer to that attributed by Woodburn to egalitarian hunter-gatherers, for whom "death procedures are only peripherally connected with ideas of fertility of human beings or of plants and animals or of the natural world more generally" (Woodburn 1982:203).
27. See Mosko 1987, as cited in Bird-David 1990.
28. This is not incompatible with Viveiros de Castro's (1998a:482) thesis that the living and the dead are sociologically discontinuous and that the fundamental distinction between the two is made by the body and not by the spirit. But whereas, for Viveiros de Castro, to die is to transform into an animal, I suggest that only in the case of violent deaths examined in chapter 3 do we have spirits being attracted to the bodies of animals (jaguars).

5. Coming Back to the Longhouse

1. In a letter he wrote to me in December 1990, Jim Yost, who in his articles had equated the emic form "X-iri" with the analytical construct "neighborhood cluster," told me how he was still mystified by the highly shifting and relative character of this notion. Although in some contexts "X-iri" is the equivalent of "band," in others it refers to each separate nuclear family unit, for example, Cuhueiri, Ñameiri, Ocatairi, and so forth. Furthermore, he observed that men would tend to use the father/husband's name (for example, Cuhue would say Ñameiri), whereas women would tend to use the mother/wife's name (for example, Huane would say Zhiroiri). In addition, the name chosen to stand for the "X" in "X-iri" is determined by the relationship the speaker has with a particular member of the group in question, often picking the name of the person in the closest line of common ancestry to the speaker. Finally, "X-iri" is never used self-referentially, either by "X" himself or her-

self or by his or her group. As the term “X-iri” covers all levels of social groupings, he concluded, it is best translated as “social group.”

This discussion may be correlated with Lizot’s judicious comment that a community is a name that integrates its members (Lizot 1984:42): “Une communauté, c’est un nom qui intègre ses membres.”

2. There were a few baby sloths as well, although sloths are never hunted, their meat being taboo. Children, who are taught to differentiate sloths from monkeys, are seriously harangued if caught hunting or eating them.
3. Arhem (1996:190) mentions that the Makuna similarly describe animals as living like humans in longhouses (*malocas*).
4. Christopher Crocker’s (1985) discussion of organic processes linked to common residence as producing intense human relations among the Bororo was an early and particularly influential analysis of the social commonality I explore here.
5. See Jaulin’s (1977:291) discerning remark that the essential life unit is that circumscribed by the act of residing (“l’unité de vie essentielle est celle circonscrite par l’acte de résidence”).
6. See Watt (1996) for a particularly insightful study of modern individualism.
7. The term *huentey* has been translated erroneously as “lazy” by schoolteachers and missionaries.
8. See Lima (1999:14) for the description of a social temperament devoid of hostility and fear among the Juruna, which is very close to the Huaorani notion of *huentey* serenity, trust, and tranquility.
9. For a more extensive treatment of this point, see Rival 1998f. For a contrastive cultural construction of work effort and community building among the Uitoto of lowland Colombia, see Griffiths 2001.
10. Yost (1981b:99) mentions that the most senior male has his hammock hung by the front entrance of the longhouse. His wife’s brother attaches his hammock at the opposite end of the house, near the other entrance.
11. Given the prevalence of sharing on demand within Huaorani domestic units, there is no reciprocal exchange of meat for sex in this society, as is said to be the case in other parts of Amazonia (see Rival, Slater, and Miller 1998).
12. See also Peterson 1993, mentioned above, and Bird-David 1990:191, who uses the term *mutual taking* and mentions the Nayaka’s constant requests to be given. Bird-David further notes that demand sharing is a system of exchange that erases the past and forecloses the future, given that what happened in the past is irrelevant to the exchange taking place in the present.
13. See also Gibson 1988.
14. Collier and Rosaldo’s (1981) bride service model cannot explain the workings

of Huaorani conjugal complementarity nor its paradoxical existence within an economy characterized by general sharing. From whatever angle one looks at Huaorani marriage, one does not find an organization of needs and claims leading to the restricted access to forms of property. Women are not men's property, spouses do not belong to each other, and parents do not own children. Huaorani marriage is a central institution that structures the political economy, but it does not correlate with social stratification and social hierarchy. My purpose here is not to review this model, which numerous scholars have already commented on, amended, and criticized, particularly Kelly 1993.

15. The section on homosexuality in Robarcheck and Robarcheck (1998:56–57) is not only entirely spurious and devoid of truth, but it is also an insult to, and a danger for, the Huaorani population. Their comments, such as “sex between male cross-cousins was also common” or “the acceptability of sexual attraction between men,” betray a complete lack of anthropological insight (male cross-cousins may hug and kiss, but the idea of engaging in penetrative sex is as alien and horrifying to them as it is to a conscientious Christian fundamentalist). Given the high incidence of tourism in Huaorani land, Robarcheck and Robarcheck's serious ethnocentric confusion between sex and sensuality may have extremely nefarious consequences for the welfare of Huaorani men, women, and children.
16. Although the idea of shared substance as a form of consubstantiality is found in varying degrees in many cultures, in Amazonia it has given rise to unique forms of sociality. Roberto da Matta (1982) was the first anthropologist to stress the importance of “substance relationships” in native Amazonia and to discuss the concomitant belief that parents influence the physical appearance and health of their children according to the foods the parents eat or avoid. See also Rival 1998e; Guss 1989; and Overing 1993:55. In some Amazonian societies, such as those described by Gow (1989) and Griffiths (1998), people become physically of one kind through work, not by living together.
17. Generalizing from Barasana ethnography, Stephen Hugh-Jones (1993; 1995) concludes that the Amazonian house is conceptualized as continuous with the human body; it is like a living organism imbued with animate properties.
18. For Terry Turner, bodiliness solves the contradiction between the individual and society in Amazonia, where “subjectivity and agency may rather be represented as they are among the Kayapo as dividual rather than individual, and as embodied in discrete bodily processes and modes of activity rather than as attributes of a disembodied and integral Cartesian ego” (Turner 1995:166). Said differently, the subject becomes subject not by producing ob-

- jects, as in the Euro-American understanding of what makes us human, but by co-participating in the creation of other subjects.
19. But see Viveiros de Castro and Fausto (1993:149–51ff.), who maintain that, despite its Dravinate features, this general structure cannot be said to be elementary, for it is not articulated by a positive marriage rule. On the absence of correspondence between “crossness” and affinity, and the existence of a semi-complex structure underlying all Amazonian kinship systems, see Henley 1996:59.
 20. During fieldwork, I did not come across the term *arorani*, a category identified by Yost (personal communication) as comprising cross-cousins with whom marriages are arranged and, by extension, all affines.
 21. See chapter 3 n. 18.
 22. Huaorani women seem to be much keener to bestow ancestral names on outsiders than their male relatives are. These latter, on the whole, tend to ignore female outsiders and are content to call male outsiders they befriend *menqui* ‘cross-cousin/brother-in-law’, jokingly asking them for permission to have sex with their sisters. I myself was asked several times to bring my younger sister to share her with my *guirinani* or to promise to give my ten-year-old daughter in marriage to one of my brother’s children. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the oil camps that surround Huaorani land, the Huaorani are no longer called *aucas* ‘savages’ or, more ironically, *amigos* ‘friends’, but *menquis*.
 23. The Huaorani contrast between the name-set (private, conveying genealogical information) and the public name (provisional, attached to a particular group membership) is not without recalling the complementarity of blood and name among the Bororo, which Crocker (1979:255) describes as constituting two axes running at right angles to each other, the first through time and the other through space. See also Melatti 1979:77–78, who argues that, among the Krahó, name transfers from male ego to ZS act as a compensation for male residence transfers.
 24. Yost and Davis (1983:281) mention that, according to the Huaorani theory of illness, there are two types of affliction, those that are *ononqui*, that is, resulting from no particular reason, and those that are caused by *huene* ‘spirits.’
 25. Cases of old people speared to death by their younger kin (classificatory grandchildren) are also reported.
 26. I knew of no elderly men left behind to die nor did my informants mention it as a possibility, as if they took for granted that whereas men die a violent death at a relatively young age, women tend to live much longer, ending up as old, decrepit, and lonely widows.

27. This connection is further elaborated in a popular myth that recounts the story of an old woman abandoned by her sons because she is too old to walk to the new house site. She is saved from starvation and death by her first-born son who rejuvenates her and brings her abundant supplies of ripe plantain and game (Rival 1992:68–69).
28. It is significant that whereas there is a myth about son and mother (expressing the son's anxiety about leaving his mother with no food) and a puberty ritual involving father and daughter, there is no myth regarding the father-son relationship (but the sun sends his son to the Huaorani to teach them how to make hard wood spears and to give them stone axes) and no ritual involving mother and daughter.
29. See Taylor 2000:313–19, for a similar occurrence among the Jivaro but with very different structural consequences, given the patrilocal nature of these societies. See Guss 1989:81–83, who describes how Yekwana boys are socialized to shift alliance from birth group to marriage group, in contrast with girls for whom such separation does not generally occur.
30. Collier and Rosaldo's (1981) argument that uxorilocality expresses a husband's indebtedness to his in-laws and that marriage arrangements reveal the symbolic, economic, and political processes sustaining gender differences does not apply in this context. See Crocker's (1984:67) remark that the Canela husband becomes "embedded in the female matrix of domestic life held strongly in place through uxorilocal residence." See Turner 1979 and Lea 2001 for conflicting interpretations of Kayapo uxorilocality.
31. In a similar vein, the primary motivation for Tupinamba warfare, according to Viveiros de Castro (1992:297, 375), is to overcome uxorilocality, which is lived as a servitude by in-marrying men.
32. Marrying someone from one's longhouse would be tantamount to brother-sister incest, as codified in the well-known myth about an incestuous brother who became the moon. The myth, common throughout Amazonia, may be summarized as follows: A brother and a sister, who have always been very close, sleep in the same hammock. In his sleep, the brother turns into a mosquito and unwillingly penetrates his sister's mouth. She is awakened by the tickling and soon realizes with horror that her brother has "annoyed" her (this is a euphemism for sexual intercourse). In some versions, the young man, mortified and terribly ashamed, asks his younger brother to use a blow-pipe to propel him to heaven. In other versions, the younger brother, enraged by his sibling's misdemeanor, decides to punish his older brother by sending him to heaven. The incestuous brother becomes the moon. The younger brother and his sister become close allies. Their mother, chagrined by her

son's absence, watches the moon every night. She is heartbroken by the irreparable distance: Her son will never return.

33. A similar situation was observed by Viveiros de Castro among the Arawete: "It is not the brother-in-law but rather the sister who cedes a daughter to ego or his son" (1992:162). While acknowledging the centrality of the brother-sister relationship in Amazonian social life, reflected in the Arawete's preferred marriage arrangement between a brother and a sister exchanging their children in marriage, Viveiros de Castro maintains that such marital alliances are ordered by cross-consanguinity rather than by affinity. What is intended, he concludes, "is an ideal of endogamy within the kindred" (162); in other words, a short cycle of reciprocal exchange. Whereas I agree with the latter statement, I would stress that, at least in the Huaorani context, such alliances *are* affinal and that it is not immediacy that people seek but rather balance and symmetry. Whereas, according to Viveiros de Castro, true affinity (i.e., unconsanguinizable affinity) occurs between a male Arawete and a M-ai god (i.e., a man who has become superhuman through death), it is between female cross-cousins that true affinity exists among the Huaorani.
34. See Dreyfus 1993 for useful summaries of the debate, Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993 and Rivière 1993 for alternative explanations, and Henley 1996 for a more recent overview.
35. Pets fix people to their longhouses more than children do and are considered to be more demanding than children. Whereas children grow and fend for themselves, pets are utterly dependent and need to be fed throughout their lives. Women suckle baby monkeys and feed fledglings with mashed bananas mixed in breast milk. Certain varieties of fruit such as small, scented bananas are brought home especially to feed pets, which are generally treated with care and affection. People would go hungry rather than deprive their pets of food, and children who eat the food reserved for pets are sternly scolded. The most demanding pet in terms of feeding is the harpy eagle, which does not live inside the house but is attached on a platform outside the main entrance, where it is fed freshly hunted monkeys.
36. Seeger (1981:169–71) discusses the ways the Suya deal with old age as a form of reversal from autonomy to dependency. Old people undergo a rite of passage by which they acquire a new status corresponding to the cultural idea that aging is a transformation to a lesser social state.
37. This cultural representation of the old woman left to die in the decrepit longhouse stands in remarkable contrast to that found in the Jivaro culture, in which the house is abandoned when its owner, a dead great warrior, dies. The corpse—armed, painted, and adorned with feathers—is tied to the central

pole of the longhouse (Descola 1994, chap. 4). Death, far from being destruction or annihilation, is a change of state and function. At the heart of the shamanic complex, the soul, from an invisible state, becomes functionally transcendental, while acquiring the potential power to interfere with the living. Huaorani dead are more like the Bororo of whom Crocker (1985:270) says: “The souls of the dead soon cease to have any interest in the affairs of the living.”

38. Roosevelt (1991:404), who mentions that Marajoara villages were also cemeteries, contends, against previous analyses, that burial sites were continuously occupied.

6. *Eëmə* Festivals: Ceremonial Increase and Marriage Alliance

1. It is in this sense very close to the Trio notion of *sasame* discussed by Rivière (2000:254), which he defines as the high valuation of a large network of close, harmonious relationships or the combined notion of material wealth and wealth in people, a kind of happiness he contrasts with the harmony and calmness resulting from co-residential conviviality.
2. Given that the chonta palm feasting complex, discussed in chapter 4, was no longer practiced at the time when, and in the places where, I carried out fieldwork, I could document these marriages only indirectly, relying on people's memories, on their comments when we walked through old palm groves, and, during the peach palm season, on visiting patterns between brothers and sisters living in different villages.
3. Lizot (1984:165) notes that the Yanomami, who also depend on banana and plantain rather than manioc, organize a feast with almost any kind of plant food, provided there is enough of it. Interestingly, their drinking parties, which are not to celebrate marriages, like the Huaorani, but to celebrate their dead (Albert 1985), frequently lead to killing raids.
4. Robarcheck and Robarcheck (1998:5) accuse me of being a poor linguist, and of confusing two contrastive morphemes, which they spell as *wĩ* and *wě*. This confusion, according to them, has led me to state erroneously that the same Huaorani term is used to translate the term “leader” and the expression “in a tree.”

In response, I would like first to stress that I checked with a number of informants over the years, and through various methods, that *abue* (tree) and *ahuene* (leader) share a common morpheme. My informants consistently agreed that *ahuene* can be used to mean both “leader” and “of the tree.” I re-

alize now that I could have accentuated the nasalization of *ahue* and *ahuene* more appropriately by spelling these two words as *ahuë* and *ahuëne*.

My second remark is that there has been a great deal of uncertainty and confusion among SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) linguists about nasalized vowels in Huaorani, particularly when it comes to differentiate the vowel *i* from the vowels *æ* and *ẽ*. Whereas Catherine Peeke (1973:127) differentiates *kĩwãdō* (what tree) from *kĩwēdō* (what manioc) by spelling them differently, the bilingual informants with whom I have worked would not necessarily make such a difference in pronunciation and spelling.

5. An average of four middle-sized manioc roots are needed for each bowl of ceremonial drink. Since people drink approximately twenty bowls during a typical drinking ceremony of one hundred, six hundred to eight hundred manioc roots are required. The substantial amount of work required in preparing a traditional manioc drinking festival is illustrated by the fact that two ripe plantains or bananas are needed for each bowl, and hence four hundred for a drinking ceremony. Moreover, banana drink requires no special preparation, as the fruit is simply boiled and mixed with water, as it is for everyday consumption.
6. The reader must take into consideration the difficulties encountered in giving anything other than an approximate translation of Huaorani chants. One reason for this is that verses use a highly synthetic, elliptical language and syntax; another is that my informants' Spanish was too poor to convey the poetic nuances and colorful language used in Huaorani. My analysis depends entirely on the approximate translations offered by bilingual speakers. My guess is that the symbolic meaning of these songs is far richer and complex than what is presented here. The translation—and my basic interpretation—are limited by the fact that no one to date has developed a sufficient knowledge of the language to provide in-depth analysis of metaphors and song semantics.
7. A few informants mentioned the wearing of necklaces of bones of anteater (*oto*), which are said to eat the bones of dead people, and bones of vulture (*ayabè*), which are said to clean the bones of enemies abandoned on the forest floor after having been killed. Such bones, I was told, carry the voices of the dead and “make noise like tape recorders.”
8. One informant told me that guests also present the ahuene with whole monkeys, cured and ready to be eaten; the latter, in return, dances for his guests while holding the monkeys.
9. An elderly informant once told me that a bunch of bananas hang at the entrance of the feasthouse for the use of huarani bachelors who practiced

throwing their spears on it. Those who did not throw with sufficient strength were penalized.

10. See, for example, Goldman 1963:215–17.
11. The old Dete told me that guests who had come from far away were allowed to sleep in a hammock provided by a kinsman or a friend but that no one from the hosting nanicabo could. Those who were falling asleep were immediately bathed in manioc drink, poked, tickled, and made to stand up again.
12. For a study of gender difference experienced as a ritual difference, see also Atkinson and Errington 1990, but especially Kuipers 1990:154.
13. See Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971 and Roe 1982, who mention in passing the association between fruiting and a fecund sexual union, and who both demonstrate the symbolic importance of sex and body in Northwest Amazon representations of the connections between cosmos and society.
14. The ear-piercing ceremony is briefly described in Rival 1993a:640.
15. I have never heard of a mother running off with her son; uxorilocality gives mothers definite rights over the choice of in-marrying men.
16. Toña, the first Huaorani evangelical missionary, was killed by the Huepeiri because, after having stayed several months preaching among them, he had refused to marry one of their women, insisting that he was already married in Tihueno and that God wanted men to be monogamous (C. Peeke, January 1990, personal communication).
17. See also Yost 1981:104.
18. Yost (1981b:105), who grants parents with more power in arranging marriages than I do, notes that couples who have a son and a daughter ready to marry are in a good bargaining position vis-à-vis those who need spouses, particularly if one nanicabo has no other alternative available.
19. See also Kensinger 1984:254.
20. See chapter 3 for a discussion of bellicose men whose kin have been killed in warfare or raids mounted by cohuori. An interesting parallel may be drawn with some African systems, in which “patrilocalty owes its importance to virilocal marriage, and it is this form of marriage that enables uterine brothers to reside together. If marriages were uxorilocal, uterine brothers would be dispersed through the villages of their wives” (Turner 1967:6).
21. A brief survey of marriage patterns in five Huaorani settlements gives the following results. In three out of five settlements there were no interethnic marriages with Quichua (0 percent of all alliances). In the fourth settlement, interethnic marriages with Quichua represented 15.38 percent of the total, compared to 23.07 percent double cross-cousin marriages and 19.23 percent

bilateral cross-cousin marriages. And in the fifth settlement interethnic marriages with Quichua represented 16.21 percent of the total, compared to 2.70 percent double cross-cousin marriages and 40.54 percent bilateral cross-cousin marriages (see table 5.1).

22. Food distribution in a longhouse I once visited during fieldwork illustrates this implicit law. In this house at the time were two sisters, who were married to the same man, and their widowed sister-in-law, who had been married to their brother. The two married sisters wanted the widowed woman to leave the longhouse, and they never shared food with her. Such cases of unwanted co-residence are infrequent today but may have been more common in the past, when warfare caused widows and orphans to find refuge among distantly or inappropriately related house groups.
23. The Cubeo drinking party, as described by Goldman (1963:203), shares a number of characteristics with the Huaorani *eëmë*. In both, we find the production of abundant resources, with a local group providing far more drink than it can possibly consume. But the Cubeo asymmetry between hosts and guests is characteristic of societies where spirits, gods, or ancestors are invited to partake in drinking festivals, and where humans, who start out as hosts, end up invaded, taken over, possessed, or devoured by their superhuman guests, as a necessary process to obtain fertility and to renew the life force. See, among others, Viveiros de Castro 1992, Chaumeil 2001, Erikson 2001, and S. Hugh Jones 1979. Such ceremonies correspond, in Bloch's (1992) analysis, to humans surrendering their innate vitality and submitting to an external, transcendental force.
24. For a review of these rites of passage, see Viveiros de Castro 1996 and Henley 2001.
25. See also Journet 1995:257, who describes the Curripaco's manioc celebration as "exogamic exchange festivals" [my translation—L.R.] linking communities on the basis of marital ties. He goes on to say:

Dans la société, la configuration associée à la culture des jardins est celle du couple de géniteurs. Lorsque les produits du jardin circulent, ils interviennent pour pacifier les relations et établir des liens contractuels, plutôt que de fonder des coalitions contre un ennemi commun. (289)

In Curripaco society, gardening as a practice and symbolic configuration is associated with the couple formed by the genitor and the genitrix. Circulating garden produce act as social pacifiers; they ease the setting up of contractual links between social groups. They are not used to create coalitions against a common enemy.

7. Schools in the Rain Forest

1. The verb *ã* means “say,” “want,” and “wish” all at once, so that the literal translation could in fact be “do not want/wish/say”!
2. As Jackson (1995:320) accurately observes in the Colombian context, non-indigenous models that are worlds away from traditional indigenous ways of organizing politically and maintaining cultural forms have been increasingly used throughout the 1980s and 1990s for the preservation of indigenous cultures and histories.
3. The advance of oil prospecting and the SIL missionary work resulted in the concentration of 80 percent of the population on less than 10 percent of the traditional Huaorani territory. At the time of my doctoral fieldwork, the Huaorani numbered 1,250, with 55 percent of the population under sixteen years of age. Two percent of the population was still uncontacted and lived in hiding.
4. By 1981, 20 percent of the population in the Protectorate could read the SIL translation of the *Gospel According to Mark* (Rival 1992:15).
5. For a fuller account, see Rival 1992:323–48.
6. Incidentally, the contrast between modern and traditional also corresponds to the general opposition between “upstream groups” (*irumenga*) and “downstream groups” (*enomenga*).
7. See, among others, Whitten 1985 and Reeve 1993 for a discussion of the Quichua opposition between “savage” (*auca*) and “civilized” (*alli*), and Jackson 1983 for the Tukano dual classification of “subhuman” and “truly human” groups. Fausto (1998) has found a similar form of dualism among the Parakana.
8. Christianized Huaorani believe that God is a powerful father who has destroyed death and has given the dead new bodies so they can live in his house in heaven: “The old bodies will be discarded as old fishing nets, and they’ll receive new bodies when Jesus comes to call them” (Wallis 1971:41).
9. Cartilla *pikenani ate yebuemonte eñenkin* I and II realized by Bay Carlos Alvarado, Luis Montaluisa, Ahua Nihua, and Consuelo Yanez. ILL-CEIE 1984. Quito: MEC y PUCE.
10. For a more extensive description of school routines, see Rival 1992, 1996a, and 1996c.
11. See, for instance, Turner 1995, Erikson 1996, and Viveiros de Castro 1998b.
12. Daniel Rogers, an evangelical missionary based in Shell Mera, had a large house built across from the airport, for exactly the same purpose of exposing the Huaorani to civilized domesticity. The house, an exact replica of a North

American wooden lodge, was designed to provide the Indians with a domestic environment propitious for the acquisition of urban and civil behavior. It had a living room filled with shelved books and old issues of the *National Geographic*, a large television and video cassette recorder (VCR), and several couches crowding around an imposing fireplace. Posters of winter scenes in various parts of the United States and Canada ornamented the walls.

13. In an interesting parallel example, Hugh-Jones (1992), who analyzes trade relations between drug barons and Barasana Indians, argues that the Barasana's desire for Western goods is a desire for social relations with the whites—rather than for the goods themselves. He concludes that the value of manufactured goods lies in the context in which they are acquired, in the people from whom they derive, and in the very act of acquiring them.
14. The foraging of oil camps, the supply of food to villages, and the determination to secure exclusive access rights to sources of wealth are all strategies that have become difficult to maintain in the present exploitation phase.
15. The practice is similar with Shuar and Qichua neighbors or Ecuadorian oil engineers to whom they are bound by *compadrazgo* ritual ties. In chapter 7 of my doctoral thesis (Rival 1992), I examine further instances of Huaorani denials of trade and reciprocity, and particular instances in which interethnic contact is manipulated in such a way that non-Huaorani are forced to give unilaterally to Huaorani.
16. A similar work ethic exists among the Uitoto who stress that one must work hard to move closer toward a lived approximation of the good life, and by so doing maintain an acceptable level of health and well-being in the family and settlement group (Griffiths 1998:190–209; 2001).
17. Cononaco trekkers, who have not been schooled and do not share the Protectorate villagers' mystique, wander naked and unself-conscious through abandoned modern buildings, such as the camps left by oil companies.

8. Prey at the Center

1. Lévi-Strauss (1995) has vividly revisited this thesis in his prologue to his photographic memoir. See Taylor 1988:182, for an interesting remark on Lévi-Strauss's concept of devolution as the inevitable outcome of the destructive temporal flux of history, which he characterizes as "a perpetual risk" and a "formidable entropic process" whose motion inevitably erodes structures and tarnishes beginnings.
2. See also Sellato's (1994:177ff.) contrast between the Punan's stewardship and

indirect management of wild sago palms and the farming practices of long-time Borneo farmers, who plant and cultivate the palm on a large scale.

3. For similar findings among the Parakana, see Fausto 1998.
4. The Buid of the Philippine Highlands have similarly adopted mobility and sharing as mutually reinforcing institutions to evade control by powerful neighbors whom they cannot resist militarily (Gibson 1990:141). Gibson further remarks that autonomous groups in the region have survived thanks to ideologies that reject any form of dominance; those who have failed to develop appropriate ideologies were either absorbed into aggressive state systems or eliminated. He goes on to compare the interactions of three societies (the Buid, the Ilongot, and the Iban) with autonomous ideologies and value systems in the common regional economy, without either reducing their ideologies to epiphenomena of the wider system or ignoring the real effects on them of commodity relations and military force (Gibson 1990:142–43).
5. Pierre Jaulin (1977:3) explains that relations of existence, which combine indissociable relations between men and relations between men and the world, pertain to the domestic domain of dwelling and shared consumption:

J'avais découvert qu'une civilisation est bien autre chose que les objets qu'elle accumule, fussent-ils des objets de pensée, des connaissances empaquetées. Je voyais que la qualité de vivre est une fin, que cette fin n'est pas une invention individuelle, mais le fruit d'un ordre collectif, la donnée d'une alliance avec le monde, alliance dont le premier temps est l'alliance des hommes entre eux, le jeu des relations les plus concrètes, c'est-à-dire celles qui impartissent l'espace, nous font résider, consommer, produire, jouir, inventer.

I had discovered that a civilization is much more than the objects it accumulates, even when these are thought objects or packaged knowledge. I had come to realize that quality of life was an end in itself, that this aim, far from being an individual invention, was the fruit of a collective order, the result of an alliance with the world, an alliance that starts with the entente of men among themselves, the interplay of the most concrete relations such as those assigned to space, and that make us reside, produce, rejoice, and invent.

6. Such a worldview is diametrically opposed to the Maussian view that gods and the dead are the real owners of the world's wealth (Gregory 1980) and that the living are indebted to those in authority for the gift of fertility, health, and wealth (Bloch and Parry 1982).
7. Judging from the oral narratives I collected in the field, women were able to move out of Huaorani land more easily than men. Women resorted to this extreme and desperate measure when internal warfare endangered their lives

to the point where the prospect of marrying outside their tribe appeared less horrifying. Men, however, had little chance of being accepted in another tribe without being killed.

In an interesting parallel, the Yuruparí myth common to all Tukanoan Indians starts with the conflict resulting from female primogeniture in societies where men must initiate the exchange of marriage partners. In the myth, two sexually mature sisters, whose younger brother is too young to marry, leave their native longhouse and search for a husband themselves (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1995:198).

8. The cultural dimension of social reproduction is a fundamental issue that unfortunately has been entirely overlooked by Gordon and Sholto Douglas (2000) in their account of the Bushman myth.
9. For a more extensive critique of the social construction of nature thesis, see Rival 1998e and Rival, Slater, and Miller 1998.
10. Only Shuar and Quichua shamans who have caused the death of blood kin and affines are called "cannibals," and at least two of them have been killed in recent years.

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