THE MAKING OF REAL PEOPLE: AN INTERPRETATION OF A MORALITY-CENTRED THEORY OF SOCIALLY, LIVELIHOOD AND SELFHOOD AMONG THE MUINANE (COLOMBIAN AMAZON)

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The making of Real People: An interpretation of a morality-centred theory of sociality, livelihood and selfhood among the Muinane (Colombian Amazon)

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PhD. dissertation for the School of Philosophical and Anthropological Studies, University of St. Andrews

Date of submission: October 27, 2000
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Abstract
In this monograph I interpret a wide-ranging native theory of sociality of the Muinane, an indigenous group of the Colombian Amazon. This theory simultaneously addresses their livelihood activities, some aspects of their phenomenological experience, their bodily form, their group identity, and their views on the achievement of a uniquely human, morally sociable way of life. The Muinane understand their thoughts/emotions as well as their bodies to be material in origin and character. Proper bodies and thoughts/emotions are made out of ritual substances and foodstuffs, which have divine subjectivities and agencies of their own, and which 'sound' through people, establishing people's subjectivities and agencies. Such subjectivities and agencies lead to the communal achievement of 'coolness,' the state of convivial sociability, tranquility, abundance and generalised good health that constitutes ideal community life. Because they share substances, kin are also understood to share bodily features and thoughts/emotions. Their consubstantiality leads to mutual love and to an intersubjectivity that enables them to live well together, without unseemly contestations or differences in ultimate moral purposes.

However, the material character of bodies and thoughts/emotions is also a source of danger. Animals and other evil beings can sabotage proper community life by replacing people's moral substances with their own false ones, causing people to experience mad, envious, angry and even sorcerous thoughts/emotions, and to suffer from weakening or lethal bodily diseases.

It is the moral obligation and inclination of properly constituted human beings to make new human beings, by intentionally forging their bodies, their thoughts/emotions and their 'baskets of knowledge.' They must do this by transforming evil substances into proper substances, through work and through everyday or sporadic rituals.

The matters addressed in this monograph—native theories of sociality, of self, of livelihood and so on—are of central pertinence to ongoing discussions in Amazonianist anthropology.
I am glad to have this opportunity to make explicit my thoughts/emotions concerning many of the people who have helped me come to this point. My first thanks go to those Muinane families who received me in their homes and communities for long months, and who were willing to allow me to participate in their activities and conversations. Following the explicit request of some of them, I changed all of their names in this monograph. It is especially frustrating not to be able to thank 'Juan' - a caring, knowledgeable, hospitable and humorous character - by name. He himself told me it was better so; to 'name' him would induce evil and envy to target him, for reasons that I explore in the chapters concerning knowledge.

I wish to thank Professor Joanna Overing, my supervisor and excellent mentor. She generously gave me one of the rare scholarship grants that the then new Centre for Indigenous American Studies and Exchange (Dept. of Social Anthropology, U. of St Andrews) had received. Throughout these five years I found her to be an exemplary practitioner of our discipline, with a strong theoretical penchant coupled to a passion for detailed ethnography, and a tough but diplomatic (or at least charming) willingness to question and subvert any dogmas she found worthy of attack. Her emotional and intellectual support for her students – for me - went beyond the call of duty. I could not have had a better guide, and so I thank Tom Griffiths as well for leading me to her. My gratitude extends as well to Napier Russell, who made sure my visits to Joanna's and his home were always well-seasoned with instructive and humorous conversations.

I must also recognise my intellectual debt with Juan Alvaro Echeverri. He has been an inspiring conversation partner, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of Amazonia and profound grasp of the subtleties of things Uitoto and Muinane have never ceased to amaze me. Sandra Turbay, at the Universidad de Antioquia (Medellín, Colombia), deserves much of the credit for anything intelligible I may have written concerning Muinane kinship classification.

I thank the members of staff at the Department of Anthropology at St. Andrews for numerous illuminating discussions we had over the years. I particularly benefited from David Riches' course on Key Concepts, and from conversations I had with Nigel Rapport and Roy Dilley in preparation for tutorials I gave their students. Tristan Platt's comments to me on the importance of finding a theoretical home were also much appreciated. Among my fellow postgraduate students, Anouska Komlosy was a good -a very good- companion, friend and conversation partner. Elsje Lagrou was also a demanding, if warm, interlocutor, and I am in her debt for this. I also wish to thank Mieke Bal, at the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, for allowing me to participate in her Theoretical Seminar, Peter Mason for bringing me there, and Professor Don Kulick for an inspiring course on performativity.

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# Table of Contents

Declarations ........................................................................................................... i  
Abstract ............................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................ iii  
1. Introduction ..................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1 A debate in Amazonianist anthropology ................................................. 1  
   1.2 Love and hate among the Muinane ......................................................... 3  
   1.3 On language, emotions and the self ......................................................... 5  
   1.4 Task and method .................................................................................... 14  
   1.5 Expressions of purpose: the multiplication of Real People and the achievement of a cool lifestyle .......................................................... 21  
   1.6 Structure of the Monograph ................................................................... 28  
Part I: On the Constitution of the Self .............................................................. 36  
2. On the Constitution of the Self ....................................................................... 37  
   2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................. 37  
   2.2 Proper Breaths, Speeches and Substances .............................................. 39  
   2.3 Spurious substances and counterfeit selves ........................................... 44  
   2.4 Speeches, experience and identity ......................................................... 50  
   2.5 Properly produced bodies ....................................................................... 53  
   2.6 Baskets and hearts .................................................................................. 63  
Part II: Substances .............................................................................................. 67  
3. Introduction: Substances and agency ............................................................. 68  
4. Tobacco .......................................................................................................... 76  
   4.1 A divine and gendered substance ............................................................. 77  
   4.2 Raising and preparing an invulnerable predator ...................................... 78  
   4.3 Hunting with Tobacco ............................................................................. 87  
   4.4 Tobacco, strength and knowledge ........................................................... 92  
   4.5 Consubstantiality, tranquillity and identity ............................................ 100  
   4.6 Salt ........................................................................................................... 105  
5. Coca ............................................................................................................... 109  
   5.1 The preparation of coca ......................................................................... 111  
   5.2 The initiation: coca, emotions and morality ........................................... 119  
   5.3 The dangers of coca .............................................................................. 130  
6. Manioc, chillies and herbs: the substances of women ..................................... 133  
   6.1 Manioc .................................................................................................... 135  
   6.2 Chillies .................................................................................................... 152  
   6.3 The Meal – the incorporation of foodstuffs ............................................. 157  
   6.4 Cool Herbs ............................................................................................. 161  
Part III On the virtues and tribulations of a life of loving care ......................... 167  
7. Introduction ..................................................................................................... 168  
   7.1 On loving care ......................................................................................... 168  
   7.2 Keeping to the path: on a sense of moral purpose ................................... 174  
8. On the communal task of achieving the good life .......................................... 181  
   8.1 Gender obligations, virtues and complementarity .................................. 181  
   8.2 On the need and sources of mutual support ......................................... 194  
9. Concerning coolness and good mutual accompaniment ............................... 203  
   9.1 Respect ................................................................................................... 207  
   9.2 Joking, humour and laughter ................................................................... 212  
   9.3 On treating kin and others properly ....................................................... 224
9.3.1 On institutions and the proper footings of relationships...... 225
9.3.2 Performativity and the establishment of kinship ............... 228
9.3.3 Affinity .............................................................................. . 235

10. The tribulations: diseases and asociality as predatory action

10.1 Real People as Prey .............................................................. . 240
10.2 Bodily tribulations .............................................................. . 253
10.3 Immoral thoughts/emotions and actions ............................ . 256

Part IV. On knowledge ................................................................... . 288

11. The agency of material, subjective and divine knowledge.... 289
11.1 On ‘the knowledge of our own’ .......................................... . 289
11.2 The materiality of the Speeches........................................... . 291
11.3 The subjectivity of the Speeches ........................................ . 293
11.4 The divine character of the Speeches ............................... . 295
11.5 On the social and material manipulation of evil ................. . 297
11.6 Knowledge as a predatory weapon ................................... . 304

12. The moral conditions of knowledge ................................... . 309
12.1 On sorcery and the moral purpose of knowledge ............. . 310
12.2 Dawning knowledge .......................................................... . 312
12.3 The proper form and contexts for the use of knowledge ... 314
12.4 Fixed knowledge ............................................................... . 320
12.5 The transmission and acquisition of knowledge ............... . 323
12.6 On the ownership of knowledge ........................................ . 329
12.7 Age and knowledge ........................................................... . 334

Part V: Transformations ............................................................... . 339

13. Basic Transformations ............................................................ . 340
13.1 Food Cooling and the Speech of Satiety ........................... . 340
13.2 Healing and hunting .......................................................... . 344
13.3 Gardening ......................................................................... . 349

14. Great ritual transformations ................................................ . 365
14.1 Maloca building and domestication ................................... . 365
14.2 Dance rituals ..................................................................... . 385

VI. By way of conclusion: a note on responsibility ..................... . 406

VII. Cited Bibliography ................................................................. . 410

Appendix I: Brief notes on a history of the Muinane and the Middle
Caquetá ...................................................................................... 418

Appendix II - The Muinane language – Generalities and Spelling
conventions ........................................................................... 422

Appendix III. Social Organization, Kinship and Censa ......... 424

Glossary .................................................................................. . 433
Table of Figures

Figure 1. A circular scheme on the making of Real People ........................... 25
Figure 2. A mambeador starts to mix tobacco paste and vegetable salt...... 108
Figure 3. A man picks coca. He toasts it while his brother pounds his own toasted batch into a fine powder. They burn yarumo leaves for ashes. 118
Figure 4. Anger dawns in the shape of a peccary, wrapped in a makeshift basket. ................................................................. 348
Figure 5. Oliverio’s small two-pillar maloca is burned down after his death.373
Figure 6. Transformations of evil................................................................ 384
Figure 7. Consanguineal kinship terminology diagram for male ego (Chukiki). ..................................................................................... 425
Figure 8. A map of the region .................................................................. 432

Table 4. Fruit/animal equivalencies................................................... 89
Table 5. Animal’s ways of mambeing.................................................. 126
Table 3. Kinship terminology for male Ego.......................................... 426
1. Introduction
1.1 A debate in Amazonianist anthropology

An ongoing debate in current Amazonianist anthropology concerns among other things a certain set of anthropologists' placing emphasis on the issue of conviviality in native understandings of sociality, as opposed to another set of anthropologist which stresses hostility as 'a particularly important aspect of social relations and of the psychological configurations inherent to them' (Taylor 1996:206). This latter set find the stress of the first - the so-called 'English school of Americanism' (Idem) - on conviviality and on the love, sharing and mutual care that ideally characterises local relationships leads them to ignore the importance of interlocal relations, characterised by an ambiguous tension between reciprocity and mutual predation. Their claim in other words is that the 'hate' inherent in these latter relations is as important to Amerindian sociality as love is, and that the English school miss this point.

However, the English school in fact embraces the point that considerations of hostility, hate and conflict are of importance in defining Amazonian sociality. For example, Overing and Passes (2000), in the introduction to a volume that brings together scholars who write within this 'English' analytical style, explicitly state that the forces for conflict, violence, danger, cannibalism, warfare and predation also penetrate to the heart of the Amazonian social. They protest, however, that an exclusive focus on affinity,

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2 Viveiros de Castro (1996) refers to the same set of scholars, constituted by Joanna Overing and her students, as 'the analytical style of moral economy of intimacy [...] in contemporary studies of Amazonian societies'.
intertribal relations and the 'wider' community, and the negative and predatory passions with which they may be linked, would obstruct a grasp of native views of sociality. Such relations are very much a part of the Native Amazonian narratives of sociality, but only because hateful, conflictive, immorally predatory others are the monstrous yet clearly conceived and delineated antisocial 'outside' that defines and is defined by the 'inside', that is, by proper, human action and sociality. In other words, the outsiders are precisely that which is not domestic and therefore is not properly social. Many native cosmogonic myths place the origins of all forces of life, fertility, and proper social endeavour in dangerous, violent, potentially cannibalistic external domains; however - and this is very important - they must be transformed.

Again, the emphasis on love, conviviality and the 'sweeter' aspects of Native Amazonians on the part of the 'English school' — and on my part in this monograph, for I subscribe to this school — is not a denial of the existence of 'hate' nor of the fact that it receives much rhetorical attention4. Rather, it stems from our commitment to calling attention to notions that are of central importance to the indigenous peoples themselves when they make manifest their awareness of what a moral social life is — of what their own lives in community are or should be — and of what their purposeful action is about.

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1.2 Love and hate among the Muinane

An ethnography of the Muinane, a native Amazonian people from Colombia, is pertinent to the debate I introduced above: their unified theory of sociality, livelihood and selfhood involves complex accounts of both love and hate. As do other Amazonian groups, the Muinane give great importance to and produce sophisticated rhetoric about love, the requirements of establishing a properly human, tranquil, sociable lifestyle, and the responsibility for the proper care and raising of children. They also speak much about anger and other difficulties facing the achievement of such a lifestyle.

There is a strong contrast between the Muinane’s chronic generation of social friction or ‘hateful’ rhetoric in everyday life and their simultaneous explicit emphasis on the importance of tranquillity, loving care for kin, and good everyday relationships among co-residents and neighbours. While living among them I was struck by the seemingly ceaseless threat of conflict and by the frequent expressions of mutual distrust and disapproval even among close kin. Over time, I witnessed or heard of fissions that tore communities apart as individuals –even siblings, or a father and son- quarrelled and entire nuclear families, patrilineages or clans broke off, unwilling to remain in the neighbourhood of the conflict.

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5 The Muinane are a people of the Colombian Amazon. They know themselves as People of the Centre, along with Uitoto, Andoke, Nonuya, Ocaina, Bora and Miraña. Cf. Appendices I, II, III and IV for very brief general information on the Muinane, such as their location in Colombia, population censas, key historical events, and kinship terminology.

6 Sometimes the troubles became extreme: reports of wife-beatings, threats and physical fights were not uncommon, and in the multiethnic community of Araracuara, several men were stabbed to death over a period of 18 months in '97 and '98.

One of my colleagues suggested that perhaps the great amount of interpersonal conflict I reported for the Muinane stemmed from an 'unhappiness' generated by their difficult history during the last century. My colleague may be right: the decimation of the Muinane by violence and forced migrations, and the changes in livelihood activities and settlement patterns in each generation, perhaps led to a lapse in people's commitment to the maintenance of *communitas*. Alternatively, they could all be responding to fission-inducing factors within a pattern of fissions and fusions in Amazonian societies, as discussed by Santos-Granero (2000). However, I will not follow here a long-term historical approach to try to understand the Muinane's conflicts and their occasional achievement of peaceful social life. I focus instead on the Muinane's expressed understandings of their own and others' subjectivity, on their own exegeses and moral evaluations of what they and others are doing when they carry out certain activities, behave in certain ways and react to events. In short, I focus on the Muinane's own theorisations of morality. I find that my approach enables me to address their frequent conflicts while steering clear of a hate-centred view of Amazonian sociality, and to understand their beautiful accounts of tranquillity and social well-being without attributing to them the angelic noble savagery which A.C. Taylor (Idem) seems to find in the English accounts.

My exploration of this moral theory involves an exploration of the Muinane's notions of selfhood. In this regard they converge with other native Amazonian peoples in their stress on both personal autonomy and the intersubjectivity between the members of a collectivity, without this double stress constituting a contradiction, as it would in a Western milieu that
opposed individual and society. Most of those who write along the lines of Overing and the so-called English school emphasise that for native Amazonians, the desirable social relations that maintain their collectivities are sustained by these autonomous intersubjective selves’ productive work and by their joint consumption of their produce. Through everyday livelihood activities of production and consumption, moral human beings produce other moral, beautiful human beings, making or shaping their bodies and sensibilities (which are not necessarily conceived as dualistically split). The Muinane have proven to be clear examples of this: their rhetoric involves a detailed causal account of the links between productive endeavours, the consumption of material produce, the consubstantiality of kin, intersubjectivity and morality.

1.3 On language, emotions and the self

My treatment of the Muinane here stems from what Crapanzano calls a ‘linguistic ideology [:] the assumptions, often implicit, [that] we make about language and its use.’ (1992:12). My starting point is that people’s worlds, or their ‘knowledge’ of the world and of themselves, are constructs, where by ‘construction’ I do not mean the exhaustive creation of a world and all its effects, by a subject. Rather, I mean that there is nothing we can say about ‘the world,’ ‘the really real’ or about our ‘selves’ that is not a further

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8 Thorough ethnographic studies of Native Amazonian groups’ linkages between a moral, caring social life and livelihood are to be found in Gow (1991; cf. especially 119, 120) Belaunde (1992:18), (Lagrou 2000), Echeverri (1997:99). Cf. Griffiths’ (1998:11) discussion of this theoretical approach, which he calls as ‘the British-Americanist school in Amazonian anthropology.’ Cf. as well Wagner (1981:24, 25) for a persuasive discussion of a similar link between production and intimate personal relationships in Melanesia.

9 Cf. Griffiths’ notion of a corporeal economy (1998:261) among the Uitoto. For a similar view
construction of them. Briefly, these constructs and their metaphysical premises are articulated by language, which I conceive of as networks of words and concepts and narrative forms shared partially by the people of some social collectivity. The collectivity itself is constantly being recreated as a result of its members' dialogic use of language.\(^\text{10}\)

Different peoples (and people within a peoples) have different such networks, different metaphysical premises, and therefore incommensurable worlds (until they are made commensurable, that is). I would hasten to add that these constructs are processual, and not fixed or established. The networks are in a never-ending state of flux: with people's citations of elements in it, they create new meanings, new coherences, new understandings all the time. The authority of any set of constructs is ultimately social or moral—a matter, at some point, of agreement— and not natural.\(^\text{11}\)

Part of my task in this monograph is to explore the Muinane's understanding of selfhood. Charles Taylor's (1985) discussion of human agency and language helps me present my own project. He rejects 'the ambition to model the study of man on the natural sciences' (ibid.: 1), and persuasively argues that any reductive account of human behaviour would ignore a crucial feature of our ordinary understanding of a human agent, of a person or self:

'A fully competent human agent not only has some understanding (which may be also more or less

\(^{10}\) Cf. Tedlock and Mannheim (1995:Introduction)

misunderstanding) of himself, but is partly constituted by this understanding. [The point, however, is that ] our self-understanding essentially incorporates our seeing ourselves against a background of [...] distinctions between things which are recognised as of categorical or unconditioned or higher importance or worth, and things which lack this or are of lesser value' (ibid:3)

Following on with a critique of the features of modern identity, Taylor argues that these have tended to 'generate an understanding of the individual as metaphysically independent of society' (ibid.: 8)\textsuperscript{12}. The resulting dichotomy between individual and society hides from view the social character of the individual, whose defining self-interpretations are drawn from the permanent interchanges going on in his or her community. The background of distinctions of which Taylor writes partake from the ways in which individuals' communities speak about these things, and otherwise act in regards to them.

The following statement of Taylor's brings together much of what I wish to state in this monograph:

'If we are partly constituted by our self-understanding, and this in turn can be very different according to the various languages which articulate for us a background of distinctions of worth, then language does not only serve to depict ourselves and the world, it also helps constitute our lives. Certain ways of being, of feeling, of relating to each other are only possible given

\textsuperscript{12} Overing and Passes (2000) stress this point as well. It is interesting that the Muinane's and other indigenous people's understandings of self similarly do away with that opposition
certain linguistic resources. Without a certain articulation of oneself and of the highest, it is neither possible to be a Christian ascetic, nor to feel that combination of one's own lack of worth and high calling [...], nor to be part of, say, a monastic order.' (ibid.: 9,10) (I return to this quote below. See as well section 2.4)

Within the discipline of anthropology, Michelle Rosaldo converges with Taylor. She subscribes to a trend which attempts 'to understand how human beings understand themselves and to see their actions and behaviours as in some ways the creations of those understandings' (Rosaldo 1984: 139). She insists that people's understandings do not stem from an inner essence independent of social relations, but from inevitable personal involvement in a world 'of meanings, images and social bonds' (Idem). She states that 'cultural models derive from, as they describe, the world in which we live, and at the same time provide a basis for the organization of activities, responses, perceptions, and experiences by the conscious self. Culture so construed is, furthermore, a matter less of artifacts and propositions, rules, schematic programs, or beliefs than of associative chains and images that suggest what can reasonably be linked up with what: We come to know it through collective stories that suggest the nature of coherence, probability and sense within the actor's world. Culture [s] [...] truth resides not in explicit formulations of the rituals of daily life but in the practices of persons who in
acting take for granted an account of who they are and how to understand their fellows' moves (Ibid.: 140).\footnote{I would include those 'explicit formulations' among the the practices she privileges.}

For Rosaldo, people's emotions are about the ways in which the social world is one in which they themselves are involved. Taylor touches upon this as well: he claims that experiencing a given emotion involves experiencing a situation as bearing a certain import, where an import is a way in which something can be relevant or of importance to the desires or purposes or aspirations or feelings of a subject. (Taylor 1985:49) An understanding of emotions—and of the behaviours they motivate—can thus not be reduced to an objective account (one which would have no recourse to 'secondary qualities' or subjective aspects as opposed to objective ones), because imports, or the ways in which we (as selves) are involved in the social world are experience-dependent.

Concerning these imports, or what she would perhaps phrase as 'the sense of involvement', Rosaldo writes:

the stakes, solutions, threats and possibilities for response are apt, in every case, to take their shape from what one's world and one's conceptions of such things as body, affect, and self are like. Feelings are not substances to be discovered in our blood but social practices organized by stories that we both enact and tell. They are structured by our forms of understanding. (Rosaldo 1984:143)

Again, Taylor says to the same effect that the imports, though accessed through feeling, necessarily involve an articulation through
language. It is only an import, or an emotion, as refracted through language.
(cf. Taylor 1985:45-76)

A troublesome question comes up at this point: How is it that the use of
language comes to constitute our emotions, our subjectivity? How aware and
agential are subjects, concerning the 'shaping' or the 'constitution' of their own
subjectivity? (These questions are actually of great interest to the Muinane,
though their definitions of terms would be different.) Charles Taylor finds
exciting the prospect of a psychoanalytic theory that would not make recourse
to global and reified mechanisms such as the super-ego, 'and with a truly
plausible account of the shared subjectivity which the mature cohesive
self must emerge' (Ibid:44). I do not wish to tangle here with this very difficult
issue, especially since dealing with its implications is beyond the scope of this
monograph. However, I did bear some of these issues in mind in my writing,
and so I will make a few gestures in their direction:

Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) discussion of gender offers one way of
understanding how the 'conversations' of a collectivity (its interchanges or
deployments of symbols, in my understanding) may come to shape people's
subjectivity. She brings together Derrida's (1988) development of Austin's
(1975) concept of performativity, Althusser's notion of 'interpellation' and her
own re-elaboration of Lacanian psychoanalysis to account for how gender is
constructed or, in her terms, 'mattered'. Her point is that gender is not akin to
a mask which a previously existent subject dons (or even a cultural impression
upon a naturally sexed body); rather, to pursue the metaphor, assuming the

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14 On emotions in anthropology, cf. for instance Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990), Lutz and White
mask of gender is part of becoming a subject in the first place. There is
nothing behind the mask; it constitutes the subject. 'Donning' or 'assuming' the
mask cannot be a fully intentional action\textsuperscript{15}. The process of assuming a gender
and thereby becoming a subject takes place within a collectivity that over time
'cites,' again and again, gender norms –expressions that take for granted what
characterises people in regards to their gender, or how a person of a certain
gender should look, speak, and in general act. Butler quotes the common
interpellation: 'It's a girl!' spoken by a midwife or obstetrician upon observing
the genitals of a newborn. I can imagine others: 'I think it was a girl driving...
she had long hair,' or 'Be a man! Walk right!' Such 'citations' of norms and a
myriad others over time shape 'girlness' and 'boyness,' and in our society,
attempt to limit gender alternatives to two: male or female. In being used by
the collectivity, these citations interpellate its members, treating them as a
'you,' demanding behaviour and appearances from them that are intelligible
within the particular universe of regulatory norms.

Expressions like 'It's a girl,' are 'performative' because they bring
about the effect that they name: a person who is interpellated over time by so
many cited norms is effectively 'girled.' She understands herself to be a girl,
behaves as such, and is probably perceived as such by the collectivity to
which she belongs and the language of which she uses. Such effects,
however, have to be maintained through permanent citations. She and other
people around her must frequently cite the norms that 'girl' (as in the verb, 'to
girl') girls, for her and other girls to be such. Failure is always an alternative in

\textsuperscript{15} Overing and Passes (2000), following Rapport (2000), claim it is no longer acceptable to
claim a consciousness for ourselves which we deny to others. I would agree, and would add
that Butler would agree as well.
the ongoing process that sediments 'girlness': misreadings and subversive
citations are always possible, and sometimes go on to create new effects.

In Butler's account, individual agency lies in reiterations and
rearticulations, and not in assuming positions outside the system (cf. Butler
1993:15)\textsuperscript{16}. Taylor does not seem to be too distant from a similar limitation of
intention, when he warns that certain models of transparent consciousness /
clairvoyant control are unrealisable. He notes that after all, part of the claim is
that the agent is only an agent at all because he is a part of a language
community, and the meanings and illocutionary forces he activates in any
speech act can only be what they are against the background of a whole
language and way of life. The agent cannot oversee these larger orders. (cf.
Taylor 1985: 11)\textsuperscript{17}

I find it worthwhile to consider the possibility of such 'citations' as Butler
writes of interpellating people not only in regards to their gender, but in
regards to everything that can be intelligibly said about people, in their own
collectivities\textsuperscript{18}. This leads me to make a tentative claim: my interpretation of
Muinane 'theory' is that it is a causal account of thoughts/emotions and
behaviours, a persuasive native explanation of personal experience, sociality
and identity. As a 'theory' it is enunciated and recreated constantly through
prescriptive counsels, moral self-portrayals, the execution of rituals, critical
evaluations of behaviour that is deemed either proper or transgressive, and
different kinds of narratives. These enunciations come to interpellate people,

\textsuperscript{16} See Overing's (1987: 72) quote of Feyerabend: 'every language contains within itself the
means of restructuring large parts of its conceptual apparatus.'
and, for a convergent point in a divergent argument, Rapport (1994:25)
\textsuperscript{18} Butler and others have done this already, among other things with the issue of race. Cf., for
to treat them as a 'you' defined in a very particular Muinane fashion: 'you' the True Man, 'you' the animal who mistreats kin; 'you' the person through whom a cool sweet substance can speak; 'you' the person whose body is made by the same tobacco as another's, and so on. These interpellations come to shape what a Real Person is for the Muinane, what features of Real People are relevant, and what constitutes moral behaviour, among other things. And to make the more daring claim: they come to shape reported subjectivities and manifest behaviours in particular Muinane ways.

Elsewhere, I paraphrase Taylor (1985:9,10; see quote above) as follows:

The Muinane's self-depictions partake of [certain previously described] postulates. They enable the Muinane to experience very particular thoughts and affects which other people who do not share these postulates and narratives - and therefore their self-depictions - cannot. I would claim that the Muinane's articulations of the substance-like materiality of their thoughts and of the qualities of proper sociality, are what makes it possible for a Muinane individual to be a Real Person of a certain clan, marked off from others by the tobacco that constitutes him or her. These articulations also make it possible for a person to realise that their proper Speech has been supplanted by an animal's, and to feel and act differently because of that realisation. They make the Muinane painfully aware of the impropriety and danger of antisocial thoughts, and

instance, Butler (1997:ch. 1)
make the project of 'living well' a deeply motivated one.

(Londoño-Sulkin 2000)\(^{19}\)

I find that to treat the different citations of these postulates as interpellations in Butler's sense help me understand better how the Muinane's theories participate in shaping their lives.

1.4 Task and method

My task, following Overing (1987:76), is to try to understand the Muinane’s world and to creatively translate it. This kind of translation implies undergoing a difficult learning process, during which the ethnographer must listen to his/her interlocutors' discourses, dialogue with them and observe their actions carefully. The point is to come to understand the world they live in and continually construct through meaningful action. Perhaps the measure of the appropriateness (rather than the 'truth') of that understanding is the extent to which it allows the ethnographer to take the more or less competent part of an agent among the peoples s/he has lived with. I do not mean by this that the ethnographer must necessarily participate in rites or other acts as if s/he were an insider, making full actual use of whatever discourses and paraphernalia are involved; however, s/he should be able to empathise with or recognise what it is that different acting agents among the peoples studied understand themselves to be doing\(^{20}\), some of the time. This entails that the ethnographer must at some point come to perceive the believability of the particular metaphysics of those peoples. S/he must then find in his or her own language

\(^{19}\) I am slightly uncomfortable with claims to accessing other's inner experience. I address this in the following paragraphs.
\(^{20}\) This point is very clearly presented in Meloe (1988).
a way of communicating these understandings, these strange ontologies and epistemologies (if s/he wants to call them that) to his or her own people.

A parenthetical remark is in order here: the 'empathy' or 'understanding' I speak of above need not be understood as the magical trick of entering people's minds. People's own reactions often make manifest their interpretations of their own and others' previous discursive and non-discursive behaviours. For instance, I once heard an angry argument in which one man accused another of speaking the Speech of animals, of having an animal inside him. What was he saying? Was that a metaphor: 'You are behaving like an animal'?

But then other events made manifest that the people involved were not treating such claims as metaphors or similes. They carried out rituals to remove the 'animal', or some subjectivity-endowing bestial substance, from the misbehaving individual. Other rituals and livelihood activities were understood to carry out similar 'exorcisms', not only for targeted individuals but for entire communities.

There is a certain duality or ambiguity to my task, however. Let me explain this with an example: imagine a Muinane mambeador\textsuperscript{21} consuming certain substances and then in a rhythmic ritual dialogue, stating that the child he is 'blessing' is a boy, and that he will be beautiful, that his skin will be tough, that his job will be to pick coca, that he will be strong, that he will be cool, that he will not be affected by disease, and so on.

\textsuperscript{21} Adult men among the Muinane, Uitoto, Andoke, Nonuya, and other groups of the region consume tobacco paste (or powder, among the Yukuna) and mambe, a pulverised mix of toasted coca leaves and ashes of Cecropia leaves, by placing and keeping the stuff in their cheeks. Men who consume mambe are known as "mambeadores". The mambeadores prepare and consume the coca in the mambeadero, the 'coca place.' This is a rough circle of carved wooden seats placed roughly in the centre of the maloca. The adult men of the settlement or maloca sit there nearly every night to consume tobacco paste and mambe, narrate Speeches
My task is to take the man's actions 'at face value,' suspending disbelief. I must try to understand what the world must be like for him, and 'translate' the metaphysics involved; the ontology and morality, hopefully in a way which the man would recognise as appropriate to what he was doing. Let me imagine that after some time and many repetitions of similar events, I figure out that for him, the language he is using is 'divine speech,' irreducible beyond that, and that it brings about the effects that it names because it is divine and because the features of the world are such that they are susceptible to that kind of agency. Much of this monograph is precisely an account of that man's world with examples of the actions I observed that led me to understand it.

Another aspect of this task (perhaps I should treat it as a different task altogether) involves going back to my metaphysical principles, which include the postulate that our use of language (this time conceived not as divine Speech but as a fluid network of contrasting terms, partially shared, constantly being subtly altered, by the people of a collectivity) is constitutive of our experiences. I must then ask how the man's use of language (and other semiotic exchanges) participates in shaping him and his people as subjects, in constituting their subjectivity, and in shaping their social life. In other words, I have to ask how he is 'making culture' and recreating meanings. From there, I do not 'believe' that the mambeador is at that moment shaping the baby in the way (that I assume) that he assumes he is. I believe rather that his discourse is predicated on complex notions of what a man is, of what constitutes moral behaviour, of what emotions are, of what human agency is.

of Apprising, make plans and guard spiritually over the well-being of the community.
His discursive placing of the concept of ‘man’ in a certain position within the network of his language constitutes a reiteration and re-creation of ‘manness’ (not manhood!) for his community of speakers, although of course, the concept of ‘manness’ requires the help of the entire community’s permanent citations of it. The same would be true for concepts such as ‘coolness,’ ‘strength,’ ‘beauty.’

The attribution of awareness or lack of awareness is a delicate issue here, and in fact is a point of contention for the so-called English school (cf. Overing and Passes 2000: Introduction)\(^{22}\). They are emphatic in attributing coherence and consciousness of coherence to the peoples they have worked with, and in being critical of accounts which present people as ‘unconscious’ of the workings of their own societies. In this regard, I make no claims to epistemic superiority or to consciousness which I would not attribute to the Muinane.

I would claim that my theoretical position allows me to posit that what the hypothetical Muinane man understands us –him and I- to be doing and what I understand us to be doing are very different things. We are both aware of what we are doing, in any case, and for my purposes, there is little point in asking whether one ‘awareness’ is superior to another. I ‘understand’ that we have ‘an entirely different set of universal principles’ of the world (Overing 1985:155), and that, bearing this difference in mind, it is my task to explore his. I understand him to be making sense of the world in his own way, on the basis of his metaphysical principles. I am interested in making

\(^{22}\)Cf. Culler 1988: (xiv, xv) on meaning as intentional act (of a writer or reader) and meaning as textual fact (the product of grammatical, rhetorical, textual, and contextual structures).
(monographically manifest) sense of his way of making sense. (I also happen to be interested in how his metaphysics and theories illuminate aspects of lived experience with which I can empathise or which I can appreciate aesthetically). He, on the other hand, probably understands himself to be transforming evil or tribulations and naming situations into being through the agency that his substances provide. One important interest of his in the ritual is to maintain the conditions of production of a proper way of life. He probably understands me to be seeking some like purpose: to seek knowledge that will make me competent and will help me to achieve a proper way of life.

I suspect that to some extent we will both achieve our purposes, and to some extent we will both find our purposes frustrated. He will end up producing food, mending frazzled social relations, healing the sick, and raising some children, but occasionally clashing with others, losing crops and losing kin. I will have enjoyed some new insights and some stimulating ideas, and by October, 2000, will probably have submitted a decent monograph. But at times I will inevitably find my 'understanding' to be limited, mistaken, and unempathetic.

My research method involved 'extensive' fieldwork (approximately 18 months, over 6 years). This is not a very long time, considering my purposes, but then again, I could probably live among the Muinane for years on end and still have much to learn. During that time I was not merely trying to be an observer, if I am to oppose that term to that of an active agent. (Actually, I do not oppose these terms. Following Meløe (1988), one can only be a

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23 Cf. Austin (1975: 25-53), Derrida (1988:17), Butler (1993:13,14) on infelicities and failed meanings and performatives. Cf. Echeverri’s (1997:168) discussion of an instance in which his own interpretation of his Uitoto interlocutor’s reported dreams were at odds with the
competent observer of human action in which one is, or can take the part of, an agent. I lived in Muinane households, and made it a point to work with them in the gardens, to wield an axe and a machete myself when the time came to fell a section of jungle, to go hunting and fishing, and in general to participate in the activities in which my help would be welcome (if at least because it would be found amusing). I was interested in showing myself to be a moral character even by their standards (an impossible task *de jure*, but in part realisable through hard work, *de facto*). Indeed, to be perceived as a good person was an emotional necessity for me. My emphasis on participating in the material production of food had everything to do with that; although it was only with time that I realised to what extent willingness to work hard was considered a necessary virtue, a mark of true humanity and morality. There are few times that I have felt closer to glory than when I overheard Carmen, a rather gruff and difficult woman in whose house I had been living for some months, telling a Uitoto comadre with pride that I worked like a *paisano* (an Indian) and ate ‘all kinds of food’. The explicit contrast was with numerous white visitors of the region who, for Carmen and others, never did ‘real work’ and could only eat ‘white man’s food.’

Much of my learning took place in the *mambeaderos*, the men’s circles near the centre of the malocas. Nearly every evening during those 18 months I sat with the men, helped in the preparation of *mambe*, and

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native’s own interpretations.

24 Horacio Calle, Juan Alvaro Echeverri and Tom Griffiths were other white men of whom different Uitoto and Muinane spoke with similar proprietary pride as ‘their’ anthropologists who were almost native in skills and customs.

25 The *maloca* is a great house, the ideal residence of the men of a patriline and their in-married wives, and the place where the great dance rituals are carried out. I discuss the *maloca* at length in section 14.1.
participated in the small rituals of exchange and consumption of tobacco paste and *mambe*. I listened to their myths and to their unique rhythmic liturgies, to their constant exegeses of their own discourses and ways of doing things, and observed them 'whistling' over different substances to transform them into healing stuffs. It was there that I learned most of what know of the Muinane language, and where I and a few of the men established relationships of friendship

I spent most of my time with men, because the institution of the *mambeadero* was exclusively for the men to actively participate in. They expected me to carry out my research there, with them, and did not see much point in my talking much to the women. Fortunately, meals and garden work provided some opportunities to listen to the women, and to inquire after their interests and knowledge. I also carried out several systematic interviews, such as when I was working on kinship or wanted to have a person's undivided attention on my matters for a few hours; on those occasions I interviewed women too. Wishing to avoid certain troubles, I chose not to accompany the women very often when they worked on their own away from the men. I find that given my research conditions, my interpretation of things Muinane will be biased towards a masculine perspective.

I learned to use the Muinane language in a limited fashion through active use, investing only minimal efforts in trying to go systematically about learning it. When I began fieldwork in 1993 I did some minor research on phonology, but found that to be too time consuming and ineffective for my

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26 I am using this term with trepidation here. Relationships of friendship in my society entail different footings of relations than friendship among the Muinane.
purpose of quickly coming to actually communicate. Thereafter I used much
Spanish, my native tongue, which most of the Muinane also handle with full
competence. I insisted on asking people how to say things in Muinane, and
would attempt to make use of whatever I learned as much as possible. Late in
my fieldwork I had the opportunity to transcribe some Speeches of Apprising
(myths) written in Muinane by a *mambeador*, and to discuss different aspects
of the language he used; the month that task required was perhaps the most
intense language-learning phase I went through. By the end of my fieldwork I
could follow the gist of most mambeadero rituals and some casual
communications. However, I cannot make claims to comfortable competence in
the Muinane language.

1.5 Expressions of purpose: the multiplication of Real People and
the achievement of a cool lifestyle

In this section I will ‘jump the gun’ and present some of the issues
which the Muinane claim are of greatest importance to them as moral human
beings, and then a brief scheme which introduces the links between these
issues. This scheme is intended to help the reader understand my
argumentation in the rest of this monograph, and to make greater sense of the
following ‘Structure of the Monograph’.

The Muinane’s cosmological rhetoric, their quotidian prescriptions, and
their critical evaluations of their own and others’ actions express interlinked
postulates of what it is to be a human being and how proper human beings
think and act; what we might perceive as a morality-centred theory that
addresses issues of sociality, livelihood, selfhood, subjectivity, embodiment,
agency, identity and aesthetics. Their discourses to a great extent deal with the intentional achievement of a moral social lifestyle which they link indissolubly to properly human, as opposed to non-human and immoral, thoughts/emotions and agency. Central to their understanding of these matters are the substance-like qualities and the material origin of thoughts/emotions, and the subjective agency of the tools and products of their livelihood activities.

Different Muinane—men more often than women—spoke to me about the salient activities in their lives in terms of their purpose. They claimed that they worked hard in their gardens, obeyed the prescriptions of tradition carried out their rituals, all with the purpose of bringing about the 'multiplication of people', which they alternatively described as the successful reproduction of their own kin, or as the successful reproduction of a more inclusive 'humanity'. For them reproduction involved the intentional shaping of the bodies and sensibilities of the young and the unborn through rituals, counsels, alimentary practices and other actions. One man told me that when a Muinane man has raised his children into healthy, judicious, well-behaved adults, he can then make an important claim in public: 'I have replaced the bone of my grandfather, the bone of my grandmother, of my uncles and aunts. 27' In other words, he has successfully managed to extend his lineage, and to replace the women that have left it to join other lineages 28; by so doing, he has made manifest to all his character as a True Man, moral and knowledgeable.

27 Cf. Hugh-Jones (1993:113) on bones as a male derived component of the body among the Tukanoans.
28 Women, in this sense, are a vehicle for the multiplication of lineages other than their own.
I must make an explanatory parenthesis here, concerning my very frequent use in this monograph of the term 'morality'. The Muinane do not use the terms 'moral' or 'immoral' in Spanish to judge behaviour. I use the term and bring this opposition to bear because the terms the Muinane do use converge with a common Western moral opposition between 'good' and 'evil'. In Muinane they use contrasting evaluative terms that can be translated as 'good' and 'not good', 'hot' and 'cold,' 'true' (or 'real') and 'false', and 'truthful' and 'lying'. In Spanish they speak of 'lo propio' (that which is one's own, as well as that which is proper, authentic, true) and oppose it to 'los malignos' or 'la maldad' ('the malignant ones', or 'evil'). They speak of some practices as 'idolatrous,' 'sorcerous,' 'animalistic,' 'akin to beings of the Speeches of Apprising,' as opposed to practices which are 'true', 'human,' 'stemming from the Speech of Tobacco'. They also contrast the desirable practices which are 'like the ancients always spoke,' in opposition to 'new' or 'invented' or 'modern' Speeches and practices. When people make a proper utterance—one that is formally correct and appropriate for the situation—an interlocutor (who is sometimes a moral sine qua non of the deployment of Speeches) punctuates it with some affirmative expression such as a simple 'Yes' or a 'That is how it is.' These expressions, as opposed to 'That is not how it is' or 'It is not so,' constitute common evaluative contrast, one which usually denies or attributes age-old wisdom and agential capacity to the original utterance.

29 Cf. Griffiths (1998:258) on 'good and evil' among the Uitoto.
30 For an interesting ethnographic convergence, cf. Salmond's (1985:251) discussion of a Maori term that when used in evaluating a proposition, constitutes a judgement of propriety as well as of accuracy of account.
To return to the issue of Real People’s moral purpose: The proper multiplication of Real People requires ‘coolness’, the achievement of which is in itself a moral purpose. ‘Coolness’ (sii-ku-) encapsulates for the Muinane the ideal state both of individual Real People and of the aggregations they constitute. It stands for the state of bodily health and fertility and intellectual/emotional tranquillity of individuals, for the state of loving, responsible interaction among kin and co-residents, and for the wholesomeness of the world around them. Achieving such a state is also glossed in Spanish as vivir bueno, or vivir sabroso: ‘to live well’ or ‘to live pleasurably.’ 31 To cool (sii-ku-suhi) bodies, sentiments, communities, and indeed the world itself, is one of the great moral obligations of Real People.

For the Muinane, effective procreation and the achievement of coolness is a cyclic, transgenerational, communal endeavour. Let me start by presenting an abstract schematisation that may help me present the circularities inherent in this endeavour:

31 This notion of coolness converges with the common theme among various Amazonian peoples of ‘the good life’ which involves dwelling with kin in peaceful communities, where convivial affects are daily displayed and here is desirable material abundance. Cf. most of the articles in Overing and Passes (2000).
A. Briefly, the ultimate purpose of moral human beings is to 'multiply' in a human way, as opposed to the immoral propagation of animals. Real People's great task is to make\textsuperscript{32} new Real People, by engendering them in a proper fashion. They must ensure that these new Real People – their children and those of close ones – have properly shaped, healthy bodies capable of working hard to produce the material elements necessary to live properly and to make yet other generations of Real People. They must also provide them with cool, loving, purposeful, truly human thoughts/emotions that will incline

\textsuperscript{32} I avoid the term 'creation of people', because the Muinane stress the difference between 'manufacturing', 'making' or 'producing', which is what they do, and 'creating', which is divine. Eventually, however, perhaps the fact that the Speech of the Creator sounds through people also opens the possibility for people's actions to be creative in the divine sense.
them to work competently and to relate convivially with other people, so that together they will establish the cool, mutually supportive community life which is the precondition for the task of making Real People. Finally, they must provide the children with the instrumental knowledge which, empowered by substances, enables them to produce all that is necessary for the making of new Real People.

B. According to the Muinane’s cosmological rhetoric, if people act properly and convivially and are agential it is because their bodies and their thoughts/emotions are constituted by proper materials and through their agency. These materials appear in Speeches of Apprising (myths) as the stuffs out of which the creator deity fashioned the first Real People. The deities and mythical heroes then gave these substances to Real People in the form of food and ritual substance cultigens. Today, these are judiciously grown or collected, processed, distributed and consumed by the Muinane. These substances constitute and strengthen the bodies and the ‘cool’ thoughts/emotions that characterise human beings. The thoughts in question are the Speech of the deity or deities speaking through people, and lead people to care lovingly for their kin and to act in moral ways. Furthermore, these substances also convey the esoteric knowledge that provides people with the agency to carry out their moral intentions.33

33 Cf. Gow for an exploration of similar matters among the Piro: ‘... subsistence economy should be viewed as the production of people, and the details of the production, circulation and consumption of food are intimately linked to the construction of gender identity and kinship relations.’ (1991:121)
C. *Mambeadero* rhetoric reveals that true substances are the product of Real People's intentional transformations of evil or useless stuffs of animal or otherwise inhuman origin into desirable substances. These 'hot', evil substances are placed in Real People's bodies by ill-willed agents. They act upon Real People's bodies, sabotaging their competence to work hard, to bear the difficulties of acquiring knowledge, and to have children. False substances also constitute immoral thoughts/emotions, which cause the affected Real People to behave in the different animalistic fashions of their faunal sources. As a result, people fail to live up to their obligations towards the new people they are making, do not comply with the counsels, and mistreat other people. If these thoughts/emotions were not checked through their material transformation, people would start to quarrel seriously. Eventually they would stop supporting each other through the work and ritual practices of everyday life. Mutual anger and suspicion would escalate, social atomisation would ensue, and sorcery and violence would proliferate, all in the end creating a hot chaos of disease and death. In time, the Muinane would disappear.

The scheme is circular, given the fact that the issues in question are so imbricated amongst themselves:

A→B [A depends on B]: because to make Real People, Real People must possess and consume True substances.

B→C: because True substances are the product of processes of transformation of evil.
C→A: because to transform evil, Real People must be morally inclined to do so, and knowledgeably competent; they must furthermore be morally sociable, so as to count on the necessary support of others in this endeavour.

A→C: because only by freeing people of any evil inside them can these people behave in such ways as to effectively produce new Real People.

C→B: because the agency to transform evil and produce substances stems from the moral use of True substances.

B→A: because the proper, moral, effective consumption of substances can only take place if there are enough Real People, and if these people are knowledgeable and morally inclined.

1.6 Structure of the Monograph

In Part I, which comprises a single chapter on the constitution of the self, I explore the Muinane’s rhetoric on selfhood and some of its contrasts with Western common-sensical notions (2.1). I describe how the Muinane understand the thoughts, emotions and knowledge that incline and enable people to live in a moral, sociable fashion to stem from properly cultivated and prepared, originally god-given substances (2.2). This leads on to my first discussion of the notion of consubstantiality: the idea that kin and co-residents have bodily substances in common (2.4). I briefly discuss the Muinane’s understanding of how consubstantiality and intersubjectivity are causally related (2.2-2.4). I also discuss how evil agents can replace proper substances with their own spurious ones, and cause people to misbehave in immoral, animalistic ways (2.3). I show thereby that the extrinsic material
origin of thoughts/emotions accounts not only for moral human subjectivity and action, but also for social conflict and immoral action.

An important point I make throughout this chapter as well is that for the Muinane, individuals’ bodies, thoughts/emotions and behavioural inclinations are the product of an intentional manufacturing process carried out by their parents and other kin; neither individuals’ sociable affects nor their bodies are understood to be ‘natural,’ in the sense of Western ‘nature –culture’ dichotomy (2.5, 2.6). In this chapter I reiterate my claim that the Muinane’s discourses on these matters—the intentionally manufactured character of the self, the extrinsic and material origin of moral and immoral thoughts/emotions, and so on—are constitutive of their understanding of themselves, and only in reference to such an understanding do their behaviours make full sense (2.4).

The roles of morally produced substances make these a matter of detailed attention among the Muinane. In the four chapters and the introduction to Part II I explore some of the rhetoric concerning some of these substances. I address the issues of what manner of thoughts/emotions they come to establish in people, what manner of agency they provide, what Speeches of Apprising account for their features, how they are cultivated and/or prepared, and so on. In chapter 4 I discuss the tobacco paste, which is produced by men and is understood not only to provide men and women with moral thoughts, but also to provide mambeadores with perspicuity and predatory agency. This agency enables men to transform evil and hunt it down in the shape of game (4.2-4.4). In this chapter I also return to the issue of consubstantiality and intersubjectivity, through an analysis of the Muinane’s claim that kinspeople are ‘made out of the same tobacco’ (4.5). In chapter (5) I
discuss the production of coca powder or *mambe*, a substance exclusively for adult male consumption. As with tobacco, I discuss how coca is prepared, the protocols of its consumption, its links to the Muinane's esoteric knowledge and its predatory agency.

In chapter (6) I discuss manioc, chillies and cool herbs, the substances produced by women. These substances provide both men and women with cool, moral thoughts/emotions and a different kind of agency. Predation is not absent in their workings, but it is not the strong game-killing agency of tobacco and coca. Rather, women's substances nourish, cool and strengthen people, and incline women towards their own moral, gender-specific endeavours.

In Part III, titled 'On the virtues and tribulations of a life of loving care' I write about the motivations and characteristics of a moral, human way of life, which is by definition a life in community. In the introductory section (7) I return yet again to the issue of consubstantiality, and note that the loving, caring feelings that motivate people to treat kinspeople and others properly stem from the common substances that constitute them. Properly constituted and therefore moral individuals seek to make new, well-shaped and moral Real People, or to help others do so. Parental loving care—apparently the archetype for all love— involves the responsibility for the proper formation of the body, 'basket of knowledge' and thoughts/emotions of a child. *Aivojitö*34 - leaders or *maloca* owners- are the 'parents' of entire communities, and as such, responsible for the proper formation and reproduction of numerous people. The Muinane's is a project for perpetuity, where each properly formed

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34 Singular *âivojîibo*, literally, 'Man of the Speech of Pain,' a man of knowledge, with the recognised right to carry out rituals and to order people to work or to participate in rituals, by sending them tobacco paste..
generation is inclined and capable of producing new generations which are in turn so inclined and capable.

In section 7.2 I explore the complex trope of the ‘Cool Path’ or the ‘Path of Life.’ This figure stands for the only knowledge and endeavours worthwhile for Real People: those that produce food and ritual substances, because only these enable people to produce Real People and to lead a properly human lifestyle. The counterpart to such knowledge and endeavours are the sorcerous and destructive actions of animals and other evil agents. The ‘Path of Life’ is also a reference to the formally correct ritual relations between two leaders, or between two patrilineages; these relations are necessary for the proper execution of life-sustaining rituals.

In chapter 8.1 I discuss how the achievement of a desirable lifestyle depends on the complementarity of men and women’s endeavours: ‘True Men’ are mostly obliged to protect their kin, whereas ‘True Women’ are mostly obliged to nourish them. I argue, in fact, that gendered selfhood is constantly being constructed through these activities. A desirable lifestyle also depends on the mutual support between kin and between maloca households (roughly, between lineages). Such support, especially between so-called ‘Men of the Speech of Tobacco’ is necessary to vital rituals that ensure the health and the proper social behaviour of the members of the participating malocas and their dependants (8.2). At the end of this chapter I discuss briefly several categories of people (from the point of view of a maloca’s inhabitants) whose support is necessary for the execution of the rituals.

People must know how to act properly in relation to each other in order to receive the mutual support necessary to achieve the good life. This involves
being 'cool' and respectful, and treating people in a manner that fits the particular kind of relationship that holds between them. I address these issues in sections 9.1-9.3.2. In section 9.2 I write about the Muinane’s ambiguous rhetoric on humour, and describe some of the ways in which they go about producing it in their attempt to make communal life enjoyable. In section 9.3.2 I show how the footings of particular relationships do not necessarily stem from relationships that exist a priori, but rather, enacting the footings can performatively create the relationships. In section 9.3.3 I discuss briefly the ideal footings of affinal relations, but also their ambiguity.

In chapter 10 I turn to the sources of the tribulations that impede the achievement of a proper lifestyle. I discuss how, despite Real People’s divine privileges, animals immorally subject them to their predatory ‘attacks’ (10.1). They place their spurious substances in people, causing them bodily and intellectual/emotional disturbances that do not allow them to act in a properly sociable way.

In section 10.1.1 I enter a theoretical debate on Amerindian perspectivism, where I follow other Amazonianist ethnographies in saying that the Muinane’s is a perspectival cosmos in which most beings—humans, animals, spirits and some plants—perceive themselves as humans, and perceive others as either predators or prey. However, I point out that the Muinane’s version differs from certain others discussed in the literature in that it is hierarchical: Real People are the Real People, whose privileged ontology is nearly guaranteed by their unique capacity to act morally. In this section I also explore the ambiguous matter of animals’ wills and motivations. Section
10.1.2 addresses the common link between predation and affinity in Amazonia.

Then I turn to some of the most common tribulations that animals and other evil agents cause: the bodily diseases (10.2) that impede production and fertility, and the thoughts/emotions and behaviours that destroy the proper relationships between people, breaking up 'Paths of Life' or 'Paths of Speech' (10.3) Among these destructive thoughts/emotions I discuss madness, purposelessness, anger, promiscuity, jealousy and gossip (10.3.1-10.3.4.5). In section 10.3.5 I discuss sorcery, the worst form of subjectivity that stems from inhuman sources, and that which generates the most lethal diseases and tribulations.

In Part IV I address the so-called 'knowledge of our own,' with an emphasis on the instrumental Speeches. In chapter 11 I discuss the features of the Speeches most linked to the agency they provide: their materiality, their subjective character and their divine origin (11.2-11.4). I explore briefly the ambiguous link between Speeches and substances, and then present my abstract understanding of the workings of the Speeches. I claim that they work through material and social manipulation of agential substances and substance-like agents (11.5). I discuss here, among other things, the 'divine performativity' of the Speeches and the Muinane emphasis on knowledge as linked to vision.

In chapter 12 I focus on the moral conditions of knowledge: the Muinane's understanding that knowledge must be morally applied, transmitted and acquired if it is to work. The very subjectivity of the Speeches is central to the moral considerations of their workings. I discuss these matters by
exploring people's claims to the legitimacy and effectiveness of their knowledge, their critiques of the misuse of knowledge, the reactions of the Speeches themselves as agential beings, and the counsels.

Having explored in previous chapters what the vital purposes of Real People are, the ideals of proper sociality and the material animalistic sources of impediments to its achievement, and the material sources and workings of Real People's agency, in Part V I turn to the actions by means of which people—mostly men—transform evil beings and their agencies into proper substances. In this manner they both protect kin and produce food and rituals substances. Most of the great transformations are men's, and they involve strong predations that often produce game.

In chapter 13 I address some common transformations involved in healing and production: the rituals of 'food cooling', whereby the pathogenic, evil subjectivity-endowing tobaccos and other substances of game animals are removed from the meat, rendering it harmless (13.1). I then turn to small healing rituals through which men act upon the animalistic substances that have caused particular people diseases or immoral thoughts/emotions, transforming these substances into game animals (or restoring them to animals) (13.2). In 13.3 I discuss the felling of the forest to make gardens, and how this constitutes a predatory healing process as well.

In chapter 14 I describe the great transformative rituals, maloca building and dance rituals. In these great rituals moral agents similarly prey upon the evils that affect human beings, transform their pathogenic and misanthropically motivating substances, and incorporate them into the maloca
itself (14.1), into ritual elements (14.1.4.) or into the meat of dead game (14.2.2.2). People are thereby freed of the substances of evil that constitute most of their tribulations, and as a result acquire food, ritual substances, and a home. These rituals carry out their transformations at a grand scale, bringing together numerous smaller transformations.

By way of conclusion (Part VI), I discuss very briefly the issue of accountability or responsibility among the Muinane, and how they negotiate between views of the self as autonomous and agential or as absolutely constrained by extrinsic agencies. This brings together matters discussed in previous chapters.

There are furthermore several brief appendices on history (Appendix 1), on the general classification and writing conventions of the Muinane language (Appendix II), and on social organization (Appendix III). The latter focuses on kinship terminology, current residential distribution and population censūr.
Part I: On the Constitution of the Self
2. On the Constitution of the Self

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to present briefly my interpretation of the Muinane's understanding of what a person is, in the sense of a 'self' or a 'subject'. Muinane elders often portray human beings in the abstract in a somewhat Christian dualistic fashion: there is a body made of flesh that houses an espíritu, a spirit. Other expressions concerning the composition of the self, however, multiply its elements and shed critical light on any presuppositions of its unity and continuity across a range of behavioural manifestations. This makes the word 'self', with its connotations of sameness, identity and singularity, slightly inappropriate for the task of making sense of the Muinane's rhetoric. They treat the individual body as potentially a component of different selves, without, however, treating the non-corporeal aspects of the self as something akin to an essential Ego.

Similarly, the modern Western common-sensical dichotomies which oppose culture to nature, intellect to affect, the social to the individual, are inappropriate if taken as givens in attempts to understand Muinane discourses on selves. Thus for example, as I shall discuss below, the body is not 'natural' as opposed to 'cultural'; and 'nature' - that is, the non-human, which may nonetheless impinge upon humanity - is not lacking in a 'culture' of its own, as my presentation of the Muinane's human-animal relationships will show. Individuals' proper actions stem from their own thoughts, which are unknowable by others; however, the thoughts of kin and co-residents are supposed to be 'the same', that is, to converge in form and purpose. The Muinane also dispense with the distinction between 'emotions' and 'thoughts';
the term *ésámaje*, which they translate into Spanish as *pensamientos* ('thoughts'), includes experiences such as love, sadness, anger and so on. (Henceforth I shall refer to the Muinane’s ‘ésamaje’ as ‘thoughts/emotions’.)

I must emphasise that the ‘constitution’ in the title of this chapter should be understood as a process: a process of production of people. For the Muinane the word ‘culture’ with its etymology of planting and selecting and nurturing would probably define well their own lifestyle: they treat their lives discursively as processes of production of people, where at every stage they intentionally participate in giving form and content to new generations, much as they plant and nurture their cultigens.

The ontological constitution of the human self as Muinane rhetoric expresses it accounts both for the powerful agency and morality of human action, and for people's antisocial behaviours. The Muinane’s reports, critiques, metacommentaries and other discourses concerning thoughts/emotions, issues of proper sociality, and the states of their bodies are all articulated in terms of materiality. For them, thoughts/emotions are linked to substances, and to some extent have substance-like characteristics. They can be extracted, inserted, moved from one place to another, purified, corrupted and otherwise materially transformed. Their expressions can have an odour, and most can be classified as desirably ‘cool’ or dangerously ‘hot’. Different aspects of the self –Speeches, hearts, bodies and others- are ‘built’ out of most of the same substances.

Let me explore some of the constitutive aspects of selves, and their implications for sociality:
2.2 Proper Breaths, Speeches and Substances

According to the Muinane’s cosmological rhetoric, if people are alive, aware, articulate and agential in a morally sociable manner, it is in great part because their ‘baskets of knowledge’ - roughly, their thoraces - are the temporary abode of extrinsic ‘Speeches’ and ‘Breaths’. The Breaths include an animating element, blown into people by the tobacco deity\(^{35}\) at the moment of birth, but also different thoughts/emotions linked to substances. The Speeches too are the proper thoughts/emotions that substances generate inside people, as well as the moral talk that people produce as a result of experiencing such thoughts.

Muinane mambeadores speak of thoughts/emotions as Speeches of substances that sound inside or through a body. These substances - tobacco and coca foremost among them- have divine origins. They speak in a ‘true’ way, virtuously, perspicaciously and agentially, constituting the normal moral awareness and dispositions of people who live well. The thoughts which people experience as love and compassion for kin, their judgements when they correctly distinguish between good and evil behaviour, their strong willingness to assuage conflict, are examples of the Speeches of some of these substances sounding inside the body. Some gender-specific moral thoughts stem from substances which, if not exclusive to men or to women,

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\(^{35}\) Complications arise from differences between Muinane clans concerning the number, gender and names of deities associated with ritual substances and with the process of creation. I tend to treat the creator as a male figure linked to tobacco, following the preferences of the Cumare and Pineapple clans. Their version of the mythical creator of the world has several names in Muinane, among them “Grandfather of Tobacco”, “Grandfather of Our Creation”, and “Our Father” (Mookani), the latter a direct translation from the Christian Bible. The clans of People of the Grub and People of the Wooden Drum are more akin to the Uitoto-Nipóde in that they treat the tobacco deity as a female and the coca as male. Their prayers are thus often addressed to ‘Our Mother’. Identification of Muinane deities with Christian ones are common.
are said to 'belong' to one or the other. Thus women's moral thoughts which 'tell' them to nurture kin and visitors are the Speech of sweet manioc and cool herbs inside them, whereas men's moral willingness to heal and protect others stems from their tobacco.

In Muinane rhetoric there is no essential Ego-like entity which pre-exists the Speeches of ritual substances and perceives them; rather, the moral self is constituted by the Speeches of these substances inside an individual body. Sometimes these Speeches do take on a homuncular shape in their descriptions. For example, Juan once explained to me that when a person feels ashamed of some misbehaviour, it is the Speech of tobacco inside them that becomes aware of an impropriety and 'lowers its head', as people do when ashamed. Speeches have their own agency, will and tastes. They can choose to stay inside a person, or not to become fixed to them. They can become sad, rebellious, indignant or angry (without necessarily causing their hosts to experience these thoughts/emotions).

Parents and kin participate in placing or generating correct Breaths and Speeches inside children, in different ways. Fathers, for example, participate in the preparation –the intentional production– of the 'basket of knowledge' inside a child, which will hold its Speeches and Breaths (I will return to the baskets below). There are Breaths and Speeches which are divinely inspired into the person at birth; a baby's first cry is one such breath. Others have to be acquired or developed by each person in their lifetime, through demanding learning processes and the consumption of ritual substances. According to the rhetoric, all children must be taught the Speech of Advice –a mass of formal counsels– so that they learn to respect their kin, and all the other niceties of
living together well with other people. A particularly important Speech is that of Loving care, which is supposed to motivate people to learn and to act well, so as to take care of others. When they get older, and depending on gender, they must learn the chants, counsels, prayers, songs, myths and other discourses which are necessary to direct the different agencies of the ritual substances to transform or reject evil, and thereby to bring about a proper way of life. Like all proper thoughts and Speeches, instrumental Speeches such as that of Apprising (myths), of Healing (chants and recipes), of Work and of Maloca (House) Construction spring from tobacco, mambe and other proper substances. Mambeadores sometimes claim that those Speeches are the very words of the deity sounding through people. They constitute the conocimiento propio ('the knowledge of our own'), a knowledge which the Muinane consider to be idiosyncratically their own as opposed to the knowledge of other local indigenous groups and of 'white men'. (I return to the instrumental Speeches in Part IV.)

Their exegeses of the men's practice of consuming tobacco paste and mambe, and of the women's production of certain drinks and foods, are expressions of the notion of the concrete and extrinsic origin of speech, and of what I understand to be the ongoing character of the constitution of the self. Licking tobacco and consuming coca are said to "open [men's] thoughts" so that they become perspicacious in perceiving troubles in themselves and in others, discerning of the proper way to behave, and motivated to behave in

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37 To the extent that Real People are partly constituted by a common set – or common sets – of Speeches or thoughts/emotions, they converge with the Melanesians, who 'contain a generalised sociality within' (Strathern 1988:13).
that manner. Sometimes men’s misbehaviours are attributed to the lack of coca and tobacco which instil proper thoughts in them. Tobacco and coca are also necessary for the acquisition of the powerful instrumental Speeches which are necessary in order to live in a proper male and human way. Furthermore, the counsels state that young men must listen carefully to their elders as they teach these Speeches, and must adhere them to their baskets of knowledge by consuming tobacco and coca.

Other substances similarly participate in generating thoughts and emotions. For example, Sergio, a mambeador with whose family I lived for a month or so, once told me that when his wife demanded that he provide her with baskets and other tools that she needed in order to work, it was the Speech of Cool Herbs inside her becoming manifest. That Speech is serene, but instils in women the necessary and moral urge to work hard and to provide nourishment for their families. These cool substances are also understood to provide healers of both sexes with the agency to heal fevers. Still other substances speak through people, or affect their bodies so that they become a likely recipient for certain other kinds of Speech.

Central to the discourses on substances and thoughts is the fact that these are supposed to be ‘the same’ among kin. Kin are made out of the ‘juice’ of the same manioc, chillies, cool herbs, tobacco and coca. This is understood to be true not only in the sense that they consume the same stuffs, which is also the case, but also in the sense that their parents and ancestors ensured their own reproduction through the ritual use of these

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36 Formal counsels are also common among the Uitoto (Echeverri 1997:127) and Airo-Pai (Belaunde 1992:91):
substances. Since it is substances that generate thoughts/emotions and Speeches inside people, and since kin, and to some extent the Muinane or the People of the Centre, are consubstantial, their thoughts and their Speeches are understood to be somehow 'the same' among them. This 'sameness' of thoughts/emotions can be understood as follows: just as two people can quote from different passages in one book, two kinsmen among the Muinane can experience or use different thoughts/emotions of Speeches, from the great mass of thoughts/emotions and Speeches consigned in the single tobacco that constitutes them. (On consubstantiality, see section 4.5 below)

This theory of selfhood, which brings together kinship and experience, is logically linked to the great moral valuation of livelihood activities, i.e., those that produce the substances of humanity. As I shall repeatedly stress throughout this monograph, not only do these and other ritual substances participate in generating proper, human thoughts/emotions, they also provide the Speeches with the agencies to transform things in the world. 39

Moral speeches stem from certain substances and in turn are necessary for the production of more of those substances. Indeed, explicit requirement for them to be considered 'true' Speeches is that they involve the proper use of substances, and that they produce desirable material results. Everyday conversations between people are saturated with expressions of their postulate of the material basis of Speeches and other actions. Among these expressions are formulae which also appear in fable-like stores with prescriptive morals, to the effect that a person who brags or gossips but does

not produce foodstuffs or ritual substances speaks and acts on the basis of no true substance, and is therefore weak.

2.3 Spurious substances and counterfeit selves

In the Muinane’s narratives, the substance-like and extrinsic character of selves’ Speeches also enables the constitution of counterfeit selves. According to the rhetoric, if instead of tobacco, coca, and other desirable substances, the false Speech of Animals speak through people’s bodies, they bring about spurious, immoral subjective states which are not really of the person in question, but rather constitute different selves which are nonetheless persuaded of their own authenticity (cf. Kidd and Belaunde, in Overing and Passes 2000). The Muinane do not use any term translatable as ‘self’; rather, in actual cases of misbehaviour, or in hypothetical considerations, people point out to others ‘That wasn’t your Speech! Your own Speech does not do thus.’ The notions of selfhood which make such a process a possibility for the Muinane differs from a common-sensical and sometimes academic Western notion of self, in which the Ego is one and the same throughout all manifestations of an individual. True Speeches, and thus true selves, are axiomatically good and cannot speak evil. In some situations, the Muinane may consider a person’s immoral thoughts and

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40 This contrasts with Santos-Granero’s (1991:41) description of the Amuesha’s (Peruvian Amazon) implicit view of human nature, in which ‘without the limitations imposed by social organisation actions tend towards evil.’ Their Hobbesian image of humankind as naturally warlike would be opposed to Muinane theories to the extent that the latter deem true humanity to be intrinsically moral. Any antisocial behaviour is therefore not human, but bestial. On the other hand, the Muinane do believe that people easily turn to animal-like behaviour due to lack of strength or discipline in the face of animal sabotage and other tribulations. This leads to another question – is lack of discipline not already a feature of beasts? This is a matter where there is slippage and the chance for contestations and negotiations.
actions to be forthcoming from a false self constituted by the person’s body and a spurious tobacco or other substance\footnote{The person remembers their experience: there is experiential continuity between the supposed false self (who is jealous, for example) and the True Self. This phenomenological continuity is not a source of puzzlement for the Muinane, as it might be for a cognitivist anthropologist. Perhaps the key to understanding this is the body: selves can have false Speeches, but never heard of them having false bodies. It is the body that provides continuity to the normal self: all the Speeches that go through a body are remembered.}. Let me explore this briefly:

The explicit prescriptions of moral human behaviour and the institutionalised forms of Muinane life seem to be the Muinane’s yardstick for judging all beings\footnote{Cf. Espinosa (1995:84), for a discussion of what might be the same case among the}. In their cosmological rhetoric, different beings in the world have social lives analogous to their own, but usually flawed in manners exemplary of the undesirable. For the most part, other beings do not comply with the prescriptions and the recognised institutions of proper social life, and thus constitute failures in moral sociality. In Muinane myths, as in those of many Amazonian groups, animals were humans at the time of creation. They were among the creator deity’s first attempts at creating Real People. He gave them his Speech of Tobacco, which was simultaneously a substance, an animating breath and the capacity for speech; it was to provide them with awareness, motivate them to behave in the manner the deity prescribed, and empower them to produce and propagate in a proper fashion. Animals and other non-human beings behaved in different immoral fashions, disobeying the prescriptions of the Speech. They did not behave with the love, respect, humility, persistence, discipline and productivity which the creator had attempted to instil in them. With their disobedience, they ruined the tobacco that motivated and empowered such virtues. Their dialogues, their houses, their ritual dances, their marriages, their cultigens, and so on were
caricaturesque, inchoate attempts at achieving the standards of the as yet nonexistent (but prefigured) human versions. In view of such imperfections and misbehaviours, the infuriated creator transformed them into animals and other non-humans, and banished them to the edges of the world. In the process, he stated to each one that its original undesirable tobacco and behaviour would be its forever, and that it would contaminate people with its evil, causing them disease and other problems.

Since then, animals' tobaccos "have no sense"; in the process of constituting animal selves, they create immoral subjective states, motivate immoral behaviour - such as incest, for example, for animals "live with their own sisters" - and empower destructive intentions. Therefore some animal species have no compassion for their own kin and kill them mercilessly; others are lazy, others foul-tempered, others promiscuous, and so on. Much like Real People's substances provide them with proper agency, animals' tobaccos and other substances provide them with perverse agencies. These beings are envious of Real People's productivity, which results from the agency of true tobacco and coca and which their own spurious agency cannot equal. They are angered by the usually rightful impingements of humans upon them - for they were destined by the creator to be "fruit" for humans- and they are fearful of humans' deadly knowledge. Therefore, they easily turn to full-blown Andoke.


44 Muinane language makes a distinction between knowing how to accomplish certain tasks (gajihi), and knowing the distinction between the acceptable and the unacceptable, proper and improper, moral and immoral (esikinihi). Animals 'know' in the first sense, but not in the second one. The term esikinihi is also understood to be synonymous to esafetehi, to remember. This constitutes a convergence with Gow’s (1991) emphasis on the role of memory - in particular the memory of past care - in the establishment of proper kin.
aggression that is experienced by humans in the form of diseases, accidents, death and asocial affects. Diarrhoea, colds, anger, jealousy, envy and many other threats to health and conviviality have their origin in the aggression of these outside agents. The hot Speeches or Breaths ensuing from animals' tobaccos and other substances can alter people's sensibilities so much that they do not perceive or act as Real People. Their unique capacities for moral human endeavours are thwarted. Some particular 'uncool' thoughts can be attributed to particular animals. For example, when I asked an elder about the thoughts that stem from a jaguar, he answered, 'That one does not say, "My brother."' I came to understand from this that when a jaguar's Speech sounds through a person, it is experienced by the person as indiscriminately angry thoughts against their own people. They displace the person's proper thoughts and Speech, which would normally make them think 'This is my brother' when acting toward a sibling, or make them actually address the sibling as 'My brother'. This correct form of address would be evidence of the awareness of the relation of kinship and of the knowledge that the other was not an enemy or an animal to be attacked. This awareness would normally lead the person to act with love and compassion towards the sibling; the jaguar's Speech, on the other hand, makes the person (who is not really him or herself) behave viciously and destructively towards the sibling and other relatives, much as a cannibalistic jaguar would towards its kin. In a relationships among the Bajo Urubambinos. On memory, cf. as well Taylor (1996:206) Among the Piaroa, animals themselves lack intentionality; it is the 'grandfathers of disease' who vengefully cause the animals to send the diseases, for reasons similar to those given by the Muinane (Overing 1985b: 266,267). Cf. as well Overing (1990:608) Some Muinane make a similar distinction between the dumb, fleshy beasts that one sees and the evil ones that actually send diseases.
certain myth, jaguars do appear as cannibalistic murderers who kill and devour their own kinspeople.\textsuperscript{46}

Akin to the Speech of a jaguar, the Speech of the coati is the abusive anger of a man against his wife, or else a general surliness. Juan told me that the owners of this Speech, large male coatis, battle any member of their species they meet, and do not stay together with their mates for very long for this reason. He attributed similar behaviour -and the Speech of the coati- to a local leader who was rather tyrannical, and who was therefore losing his following. Whatever their origin and causal agent, these extrinsic Speeches of anger lead to the destruction of proper sociality, and eventually, if not dealt with, of the kinship group. Part of the danger of such false Speeches lies in the fact that with another’s body they constitute counterfeit selves; immoral false selves who are persuaded of their own authenticity. For this reason, Juan explained to me, people who manifest evil thoughts/emotions often do not recognise their own faults, but rather deny any guilt of them\textsuperscript{47}.

Another evil Speech is that of the mythic figure of the False Woman. This Speech makes people experience jealousy, perverted sexual desire or vanity, or behave in purposeless ways. In mythical times, this feminine spirit

\textsuperscript{46}Note that it is not the case that the Speech of the jaguar inside a person makes the person perceive his or her kin as members of another species. This supports Viveiros de Castro’s (1998) point that it is the body that provides the point of view; bodies of others of the same species cannot but be perceived as humans (cf. as well Taylor 1996:205, 206). However, the warped subjectivity of the jaguar motivates it to destroy others of its own kind –whether body-kind that subjectivity happens to be ‘speaking through’. When speaking through a human body, it seeks to destroy other humans. Cf. as well Belaunde (2000) and Hugh-Jones, C. (1979: 63 ).

\textsuperscript{47}According to Santos Granero (1991:220), the Amuesha link hatred to jealousy and wrath, and these to lack of self-control, ‘that most desirable of virtues’. Such a lack is conducive to murder, and precludes harmonious relations (Santos Granero 1991:222) Belaunde (1992, 2000) similarly notes that the Airo-Pai, who are very peaceful, fear the capacity of anger to drive people apart physically and emotionally, and to induce to murder by physical violence or sorcery. (Cf. as well all the articles in Overing and Passes 2000.)
bore a penis-shaped tobacco container, the contents of which made her desire sex uncontrollably and indiscriminately. She was beautiful and vain, but too lazy, incompetent and libidinous to produce the food and ritual substances which were her responsibility as a woman. She attempted to seduce her own brothers, and therefore the creator banished her to the outskirts of the land of moral Real People. On diverse occasions I heard her story being used in rituals to "heal" jealousy, promiscuous tendencies and some other evils; the rituals involved the angry rejection of that false woman back to the edges of the world, with the claim that the victims had their own true tobacco, and did not partake of hers. (I return to the False Woman in section 10.3.1).

Like these, there are myriad other evil Speeches and actions. Animals and other beings infect people with destructive anger, vanity, jealousy, greed, authoritarianism, thieving thoughts, purposelessness, lying, and laziness, among other things. Sometimes people speak of the sources of these thoughts not as Speeches but as foul breaths or 'atmospheres'. These are said to smell bad, or to constitute a fog which blinds people to proper behaviour. This is the case of the desire to fight; Juan told me that this breath (he used the word 'atmosphere' in Spanish, but 'breath' in Muinane) is very strong and can make even the coolest heart lose its firm footing. He said that when that atmosphere comes upon one, one has to 'stand firmly' and allow it to pass, and never yield to it. He turned this into an illustrative metaphor. He said that it was much like when the sky was overcast, and the little plane that landed in Araracuara every week flew on to another destination because the pilot could not see enough to land. Running on with the metaphor, he said,
'After a while the cloud clears, and the airplane can land. All you have to do is sustain yourself firmly and wait, and the bad atmosphere goes away.'

The smells of Breaths and Speeches may also act upon people. Some people's Speeches may be referred to as 'foul-smelling'; this evaluation is the aromatic equivalent of 'the hot'. There are also Breaths the smell of which may be considered delicious, but which must be avoided because they are very dangerous. One palm tree in particular is reputed to produce a flower with an exquisite smell that can drive people mad. Killing poisons and love potions produced by witches and known as 'chundú' (in local Spanish) often act upon victims through Breaths that act upon people through the sense of smell. As a counterpart to such foul breaths, some of the proper ritual substances act upon people or upon other substances also through smell. For example, the inhaled Breath of Cool Herbs and of chillies can protect people against pathogenic odours, or heal them against diseases acquired through smell.

I return to these issues in extenso in chapter 10.

2.4 Speeches, experience and identity

The Muinane's rhetoric on true and counterfeit selves – in particular the commonly expressed idea that anger, authoritarianism, laziness, and so on, may be spurious extrinsic Speeches which constitute counterfeit selves persuaded of their authenticity, that substances provide awareness and that affects and thoughts are substantial – is not a neutral subject detached from experience outside the rhetorical. Rather, it is partially but powerfully and

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48 The same would apply to the Uitoto, as described by Echeverri (1997). See in particular his discussion on the 'tobacco word' in action in current social realities, as opposed to considering it as a petrified survival of a tradition.
intimately constitutive of many quotidian interpretations of behaviour and I believe, of many experiences of emotions. People claim that what they or others experienced at some moment might not have been their own true self’s thoughts/emotions, but rather the lying, fallacious, but nonetheless powerfully persuasive thoughts stemming from an animal Speech. The realisation that their experience was the product of counterfeit subjectivity, realisation that is sometimes brought about through ritual dialogues, affects their emotions and perceptions profoundly, changing them.

Manuel, a middle-aged mambeador and his patriline’s elder, provided me with an eloquent example of how such rhetoric is linked to the interpretation of emotions. He told me that at one time he had suffered from the "disease" of jealousy, and mistreated his wife because of it. Later, perhaps through ritual, he became persuaded that the jealousy had been caused by the False Woman. He explained: "She is the one who makes one say, when one’s wife laughs, that she is laughing at one; she makes one say when one sees her speaking to herself, that she is speaking about one. It is all lies! I told her I did not wish to lick her tobacco, for I have my own." I found this story to be quite revealing; I understood him to believe that when he had been jealous, he had experienced the False Woman’s Speeches as his own inner speech. Then he became aware, probably through ritual, that his jealousy had not been his true “Speeches”, though he had experienced them\textsuperscript{49}. In other words, he came to doubt the authenticity of his own thoughts. The point I want to call attention to is that his new awareness changed how he perceived the situation -how he felt, I dare say- and especially, how he behaved.
The link between substances or substance-like Speeches and selves is central not only to people's interpretations of their own thoughts and emotions, but also to their more general self-depictions concerning their identity. For example, different elders frequently called attention to their consubstantiality as a group: 'We are all made with the same tobacco.' This consubstantiality implies that clanspeople's thoughts are 'the same', since the substances from which their Speeches stem are the same. That is a strong image for them, and one that is often quoted as a reason in explaining and prescribing certain actions. People come to treat relationships with kin in the terms of such consubstantiality, and to attribute to themselves and to their clanspeople particular characteristics stemming from that consubstantiality. They demand from each other not to vary in their thoughts and Speeches, since they should all be the same.50

I was told on different occasions by members of different clans, that some of their personal virtues and skills stemmed from specific substances unique to their clans. Once, for example, I praised a certain man because his son was particularly intelligent and knowledgeable. He answered that it was always thus with the people of his clan, because their jävarata - their clan namesake, akin to a totem, a being or substance which partook materially in the origin of the clan- was linked to the flash of lightning which illuminated the land. Such lightning would shine upon that which was invisible, making it obvious to the observer. His people learned quickly, because they had that same capability for quick illumination.51

51 In this the Muinane differ from the Tukanoans as described by Reichel-Dolmatoff
The focus on ‘sameness of thoughts’ is not incompatible with a strong commitment to the autonomy of the individual. Indeed, people often claim that one cannot know what another person is thinking, nor speak for that person. I believe that when they speak of the ‘sameness’ of thoughts, they are referring to moral inclinations on the one hand, and to the knowledge of memorised formulaic Speeches on the other. Thus kinsmen supposedly use the same myth to heal the same kind of disease, whereas members of other clans use a slightly different myth. Furthermore, kinspeople in general should be similarly inclined to be generous and solicitous towards each other, something that perhaps they do not expect from immoral others.

2.5 Properly produced bodies

The Muinane do not seem to think of their bodies as ‘natural’ or as ‘innate givens,’ as opposed to conceiving them as the product of ‘culture’. In their cosmological rhetoric, they link their bodies as much as their Speeches to proper sociality and to the production and use of cultivated substances. People’s bodies are generated, shaped and gendered by the intentional action of kin, made agential by these substances. These substances in turn are intentionally produced following certain procedures, and by means of the agency of previously produced substances. Proper social action and moral

(1997:111), who states that they do not have totemism, ‘in the sense of a mystical identification between man and animal’. For the Tukanoans, there is no ‘mysterious message’ transmitted between species. The Muinane constitute a case where the link between clanspeople and totemic beings is metonymic; that is, clanspeople are understood to be materially linked to their totem. This stands in sharp contrast as well to the merely analogical character which Lévi-Strauss (1964: ch. 2) attributes to totemism. I am not addressing here the opposition between totemism and animism as discussed by Descola (1994), Áhem (1994) or Viveiros de Castro (1998). Like the Muinane, the Uitoto-Nipôde claim that people are formed of the same corporeal substances as their garden crops (cf. Griffiths 1998: 146, 147). I return to this issue in chapter
thoughts are thus vital for the production of both substances and people, ensuring the propriety of young kinspersons' bodies and Speeches. Violations of morality are on the contrary understood to be very detrimental to their formation. The concepts and practices which concern livelihood—the production, processing and distribution of foodstuffs and ritual substances—are therefore also concepts and practices which relate to the body and to sociality.

Let me explore further the active and intentional—the performative—character of the production of bodies:

If I understood my Muinane friends' statements correctly, the repeated act of sex is essential to the process of procreation, but it in itself is not a 'natural' process. Semen, for one thing, is a very purified extract of the properly produced substances which the man has consumed: his own tobacco and coca, but also the manioc starch drink and sweet manioc drink his wife provides. The semen is then deposited and accumulated in the woman's cup of life—in Muinane, 'our root' or 'egg of Speech'—where it dries up in a manner understood to be similar to the process of sedimentation and drying of manioc starch (see section on manioc). Ideally, the father of the child uses Speeches in the coca circle to ensure that the drying occurs, and to direct the correct formation and growth of the child in the mother's womb. These Speeches in turn depend on the agency of ritual substances for their effectiveness. Animals do not reproduce in this fashion, but do so immorally. They mate with...
their own kin, and lack the Speeches and substances to give proper shape and qualities to their children.

The Muinane understand bodies to be produced through the intentionally controllable action of kin, not merely through the act of sex but also through other ritual and non-ritual actions. Kinspeople's moral behaviours in their own youths, during pregnancy and afterwards during a child's upbringing, confer upon the child's malleable body its beauty, health, fertility and capacity for work; their immoral behaviours misshape it. For example, a child's parent's dietary behaviour before its birth determines whether it will be bald or hairy, dark-skinned or light-skinned, ugly or beautiful. Their ways of interacting with others -i.e., angrily or gently, respectfully or disrespectfully- also affect the future child, both because they induce benevolent or malevolent intentions from others, which then have an impact upon the child, and because such behaviours somehow directly affect it.55

The fact that bodies are produced is reflected in the numerous prescriptions, prohibitions and rituals which conceptually treat youthful bodies as malleable, and the process of ageing as a 'hardening'. The metaphorical link with pottery is fairly explicit. Immediately after birth and while it is still 'soft', the child should be moulded by the kneading of the midwife or other preferably female kin to correct any birth defects and ensure that the face and body are set correctly for growth.56 When I was inquiring about this kneading of newborn babies, a woman pointed out her different children to me, and called

my attention to the fact that those whom she herself had “fixed” all had flat stomachs and shapely faces, while those whom her aunt and her oldest daughter had kneaded were pot-bellied and less handsome of face. She claimed that her better performance in kneading children into desirable shapes was due to the fact that as a young woman she had followed the strict dietary prescriptions pertaining to this particular skill.\(^57\)

‘Watering’ (niifaikunihi) is another ritual which is understood to be necessary for the active production of people, in order to ensure that they have proper bodies and proper behaviours. It takes place immediately after the birth of the child and before giving it its first breastmilk. Pedro and Sergio both spoke to me about this. Sergio’s youngest daughter had been watered by Pedro. Pedro told me that the elder who does the watering begins by licking tobacco and then sitting to think. The tobacco then speaks to him, and tells him what name the child should have according to its jàvarata\(^58\). Pedro had chosen for Sergio’s daughter a name which meant ‘Striped’ (striped in a fashion similar to tabby), because certain specimens of their clan’s jàvarata species are thus striped. Pedro described to me how the watering elder makes a long incantation over a small amount of water, rejecting all the evils that can affect the child, and delimiting the activities that it will carry out, explicitly rejecting ‘all’ improper ones. In doing so, the elder also speaks of

58 People’s names in Muinane are usually linked to the clan’s jàvarata (totemic symbol) although the kinds of connections vary. Thus, names of People of the Pineapple can be ‘Beautiful Pineapple Plant’, or ‘He of the Refuse heap (of pineapple peels)’, or ‘Macaw Flower’ (a variety of pineapple). Examples of names of People of the Grub are ‘He who descends’ (as a grub descends along a palm tree as it eats its core), ‘Flier’ (because the butterfly of the grub flies), and so on. Cf. Griffiths (1998:268) on the metonymic relation between personal names and totems among the Uitoto.
59 On naming rituals and the recycling of names or souls among the Uitoto, the Barasana and
the proper qualities which the child's body must have. Afterwards, the elder or the parents give it a few drops of the water. With this incantation and water, the child is given the name by which it will be called in healing invocations whenever it requires them. Thus its future health and strength are ensured. 59

Numerous counsels of the Speech of Advice add up to the conclusion that the parents' behaviour during the period between birth and the falling of the umbilical cord also impinges upon the child's health and future physical constitution. Even young, sometimes cynically anti-traditional Muinane take this very seriously. A young man once told me in great distress that he had been obliged to make some strenuous physical effort just a few days after his baby son had been born, in disregard of the prescriptions of the Speech of Advice to the effect that parents of newborns should not exert themselves. He claimed that his child was breathing abnormally, as if making some strenuous effort, as a result of his action 60.

During childhood and youth, people's own moral or immoral expressions become a determining influence over the development of their bodies, although parents are clearly understood to be responsible for ensuring a proper upbringing for them. Moral behaviour in general is understood to keep people healthy and young, whereas immoral behaviour ages them quickly. Children's diet, bodily discipline, and ways of relating with others all have an impact upon them. I was told that prescriptions addressed to children tell them that certain foods will soften their skins, others will make their teeth brittle, yet others will make their hands blister, and so on. Boys are instructed
to act in ways that will toughen and strengthen their bodies for the hard work of axing down trees, carrying the heavy *maloca* pillars, running through dense jungle full of vines and thorns after fast prey, and for the tiresome task of sitting in a coca circle in disciplined stillness to acquire knowledge. Girls are instructed to become strong so as not to falter under heavy loads of manioc or weaken under the hot sun. Girls, under their mothers’ tuition, additionally have to prepare their bodies for the great efforts and pain involved in childbirth. Children of both sexes are therefore given counsels from the Speech of Advice to the effect that they should bathe regularly in the morning in the cool waters of a stream, so that the water's coolness will wash away the ageing effects of sleep (oversleeping is linked in rhetoric to laziness, ugliness and immoral improductivity) and heat and make their bodies strong and their skins tough. Furthermore, the cool water will keep their bodies feeling pleasurably fresh.

Bathing and proper diet have an impact on body odour, which is also linked to morality and capability. Youths who start to *mambe* should avoid smelling of ‘perfumes’ because certain instrumental Speeches do not willingly stay in bodies with certain smells. Counsels state that people should scrub their bodies with the mulching leaves at the bottom of cool streams; those leaves are themselves cooling and vivifying, and remove any undesirable aromas from the body61. I remember one young man claiming that he stank strongly (he did not, though); he was thereby making a claim to knowledge, and notions of consubstantiality among Amazonian peoples.  

since, as he himself said, 'true mambeadores all stink like pigs, because of how they bathe.'

Bodies also manifest their morality visually. Women's beauty is a matter of differing opinions and prescriptions; some men and women claim that youths should choose for wives girls who are thin and unkempt, because that means they work hard on producing food and not on making themselves beautiful. The latter endeavour is vain and useless. On the other hand, once I asked an elder what he considered to be a beautiful woman. He said that the most important aspect was that she be very well painted. Paint, however, only attaches well to certain textures of skin, and people supposedly only acquire that if they follow the dietary prescriptions. In that sense, beauty is the product of moral action in the form of compliance with dietary prescriptions, and so is desirable.

According to older men and women, children have to be told that touching their own bodies and heads constantly instead of maintaining a disciplined stillness may make them become ugly, age quickly, or become diseased. Growing healthily also requires that children be respectful, for otherwise they will awaken animosity from others and be victimised with disease. In short, the disciplined, convivial child grows well and healthily, while the undisciplined, disrespectful, antisocial one may easily become sickly and develop abnormally. [Though in contemporary liberal Western cultures we also shape our bodies through sport, diet and surgery, the causal relations involved in the shaping process are obviously conceived differently.]

Untimely sex is presented in the counsels as a source of great misfortune and physical limitations. One counsel ideally addressed to boys
tells them that those who indulge in sex with older women develop voices that break in singing, and which then become excessively deep. Girls are supposed to be warned against climbing trees lest their vulvas grow monstrously large. An elder explained to me that what the counsel sought to avoid was the development of wantonness. Other counsels of which I heard reportedly forbid that girls ‘joke’ or ‘play’ too much with boys or men. Ernesto told me that girls who indulge too early in playing, joking or having sex with men, grow large breasts but remain short themselves. This bodily shape would reveal a wanton and immoral disposition.

An important part of the proper production of bodies is their gendering, for only with properly gendered bodies can women live up to the demands of being proper wives, daughters-in-law and mothers, and men to the demands of being husbands, sons, sons-in-law and so on. Women must be strong so that they can carry heavy loads of manioc and work in their gardens under the hot sun, and they must also grow resistant to pain, lest childbirth kill them. Men must be tough-skinned and resistant to long vigils, cold, heat, wounds and discomfort, among other things.

People are responsible for gendering the bodies of young kin, that is, for providing young members of the kinship group with the bodily and behavioural features of a Real Man or a Real Woman. The following beautiful lullaby eloquently makes explicit the potential agency of people to produce bodies, with the use of the verb ‘to bone’ (to make a person’s bones), and furthermore marks the difference between making the bones of men and making those of women:

1. Kiili, kiili, kiili, kiillime. O, o
2. Jiíneje seemene mïkise tãfiakanise? O, o
4. Jááseke jiínejeri mábakiniji? O, o
5. Éti béremikuri. O, o
6. Lliíru, lliíru, lliíruje,
7. beshájeke dihimokigarati ganikiva! O, o.
8. Álli piruje, álli mikihi. O, o

1. X, x, x^{62}, Oh, Oh
2. What child is this who always cries? Oh, Oh
3. It is a man child. Oh, oh
4. With what shall we bone this child? Oh, oh
5. With dart palm wood. Oh, oh
6. Snake x, snake x, snake x,
7. come pour your pleasant sleepiness onto my baby boy. Oh, oh
8. Eye closes, eye closes.

If the child is a female, the answer to the question as to what child it is that always cries is: ‘Etì gáigo seemene’. ‘It is a woman child.’ Then the song asks what shall this child be boned with, and answers, ‘Etì nîferiho’. (‘Out of nîféerího.’) This is a red-stemmed weed that grows in gardens. Manuel and his wife explained to me that women were boned with this so that they would grow quickly, like this plant does, and start bearing children quickly. The dart
palm, on the other hand, grows slowly, but its long, thin darts are very hard; similarly, men grow slowly but with hard bones. We were cutting the ubiquitous niferiho weeds in their garden when Manuel and his wife explained this to me. I noted how easy they were to cut or break, and the woman said, ‘Perhaps it is for this reason that our bones break so easily, whereas men’s are so tough.’ 63 (see also Lagrou 2000, on rituals to properly shape and harden teeth and bones, among the Cashinahua.)

The ritual of ‘watering’ newborn babies is an example of a productive endeavour understood to gender bodies. The watering shapes the child through an incantation that names the tasks that the child will have to carry out according to its gender, and which thereby ensures that the child will have the proper constitution for these tasks. Boys are named as ‘coca-pickers’, women as ‘manioc-pullers’, among other things.64

Men and women were created differently, and with different agencies. In one myth narrated by members of a certain clan, the Grandfather of Our Creation or Grandfather of Tobacco created the first male human body out of earth, coca, and his own salty sweat-cum-semen. He gave thought, sight and hearing to the lifeless male manikin by blowing his smoky tobacco breath into its head, eyes and ears, and then brought it to life by blowing into its heart. He

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62 A mammalian species. I could not ascertain its species.
63 Other peoples of Amazonia make a similar association between men and hardness and women and softness. Cf. for instance, Riviere (in Hugh-Jones, S. 1979:206)
64 Belaunde (1992: 88-92, 106) states that for the Airo-Pai, sexuality is not ‘naturally given’ outside human social agency. They symbolically manufacture children’s sex organs, craft their (male and female) ‘wombs’, pierce girl’s hymens and scratch the dark borders of their labia. ‘In order to avoid an ever-present dangerous and infertile state of non-differentiation, the difference between men and women is constantly being recreated in a process which states their difference and also inverts their difference’ (ibid: 119). Again, cf. Viveiros de Castro’s (1998: 481) on Amerindian performativity of the body. Cf. as well Gow (1991:120) on gender identity as constituted within social relations, and not produced before them.
made the first woman out of tobacco and earth; she also had gourds\textsuperscript{66} or fruit for breasts and sweet manioc juice for breastmilk, and either a hammock or a gourd for a womb (Other versions stress that Cool Herbs are also elementary to women's composition). He brought the female to life by throwing her repeatedly into a pool of cool water in a small stream; he failed twice in his intent, but on the third attempt, she reached the bottom where the water is coolest, and she came to life. An elder linked this myth with the common claim according to which women are intrinsically cool and wet, while men are harder, drier, and often hotter. Men are hunters, and are made effectively predatory by the tobacco. Women's responsibility and agency lies mostly in nourishing their kin, and their mythical origin accordingly stresses this.

\textbf{2.6 Baskets and hearts}

Mambeadores often speak of people as having 'baskets of knowledge', their bodies' containers of substances, Speeches and Breaths. Sometimes they describe the basket of knowledge as something tangible, the material weavework of which is constituted by the ribcage. Equally often they claim it to be intangible and "spiritual". These baskets, like the rest of the body, are also produced: the moral behaviour of the person in question -and previously, of the person's kin- turns them into sweet, cool, enticing recipients for desirable Speeches, and active, winnowing sieves for evil substances and Speeches. Baskets of knowledge can be intrinsically 'perfumed' in such a way that

\textsuperscript{66} cf. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996: 34) and Griffiths (1998) for similar views of women's wombs as gourd cups, among Tukanoans and Uitoto.
particular Speeches—for example, the Speech of Pain⁶⁶, which belongs to leaders—do not wish to stay in it. Filth—animal faeces, hairs and feathers—slips into baskets frequently through pollutants in food and in the ritual substances, despite the shamanism and purification these products undergo. This filth can begin to sound through people, making them experience bad thoughts, speak of gossip and manifest undue anger or other destructive affects. Prescriptions demand that people vomit every morning when they bathe, to cleanse their baskets of undesirable filth.

As with many other elements in the cosmos, there are proper baskets and numerous spurious ones. Certain myths focus much attention on the distinction between proper human baskets and animals' improper ones. The former are clean and tightly woven; their weavework is such that good Speeches stay in them but the filth sieves through. Animals' baskets on the other hand are filthy, and fit containers only for spurious foods and substances which cause the animals to act in immoral ways. Sometimes people are said to have two or more baskets: a proper one, inside, for proper knowledge, and then another basket, akin to an animal's, in which to dump all the filth and all the Speeches of anger and war that come their way.

I did not delve with enough depth into the matter of baskets to make a proper exploration of it here. Rather, I base what I state on numerous casual commentaries I heard from my Muinane interlocutors. One which I found interesting helped me deal with the problem of how a cool, tranquil person

⁶⁶ So called because it burns, harms or kills evil agents. (The term for pain is also an augmentative adverbial or adjectival term: 'very strong', in Muinane, would be 'painful strong'.) For an interesting convergence, cf. Tambiah (1998:76) on Sinhalese mantras which are said to 'hit with sound'.
could ever be angry. It concerned a second ‘basket’ which people bear in their throats. I heard about this from a man who was describing himself as an angry-sounding character, who nevertheless was always cool and peaceful inside. He went on to say that it was always thus among Muinane men of knowledge: their true baskets were always cool and clean, and certainly free of angry or otherwise unpleasant thoughts. However, any man of knowledge must at some point ‘embitter’ (see glossary) and verbally attack the evil of the world. His angry Speech at that point, however, does not go downwards beyond the basket at the throat. It merely sounds angry, but it does not threaten the man’s proper substances and speeches. In this fashion, a man can claim to be both agentially angry and cool. However, I never heard of women speaking of having two baskets.

Among the contents of the basket of knowledge is the heart. Juan claimed once that the heart is a pathway for the Speeches spoken by a person. *El espíritu de tabaco* - the "spirit of tobacco", as an elderly Muinane put it in Spanish - is always on guard, which is why the heart never ceases to beat while there is Breath in the body. The heart beats slowly when the person sleeps, for the "spirit" is at ease and working little. However, when the person is sick or licks tobacco, the heart beats fast; it is the tobacco working intensely, angered at whatever evil may be impinging upon the body. The heart must frequently be mended, sweetened and cooled through active Speeches and the consumption of substances. To that extent at least, it is also produced. Juan explained to me once that all hearts are made of the

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67 Cf. Echeverri’s (1997) discussion of the link between the Uitoto’s and Muinane’s similar categorisation of material baskets and an endogamic rule.
same tobacco; killing a person, therefore, meant destroying one's own tobacco, and thus oneself.\footnote{I abstain from discussing other elements of the self here, such as 'ghosts' and 'shadows'.}
Part II: Substances
3. Introduction: Substances and agency

The Muinane’s livelihood activities—those that produce their foodstuffs, tools and ritual substances—are of primary importance in their understanding of both social life and individual experience. They hold to a progressive yet cyclic view of these endeavours: their ideal of ‘the good life’ involves an abundance of foodstuffs and ritual substances, which stem from previous uses of such stuffs and in turn are necessary for the production of more stuffs. They understand the substances they produce to be constitutive of themselves, and to be the means and materials with which it is their obligation to engender the morally agential bodies and sentiments of their children. Properly engendered and raised children are unique in being capable of perpetuating the Muinane’s ideally tranquil and moral way of life. It is therefore not surprising that the Muinane spend much time discussing, exploring and evaluating the generalities and particularities of the processes of cultivation, preparation, distribution and consumption of these substances and the Speeches of Apprising relating to them. Concerning this understanding of social life, and perhaps of individual experience, they are very similar to other Amazonian groups. In the following chapters, I explore the rhetoric and other actions concerning those substances that, for the Muinane, constitute the literally material character of their thoughts/emotions. I will also direct some attention to the relationship between substances and the body.

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The material origin and character that the Muinane attribute not only to their bodies, but also to the thoughts/emotions they experience, are central to their view of human agency (and, as should be clear from the section on selfhood, to their view of human suffering as well). In their descriptions of dealings with thoughts/emotions, these and their spoken manifestations are presented as having some of the characteristics of tangible material objects in general. Thus, if a man's destructive anger is returned through ritual to the peccary that originated it, or a woman's shrewish anger is consigned to a chilli pot, it is perfectly understandable for another to ask the angered man or woman matter-of-factly how it is that they can still be angry, in view of the fact that the anger had already been caused to 'materialise' in the pig or in the chilli broth. On the occasions in which I heard these expressions and other similar ones, it seemed to me that they were arguing to the effect that obviously, an object which had been materially removed from a certain location could not be at that location any longer. Such movements and transformations of thoughts/emotions and tribulations are an important part of what human agency is about.

The substances and objects which speak through people, providing them with thought, Speech and different agencies, are presented in mythical and other narratives as beings with agencies of their own. These agencies are comprised mainly of the capability to transform or move substance-like affects, sentient materials, or the purveyors of these affects and materials. Each 'proper' substance belongs uniquely to human beings, but has spurious counterparts which were proscribed in the mythical First Time from human use.
and were given to the denizens of the jungle\textsuperscript{70}. Real People can make use of the transformative agencies of the substances through their judicious consumption, as presented by the counsels of the Speech of Advice and by the Speeches of Apprising. Acting through people, proper substances can burn, eat, attack with invisible claws, wound, kill or blow away evil beings; others can sweeten, purify, filter, soothe, heal, nourish or cool stuffs—including body parts and thoughts/emotions; yet others can rejuvenate people or make them invulnerable from the attacks of evil. Improper substances in people can similarly burn, eat, spear, age, heat up and kill their hosts, their substances or their organs, as well as the substances and bodies of those with whom the host interacts.

The Speeches of Apprising—that is, the myths—focus on the origins of the Muinane's foodstuffs, ritual substances and tools, on the embodiment or first manifestations of their agencies, and on the failure and rejection from the Land of the Centre\textsuperscript{71} of the spurious versions of these substances. According to the myths and to people's exegeses of them, the ritual substances themselves and the instructions concerning the formally correct ways of using them were given to each peoples by parental divinities or mythical heroes. Since then, each people know how to use their own substances and to 'cool' them, pre-empting any harmful effects they could have on the consumer. However, misappropriation of the substances—that is, their consumption or

\textsuperscript{70} There are a few animals who behaved partially correctly in some Speeches of Apprising, and who therefore acquired or maintained some desirable characteristics and substances. Certain birds are beatifully well painted, vigorous and youthful, for example, because of how they bathed in First Time, the mythical time of creation.

\textsuperscript{71} The Muinane deem themselves, and sometimes the other groups who consume tobacco paste and coca in a fashion similar to theirs, to be the 'People of the Centre', and their traditional territories to be the 'Land of the Centre (of the world).'}
use by the wrong person, in the wrong circumstances—could always turn those substances into ‘poisons’. On different occasions I noted that some people interpreted others’ misbehaviours and misfortunes as caused by the agencies of misused substances which had turned against the consumer, causing them madness, anger, a range of diseases, and even death, much like the effects of the substances of animals. In general, this possibility allows for many contestations in interpretations of behaviour. A misfortune explained by one person as stemming from the immoral actions of others, may be interpreted by others as brought about by the person’s own immoral actions.

An Andoke elder, making an impassioned plea before the local indigenous political organisation\textsuperscript{72} against the prohibition of alcoholic drinks in the region, claimed that the demands for knowledge to pre-empt the dangers of substances applied even to apparently harmless food, which was also dangerous stuff. People simply did not get ‘drunk’ with food because they knew how to ‘cool’ it and gain strength from it. His Uitoto and Muinane listeners nodded their approval at this statement, and commented that indeed, anybody who did not know the Speeches and processes necessary to render foodstuffs edible could indeed get drunk, get sick or die upon consuming them. The Andoke elder went on: alcohol made indigenous people drunk and

\textsuperscript{72} CRIMA: Consejo Regional del Medio Amazonas.
violent because they did not know how to cool it; however, they had to learn
do so, rather than reject alcohol from their lives.\footnote{Ironically, some years after he made these statements, a close kinsman of his nearly destroyed his face with a machete when both of them were drunk. This was much commented in the communities I worked in.}

An important aspect of the Muinane' rhetoric in general is the pervasive assumption of the determining character of human intentions. It is the intentional action of human beings that ensure all the processes involved in a proper, human way of life. Things in the world are malleable to people's substance-empowered, formally expressed intentions. In a cycle that never ends, the moral substances that provide Real People with Speeches and proper agency are produced by people, through their intentionally deployed Speeches and substance-endowed agency.

As understood by the Muinane, the agricultural endeavours that produce proper tobacco, coca, manioc and other cultigens have little to do with what we might consider a 'natural' process. On one hand, the Muinane speak of their agricultural tasks in terms of human social relations, in a manner akin to other groups in Amazonia. They are explicitly insistent on the capacity of terms of address and of certain actions to create certain kinds of relationships among people; it would seem that this extends to their relationship with deities and other beings as well.\footnote{In this sense the Muinane fit among the 'performativ'-as opposed to 'prescriptive'-cultures described by Sahlins (1985:x). Sahlins stresses that among the former, cultural acts precipitate cultural forms; among the latter, actions are determined \textit{a priori} from the relationships. See section 9.3.2 below.} Thus in their ritual Speeches, the mambeadores address the 'Grandmothers', 'Grandfathers', 'Mothers' or 'Fathers' (depending on the clan) of the Axe, the Summer, the Fire, the Rain, and others and ask them or instruct them or cajole them into
helping them with the different tasks: to fell the jungle, dry out the slashed shrubs and tree trunks, burn them to ashes, and wet the ashes. The Muinane present themselves in these discourses as the adult children or grandchildren of these beings, and as such beg their protection and help. As properly behaved adult children, they feed these beings in return. In the rituals I am describing, people address the beings in question using terms for close ascending kin, and portray their actions to these beings as examples of care for them.

Relationships with cultigens are also likened in some circumstances to those between parents and children. Men and women attend to their own gender-specific cultigens during their processes of growth, weeding them and putting ashes on them and sometimes uprooting and moving them if necessary. The 'parental' aspect of these activities is not particularly obvious until the mambeadores speak of them in the mambeadero, the men's ritual coca circle. Then the men refer ritually to the different cultigens as 'children', and instruct parental deities to help them care for them by pouring life-giving water on them, and inspiring them with breath, and feeding them with ashes. They also protect the plant children by instructing the wind not to blow too hard before they take root, and by proscribing or misleading any evil beings who might wish to harm them.

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76 Cf. Descola's (1994:100, 101, 200) discussion of the Achuar's anent songs, which allow communication with different kinds of beings which require different modes of communication. For the Muinane, tobacco paste and certain kinds of mambeadero dialogues do the same. Cf. also Hugh-Jones, S. (1979:210-215) on the Barasana's use of tobacco to communicate with the supernatural.
Outwith men's mambeadero Speeches that effect ritual parenting for the couple's plant children, the cultigens may grow, but they will not be the agency-giving, moral substances sought, but mere powerless materiality and tricky appearance. However, the possibility of gardens growing even apparently well without proper spiritual care is rarely considered. Garden care for the Muinane is a matter which may hardly be treated in morally neutral terms. Proper gardens reflect the knowledge and morality of their owners, much as healthy, well-behaved children do. Gardens that do not thrive, and children who are sickly or misbehaved, may be considered to reflect the ill-faring state, ignorance or immorality of the owners and parents.

I do not address them in this monograph, but there are other key substances that would probably seem to us Westerners to be more 'basic,' 'natural' and self-perpetuating than the cultigens, such as water, fire, earth and breath, but which the Muinane nonetheless also treat as partly the products of human action. Speeches must be employed to transform them from raw and potentially dangerous elements into the desirable, life-sustaining stuffs that people use and need.

In the following chapters I shall discuss at different lengths some aspects of these substances, such as their material production, the narratives related to them, the subjective states each substance brings about and the particular form of agency each provides.

I must note that any substance that the Muinane claim 'belongs to women' or that appears as female in the narratives may be used by men;

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77 According to Espinosa (1995:91), the Andoke consider that it is only through human use of magical-religious plants that the world endures. The growth of other plants, the success in hunts and fishing, health and the well-being of the group all depends on the correct use of the
similarly, one that is mostly for male use is not necessarily forbidden to women. Tobacco, for example, is used mostly by the men, but women can and do consume it as well. It plays a more important role in the mythical constitution of the first male, but also enters into the 'recipe' of the first woman's body. Coca, on the other hand, is forbidden to women. The main cultivated substances participate in the establishment of moral thoughts/emotions in both men and women; however, the bodily and intellectual/emotional links between manioc plots and women are very powerful, while the state of a woman's manioc plot need not affect her man directly. Similarly, the link between a man and his coca and tobacco plots is very powerful, to the point that if the latter are badly kept the man may become sick or profoundly confused. Women are not directly affected by the state of their husband's plots.

The distinction between cultigens that belong to men and those that belong to women are similar among the Muinane, Andoke and Uitoto. In each case, the division of labour between genders reflects the division of substances. Cf. also Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996:30).

A parenthetical remark is in order here: I abstain from discussing at length in this monograph several other substances and objects which are also of great importance. Most notable among these are the metal axe and the hallucinogenic yagé. Either would require a chapter for itself, and would add little to the structure of my arguments here. However, I do mention them briefly in other chapters. On yagé, see chapter 11; on the axe, see section 13.3. Other substances that I abstain from discussing are body paints and fish poisons.
4. Tobacco

For the Muinane, men’s most important obligation is to protect their children and spouses through their rituals. These rituals are for the most part understood to be transformations of the substances of agents that originate diseases, social tribulations and antisocial thoughts/emotions. The evils in question are transubstantiated, so that their original destructive agency becomes manifest instead in the strengthening, nourishing or otherwise desirable agency of a proper substance. Men effect these transformations through the predatory agency of their ritual substances: mainly the processed coca powder, or *mambe*, and the salted tobacco paste.

The predatory nature of these substances implies that the transformations they effect involve the death of the evil agents they transform\(^{80}\). This implies that in order to protect themselves and their kin, men must manage death-dealing capabilities and anger. In fact, men often speak self-righteously about their own anger, and portray themselves proudly as knowledgeably angry and dangerous to evil ones. However, their *mambeadero* rhetoric –including much of what they say about their substances– makes it clear that they share an awareness of the risk of excessive anger, which makes them lose all discernment and their sense of purpose, and to attack their fellow human beings (I return to the issue of anger in section 10.3.4.)

In this chapter I describe the handling and symbolism of tobacco at some length; in the following chapter I turn to the coca.

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\(^{80}\) For a clear discussion of another Amazonian people’s view of human existence as based on predatory action, cf. Overing 1993:199
4.1 A divine and gendered substance

Muinane elders make much ado about the secrecy of the myths of origin of their clans, and of those which relate the origin and vicissitudes of the first man and of the tobacco plant. Tobacco as a breath or essence preceded the plant, and was constitutive of a principal deity, whether the deity be conceived as a male, as by the clans of People of the Cumare Palm and People of the Pineapple, or as a female, as by the clans of People of the Grub and People of the Wooden Drum (manguaré). For the first two clans, the sweat-cum-seminal substance of the Grandfather of Tobacco was the origin of the Land of the Centre, of rivers, and eventually, of people. For the latter two, the creator sat upon the Mother, the deity of tobacco, and thenceforth created the land, which he placed upon her shoulder. In at least one clans’ myths, the creator deity made the first man out of tobacco paste and other substances, and brought him to life by blowing tobacco breath into him.

Despite these differences between clans and groups among the People of the Centre –differences which are sometimes a source of discomfort in their conversations-, many of their protocols concerning tobacco are nevertheless similar. Men exchange tobacco and mambe containers upon meeting; they ‘invite’ each other to their dance rituals by sending imogaibi –packages of tobacco paste–, and prepare bowls of llibiniba –liquid tobacco paste- to keep in the mambeaderos during the rituals. Most of their Speeches of Apprising are similar, and where they are not, many elders have heard most of the versions.

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81 The Barasana also link tobacco with sperm. (Hugh-Jones, S. 1979: 210-215)
82 Other People of the Centre attribute a similar life-giving role to tobacco. So do some other, more distant peoples; cf. Hugh-Jones, S. (1979: 210).
of myths used by each other. Such shared knowledge is key to ritual practices, because the different clans and indeed distinct language groups of the region hold rituals together in which it is important to know some of each other’s stories. Furthermore, there seems to be no difference in their conception of selfhood as linked to substances, of thoughts/emotions as material, nor of the transformative agency of their ritual substances.

4.2 Raising and preparing an invulnerable predator

Whatever the differences between clans, their narratives converge in their emphasis on the appearance of fragility and the need for care of the tobacco plant, but also on its invulnerability and predatory capability. The agency which people gain from the use of tobacco is precisely this predatory capability. People too may appear to be fragile and defenceless, but their proper use of tobacco makes them almost invulnerable to the threats of evil. However, people’s tobacco-endowed predatory agency is not supposed to become manifest as ferociousness, or at least not often and certainly not against other people. Rather, people must be cool and peaceful, because they have the capacity to ‘prey’ upon the agents that cause anger and other evil affects, and transform these into something else.

Below I follow the rough chronology of the preparation of the substance as of the moment of planting the seeds, after the felling and burning of the forest to make gardens. (I addressed the felling briefly above, in the section on the axe. I return to the felling and burning in the chapter on transformations.) Throughout all this process and at nearly every stage of its preparation, tobacco preys upon animals and other beings, or escapes their predations.
On different occasions, I helped the elders Pedro and Manuel\(^{83}\) plant their tobacco. They both had already taken apart the pods, and had collected a half-flaskfull of the tiny black seeds. In both cases, I accompanied each one of them to the newly burned garden to collect any leaves, twigs and trunks which could still burn, and made new bonfires with them. Soon afterwards it rained, and we dropped seeds on the spots with the most charcoal on the ground. Pedro pointed out to me that the seeds became invisible on the ground. I tried to find those that I had just thrown, which must have been thousands, but they were perfectly camouflaged by the brown earth and the black charcoal. Pedro explained to me that this was ‘oración’ (prayer); that is, that the practical invisibility of the planted seeds was referred to in certain incantations for protecting oneself and kin. He said that on the eve previous to planting tobacco, the elder of a maloca sits in the mambeadero, licks tobacco, mambes coca, and speaks the Speech for planting tobacco. He told me part of the Speech of Apprising (myth) involved:

The Grandson of the Centre went to his garden to plant his tobacco. The animals had heard his Speech the previous night, and said to each other, “He has already brought out his tobacco...he said he was going to plant it somewhere!” He threw the seeds to the ground, knowing well that the animals would try to destroy them. The animals sought the seeds, but could not find them. Because of this, they said, “He lied! We saw nothing there!” (If one knows this part of the story, Pedro claimed, one

\(^{83}\) Pedro (Juan’s and Sergio’s oldest brother) and Manuel were both maloca owners, and leaders in their own lineages.
can use it in a prayer that will make one become invisible to the enemy even as one walks in their midst. One names oneself to be the seeds that are there, exposed, and yet are invisible to evil eyes\(^84\).) The Speech of the Grandson of the Centre then spoke inside him: “My son will now be born. I have put him in the ground. He is to grow well.” Animals came to listen, but because the Speech was inside him, they could not hear, and so thought that he had no Speech. (Pedro explained that for this reason, when there is an evil environment –‘atmosphere’, he said–, elders only dialogue inside themselves, without speaking out loud.) He spoke thus for three days, and for this reason the unwary animals did not visit his garden again. Meanwhile, the tobacco had grown beautifully. One evil animal wanted to look at the garden again, but the others said, “We already looked, and there is nothing there! It was just lies!” They spoke thus because the Grandson of the Centre tricked them, by reverting to them their own evil thoughts and disbelief.\(^85\)

Throughout the process of cultivating the tobacco and preparing it for consumption, the mambeador who owns it must ensure the proper growth and character of the tobacco. He does this by carefully moving the sprouts to the more fertile sections of the garden, and by removing any weeds found around

\(^84\) Tobacco can protect people by hiding them from evil eyes, or on the contrary, by making people blindingly brilliant, so that evil beings cannot bear to look at them. I return to this below.

it, and through Speeches. Such care for cultigens is also care for oneself and for kin. The link between a man's tobacco and coca plots and his own state of mind is strong: a sickly, depleted, weed-infested tobacco or coca plot is evidence of the man's lack of knowledge or of his ill state. A man's confused thoughts also become manifest in poorly raised children. (As I shall discuss below in the chapter on the substances of women, the same is true for women and their manioc plots.)

One of Manuel's Speeches of Apprising presents the process of tobacco from the moment of planting the seeds to the finished paste as a series of attempts by animals to harm it, and tobacco in return successfully preying upon animals without being harmed by them. Manuel told me that when a man first plants his tobacco, he must first address the Grandmother of the Summer, telling her that his children—both his human children and his tobacco seeds—are still small and have no roots, and therefore she is not to blow, lest they be carried off. (When Manuel addressed her, he called her 'Grandmother'; the People of the Pineapple addressed the deity of the summer as 'Grandfather of the Summer'.) The mambeador must also call for the cool Water of Life to rain upon the earth, cooling it and enabling the tobacco seeds to thrive. Thus there is a paternal link between a man and his tobacco; and like any father, the man is obliged to protect and ensure the well-being of his tobacco child. Because of this loving paternal care, the tobacco becomes rooted, and starts to grow. Manuel's version of the myth converged with Pedro's, above, but had an interesting addition to Pedro's, besides the difference in gender of the tobacco:
The animals came and asked the Grandson of the Centre\textsuperscript{86} what it was that they had seen in the path, referring to the incipiently growing tobacco. He answered, 'The little feather on top of the head of the jichai bird.' The next day, when the tobacco was bigger, they asked again, and the next day, yet again, and so on. Each time, he would answer differently. 'It is the liver of a mouse.' 'It is the liver of a tintín.' 'It is the liver of an agouti.' As the tobacco grew, he mentioned larger and larger game, until he answered 'Tapir liver' to their questions. Somehow, in so saying, he was feeding these pathogenic meats to the tobacco plant, and the tobacco did not become sick because of it, but rather grew beautifully.

Manuel said that for this reason, tobacco can kill and consume any creature without being harmed.\textsuperscript{87}

Proper tobacco must also be cared for through Speeches that name it into what it should be: Féénefiivobañoho (Tobacco of Life of the Centre), Siíkubañoho (Cool Tobacco), Jíibogobañoho (Tobacco of Apprising), Esáyubañoho (Tobacco of Enlightenment), Àikusubañoho (Tobacco of Wakefulness), Ífinubañoho (?), Nükufeesubañoho (Tobacco of Dazzling)\textsuperscript{88},

\textsuperscript{86} Manuel had a tendency to refer to characters in stories by means of pronouns ('he', 'she', 'they'), without using their name or otherwise pinpointing about whom he was speaking. The character may have had another name.

\textsuperscript{87} Griffiths (1998:130) describes the same comparison between animal organs and the growing tobacco among the Uitoto. He also notes that tobacco is 'named' as traps, shotgun, etc., (1998:142) and that during its preparation it 'eats' faunal substances and purifies them (1998:134). He also notes that the Uitoto-Nipóde—who always attend the dances of the Muinane from the communities upriver from Araracuara—name the tobacco used to invite others to dance rituals as 'hunting dog tobacco' or 'tiger tobacco', which is understood to prey on animals through the groups of men who go hunting and fishing. (ibid: 169). Cf. also Echeverri (1997:197).

\textsuperscript{88} 'To dazzle painfully' and 'to cause to feel shame' are the same term in Muinane. Shame is
Ku+dinibaño (Tobacco of Heart-making), Állihinibaño (Tobacco of Eye-making), Ígusubaño (?), Átyimebaño (Tobacco of Seeing), Gihinobaño (Tobacco of Searching), Áchikibaño (Tobacco of Light), Íjinibaño (Tobacco of Speech-making (?)), Tūuvabaño (Tobacco of Satiety). Thus named, the tobacco acquires its properties and its agency. It then becomes a life-giving substance that cools people and provides them with moral, sociable discernment. It also enables them to produce an abundance of foodstuffs and ritual substances. The tobacco makes people alert, vigilant and spiritually clear-sighted, so that evil beings cannot creep up on them unawares; it apprises people of the Speeches necessary to deal with those agents, and refashions their eyes and hearts so that they are strong and perspicacious in their dealings with evil. The tobacco also makes people blindingly brilliant to the eyes of ill-willed animals, and furthermore hunts them and other evil beings down.

Producing such tobacco similarly requires the rejection of undesirable tobaccos. Some of these are not necessarily visible plants, or not necessarily a single plant. Some important tobaccos which the owner of the tobacco must reject are Miitasubaño (Tobacco of Confusion, or of Mistakes), Ájevabaño (Tobacco of Itchiness⁶⁹), Jéégavobaño (Tobacco of Madness), Fárabaño (Tobacco of Corruption or of Obsession), Giirikavobaño (Tobacco of Intoxicated Confusion), Ásibaño (Tobacco of

supposed to make a person drop their head, unable to bear looking at others’ faces, much as they are unable to look at the midday sun. (For a lengthy discussion of shame among the Cashinahua, cf. Kensinger 1995:ch.5)

⁶⁹ Walton et al (1997:12) translate the term ‘ájeva’ (one of the roots of the word Ájevabaño) as ‘madness’ and ‘sexual desire’. I translate it as ‘itchiness’. I find that the Muinane conceive of fixating, uncontrollable sexual desire as similar to extreme itchiness in its capacity to occupy people’s attention and distract them from their endeavours.
Animals), Düdujabañoho (Hunting Tobacco), Gáibanibañoho (Tobacco of Sorcery), Imukugahibañoho (Tobacco of War), Jábatobañoho (Tobacco of Opacity), Bááñisubañoho (Tobacco of Lies), Kiijigaibañoho (Tobacco of Fire), Átyimeratibañoho (Tobacco of Not seeing), Llhibañoho (Tobacco of Fever and Diarrhoea), Ásimaimobañoho (Tobacco of Animal Witchcraft).

Some of the tobaccos rejected relate negatively to awareness and knowledge, much as the True Tobacco relates to them positively. Thus, they produce confusion, sightlessness\(^\text{90}\), madness, obsession/corruption and itchiness or sexual fixations, all of which make people vulnerable, deprive them of moral discernment and keep them from proper endeavours. Others bring about dizzy intoxications that do not benefit the consumer or his or her kin, and cause people to lie, hate and destructively attack other people with their bodies, their Speeches, or, in the worst cases, with sorcery. Still other tobaccos cause people to be lazy and unwilling to fulfil their obligations. Some also cause diarrhoea, fever, and other diseases. In general, the mambeadores claim that failure to reject any source of evil which the Speeches of Apprising link to a particular problem, enables that particular evil to slip in through the 'gap' that the invocations did not plug. In the case of tobacco, it may become an evil tobacco of a kind that was not explicitly rejected. As such, it may do great damage\(^\text{91}\). I will note here parenthetically that if evil tobaccos engender

\(^{90}\) Clear sight, light and disclosure are opposed to undesirable sightlessness, darkness, opacity in Muinane rhetoric on knowledge. On the other hand, darkness and opacity can be used as protection. Calling the Tobacco of Opacity an evil tobacco is a matter of perspective: if what it does is make animals opaque and inconspicuous, it is evil. Manuel once told me of a Speech of Apprising in which the heroes were protected by Tobacco of Opacity, which made them invisible to evil beings and enemies, or to appear to them like their own grandchildren.

\(^{91}\) van der Hammen (1992: 292, 344) notes that among the Yukuna, Makuna and Desana, consuming the tobacco of a tapir may transform a person into a tapir. The Muinane would probably agree with that, though I would qualify the meaning: the tobacco of an animal may
evil behaviours, the opposite is also true: an evil behaviour may damage proper tobacco, transforming it into one of the rejected tobaccos.

Some of the False Tobaccos are actual plants that are tangible and visible: such is the case of many garden weeds and jungle plants. The Tobacco of Lizards (*Matyiikibañho*), for example, is the first weed to grow in the garden. Roberto told me that this False Tobacco was prompted by jealousy to grow fast in an attempt to smother the True Tobacco, for it knew that the True Tobacco was cared for and fed with ashes, and that it itself never would be, for who would ever plant or take care of a weed?

Once the tobacco has matured, its leaves are harvested\(^{92}\). These have to be washed carefully before the cooking process begins. This is so that the cool water can remove the sticky, bitter resin that covers all the leaves, and some of the dust and filth that they may have picked up. This is the first (non-discursive) step of the transformation of the unprocessed tobacco leaves through the action of another 'true' substance. Then comes the action of a second true substance that participates in the transformation of tobacco: fire\(^{93}\).

The processes of the preparation of the tobacco, like those of its cultivation, are the object of much attention in the Speeches of Apprising. Manuel told me one which concerned the cooking process. In his narrative, different animals

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\(^{92}\) Tobacco harvesting receives surprisingly little rhetorical attention among the Muinane. I will not discuss it here.

\(^{93}\) cf. Griffiths (1998: ) on Uitoto 'Rapue' (what I call Speeches) on how the divinities processed tobacco. As with the Muinane, there are specifications for the types of firewood that should be used, as well as instructions concerning the need to wash and cook leaves. Griffiths notes that for the Uitoto, it is essential to remove all contamination from the tobacco: 'Again, the ethos in Uitoto work is one of purification.' (1998:134) I would stress that purification is most often a predatory process, because the removal of pollutants is usually presented in terms of the deaths of sentient evil agents. On the preparation of tobacco paste among the Andoke, cf. Pineda (1982:30).
would arrogantly claim to be water, fire, or axes—that is, to be powerfully agential and unconquerable predators. The tobacco invited them to join her in the water in which she was being cooked. No animal could bear the heat of the water on the fire, and so all refused to go in. Manuel said, 'For this reason, she (the tobacco) can dominate animals.'

The cooking process over the 'Fire of Life' removes all pollutants—animal excreta, vomit, spiderwebs, and so on—from the tobacco, leaving only its very pure, powerful essence and some harmless pulp. The latter is removed and wrung so as not to waste any of its liquid, and may then be burned, smoked or otherwise disposed of. In one of Pedro's mythical narratives, as the Grandson of the Centre wrung out the cooked leaves and squeezed them into hard, fist-sized balls, the hands of many animals—who until that time had human-like hands—similarly got crushed into the shape of paws, as they would remain forever.

Towards the end of the cooking process, the dark liquid tobacco is thickened by adding the phlegm or sap of some plants to it. 'It is an itchy, disgusting phlegm, yet she—the tobacco—consumes it without thereby getting a sore throat,' Manuel told me. Tobacco kept her 'throat of sweet niíbimi herb', which felt good and could sing without breaking. Alternatively, the tobacco paste could be thickened with manioc starch.

The pure tobacco paste can then be readied for consumption in several ways. The paste can be mixed with the dry vegetable salts, to make the paste that can be consumed casually during the day, and more conscientiously during the nightly mambeadero rituals. It can also be mixed with some
saltwater, to prepare the more liquid paste called *llibiíniba*\(^94\). (I return to the liquid tobacco in section 14.2.2.2).

4.3 Hunting with Tobacco

The Muinane, like the Uitoto, sometimes claim to be tobacco\(^95\). I found that they could stress different things by saying this. On several important occasions in which a group of men reiterated this, they were stressing that all the Muinane were *made* of the same tobacco. This consubstantiality entailed that all were to some extent kin, and owed each other love, concern and support. In each of those occasions, they seemed to be interested in marking their common identity by contrast to other people such as the Uitoto, the Andoke, the Yukuna and others. On other occasions I heard men claiming to be not only tobacco, but fires and axes as well; I found such expressions to be intended to stress and indeed to performatively create the moral predatory agency and the invulnerability of the speakers\(^96\). Such an agency enables *mambeadores*, and a few women, to live up to their obligations of protecting their families and generally providing for their care.

Human beings are not unique in having tobacco; theirs is just ‘the real thing’. Nonetheless, other beings have tobaccos which can be very powerful predatory agents as well. The tobaccos of jaguars and anacondas are very strong, as is that of tapirs. Different people told me that anacondas can use their tobacco to make unwary victims sleepy (‘hypnotised’, they said) and blind to the beasts’ presence, before attacking them. One man once warned me

\(^94\) The Muinane sometimes smoke rolled tobacco leaves.

\(^95\) On a similar claim among the Uitoto, cf. Echeverri (1997: 113, 303).

\(^96\) Roberto often threatened evil beings from his *mambeadero*, telling them that if they
that if I were to kill a tapir, I should not touch the carcass immediately, but rather to whip it with a cane or branch first. That way, the beast's tobacco would pass onto the branch, which I would throw away. Otherwise, it would pass onto my hand, to cause me pain afterwards.

It is important to note that true tobacco is sometimes named to be a 'jaguar of tobacco', an 'eagle of tobacco', or an 'anaconda of tobacco': this is not the tobacco of the evil animals themselves, but rather a True Tobacco with a hunting capacity akin to the great predators, but humanised or divinised, and therefore more powerful and properly directed. Let me now present briefly an example of how people make use of the predatory agency of tobacco:

People's performative dialogues, chants and songs are powerful because they direct this agency. Several elders explained to me that when a family is hungry for meat, the mambeador may sit in the mambeadero, lick tobacco paste, mambe, and then address the creator thus: "Father, your children are hungry. Manioc bread alone is plain; there is no pleasure in eating it. Give us some fruit, that we may eat with pleasure. You have given us tobacco, that we may get fruit. Let the fruit mature for us, that we may eat." Game in general is referred to as 'fruit', and particular game animals are requested by referring to them as particular kinds of fruit. Thus, if a man wishes to eat agouti, he requests in his invocations that his 'maraca' ripen (see table below). Naming the animal as such may incur its attack or may drive it off, and so the mambeador asks for 'fruit'.

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96 Prohibitions against naming animals before the hunt and against expressing the intention to approached him or his people, they would be walking into the open mouth of the Axe Woman.


98 Prohibitions against naming animals before the hunt and against expressing the intention to
In a manner not uncommon in Amazonia, these equivalencies between fruit and game are also taken to be significant in dreams: dreaming of manioc is a presage of good fishing the following day; dreaming of cumare, an apprising that the following day one will see or kill a peccary.

Table 1. Fruit/animal equivalencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit, in Muinane</th>
<th>Fruit, in Spanish and/or English and/or Latin</th>
<th>Animal, in Muinane</th>
<th>Animal-Spanish, English, Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moomo</td>
<td>Chontaduro</td>
<td>iígo</td>
<td>South American coat; cusumbe; Nasua nasua.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niikuje</td>
<td>Cocuy</td>
<td>churuco</td>
<td>Monkey, Lagothrix lagothidae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jáájoho (see Walton 1997:67)</td>
<td>Maraca</td>
<td>Táki</td>
<td>Borugo, paca, Agouti paca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Másaka</td>
<td>Peanuts; Arachis hypogaeae</td>
<td>Táki</td>
<td>Borugo, Agouti paca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kúj+h+</td>
<td>Avocado Persea americana</td>
<td>Fáti</td>
<td>Guara, Dasyprocta fuliginosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miseese</td>
<td>Caimo, Caimito pouteria</td>
<td>Killigaho</td>
<td>zorra ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niímiho</td>
<td>Green guacuri; Poraqueiba sericea</td>
<td>Tíhe</td>
<td>Danta, Tapir, Tapirus terrestris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nejéyi</td>
<td>Cumare, Astrocaryum chambræ</td>
<td>Meeni</td>
<td>Puerco, White-lipped peccary, Tayassu peccari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guhiya</td>
<td>Black guacuri; Poraqueiba sericea</td>
<td>Fáfaiba</td>
<td>Cerrillo, Collared peccary, Tayassu tajacu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juuve</td>
<td>Guacuri?</td>
<td>Fáfaiba</td>
<td>Cerrillo, Collared peccary, Tayassu tajacu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fééka</td>
<td>Manioc; Manihot esculenta</td>
<td>Taava</td>
<td>Fish, pescado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killa</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>Tuunu</td>
<td>Panguana (bush fowl sp.?),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hunt, are to be found as well among the Achuar (Descola 1994:267;1997:121 ), the Yukuna (van der Hammen 1992:329) and the Penan of Borneo (Rajindra K. Puri, personal communication), similarly to avoid forewarning the game or inducing its or some other being's ill will.

99 One of the oppossums (jeráiko) is also marked by this dream.
The elders told me that after asking for the fruit/animal, they would then state to the deity, "I have now placed it in your hands. It is not mine now, it is yours. You have to make it dawn" (or some demand to the same effect). If the knowledge had been correctly and justifiably implemented, supposedly the tobacco spirit or deity would place the animal requested in the path of the hunter the following day, or soon after. Juan once told me that if no game was forthcoming, the *mambeador* could address the Owner of the game he sought, telling it not to be stingy, for animals were there for people to eat. The Owners – a jaguar, a hawk and an anaconda\(^{101}\), for beings of land, air and water respectively- were mortally afraid of the creator’s tobacco, and so would respond quickly by providing game\(^{102}\). These Owners are not visible animals or the purveyors of evil; they are powerful spirits who behave properly.

The former is one way in which people use tobacco’s predatory capabilities. Most commonly, however, dead game are claimed to be not simply a fruit begged for out of desire, but actually the chastised culprit of

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\(^{100}\) All classifications taken from Echeverri (1998: 396-403); van der Hammen (1992:320), and Emmons (1990).

\(^{101}\) The jaguar, eagle and anaconda in question are easily conflated with the ‘jaguar of tobacco’ and so on, because the former prey upon their animal wards for people’s benefit, and so would have the same ‘function’ as the latter. On the other hand, people say that the Owners of animals are mortally afraid of people’s tobacco, thus portraying them as clearly distinct from it.
some crime against the hunter’s family. The animal may be accused of having
casted people anger, bad dreams, or some bodily ailment. In such cases,
healing rites are understood to direct the tobacco to remove the culprit’s
harmful substances from the victim, and to revert it to the animal, or else to
have transformed the negative affects into animal form. In either case, the
tobacco is the real hunter who ‘catches’ the evil animal and ‘frames’ it so that
the human hunter merely finishes it off. Yet another alternative representation
of the healing process is that the Speeches demand that the Owners of
animals chastise those creatures under their charge who attempted to harm
human beings. (I describe this ‘healing hunting’ in section 13.2)\textsuperscript{103}

Tobacco’s predatory agency is made use of in most rituals which
pertain to everyday life, and certainly in the great transformative rituals. The
imogaibi—a palmleaf-wrapped dollop of tobacco paste— that is sent to other
malocas as a formal invitation to dances and maloca constructions exemplifies
this. The imogaibi is understood to hunt for its receivers, transforming their
tribulations and antisocial thoughts and actions into game. Furthermore, it
shows the consumer the tribulations he suffers, and what possible prey he will
kill. Similarly, the llibiniba— the liquid tobacco paste kept in a bowl during
dance rituals— acts as a predator that guards the maloca from evil comers, and
attacks the evil that might be found in those who lick it. In general, tobacco
attacks evil when people fell the jungle for gardens, when they build houses,
when they make the great wooden drums, and in many other circumstances.

\textsuperscript{102} I discuss the issue of predation in greater depth in chapter 10.
\textsuperscript{103} On tobacco as a hunter among the Uitoto, cf. Echeverri (1997: 135) and Griffiths
(1998:142). The predatory ‘nature’ of tobacco perhaps extends to other regions in Amazonia:
among the Barasana, for example, tobacco snuff is seen as celestial fire which kills and burns
Predation, in other words, is central to the Muinane’s conception of their own lifestyle.

4.4 Tobacco, strength and knowledge

*Mambeadero* rhetoric establishes a strong causal link between the tobacco paste as a substance, and the Speeches which constitute thoughts/emotions and the *conocimiento propio*, the ‘knowledge of our own.’ One way in which Muinane *mambeadores* explained this link to me was by making an explicit comparison between tobacco paste in human bodies and a cassette tape in a tape recorder: ‘Without the tape, the machine won’t sound...it’s the same way with people. Without tobacco, they cannot speak. One man once used a different image: that the tobacco worked like a radio satellite link. The creator was perhaps up above, but his voice sounded through the people who consumed his tobacco ‘down here.’ Women, though not in charge of dealing with the instrumental Speeches, must also consume tobacco on occasion to maintain their moral discernment; however, most of what follows refers to the men’s use of tobacco.

The counsels and protocols concerning the sharing and consumption of tobacco reflect its character as a substance that provides life-giving agency and knowledge. I use the term ‘sharing’ to refer to the different interchanges and gifts of tobacco which are commonplace among Muinane men and other Peoples of the Centre. The most common form of tobacco sharing is the interchange of tobacco paste containers which take place whenever men wish to greet each other with some formality or sit together to speak in a mambeadero.
These tobacco containers are referred to as *jůbogo nejéyi* ('apprising cumare nut'). In the past, they used to be made out of the hollowed husk of a cumare palm seed. Nowadays most men have small plastic flasks for their paste, but they are still called *nejéyi*. The term 'apprising' (*jůbogo*) is linked to the fact that the tobacco paste in the container is understood to provide the *mambeador* who consumes it with proper thoughts/emotions, to settle in his basket of knowledge (that is, in his memory, for some purposes) the formal instrumental Speeches, and to enable him to express them. Furthermore, the tobacco paste is also understood to 'awaken' the person to full vigilant awareness, making his body sensible to the presence of threatening evil through tingling sensations in the skin and back, or through his toes, which feel the earth much like the tobacco's roots do. Depending on the expertise and knowledge of the consumer, the tobacco also provides a privileged 'sight': the person can 'see' that which is normally invisible, for example, evil substances or objects in people's bodies, hidden animals and past and future events.

Different people told me that the interchange of tobacco containers was just a polite form of greeting. However, other reactions and discourses present it clearly as something more complex than that. For example, men will lick another's tobacco, smacking their lips with pleasure and exclaiming, 'Delicious! Sweet! [i.e., well salted] I am now healed!', referring to a weakness

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104 Some men keep a real cumare nut container which they do not share widely with others; they claim that in that container they keep an amount of tobacco paste that they have prepared for some special esoteric or secret reason, and which would harm others who licked from it.

105 For an excellent discussion of a Uitoto healer's discourses on the development of the kind of sight that allows sorcerers and healers to 'see' that which is invisible to others, cf. Echeverri (1997:171). I return to this in section 4.4.
that stems from the lack of tobacco, or to sadness, irritation, or other tribulations of thoughts and body. Sharing tobacco can therefore be a show of care and concern, and as such cools the receivers' hearts and strengthens them. During the nightly mambeadero rituals, it is especially important to share tobacco, because it is at that time that the mambeadores most need their 'strength,' the capacity to resist bad thoughts/emotions and remain in good temper and vigorous, and the capacity to act upon the world through their Speeches. Thus the rhythmic dialogical exchanges in that setting are punctuated by frequent interchanges of tobacco containers.

There are other forms of sharing tobacco. For example, people also use it to invite and commit others to certain endeavours. When a man wishes to invite his brothers or other kin to help him slash down the jungle, or to invite affines and others to sing and dance at his dance ritual, he prepares an imogaibi by making an invocation over a large dollop of tobacco paste, wrapping it up in a puy palm leaf and taking it to them. Prescriptions say that tobacco should never be turned down, and its summons—for the Muinane claim that it is the tobacco paste that does the summoning, not the person who sent it— is unswayable. Some mambeadores claim that if people do not accept the tobacco with pleasure and good will, or if they do not comply with its summons, the tobacco itself will turn upon them, causing them harm.

I was present one night when Juan delivered an imogaibi to Roberto, inviting him and his charges to his dance ritual. Roberto and his sons yelled their approbation at Juan's arrival, upon hearing the loud singing that marked this as a delivery. When Juan finished the song Roberto made enthusiastically explicit his pleasure at receiving the tobacco, and paid careful attention to the
demands of the bringer. When Juan left, Roberto started to call his sons and nephews one by one, and gave each a small ball of tobacco paste, saying that this tobacco was for them to hunt and take game to Juan, and to sing songs at his dance ritual. Then Roberto called, ‘Women! Come lick!’ His wife, his daughters-in-law, and his unmarried daughters and nieces received little amounts of tobacco as well, with the instruction that they were to ‘help’ the men sing at the dance ritual. Finally, the children were called to receive a smudge of tobacco paste each. Everybody present received tobacco paste that time. To leave somebody without tobacco is explicitly described as dangerous in mythical exegeses: in one Speech of Apprising, a certain character failed to give proper warning of grievous tidings because he alone among others did not receive tobacco, and thus could only stutter when it was vital that he speak.

The importance for a man to have tobacco is illustrated by proverbial situations which mambeadores cite frequently, in which a surly old man demands that a youth who ventures to speak before his time in the mambeadero, show that his speech springs from true substance. ‘Where is your strength? Where is that which makes you speak?’ When the proverbial young man has no tobacco and coca to show, the elder shames him by claiming that his words are lies that will bring about no desirable results, and that he should speak no more. A man’s ownership of a tobacco pot shows that he has produced tobacco successfully. This in turn is evidence of the willingness to work hard which characterises well-counselled people, because tobacco production is widely regarded to be hard work. A youth who has not shown such willingness or who does not make his knowledge manifest
through material production has no call to speak in the *mambeadero*. His talk is still weak and soft, his morality is still suspect or unestablished, and he is understood to have little power to act upon the world\textsuperscript{106}.

Tobacco is important not only to enunciate Speeches; it is equally important in learning them. Youths should lick from their own tobacco whenever they wish to learn key points of narratives they hear in the *mambeadero*. The tobacco they lick 'fixes' the knowledge to their baskets of knowledge. One man told me that in this sense the tobacco was like pen and paper: one 'took note' by licking tobacco when one heard a good 'point' from an elderly speaker. He said that on occasion one could 'borrow a pen', that is, ask a fellow *mambeador* for a lick of tobacco when one had none. However, one could not steal another's pen, because one's notes would not prove beneficial. Stolen or improperly used tobacco paste would never enable a person to achieve anything desirable.

*Mambeadero* protocol also evinces the connection between tobacco and agential knowledge. Good *mambeadero* manners, for example, demand that a youth never lick too much from the tobacco flask of his elders, lest he finish off their tobacco and thereby leave them weakened. There are endless discussions of this, and my friends in the *mambeaderos* of the Middle Caquetá never tired of giving me instruction concerning this matter. For example, they warned me not to dig too deeply into an elder's flask with the *buriga* (the twig with which tobacco is licked). They said that some tough elder—a proverbial character, knowledgeable yet surly—might observe this and then purposefully

\textsuperscript{106} The Muinane have no word for poverty, except perhaps 'sad'; few things are sadder than a man without tobacco to ensure his own and his family's well-being. Among the Yanomamó the word 'hori', which is their word for being poor, translates literally into 'to be without tobacco'
keep me awake till the wee hours of the morning telling me stories. When it would inevitably become obvious that I was very sleepy and could hardly keep my eyes open, the elder would scold me and ask 'Why did you ask me to teach you, if you could not bear the vigil?' The point was that my delving deeply into the paste would be understood by the elder as a statement to the effect that I wanted to learn a great deal—the tobacco I licked would be meant to strengthen me and fix much knowledge to my basket—but my lack of resistance would show that I lacked the strength and capacity for vigil necessary to acquire that knowledge. Another prescription demands that one not stir the paste in the container with one's buriga, as some unwary people do in order to get more tobacco paste at each lick. To do so 'stirs' the story one is listening to, and then it becomes jumbled in one's memory. Like this counsel, there are numerous others that concern details of the form of consumption of the tobacco.

Different mambeadores, some of them quite young, warned me on different occasions against the proverbial sly elders who would play tricks or test the knowledge of immodest or ignorant youths. One such elder, for example, could test my knowledge when we exchanged tobacco containers. He could look at me as he licked my tobacco, and say, 'Süúba', your wife's vulva is fat and delicious...my wife's, on the other hand, is thin and bony. There is no flavour to it anymore.' My friends told me that some youths might become angry at this, but that it was a 'test' which the elder was setting. He was not speaking about a woman, but about the tobacco container, which is


107 My friends among the Muinane knew me by the nickname 'Súúbára', the name of the hirsute mythological monster father of monkeys.
like a wife to the extent that it should always move around with the man\textsuperscript{108}. They went on to explain that a youth’s container should be full, for youths are strong and can work hard to produce plenty of paste. Old men’s containers, on the other hand, are often empty because they cannot work as hard, and therefore cannot produce as much tobacco paste. The nearly empty container is what the elder likens to a bony vulva. (Old men’s tobacco containers are in fact not often empty for very long. The counsels which concern young adult men often insist that they should make sure their fathers’ and other elderly kinsmen’s tobacco containers are well provided; sons-in-law may also be required to provide their wives’ fathers with ritual substances. Furthermore, old men sometimes receive tobacco and coca in exchange for healing conjurations, teachings and special songs they sing at dance rituals.)

In another similar test of knowledge, the proverbial elder may ask a youth about the size of his penis, whilst claiming that his own is short and small. The unwary youth may state that his is bigger, and thereby reveals his ignorance. The elder speaks of the buriga, the twig for the tobacco. A long penis/buriga digs deep into the vagina/knowledge; therefore to claim in those circumstances to have a big penis is an immodest claim to being knowledgeable. Another trick of the elder may be to tell a youth that he has three women, and ask the youth how many women he has. The youth may answer frankly, or perhaps try to brag. The old man then asks for the names of those women. He nods seriously as the youth pronounces real women’s names, and then tells the youth that he has revealed his ignorance, because

\textsuperscript{108} Concerning this humorous reference to the tobacco container as a woman, one man of the People of the Cumare palm said he found it unacceptable. However, one old man of that clan who normally rejected the idea of tobacco being a woman, nonetheless used the same joke.
the old man himself was not referring to ‘real’ women at all, but to Speeches. The old man was claiming to be knowledgeable of three kinds of ‘Speeches’.

There is another way in which tobacco can provide knowledge. When somebody misbehaves, the leader of the community in question may demand that the person drink liquid tobacco. In Spanish this is described as ‘punishment’ – *castigo*, in Spanish. The idioms they use to refer to it in Muinane treat it rather as ‘embittering’: an angry sort of counselling that takes the form of the demand to know why the person behaved in such a fashion. On the other hand, people may stress the ‘enlightening’ or didactic aspect of the liquid tobacco. The person who is demanding that the other drink may say, ‘Perhaps it is a lack of this (the tobacco) that is making you behave thus. Drink!’ If the drinker faints, gets dizzy, vomits or defecates as a result of the intoxication, the other may then demand, ‘Where is your strength now? Where is that which made you say what you said? Where is that which made you do what you did? Where is it now? It was empty Speech!’

I once witnessed an occasion in which two women started an unseeming row at a dance ritual, screaming insults at each other and nearly coming to blows. Juan, who was the ‘owner’ of the ritual, could not let such behaviour pass. It was an evil being made to become manifest by the tobacco, and had to be routed. He demanded that they come to him. Their families half-dragged the women to him, where he put the bowls of liquid tobacco to their lips. He told each one, ‘Drink this, little sister, to heal! It will heal you!’ The tobacco, he told me later, would rid the women of their bad thoughts/emotions and make them ‘discern/remember’ (*ésikinihi*) – that is, to become aware of the indecency of their behaviour by contrast with what it should be.
A final remark: though tobacco is mostly for male consumption, and it is men who are usually the stronger healing predators, it is also theoretically possible for women to become knowledgeable of dangerous Speeches and therefore capable of privileged vision (see section 11.6) and of dealing death to evil beings. Sergio once told me that there used to be women in the past who licked much tobacco and acquired these capacities, but that there were none today.

4.5 Consubstantiality, tranquility and identity

Despite its death-dealing predatory agency, tobacco is ‘cool’. According to the mambeadores, the thoughts which tobacco generates are mostly peaceful and serene; they make people feel love and compassion for kin, and the willingness to support and care for them. As I discussed above, one explanation for this is that kin are consubstantial. Juan explained to me on one occasion that he and the members of his clan had been bred and raised by elders who used tobacco paste made from the clan’s supposedly single strain of tobacco plants, in the numerous processes and rituals involved in making, rearing and protecting children. [The members of one’s patriline and clan] are one’s own body; they are made with the same tobacco with which one is made,’ he told me. To care for his clanspeople, he said, was therefore to care for his own body. He added that when one addresses kin properly—that is, using the correct term and manifesting the corresponding care and compassion— it is the tobacco speaking through one. If I understood his explanation correctly, the love of kin is nothing other than the extrinsic, divine Speech of Tobacco sounding through one’s body, aware that tobacco of the
same kind is what constitutes the loved one’s body. Kin share other substances as well, but at least on that occasion, Juan privileged the tobacco.

Juan added that an elder may speak of his children as the arms of his body, or mention pain in his fingers and fingernails when slightly more distant kin are ill. The image of kin as parts of the body is also used in exhortations of what I can only call empathy: prescriptions demand that people be aware that others feel pain akin to theirs when beaten or wounded, and mambeadores’ exegeses of these prescriptions explain that the same applies to the anger, grief and indignation anybody feels when their kin are attacked.

At another level, a more general philanthropy involves the awareness of the consubstantiality of humans, as opposed to the differences in substances between humans and animals. ‘Being made with the same tobacco’ can also allude to the fact that in several clans’ versions of the myth of creation, the first man and woman’s bodies were made out of tobacco paste and other key substances. In several meetings which brought together different ethnic groups from the region, the elders reiterated that they all had the same hearts, made from the same tobacco. Juan often stated ‘There is no pardon for a person who kills another...even if it happens unwittingly, or defending himself. It is killing one’s own heart.’

Individual and communal tranquillity is one of the purposes and manifestations of a proper lifestyle. As such it is linked to the consubstantiality of kin and co-residents, who are all understood to be made of, or at least to have consumed, much of the same proper tobacco paste (and coca and foodstuffs as well, though less so than tobacco). Because of the link between thoughts and substances, this consubstantiality entails, ideally, that
kinspeople all ‘have the same thoughts’, and can collaborate without contradictions or contestations\textsuperscript{109}. On the other hand, references to the threats of evil substances indicate that ‘speaking with other tobaccos’ leads to dissent, contestation and other tribulations which are detrimental to a tranquil lifestyle. This is also true within the individual, and not only between individuals. One of the most undesirable situations that men and women among the Muinane envision is that of a person ‘thinking one thought and another and another’, that is, experiencing an anguishing confusion of simultaneous thoughts, or desiring contradictory things. This situation may stem from the consumption of improper tobacco or other substances, which bring about different and contradictory motivations. Often the \textit{mambeadores} criticise antisocial manifestations of anger, purposelessness, laziness and other improper thoughts/emotions in terms of their stemming from Tobacco of War, of Madness, of Corruption, and so on. On occasion, they claim these ‘other tobaccos’ to be actual plants or material preparations of tobacco.

Elders vary in their evaluation of other people’s tobaccos. For Roberto, for example, only the tobacco paste the People of the Centre prepared was True Tobacco, and only it enabled people to lead moral lives. On occasion he was even ambiguous about the morality of the tobacco paste of the Uitoto and Andoke. Other peoples whose tobaccos were different could be befriended and tolerated, but at least at the level of cosmological rhetoric, there was always something morally suspect about them. White men, for example, had received the rejected Tobacco of Madness –marihuana– which made them

behave in strange manners. Old Jonás, a Uitoto elder, was more diplomatic in his evaluations. Other groups of Real People, he claimed, had received different tobaccos from the creator. Yukuna Indians, for example, had received tobacco snuff, and with that they ‘produced people’ much in the same way as the Uitoto, Muinane, Andoke, and so on, produced them with tobacco paste.

Old Jonás himself once told me that the tobacco was only one, but that every peoples had their own way of handling it. Touching the tobacco of other peoples would cause one’s tobacco to be resentful, and to cause one trouble. Like most of the Muinane, Uitoto, Bora/ Miraña and Andoke, however, he found it normal and desirable to share tobacco between individuals of different peoples within the People of the Centre. Converging with Old Jonás, both Manuel and Roberto individually warned me against ever smoking marihuana, which was one of the False Tobaccos banished from the Land of the Centre at the time of creation. They said that I had already licked the proper tobacco of the Muinane, and if I consumed some other tobacco, they would be jealous of each other inside me, and drive me mad.

Along the same lines, Enrique reported to me how Orlando had sung Ernesto a critical song in which he told Ernesto to remember that he had his own Tobacco of Life (or Tobacco of Creation), and that he should use that and no other. Enrique explained that the song was a critique of Ernesto’s regular

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110 These are the groups of People of the Centre with whom I have had personal contact.
111 They sometimes call it ‘Tobacco of Madness’, though marihuana is not the only such tobacco.
112 Enrique is a young man of some 24 years. He has been a teacher in two incipient schools in Muinane communities. He belongs to the same clan as Ernesto, but to a different lineage. Ernesto is the ávôjilbo—the Man of the Speech of Pain, i.e., the leader of a Muinane clan and of an entire multiethnic community. He is widely known to be a tyrannical character. Orlando
use of the Speeches and other customs of the Bora and of whites, rather than of Muinane ways. He added that it was Ernesto's confused thoughts and tyrannical thoughts, stemming from his use of foreign substances, that had his community in a constant state of unease.

The constitutive character of tobacco and the formal aspects of its consumption are a central feature in the Muinane's and neighbouring group's establishment of identity boundaries. This is so explicit that tobacco paste consumption appears in the Constitution of the Indigenous Regional Council of the Middle Amazon, (Consejo Regional Indígena del Medio Amazonas, or CRIMA), a political organisation that brings together representatives of the Uitoto, Muinane, Miraña, Andoke and mixed communities of the region. The CRIMA states in its Constitution that it is an organisation of 'the People of the Centre': those indigenous groups of the region that mambe powdered coca and lick tobacco paste. The Yukuna are a minority within the CRIMA, and the only group who consumes tobacco snuff rather than paste. They protested about the wording, but the Uitoto majority and the other representatives of paste-licking groups would not hear of changing it.

In a more 'private' milieu, I remember Juan telling me proudly that his father had been the only Muinane elder who had not lost the seeds of his clan's strain of tobacco at the time of the rubber holocaust. Because of this, Juan claimed, he, his siblings, and his children were 'made with the same tobacco' of his patrilineal ancestors, while other Muinane clans depended on whatever tobacco their clans' survivors had managed to get after the genocide. One man from a lineage of the People of the Wooden Drum

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is a Muinane-speaking Andoke who lives in a settlement that is part of Ernesto's community.
similarly told me that Juan's people were the only ones who had 'kept their own tobacco.' He seemed to be claiming authenticity for Juan's clan's knowledge, and at the same time to question the truthfulness and agency of other clans' claims to age-old knowledge that was truly 'their own'. Other clans had all lost their original strains of tobacco, and so lived on borrowed substance.\textsuperscript{113}

4.6 Salt

The extraction of the vegetable salt to be mixed with tobacco paste is a particularly clear example of a predatory, purifying transformation. It involves burning certain palmtrees or other plants, an action which the invocations for the occasion describe as the incineration of dangerous thorns, itchy bark fuzz, poisonous snakes and scorpions, among other dangerous stuffs. The ritual Speech (needless to say, empowered by salted tobacco paste and coca) that is instrumental in effecting one aspect of the transformation at one point takes the form of a commonsensical question rooted in what is portrayed as a matter of fact: 'Given that here the True Fire of Life is eating the False Fires, destroying the thorns, the snakes and the scorpions, why should I be bitten, why should I be stung? Why should my children, my people, be bitten, be stung? Why should we feel itchy? We will not be, for I am consigning such thorns, saps, fizzes, scorpions and snakes to the fire, that I may then lick

\textsuperscript{113} This issue is not stressed at all times. It seems to come up mostly when problematic issues between clans come up, such as the existence of a general leader for all of them, or contestations of rights concerning the use of community lands. Even then, I never witnessed this being discussed before all. Each lineage spoke about it in the intimacy of their own maloca, and among themselves. Echeverri's (1998:99) discussion of 'public' vs. 'private' discourses among the Muinane and Uitoto concerns this very issue. Cf. as well Hugh-Jones (1993:108), on Tukanoan's 'vegetable lines – cuttings of coca and manioc plants' transmitted
good tobacco. The stings, animal poisons, itches and so on have tangible referents whose potential for bodily harm the Muinane very much wish to pre-empt; however, the Speech also treats them as sources of unpleasant, antisocial thoughts and actions. The fire turns the plants with their itchy fuzz, bitter saps and sharp thorns into ashes which can then be subjected to filtering. Water is poured on the ashes, where it dissolves the salts and then falls through into a receptacle. The resulting salty water is evaporated over fire, leaving only the vegetable salts, ready to be mixed with the tobacco paste. By transforming the very substance of evil and incorporating it into salt, this preparation pre-empts some of the evils that keep people from living well, namely, stings, cuts and bites, but also anger, envy and jealousy. Furthermore, the substance of evil is not only rendered harmless to people, it is also made into a properly agential substance in its own right, and one which makes tobacco paste tasty.

Dance rituals require the preparation of large amounts of tobacco paste, which in turn requires the preparation of large amounts of vegetable salt. In this way, dances direct yet another set of predatory processes. Some of the salt must be prepared in the form of flat, consolidated salt cakes. The process by which the salty water dries up to become a hard cake is used in Speeches of Healing and Speeches of Life. The mythical first iteration of this process for at least one of the Muinane clans was the desiccation of the sweat of a creator deity, forming the incipient earth. Different Speeches make agential comparisons between this process and the drying of manioc starch in over generations as part of the group patrimony.

the process of making manioc edible, the drying of semen in a woman’s womb to produce a child, and the hardening of the stools of a diarrhoeic person as he or she heals.
Figure 2. A *mambeador* starts to mix tobacco paste and vegetable salt.
5. Coca

The mambeadores often state that it is the combination of mambe (prepared coca) and tobacco paste which makes Speeches work. Thus, much of what I said above about the consumption of tobacco and its predations usually only applies if mambe is involved as well. The one without the other will not provide true agency: they must be ‘married’ in order to produce the desired effects. However, the stress is on the complementarity implied by their casual use of the term ‘marriage’ here, rather than the couple aspect. Indeed, as with tobacco, the gender of coca can be male or female, depending on the clan, and it need not be of gender opposite to that of tobacco\textsuperscript{115}.

Coca is much like tobacco in its predatory agency and in the proper thoughts it generates in men. It is similarly understood to endow men with the knowledge of their lineage. Roberto once provided me with a succinct illustration of his understanding of the agency of coca and the thoughts it generates. He spoke to me as follows: ‘Sometimes in the daytime [one] scolds [one’s] sons, like I sometimes do with Napoleon. “You do not comply with what I say! How many times have I taught you that!? You do wrong! You violate the counsels of Fagóji (the Speech of Advice)! I never told you to do thus...leave! I will not receive you at home again!”’ But then one goes and collects coca, arrives at the maloca and toasts it. Then one calls him. “Son, come mambe!” He does not wish to answer, but he has to come. One tells him, “This is the woman of conciliation, of cooling, of nourishment. She is our strength. Her Speech is cool...Perhaps the hot Speech that made us speak

\textsuperscript{115} Roberto’s clan treats the coca as both male and female: Father of Coca and Sweet Mother. Cf. Griffiths (1998123), on the maleness of coca among the Uitoto-Nipóde.
today comes from lack of mambeing from her, who is sweet. She knows what it is that is happening to us...She will make it appear as game...If we had not had that problem we would not have spoke to each other thus...it already wants to dawn as game.'

In other words, father and son mambe together, and the substance leads them to the discernment of what proper mutual behaviour would be, to the discovery of the evil that made them act thus, and to the agential knowledge of how to deal with it\textsuperscript{116}. Furthermore, it leads them to feel tranquillity and the desire for conciliation. Roberto was saying that perhaps it was the very lack of this substance which allowed some evil being to make his son misbehave, and him to speak in such an angry, unwelcoming fashion. The spirit or deity of the coca would hunt down the animal that had caused their tribulations. Conversations such as the one Roberto was portraying are part of the process of inducing the predatory agent of the coca to act against evil. It is thus performative. The tone at the end of the story is one of irony, claiming that it was as if the guilty animal 'wanted' to die as game, and so signalled its willingness by speaking in its characteristic way through people.

Pedro explained to me that coca is 'sweet', and should sweeten, cool and pacify men's hearts. He added, however, that it was also 'angry', as evinced by its seeds which were as red as hot chillies. It can make men dangerously hot, if used continuously and without the cooling influence of tobacco and of sweet manioc juice. Mambe is exclusively for male consumption, and the 'coca place', the mambeadero, can only be occupied by

\textsuperscript{116} Cf. Griffiths (1998: 123) and Santos-Granero (1991: 103-105) on the links between coca and knowledge among the Uitoto and the Amuesha.
men. *Mambeadores* say that women should not *mambe* because they are intrinsically cool and wet, and must protect themselves against the dryness and potential heating effect of the coca, in order to be able to bear children.

### 5.1 The preparation of coca

There are myths which concern the origins of the processes of preparation and consumption of *mambe*. Different versions of these involve a process of trial and error by some mythical character or characters. In one version it was just the Grandson of the Centre, and I will use his name for the following brief and admittedly impressionistic amalgam of different versions I heard:\footnote{For the People of the Cumare, for example, the characters were the two Grandsons of the Centre.}

The Grandson of the Centre tried to *mambe* first one kind of coca, then another, and so on with numerous different cocas. Those first cocas were jungle or fruit trees, and not real coca. Each time he found that the *mambe* did not provide him with True Speech. Some made him behave strangely, but mostly they did nothing. He proscribed most of them from the Land of the Centre, except for a stinging nettle and a certain fruit tree, the leaves of both of which were beneficial if not sources of powerful Speech.

Finally the Grandson of the Centre discovered the True Coca. In some versions, this occurred when he visited his father-in-law, who already had coca and could prepare it with tools...
which were parts of his body. In others, he had to discover the (prefigured) process of preparing it. In order not to lose the opportunity to gain Speech, he removed and *mamb*ed the raw bark of the coca sticks which are its seeds, and planted the rest. He picked the first harvest of leaves with the ‘first basket’: his open hand. To prepare that coca, he placed the leaves above a smoky fire as one does with game, not yet knowing that they had to be toasted. Then he crushed the leaves in the hand or in a shallow hole in a trunk, and *mamb*ed it (In one version, he added ashes to the *mamb*e before using it, in others, he still had not realised the necessity of it). He felt some incipient Speeches, but they could not come out of his body or manifest themselves well because a great anger blocked them.

The wife of the Grandson of the Centre, noting his tribulations, gave him the wood out of which her father had made the club to powder his coca. The Grandson made a club, used it, and produced good coca. He still could not speak True Speech, but then he had the thoughts to make a *kabikipaje*, the cylinder in which coca should be powdered with a club. (In other words, he suddenly realised what a correct cylinder would be like and how it had to be made. However, the form and mechanism were prefigured.) He used fire to hollow out a *bāākuho* (wild grape) trunk. That fire was a transformation of the anger which a small rodent had placed inside the Grandson of the Centre. Slowly it hollowed out the trunk, and with this the Grandson of the Centre
was freed of the anger that had not allowed his Speeches to come out.

In some extended versions, this myth also describes the development or discovery of other tools and techniques involved in the processing of the coca – the baskets, the sieving bags the dishes for ashes and the ashes themselves. In each case, they were discovered or arrived at with difficulty. The final result was the correct way of preparing True Coca so as to produce the powdered mambe. This process, and the consumption of mambe, should ideally take place in or around the mambeadero of the maloca of the settlement.

Like the production and consumption of tobacco, coca's is similarly the object of much rhetoric and numerous protocol prescriptions. Many expressions establish a connection between the thoughts of a mambeador and his coca plants, and treat the latter to some extent as the children of the mambeador. For example, the Muinane often state that a well-kept coca plantation with healthy plants manifests that its owner's thoughts are well and good. Following the same logic, a sickly plantation with wilting plants and too many weeds is symptom and cause of the confused thoughts of the owner. A poorly kept plantation, mambeadores claim, looks more like the garden of a lazy animal than like the proper place of endeavour of a Real Person. The same is true for healthy, well-behaved children and for unpleasant, sickly

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118 The Speeches of Apprising of the Muinane very often depict similar ‘trial and error’ developments of the proper ways of doing things. There is teleology involved, however – there is always a proper, prefigured form which the characters in myths knew about as a vague premonition, but had yet to pinpoint, discover or implement.
ones: the former are clearly being raised as humans, while the latter are being raised like an animal raises its children\(^\text{119}\).

Once the coca is truly ready for harvest, the leaves should be picked in the absolute absence of haste, but yet without lazing around. Proper knowledge must also be boarded with similar patience. The leaves should be picked with great care not to drop and leave any behind. Doing so is 'leaving behind a thought', or some important Speech which the person will therefore never learn or be able to use. Many counsels warn that leaves not taken may be used by animals, who can make invocations so that those forgotten leaves take away all the "starch" and Speeches from the leaves the mambeador does take. The coca bushes must be picked carefully, from top to bottom –because then the Speeches will go down into the basket of knowledge- and without damaging the new leaves or leaving behind the sickly yellowing ones\(^\text{120}\).

Another example of the connection between Speech/knowledge and coca is the prescription that youths never 'step ahead of the coca'. The mambeador who spoke to me of this prescription told me that this means that a youth should never step ahead of his father as the latter carries the laden coca basket home from the garden. He added that a perspicacious youth would also understand it to mean that he should never speak in the mambeadero concerning important issues before his father does, or claim to know more than his father.

In the past, coca leaves were toasted in ceramic plates or pots and stirred about with a tool made out of a twisted and looped vine. All the coca

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\(^{119}\) According to the Uitoto-Nipöde, if a man's coca grows freely, without weeds suffocating it, so will his human children (cf. Griffiths 1998: 115,127).

\(^{120}\) Cf. Urbina's (1992) poetic rendition of the Uitoto's formal prescriptions regarding the
preparations I ever observed, however, were on sheets fashioned out of flattened metal barrels and placed on 4 wooden legs. The coca leaves are spilled on to it when the fire underneath has reached the appropriate temperature, and then the toaster moves them about with his hands or with a paddle-like wooden tool. The toasting is said to burn away all the eggs of insects, excrements of animals and disgusting waters of different beings which may have sullied the coca leaves. The mambeador is supposed to think of certain insects' wings, and to repeat to himself in a rhythmic prayer that the wings are brittle and that the leaves should become similarly brittle quickly. He should also name the coca 'Sweet Coca', so that it tastes delicious, without a burnt flavour.

Once toasted, the leaves are pounded into a fine powder in the kabikipaje, a large wooden cylinder (roughly 1 meter tall and 20 to 30 cms. in diameter) which has been hollowed out, leaving only the bottom and the walls (see the myth at the introduction of this section). The club with which it is pounded is usually made out of either very hard redwood\textsuperscript{121}. In several of the mambeaderos of the Medio Caquetá, the clubs are some metal axle from an old vehicle or machine. Both the coca cylinder and the (traditional) club appear in the Speeches of Apprising as transformed parts of the bodies of mythical beings. The powdered coca is then mixed with the ashes of burned yarumo\textsuperscript{122} leaves. In myths, the yarumo leaves for coca processing were the product of the destruction of an evil eagle who ate people. The hero whipped it

\textsuperscript{121} Brosimum rubescens – Catalina Londoño, Universiteit van Amsterdam, personal communication.

\textsuperscript{122} Yarumo, in Spanish, or 'tävi' in Muinane, is a certain tree species of the genus Cecropia. There are a few other species the ashes of which may also be used in the coca powder mix.
with a long cane, and the feathers that fell from it became the leaves for the ashes that would make the *mambe* the proper empowering stuff it now is. Thus the *mambe* involves in its preparation this other predatory transformation of evil: an anthropofagic being’s features were transformed into desirable stuffs for consumption.

The mix of ashes and coca powder is placed in a fine cloth bag and carefully shaken so that the finer particles sift through and drop into a container. When no more ‘*mambe*’ comes out, the remaining coarse contents of the bag are poured into the coca cylinder and pounded again, then mixed with ashes and sifted once more. This is repeated several times until what is left in the bag are the ‘bones’ of the coca, which will not make part of the *mambe*. The finer stuff in the container is the *mambe* which is fit for consumption; the rest is thrown away or burned. As with the toasting, the *mambeador* in charge of sieving the coca must think certain thoughts so that much coca results from his part of the process. He must think of the sand of the river beds, which is ever collecting and is endless. He must think also of the dust of the world, to which there seems to be no end\(^{123}\). There is much emphasis on the purifying aspect of the sieving, and indeed of the whole process of the *mambe*: ideally, only the desirable ‘starch’ of the coca – the pure material essence-makes it into the mouth of the mambeador. The pollutants, ‘bones’ (veins) and other useless aspects of the material leaves are removed and thrown away.

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As soon as there is enough mambe collected in the container to provide each mambeador present with a spoonful of the stuff, the man doing the sieving interrupts and dips a spoon or a leaf into the powder, brings it out loaded, and calls for the oldest man present to come and receive mambe. Then he takes another spoonful and calls somebody else to come, and so on till all the mambeadores have received a portion. According to the mambeadores, one should always react with protestations of pleasure when summoned to mambe, and make one’s way quickly to the siever to receive one’s spoonful. After some time, the siever may offer more mambe to those present, and this may be repeated a few times each night. When the siever finishes the preparation process, he calls for the men to pass on their coca containers, so that he may put a few spoonfuls of mambe into each one. Ideally, each day a different man from the settlement provides the coca, so that no man’s plantation is too heavily taxed.
Figure 3. A man picks coca. He toasts it while his brother pounds his own toasted batch into a fine powder.

They burn *yarumo* leaves for ashes.
5.2 The initiation: coca, emotions and morality

In theory though in my experience rarely in practice, a young man’s initiation into *mambe* is a highly ritualised affair. I heard of this process numerous times, always as a description, always in present tense as if it were something that occurred all the time. It is interesting to note that many men claimed to me in their biographical accounts that they started to mambe ‘just so’, ‘out of a whim,’ ‘behind my father’s back.’ This was an almost standardised self-portrayal, part of what seems to me to be a common narrative frame were youths are presented as ignorant, and the speaker in his present stage as more knowledgeable and discerning.

According to the accounts of ideal initiations, for some years before it the youth helps his father with some of the activities related to the production and preparation of coca, such as weeding, collecting the leaves, bringing firewood for his father to toast the coca, lighting the fire, and then beating the toasted coca into a powder. He must also pick lots of *yarumo* leaves. Men often reiterate that a well-counselling youth need not be told to go look for *yarumo* leaves; he does so without bidding whenever he notes that there is none in the maloca. Concerning this, Ernesto once said to me: ‘A young man who behaves thus, and brings *yarumo* leaves without being told, will be noted and spoken of by others as a proper young man...and some man may offer him his daughter for a wife.’

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Observing his son's judicious behaviour and his willingness to work, the father sees that the youth is ready for initiation. He tells him to prepare a small garden of his own and plant it, for it would not be acceptable for him to depend on his father's coca only. He must produce his own 'strength.' Until he gets married, his mother or unmarried sisters care for the manioc and the cultigens which are women's responsibility, while the youth himself takes care of the tobacco and coca, as his father has taught him. In preparation for the first harvest, and only then, because his son will only then truly need it, the father teaches him to weave a basket for him to carry his coca leaf harvest home. Because this whole process is geared towards the young man's eventual acquisition of a wife with which to live and raise children, the father also teaches him how to make all the instruments which it is a man's duty to weave for his wife to work. The type of basket to be woven, the materials used and the vigour and speed with which the youth is to weave are all subject to prescriptions, and to illustrations with mythical narratives. Only when the young man has a beautiful, productive plantation of coca and the proper baskets in which to collect the leaves, has he started to show that he is capable and hardworking, and that his 'inner' basket of knowledge is prepared to receive the more complex and agential Speeches his father must teach him.

The father then tells his son to bring him fresh coca, the first good harvest of his new plantation. That first harvest of a new coca plantation is widely regarded to yield the sweetest, purest mambe: the kind of stuff the Muinane call 'the mambe of a young man.' The father toasts it for his son.

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because toasting is a hot task that 'heats' the hands metaphysically in such a way that they are no longer 'cool'. A young man's hands, it happens, must be cool so that when he plants his crops these will grow well. Older men already have adult children and sons-and-daughters-in-law to help them plant, and so can afford to deal with metaphysically hot matters.

Meanwhile, the son brings and burns yarumo leaves. When the coca is toasted, the son pulverises it in the coca cylinder, and the father mixes it with the ashes and sieves it. They sit in the mambeadero throughout the evening, and then the father makes an invocation on the mambe, so that it provides the youth with good Speeches, and does not drive him mad. He gives the young man a spoonful, and keeps him up late every night for the following few nights while he gives him what they call the 'mambeadero course': the counsels, prescriptions, protocols and Speeches of Apprising pertaining to the origins of tobacco and mambe, and to the origins of his own lineage and clan. Some men claim this process can be extended for months and, in the case of youths willing to delve deep into their people's knowledge, years.

It is striking that the emphasis of these mambeadero counsels, and in fact, of the entire 'course', is on the responsibility of the youth for the care of his future wife and children. He must acquire from his father the Speeches of Apprising necessary for healing and protecting a woman from the particular diseases that threaten her, and also those that tell the origins of the diseases that affect children. He must also learn the remedies and melodies of the chants which stem from these myths and which reject the pathogenic agents. The youth must also take care of himself: he must remain healthy and
vigorous so as to be materially productive, and he must keep his thoughts purposeful, lest he be led to wander from the task of learning everything he needs to take care of his family. The care for his own thoughts involves much discipline regarding mambeadero protocols.

As in pregnancy, birth, marriage, menstruation, and other important junctions in life, the initiation into mambe is a dangerous time for youths. At such moments, their bodies are particularly malleable. Their behaviour can become set in the person much like ceramic becomes set in the shape in which it dries. A young man's bodily position, his movements, his thoughts, his speech must be carefully controlled, lest he become set in some undesirable way. Evil beings, aware that the youth is in the process of becoming a capable killer of evil agents, target him in an attempt to keep him from becoming a knowledgeable, well-set person. It is therefore of vital importance that they young man 'sit firmly.' To 'sit firmly' is to be moral, proper, purposeful and strong. Like a tobacco plant with strong roots which is also said to sit firmly, the virtuous mambeador is not easily uprooted or thrown off his path. He resists temptations, antisocial thoughts and emotions, disease, discouragement, and instead grows, protects his people, and sustains his maloca.

Many anecdotes and counsels converge on the notion that a very great danger for young men is to become obsessed with sex, for that would impede their proper development. For example, numerous counsels press upon

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youths not to look at women's genitals, lest their thoughts 'remain' in there, keeping them from ever being capable listeners in the *mambeadero*. Neither should they indulge in intercourse too early on lest it damage their singing voices or similarly make them wish to have sex all the time, rather than listen with concentration to the *mambeadores*’ Speeches of Apprising\textsuperscript{128}. Concerning this, I remember one occasion in which I was *mambeing* with Juan and Pedro, and supposedly trying to follow a myth they were telling. I was unable to understand much, and became distracted thinking idly about my nubile girlfriend of adolescence. Juan finished his story, and asked me whether I had 'caught' it—that is, learned it. I confessed that I had not understood much and that instead had been thinking about a woman I knew. He asked me whether she was beautiful, and upon my affirmative answer said, 'That was not your friend...it was the False Woman...'. He explained to me that this evil spirit approaches *mambeadores*’ thoughts and dreams in the shape of their wife, their mother, or some other woman. Sometimes she tickles the man, or has sex with him, or in some other way distracts his attention. In every case her intention is to keep the *mambeador* from his task. Juan told me: 'You missed the Speech of Apprising because you were thinking about her...and we might never find occasion to tell this Speech again. She kept you from learning something important!'

Youths are told to remember that the *mambeadero*, as the place from which to care for kin and in which to learn the moral lessons and skills for it, is only for True Speech of the kind that brings about desirable manifest results. It

\textsuperscript{128} Girls too have to be careful with sexual fixations: early sex may make them undesirably short, big-breasted, wanton and lazy.
must at all times be kept free of critical remarks, gossip and other 'womanly' talk which might sully the place. Otherwise, evil beings may slip in through such careless talk, and sabotage the mambeadores' endeavours (cf. Griffiths 1998:206).

Many myths and stories are supposed to warn youths about behaviours they have to avoid. These warnings also link substance and affect, and morality and humanity. As with tobacco, there are spurious versions of coca which bring about immoral subjective states. One important myth for initiates, different from the one on the origin of the mambe, is the following:

The Anaconda of Food (sometimes presented as a sage, sometimes as an ineffective mambeador) possessed proper coca. He also had a beautiful daughter whom all animals – still shaped like humans at the time- desired. They would come, one by one, supposedly to mambe with him, but actually they were improperly motivated by desire for the Anaconda's daughter. Whilst sitting in the coca circle, the Anaconda would suffer troubles. For example, at one point he became very sleepy. A few moments later the smaller anteater (Tamandua tetradactyla ?) came in. "Oh, so it was he who did that to me!" the Anaconda thought to himself. Instead of offering his own coca to the anteater, by sleight of hand the Anaconda gave him the anteater's own coca to mambe. The anteater became sleepy. The Anaconda then told him that his coca would be Coca of Sleepiness, and not fit for proper people to consume, and banished the anteater from his maloca.
With the small anteater gone, the Anaconda was left alone in the coca circle. Suddenly he berated his wife for no reason. Soon after, the coati (*Nasua nasua*) walked in. The Anaconda realised that it had been that animal who had made him feel thus. He feigned to offer his own proper coca to the coati, but actually proffered it its own. The beast *mambed*, and then evinced anger and jealousy, whereupon the Anaconda told it that its coca would be Coca of Jealousy and Coca of Anger, and not fit for Real People. The coati too was banished.

The coca of the large anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) also made the Anaconda feel rage, and so he rejected it. And so it went on, and different animals kept coming; each time the undesirable actions and subjective states which belonged to these animals affected the Anaconda before their coming, and each time the Anaconda rejected the being’s coca, its way of *mambeing*, its behaviours and its Speeches.

Many of the anecdotes focus on the protocol of the *mambé*, others on the diets and behavioural restrictions which different animals violated and which explain their undesirable anatomical and behavioural characteristics today. The animals became set—again, like ceramic does when it hardens in a certain shape— with their flaws and evils.

I only heard lengthy versions of this story a few times, and never a single telling which included all the events and anecdotes which I picked up during the time I spent in the Caquetá. Mostly, I heard brief anecdotes which make a part of this myth, but which were often not even linked explicitly to it.
Rather, a mambeador would find it pertinent to point out some behaviour as stemming from the way in which some animal had first mambed, and then add three or four other kinds of antisocial behaviours or violations of mambeadero protocol which were linked to animals. In some of these anecdotes, the Anaconda would suffer certain symptoms. In others, the animal itself behaved in a certain manner and therefore suffered certain consequences. (In the table below I note some animal's form of mambeing.)

**Table 2. Animal's ways of mambeing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muinane name</th>
<th>Species name or general classification</th>
<th>Behaviour or symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tihemi mááraga</td>
<td>Black jaguar, Tigre dantero, <em>Panthera onca</em></td>
<td>His talk sounded proper, but inside it was fire, because he wanted to eat the others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tifaihuhi</td>
<td>Puma; Tigre colorado; <em>Felis concolor</em></td>
<td>The Anaconda wished to bother another man's woman, and felt jealous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meenimi</td>
<td>White-lipped peccary; puerco; <em>Tayassu peccari</em></td>
<td>The Anaconda felt his stomach blow up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Táki</td>
<td><em>Paca or Borugo, a large rodent. Agouti paca</em></td>
<td>He packed his ball of mambe too tightly, and ate his own cheek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giifo</td>
<td>Tailless mouse, <em>Echimydae</em> (van der Hammen 1992: 320)</td>
<td>He <em>mambed</em>, and then had sex with his sister. He also made the Anaconda grind his teeth in his sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fáti</td>
<td>Guara, Black Agouti, <em>Dasyprocta fuliginosa</em></td>
<td>The Anaconda gnashed his teeth in his sleep (because guaras gnaw on hard husks and other things during the night).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiíyi</td>
<td>Monkey sp.? (Bebeleche)</td>
<td>These monkeys tickled each other and scratched each other's balls, and therefore developed white stomach worms (<em>mááma</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jusári</td>
<td>Chichico, <em>Saimiri sciureus</em></td>
<td>He <em>mambed</em>, and then had sex with his sister. He was killed for it. He also tickled and scratched the balls of his</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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129 My research is not ethnoecological, and so this data should not be used as an authoritative account of correspondences between Muinane names and Linnaean classifications.
peers, and so became infested with mááma worms.

| Nééfik+ | Squirrel, *Scirurus* sp. (van der Hammen 1992: 320) | He *mambed* and then had sex with his sister. |
| Moomo? | Otter | *He mambed* and got diarrhea. |
| Daagi | ‘Perezoso de una uña’; perhaps a Pygmy anteater (*Cyclopes didactylus*) (Emmons 1990: 34) | *He mambed*, curled up and fell asleep. |
| Kikíje | Bat | *He mambed*, played with his sister, and as a result got her vulva stuck in his face |
| Búúru | Owl | *He mambed* and then sought lice in his own hair, and therefore became ugly. |
| X Bird |  | *He laughed when he first mambed*, and that behaviour became fixed in him. |
| Panguana | Fowl (*Tinamidae*) | *He slept as he mambed*, and kept answering ‘jii...ji’ to his interlocutor in his sleep, as if he were listening. He also slobbered. |
| Níigo | Toucan, *Ramphastos cuvieri* | *He mambed* and then ate a palm heart, therefore his tongue took on the shape of a palmshoot. |
| Jééki | Oropendola, *mochilero* | This tyrannical bird called its kin to *mamben*, and beat those who did not come. Furthermore, when several of them *mambed* together, they spoke simultaneously without listening to one another. |
| Buuyáhu | Arrendajo | Like parrots, these birds imitated other people’s Speeches; this is unacceptable, for each peoples should have their own. |
| Mímínoobó | Bird | These birds also imitated other people’s Speeches |
| Chúúhihu | Bird | This bird was a mad woman who seduced youths and constantly |

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130 van der Hammen 1992:311
131 The Muinane privilege certain aspects of this bird’s behaviour, making it a recurrent example of immorality. By contrast, the Airo-Pai of the Peruvian Amazon treat this same species as a paragon and symbol of paternal virtue (cf. Belaunde 1992).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cháárihu</td>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>Interrupted the good dialogues of other mambeadores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erééda</td>
<td>Small guacamayo</td>
<td>These birds spoke unintelligibly fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Méllihu</td>
<td>Dragonfly</td>
<td>He mambed correctly but then greedily ate a fly, violating dietary prescriptions for initiates. This tore his head off, and it was stuck back on with spit. He was also told not to throw away the coca before going to sleep because he would spit out his own teeth with it, and so slept with it, which is incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihijo</td>
<td>Edible black ant (arriera)</td>
<td>He mambed correctly, and the coca was a dry, tight little ball in his cheek. He can be invoked so that one can eat whilst mambeing, without losing one’s coca. However, he nibbled on the buriga with which he licked tobacco, with some negative result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuumo</td>
<td>Grub</td>
<td>His mouth was full of saliva, so he made too much noise as he mambed, and swallowed his mambe too quickly. Therefore the Speeches he witnessed passed through him, not remaining attached to his basket of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siisi</td>
<td>Big black grasshopper</td>
<td>He ‘ate’ excessive amounts of coca and tobacco, and walked around as if in a trance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jááki</td>
<td>Frog</td>
<td>These frogs all sang simultaneously, not listening to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijáága</td>
<td>Frog</td>
<td>He mambed and kept talking clearly. Thus he can be used in an invocation to sing clearly at dance rituals, even with a mouthful of mambe. However, he mambed in an incorrect position, leaning over too much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake (?)</td>
<td>Snake (?)</td>
<td>He mambed and was sleepy. His coca transformed into poison, and because he was angry at being woken, bit anybody who called him or bothered him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fáragaigo</td>
<td>False woman</td>
<td>She mambed with legs open and vulva exposed. Any who came...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with tobacco, animals have their own, usually aberrant, *mambe* and their ways of consuming it. Virtuous and flawed behaviours are presented in terms of these animals’ stories. These stories focus on issues which are of importance to the Muinane, such as health, knowledge, discipline and conviviality. Youths are warned against behaving like the animals and other mythical beings in question, lest they take on similar flaws or suffer similar consequences. One strong focus is on discipline and protocol in the *mambeadero*: people should sit still, quietly, without moving their *mambe* about in their mouths or swallowing it too quickly. They should avoid distractions such as seeking lice, fidgeting or changing positions frequently, tickling and scratching others, or laughing too much. They should also avoid interrupting good dialogues. These misbehaviours would keep the young *mambeadores* from learning from their elders. Furthermore, their Speech

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132 Those who are good and follow the diets are transparent. Others are ashamed, and hide their evil.
should be clear—not too fast, not too slow, and not simultaneous to others’ speeches—and should be learned from a patrilineal kinsman, for such knowledge is properly agential and less dangerous than dealing with foreign knowledge. Other behaviours relate to productivity and to proper relations with other people. Anger, treated as the desire to eat or otherwise attack others, is an evil in itself that must be avoided. Laziness and sleepiness are linked to bad temper and unjustified aggressions against others. Improper sex—thinking about it obsessively, indulging in sex with others’ spouses, committing incest, and being openly provocative—is another great evil, to be avoided in itself and because it both makes people jealous and antisocial, and keeps them from acquiring much needed knowledge. Finally, consuming proper mambe improperly (which makes it improper for the consumer) or not following the diets related to mambe, causes bodily troubles such as bloated stomachs and diarrhoea.

Some animals manifested some virtues in their use of mambe: they packed it correctly into their cheeks. This enabled them to speak and sing without spewing forth clouds of green powder or swallowing too much of the stuff too quickly. Yet others mambed correctly and did not develop any harmful behaviour or disease. They remained transparent, having no evil intentions to hide. These virtues are also something which young mambeadores are supposed to be instructed to emulate.

5.3 The dangers of coca

On one occasion, Sergeant Sánchez, who worked at the military barracks of Araracuara, warned me that I should abstain from using mambe.
He told me that a few months before, a young soldier under his command had suddenly become furious and shot one of his mates at the garrison. Investigating the case, Sgt. Sánchez had discovered that the young man had *mambed*; he had acquired the stuff from an Indian and had used it. The sergeant claimed that the coca had maddened the soldier, who had been a peaceful lad until that day. I told Manuel about this, and Manuel answered that indeed, that could have been the case.

Coca, Manuel explained, was a delicate thing and not a toy to be played with. Young Muinane who are initiated into the stuff are given numerous counsels concerning their restrictions, and the *mambe* has to be prepared by the father. Through counsels and invocations the father or grandfather attempts to direct both the young *mambeador* and the coca. He names the coca to be sweet, thought-opening, cool and so on, and counsels the youth thus: 'Medeikukuubo mafárajkarujitihi, mikigatajevejitihi, magáikitajevejitihi, áñigasutajevejitihi, mudúfitajevejitihi, mihíimukugatajevejitihi, mámahutajevejitihi, siifi limajiko medéirajitihi, muhúvukunusujitihi, mitimetasutitihi.' He translated this freely into Spanish as he spoke: 'He who mambes should not make his coca Coca of Corruption (which I understand to be obsession as well), nor Coca of Sleepiness, nor Coca of Laziness, nor Coca of (ceaseless, irritating) Playfulness, nor Coca of (constant) Meat Eating, nor Coca of War, nor Coca of Flitting Speech'\(^{133}\), nor

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\(^{133}\) Manuel stated that people who spoke thusly started a story, broke off, touched upon another, jumping around without elaborating on any. Such non-sequiturs are at times considered to be a sign of ignorance, at times to be the way of sages who possess massive amounts of knowledge, know what they are doing and need to be brief.
Coca of Deriding other's Speeches, nor Coca of Setting difficult trials for others, nor Coca of Contestation. These coca are also thereby rejected.

Sergeant Sánchez's soldier had not been properly counselled, and his *mambe* had not been properly prepared. Powerful substance that it was, and consumed in an improper fashion, the *mambe* had maddened him.

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134 Manuel once used this term critically to describe somebody's act of denying a kinship relation in order to abstain from showing care and compassion to somebody. It is thus probably more charged than 'contestation', but I cannot say much more about it.

135 On a similar dangerous link between knowledge (or substances of knowledge) and madness, see Overing 1985b:255. I discuss this link in sections 10.3.1 and 12.5.
6. Manioc, chillies and herbs: the substances of women

In this chapter I will describe some of the concepts of the Muinane concerning the substances which they claim ‘belong to women.’ I will focus on manioc and chilli as the main cultigens of women, but will describe briefly their ‘cool herbs’ as well.

Muinane men and women call attention to the fact that men are responsible for the production of just two cultigens, coca and tobacco, while women are responsible for the numerous other cultigens which their families consume: manioc, chillies, peanuts, yams, maize, pineapples and many others. Women are also in charge of planting and caring for the medicinal ‘cool herbs’. The attributes of each gender’s cultigens reflect the gender’s obligations: whereas men’s cultivated substances provide them with predatory agency, which they need in order to protect their kin, women’s substances for the most part (but not exclusively) nourish people’s bodies and hearts, ‘strengthening,’ ‘cooling,’ and ‘sweetening’ them, without necessarily destroying evil beings in the fashion of men. The focus when discussing women and their preparations is mostly on the fact that they feed good stuff to their children, husbands and parents-in-law. However, this is not to say that women are bereft of predatory agency, or men of nourishing capabilities.

On occasion people stress the differences in substances between men’s and women’s bodies. For instance, Carmen, Pedro’s wife, portrayed to me the mythical process of creation of women as being based on substances

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136 Mostly cultivated, that is; tobacco has salt which is not cultivated, and mambe has yarumo, which is also not cultivated.

137 Cf. Hugh-Jones, S. (1979: 250) on male and female modes of creation among the Barasana. They closely parallel the Muinane’s respective male predatory and female nourishing obligations.
different to men's. She claimed that whereas men are made of coca and tobacco, and raised with these substances, women are made out of sweet manioc\textsuperscript{138} and other fruits. Along the same lines, it is a stated fact that the state of women's bodies and thoughts/emotions is closely linked to their manioc plots, like men's are to their tobacco and coca plots. Such differences in substances may be rhetorically created and stressed in order to mark differences in gender roles, obligations and virtues, but I find that eventually men and women agree that they are mostly made up of the same substances, with differences in proportion. The substances of women are more present in their bodies than in those of men, though the latter cannot lack them totally. Men's substances are 'cool,' but their predatory character, if handled intemperately, can make them extremely hot and dangerous. Furthermore, coca, which is exclusive to male bodies, is completely dry by contrast with the wetter and therefore cooler tobacco paste. Men are therefore in danger of burning. To offset this danger, men must consume the substances of women which their mothers, wives and daughters-in-law provide.

Women too have the substances of men in their bodies, except for coca, and they have more water, manicuera, cool herbs and garden fruits in them\textsuperscript{139}. This makes women softer, cooler and wetter than men, a composition which enables them to breastfeed their children and generally to be nourishing with their kin.

\textsuperscript{138} By 'sweet manioc' I refer to the manicuera, a variety of poisonous manioc that yields a delicious and very sweet drink.

\textsuperscript{139} The fact that women are wetter and cooler does not make them necessarily freer of anger and ill temper. Pedro often said that women were less strong than men at dealing with the heat of a day's work, and thus manifested bickering irritation more often than men did. Similarly, Manuel told me that women have long, rancorous memories, whereas men forget their slights and conflicts very quickly. Other men and women, however, did tell me that
However, the fact that women’s obligation is mostly to nourish their kin does not imply that they do not participate in protecting them; nor does their sweet, wet composition necessarily mean they cannot ‘hit hard’. As my discussions on chillies and manicuera will show, their substances also do some protecting of their own: in the case of chilli, such protection can cause improper beings serious harm and pain through its particular form of predation. Furthermore, just as men enable women to nurture through their transformations, women enable men to protect them and their children through theirs.

6.1 Manioc

Manioc is the main staple of the diet of the Muinane and their neighbouring groups. They relate the production and consumption of manioc with their subjectivity, their agency and their identity, much as they do with other key substances. Manioc and manioc products are understood to be the evidence, the material manifestation and the main source of a woman’s moral thoughts and agency. Carmen spoke to me about this: ‘A woman’s strength is manicuera, the chilli pot, caguana, manioc bread and peanuts[140]. If visitors arrive and one does not have these things, one is weak. What will one offer to the people? If one does not have these things, people may say, “The people from that maloca do not greet anybody, and do not offer even water! How is it

women were the ultimate owners of coolness, and were thus obliged to maintain good tempers.
[140] Among the Uitoto-Minika, ritual discourses explicitly note that ‘women’s strength’ are the cultigens she produces (Candre and Echeverri 1996:149). I should mention that many of the ‘Muinane’ couples I worked with were made up of a Muinane man and a Uitoto woman.
that a *maloca* woman\footnote{\textquoteleft Maloca woman' or \textquoteleft maloca man' stands in contrast to people who do not belong to a nuclear family or patriline who lives in a *maloca*. People counsel their children to become hardworking, just in case they ever marry into a *maloca* family. The latter will demand much work from in-laws, for the upkeep of a *maloca* and for carrying out dance rituals. *Maloca* families are supposed to be very orthodox in form, very obedient of counsels, and so on.} can do thus?" One has to offer whatever one has. My grandfather told me that when a person arrived angered and hot at the *maloca*, they used to give him *manicuera*, and that sweetened his heart. When a woman offered people *manicuera*, they would say "This is a True Woman...she makes our hearts cool."

Several men told me casually something I also heard in a Speech of Apprising. Basically, it was a statement to the effect that it is the *maloca* owner's wife—the Áivojiigo, Woman of the Speech of Pain—who demands that her husband hold a dance ritual, rather than it being his motivation first. The idea is that a couple's productive capacity increases over the years, as their children grow up to become competent helpers, and as they acquire sons-and—daughters-in-law from whom they can demand and expect help. One day, the proverbial Áivojiigo tells her husband that they have an excess of manioc and fruit, and that it will rot if they do not share it with other people. Therefore she demands that he send out tobacco and summon people to come and eat manioc bread with chilli broth and drink *caguana* (manioc starch drink), so that all may be sated and strengthened by her good food\footnote{Other rhetoric notes that to hold a dance ritual is the Áivojiibo's decision in view of the need for great rituals to transform the tribulations of the community. However, it also depends on how much tobacco and coca he has, and he must consult with his wife about the amount of manioc, peanuts and other cultigens they can count on. Cf. Griffiths 1998: 155, on this issue among the Uitoto.}.

Though it is women who are said to own their manioc and who do most of its cultivation and preparation, men must also participate in the process, at least through Speeches. For example, one night, in preparation for a dance...
ritual he was to hold a few days afterwards, Juan spoke the Jäänigai hiiji, the Speech of the Manioc Plant. He started (and ended) by claiming that this Speech and the Speech of Tobacco were one and the same Speech—they were powerful, and were all directed towards the multiplication of humanity. Then he narrated, with the help of a what-sayer\footnote{I use this term following Echeverri (1997: 29). It is an interlocutor for formal dialogues. In Muinane the term is ‘sanáagoobo.’}, a Speech of Apprising which involved several gigantic, evil manioc plants of the First Time, the distant mythical past in which evils were too great for humankind to deal with. These enormous plants bore all kinds of bitter, poisonous, evil maniocs and other fruits of animals, and caused hunger, war, madness and other deadly tribulations to the people who lived at the time. These ‘manioc trees’ were finally vanquished by heroes bearing proper axes, and humankind had the chance of receiving the proper, harmless and nourishing stuff from the Mother of Satiety\footnote{Again, if one listens to several Speeches of Apprising from different clans, the name of the original giver of manioc varies. Manioc itself is sometimes referred to in the mambeadero as Tuuubogaigo, the ‘Woman of Satiety.’ This last term may also be used to ‘name’ a woman so that she becomes productive and inclined to nurture. On such performative naming, see section 11.5.}. Juan ended his liturgy with an invocation which noted that the False Maniocs had been rejected and destroyed, and that the manioc he required was the True Manioc, the proper food of Real People to which no other being should have access\footnote{Manioc and other cultigens are Real People’s food. Meat is a much cherished addition to manioc products, and people often claim to miss it and want it, but they do not deem it to be superior stuff to what women cultivate and prepare. Perhaps this is because at a ‘shamanic’ level, game are also cultigens that mature and are harvested by men. On differential vs. egalitarian valuations of men and women’s products in different Amazonian groups, see C.}. These Speeches were understood to be attempts to ensure a smooth-running material process: an easy, fruitful harvesting day in which nobody would get injured, as well as manioc which would be easy to grate and which would yield much starch. On the other hand,
they would also ensure proper social relations by rejecting the substances which constitute antisocial motivations.

A caveat concerning this last paragraph: it is tempting to separate the ‘material’ from the ‘spiritual’ results of Speeches. A danger, however, lies in losing sight of the ‘materiality’ which the Muinane attribute to what we might call ‘spirituality’. The Speeches that reject or transform False Maniocs are intended to affect actual tubers but also the substances of the emotions of people. These transformations of people’s thoughts/emotions are material as well.

6.1.1 Cultivation

Much like a man’s good thoughts/emotions are linked to his tobacco and coca plots, so are a woman’s thoughts and health linked to her manioc plantation. According to the counsels, she must keep her manioc from being smothered by weeds, and on occasion she must fertilise them with the ashes of burnt weeds. Furthermore, she must renew her manioc regularly to keep it fresh and young, for its ageing and thickening makes its owner old and painridden. When I was helping Manuel and his wife Dilia prepare a new garden, Manuel told me that Dilia was starting to suffer from back pains fatigue, and that therefore it was a good thing that they were going to plant manioc anew. Upon telling me this he asked me, in that matter-of-fact tone which also characterises the Muinane’s performative ritual discourses, ‘Who has ever seen manioc get old?’ The point was that it did not get old because each time a manioc plant started to age, it would be cut up into sections

(cuttings which the Muinane refer to as semillas, ‘seeds’) and then replanted. Out of the old ‘seed’, a strong, healthy new plant would grow. Manioc was thus eternally being healed and rejuvenated, and with it the woman who owned it would be healed and rejuvenated\textsuperscript{146}.

I did not delve deeply into details of the planting such as how the manioc is distributed in the garden, or how many varieties of manioc a woman has in her garden. It was fairly obvious to me that the manioc plots of each of the women I worked with held plants of heterogeneous origin: some which had come from cuttings which the woman’s husband got from his mother, when he opened his first garden; some which the woman’s mother had given her; some which had been brought by guests as gifts, in the so-called ‘Fruit Dances’; and some which the woman may have asked others to give them out of curiosity for different varieties’ virtues. On those occasions in which I helped with the planting, the women owners of the garden would instruct me where to plant each kind of manioc. There was an order to the pattern of planting, as I was prepared to recognise from other ethnographies of Amazonia\textsuperscript{147}. Dilia, for example, pointed out that she was planting manioc ‘for rotting’ (manioc which is prepared through fermentation) in a certain place, manioc for grating in a different place, and so on for manioc for farinha (manioc flour) and for manicuera. She decided where to place each one out of pragmatism, explaining her decisions in terms of which variety would mature more quickly and should therefore be planted close to the more accessible edges of the garden, which variety needed more ashes, which should be planted closer to

\textsuperscript{146} cf. C. Hugh-Jones’s (1979:184) discussion of manioc planting as a form of female renewal among the Barasana.
the stream so as to be laid there to ferment. There were probably a myriad other considerations; again, I must confess I did not focus on this matter while I lived in the Muinane's communities.

Planting manioc requires planters with skill and cool hands, as well as certain invocations which both men and women can use during the planting. This ensures that the tubers that eventually grow are of a good size, full of starch, and not too deeply embedded in the ground. Manuel and Dilia found that the manioc cuttings planted by their little nine-year old daughter had grown wonderfully in previous years, and encouraged her to do a lot of planting on the day we planted together. On that occasion they commented that they were curious to know whether my hand was good for planting. With hindsight, though, I realise that the women and children did most of the actual putting the cuttings in the ground that day, while Manuel and I made the planting holes in the ground with poles, ahead of them. Perhaps as men, our hands were deemed to be hotter than the women's and the children's, and so they arranged it so that the latter did most of the actual placing of the cuttings. Yet this is not a matter about which they are obsessive; at several mingas (communal work parties) I attended, men, women and children all sowed together.

I found that weeding was something that women tended to carry out casually when they went to the garden to pick their manioc. Sometimes they invested a greater effort in it, at times they did not do it at all, depending on the age of the garden and other considerations. Manioc plants soon to be removed from an old garden in order to be replanted in a new one were never weeded, for weeding an old garden was simply not considered to be worth the
effort. Husbands and wives sometimes went together to the garden, and the man would help his wife pull out manioc and weed the plants. Afterwards they would go together and pick his coca, weeding each plant as they picked out its leaves. I found that some of the women would carry out a few strong weeding missions a year, in their newer gardens. For one or two days each one would have her husband and children working hard exclusively at weeding the garden. I was told that sometimes they would have a small minga to do this, or the women of the community would get together and as a group weed all their gardens on different days. Elena told me that when women work together like that, the work goes well and quickly, with good ánimo, that is, with much display of good humour and willing vigour.

Manioc harvesting is strenuous work, and women do most of it. Some of the tubers are deeply rooted and pulling them out of the ground requires a strong back indeed. Proper harvests are ensured through men’s liturgies: in Juan’s Speech of the Manioc Plant the night previous to the manioc harvest for the dance ritual, he rejected the False Maniocs that were too deeply set in the ground, and those that broke as people tried to pull them out. Usually the harvest occupies women for only a couple of hours, a few times a week. For dance rituals, however, many basketfuls of manioc are required, and on those occasions the harvests are more time demanding. Often the Áivoiíigo asks her husband to call for all the men and women of the maloca, and even others, to help harvest the manioc, pack it and carry it home.

In my experience, the harvested tubers were usually shaken clean, and the undesirable parts chopped off with a machete, so as to not carry soil and rotten stuff home. Then the tubers were packed carefully into the baskets so
that they would be comfortable to carry. The baskets in question are also the object of much rhetoric; however, I will not address it here (but cf. Echeverri 1997: 223). A resonant theme which concerns the harvest of different cultivated crops, such as coca and tobacco, demands that the harvesters not leave behind the smaller, more humble-looking specimens. This theme also appears in a counsel about manioc, according to which the apparently insignificant little tubers must be included in the harvesting baskets and taken home. One woman explained: 'Otherwise, those little maniocs will stay behind, crying, and all the starch will be in them and not in the big ones which you do take away.'

I remember being counselled several times to carry my load of manioc in one go all the way to the boat that would take us home, or even all the way home, if the river did not lay between the garden and the home. If I were to insist on resting, they told me, the task would become more difficult and I would get more tired. As with other tasks, then, this one should be carried out with vigour and willingness.

6.1.2 Manioc preparations

The preparation of manioc is women's responsibility, and it takes up much of their time. Most of the many variants of manioc used by the Muinane are poisonous and so must be treated carefully to avoid intoxication and even death. As I mentioned above, the mambeadero rhetoric on the substances of men often emphasises the predatory, death-dealing nature of the processes involved in preparing the substances, and of the agency which they provide. In the Speeches (and through them) poisons, pathogens, pollutants and so on in
tobacco and coca are attacked and destroyed, and in turn, the resultant substances become in a strong sense hunters. By contrast, the women’s transformation of a very poisonous tuber into edible matter is not treated as a strong predatory attack upon evil beings. Rather, if there is any predation involved—I would argue there is, in a weaker sense—it is not a matter of great attention. The resulting foodstuffs are not deemed to have strong, game-killing agency; they do, however, quench False Fires. Perhaps the point is that being a creature of the garden, a strongly domesticated and therefore moral space, the manioc is in itself already free of pathogenic agents, so transforming it need not be conceived as a battle or a hunt. The emphasis of the rhetoric is more on its final purity, nourishing harmlessness, and life-giving attributes.

The methods of preparation are standardised and very similar among the People of the Centre and other groups beyond. One way of preparing poisonous manioc is to leave the unpeeled tubers to ferment for three days or so in a pond, a quiet spot in a stream or in a barrel. The manioc is then peeled by hand and carried home to be beaten into a mash in a trough. The resulting mash is placed in a sack and compressed to remove some liquids, and thereafter placed in a gādāmehu, a long, flat band of interwoven bark strips which is wrapped around the mash and then hung and twisted in such a fashion that it wrings out the rest of the poisonous liquids. The almost dry

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148 I discuss this in section 11.6.
149 From what I gathered, garden produce is usually understood to ‘have no harm’—that is, to be no threat whatsoever to human health—and therefore to need no transformative food shamanism such as that required by game meat. However, there seem to be some exceptions. Cf. Griffiths (1998:164, 165), where he describes certain Uitoto (and Muinane) dance rituals which carry out the function of ridding certain garden fruit of their pathogens. These pathogens would be carryovers from incomplete mythic transformations.
dough is then ready to be placed on a manioc bread plate and cooked into the form of manioc bread, or else to be toasted as farinha, a granulous manioc flour. The former is known as tyükino määhu (‘fermented manioc bread’) in Muinane, and as casabe seco or casabe uitoto (‘dry manioc bread’ or ‘Uitoto manioc bread’) in Spanish. It is considered to be traditionally Uitoto fare, and not Muinane, but many Muinane men are married to Uitoto women, and so for that reason as well it is common fare in Muinane communities. Furthermore, most Muinane women can make this kind of bread, because often their mothers, grandmothers, or sisters-in-law are Uitoto\textsuperscript{150}.

The method of manioc processing which the Muinane consider to be their very own involves first peeling the fresh manioc and grating it. Both these steps are subject to counsels. (To provide two examples that come to mind concerning the first step: little girls are supposed to be instructed not to peel their manioc in the garden when they grow up, lest they become widows early when they marry, and not to leave the peels close to the home lest dangerous worms develop there.) The graters for this method of processing manioc are usually made of wooden planks to which the woman’s husband—who is obliged to make all her tools—has attached a flattened metal can in which he has previously poked numerous holes with a nail\textsuperscript{151}. The jagged edges of the holes quickly turn manioc rubbed against them into a wet mash. The mash is then processed to separate the starch from the pulp, by means of the nitiiba, a

\textsuperscript{150} Some of the Muinane say that before the time of the rubber holocaust they tended to marry other Muinane-speaking clans, and to avoid intermarriage with the Uitoto, Andoke, Nonuya and other neighbours. On the other hand, they tell of past formal relationships of ritual interlocution with those groups, and of the multilingualism of their ancestors at the time of the rubber holocaust. These features are probably linked to frequent intermarrying. Whatever the case, these groups now share most of their cultivation and food preparation techniques and ritual forms.
concave disc (of about 70 cm. – 1 mt. in diameter) woven out of flat strips of the bark of certain plants. The grated mash is placed on it, water is poured over it, and with vigorous movements the women mix water and mash, and the finer starch, dissolved in the water, sifts through the weave and into a container. The women then wait till the starch settles at the bottom, and pour out the poisonous water. The pulp is disposed of, usually, or else small amounts of it are mixed with starch and used in manioc bread preparation.

The precipitation and desiccation of the very pure starch is the part of the manioc process to which the Muinane seem to attribute the strongest symbolism. This image is their model for the process of generation of a child in its mother's womb: there, the father's semen precipitates and dries in the cool warmth of the maternal 'cup of life', just like manioc starch does, until finally it takes the shape of a child.

Manioc preparation is mostly an endeavour of women. Men on occasion help with some of the work, and indeed counsels to boys prescribe that they should help their wives with their tasks whenever they can do so. Some of the counsels, however, warn that men should not touch the starch, for they can then get a disease that affects their penes, making them itch and become covered with an unpleasant, starchlike substance.

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151 A few of the women with whom I spoke, however, preferred to make their own graters.
152 This water may be used in some culinary preparations, if properly cooked.
153 According to Echeverri (1997:254), manioc straining and starch extracting processes among the People of the Centre are a symbol of Creation, a separation of 'true abundance' from the animalistic 'abundance of beginnings', of cultigens from game, of culture from nature. I would add that the same is true of several other processes, such as that of tobacco and coca. They are all purifying processes that involve the sometimes violent exclusion of detrimental elements from otherwise desirable matter. For an interesting convergence between the People of the Centre and the Tukanoan Barasana, concerning the link between the processing of manioc and human reproduction, cf. Hugh Jones, C. (1979: 180).
Once the starch is ready, it can be used in several important preparations. One of these is the traditional iïtaku mǎåhu, manioc starch bread. Manioc bread—prepared in the ‘Uitoto’ fashion\textsuperscript{154}, the ‘Muinane’ fashion, or otherwise\textsuperscript{155}—is the staple of the daily diet of the Muinane. It is usually a thin, flat round loaf of about 50 cms. in diameter, which is cooked on a ceramic plate above the fire. Manioc bread is the quintessential food of Real People, the ‘real food’ that any True Woman always has available to feed her family. In one myth, evil beings attempted to feed a human carcass to other humans, making it appear to the eyes of the latter like an agouti carcass. One woman distrusted the meat bringers, and instructed her children to wash the meat in the river and to inspect the contents of its guts. The children found pieces of manioc bread in the intestines, thus discovering the grisly truth.

Though less often than tobacco coca and manicuera (which I describe below), I also witnessed the occasional event in which manioc bread was linked to people’s subjectivity and action. For example, Manuel once described his own bad temper as a young man, and stated that his father had on occasion asked him “Why is it that you always wake up with that bad manioc bread?” The idea is that a well-fed person—that is, fed with good food, in a proper environment—should not have a bad temper, for he or she does not incorporate improper substances that generate it.

Another important manioc concoction is the caguana, the manioc starch drink. This drink is of central importance to many Muinane activities. It is prepared by mixing manioc starch with very hot water, and beating it. The

\textsuperscript{154} The preparation of Uitoto manioc bread does not involve the extraction of starch. However, the Muinane deem it to be real food, like their own manioc bread.

\textsuperscript{155} There are other ways of preparing manioc bread.
resulting drink is thick and white, and on several occasions mambeadores quietly called my attention to the fact that it was like semen. In different mambeaderos, the men told me that the wife of the maloca owner, who is known as the Āivojigo or 'woman of Painful Speech,' never lacks chilli broth, manioc bread, and especially caguana, with which to feed and refresh her people and any visitors. The caguana, along with the tobacco, coca and other substances, is processed by men's bodies and turned into what may be the purest substance of all: semen. Roberto once told me that women provide men with food and caguana all the time, and then demand that the men provide them with semen in return. Women also drink caguana, though, and it is similarly understood to make them healthy, strong and fertile.

Counsels to mothers of young children insist that the latter should be given much caguana to drink. There are even little games to persuade a child to drink, such as handing it a bowl of the stuff, and then as the child drinks, saying rhythmically 'Tihe ádu, tihe ádu, tihe ádu, tihe ádu....' (The tapir drinks, the tapir drinks, the tapir drinks.) The doctrine states that the health and strength of the tapir stem from the fact that it not only bathes often in cold water, but that it also drinks a lot. The caguana, which is widely regarded to be very nourishing and wholesome, should do the same for a child that drinks much of it. A similar game Manuel described to me from his own childhood involved his mother or grandmother putting her hands on his neck and then, as he drank from a gourd, slowly lowering her hands along his body, signalling that his body was being filled (in a descending direction) with caguana and that it was down to the level of her hands. When she reached his ankles — meaning that he was full of the stuff he could stop drinking.
The large dance rituals involve much caguana drinking, with one of the explicit purposes of this being to help people to multiply\textsuperscript{156}. On the one hand, this stems from the fertility-endowing nature of the manioc starch drink. On the other, manioc starch and caguana are used as healing concoctions for several different diseases.

There are different ploys which the Muinane use to get people to drink as much caguana as possible, for the sake of their health and fertility. One custom that involves getting people to drink caguana is the Íísúji ritual—the ritual of Speech of Making (people) drink‘—, which may take place one or several nights prior to a dance ritual. On that occasion, the men of a maloca, excepting the dance owner himself and his sons, take gourdfuls of caguana to everybody in the maloca while they sing more or less critical songs addressed at others present.

Another ploy to get people to drink is to hold a ‘caguanada’, a drinking bout. I witnessed one in which Amancio’s wife Alicia called people to drink. Ernesto, the áivojiibo of the community, had previously accused her of being a gossip, and had tossed a dead wild pig at her door, saying ‘There’s your gossip. See how you pay for it!’ Ernesto’s gesture was a claim to the effect that Alicia’s gossip was the Speech of an evil animal which he had caused to dawn as game. Perhaps to ‘redeem’ herself and show that she was not just a loudmouthed gossip whose talk was empty, or perhaps to ‘pay’ him for healing her, she was obliged to produce a massive amount of drink and provide it to all the community. She did so, showing herself to be a True Woman whose

\textsuperscript{156} Espinosa (1995:88) states that the Andoke claim that in the past, some of their women could propitiate the birth of either male or female children through the ritual use of caguana and manicuera. See also her description of caguana drinking the night before a dance ritual
thoughts and talk were not empty. These thoughts ‘dawned’ as a large vatful of life-giving drink to be shared in an event that turned out to be lots of fun.

In that funny but slightly painful event, people took gourdfulls of the drink to a chosen rival –often they were opposite sex rivals from different lineages- and said ‘Drink!’ The other would receive the gourd, empty it, and then go to the vat of drink to fill up the gourd again. Then the first drinker would take the gourd back to whoever had given him or her the drink, and would demand that the other drink in turn. The person in turn would empty his or her gourd, and repeat the operation. Several such light-hearted exchanges would be going on simultaneously, until the large vat was empty or the bloated drinkers gave up. Throughout, people laughed and commented about each other’s drinking capacity and about similar events in the past. The community’s troubles were thus transformed into a pleasurable and nourishing event

Chuchito, a young man, received much pleased attention that day. His taut, swollen belly standing out like a Buddha’s against his otherwise fit body, he would beat it like a drum or punch it and say, ‘There is plenty of room in there for more!’ Several giggling women were in line with full gourds of caguana to make him drink. As each one proffered him the gourd, he would yell in mock surprise, receive it with loud protestations of pleasure and thirst, and empty the whole thing. We were all laughing at his antics, and there was a general buzz of approval at his good-humoured ways and (literal) holding capacity.

(ibid:219). Cf.as well Pineda (1982: 20)
6.1.3 Manicuera

Cool women who have proper thoughts in their hearts produce manicuera, the juice of sweet manioc, for all their kin to consume. This tuber looks much like other manioc varieties but is much softer to grate and has a higher content of water. It is prepared by peeling it and grating it, and then boiling the resulting soft mash for hours until its poison is cooked away and the delicious, sweet drink is ready. According to Carmen, Pedro's wife, manicuera is the mother of women: 'By means of manicuera women came to exist, much as men came to exist through tobacco and coca'. Manicuera juice 'cools' and 'sweetens' the hearts of men, women and children, which may be heated and made angry by other substances and by the sun. Sergio explained its healing properties by reference to water: 'The manicuera is entirely water...how then can disease enter into it?' Another man told me to note that the manicuera, like the tobacco plant, has water (dew) on the outside at night and in the early morning, when it is cool, yet under the hot sun the water is in its inside, keeping it forever wet and cool. People should be thus: always cool inside, even in 'hot' milieus.

The cool Speech of Manicuera constitutes a pleasurable sense of calm and well-being, and when expressed, brings the addressee tranquillity and relief from anger and haste. The person imbued with manicuera feels no harried haste, but no laziness either. Anger cannot touch him or her, nor can itchiness and confusion.

Pedro portrayed an ideal scenario to me, in the typical present tense of Muinane prescriptions and descriptions of tradition: 'The daughter-in-law
harvests her sweet manioc and prepares it carefully. She cools it\textsuperscript{157} and then she takes some to her husband’s father in the *mambeadero*. He drinks, and says, ‘This woman is a true daughter-in-law. I have become cool because of her produce. She has already *shown*.’ This last term, my translation of their ‘*Ya mostró*’ in Spanish or ‘*Ifuvusukugo*’ in Muinane, means that the woman has already made her virtuous thoughts dawn as visible, tangible nourishing stuffs that benefit her and her new family. She has thereby proven herself to be a well-counseled woman.

Manicuera is equally important for men and for women; they need it so as not to be dominated by the heat of their other substances. Thus, men risk burning to death and burning others with them if they are not ‘cooled’ by the manicuera; women too risk becoming excessively angry under the influence of the chillies they cultivate (I describe the effects of chillies in greater depth below). Manuel once told me that Samuel, his young classificatory brother, was forcing his wife to smell burning chillies for the third or fourth time in a brief period, to punish her for angry expressions to or to banish from her body through the pain of chillies whatever agent was making her express anger. Manuel claimed that he had corrected Samuel by asking him, ‘Yes, chillies are sometimes the cure...but where is the *manicuera*? How, otherwise, will you sweeten her heart?’ Samuel had then instructed his wife to prepare *manicuera*, and had asked his father (or perhaps Manuel himself) to make the proper invocations on it. The woman had drunk, and since then, according to Manuel, had offered less trouble.

\textsuperscript{157} She cools it in a ‘literal’ sense: with a cup, she constantly stirs the manicuera, lifts a cupful and lets it pour back into the pot from above, to lower its temperature.
Despite the native emphasis on the sweet and cool nature of manicuera, it can be lethally poisonous if not properly cooked. It must be boiled for hours before it can be drunk. In several casual conversations, men and women among the Muinane told me of occasions in which women had failed to cook their manicuera for enough time, and had caused people to become intoxicated. One woman nearly killed an entire Nonuya lineage in the 1980's; most finally recovered but one child died that time. The process of transforming it into a sweet, cooling drink, like that of transforming the bitter, poisonous raw manioc into the nourishing staple manioc bread is of symbolic importance to the Muinane; it is another case of proper human work wresting nourishment and agency from useless or polluted substances. However, as with other manioc, this cooking process—unlike that of tobacco and coca—does not seem to be treated as a case of predation upon an evil agent behind the poison.

6.2 Chillies

Women’s nourishing obligations demand that they prepare good food for their families. In cooking they use the agencies of chillies and fire to transform any filth and pollutants which may have remained in meat, fish and other foods after the men’s food shamanism. Tobacco and coca, through food shamanism, are understood to prey upon the subjective agents behind the pollutants, but on occasion to leave behind some perhaps unpleasant or useless elements in the food. The most common culinary preparation of the

158 There are Speeches and recipes to treat people who have been poisoned by uncooked manicuera. Amancio told me, however, that the best cure did not involve Speeches: the intoxicated person merely had to drink saltwater.
Muinane is the chilli broth, made by cooking hot chillies and some fish or game in raw manioc juice or water. The Muinane claim that the chilli pot "eats" the left-over, unpleasant blood-taste of the game or fish, and transforms the "bite" or "pain" of different kinds of ants and edible insects added to the broth into pleasant taste.

Chillies, Pedro told me, belong to women\textsuperscript{159}. He explained that they are hot because of the sun that shines upon them and enters them. Like chillies, women get red-faced working in the garden under the sun, and they too get hot and therefore sometimes scold. 'One listens quietly, without answering her...because then a fight would start. One knows that it is the sun that makes her speak like that. After a while she calms down and realises what is going on. Then at night one embitters the sun for doing that to her...then she will truly rest in her hammock..' Nevertheless, he said, women should consign the heat and anger they receive from the sun into their chillies, and not direct it against their husbands and children.

Pedro went on to say that whereas men punish miscreants by making them consume a sickening amount of tobacco paste, women do so with chilli powder. He stated that in the past, women used to demand that miscreants smell chilli powder, to punish them: 'It is out of fearful respect of this powder that the elders warn youths "Do not play with women!"' I never witnessed any woman punishing anybody else in that fashion. Chillies are, however, used frequently to remove evil 'atmospheres' from people and places. On occasion

\textsuperscript{159} Pineda (1982:21) notes briefly the intimate link between chillies and the Andoke women who cultivate them. He notes, however, that certain varieties are carefully cultivated by men of knowledge, who used them with great secrecy. They burn them to heal 'dementia and delirium' (ibid: 32).
mambeadores ask their wives for some smoked chillies, which they set alight. The irritating smoke makes most people cough, expelling the evil agents.

On one occasion I was awakened by a woman’s pitiful screams in an adjoining house, addressing her husband, ‘Is it that you wish to kill me?’ His hoarse, tearful voice answered loudly, ‘Yes, die! Die now! Leave!’ He later told me that he had been making his wife smell burning chillies, to rid her of her evil. When she had protested, he said, it had not been her in fact, but the evil inside her trying to stop him from attacking it. On another occasion, several girls aged twelve or so were involved in a row that took place in one of the Muinane communities. They were accused of causing trouble between a man and his wife with their flirtatious behaviour. The leader of the community, a very old man, called them to him and made them smell burning smoked chillies, reportedly until they vomited and passed out. This old man also diagnosed Pedro’s daughter’s wandering ways as a result of ‘chundü’ poisoning, and provided her with smoked chillies which she was to light and smell every day for a week or so.

Carmen said that the chilli plant was intrinsically hot since the time of creation, and did not mention the sun as its source of spice. She stated that if people eat a lot of chillies, their bodies become spicy hot — the word for this in Muinane could better be translated as ‘painful’ — and the diseases find it so and thus do not enter it. She rectified: ‘The heart must be cool, but the body [spicy] hot. People in the past did not have any drugs, but still they did not use to become sick. Perhaps it was the chillies.’ Women’s responsibility to provide

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160 Cf. Echeverri on the Uitoto’s use of hot chillies to scare away the animal spirits that induce drowsiness, the tendency to oversleep, deceitfulness and ‘craziness’ (1997:262).
their men and children with hot chilli broth is thus central to the maintenance of health of the community.

Chillies' link to thoughts/emotions is further made evident in dance rituals. Pedro explained this to me: 'Chillies are war. They cool people, but heat up and kill animals. When there is a large harvest of chillies, women make kiīgai (a strong chilli broth reduced to a paste by means of a long cooking process). Then they add a basketful more of chillies, and put meat, kiīta ants and grubs of the kind that cause stomach pains into it. The kiīgai 'eats' all those diseases and stings. Then it is called 'duúmoba' ('meat eater'). 'The woman's anger becomes extinguished, because it is all consigned in the kiīgai. Then when there is a dance, the maloca's leader says, "Women! Now show your anger!" And they fight with all comers, with chillies. That is why the dance is called "war." I never witnessed this 'war', but according to Pedro, women used to brush very strong chilli paste on the mouths of guests, in particular of those who sang critical songs addressed to them. Some such songs—a standard and necessary element of most dance rituals—accuse the maloca's women of being angry, stingy, inhospitable, lazy or ugly. With her chilli paste, each woman retaliates correctly, showing that she is a moral and productive person. Such 'war' benefits both her and her critics. She is freed of the weight and threat of hidden critiques, and they are made healthy by the chilli paste, as the woman's transformed anger makes their bodies spicy hot and therefore protected against evil agents.\(^\text{161}\)

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\(^{161}\) Echeverri (1997:241) notes that among the Uitoto-Minika, women transform their anger into manicuera, 'the quintessence of Indian femininity.'
Carmen told me that if a woman's *kiigai* is hot, others will say 'This woman is angry in truth! She is [spicy] hot, like her chilli pot!' On the other hand, if her chilli pot or *kiigai* are not hot, people will chastise any anger she may show, saying 'How can you claim to be angry, when you do not have hot chillies?' or 'Your anger is empty...you have not 'shown' yet!' (That is, she has not made her morality manifest itself in hot chillies.) This seems to be paradoxical, because if hot chillies are the incarnation of women's anger, for a woman to have hot paste should be understood to free them of anger. However, the Muinane's interpretation is different: a woman with hot chillies has shown her anger to be based on true substances or moral thoughts/emotions; it is therefore defensible as a rightful anger, or one that results from moral activities. A woman who does not have hot chillies but is bad tempered thereby manifests a lack of moral substance. Her angry demonstrations are the empty Speech of a lazy woman who has not worked as much as she should, and which cannot be transformed into hot chillies.

As with tobacco, coca and manioc, there are also spurious versions of chillies which cause people to have improper thoughts or to act in improper manners. The 'chilli of the coati', as one variety is called, are real plants that come in different sizes and colours. Some are large, some small, some red, some purple, some green. In *mambeadero* Speeches, the Speech of this variety of chilli is rejected because it is as inconsistent as the fruit's appearance: at times it is cool, at times hot, sometimes good, sometimes bad. Proper Speech which stems from true substances, on the other hand, is always consistent: a *mambeador* should always act in accordance with his statements in the *mambeadero*, and never otherwise; a woman should always
be hospitable, generous and hard-working. As with other spurious substances, other varieties of chilli cause people to be immorally angry or do behave in diverse, flawed fashions. Yet other chillies simply lack the virtue of strength, without causing any harm.

6.3 The Meal – the incorporation of foodstuffs

A typical meal among the Muinane can take place at any time of the day, from morning to night. They do tend to have three main meals, to which they refer in Spanish with the words for breakfast, lunch and dinner, but often they also have snacks at other times or break the pattern. Women are in charge of the distribution of prepared foodstuffs, and sometimes of the game their husbands bring. For example, when Juan killed a domestic pig in order to feed the numerous people who were helping him to build his maloca, it was his wife who addressed each of the women guests and said 'Here is your part.' Each woman thus addressed would receive the proffered meat and then distribute it to her husband, children and other dependants.

For everyday meals, the woman who owns the hearth – she tends to be the mother of the nuclear family who eats at that hearth - usually heats up the chilli broth and puts the pot on the floor, and next to it she places several loaves of manioc bread. She then calls 'Mámachuvako!' (Or the Uitoto or Spanish equivalent to 'Come eat!'), not necessarily addressing her husband and children individually and by name. When it is a larger meal and she is calling different families to partake from her preparations, she similarly says 'Mámachuvako!' but then addresses each adult man and woman and tells them 'There's my chilli pot and my manioc bread. Eat!' Any children are called
or brought over to the pot by their parents. Several times I witnessed conversations in which people from different ethnic groups of the region commented about eating customs. Each time they claimed that among some peoples the meal is just put out and nobody is called; rather, each one makes their way to the pot and partakes from it with no invitation. Not so the Muinane, they all stressed.

There is often sharing between hearth units within a maloca, but less so among kin who live in close proximity but in different houses. For example, Manuel lived in a big maloca with his four sons, two daughters and two daughters-in-law. The three couples and one of the daughters each had their own cooking fire. The other unmarried children –one of whom was fully grown-ate with their parents. Very often at meal times the cooking women would take food to the others. While I usually ate with Manuel and his wife, it was not rare for one of the other three women to bring me a cup of manicuera, or to give me some cooked ants, and to do the same for the others in the maloca. On the other hand the siblings Juan, Pedro and Sergio and their respective wives, who lived in neighbouring houses and thus did not eat together, would provide cuts of game or amounts of fruit to each on a much less frequent basis. Each of them considered this to be a sad lack of regard for kin on their siblings’ part. The emphasis on generosity and mutual concern applies to the meal itself: children are supposed to be able to eat together, out of the same plate, without bickering over morsels; men are supposed to leave generous amounts of food for their wives in the plates they share.

In most meals, the people sit around the chilli pot, break off pieces of manioc bread, and dip it into the broth. If there is plenty of fish or meat in the
broth, they take some out; otherwise it is explicitly deemed to be bad manners
to 'row' with the manioc bread in the pot in search for meat. As they eat, adult
men often smack their lips loudly and exclaim at how delicious the food is.

Many counsels refer to the protocols of the meal, and to the ill
consequences of not complying with them. Certain meats or cuts should be
avoided by children, because these may affect their health. The way to eat
manioc bread is also important: it should not be torn into small pieces lest the
person have too many children, too quickly; they should not choose to eat only
the toasted borders of the loaf, lest their teeth break or lest they someday be
surrounded by enemies and be unable to flee. The child should not 'row' with
the manioc bread in the chilli pot, lest his or her hand remain in the clawed
position which the hand must assume in order to get anything solid out of the
pot. Boys should not eat in their hammocks, lest the trees they fell and the
treed game they shoot remain caught by branches up high. (Paradoxically, I
once heard a mother telling her daughter not to eat in a hammock, for what
did she think she was, a man?!) One important counsel demands that people
not eat too much of any one thing —meat, fish, fruit or ants, among others—
without combining or mixing it with manioc bread. There is indeed a particular
verb for this mixing: 'dīvēhi'. The counsel states 'Giránoko midiivehi!': 'We
must mix much!' Meat on its own without manioc bread is dangerous, as are
fruit.\textsuperscript{162}

A person's thoughts/emotions affect very much the enjoyment of their
meal and the beneficial effect of the foods —and for the matter, ritual

\textsuperscript{162} The emphasis on mixing or combining is common in Amazonia, and extends well beyond
Overing makes a similar point throughout her writings, as do Belaunde (1992) and Gow
substances- they consume. Amancio was clear on this account: he told me that when a person is worried and thinking 'many different thoughts' –i.e. confused and indecisive- they do not sleep well, and the food they eat has no taste for them. Similarly, the counsels claim that an unhappy wife eats despondently and finds no taste in her food. In both cases, the food does not benefit the person, and they waste away. A tranquil lifestyle is thus necessary for the enjoyment of food, and the enjoyment of food is apparently necessary for it to truly nourish the person.

There are different occasions for extraordinary meals in which larger groups partake together from the fare. Among these are the mingas (communal work parties) for felling and the large work parties convoked to build a maloca. Amancio and Samuel noted on different occasions that in the present day, meals at mingas (communal work parties) are slightly incorrect in form because only the owner of the minga puts out her chilli pot, manioc bread, fruit and caguana. Samuel said that it was different and better in the past, and Amancio said that it was different and more pleasant among the Bora; in both cases because the custom was that every woman who came put out her pot and her manioc bread, and people ate from everybody's food. Samuel said that as done today, the family who was holding the minga risked hunger from feeding everybody else (I discuss mingas in greater depth in the chapter on transformations).

Dance rituals are also extraordinary events in which foodstuffs are prepared, distributed and redistributed with many protocolary regulations. I touch upon this matter in the chapter on transformations.

6.4 Cool Herbs

The Muinane say that the Cool Herbs belong to women. It is women’s responsibility to plant them and care for them, though often it is men who make invocations upon them to make healing concoctions. These herbs are paradigmatic of all that is cool, gentle, sweet and serene. They are wet, like the *manicuera*, and like the *manicuera*, the sun may burn hot upon them but still they remain cool and sweet inside. *Síikuje, kátiho, gáníiraba, gáakába, niibimi* and *düúmoho* and a few other herbs are referred to as ‘mothers’ or ‘grandmothers’. Two of the Cool Herbs are understood to be male: *kárefiku* and *bakúhono*. As with tobacco and manioc, the gender of the substance does not mean that only men or women speak its Speech; both genders may experience the Breath of the Cool Herbs, and speak accordingly.

The cooling capacity of these herbs is understood to be intrinsic to them. As expressed in at least one clan’s myth of creation, great, unstoppable fires once burned all over the Land of the Centre. The creator placed the grandmothers on the ground, and the fire died upon reaching them. Ever since, they quench many kinds of False Fires.

The Cool Herbs are used in different ways. *Kátiho* is used as a body paint; most of the others are used as ingredients of infusions to be drunk or to be used in bathing. Among the prescriptions of the Speech of Advice, one counsel instructs women to bathe their bodies in *síikuje* after a day of work under the hot sun, to cool their bodies down. Another counsel tells them to bathe themselves with ‘the grandmothers’ so that anger does not affect them too much. They should also bathe their little children with these herbs before
laying them to sleep in their hammocks, in order to soothe them and ensure that they sleep well. The Cool Herbs in general can be used to counteract the aromatic or pungent odours of certain forest plants, as well as the sickening stench of certain rotten animal carcasses. Smelling any such pathogenic odours unwittingly can cause people headaches, sore throats, dizziness or mad behaviours; the sweet aroma of the Cool Herbs, crushed in the hand or seeped in water and then breathed in, removes these pains and troubles. Kárefiku, for one, and perhaps a few of the others, may be dried and smoked as well.

Sergio linked the düümoho to Cool Fire rather than to water. He said women should be named as ‘Düümogaigo’ (Woman of düümoho) so that they become like a Cool Fire that can consume all kinds of stuff—evil stuff included—without coming to harm because of it. This is one instance in which a substance of women functions in a limited sense like a predator. It enables a woman to consume potentially dangerous stuff much as a predatorial fire does, without coming to harm, but it differs from more predatorial substances in that it does not make evil agents ‘dawn’ as game.

Let me present a summary version of a Speech of Apprising on the gääkába, the herb that watches over the manioc in the garden, scaring off the agoutis that eat the manioc and frightening passers-by. This plant is often referred to as a mother who repairs evil, corrects mistakes and cools things down.

There was once a child whom the animals were trying to sicken and corrupt. They would give him sticks and have him hit them

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with it; they would teach it to bite them and pinch them. They also wrapped him in their own itchy carrier cloths. The child became very troublesome. He cried all the time and hit others with his stick. His mother tried to make him sleep, to no avail. One of his grandmothers, the Cool Herb Gáakába Mógai (Woman of Gáakába) perceived this and came to help. She told the mother, ‘Your whole body is like thorns and itchy fuzz to him...I will paint you.’ The Gáakába Mógai made an invocation upon some kátiho paint, and painted the child’s mother with it, healing her. When the child wanted to play with his stick, the grandmother took it from him and placed it in the rafters of the maloca above the door. She told him, ‘I will take care of it for you till your are a grown man.’ (At this point in the narration Manuel emphasised that one should never give children sticks to play with, because they then learn to hit and spear people with them). She then cooled the child down and sweetened his heart by giving him a gourdfull of manicuera. She also got rid of the itchy carrier cloth in which the animals had wrapped him, by covering him with kátiho and anthill cotton. The child and the mother then truly rested.

The animals try to transform the child into a violent, antisocial character, and exacerbate his discomfort by making his mother feel anything but mother-like. Through the agency of the cool herbs and manicuera, the

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164 The Uitoto plant a herb they name as ‘Lying-in-Wait Mother’, who stamps her foot and scares black agoutis (Dasyprocta fuliginosa) away from the garden. (Griffiths 1998: 116)
child's heart is cooled and his violent desires and physical discomfort are brought under control.

As I noted above, the story of tobacco also involves the Cool Herbs. When it swallowed the thickening phlegms of some plants, these did not sicken it. Rather, its throat remained a 'throat of niibimi', sweet, cool, free of pain, and capable of singing normally. In general, the Cool Herbs are used in remedies to heal many diseases. They also provide people who use them with a cooling agency.

Women's moral endeavours are sometimes understood to be expressions of the Speech of Cool Herbs in their bodies. For example, while I lived with Sergio and his wife, she almost incessantly inveighed against her husband, aggressively chiding him for being lazy or else for working too fast, for being bad-tempered in the morning, for being inconsiderate with her and the children, and so on. He told me one day that it was not his wife who spoke thus, but a yulo. This yulo 'spirit' was in her, and should he answer her so that a quarrel would ensue, the beast would have succeeded in its efforts, and would laugh. To avoid this he never accepted her provocations. On the other hand, he said, when she asked him to make baskets and other tools for her use in productive processes, it was the Speech of dúúmoho in her, her true Speech, speaking. In such cases, he claimed, he would respond immediately by providing what she demanded.

The Cool Herbs can also be made use of in nominal transformations of different things. In my experience this was usually the task of men, though

165 The term for it in Muinane is nimitíthe. Other terms for it in Spanish are chigüiro or capybara. Its Linnaean classification is Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris, and it is the largest of rodents. The Muinane deem it to be a filthy animal, and only a few hunt it for meat.
Juan's wife, a Uitoto-Miníka woman, was known to be a successful healer of minor illnesses through her invocations upon Cool Herbs and cigarettes. In the frequent performative lists which the Muinane use in their mambeadero liturgies, the Cool Herbs tend to function 'adjectivally', so to speak: tobacco can be named to be tobacco of sìikuje, niibimi, düúmoho and so on, as can women, breaths, hearts, lands, carrier cloths and whatever other substance or object the mambeadores wish to make cool and harmless. A particularly eloquent example I can provide of this stems from the time I had to pay Pedro and his siblings a certain amount of money. I gave a sizeable wad of bills to Pedro, who was the eldest, and told him that I had a great fear of money, for the False Woman could make use of its presence to heat up the hearts of men, making them wish to invest it unwisely in damaging ways, covet more of it greedily, envy each other, etc. I also insisted –attempting to follow their own styles of narrative- that this money had been hard for me to come by, and that therefore it should not be misused, heated or used for anything other than what was desirable. Pedro, who was in charge of distributing the money, said that it was indeed as I had said, and started to render it harmless and good. He began to speak using a rhythmic ritual discourse, rejecting all evil that could be associated with the money, and finally named it to be the leaves of several of the cool herbs. Then he took the wad of bills, smelled it and exclaimed at its aroma and freshness, and rubbed it over his body as he would have done with a cooling herb (of the kind grown as such, not the kind transformed, that is). He passed the wad on to Juan, telling him to smell its freshness. He had effectively transformed the money so that no evil could come of it.
There are other desirable herbs which are not cultivated, and therefore not substances of women or of men. They grow in the jungle, but are nevertheless cool and with healing properties. Among these the fern-like tamillu stands out. In a certain myth, it alone among numerous other substances was untouched by a destructive fire and polluting diseases. For dances, the Muinane often bring some of its long leaves and use them to fan the air in front of them as they go into the host’s maloca. Thus they sweep away or blow away any evil in their path, and they remove any traps—such as spiderwebs—which animals may have placed there. They fan the host, perhaps blowing away the evils that may harm him. Other such jungle herbs are méhisiiikuje, which is cool and has a takákino flavour (a taste of iron or blood) and méemetamillu, which is used to heal fevers.

There are no spurious versions of the Cool Herbs, to my knowledge; there are, however, herbs which are deemed to be of ambiguous healing or knowledge-endowing value. I do not explore these here.
Part III On the virtues and tribulations of a life of loving care
7. Introduction

7.1 On loving care

The thought/emotion of loving care\(^\text{166}\) is the ultimate motivation for people to act in an appropriate, human fashion. In turn, the ultimate purpose of moral, loving human beings is to produce new human life. A moral kind of fertility is thus central to the Muinane’s concept of proper social life.

Love, like other moral thoughts/emotions that people experience, is the Speech of the substances they consume, or of which they were made. Because kinspeople are consubstantial—they are fabricated with the same proper substances and furthermore often consume them together—, to some extent their thoughts/emotions are understood to be ‘the same’ in the sense that they share the same purposes, feel the same moral inclinations and constraints, empathise with each other’s pain and sadness, and use the same instrumental Speeches in the practices that constitute and reproduce a moral lifestyle. Such a situation is conducive to a pleasurably tranquil daily life, in which people are likely to support each other without the discouragement of unhindered contestations or conflicts of interests\(^\text{167}\).

I find that the Muinane’s variable treatment of a ‘we’, whether they speak of a nuclear family, a patriline, a clan or an ethnic group, often centres on the attribution of consubstantiality. Thus a man may claim to be made with the same substances as his brother, and therefore to have the same thoughts,

\(^{166}\) Most often I heard of it referred to in the term of the formal ‘Speech of Loving care’, ‘Kävaji’, in the mambeadero conversations among men. Another Muinane term for love is the verb gäjįįįį. This term is also used to refer to improper stinginess, such as when people abstain from giving others food, money, tools, etc., out of excessive appreciation for these things.

\(^{167}\) For discussions on consubstantiality, substance consumption, co-residence and kinship in lowland South America, cf. Vilaça (1992: 53 ), Hugh-Jones (1993: 100) and most of the
while a more distant kinsperson is made with slightly different substances and therefore has different inclinations. However, kinship and consubstantiality are manipulatable issues\textsuperscript{168}. For instance, I witnessed an occasion in which elders of different Muinane clans agreed that 'We are all made with the same tobacco,'-which was different from the tobacco of other ethnic groups- and that therefore they should manifest the same thoughts. They made claims on that occasion to the effect that manifestations of differences in thoughts —I believe they meant this in the sense of general purposes and notions of virtues— were a sign of immorality, and a denial of their consubstantiality and identity as Muinane.

Juan was explicit in linking consubstantiality —in particular the 'sameness' of the tobacco that constitutes the bodies and Speeches of kinspeople— to the feelings of love and responsible obligation towards others. He defined this love to some extent as the recognition of the fact that other people's constitution is similar to one's own: the tobacco in people recognises itself in others. It seemed as if for Juan, the potential for love were to some extent innate to every Real Person, as a result of their being made with tobacco; however, Juan also stressed that it must be generated inside people through the counsels and through nourishing with good food and drinks such as the manicuera, which sweetens and cools the heart. Juan also spoke approvingly of schools as milieus in which children incorporate 'warmth' —a loving thought/emotion, different from pathogenic heat— towards others\textsuperscript{169}.

\textsuperscript{168} Cf. Hugh-Jones (1993: 106) for a similar discussion of the variable and contextual nature of 'consanguinity' among the Tukanoans.

\textsuperscript{169} The Muinane's play between emphasising innateness or nurture seems to me to be the same in principle as their play between an explicit stress on the fixity of institutions such as...
Many of the Muinane's references to the thought/emotion of loving care seem to centre it on the relationship between parent and child. Their discussions of this thought/emotion clearly convey that it involves the morally inescapable obligation or responsibility for the proper bodily and intellectual/emotional formation of children, as well as for their general well-being. They make many references to the importance of ensuring their bodily health, and of teaching them to be pleasant, hardworking, disciplined, and so on. It is significant that in the mambeadores' dramatised descriptions of the counsels, they often address hypothetical youths or children and tell them how they should teach their future children how to behave. For instance, Ernesto, Pedro, Juan and Manuel used to speak to me about this with expressions such as the following: ‘One must tell the child ‘This is what one tells [or shows, or teaches] one’s child...’, followed by some prescription of behaviour. Such statements seem to me to reflect a fairly explicit teleological view of loving care: it is a project for perpetuity.

The parental aspect of love is similarly clear in references to dance rituals, for the duration of which guests are said to be the children of the maloca owners. Maloca owners and leaders in general are sometimes said to be ‘fathers’ of their community, and as such, to be obliged to protect it, care for its well being and ensure its propagation. As I discuss in part II and in

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171 For an example of a discourse that instructs the listener to instruct his children, cf. the Uitoto elder Candre’s discourse in Echeverri 1997:120-127
section 14.2, through dance rituals the owners ensure the bodily and intellectual/emotional health of their 'children.'

Alongside the particular emphasis on paternal obligations with which people comply out of loving care, both men and women stress people's obligations of care for other 'esteemed' ones: their spouses, their siblings, their parents, their parents-in-law, and their hosts, among others. With the latter three the responsibilities are filial in character. Daughters-in-law (and according to some people, sons-in-law too) are supposed to be counselled to address their parents-in-law as 'father' and 'mother,' and to behave accordingly: obediently and with reciprocal concern for their well-being. As adult 'children,' people's sons, daughters, children-in-law and guests should generously share their ritual substances, game and other foodstuffs with them. Sons in particular should show gratefulness for their fathers' or guardians' teachings, and apply their acquired knowledge in the care of the original providers, once these are too aged or weak to take care of themselves. Concerning spouses and siblings, people are enjoined to support them and to respond to their demands with promptness and concern.

Muinane men and women often insist that there is no such thing as a true (moral) sentiment that is merely 'inside' the person, or that is limited to mere spoken protestations of proper emotions; it is precisely a feature of moral sentiments that they become manifest 'materially,' and indeed visually (I return to this in section 12.2). They should be made manifest through action:

\[^{172}\text{I return to this section 12.5. On the general notion of 'community of care', cf. Ales 2000, Gow 2000 and Kidd 2000.}\]
thus, loving people actively ensure the well-being of kin by providing the material trappings of care.

Sometimes the loving character of action is not immediately obvious to the receiver, but this does not make it any the less a materialisation of love. For example, Juan once told me that I should change my ways concerning a minor detail of my behaviour. Afterwards he told me not to feel bad about his 'scolding' me: 'It is only one who loves who counsels another; one who does not love does not counsel or scold.' In other words, it was out of loving concern for me that he was counselling me to change my ways. He went on to say that an observer who does not love a youth who is misbehaving will not correct his or her actions, but will merely remain silent, waiting for the day in which the youth's misbehaviour offends somebody capable of harming him or her physically or through sorcery. Such counselling and scolding, and similar explanations that this was done out of loving care, appeared constantly in the mambeadores' ideal portrayals of child-raising.

People give pride of place to the concept of loving care in their definitions of what constitutes desirable community life, in their appreciative portrayals of moral people, and in their harsh critiques of others who fail to manifest proper thoughts. On one occasion, for example, my friend Manuel came back home from attempting to heal the tribulations of his classificatory brother Napoleon and his wife Fidelina, who had been fighting over jealousy and infidelity. Their fighting had generated much talk in the community, and worried Napoleon's father and the community cabildo\textsuperscript{173}. Manuel had visited

\textsuperscript{173} The cabildo is usually a small committee elected to administer those aspects of community (comunidad) life which relate to the issues of 'white men': that is, money, the school, the government, the church, and NGO's. It is usually made up of young adult men. In Chukiki, the
the couple, told them a myth which related the origins of behaviours such as theirs, and then ritually cleared their household and their hearts of the evil agents that caused their troubles. Afterwards, he told me with justified pride that Fidelina had said to him ‘Now you have shown that you truly esteem us, compadre! Others come to us with angry yells and insults, but not you...you come with sweet Speech, to heal us.’ His actions, he claimed, manifested that he truly esteemed his people and would care for them, even to the extent of exposing himself to the retaliative attacks of the evil sources of Napoleon’s and Fidelina’s emotions that he was combating for their sake.

Before finishing this section, I wish to make the following, parenthetical addition: much of what I write below manifests my perception of the Muinane as a tough people, and of their daily life as characterised by much friction. It is not at all my purpose to stress the contrast between this friction and their rhetoric on love and conviviality, as if it were a case of discourse and action not coinciding. Both their conflictive manifestations and the loving rhetoric are action. The point I wish to make here is that for me there is another great contrast, between the very frequent expressions of anger, harsh critiques and so on, and the touching demonstrations of love more akin to our understanding of affection. Roberto, for instance, despite his famed quickness to anger and despite his occasional demonstrations of ill will towards others—he wanted me to teach him Haitian voodoo so he could harm people with photographs!—, was surprisingly sweet with his grandchildren. He would hug them and pamper them unselfconsciously, in quite a touching way.

cabildo is supposed to be subject to the supervision and counsel of the ‘council of elders’, a group of the oldest clan leaders. Some communities have women in the cabildo as well, but older Muinane men tend to frown on this, finding it untenable to counsel a woman in the
On occasion he and his wife would lean on the other, as the one lay on a hammock and the other sat next to it. Sometimes they would punch each other playfully to chastise some joke, in a way that I felt reflected a trust and a companionship of years. Antonio, Juan, Manuel and even Ernesto—a true tyrant, in my opinion—all at some point or another came up with similar manifestations of affection. These affectionate expressions tempered the rather harsh image of the Muinane that I sometimes perceived.

7.2 Keeping to the path: on a sense of moral purpose

The Muinane often use the metaphor of paths to refer to proper goals and moral endeavours, and to the importance of a disciplined sense of purpose\(^\text{174}\). For example, Pedro, an old mambeador, once told me that the Cool Path, the Path of Life, went from the maloca to the garden, and that walking elsewhere was not acceptable. He explained to me at length that this meant that the only worthwhile knowledge, and the only worthwhile endeavours, were those that ensured the production of foodstuffs and ritual substances, because only these ensured in turn the propagation of Real People. Such endeavours take place for the most part in the garden itself and in or around the maloca. For Pedro, ‘walking elsewhere’—off the ‘Cool Path’—stood metaphorically for the use of unacceptable forms of knowledge and action, such as ‘empty Speech’ which does not bring about desirable results, or sorcery. Hunting, though it takes place in the forest, is a moral endeavour that leads to the protection and nourishment of kin; moreover, it is treated in exclusively male mambeadero, as they like to do with the cabildo members.\(^\text{174}\) On a somewhat similar moral emphasis on a sense of purpose among the Peruvian Airo-Pai, cf. Belaunde (1992:95).
ritual as a form of fruit harvesting. Thus, though it often literally takes place off the actual path to the garden, it is well within the metaphorical 'Cool Path'.

Another 'Cool Path' is the 'Path of Speech' or 'Path of Tobacco'. These terms are sometimes used as a complex trope for the formal relationships established between maloca owners explicitly for ritual purposes. The 'path' refers to the geographical space to be traversed by a traveller taking ritual tobacco from one clan's maloca to the other's in order to demand the other's help in some ritual endeavour, and by the guests who respond to those summons of tobacco and make their way to the ritual. In the rhetoric, however, it appears that the trope involves not only the path itself but numerous formalities involved in traversing them, the footings of the relations between the men who send and receive tobacco along it, and the behaviours of all involved when visiting another maloca. In the rhetoric, such 'paths' ensure that each clan can request from each other much needed mutual support for great and vital endeavours, and that the other can respond accordingly. Again, this is a moral path, traversed for moral purposes.

One aphorism concerning such paths and purposes demands that "We must go straight to where we go, and nowhere else." I often heard this aphorism, or paraphrases of it that similarly stated that once one has established an aim or a goal, or enunciated a plan, one must direct one's actions towards it without deviating. It is as a demand for single-minded purposefulness. Needless to say, this aim or plan must conform to a moral purpose in the first place. A Muinane-speaking Nonuya leader once described

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175 The 'Path of Life' is also sometimes used as a complex metaphor for the penis (through which tobacco/semen spews forth), among the Uitoto and the Muinane. I cannot explore this in depth here. On the Uitoto-Nipöde’s use of the metaphor of the path, cf. Griffiths (1998: 2101-3296).
to me how he counselled his people before a trip to another *maloca* whose owner was holding a dance ritual, and had sent them an invitation with tobacco. He addressed men, women and children from the *mambeadero*, saying: "We were invited to that *maloca* to sing, dance, lick tobacco, *mambe*, drink *caguana* and eat! Do not stray from that path, for there you will find thorns, and I cannot heal you if you get hurt for your disobedience! Do not make them name me! Do not make them say that the people of Such-and-such do not help with the dancing, or that their young men bother the girls!" As I shall discuss below (in section 14.2), dance rituals are ultimately carried out for the protection and future procreation of the participants. Behaving properly at a dance ritual, by responding appropriately to the requests of the host, consuming the provided stuffs, dancing, singing and generally behaving convivially, helps ensure its success, whereas misbehaving—wandering from the 'path' of propriety—constitutes sabotage and thus leads to criticism, breaks in relationships, and, according to my interlocutors, to retaliations with sorcery.

I witnessed several counselling harangues prior to trips to dance rituals, and noted that sexual offences were much referred to as instances of deviations from the path, though I never witnessed real trouble on this account. Theoretically, if a young man should choose to skulk outside the hosts’ *maloca*, perhaps attempting to persuade one of the women of the *maloca* to have sex with him, he may well be attacked by sorcery. Sorcery and accidents are the 'thorns' to be found off the path, to which the leader above was referring. In such a case, the youth's protectors have little power to heal him, for healing power to a great extent depends on the moral position of both
the victim and the healer, and in that case the young man will have called that
trouble upon himself. Not only will he have failed in the communal task of
ensuring the ritual’s success, but he will actually have behaved like a
promiscuous animal.

In short, the counsel to ‘keep to the path’ is about being virtuous and
living up to obligations. The Muinane’s virtues and obligations relate mostly to
the production of material goods, bodily health, and intellectual/emotional well-
being that translates into proper social relations. The fact that the ‘path’ used
as a metaphor is either the one between the maloca and the garden, or
between malocas for ritual purposes reflects those virtues. The garden is the
place where garden work, a synecdoche for all productive endeavours, takes
place. Dance rituals are great endeavours carried out as a means to
transform antisocial thoughts/emotions and diseases into proper substances,
and thus to ensure people’s intellectual/emotional and bodily health.

Sorcery, undue manifestations of anger, cuckoldry and other violations
of protocols and obligations, constitute deviations from the proper path.
Mambeadores stress that the product of such actions and endeavours do not
‘dawn’ or materialise in a desirable fashion, they ‘cannot be seen’ in the way
food or ritual substances can be seen, smelled, touched and consumed. They
similarly stress that whatever does issue from such evil activities, it does not
sate anybody, but instead leads inevitably to disease and death.

The demand to keep to the path can easily be applied to other
endeavours outwith those of the garden and the maloca; what this injunction

176 Echeverri makes a somewhat similar claim for the Uitoto: ‘agricultural work [is] the
metaphor of all work […]’ (Candre and Echeverri 1993: 162). I would note that it is a
synecdoche rather than a metaphor, because gardening is makes up a large portion of all
does, however, is transform all 'paths' or endeavours it refers to into sacred ones. For instance, a young *gobernador* from Chukiki, charged with the responsibility of travelling to the city of Leticia (the capital of the department of Amazonas, Colombia) to retrieve community monies, was also warned not to 'wander from the path', by which his counsellors meant that he was not to delay or interrupt the mission of bringing the money back to the community. They told him to bear in mind that his purpose was to make sure the money came back to be used for the benefit of the community. They warned that at the side of the path he would see beautiful glittery goods that could make him lose his thoughts; and that bad company would try to tempt him to wander to the side of the path - i.e., to drink alcohol, buy goods for their personal benefit-, but that were he to do so the sacred tobacco which he had licked, and which bound him to do as planned, would turn on him and punish him. "Do not do as the leaders of [X community] did; or the tobacco will make you pay the consequences!" Like trips to gardens or *malocas*, this one was intended to benefit the community materially, and was thus in some sense sacred.

There is no simple translation for 'purposefulness' or 'discipline' in Muinane, though different terms and paraphrases in Muinane seem to have a similar meaning. These notions are central to the issue of traversing paths properly. A concept that converges somewhat with our notion of discipline as self-control is that of 'compliance' with 'āiga', dietary prescriptions and

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177 The *gobernador* (governor) is the leader of the cabildo's activities. Each community has its own rules concerning the election of a governor. In some, it is a temporary role, in others this is not clear.

178 For a period in 1997 and 98, there were numerous reports of local leaders who had travelled to pick up their communities' governmental monetary transferences and had misspent them, lost them or stolen them.
prohibitions which make part of the Speech of Advice. ‘To comply’ with the Speech of Advice, or ‘to diet,’ is to abstain from yielding to destructive affects, untimely sexual desire, physical discomfort, laziness, sleepiness, dietary whimsies and other urges that may distract people from their moral purposes, or cause them to behave antisocially. Such ‘dieting’ is necessary for both men and women to achieve important aims. For example, one aspect of ‘diets’ or control is the capacity to maintain a disciplined motionlessness in the mambeadero, in the face of exhaustion and discomfort. People who can control themselves thus are understood to be better able to listen and learn, and therefore can become more skilled in a Muinane way. The behaviour of both male and female children around alimentary diet are also the object of counsels which focus on health, reproduction and conviviality. These counsels claim that non-compliance with their prescriptions and prohibitions has terrible consequences. Some of them predict painful or lethal birthing labour for the girls or for the boys’ future spouses. Others state that the unorthodox will have ugly or otherwise defective children, or will have difficulties in the tasks of food and substance production.

The emphasis on self-control and discipline is also reflected in peoples’ laudatory self-depictions, where they describe their own capacity to ‘bear’ (aguantar, in Spanish) or ‘resist’ difficulties such as sleeplessness, exhaustion, and pain, without protesting or falling to the temptation of quitting, backing down, taking a rest. They often bragged to me about events in which they had endured admirably certain trials and difficult situations which involved

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179 Reichel-Dolmatoff translates a similar notion of the Desana as ‘to fast.’ (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996:93) Cf. as well Overing (1985b:276), on Piaroa moral philosophy insisting upon the necessity of learning personal restraint, and Santos-Granero (1991: 102) on Amuesha self-
long vigils and profound exhaustion (I return to such 'moral self-portrayals' in section 12.5).

Another example of the importance of purposeful discipline for the Muinane is their prescriptive emphasis on the art of patient timeliness: young men in particular in the proverbial portrayals of the Speech of Advice are taught to wait till the right time comes before they start to mambe, inquire about certain matters, acquire a spouse, and so on. In brief, they should never manifest haste, but only a judicious combination of eagerness, patience and curiosity concerning accessible knowledge, and reticence to delve into matters too esoteric or sullying. The message is that haste merely makes it more difficult to achieve the desired end: for example, young men who marry too early stop learning too soon, and thus fail to acquire the Speeches which are necessary to ensure the creation of fruitful gardens and the protection of their wives and children. Young women too should also abstain from acceding too early to sex, for fear that they should become wanton, promiscuous and misshapen.

In the chapters that follow, I will discuss people's need for mutual support in the achievement of a proper lifestyle. This involves discussing the proper footings of different kinds of relationships, and also an exploration of what the Muinane understand to be the skills of conviviality. Finally, I will discuss how evil impedes conviviality and mutual support, and ultimately, the achievement of a proper lifestyle.

\[^{180}\text{ Cf. Griffiths (1998:222) on the Uitoto's valuation of patient, orderly timeliness.}\]
8. On the communal task of achieving the good life

To deal with the threats of evil agents, to produce the abundant foodstuffs and ritual substances needed to live well, and to procreate effectively, people depend on the complementary endeavours of the genders, and on the mutual support among co-residents, neighbours and others. It is thus central for people to support others, and to relate with them in such a way that they can count on those others for support.

In this section, I will discuss briefly the complementarity of the genders and the need for mutual support among co-residents.

8.1 Gender obligations, virtues and complementarity

Ideally, couples181, motivated by love, attempt to make and raise their children well and to achieve a cool lifestyle, in what is clearly conceived as a joint endeavour in which both partners contribute to the result with their particular gender competence. The processes of production, preparation and consumption of foodstuffs and ritual substances feature centrally in the Muinane's discourses on these obligations. After all, only Real People whose bodies and Speeches are constituted by and through proper cultivated substances are inclined and empowered to behave in a moral and agential fashion; the making of such people is one of the Muinane's main explicit purposes in life.

181 By a 'couple' I refer to a man and a woman who have chosen to live, work and raise children together. They usually have a few gardens of their own as a couple, and live in a house of their own. Alternatively, some live in malocas with other couples, where each couple and its children have a hearth to themselves. Often, however, couples help each other out or provide food to each other. Furthermore, it is common for differently constituted units of production, processing and consumption to be set up, such as for rituals where different members of a patriline, or even entire communities, work together. Cf. Echeverri (1997:295).
There is a strong division of labour in the achievement of a desirable lifestyle and in the successful production of Real People. Each gender's different responsibilities are central to Muinane discourses on gender identity. There are, however, important overlaps, and each gender helps the other live up to its obligations.

Men participate in this process mostly but not exclusively by protecting their children and kin from evil agents that threaten their bodily and intellectual/emotional well-being. As I have repeatedly discussed above, these protective endeavours usually transform some evil agent into a desirable substance—meat, more often than not—that may further empower men to produce stuffs and protect close ones, or that women may process in order to nourish kin or close ones.

The Muinane define in their rhetoric an ideal of masculinity, the 'True Man.' Usually, such a man is said to possess the knowledge, the thoughts/emotions, the bodily constitution, the activities and the substances that make him simultaneously a competent producer and protector. The different obligations which men must fulfil in their different roles as husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, grandsons, Men of Speech of Tobacco and affines mostly pertain to these endeavours of protection and production. The Watering ritual invocations recited by old men to shape and protect male on the Uitoto couple as a social unit.

On gender identity as linked to activities, cf. Gow's claim that among the Piro, 'gender is predicated on the ability of adults to satisfy gender-specific desires of spouses' (1991: 120; cf. also 128). Gow explicitly notes that concerning gender identity, he follows Strathern (1988:14,15), for whom gender is not a given but rather must be achieved through social action. Closer to the Muinane, cf. Echeverri (1997:295), who states that among the Uitoto, a man's task is to protect and defend new life from illness of animal origin, and this defines him as a hunter. A woman's task is to acquire food to feed that new life. Cf. as well Griffiths (1998:190).
children exemplify this; they use language that performatively\textsuperscript{183} ensures that the youth will have a True Man's hard bones, tough skin, tirelessness and other virtues necessary to live well. These rituals focus strongly on the future role of male children as producers and consumers of mambe. As such, again, the men will be responsible for yet more production and for the protection of their kin.

Women's obligations centre on the alimentary nurturing of loved ones, mostly through the hands-on care for cultigens and children and the preparation and distribution of foodstuffs. Nurturing is a vital contribution to a proper lifestyle, for a key condition for people to be integrally healthy --that is, strong, free of disease, fertile, tranquil and inclined towards convivial action-- is that they be fed with proper foods in proper amounts. This is coherent with men's ritual attempts to transform their womenfolk through different Speeches --among others, the Watering ritual invocations-- into 'the True Woman, the Woman of Satiety'. This womanly figure works hard and generously nourishes her husband, her children, and other co-residents through her food producing, processing and distributing activities. By 'naming' their wives, daughters, daughters-in-law and other women around them as such, the mambeadores performatively ensure that these women are competent and inclined to live up to their obligations. Men and women too ensure their daughters' and grand-

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\textsuperscript{183} See 1.3 for a discussion of 'performativity'. I am using the term here to refer to what Butler (1993:13) calls 'divine performatives.' Performative utterances of this kind enact or produce that which they name, by virtue of the power or will of a subject. Butler uses the biblical 'Let there be light!', as an example. Her understanding of 'performativity' \textit{tout court} (that is, not divine) problematises intentionality.
daughter's proper moral and bodily formation through counsels and nurturing.\textsuperscript{184}

In short, the Muinane clearly find that gendered selfhood is an ongoing personal and communal achievement. People must act as Real People and as True Men or True Women, and must be made as such, if they are to be such. Otherwise, they will be something else, spurious and evil.

Muinane men and women make explicit the complementarity and mutual need of the genders when they speak of abstractly conceived maloca owners and their wives\textsuperscript{185} as virtuous men and women living in an ideal good fashion. These proverbial couples are described as the 'parents' of their communities. Like any other couple and set of parents, a maloca owner and his wife depend on each other to fulfil their own obligations. They often stress that without a willing and hardworking wife, even a very diligent and knowledgeable man cannot sustain a maloca and carry out dance rituals\textsuperscript{186}. But he too must enable her to do her part: he must provide her constantly with baskets, sieves and healing concoctions\textsuperscript{187}.

Though men and women are to a great extent defined respectively by their protective and nourishing endeavours, the Muinane are aware that there

\textsuperscript{184} Cf. Griffiths (1998:198) on the Uitoto's ideal, nourishing, mythical 'woman of abundance.'
\textsuperscript{185} A maloca is usually considered to be a man's, even though he depends on his wife to sustain it. However, a woman can also be referred to sometimes as the owner of the maloca, especially when speaking about her responsibilities and obligations to the community and to visitors.
\textsuperscript{186} For a similar gender interdependency in rituals among the Barasana, cf. Hugh-Jones, S. 1979:42.
\textsuperscript{187} Cf. Santos-Granero (1991:232), Belaunde (1992:16,139) on the complementarity of and interdependency between the 'sexes' in native Amazonian groups. These scholars do not find any male or female domination in the groups they studied. Among the Muinane there is much autonomy for each gender in their everyday activities, and much possibility for mutual demands as well. However, their idioms tend to portray it as 'normal' for women to obey men, rather than the other way around, and I did witness much more authoritarian behaviour on the part of men. Cf. as well Whiffen (1915: 91)
are important overlaps. Men provide for the sustenance of their families by felling the forest to make gardens, by hunting, fishing and gathering. They must also weave vine-wicker baskets and sieves for their wives, who need them in order to carry out their own tasks\(^{188}\). On occasion, they also help their wives with some of the activities of food processing and preparation. Furthermore, men sometimes ensure that certain foodstuffs provide special nourishment to their children. For example, Ernesto once described for me how at some point during a man’s children’s lives, the man should ask his wife to give him a *daledale* tuber. He should make an invocation upon it so that the baskets of knowledge of the children become like the tuber’s clean, clear flesh and spaciously hollow centre\(^{189}\). Then he would have his wife feed it to their children, or give it to them himself. Ernesto claimed that the children’s thoughts would become ‘open’ as a result of this, and they would become quick learners. For the most part, however, neither men nor women treat these activities as ‘nurturing’ or ‘feeding’ (*óóbajahi*); rather, they say that men enable or help women to ‘do their thing’\(^{190}\).

Similarly, women’s nourishing activities play some protective roles against threatening evils, such that their responsibilities overlap with men’s protective ones. For example, women feed spicy hot chilli broth to their

\(^{189}\) For the Muinane, the thoughts themselves constitute the self, unlike our Western view of a mind as something independent of the thoughts it contains. For the Muinane there is a container, but it is not a ‘mind’. Its ‘hollowness’ does not imply stupidity or vacuousness, but only competence, purity and virtue.  
\(^{190}\) Belaunde (1992) states that when men cook or weed the garden, they claim to be helping their wives to cook or weed, rather than cooking or weeding themselves. Among the Uitoto-Nipóde, *[m]en stress that a man’s “true work” is to sit in the mambeadero and invoke *rapue*, healing invocations, moral counsel and the “word of work” in order to nourish, heal and protect his family. (Griffiths 1998:127) I never witnessed Muinane men claiming to feed or nourish
families; the chillies in question are understood to destroy the pathogenic odours and flavours of fish and meat, and to make the bodies of the consumers too spicy hot for evil beings to attach to it. The discourses on counsels also stated that women had the indispensable task of ‘cooling’ the bodies and hearts of their children, their spouses and their own, after a hot and perhaps potentially irritating day of hard work under the hot sun. To do so they had the manicuera, the sweet manioc juice, which soothes, cools and sweetens everybody’s hearts. This ‘cooling’ is similarly defensive; it is a quenching of false, evil ‘fires’ that engender antisocial feelings and diseases. Men and women both refer to these activities as ‘defensa’ (defence), in Spanish. I remember Leonor referring approvingly to an 11-year old girl who could already harvest and grate manioc and prepare manioc bread: ‘She already defends that which is her own.’ Leonor herself also referred to the activities of the women of a maloca hosting a dance as ‘defence’. However, it is common for Muinane men and women to claim that women cannot deal with threats that they say are more dangerous and secret, which are therefore normally the dominion of men.

Another endeavour in which men and women’s obligations overlap is that of counselling. There are reflexive prescriptions according to which men and women must counsel their loved ones about the desirable consequences of some behaviours, and warn them against the diseases and other tribulations that ensue from others. Such counselling is understood to be a form of protection, for well-counseled children do not behave in ways that awaken hostility from dangerous others.
I found that there was much room in everyday life for much mutual demand between spouses, for much personal autonomy, and for concerted decision making. People made many independent decisions about how to carry out their endeavours. On the other hand, men and women often decided together, as interdependent spouses constituting an autonomous couple, about issues such as whether to make a new garden or where to place it, what food to prepare or what animal to hunt on a certain occasion, and so on. I also witnessed much mutual demand between husbands and wives concerning gender-specific stuffs and services; as often as not, these demands took the form of harsh critiques of the other's failure to provide something. Elena was particularly vociferous in this sense. She protested that she had had to learn to weave baskets and sieves because Sergio would not do so. (Sergio himself had told me beforehand that women can demand that their husbands make them baskets and other tools that they may need to carry out their endeavours.) On another occasion, Elena scolded Sergio for repeated failures in capturing game, at a time when she claimed to be tired of eating fish. She loudly questioned his abilities, his intelligence and his hunting zeal. He alternatively laughed her comments off or remained silent, but eventually went hunting. She also spoke disparagingly about his unwillingness a few years before to heal his daughter, who had been sick with diarrhoea, and told me that it had been she who had finally demanded that he apply his healing knowledge. Sergio nodded at this, telling me he had been reticent to do so out of fear of using knowledge which he had never used before. Elena also criticised Sergio to his face for not teaching his sons to mambe, sing and heal, loudly proclaiming that it was stingy and uncaring of him to keep his
knowledge to himself. And indeed, he responded in the following days by teaching them some songs.

I found that men also made critical demands on their wives, though usually less than their spouses. I particularly remember Juan inveighing his wife for serving too often a certain preparation, instead of providing variety. I also witnessed several occasions in which men chided their wives for not having *caguana* available for them to drink. Sergio once told me in Elena’s presence that she had carelessly allowed their cool herbs to die, and that they were therefore vulnerable to diseases that required such herbs as remedies.

According to the prescriptions of the Speech of Advice, not being generally supportive with the spouse or thoughtful of their needs leads to abandonment and the consequent lack of a necessary complement. Carmen, for example, described how elders of the past would tell boys to learn to execute women’s tasks competently, so that they could help their wives when the latter had too much to do. Otherwise, she said, the boy’s wife could grow tired and decide to leave her lazy, unhelpful husband. At the meetings on the Speech of Advice, one man once told me that when a man delivers his son’s wife-to-be to him, he counsels him to hold on to her hard, and not to misguide her or confuse her. He had to counsel her and instruct her and care for her. Mothers are also supposed to counsel their girls to help their husbands pick their coca, or to pick it all themselves when their husbands are hunting and cannot do it themselves. Such loving manifestations of concern ‘cool’ men’s hearts, and strengthen them to deal the better with the evils of the world. Several counsels warn against other behaviours that might lead to troubles with spouses: men should not beat their wives, women should not scold their
husbands, and they should not cuckold each other or be jealous of each other. The threat of losing a spouse is not an idle one: Amancio’s wife, for one, abandoned him for his repeated beatings. As a result, Amancio had no garden, no true home, and little chance of producing food and substances for himself. He wandered between communities with his children, irking some, being pitied by others.

Before finishing this section, I find it necessary make a brief parenthetical note on the issue of the hierarchy in the complementarity of the genders. The Muinane do not treat this complementarity as a relationship of ‘equality’, as we might understand the word, that is, as a political metaphor of ‘likeness’ between different people, in what regards their ‘rights’, their autonomy and the intrinsic value of their potential contributions to society.\(^{191}\)

On the one hand, the mambeadores sometimes stress with no hierarchical qualifications that the contributions of each gender are a \textit{sine qua non} for the achievement of a desirable lifestyle and for the propagation of kin. There is definitely a cycle involved in which mutuality and complementarity are key: without women to process foodstuffs, men would quickly be bereft of the strength to produce ritual substances and carry out rituals; without men’s agency, women could not produce foodstuffs. The contributions of both are indispensable, and the Muinane are fully aware of this.

\(^{191}\) Gender inequality or domination --or, for the matter, equality-- cannot be assumed to exist or to take the same form in all societies. Belaunde (1992), Gow (1991) and Overing (1986) have addressed this issue. There is no word for ‘equal’ in Muinane, though there are several that denote likeness or similarity. The ‘Muinane do use the word \textit{igual} (‘equal’, in Spanish) fairly frequently, and as a political metaphor. For example, they used it to demand equal treatment of the communities of the region, concerning the distribution of governmental monies among them. Pedro and his brothers were fastidious about making sure that I spent...
On the other hand, from the start there is much emphasis on the difference between men's and women's responsibilities. The 'circle' of mutual dependency, if I may pursue the metaphor, tends to appear lopsided and blown up on the masculine side. The mambeadores often expounded before me that it was men's substance-empowered thoughts/emotions and knowledge that ensured through ritual the continuous flow of human existence, encompassing men and women's non-ritual endeavours. Even women's wills and actions are to some extent the product of men's naming them into 'True Women.' Furthermore, different men and women explicitly stated that women do not have 'the capacity' –la capacidad, in Spanish- for Speeches of the kinds required to ensure the production of foodstuffs and ritual substances, and for the protection of close ones. The reason for this is that they were not made by the creator with that purpose, but rather for others, and that he did not use the same substances. By contrast, nobody privileged the fact that men have 'no capacity' to bear children. Concerning the latter, rather, the process of fecundation and pregnancy is understood to materialise in women's bodies, but to depend on men's mambeadero Speeches in order to take place. Some men also claimed that they could prepare food well when their wives were absent; it was something they did not do because they did not have to, not a question of capacity.

the same number of months with each one of them, and that I reciprocated their teachings with the same amount of money.

192 C. Hugh-Jones (1979:132) describes a similar situation among the Barasana, who consider procreation to be under the the conscious control of men, and ultimately outwith the control of women. The Muinane's seems to be a more tempered version than that described by Hugh-Jones for the Barasana, however, to the extent that women can consciously eat and otherwise act in ways that preempt the malformation of their children.
I witnessed several occasions in which *mambeadores* discussed explicitly the question of whether their 'culture' was 'machista' (macho chauvinist) as some foreign visitors claimed. The *mambeadores* claimed that it was not, and that they greatly valued women because they were the 'mothers of coolness', the providers of the nourishment and refreshment without which children would not grow and the men would become dangerously hot. However, women's 'ownership' of coolness does not make it their exclusive purview, and moreover, is not always considered to translate into a greater capacity on their part to resist anger and other antisocial motivations. Pedro, for example, told me that women are less resistant than men to the contagion of bad temper from the heat of the sun.

I should specify that the Muinane do not found whatever hierarchical claims they do make concerning gender relations on the differential valuation of the different *foodstuffs* produced. Apparently, some Amazonian groups value differently the foodstuffs produced by men and those produced by women. Whenever this is the case among the Muinane, it does not stem from a difference in the prestige between masculine and feminine endeavours. The Muinane deem a proper meal to contain both game or fish and manioc bread; without the latter, meat is dangerous; without the former, manioc bread is boring. However, it is important to note that for the Muinane, manioc bread is the ultimate food for proper human beings. Furthermore, they would probably claim that it is ultimately the women who are doing the nourishing.

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193 According to C. Hugh-Jones (1979: 72, 173), for instance, fish and meat are the most highly esteemed foods among the Barasana. They are provided by men, and they gain more prestige from their acquisition than women do from their production of cultivated foods. Hugh-Jones claims that dependable female powers are less valued than the male ability to succeed in risky encounters with the natural world.
The high esteem for meat is not emphatically linked in discourses to the fact that it is the men who hunt.

If there is a differential valuation in the production of each gender, it may be, rather, in the opposition between foodstuffs usually produced but in any case prepared and distributed by women, and the ritual substances produced by men. All these substances are constitutive of Real People, but in their discourses the mambeadores, and sometimes the women as well, clearly privilege the role of tobacco in people’s constitution, and its agency-giving character. In their discussions of clanic identity, in their descriptions of healing rites and dances, the often elide mentioning the theoretically indispensable use of manioc products, but they never cease to mention tobacco. And again, it is the men who produce, prepare and distribute tobacco; it is their obligation and privilege, and one for which women ‘have no capacity’ ‘either.

In short, men and women’s contributions to a proper lifestyle are the object of different discourses. Some of the discourses establish a hierarchical valuation of these contributions, and some stress only the indispensable character of both male and female contributions.

Part of my interest in this matter of hierarchy concerns the issue of personal autonomy. I found that men and women made up their own minds individually concerning many everyday decisions. There were also many matters in which they ordered each other about, relating mostly to their gender-specific obligations. Thus, men and women spoke of women ‘sending’ men –ordering them- to weave a basket or a sieve for them. I often witnessed men ordering their wives peremptorily to bring them manioc bread, or to serve this or that food. However, I perceived clearly that side to side with numerous
manifestations of personal autonomy and expressions of mutual demand, both men and women seemed to feel that it was the men who could demand obedience from their wives, and who constituted the ultimate authority in moments of conflicting opinions or of uncertainty. Some women could ignore or override their husbands' authorities, but the Muinane noted and marked these cases as different. I particularly remember several women - even strong-willed, outspoken Elena - telling me that their husbands would not allow them to visit their families, or to go to Araracuara; to some extent, thus, men were attributed with some restrictive control of their wives' bodies. This extended to their daughters, daughters-in-law and to some extent, to their sisters.

Expressed ideals of marriage seem to attribute greater agency to the men. For instance, the counsels seem to incorporate the assumption that it is men who seek out women to marry them, and not the other way around. There are counsels for a woman to follow if she wishes to be a desirable choice for a good man seeking a spouse: she should be quiet, hard-working and well-behaved at all times, and solicitous concerning the hunger and thirst of guests. This is supposed to attract the favourable attention of good men, who may ask her father to give her to them as a wife or as a daughter-in-law. Furthermore, it is women's fathers rather than the women themselves or their mothers who receive the 'basket of asking' which suitors take to them when requesting that a woman be given to them.

However, women do have a strong say in accepting to go with a young man or not. One of Ernesto's sisters, for example, refused to live with a young man even though her father had accepted a 'basket of asking'. Years
afterwards, this was still something of an issue between the clans involved, though the girl had by then married a man she did wish to have for a spouse. Roberto’s daughter gave me a similar example of female autonomy. She told me that it had not mattered to her that her father and her brothers had not wanted her to go with a certain young man. She said, ‘I liked him... so what could my father and my brothers do [to impede it]? They had to accept it in the end. ’ Roberto himself jokingly showed me that despite the ideal of male initiative, he was persuaded that women were strongly inclined to make their own choices. He told me that his second wife had been a little girl when he met her in the boarding school in Chorrera, ‘...and even then she liked me and wanted to marry me!’ His wife punched him laughingly and claimed that he was lying.

8.2 On the need and sources of mutual support

In my experience, the Muinane’s references to ‘living well’ usually brought into account the mutual support among kin, co-residents, affines and others. They insisted, through counsels, myths, self-depictions, critiques and casual commentary, on the desirability and need for the support of spouses, siblings, siblings-in-law, children-in-law and ‘Men of the Speech of Tobacco’ (those men linked by a formal relationship of mutual support in rituals) in the tasks that set up the conditions for the successful procreation of the kinship group.

On two occasions that I witnessed, different maloca owners addressed their communities, and each one in his discourse likened it to the physical structure of a maloca. One of them called attention to the fact that the maloca
had wooden pillars, rafters, walls and other components. It had all these different parts, and not just some of them. How could a maloca lack any parts? he asked rhetorically. He himself was like a maloca's "heart", or like its front pillars, and the others were rafters, walls, roofing, and so on; the community needed all its members for support. He also compared the members of his community to his body, of which he needed every part in order to be well and work.\textsuperscript{194}

The desire, need, offer and demand for support is a matter of much morally evaluative attention among the Muinane. Juan and Manuel told me on several occasion that people should never claim to have achieved anything by themselves, not even those tasks they carry out without the help of other people. Rather, they should always claim that things had been achieved with the help of the Creator or the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of the Axe, the Summer, the Cool Herbs and others, and in the case of youths, through the ritual mediation of the elders. Otherwise, they said, these beings will say, "If that is so, let us see how well you do on your own next time!" and will abandon the proud braggart to his abilities.

People sometimes prefer to call attention to their personal autonomy and independent competence, rather than to the complementarity of their endeavours. Thus, I often witnessed people proudly claiming to have carried out great tasks on their own. One woman, for example, told me that she had twice prepared the foodstuffs required for a maloca-building—a truly huge endeavour—without help from others. Couples sometimes also told me of occasions in which they had worked on their own in some large task that

\textsuperscript{194} cf. Lagrou (2000), on the Cashinahua concept of the group of close kin as ‘our body’.
normally required the collaboration of a larger group. But what was noteworthy about these occasions for the narrators was the lack of help, which made the couple’s or the individual’s own autonomous competence stand out; they were thus reiterations of the fact that help was normally to be expected (I return below to the issue of gender complementarity and the couple as a unit of production).

The need for support is often linked in rhetoric to the valuation of convivial virtues such as a stable good temper, generosity, good humour, helpfulness and willingness to defuse or ‘cool’ conflicts. The leader who compared his community to the structure of his maloca also stressed on that occasion the need for the peaceful cohabitation of all involved. He demanded that they look at the different parts of the maloca and note that though these elements lived in close proximity, they never bickered or came apart. He asked then, as a means to reject the possibility, how it could be that his own people could bicker, or come apart, if they were like the parts of a maloca.

The Muinane commonly make explicit their awareness that one of the threats of situations of social conflict inside a community is the dampening of the willingness of people to support each other through substances, dialogue and physical labour. Similarly, they often insist that bad-tempered or otherwise unpleasant people lose the good will of others. In such situations, they ask, whom can you ask for help if your child is sick, or if your tasks are too great?

Counsels demand explicitly that people should work with good will, evincing good humour and no irritation or bad thoughts. When possible, they should volunteer to help others. In particular, they should show great pleasure and willingness when they receive tobacco as a summons to some large task.
or dance ritual. Neglecting to help, working grudgingly or receiving tobacco apathetically are commonly said to stem from laziness and from a selfish lack of care for others. I heard people state on different occasions that a person who had been unwilling to help them or to share game, or who had done so unwillingly, would probably ask for help soon; the critics then claimed with a righteous tone that they would remind the miscreants of their unwillingness.

A frequent image used in exaltations of the notion of mutual support was that of groups of brothers preparing *mambe* collaboratively, where each one carried out a different task so that they all complemented each other. In this way, by the end of the day they could all *mambe* good coca together, in the nightly rituals for the spiritual defence of the residential group. Another key image was that of two men, father and son, or brothers, holding ritual dialogues to heal the sick. They would remind each other of important and necessary parts of the Speeches, and reaffirm and encourage each other’s utterances. The formal and dialogical character of the implementations of knowledge is understood to be a requirement for these to have the power to heal; the support of the other, the dialogical partner, is indispensable. Women too on different occasions told me that several of them working together grating manioc for a dance ritual make short shrift of this enormous task, which is otherwise overly taxing and tedious.

But perhaps the circumstances to which the Muinane attribute the greatest need for support, are the great ritual endeavours of building a *maloca* and holding the dance rituals that legitimate the *maloca*’s existence. Without *malocas* and rituals, proper Muinane life –perhaps life in general– simply could not continue. It is through these rituals that *maloca* owners ensure the
procreation and well-being of their people, which include all the participants in the rituals. *Maloca* owners depend heavily on the support of these very people to carry out their rituals. These people are categorised as follows:

The jähemina or hiljahooto (‘insiders’ or ‘people of the maloca’) are those who are members of the patriline of the owner, live in or around the *maloca* and depend on it for rituals. Thus, when Juan built his *maloca*, the ‘insiders’ were himself and his two brothers, their spouses, their sons, their daughters-in-law and their unmarried daughters. Antonio and his sons were part of Juan’s patriline but had built their own *maloca* recently. Their past status as insiders was therefore no longer in effect, and both Pedro and his brothers, and Antonio and his sons, were obviously somewhat uncomfortable with the issue of each other’s roles in each other’s rituals. At least one of Antonio’s sons joined Juan’s ‘helpers’ (*jiikávo*, see below), however.

Among the women involved, the wife of the *maloca* owner is the most important source of support for him. In fact, she is his single most important source of support, that without which he simply would not be able to carry out a dance ritual at all. A hardworking man can eventually produce enough of men’s substances to hold a dance without the support of his brothers –Manuel did so frequently–, but never without the support of his wife. It is mostly the produce from her garden that enables him to build a new *maloca* or to hold a ritual. Furthermore, once the *maloca* is built, it is mainly up to her to keep the *maloca*’s floor and patio physically clean, and to offer plenty of food and drink to the *maloca*’s ‘children,’ that is, to all the insiders as well as any formal guests. Her husband’s brothers’ wives are supposed to help her with contributions of manioc and with their collaboration in the preparations for
rituals. The daughters-in-law too are obliged to help; in fact, at Juan's *maloca* building it was his three daughters-in-law who did the lion's share of the work.

When Juan announced his intention to build a new *maloca*, his sister-in-law Carmen bitterly told me that when her husband Pedro had built his *maloca*\(^{195}\), Juan's wife Leonor had been envious and unwilling to help. Carmen added that nonetheless, she herself bore no grudges, and would gladly help her brother-in-law. She made the point, though, that envious, jealous people such as her 'sister-in-law' (thus addressed because she was her husband's brother's wife) could hardly expect much help, and that as a result Carmen did not expect the new *maloca* to function well.

The men linked to a *maloca* are supposed to support the *maloca* owner by providing him generously with tobacco, salt and coca, for ritual consumption and redistribution; in this, they act much like an ideal adult son should with his father, or like a set of male siblings towards the eldest of them. They must also be willing to be his interlocutors in the initial ritual dialogues, prior to his sending out tobacco packages to invite other helpers and guests to a ritual. Juan's brothers Pedro and Sergio indeed gave him generous amounts of coca and vegetable salt for him to build his *maloca*; unfortunately, they had no tobacco paste to add to what Juan himself had produced. They received the tobacco with which he announced to them that he intended to build it, and supported him throughout by reminding him of details of the Speeches their father had used in like circumstances.

\(^{195}\) In fact, the *maloca* that had just been burned down after five years of good service. It was the end of this *maloca* that legitimated Juan's intention to build a new one.
A second category of people that becomes pertinent around rituals is that of the jiikávo, who are referred to in Spanish as los ayudantes, 'the helpers'. These are for the most part the maloca owner's brothers-in-law and sons-in-law, with their own children and spouses (the latter are, of course, the maloca owner's sisters or daughters). Usually they do not live around the maloca owner, but around some other maloca or on their own. The affinity constitutes a hierarchising injunction to help; that is, a man can hardly demand that his wife's father or brothers help him with some large ritual task, but he is himself obliged to provide his father-in-law or brothers-in-law with help. A man may, however, request that his father-in-law heal his child, who is the other's grandchild. Again, Juan's jiikávo were his three sisters, one brother in law, and their numerous sons, daughters-in-law and unmarried daughters. The relationship between Juan and his jiikávo was excellent, with much light-hearted but respectful good will between them. They received tobacco as a summons to go and help Juan, and after the ritual, were 'paid' with much meat, fish and other stuffs which the guests (to whom I return below) had brought as gifts.

The insiders and the helpers worked together in some endeavours in preparation for Juan's dance ritual, but for others the insiders chose to work apart.

Another category of people linked to the maloca owner are his Men of the Speech of Tobacco –the Bááañojito, who provide him with indispensable support. A large ritual depends on the added 'strength' of several such men from different mambeaderos using various Speeches with a common set of purposes: to ensure that there is enough food and drink for the ritual, that
diseases and other tribulations dawn as game, that it does not rain on the day of the arrival of the guests, that all involved are well counselled, and in general that the ritual is successful. For instance, Manuel explained to me that a man who holds a dialogue with his brother in order to keep rain at bay prior to a ritual has limited 'strength' (i.e., the agency to achieve his ends) if the pair is alone. However, if the maloca owner’s Men of the Speech of Tobacco are doing the same with their own brothers, at the same time as he is, their Speeches unite and gain great strength, to keep dry all the people travelling to the ritual. As he explained this to me, Manuel made wide-sweeping gestures that mimed the Speeches travelling across the sky overhead from the different directions of the malocas of his Men of the Speech of Tobacco, and converging in the sky above his own. He stressed gesturally the strength and effectiveness of those converging Speeches.

Most of the maloca owners I knew had two Men of the Speech of Tobacco. These formal relationships are supposed to be inherited; thus, Juan told me that Roberto had to be his Man of the Speech of Tobacco because Roberto’s father had been Juan’s father’s Man of the Speech of Tobacco. Juan’s other Man of the Speech of Tobacco was Ruben, a young man whose father had presumably also had a similar relationship with Juan’s father. However, new relationships of this kind can be established, though they have different names when untried or when few rituals have been carried out between the new ritual interlocutors. Of importance in these relationships is the establishment of the ‘path of Speech’ – that is, the initial explicit formalisation of how tobacco is to be sent in the future, who the bearer will be, with what anticipation prior to a ritual, as well as other details. One
important condition for two men to be able to establish such a relationship is that their lineages be entitled to hold the same kind of dance ritual: thus Ernesto and Manuel were both entitled to hold Charapa Turtle dance rituals, which led Ernesto to ask Manuel to be his Man of the Speech of Tobacco.

It is formal ritual protocol that the maloca owner sends or takes - depending on how the formalities of the particular 'path of Tobacco' have been established- an imogaibi to his Men of the Speech of Tobacco, when he requires their help to build a new maloca, to hold a dance ritual, or in other special circumstances. According to Pedro, Men of the Speech of Tobacco would sometimes send for each other outwith dance rituals, when facing a particularly difficult problem or disease. When a Man of the Speech of Tobacco receives his counterpart's unswayable tobacco summons, he in turn must distribute the tobacco among his kin and others whom he needs in order to live up to his responsibilities. Thus, when Juan took tobacco to Roberto to demand his help in building his maloca, Roberto gave tobacco to his sons, his brothers, his nephews and their spouses, and then to Manuel, his sons and their spouses. Those to whom the Man of Speech of Tobacco gives tobacco in order to summon them to a dance ritual are known as the dance ritual's másiminaha -'singers,' in Muinane- or as los invitados -guests, in Spanish -. Each of the Men of the Speech of Tobacco is the leader of a group of singers and dancers that help the maloca owner execute his ritual properly.

Relations between any given person and the people related to him or her as insiders, helpers, Men of the Speech of Tobacco or guests must be good, lest the enormous task of achieving a desirable lifestyle fail from lack of support or worse, from active and mutual ill will.
9. Concerning coolness and good mutual accompaniment

In the Muinane's abstract accounts of ideal community life people try to live convivially and to perpetuate the conditions that allow them to do so. It would be equally correct to state that they try to 'multiply' their kinship group -- that is, to get its people to reproduce effectively- and that a convivial lifestyle is a condition for this. Material abundance, bodily health, good mutual relations and tranquillity are all bound together in these accounts¹⁹⁶.

'Coolness' is part of such an ideal lifestyle. The 'cool' (sīkuno) and the 'hot' (aigūkuno) are a contrastive pair of utmost importance in the Muinane's terminology of moral and aesthetic evaluation. Substances, situations, thoughts/emotions and utterances as 'cool' if they fit within the paradigmatic set of the good life, conviviality, tranquillity, reproduction, inoffensive benignity and material abundance, or 'hot', if they are judged to have a negative impact upon people. Thus anger, jealousy, purposelessness, tactless straightforwardness, irreverence, lack of bodily discipline, dispersed thoughts, worried brooding, haste, uncontrolled sexual desire, and other destructive emotions and actions, all lead directly or indirectly to loss of health and good conviviality, and as such are hot. In contrast discipline, concentration, sense of purpose, tact, vigour, patience, a generous hospitality and a great willingness to defuse conflict lead to good health and conviviality, and as such are the virtues of the Cool Person (Siíkumiina), or the Person of Advice (Fagómiina)¹⁹⁷.

References to coolness do not present it as something that is merely morally desirable, without considerations for aesthetics. The Muinane tend to conjoin morality and aesthetics, and nowhere is this more clearly presented than in their use of the term 'cool'. It is morally good, but references to it stress as well its sensuously pleasurable character.

Cool people are peaceable and serene; they maintain a pleasant good temper, do not manifest undue anger against other people, and show great willingness to avoid and assuage conflict. They are also wonderfully free of itchy, uncomfortable bodily sensations. In the mambeadores' rhetoric, the cool person "cools" and "sweetens" other people's hearts. I noted that several elders at different times emphasised through counsels and abstract descriptions that the (proverbial) cool mambeador never lashes out critically at others with straightforward, public denouncements. Rather, he knowledgeably chooses a story or myth which exemplifies the undesirable behaviour, so that the person may suddenly realise his or her mistakes without being shamed in public. Cool people work carefully and without haste, always vigilant of threats of accidents or possible dangers; yet they work vigorously and fruitfully. They are disciplined and respectful, and comply with the formalities of relating to others. Such a person is considered truly to contribute to the achievement of a desirable way of life, engendering the social conditions necessary for the propagation of the kinship group.

Another defining characteristic of Cool People is that they care lovingly for others. In particular, they 'are sad for others' (idāsuhi). This means that

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198 The rhetoric on coolness is mostly men's, and the discussions of conflict resolution and control of evil thoughts/emotions involved mostly examples of men' action. References to women's coolness usually involved their role as providers of nourishment and cool, sweet
they empathise compassionately with those who suffer from disease, or who grieve deaths, and so on. They are also aware that much as they feel pain and anger when their kin and material goods are negatively affected, others feel the same\textsuperscript{199}.

A much exalted virtue of Cool People is a stable disposition, and its lack is a much censured flaw. Elena was scathingly critical of her husband on this account. She said to me in Spanish, "He wakes up furious, and doesn't speak if it isn't to scold one of the children...he is scary in the morning. But in the evening, what a most excellent gentleman he is! How calm, how cheerful! That is not good...I am not like that...I am usually the same in genio (temper), neither too angry nor too cheerful." Similarly, Manuel's classificatory brother Napoleon was critical of Manuel for making a typical claim: that if approached in the daytime he would not listen to serious talk, and would answer lewdly or like someone crazy, whereas if approached properly in the evening, in the mambeadero, he would receive the comer well and would dialogue in the correct fashion. Napoleon told me that he found that to be an unacceptable violation of the requirements of their tradition(?) , and that mambeadores should behave during the day with the same care, temper and good will exemplified and spoken of during the night time. At another point, Juan praised my own stability when I was preparing to leave his household. He congratulated me because throughout the time I spent among them I "spoke in the same manner", without becoming angry or inordinately sad.

The counterpart to states of pleasurable, moral coolness is the pathogenic, antisocial heat of animalistic thoughts/emotions and diseases. Antisocial manifestations are dangerous because they may lead to domestic tribulations of different kinds. At worst, they may lead to the closure of ‘iimaji’, the Speech of Conversation, or of the ‘paths of Speech’. These ‘paths,’ which are metaphors for the footings and formalities of the relationships between ritual partners or Men of the Speech of Tobacco, close down when such men have apparently irreconcilable differences with each other. As a result, these men fail to get each other’s support for the greater rituals, and therefore fail as well to ensure good production, effective propagation and a cool lifestyle in general for their communities.

I must note the following, concerning my use of the term ‘coolness’ or ‘Cool Speech’. I told my hosts, when I returned to the Muinane in 1997, that it was my intention to do research on this matter. Most of the men who were in charge of deciding whether I would or would not be allowed to work in the community found it an interesting and harmless subject. Manuel, however, confessed afterwards that he had felt it to be a delicate issue. He claimed that it involved dealing with dangerous Speeches and knowledge of clan origins which could endanger them. He wanted me to pinpoint exactly what it was I wanted to know. After I did so, he said that I was interested in something slightly different to the Cool Speech: to wit, the issue of ‘good mutual accompaniment’. This, he claimed, was less dangerous, because I was focusing on counsels that concerned mutual interactions outwith esoteric dealings, and not on the heavy spiritual manoeuvres of the mambeadores.
There is, thus, a more esoteric side to ‘coolness’, beyond the much
appreciated capacity of ‘good mutual accompaniment.’

9.1 Respect

The Muinane are very insistent in that respect is central to the
achievement of a proper lifestyle, and many are vociferous concerning the sad
lack of respect which the youths of today manifest. A youth who is respectful
thereby manifests knowledge, coolness, and the proper counselling that he
received from his kin. There is no widely known translation in Muinane for the
term "respect", but they find the Spanish term "respeto" to be adequate for
their purposes. They claim that respect is the subject matter of a great many
counsels. It is to a great extent promulgated with images of negative
consequences: according to the counsels, men, women and children should
all be respectful of kin, of others, of elders, lest they induce anger and
retaliation, and thereby ruin convivial relationships and their own health200.
The Muinane state that teaching children respect – an obligation of their
parents and grandparents- constitutes a form of protection, for it keeps them
from being targeted by aggrieved others.

"Respect" has a wide scope; it involves among other things not
‘touching that which is another’s’ -that is, not stealing from them, harming their
children or other kin, or seducing their spouses. Some counsels appeal to
empathy concerning this matter: in the mambeadores’ idealised portrayals of
the Speech of Advice, children are exhorted to think about what they would do

200 Cf. Belaunde (2000) and Alès (2000), on similar counsels and fear of anger among the
Airo-Pai and Yanomami, respectively.
if somebody stole something that belonged to them, or harmed a pet or a member of the kinship group. The proverbial father would explain to the child: "Little father, they too love their children, they too need their things, and care for them because they worked hard to produce them. If you touch these things, they will be angry and sad." In mambeadero discourses, empathy was also exhorted in terms of a common humanity: 'We are all made of the same tobacco', and in consequence, harming another is harming oneself. Most counsels, however, warn the addressee of danger rather than appealing to empathy. Elders and fathers may warn of further consequences of touching the things of others: "They may sorcerise you or harm you, and I will not be able to defend you because you 'touched', knowing that you should not have done so."

One counsel I heard both in the abstract descriptions of the elders and as parts of reports of local cases of thievery, was that one should never touch another person's fruit or fruit trees without the person's consent or invitation. The same applies to the pots and food in neighbour's fireplaces. Several short stories have fable-like morals in this sense, depicting the awful ends of children, men and women among the primeval people who touched things that were not their own or were otherwise disrespectful of them, and became animals as a result. In current mambeadero interpretations of behaviour which is disrespectful of the things of others, different animalistic thoughts/emotions are blamed. Mambeadores claim that it is animals or spirits such as the False Woman, the black agouti, the tapir, the deer and the dolphin among others, who cause people to covet and 'touch' others' spouses, substances, healthy children or desirable lifestyle.
Parents and grandparents of the past reportedly demanded that their children not disobey their counsels and misbehave, because if they were to do so they would make others 'name' them. They claimed that others would ask 'Does this child not have a father, a mother, or grandparents to give it proper advice? Whose child is this?', which would cause the guilty caretakers much shame. For instance, Alejandro, whose children had been pointed out as the possible thieves of some neighbour's fruit, addressed them as follows: 'As a child I never touched other people's fruits...I never stole anything. I did not make anybody name my father or mother for not giving me proper counsel. Why should you do otherwise!? I have given you counsel many times, and yet you are making others say "The children of Such-and-such touched my fruit". Do not make them name me again, or I shall whip you!'

One particularly grave case of thievery occurred in 1995. I witnessed some of its results then, but only put together a coherent picture in 1998, when Pedro told me the story of Jose, Manuel's brother. Some years before, Pedro had noticed that somebody had been picking his coca without his consent, and had heard that the same thing had happened to others. One night at that time he decided to ambush a black agouti that had been eating his wife's manioc in their garden. As he sat waiting quietly with his shotgun, he had heard noises. It had been Jose, Manuel's youngest brother, coming out of the garden with a bundle on his back. Surprised and upset, Pedro had asked him what he had been doing there. Jose had said that he was hunting, to which Pedro had told him curtly that this was no time to be walking around if one was hunting. Jose had left, and Pedro had gone into the garden to
investigate. He had found that Jose had harvested his coca plantation roughly, with little care for the leaf buds.

Pedro had spoken to Manuel about this, and Manuel had confessed that there was nothing he could do anymore. He had claimed that he had counselled Jose numerous times concerning numerous similar misdeeds, but still Jose misbehaved. Manuel had reminded Pedro at that time (–and Ernesto and Juan had told me the same on other occasions–) that a father, grandfather or uncle can only counsel a miscreant youth up to three times concerning a particular misdeed. Beyond that, the victims of the misdeed were free to take action against him, with no need to fear retaliation. Pedro therefore had sent somebody to summon Jose with a rough, angry statement: ‘Tell him to come to my mambeadero tomorrow night without fail’. Pedro told me that Jose had arrived in a bad temper, demanding to know what was wanted of him. Pedro had then given him some mambe and tobacco paste and demanded, ‘Tell me the Speech of Apprising that says that one can pick another man’s coca in the middle of the night, without asking him for it.’ This is a standard type of question for miscreants in different kinds of Muinane narratives: the counsellor or victim demands that he or she tell them what traditional source legitimates the other’s misdeed. The idea is that the other then falls into shamed silence, and can then be heavily scolded. Pedro said that Jose had not answered initially, but then had said, ‘Coca is for mambeing!’ Pedro had responded: ‘You are not a man. Like a black agouti, you go around at night stealing from others. And you know what it is that one does with agoutis: one shoots them. If I see you around again, I will shoot you.’
I met Jose in 1995 in a community some distance away downriver, where I was doing my fieldwork for my undergraduate dissertation. Jose came to Ernesto, the leader of that community, claiming that he found it difficult to make a living upriver, and asking Ernesto if he would allow him to live and work down there for a while. It was only three years later that I found that he had been fleeing the shame and danger of his situation upriver, where not even his brothers were willing to stand up for him.

The counsel not to touch other men's fruit takes on a more metaphorical content later on in life for youths, when they are thereby warned not to touch other men's wives. The Speech of Advice includes several stories which describe the horrible sufferings of youths who dared to seduce the wives of elderly, knowledgeable men. In one of these, for example, the elder caught on to the cuckoldry and laid an ambush. He lay in his wife's hammock, and when the youth whispered a call to his supposed lover through a hole in the maloca wall, faked his wife's voice and persuaded the youth to extend his hand through the hole in the wall towards 'her.' The eager youth did so, whereupon the elder cut it off. The youth, marked and ashamed, afterwards leapt to his own death from the top of a tall tree.

Another issue much touched upon in meetings is the respect due to other people's territories. Traversing them may be acceptable, but Ernesto told me that 'among the ancients' — the ancestral Muinane — anybody found fishing or hunting in another clan's territory was killed on the spot and decapitated. Nowadays there are many conflicts between communities and even families concerning territorial ownership, and the counsels and "laws" concerning
respect are much rehearsed. In one such conflict, Sergio was protesting because one of Antonio’s sons-in-law was felling a garden next to his, in a spot where Sergio had intended to make a garden the following year. Sergio claimed that his father had left that land to Pedro, Juan and Sergio, and that it should not be touched by others. Antonio and other members of the community claimed that tradition said nothing about reserving or inheriting land in that fashion; rather, what was respected as a mark of ownership was the presence of fruit trees, which indicated that that land had been used by a certain family some time before and could be used by them again. I did not see the end of this debate.

I address the issue of respect for the elderly in section 12.7.

9.2 Joking, humour and laughter

In my experience, the Muinane are constant jokers, rarely missing an opportunity to take advantage of possible double-entendres or presenting their own or each other’s behaviours in some comic light\textsuperscript{201}. Daily life is often punctuated by comic interventions, and even the nightly mambeadero talks, when the men deal with threatening evils, are often marked by chuckles or bursts of laughter. It was at mingas and other great meetings, however, that I found the Muinane’s humour to be most manifest. On those occasions people maintained a flow of jokes, ribald remarks, ridiculing anecdotes and so on.

Joking was a matter of abstract commentary in the mambeaderos of the Middle Caquetá, and one about which there were different opinions. For instance, Ernesto’s considerations regarding joking reflected his permanent
suspicions and rather grim views. For him, joking was either threatening and should be avoided lest it induce troubles, or it was defensive. He claimed that joking often hid intended evil, and that one's own joking could cause one to be blamed for troubles.

I once witnessed an occasion in which Ernesto heard the women of his community telling disparaging stories about another woman from the community who was absent. One of them said ‘I met her in Araracuara...she was walking around in high heels! She was stumbling around walking like this...[She mimicked somebody walking clumsily on tip toes and bowed legs]...but she was proud! She would not even greet me!’ All those present in the maloca laughed throughout the story and even Ernesto chuckled. He warned them, however, that they should take care lest their laughter be like armadillo flesh. I asked him what that meant, and he said that the fibres of armadillo flesh initially tear only superficially, but inevitably lead deep into the flesh. I understood this to mean that light joking may seem not to bother anybody, but may make people resentful and start fights.

Different mambeadores often told me that it was important to be careful with joking. They stressed that youths were to be particularly prudent around older men; the fact that older men were joking with each other in the mambeadero did not constitute license for a youth to participate in the joking. The counsels warn that the youth who attempts to join in the lewd talk or bantering might suddenly be offered tobacco and coca by one of the elders, and required to tell the Speech of Apprising that the elders might have been alluding to cryptically with their lewd talk. Another problem that could

theoretically ensue from a youth's impudent participation in such talk is that one of the elders present may remember the youth's undesirable contribution on a later date. Then, at a dance ritual, he may pose a difficult riddle to the youth's father pertaining to the youth's joking. Riddles, if unanswered, are a source of danger.

Ernesto once told me that when he and others joked and laughed in the mambeadero, it was actually a ploy. Evil beings, ever vigilant of the mambeaderos lest they be attacked through Speeches, would hear the laughter and become unwary and distracted, believing that nothing of moment was going on. When the mambeadores would then move on to more 'serious' things, the beasts would be vulnerable. He added that that which sounded like lewd talk could be something else completely. Alejandro, his brother, elaborated on this. He said that sometimes when he was worried for his wife's health, he would lick tobacco and tell the other mambeadores, 'It has been a long time since I last fucked my wife. I think I will go and do that now.' The others, he claimed, would know what he was talking about and would say, 'Yes, go fuck her,' and perhaps laugh a little. In fact, however, his intention was to watch over her sleep for a while, and perhaps make some invocations over her; the sexy claim only served to trick any evil beings around.

Despite these counsels and trepidations regarding joking, several of the men with whom I spoke about laughter and playfulness manifested their own high regard of this matter. Samuel, while admitting that one had to distinguish carefully with whom one could and could not joke, stressed that

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meetings, *mingas* and so on, would lack ‘ánimo’ (in Spanish, good-humoured vigour and pleasure) if there were no joking. In other words, there would be no pleasure in communal work without the lewd joking, bantering and slapstick. And it is important to note that for the Muinane, such pleasure and ánimo are very much a part of what sociality is about.

I found that the Muinane appreciated skilful joking greatly, even if at times they contrasted joking to desirable prudence and to a serious sense of purpose. People made joking ability a part of their laudatory self-portrayals, and the lack of it a critique. For instance, Samuel himself told me people would often ask him how he managed always to have a facetious answer when others joked with him. He was proud of his skill, and answered their question for me: ‘One must never become angry when they are saying things about you to taunt you…and one must never let others leave one wordless…one always has to say something else’. Even Ernesto expressed some admiration of the joking ability of Pacho, another Nonuya elder: ‘One has to be careful of what one says around him. He can turn anything one says around, and make it seem as if one had said something lewd…’

As Samuel stressed, a common counsel –not really a formal counsel of Fagójí, but still a widely shared piece of advice- concerning joking is that one must never become angry with jokes made at one’s expense. ‘It will only make people try to make you angrier!’ Juan, for example, often told me that when people jokingly hinted or stated that I was having sex with one of the women of the community or with a white woman from Araracuara, I was always ‘to admit’ to it loudly: ‘It is the truth that you speak! I did indeed have sex with her!’ or something to the same effect. Otherwise people would note my
discomfort of anger, and redouble their efforts to embarrass me or vex me. I actually witnessed this tactic being used: some of the men were making fun of those who were supposed to indulge in sex with very old women, and one of them claimed that Manuel did this. Manuel promptly said that that was true, and the joke quickly trickled out. He then addressed me and commented for all to hear that he had thereby shown me that what he had said to me about disarming jokes was true. Elena also spoke to me about how shameful it was not to be able to ‘bear’ jokes and critical songs.

Double-entendres, intentional misapprehensions of other’s statements, and plays on words are typical, and many of the men and a few of the women excelled at producing them 204. At one meeting, for example, a man asked the congregation for the origin of the word ‘educación’ (education), in Spanish. For the Muinane, the mythical origins of customs, invocations and objects are central to their workings and purposes. Many of the Muinane found the etymological analysis of key Spanish words to be a profound endeavour, pleasantly mysterious and perhaps somehow powerful. The man’s question was probably directed at the exploration of some subtleties of the etymological origins of the term, so as to solve some of the problems of the community regarding this matter. Manuel made use of the occasion, and answered, ‘It comes from “dùükási”.’ It so happened that educación, the word in Spanish for ‘education,’ sounded very similar to ‘dùükási,’ the word in Muinane for ‘cannibalising each other’. The meanings of these two words, however, contrasted starkly: for the Muinane, the word ‘education’ was something akin

204 This is not meant to be a general typology of Muinane humour, but rather a brief impression of it.
to their formal counsels, and the purpose of these was precisely to get rid of immoral, animalistic behaviours such as incest and cannibalism. The similar sound and the opposed meaning somehow created the comic effect.

One night, when Juan’s new *maloca* was full of people from other settlements who were helping him prepare for the dance ritual that would initiate his *maloca*, I was the victim of an obviously intentional misapprehension of something I said. In general, such large meetings were characterised by much joking and bantering, and people seemed to be particularly eager to reap comic benefit from any opportunity offered. I was sitting across from Juan in his *mambeadero*, and perceived a glint from underneath his little seat, perhaps a reflection of the dim light of some background hearth fire. However, I thought that the glint might come from a flashlight Juan had been searching for unsuccessfully some minutes before. To investigate, I shone my own flashlight on the seat. Juan twitched with surprise when the spotlight illuminated the short stool a couple of inches below his crotch. He chuckled and exclaimed that I had startled him. ‘One does not do that, *Sūūba,*’ he said. Those who were sitting close by chuckled as well. I tried to excuse myself by explaining, ‘I saw something and thought it was a flashlight.’ Pedro, who was sitting next to me, pounced on the opportunity. He said loudly, for everybody to hear, ‘It looked like a flashlight!’ He managed in doing so to make it seem that I had been referring to Juan’s penis, and had likened it to a (thick, 12-inch long) flashlight. Everybody in the

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205 It is not my intention here to enter an abstract theoretical discussion of how humour is created.
*maloca* broke into guffaws, and for a few minutes they made much fun of the fiction that I had attempted to investigate that matter.

Matters of sex and sexual organs permeate the Muinanes' sense of humour, and in my experience, they thoroughly enjoy making hidden sexy references. For example, Roberto's nickname (which I will not transcribe here) was widely used, but some of the men loved to rehearse the fact that only a chosen few knew where it stemmed from. When people addressed him with it, Roberto would sometimes answer 'Guacamaya chicks' rather than the usual 'What?' or its equivalents. On two occasions in which I witnessed people pressing him to explain, he merely said, cryptically and with a mischievous smile, 'They are red.' Juan explained to me that Roberto’s nickname meant alternatively ‘vein’ or ‘vine’, and that it was a reference to Roberto’s reportedly long and vein-covered scrotum. Roberto’s answer, when people called him that, was a humorous claim to the similarity between his balls and little, red, featherless guacamaya chicks.

Many men, but Roberto’s sons in particular, liked to use lewd expressions to refer metaphorically to different things. For example, they had once heard Pedro telling Antonio, ‘Make me have an erection!’ whereupon Antonio had handed over his tobacco container. The youths, who were already *mambeadores*, enthusiastically adopted this way of asking for tobacco from other people. Other ways of asking for tobacco were quite rude as well: ‘Give me your asshole’ was also attributed to Pedro. It probably stemmed from the similarity between the tobacco paste and liquid faeces, a similarity which in fact appeared in several healing invocations. Another
commonly used request for tobacco was ‘Give me your wife.’ This was not necessarily a metaphor for sex, but was often pressed in that direction.

Manuel often spoke about funny or tricky ways of speaking and joking. He insisted that one should not speak like that to just anybody, but only to people of one’s age or category\textsuperscript{206}. He particularly liked the mystery involved, both in the fact that one could speak about lewd matters without using literal lewd terms, and that one could speak about non-lewd matters lewdly. He himself produced quite a lot of sexy expressions, and enjoyed them. He also seemed to enjoy my own advances in understanding those expressions, and would go into great detail to explain them to me. He said mischievously that if somebody ever scolded me for speaking like that, I should answer that it was ‘Speech of Life’ or ‘Speech of Becoming Abundant’, for after all, those sexy things we talked about were part of the production of new people. On one occasion in which several elders from different settlements were together, he said, ‘Súúba, tell Juan how it is that Pedro asks for tobacco paste.’ I said, ‘Pedro says “Make me have an erection.”’ There were some chuckles, and Juan said good-naturedly, ‘I find such talk disgusting.’ On cue, I answered, ‘But that is just Speech of Becoming Abundant.’ Juan’s next answer to me is one of my favourite jokes of all times, and one of the most pleasant memories I have of fieldwork: ‘Though it be so, we never become abundant in the midst of people.’ In Muinane the metaphor was quite clear: one does not copulate when there are people around to witness it.

\textsuperscript{206} By ‘category’ (\textit{categoria}, in Spanish), Manuel, Juan and others who used the word referred to a certain status that stemmed from age, knowledge and ritual privileges. They seemed to think that ‘maloca families’ or the families of leaders are somehow of ‘higher category’. In my experience, this difference in ‘category’ did not translate into privileges or responsibilities outwith ritual practices, nor were the daughters or sons of actual leaders or \textit{maloca} owners.
Many of the women seemed to avoid lewd talk and joking, or in any case, they did not do so around me. A few, however, were very clearly unencumbered by any reverential awe for me and were willing to kid me mercilessly or joke lewdly with me. Fidelina, for example, once said seriously to me: ‘Alina is wounded, Súúba…you should take a look.’ Enrique’s wife Alina was laughing and blushing next to her, and I commented, ‘She looks well to me...’ ‘Yes, but she has a big machete wound!’ It was a reference to the other’s genitals, and both of them broke out into laughter. Another woman listening near by scolded Fidelina laughingly for talking in that fashion to me. Ernesto’s wife Aida was also outspoken around me, and insisted for all to hear that a forest engineer who had worked in their community had been pregnant when she left it, and that the baby was mine. She loved to hear my protests that this could not possibly be, and would come up with fictitious proofs of my paternity, recriminations against me for my irresponsibility and so on. This was in part for my benefit, but she often did it where plenty of people could hear her and laugh.

Another form of Muinane humoristic endeavour were certain anecdotes concerning how the speaker or somebody else got the best out of some sort of confrontation or contest with a third party. These anecdotes often involved self-portrayals where the speaker ended up appearing as knowledgeable, vigilant or otherwise virtuous in some tough way, and somebody else looked poor by comparison. Antonio was clever at telling such anecdotes and stories.

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207 This is a common joke in much of Colombia, where a woman’s vulva is likened to a machete wound.
During the days of work for preparation for Juan’s dance ritual he told several of them.

One of Antonio’s stories involved a dance ritual that Úmire, a *maloca* owner of one of the Muinane clans, had held some twenty-five or thirty years before, back in La Serbian. Part of the humour in the story was based on the generalised assumption that the host of a dance ritual must be nearly permanently awake during the week or so prior to the dance, in order to be vigilant against the coming of evil, and in order to be prepared to receive guests who come to bring game. The idea is that a truly great man of knowledge cannot be caught asleep by surprise at such time. Antonio stated ‘Úmire had tried to catch me asleep before, on an occasion in which I had sent out tobacco to invite people to a dance ritual. He slinked in at three in the morning, but there I was in the *mambeadero*, wide awake. He tried on several different occasions, but I never fell asleep. But I got him! One time when Úmire himself was going to have a dance ritual, I took a large *pintadillo*²⁰⁸ to his *maloca* at three in the morning. Everybody in that *maloca* was asleep... even Úmire himself was snoring in his hammock. I put that fish gently next to him in his own hammock, and then went out of the *maloca* quietly. Outside I started to sing, as if bringing game and fish. How the people of the *maloca* jumped! “Somebody is bringing game! Wake up! Light the fires!” they said. Úmire woke up and found himself hugging that fish.’ At that point in the story, most of us present were laughing smugly. We had ‘survived’ a similar attempt to catch us off guard the night before, when some of Juan’s Uitoto nephews had come at 2 a.m. bearing game. Antonio went on with his story. ‘Amancio
lived in La Sabana at the time too... and one night, before another dance at Úmire's, he took some fish to Úmire's *maloca*. He found that everybody was asleep, so he dropped a big fish in the middle of the *maloca* and walked out. He started singing outside, whereupon Úmire jumped out of his hammock and dashed out, only to trip on the carcass in the middle of his *maloca*. At that point Amancio came in, and said that he'd come earlier, found everybody asleep, and had therefore gone back out to fish some more!

Sometimes the Muinane's humour is quite harshly critical. When many of the members of the community were working on building Juan's *maloca*, Heriberto, a Uitoto elder, arrived bearing an *imogaibi* to invite some of those present to a dance ritual which Antonio was going to host. Many of those present found the whole procedure to be intolerably outwith protocol. Pedro, Juan and Sergio were insulted that their classificatory brother had sent out tobacco paste for a dance ritual without asking them for help or counsel, considering that they were of the same lineage. They claimed at the time that they would sing at Antonio's dance, like guests, since anyway he was not treating them as patrilineal kin (who do not sing at their own dances). Juan also joked bitterly and loudly for all present to hear that they would sing in Uitoto, since they had received Antonio's tobacco invitation from the Uitoto Heriberto and not from Roberto, who was Antonio's only Muinane Man of the Speech of Tobacco. This statement was based on the understanding that people who receive tobacco being redistributed by a *maloca* owner's Man of the Speech of Tobacco in order to invite them to the ritual, are thereby being

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208 A large fish of delicious flavour.
called upon to help the Man of the Speech of Tobacco do his part of the ritual, which is to sing and dance.

Others present found Antonio’s motivation improper. Reportedly, Heriberto had given Antonio some fish, and demanded that Antonio hold the dance ritual ‘as payment’ for the fish. Several commented that only if a Man of Speech of Tobacco brought great game, like a tapir or perhaps a few peccaries, could he demand that the other hold a dance ritual; but certainly he could not do so for bringing mere fish. As they wove the palm leaves for the roof of the maloca, they started to joke, saying that it was actually Heriberto’s dance, and not Antonio’s. The youths joked about the fact that Antonio was doing all this for mere fish, and claimed that that was all they would get at that dance. ‘Even the caguana will be fish caguana!’ The whole afternoon was whiled away amidst funny critiques, whimsical insults and laughter. Next day Antonio arrived at Juan’s, and fixed things slightly with his classificatory brothers. None the less, some of the youths kept joking brazenly about him, in his presence.

Sometimes certain men establish truly hilarious joking relationships, and it was a great pleasure for those present when they came together. One such pair were Camilo and Roberto. At the minga to weave palm leaves for Juan’s maloca’s roof, Camilo accosted Roberto, insulting the latter for not giving his sister to Camilo to be his wife. ‘Roberto was stingy with me, and gave his sister to that ugly gimp Miguel...so I had to kill that gimp with sorcery, so that I would get the widow. But now Roberto has threatened her, telling her that he will hit her if she comes to live with me.’ Miguel had indeed died a few weeks previously, but nobody would take the joking claim seriously.
Another source of humour are details in myths; some of the *mambeadores* are good at interspersing piquant details into their versions, adding some spice into their narratives. There is also a set of stories about the trickster *Miméhuje*, a cruel, traitorous, promiscuous, funny-talking and lazy frog whose stories are full of slapstick and outrageous behaviours. In one story, he sorcerised and killed his own sick classificatory brother, when he had been called upon to heal him. The song with which he did so was itself funny – it demanded that the other die so that ‘Mime’ (the frog) could keep the widow. It included strange words that characterised his mad mixing of local languages. There was no end to his immorality: at one point in the story, *Mime* ate the widow’s children. Despite his mad desire, he was also sexually incompetent because he did not have a penis. He therefore used his hand to touch his widowed sister-in-law’s genitals, only to have it come out smelling terribly. Trying to remove the smell, he filed his fingers on a rock, till they were mere slivers; this explains the shape of his hands nowadays.

### 9.3 On treating kin and others properly

For the Muinane, to be human and moral is to a great extent a matter of treating kin properly. There are virtuous ways in which kin should be treated, and behaviours proscribed between kin. These behaviours and treatments, however, can be cause as well and effect, and can precipitate institutions. This is part of what I explore in this chapter.
9.3.1 On institutions and the proper footings of relationships

Clans and lineages are strong institutions among the Muinane. People attribute great significance and determining effect to their being a part of such lineages. Some men even know the names of their patrilineal forefathers up to 7 generations before them\(^{209}\). Furthermore, lineage and clan membership are central considerations in residence prescriptions and patterns. Particular categories of kin relations within clans and lineages are also a strong source of expectations. Given any such relationship, people are subject to numerous counsels, critiques and all sorts of interpellations that make explicit what the footings of such relationships should be, and which demand that that they think/feel and act accordingly. Relationships between father and son and between brothers are particularly subject to such counsels. For instance, sons are supposed to be told time and again that they should be reverentially obedient and solicitous towards their fathers, who in return should be protective, informative and concerned. Furthermore, a good son 'stays by his father's side', as Manuel once said to me. Ideally, this also implies that he stays next to his brothers, paternal uncles, grandfather, and patrilineal nephews and male cousins.

In fact, sets of brothers did tend to live together with their parents and their in-married wives. I spent several months in each of four settlements, and two of these were constituted by sets of male siblings with their parents, spouses and children. The first was Ernesto's settlement, where he lived with his father, his mother, several brothers, and an unmarried sister, and their in-

\(^{209}\) The Muinane stand in contrast to much of Amazonia, regarding their relatively deep time frame and their interest in genealogies and descent. For instance, cf. Gow (1991:151), Overing (1975, and personal communication), Descola (1997:366), and Hugh-Jones
married women and children. The second settlement was Pedro's and his brothers’, their old mother and their wives and children. The third and fourth settlement were almost merged together; it was constituted by members of Roberto’s and his older brother’s patriline, and by Manuel and his spouse and children. Manuel and Roberto treated each other as nephew and uncle, because Manuel’s father and Roberto had treated each other like parallel patrilineal cousins (i.e. classificatory brothers), though genealogically the link between them was through a woman, several generations back.

Andrés, a Muinane living in Araracuara, gave me a good example of how brothers should behave. He was telling a group of Muinane youths at a training course for native teachers that one should teach children not to fight, and especially not to fight with brothers. He described how the wise Muinane of the past would interrupt the bickering children, make them stand side by side with arms interlocked in the position of ritual dancers, and say in baby voice ‘abo, abo’. This was to show the children that they should not fight with their ‘naabo’ (brother or classificatory brother), but instead, should support and accompany each other well, like adult siblings do at dance rituals.

On the ground, I found relationships between male siblings often to be tense, and characterised by much criticism, resentment and stress. In my experience, the tensions arose precisely because they had to live together, and inevitably came to have conflicts of interests and to impinge upon each other. For example, Ernesto’s brothers found him to be bad-tempered and

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tyrannical, and to wish to control everything too much. Two of them had moved away, one of them doing so particularly because he could not stand Ernesto's despotic ways. In Manuel's case, the generalised belief that his numerous brothers had moved away from the settlement to escape conflict with him made him and them the objects of much negative moral evaluation. The events people described in speaking about this clearly reflected the tensions between the brothers, but also the expectation that they should live together.

Relationships between men or boys and their grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters and sisters-in-law are also subject to counsels. Many of these straightforwardly or cryptically demand the avoidance of any sexual contact. Counsels for women relate mostly to how the women should behave towards their brothers, husbands, children, and in-laws. Usually, the counsels stress that they should be good-tempered and sweet towards these others, and to act in a nurturing fashion towards them. Daughters-in-law, wives and mothers in particular are pressed to manifest their respect, love and willingness to support others through foodstuffs.

Two relationships between females that are the object of counsels are those between mother and daughter, and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Mostly it is the younger women who are addressed by these counsels, with the injunction to work hard to help their mothers and mothers-in-law, and to provide solicitously for them. Counsels for women rarely have to do with relationships between sisters. However, among the two sets of Muinane sisters I spent any time with, I found that they interrelated in a very pleasant fashion. The first set were the sisters of Pedro, Juan and Sergio. They had
married into different Uitoto clans, and so usually coincided only at dance rituals or dance ritual preparations. On those occasions, they joked, gossiped and helped each other with great willingness and good humour. The other set of sisters were Sergio’s daughters. The two youngest, still girls, obviously loved each other. One of the most pleasant memories I have of fieldwork is of lying in my hammock and listening to them laughing and singing together in theirs, oblivious of my attention.

9.3.2 Performativity and the establishment of kinship

Despite the strength of the clan and lineage system and the expectations regarding the institutions of kinship (that is, the ideal footings and mutual obligations between those related as parent and child, siblings, grandparent and grandchild, and so on), the Muinane are explicit about the possibility of generating through different actions, including the use of kinship terms of address, the corresponding attitudes or thoughts/emotions and actions in others, even if the relationship does not necessarily hold by abstract genealogical standards. In other words, by acting towards each other in the fashion that kin are supposed to, people may come to be kin, for many intents and purposes. To illustrate this briefly, I remember the case of Vicente, a Uitoto who moved into the community of Villa Azul in 1994. When I returned in 1995, I found that Enrique, a Muinane youth who was genealogically unrelated to Vicente, nonetheless addressed the latter as ‘uncle’ (FB). Vicente was co-residing with Enrique, was of his father’s generation, and often taught him instrumental Speeches; such behaviours were uncle-like, and Enrique responded in kind. I believe that there was little alternative for them then:
different terms of address would probably not ‘fit’ with the age difference and the behaviour. I believe that Vicente also participated in the community’s dance rituals as an insider, rather than as a guest.211

So the oft paraphrased statement that Muinane men co-reside with the members of their patriline may be reinterpreted as performative: it is the case that Muinane men live with their fathers, brothers, paternal grandfathers, paternal uncles, and paternal parallel cousins, not only because people so related tend to live together, but also because people who live together are so related.212 Vicente’s case exemplifies this, as do the living arrangements and kinship terminology in the community of Chukiki, which I discuss below.

In their decisions to act in certain ways, and in their evaluations of their own or others’ actions, the Muinane can choose to focus on the actions involved, stressing choice and personal agency, or alternatively they can present the supposedly fixed character of institutionalised relationships as an unquestionable matter. When people focus on actions, it is sometimes manifest that this is a matter of clear reflection for them, and they are outspoken about it being a choice. At other times, however, people stress the fixedness of the institution and do not seem even to consider the possibility of choice. For instance, there is one single moral or properly human way in which brothers should feel and act towards each other. A person can choose to behave in a brotherly fashion towards someone who is not one’s brother, or

211 My arguments here to some extent echo Sahlins’ (1985) discussion of performative vs. prescriptive structures. To paraphrase Sahlins, the Muinane would be part of a ‘family of cultures […] which prefer to sediment structural relations out of pragmatic actions, rather than determining the actions a priori from the relations.’ (ibid:28) For examples of a similar analysis of the ‘performative’ in Amazonian groups, without actually deploying that term, cf. Overing (1975:71-82, 189) and Gow (1991:194)
212 Cf. Sahlins (1985: 27) for a similar formulation.
a brother can choose —immorally— not to behave in a brotherly fashion. However, what it is that constitutes the ideal footings of a brotherly relationship is not understood to be open to choice.

In some cases people may find that they have a choice between institutions to privilege, rather than between institutional fixity and practical leeway. For instance, there are cases in which people related as classificatory grandmother/grand-daughter may also be related, through a different chain of relations, as sisters-in-law. Similarly, people who are distant parallel cousins through one genealogical line may be cross cousins through another. In some of these cases, despite awareness of the possibility of choice, they feel constrained by the feeling that one of the kinds of relationships is the more compelling one.

One of the forms of action that are deemed most powerful in establishing some of the attitudes and obligations linked to institutions, or even the institutions themselves, is the use of kinship terms of address. The 'correctness' of any application of any such term is a flexible issue. Relationships can be strategically planned, actively sought or discouraged, and contested. In many cases, people have some choice in deciding what kind of a term of address they wish to use with somebody else, depending on the kind of relationship they wish or do not wish to have. For instance, Samuel claimed that he always counselled his daughters to address men from other lineages and clans with kinship terms such as 'Grandfather', 'Father-in-law' or '[classificatory] brother', especially if they did not wish to receive their flirtatious attentions. He explained that a man being addressed as 'Grandfather' (or 'Father-in-law', or 'Uncle' or others) would be ashamed to try
to flirt with the girl who spoke to him using that term. The term in a sense creates a grandfatherly (or uncle-like, etc.) relationship, and demands consequent treatment. Samuel added as part of his explanation that if ever a woman from the region addressed him by name instead of some kinship term, he would proceed to try to have sex with her, to see what she was about.

Samuel’s explanation was an echo of a matter much discussed in the relatively frequent meetings that bring together different communities in the region. It has become standard for leaders -even young leaders- to rehearse the importance of ‘recovering our culture’ or ‘recovering the culture of the ancients.’ A common theme much discussed in these meetings is the perception that nowadays people lack proper respect for kin, in that they address them by name rather than by kinship term. The use of the correct term of address, the elders explained, ‘reminds’ people of the proper way in which the speaker and the addressee should treat each other. The terrible consequence of failing to address kin and others properly and instead calling them by name, is that people will eventually forget the proper way to treat each other (the appropriate footings of their relationship, I would say) which the kinship term always brings to mind. In the meetings on the Speech of Advice, elders protested that youths today seek to marry or have sex with their own aunts, classificatory sisters, sisters-in-law and so on, precisely because they do not know the correct way to address them or the counsels regarding proper relationships.

213 Cf. Overing 1975, for a similar notion among the Piaroa.

215 I heard both critical commentaries and legitimating explanations of a few arguably ‘improper’ unions among the Muinane and Uitoto.
It is significant that when mambeadores abstractly describe evil agents, their descriptions often involve noting that such beings ‘do not say “My brother” [or some other kinship term of address].’ This lack of propriety on animals’ part is causally linked to their cruel and immoral disregard for kin, or to their incestuous lack of criteria.

The Muinane are often willing to manoeuvre with their terminologies, creating little contradictions that are sometimes embarrassing, sometimes merely ignored. Alejandro, a man from the People of the Cumare nut, provided me with an example of this manoeuvrability of kinship and affinal relations and terms. He told me that when he first approached the parents of his Andoke wife-to-be to tell them that he and their daughter wanted to live together, the woman’s mother said that if they had so decided, there was nothing she could do to impede it. She added that nevertheless, there was something that worried her, and about which Alejandro should consult Francisco, his father. She said she always called Francisco ‘Uncle’, and that this might mean that a union between her daughter and his son would not be acceptable. She also said that it would be embarrassing for her not to know what to call him after their children were married (for there is a term in Muinane, and presumably in Andoke as well, for an ego’s FHD, the father of the husband of the daughter). Worried, Alejandro had asked his father. Old Francisco had answered that he just called the woman ‘niece’ out of respect, and that she had always responded in kind. There was therefore no obstacle

216 I do not know the Andoke kinship terminology. However, local gossip has it that old Francisco was in fact of Andoke blood, because his Muinane ‘father’ had stolen Francisco’s already pregnant mother from her first husband, who had been an Andoke. His son Ernesto told me that many of the Andoke therefore called Francisco ‘uncle’, ‘cousin’ and other kinship terms.
to their union. I do not know how Francisco and his son’s mother-in-law called each other thenceforth, but I believe the age difference between them led them to maintain the ‘uncle’-‘niece’ terms.

In Alejandro’s case the kinship terms were not transitive; the daughter and son of two people who knew each other as ‘uncle’ and ‘niece’ did not treat each other as children of people who were so related. On the other hand, sometimes people accept the transitivity of the kinship terms and institutionalise relationships that would not exist if ‘strict’ genealogical considerations were the only criterion of classification. The kinship terms used by the people of the community of Chukiki –which included Roberto’s, Pedro’s and Manuel’s clans- are illustrative of this transitivity. I drew several kinship terminology charts while working with these clans, and it was clear that in the abstract, they distinguish between kin linked through women and kin linked through men (see Appendix III). Thus they distinguish between FB and MB, and between BS and ZS, and so on. Ultimately, this would mean that the terms for and , among others, would only apply to people in their own clan. However, many of the men and women of each of these clans refer to members of the other clans using terms such as ‘takoomobo’, ‘tañaabo’, ‘tasiibakajeebe’, etc., terms which in an idealised kinship terminology apply only to actual FB, FBS and BS and to classificatory equivalents within the patriline – that is, to men of their own lineages. I pointed this out to Juan, telling him that I found it strange that he should address Roberto as ‘my brother’, when in fact there was no genealogical connection between them and in fact they belonged to different clans altogether. Juan replied that I had indeed learned a lot about these issues, but that my question revealed that I
still needed to learn much more. He added, with no further explanation, that they all used 'brother' and 'uncle' and such terms, 'out of respect'. However, I found out with time that the fathers and grandfathers of the men involved similarly addressed each other as patrilineal kin, independently of genealogical considerations. In some cases, these ancestors lived together, and perhaps it was in those generations that they established kin-like relations among non-kin. Some of their descendants (I am referring here to men who are nowadays in their 40's and 50's) explicitly take into considerations how their fathers treated each other, and can 'calculate' their own interrelationships on that basis.

Some aspects of my participation in Muinane social life may further illustrate some of my points above. On one occasion, for instance, I asked Sergio to help me design a few critical songs to address to different people at a ritual of caguana drinking that was to be held a few days later. I wanted them to be light-hearted, and so decided that a good issue to refer to in a song was the hilarity with which Juan and Leonor had reacted to my numerous little mistakes and clumsiness in speaking and in working with them. I remembered that there were counsels which stated that people should not make fun of others, and so I said to Sergio that I wanted to sing to Juan 'Though I come to help you, yet you mock me.' Sergio thought about it for a few minutes and then sang: 'Though I come to brother you, though I come to brother you, yet you laugh at me.' It was his choice to consider my endeavours among them - particularly my active participation in their processes of food and ritual substance production- 'brothering'.
Muinane men have their own way of putting down somebody who makes an uncomfortable or improper claim to social closeness, such as addressing elderly men over-confidently. Again, the expression they use manifests the association between kinship terms and the footings of the relationships involved. In the cases in question, the offended man may say sarcastically, ‘Uuko “Fáñi” dinó,’ or ‘Uuko “Beesha” dinó’ (‘Call me “maternal cross cousin”!’ or ‘Call me “Darling little brother”!’) This could be understood to mean something like ‘You are treating me with excessive cheek, as if we were brothers rather than strangers, affines or people in different generations. Shame on you!’ To be thus told by an older man is extremely embarrassing, several men told me.

9.3.3 Affinity

The formalities and footings of affinal relationships are also the object of numerous counsels. For instance, at one of the meetings on the Speech of Advice, one speaker stated that the taking of a spouse should involve prior commitments between the parents of both spouses-to-be. If not, but in any case, the man should give his wife’s parents a ‘marriage basket’, a fine-woven basket filled with gifts of tobacco paste, mambe, salt, game and manioc bread. Compliance with this formality is important in the rituals which may someday be necessary to heal the wife’s or their children’s diseases. Manuel elaborated on this for me: he told me that whenever his wife got sick, he would sit in the mambeadero and inquire through Speeches about the origin of her troubles. Then he would state to all beings who could hear that he had paid for his wife with tobacco, and that she had not been stolen. He explained that If the
diseases had come from anybody who felt they had been cheated with that coupling, the tobacco with which he had paid for her would deal with them, retaliating against the attacker and healing her. On the ground, however, few youths today bother to send their affines-to-be such a basket.

Beyond this first formality, people should get along with their spouses' parents and their children's spouses. Men should show special generosity towards their wives' parents, going to their home and helping them with their large tasks, and giving generous amounts of tobacco paste and mambe to the fathers-in-law. Elena, with her frequent criticisms, provided me with a negative example of this: she spoke contemptuously of her daughter's husband, describing him as a stingy young man who had not brought her or her husband any gifts from a recent trip to the city. Fathers-in-law can and occasionally do simply tell sons-in-law to come to their communities and help with some big job\textsuperscript{217}.

In the Muinane's mythology, fathers-in-law often appear as dangerous cannibals, eager to kill and eat their sons-in-law and even the latter's children. On the ground, I found that many men suspected and actually accused the men they addressed as 'father-in-law' of sorcery. Sergio, for example, told me he distrusted his wife's father because he belonged to a clan the members of which were perfectly willing to kill their own grandchildren with sorcery. Manuel claimed to have been the victim of his father-in-law's sorcery, and Ernesto broke off relations with Antonio, who was both his wife's maternal uncle (a classificatory father-in-law) and his father's sister's husband, because

\textsuperscript{217}Cf. Overing (1975:178) and Gow (1991:135) on the injunctions of Piaroa and Piro sons-in-law to aid their fathers-in-law. Among the Piro, the fathers-in-law are expected to help their sons-in-law as well.
he had learned in a hallucinogenic trance that Antonio had killed his father with sorcery.

_Mambeadores_ and women explicitly stated that people should be like caring parents towards their son's wives, who should become like daughters. I found that relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law varied; some were good, even if some respectful distance was always present, while others were problematic. Leonor showed much concern and somewhat bossy educational interest in one of her daughters-in-law, respectful consideration for another, and great antipathy towards a third. With the latter, the antipathy was so obvious that Elena even accused Leonor of causing the death of the daughter-in-law's first child by beating her fiercely a few days before she gave birth. Elena in turn remembered her mother-in-law's stinginess and manifest displeasure at her daughters-in-law's requests to borrow her manioc bread cooking plate. She noted that despite the poor treatment she received initially from the old woman, she still took care of her in the mother-in-law's old age.

Sisters-in-law (the spouses of pairs of brothers, or the spouse and the sister of a man) differed in their relationships as well. Elena and Carmen were aunt and niece to each other, and though they married Sergio and Pedro, a pair of brothers, they kept addressing each other as kin rather than as sisters-in-law. They got along relatively well, helping each other and sharing some food, despite some mutual criticism. Together, they waged a war of hate and gossip against Leonor, who was their husbands' brother's wife and was not otherwise related to them. In another settlement, Manuel's two daughters-in-

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law were classificatory sisters, and loved each other dearly and could be seen to help each other willingly and enjoy each other's company. At yet another community, the spouses of Ernesto's group of brothers got along well with each other despite being unrelated, but one of Ernesto's unmarried sisters made life very difficult for one of the incoming women. The young sister claimed that the woman whom her brother had married and brought to live with them wanted to usurp things that were rightfully hers and her mother's. The bickering became very aggressive, and they even came to blows.

The men were subjects to very strong counsels against coveting their brothers' and other close kinsmens's wives. Ideally, they should avoid contact. Napoleon stated this last point with an expression according to which for a man to gaze at a sister-in-law's face is like staring at the sun: embarrassing to the point of pain, so that one must look at the floor not to be dazzled. At the meetings on the Speech of Advice, the men described how the Muinane of the past would point out to all the men of the patriline that a new woman had arrived, and that she was the woman of one of them, and should be addressed as 'sister-in-law' or 'daughter-in-law' or 'aunt', and should definitely not be approached sexually. In one of the clans, a young man cuckolded his own father's brother; this caused a very serious break in the patriline in question, which split up.

As with certain kinship relations, affinal relations can be 'induced' by behaving as if the relationship were already established as such. If one behaves as an ideal kinsperson or affine behaves, one eventually comes to be treated as such. One counsel tells young men that wherever they are, they should be on the lookout for opportunities to help others. The counsels go on
to say that when visiting other *malocas*, a helpful youth may be observed and
his diligence noted, and the owner of the *maloca*, wishful of acquiring a
judicious and hardworking son-in-law, may offer him his daughter as a wife.
Fermín, a young man, tried to acquire Herminia for a wife in this fashion. I
found out from Elena, Herminia’s mother, that on two occasions Fermín had
helped Sergio fell a section of forest. Elena reported that Fermín had said to
Sergio, jokingly, ‘This is to pay for Herminia.’ I understood Fermín to have
meant that he was working for Sergio so that Sergio would give him his
daughter Herminia to be his wife.

Fermín perhaps had the idea that if he behaved as a son-in-law should
behave –working for the ‘father-in-law,’ addressing him in the proper fashion
(as ‘father-in-law,’ though this involves running the risk that this might be
deemed disrespectful by the addressee), providing him with tobacco and
coca, and helping the mother-in-law whenever possible- he could eventually
effectively become a son-in-law. Fermín’s mother and sister tried to help him,
respectively addressing Herminia on different occasion as ‘daughter-in-law’
and ‘sister-in-law’. Unfortunately for Fermín, however, his attempts faced a
contesting use of performativity. Neither Herminia nor Elena wanted Herminia
to go with Fermín, and so the mother instructed the daughter to address
Fermín as ‘cousin’, in Spanish. Elena told her that she was to say that though
she knew they were not cousins, she perceived him as such, and that it would
be strange and shameful for them to live as a couple. Fermín tried to deny that
they were cousins, to no avail.

10. The tribulations: diseases and asociality as predatory action
In previous chapters, I described some of the purposes, obligations, thoughts/emotions and actions which the Muinane claim characterise Real People, and which they link to certain substances. Real People are constituted by ‘true’ substances, and are furthermore shaped by their agency and nourished by it. By axiom, they—the Real People—are morally sociable, healthy and fertile. Real People’s virtuous actions, thoughts/emotions and substances can be contrastively defined by their counterparts, immoral actions, inhuman thoughts/emotions and spurious substances. Proper thoughts/emotions are susceptible to being sabotaged by evil beings and replaced with their perverse counterparts, in ways that may be considered predatory. For the Muinane, these evil counterparts are the source of humanity’s tribulations, and the main impediment to the achievement of moral purposes219.

10.1 Real People as Prey

Real People do not—or rather, should not—constitute a regular link in any chain of predation. According to Sergio, they are made by the Creator with his very own tobacco. ‘Thus’, he asked rhetorically, ‘how can animals touch them?’ Sergio conveyed to me with this question a sense of the indignation that is so clearly, so common-sensically to be expected if such sacred creatures as Real People are subjected to the defilement of an evil animal’s filthy touch. Any animal wishful of living for any length of time, Sergio added, should abstain from ‘touching’ the Creators’ children; that is, from visiting its particular evil on them. An animal that does attack Real People is

219 The Achuar offer an example of the inverse effect, where a hunter ‘injects’ his will and desire into a game animal by means of anent (rough equivalent of sung Speeches), so that it desires what the hunter desires and becomes willing game (cf. Descola 1997:133).
inevitably condemned to die by the action of the tobacco deity or some other avenging being. Sergio's indignant tone when he explained this was very similar to that of the formal harangues that constituted healing Speeches in the *mambeadero*.

Besides the 'sacred' character that places Real People outside any morally acceptable prey category, human adults are also protected by the fact that they appear to animals as lights of such brightness that they dare not look at them. The *mambeadores* describe this impact of a blinding humanity with a term that connotes both pain and shame: "Núkufевésuno". The same term describes the experiences of a man staring at the sun and, in prescriptive proverbial references to incorrect behaviour, of a young man gazing (perhaps lustfully) at a sister-in-law's face; both actions are described as "shaming" experiences which force the man to put his head down and gaze at the floor from the pain of it. Alternatively, tobacco can make people invisible to the eyes of ill-intending agents (cf. chapter on Tobacco).

True Tobacco also makes the bodies of the Muinane reek of it. That odour can be lethal to animals, and so keeps people from fitting in any "natural" chain of predation. *Mambeadores* claim to have a particularly strong reek because of the masses of tobacco they consume. Indeed, some explain, this may constitute a problem for hunters or fishermen, since the reek and light of their tobacco-saturated bodies scare away potential prey. They have to use substances such as the cool *tamillu* - a small jungle shrub- to cover up the smell and the shine (on *tamillu*, cf. my section on Cool Herbs).

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Despite the tobacco, and despite Real People's morally privileged existence in the eyes of the deity, diseases and improper thoughts/emotions inevitably do place people clearly into the category of animals' prey. The Muinane's rhetoric is that most of the diseases people suffer and the inappropriate behaviours people manifest stem from animals' and other evil beings' actions against them. An important question to ask here is, how and why do animals attempt to impinge upon Real People? My interpretation of this matter requires that I discuss the notion of 'perspectivism.'

10.1.1 On animal and human perspectives

The issue of animals' and other beings' means and/or motivation for causing human beings diseases has been addressed persuasively by different Amazonianists. According to Vilaça, for example, the Pakaa Nova find that many human tribulations are the result of the counterpredatory action of a 'human' aspect of game animals against the people that eat their flesh. The category of 'human beings' (or 'people'), for the Pakaa Nova, is equivalent to 'predator.' If dead game is not treated so as to remove its human and therefore predatory element, this element will prey upon its consumer, whom it perceives as prey.

Viveiros de Castro (1998) compares different Amerindian people's cosmological accounts in order to explore the issue of the common 'humanity' of people and animals that many of these accounts posit, and which the Pakaa Nova's jam –somewhat akin to a Western notion of 'soul' or 'spirit'–
exemplifies\textsuperscript{223}. He defines this humanity as 'an intentionality or subjectivity formally identical to human consciousness, materializable, let us say, in a human bodily schema concealed behind an animal mask' (Ibid:471). In his attempt to develop 'a plausible phenomenological interpretation of Amerindian cosmological categories, which determine the constitutive conditions of the relational contexts we can call "nature" and "culture"\textsuperscript{224}, he desubstantialises these categories, finding that in Amerindian thought they have other contents and status than they do in their Western counterparts. He argues that they are not ontological provinces but rather points of view, akin to pronouns. Thus, much like the pronoun 'I' can refer to anybody who uses it, the use of terms for 'humanity' or 'people' by characters in the narratives of Amerindian groups refers to whomever speaks and to his or her group, whether it be a jaguar, a peccary, a tree or an Amerindian. This pronominal or deictic character of the term for 'humans' or for 'people' in many Amerindian languages is more than just a name; the claim in these cosmologies is that the beings that call themselves 'people' perceive themselves as human.

Unlike multicultural relativism, which posits a unified nature represented in different ways by different observers, Viveiros de Castro's Amerindian perspectival scheme posits a phenomenological unity and multiple 'natures'. This means that all beings with souls perceive themselves as humans, and their ways of life as characterised by malocas, gardens and other accoutrements of a human lifestyle\textsuperscript{225}. They also perceive other species as

\textsuperscript{223} For an account of perspectivism outside America, cf. Howell 1996:133. on the Malaysian Chewong.

\textsuperscript{224} I am quoting here from Viveiros de Castro's paper for the 49\textsuperscript{th} International Congress of Americanists held in Quito in July 1997, and which he edited further and published in 1998.

\textsuperscript{225} Viveiros de Castro encapsulates this idea with the key phrase, 'Culture is the Subject's
either game or predators. Human beings—the very peoples who posit it—are a part of this scheme. For instance, some Amazonian peoples state that from the point of view of jaguars, snakes, and the Moon, humans look like white-lipped peccaries do to humans, and humans look like jaguars to peccaries, who perceive themselves as humans. Blood is manioc beer for jaguars, and vultures perceive as smoked fish that which humans perceive as maggots in rotting flesh. What determines whether a single specimen observed appears as a peccary, a jaguar or a human being depends on the kind of body from which that specimen is observed; in other words, the point of view is in the body.

Part of Viveiros de Castro’s argument is that this ‘animism is not a projection of substantive human qualities cast onto animals, but rather expresses the logical equivalence of the reflexive relations that humans and animals each have to themselves: salmon are to (see) salmon as humans are to (see) humans, namely, (as) human’ (Ibid.:477). In his draft for the 1997 Congress of Americanists, this phrase read as follows: ‘Animism is not a projection created by humans and cast onto animals, but rather the real equivalence of the relations that humans and animals have among themselves’ (p. 12, 13). The emphasis on appearance in the 1998 version makes a great difference; it now applies to the Muinane. The 1997 version, I would note emphatically, would not apply, for reasons that should be clear in the following paragraphs.

For the purposes of my discussion here, I find Viveiros de Castro’s account of native understandings of phenomenology, or of a subjective point nature’ (Viveiros de Castro 1998.477).
of view, to be incisively argued and of keen interest. However, in the light of what I have witnessed among the Muinane, I find that the discussion on perspectivism might benefit from a more detailed consideration of moral issues. For what strikes me the most about the differences the Muinane draw between different species’ supposed perspectives is their moral or immoral quality. According to their own cosmological rhetoric, many animals perceive themselves as people, experience their dens and trunks as malocas, and their food, whatever it may be, as manioc bread, chilli broth and legitimate game meat. However, what is most pertinent to them about animals’ and other non-human beings’ ‘humanity’ and ‘Culture’ (to use Viveiros de Castro’s words) is that they are intrinsically warped and morally and ontologically inferior to their counterparts among Real People. This is the case from the point of view of human beings and sometimes from the supposed point of view of the animals themselves.

An example of the warped sociality of animals in the Muinane’s scheme can be seen clearly in their expressed understanding of certain forms of anger. To use an example I have used in other chapters, it is not rare for people to claim that a man who misbehaves has a jaguar inside, or that he speaks the Speech of a jaguar. They never claim that the man perceives kinspeople as peccaries, which in any case I would think is phenomenologically untenable. Rather, the person perceives kin like a jaguar perceives its kin. And an important way in which jaguars differ from proper

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226 Cf. Overing (1985b:247), for a discussion on an ethnographic emphasis on evaluative native discourses, rather than on hidden meanings or structures.

human beings in the Speeches of Apprising is that they are violently angry and inclined to cannibalise their own brethren and children. The man with the jaguar Speech inside him gazes upon kin, perceives them as such, but fails to experience the loving, empathetic and merciful thoughts of a proper human being, and instead feels the desire to burn, maim, hurt and even kill them in anger.228

Other animals similarly fail to relate in moral ways to their own kind, by being tyrannical, stingy, incestuous, disrespectful, thieving, and so on. So there is, of course, a case for perspectivism among the Muinane: animals may see themselves as human. However, their relationships with those others they perceive as human are essentially flawed, and this is a vital point for the Muinane. In fact, a central aspect of animal predation for them is precisely the destruction or sabotage of a true human perspective, and the imposition of animals’ own immoral ‘points of view. People affected by animal substances and Speeches start to treat other people as animals treat their own kind.

The axiomatically ‘true’ (miya-) character of True Tobacco, and the moral agency attributed to it, also have a centring effect around the perspective of Real People, marking another difference from the more egalitarian scheme which Viveiros de Castro presents. True Tobacco disrupts the perceptions that non-humans have of themselves as humans, or destroys the perceivers. When healing the intellectual/emotional or bodily tribulations which animals’ substances cause, people use tobacco-empowered Speeches

228 Cf. Gow (1991:154), on forest beings avenging themselves upon the Piro by transforming the latter’s children metaphorically into themselves. Thus the jaguar makes the child nocturnal (Gow 1991:154). Among the Muinane, similar transformations are not understood to be metaphorical. Perhaps it is also the case among the Piro that this ‘metaphorical’ transformation can change proper human subjectivity.
to address animals, inveighing them for attacking Real People. As a result animals may feel shame at attacking Real People, and presumably therefore come to know or have to admit that they themselves are not Real People. Alternatively, the Tobacco may prey upon them and kill them. The point is that the perspective of Real People is ‘true’ because it is moral; it is moral because this is axiomatically established by the Speech of Tobacco; and finally, its truth and morality endow it with greater agency than other perspectives. That is, it is more persuasive or more capable of destroying the unpersuaded.²²⁹

It would appear that the Muinane’s cosmology involves a more radical view of propriety and impropriety, humanity and inhumanity, and even of good and evil, than what Viveiros de Castro considers in general for Amerindian cosmologies. This is important, as far as the conduction of social life – including the always social construction of the self – is concerned. The Muinane’s interpretations of their own actions, thoughts/emotions and histories clearly make use of this perspectival scheme, but always with a strong moral overtone. Among other interpretations, they constantly produce criticisms of others and laudatory self-depictions that make use of the moral contrast between animality and humanity.²³⁰

²²⁹ This possibility is not entirely absent from Viveiros de Castro’s discussion. Near the end, he discusses the case where a supernatural, non-human subjectivity addresses a human being as a ‘you’; in answering, the human being accepts his or her character as a ‘second person’, and thus establishes the other’s humanity and subverts his or her own. Muinane healing rituals could be interpreted in a similar fashion: animals addressed as ‘you’ in powerful Speeches must accept their own non-humanity.

10.1.2 Are predators enraged affines?

For the Makuna as described by Århem (1996), the diseases people suffer result from game animals' counterpredatory actions against them. Makuna shamans are responsible for removing dead game’s spiritual ‘weapons’ from the meat and returning them to the animals’ ‘waking-up house’ so that they can reincarnate in a new beast. If a shaman fails to carry out such ‘food blessing’, the weapons in the dead animal’s flesh attack the consumer in revenge against humans for not allowing the animal to reproduce. Århem finds that food blessing is part of an exchange between animals and people, via the shaman; an exchange that is modelled on the reciprocity between affines. The consciousness-endowed spiritual Owners of animals give game animals to hunters, much like men’s affines give men daughters and sisters to be their wives; in return, men give the Owners of animals rituals substances, much like they give affines certain stuffs in return for their women. The food blessing that enables animals to reproduce would be part of human’s reciprocal responsibility as well.

Unlike the Makuna, the Muinane do not model their relationships with animals after the ideal, prescribed relations of reciprocity between affines. The Makuna’s understanding of relations of reciprocal exchanges between humans and animals is a matter the Muinane can well make sense of, but which they condemn. For the latter, such exchanges are extremely dangerous and furthermore immoral; only ill-intending sorcerers or misguided people...

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231 Cf. Echeverri (1997:157) for a different treatment of similar rituals among the Uitoto.
232 Cf. Århem 1996:186
233 For the Airo Pai the hunt also seems to be a both a killing and fertilising process, where particular animals' deaths are vital to the species' reproduction (Cf. Belaunde 1992). Among the Piaroa, the ruwang or shaman is responsible for recycling the souls of dead game so that
effect them\textsuperscript{234}. In their accounts, game animals die because they attacked humans and were chastised by tobacco, because their Owners were forced to give them up for the animals’ bad behaviour, or because the parental Tobacco deity provided the game to people as a form of fruit. In no case is there a delivery of substances to the Owners of animals in reciprocity for game, except where evil sorcery is involved.

It is also not the case that the Muinane ‘construe human predation as a revitalising exchange with nature, modelled on the rule of reciprocity between affines’ as Århem claims for the Makuna. Muinane food shamanism differs from the Makuna shaman’s friendly ‘restoration’ of animals’ weapons back to them (Århem 1996:193-197). If the Muinane ever do return animals’ ‘weapons’ to them, it is as an aggressive gesture meant to harm the animals who themselves are assumed to have tried to harm people. The Muinane do not understand animals to depend on human beings for their reproduction; in fact, it is characteristic of animals that they reproduce ‘just so’, with no criteria of propriety\textsuperscript{235}.

The Muinane’s treatment of their relationship with game animals is to a limited extent akin to that described by Descola for the Achuar (Descola 1996: 324) and by Vilaça for the Pakaa Nova (Vilaça: 1992:76), in the sense that

\textsuperscript{234} In fact, Juan and other Muinane often found the Andoke and the Yukuna suspect, because of their purported exchanges with non-human beings.

\textsuperscript{235} Griffiths (1998) and Echeverri (1997) address positions like Århem’s on the Makuna’s ‘ecosophy’. Griffiths writes that ‘Uitoto cosmology [where within the sociocosmic community many forest and riverine beings are enemies of humans] thus tempers current anthropological discourse that perhaps over-emphasises concepts of unity in native Amazonian views of nature-society interactions. (Griffiths 1998: 16) Echeverri notes that the People of the Center (among them Uitoto and Muinane) allege that ‘the People of the Animals’ (Tukano and Arawak-speaking groups) indulge in animal worshipping because they offer the Masters of Animals coca and tobacco, whereas the People of the Center themselves are against animals. He adds: ‘Perhaps the People of the animals would fit better in the environmentalist
any similarity to an affinal exchange would be characterised by non-reciprocity and human duplicity. For instance, something close to a purported exchange is the fact that to appease animals for the felling of the forest, mambeadores tell them that their cultigens will be replaced by human cultigens, and that eventually they will benefit from this replacement. This, however, is for the most part a trick: the animals that try to benefit from humans’ gardens or their fruit get burned, shot or trapped. In short, animals or their Owners get nothing from humans in return for giving up their kin and their homes to hunting and gardening Real People.

There are some Muinane themes that resonate with the oft-established Amazonian link between predation and affinity. For instance, Manuel once told me his father referred cryptically to game as ‘women,’ but he gave me no further explanations, and I never heard this expression again. More common references seem to establish a more indirect link: game and women are both often performatively or metaphorically named as fruit. Perhaps the point is that wives and game are outsiders to the domestic group and must be named into some harmless, domestic inside thing (see section 13.1 and 14.1).

If game is similar to affines, it is only to the immoral affines of the Speeches of Apprising. Thus certain evil spirits and game animals can take the form of women in men’s dreams, establishing perverse and dangerous adulterous (pseudo-affinal) relationships with them. Amancio, for instance, told

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237 In Amerindian cosmologies, ‘...the animal is the extra-human prototype of the Other, maintaining privileged relations with other prototypical figures of alterity, such as affines’
his fellows in the mambeadero that he had dreamed that four beautiful women bade him follow them into the forest and have sex with them. They managed to make him get lost in the forest, but he did not indulge in sex with them. Soon after he fell sick with malaria and went mad with fever for a few days. Afterwards, he claimed that his madness had been predicted by his oniric confusion, and only his having abstained from sex in the dream saved him from death.

Furthermore, fathers-in-law in the Speeches of Apprising are often dangerous predators ever willing to kill and eat their sons-in-law. And on the ground, wives' fathers and brothers are often deemed to be animalistic, immoral characters willing to kill their sons-and-brothers-in-law (see Affinity above).

However, this collection of allusions never quite congeals into a clear-cut or explicit native model among the Muinane. I have no recollection of any Muinane treating the hunt as a process of seduction of a game animal-cum-woman by a hunter-cum-man, as described for some other Amazonian groups. Nor is it the case that they treat a woman's in-marrying move as a process of consumption. In my understanding, the similarity between affines and game is that they are outsiders, often distrusted, and often deemed to be immoral.

So what are animals' motivations, if not anger at non-reciprocated gifts? The Muinane's accounts of evil agents' intentionality vary. Sometimes individuals claim that the animals that impinge upon people are persuaded of

(Viveiros de Castro 1998:472)

their own propriety. For instance, an animal guilty of causing a person an illness or some form of misbehaviour finds that it is behaving acceptably. This is reflected in the often noted fact that people who misbehave usually think that they are behaving well; it would appear in such cases that the animal Speech that constitutes their selves at that time is persuaded of its own morality. At other times, the same individuals may present animals as dumb creatures lacking in any sense of discrimination: they 'do not know what they are doing.' Indeed, Juan once told me that the animals one kills are just dumb, ultimately innocent victims, paying for the crimes of others. On the other hand, people sometimes claim that when somebody yields to hot thoughts or falls sick or dies from a disease, out in the jungle the animal that caused it, aware of its evil, laughs at having managed to destroy people, or people's proper thoughts and behaviour.

Most of the Muinane would probably agree, however, that ultimately, animals and other evil agents seek the destruction of Real People as a kind. They are motivated by envy for the good stuffs and desirable lifestyle that humans can achieve, by uncontrolled anger, by desire for revenge for human predatory actions upon their kin, and by the wish to pre-empt Real People's lethal power to deal with misanthropic agents.

239. Perhaps I am mistaken in assuming that when a person misbehaves, his or her own Speeches disappear completely and are replaced by evil ones, as if there were unified psychic packages of Speeches that in inhabiting a body or sounding through it constituted a true, moral self or a false, improper self. There might be the hypothetical alternative of contradictory Speeches of diverse moral and immoral origins sounding simultaneously through a body and creating different selves. The Muinane do not seem to render these matters univocally precise, though they do find room in them for contesting interpretations.

These motivations, and the tribulations that animals and other beings cause Real People to suffer are the main theme in most Speeches of Apprising. These Speeches describe the origin of each disease or spurious thought/emotion, and link it to the misbehaviour of different primeval people. As a result of their different forms of misbehaviour, primeval peoples were transformed into animals and other non-human beings. Each animal or evil primeval being maintained, however, the agency to cause people to suffer a particular disease, or to think in an evil or misguided fashion and misbehave. Hence the mambeadores' expression, 'We are not the People of the Speeches of Apprising; we are Real People.' This statement is a claim to the morality and agency which animals lost in the mythical past, and a forceful demand that diseases and other tribulations not touch them, the Real People.²⁴¹

Below, I discuss a few of the numerous immoral thoughts/emotions and behaviours which the Muinane find that people manifest, and some of the beasts that cause them to do so. These behaviours and thoughts are the negative versions of what the Muinane consider virtues. First, however, I will refer very briefly to bodily diseases.

### 10.2 Bodily tribulations

Much of the Muinane's daily rhetoric in the mambeadero and out of it addresses the issue of bodily tribulations. This rhetoric manifests the Muinane's understanding that diseases more often than not come from

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²⁴¹ Viveiros de Castro 1998:470 notes that it is almost universal in Amerindian cosmologies that humanity was the original condition of animals and human beings, and that the original separation was that of nature distancing itself from culture, and not humans evolving from
animals' hunting or alimentary endeavours. For instance, different *mambeadores* explained to me that muscle pains are caused by falls into hunting traps set by animals. When a victim unwittingly walks through a spider web in the jungle, for example, it might be that he or she is triggering a trap placed there by a jaguar or some other beast. The person feels nothing at the time, but later suffers from great pain. Sergio and Juan spoke as well to me about wracking pains that stem from being wrapped in an invisible, intangible, yet pathogenic animals' carrier cloth. This carrier cloth is the perverse counterpart of the true carrier cloths in which hunters wrap dead game in order to transport it home from the forest. (I return briefly to the carrier cloths in section 14.2.) According to Amancio, fevers are false fires which animals set in people's bodies to burn them inside and cook their hearts into a soft dough. Certain digestive ailments are conceived of as being eaten inside by worms or grubs which treat human viscera as manioc bread. For yet another example, male infertility is linked to a story in which a turtle bites a jaguar's testicles; that turtle is supposedly addressed and rejected in healing rituals that help men have children.

Some diseases of women stem not so much from animals' hunting endeavours as from their attempts to pollute women's birth tracts and insides with their own substances, through imperceptible attempts at copulation with their victims. These diseases affect fertility and the actual childbearing. They are predatory attacks, in the sense that they directly and in bad faith impede

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242 The Muinane's accounts of human fertility involve semen, but I do not know that tradition makes a link between it and testicles. Manuel for one spoke about the turtle's bite obstructing the path of the 'tadpoles' (sperm). I believe he picked up this image of spermatozoa from a medical doctor or an anthropologist.
the great purpose of the propagation of Real People. The counsels to male youths to learn well from their elders in the mambeadero before marrying are related to the threat of these diseases; a man should not acquire a wife until he has the knowledge necessary to protect her and the children she will bear.

The point of bodily diseases is that they hinder the achievement of a proper lifestyle. Sick people cannot work properly to produce: they tire easily, they lack the strength to carry heavy weights, they cannot walk or row to where productive activities take place, and so on. Their lack of strength leads to greater lack of strength, since they stop being able to provide strength-giving substances for themselves. They may come to depend too heavily on others, without offering much in return; this in turn can generate new troubles. Furthermore, the sick can hardly participate in the proper formation of new kin; out of weakness they can even bungle the task and cause new kin to be misshapen or weak themselves.

I must note, however, that not all diseases stem from the attacks of ill-intentioned beasts. Some stem from people's own actions, such as failing to comply with particular counsels and thereby inducing accidents or digestive troubles and other tribulations which affect them or their close kin. Others are warnings from the tobacco, or the deity, or some other domestic entity, to 'remind' the person of something or to make the mambeador review his knowledge. Manuel, for example, told me about a painful, bloody diarrhoea he suffered and which would not heal, and which turned out to be a statement from the Grandfather of Tobacco to the effect that he should build a maloca. Still other diseases originate in mythical accidents for which no evil being is at fault, but rather the blame falls on a careless accident occurring to a moral
being. Finally, Juan once explained some diseases and tribulations to me as *cosas de la naturaleza* -"matters of nature", where 'nature' appears atypically as something impersonal or neutral –a more Western view- , and not as a set of evil subjective agencies.

### 10.3 Immoral thoughts/emotions and actions

Animals' predatory actions can affect more than people's bodily health. In the Muinane's abstract portrayals, if *somebody* behaves improperly, it is understood not to be a Real Person but some spurious animal self who is misbehaving; an animal among whose defining characteristics are precisely that it is immoral and destructive, in some way or another, of people or of proper sociality. The Muinane refer to those evil beings who cause their thoughts/affects or Speeches to become embodied in others, as *siifimoomo iiigomo*, 'walkers in others' names'. As a result of having such an animal 'walk in their name', people experience as *their own*, thoughts/emotions which are not really theirs. They experience, among other harmful motivations, the animalistic sentiments of hate, jealousy, desire for violence, wrongful anger, disrespect for others, laziness, vanity. They lose sight of proper behaviour, of obligations, and of injunctions to compassion. These evil thoughts/emotions then become expressed in actions that are at best unproductive, at worst lethal or destructive of social life.
10.3.1 Madness

Among the evil beings who are ever seeking ways in which to divert properly behaved, purposeful men and women from their paths, the False Woman plays a role. While I lived in Muinane communities, this 'spirit' was blamed for more misdemeanours and tribulations than any other beast. According to the rhetoric, her presence can be subtle and pervasive, and her manifestations multiple. Her Speech persuades men and women wrongly of their own strength, knowledge and invulnerability. People who speak her Speech believe that it is the strongest and most effective Speech, and reject the proper one. Of course, they do not recognise it as her Speech, but assume it to be the proper one.

The narrative use of the False Woman's personage constitutes, among other things, a definition of the nurturing role of women, but also the general need for purposeful behaviour. According to a certain myth,

When the Grandsons of the Centre first accepted the False Woman's presence in their *maloca*, they were testing her. They wanted to know whether she was a True Woman. Soon enough, she started to fail in her nurturing duties. She did not work in the garden or make manioc bread, manicuera or *caguana*, but instead vainly combed her hair. Furthermore, she attempted to draw the older Grandson of the Centre from his proper endeavours by attempting to persuade him to lie in her hammock with her. He withstood her seductions, and so she tried her wiles on the younger one, and similarly failed. The elder then merely gave her some of his tobacco. She licked it and
went uncontrollably mad. She showed him her vulva, touched her breasts and demanded that he come with her into her hammock. He then banished her for her failings, for not being a contained, nurturing woman but rather a wanton, unproductive, barren and purposeless beast.

In another clan’s myth, one which takes place earlier in their cosmogony,

the Grandson of the Centre initially spoke good Speeches which concerned the growth of foodstuffs and ritual substances, the care for kin’s health, proper behaviour and other moral endeavours. He did so under the instruction and observation of his father, the Grandfather of the Centre. Because his speech was True Speech, it never ended^{243}. At some point, however, the Grandson started to think that his Grandfather’s ways were mistaken, that His creations and Speeches were mostly useless. He started to think that his own Speech was superior to his Grandfather’s. These improper thoughts were not his true Speech, which was good and respectful; they were the immoral, damaging Speech of the False Woman. The Grandfather, irked and saddened by his son’s behaviour, said, ‘If my Speech is useless, then you speak. Give counsel, produce, take care of everybody.’ The Grandson started to speak, but very soon his storytelling, counsels and so on came to an end, because it is
always so with False Speeches: they start loud and strong, but
soon trickle out and disappear into mute, knotted confusion.
They do not bring about the desired results, but only
improductivity and conflict.

Antonio once said that this woman carried a tobacco container shaped
like a penis. It was the tobacco she licked out of it that made her misbehave
as she did. Despite the fact that she had been banished—like many other evil
beings had been banished in the mythical past—the False Woman sometimes
managed to corrupt people today. She makes people lick her tobacco in such
a way that they are unaware that it is not their own tobacco or proper
substances that they are consuming; as a result, they misbehave.

The Muinane refer to her in Spanish as ‘la Mujer Falsa’ or ‘la Mujer
Prostituta’ (the False Woman, or the Prostitute Woman). In Muinane, they
refer to her mostly as the ‘Fáragaigo,’ the root ‘fära-’ of which denotes
obsession and perversity. On occasion they also call her the ‘Jégavogaigo’
‘the Woman of Madness.’ ‘Locura’ (‘madness,’ in Spanish), for the Muinane,
embraces purposeless behaviour, complacent vanity, incompetence,
forgetfulness, and excessive movement, and the physical condition of an
overall, irritating itchiness. ‘Itchiness,’ I add parenthetically, refers also to
obsessive, incontinent sexual desire.

Pedro thought that it was ‘madness’ stemming from the False Woman
that kept his daughter from living at home for more than a few weeks or
months at a time, and instead drove her to wander about and indulge in
gossip-inducing flirtatious behaviour with the soldiers at the military base in

243 I return to the ‘never-ending’ attribute of True Speech in section 12.3.
Araracuara. The old áivojiibo of one of the Muinane communities blamed the False Woman for the sexually provocative behaviour of several young girls. Some of the people of the community told him that it had been these girls' behaviour that had induced Napoleon to flirt with them and to have problems with his wife Fidelina. Furious, the old man had demanded that the girls breathe in the smoke of burning chillies, to rid them of the spirit that made them behave in that fashion. Somebody told me that they were made to do so till they vomited or passed out. Such behaviour is contrasted to the focused hard work and the geographical fixity of morally motivated women.

Madness does not necessarily stem from the False Woman, however. For instance, Manuel referred to his son’s shocking violence against him as ‘madness’. The young man’s behaviour deviated in a very anguishing manner from moral sociability; it destroyed tranquillity and lacked any practical value. Mere anger, Manuel noted, would never have made his son attack him. He attributed his son’s madness to a jaguar, adding that the jaguar had to have been directed by somebody’s sorcery. Madness is thus closely linked to that most dangerous thought/emotion: anger.

10.3.2 Concerning laziness, envy and jealousy as affective conditions of disruption

Counsels and critical comments point out jealousy and envy as common causes of anger and undesirable behaviours. Throughout my period in the field, different men and women insisted prescriptively that people

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244 The Airo-Pai make a similar connection between ‘craziness’, roving behaviour and purposelessness. They link it to deers, however. (Belaunde 2000). Among the Piaroa as well, the ‘wanderer’ is often promiscuous and crazy (cf. Overing 1985b)
should learn to work and produce, to avoid their coming to envy what others possess. Concerning this, Juan once said to me, 'My father used to say that as long as you can work, you can produce anything you need. Having that, then you need not envy anybody else.' One of the dangers of laziness and the insufficient production it entails is precisely that it engenders lacks which contrast with the abundance of others, and therefore engenders envy as well. Not surprisingly, people's moral self-portrayals often stressed their own willingness to work hard and their lack of envy.

One mythical source of laziness is the red deer. In one of the Speeches of Apprising, this beautiful, vain creature competed with an ugly, hardworking turtle for the favours of a young woman. The deer was the favoured suitor, initially, but both were sent to work anyway to test them. The deer merely slept in the jungle instead of working, while his contender worked efficiently at making a garden. The deer, observing how the other produced so well, worried broodingly, was sleepless and could not enjoy his food, but still he would not work. As a result of his lack of production, he was finally denied the woman, and proscribed from the would-be father-in-law's maloca. Amancio told me this story, as a response to my question regarding the origin of brooding worry; he stressed the link between it and laziness, and then added that laziness would eventually lead to envy, anger and sorcery.

Manuel defined envy (envidia, in Spanish) to me as people's wish to destroy the good things which others possess and they themselves do not. Manuel and others often blamed such envy for many local territorial and political disputes, fights and what they supposed were sorcerous attacks.

Roberto in particular interpreted almost all negative events in terms of envy; for him, my occasional nightmares, his own, deaths in his family, diseases in the community and so on were all the product of the agency of envious people or other beings. He claimed that others envied his knowledge, his good relationships with white men and his leadership, and therefore sent him problems by way of sorcery.

Jealousy is similar to envy and anger in that it does not allow people to live well together with others. Manuel, for example, was widely known to be excessively jealous, to the point of having beaten his wife numerous times because of it. Different people from different communities claimed that he was responsible for dispersing his family, because his jealous attacks on his brothers had forced them to leave the lineage's settlement. One woman, discussing this matter with me, told me with some pleasure about a time in which Manuel had joked with an elderly woman concerning possible infidelities of her husband. The woman had 'embittered' him: "You should not joke like that, because you cannot bear to be joked with in turn...if we say anything, you will beat your wife." Reportedly, he became shamed and joked no more. As I discuss in section 2.4, Manuel deemed his violence and jealousy to have been the false Speeches of the False Woman and other animals and spirits, and often claimed to have dealt with them satisfactorily.

There are counsels that instruct children not to grow up to be jealous. According to Napoleon, a girl may be told, "Little mother, do not be jealous of your husband, for one day he may wrap your hammock around your head and send you back to us, and take as his wife the woman about whom you
fight. Similarly, a boy may be told that his future wife, angered by jealous accusations, may say "Since you believe I have been with him in any case, I shall leave you and live with him." 247

Jealousy is linked to incest in counsels and myths. I first took note of this at a time when a young man I worked with was going through a period of obvious distress because his relationship with his younger sister was overtly conflictive, and this was affecting his relationships with his parents and his other siblings. At one point his unmarried sister had fought with his new wife over the ownership and use of household tools which he had bought or made before the latter's arrival, and he had interceded on his wife's behalf. He had hit his sister, and she had attempted to stab him with a knife. My friend addressed the issue in the *mambeadero*, using me as interlocutor. He told me his sister had inside her the Speech of the False Woman, the mythical character who had at one time attempted to seduce her own brothers. He told me the myth in which this event occurred, and said that his sister was behaving jealously with his wife, as if she were his wife as well. That behaviour could only be explained by the presence of the immoral, incestuous False Woman, who had been rejected to the mouth of the Caquetá river by her own father. He demanded matter-of-factly, 'Why should that woman come and bother us, when she had already been rejected, swept out of the lives of men?' He stopped addressing me and started addressing her with an impassioned, nearly tearful voice: "You are not wanted here; nobody has

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246 An endearing term for a daughter or grand-daughter.
247 The Airo-Pai and the Cashinahua link jealousy to stinginess (cf. Belaunde 1992 and Lagrou 2000). For the Muinane, the term for being stingy is the same as that for loving. Being stingy with kin—in the sense of investing much in their care and zealously making sure others do not 'touch' them damagingly—is acceptable, whereas loving one's things to the point of not
beckoned you here; I do not speak your Speech...I shall fight you even if I die doing so...You were rejected to the mouth of the river by the creator...leave!"

In my experience, counsels concerning jealousy were usually accompanied by stories concerning adultery. The anecdotes in question usually involved a married but lusty and wandering woman, and some young man. Inevitably in these stories, both died miserable deaths. Ernesto, for one, often told me that 'the ancients' stated that a woman who cuckolded her husband revealed it in her walk and her talk. She would walk strangely, laugh in a certain way and behave in an excessively solicitous way towards her husband. He added that when a man of the 'ancients' discovered this, he would simply chop her head off and throw her body into the river. Her family of origin could not retaliate, because it would be their fault for not counselling her properly. A story about a youth who seduced the wife of a knowledgeable older man tells of how he was eventually tricked by the latter and inflicted a grievous, shameful wound that led him to kill himself.

Despite the threatening counsels, adultery seemed to be fairly common among the peoples of the Middle Caquetá. I heard about numerous beatings of supposedly wayward wives and even murders of unfaithful spouses. For instance, one of Manuel's daughters was married to a fiercely jealous Uitoto who had reportedly murdered his first wife in a jealous fit of rage. Ernesto's wife's mother had stabbed her first husband to death out of jealousy, and had spent some years in a jail in Bogotá. I also witnessed the results of several fights motivated by jealousy: several men and women I knew bore machete

sharing them generously with others is unacceptable.

wounds inflicted upon them by the jealous husbands they had cuckolded. One of Oliverio’s sons had a dozen scars from machete slashes that marked the time when his lover’s husband discovered them *in flagrante delicto*.

While I was at his community, Ernesto had cut his wife with a machete for gazing at another man and supposedly signalling him cryptically during a visit to Araracuara. He claimed that he had not killed her or sent her away because their children were too young. Ernesto had to remain in Araracuara while his wife was in the hospital. I remember Francisco, Ernesto’s father, asking another man at the time whether Ernesto was still ‘being bad.’ Ernesto’s older sister similarly condemned him, and justified Ernesto’s wife’s attempts at escaping from him.

Events such as these caused breaks in several communities among the Andoke, Nonuya and Muinane. Ernesto’s patriline, for one, broke up when his brother Alejandro’s wife attempted to run off with the son of Andrés, the oldest of the brothers. Andrés and his sons simply left the community. In the years following the event, the guilty nephew tried to murder one of his uncles. They in turn attacked him every time they met him in Araracuara.

**10.3.3 Concerning lies, gossip and criticism**

Despite the constant flow of critical moral evaluations I witnessed among the Muinane, they often claimed that excessive fault-finding and complaining make people unpleasant living and working companions. Children should be counselled not to be overtly critical of others, lest eventually they themselves, or their children, acquire similar flaws. Criticism can also cause disease, if it is not addressed to the person being criticised.
Manuel, for example, told me about a period in time when his children were constantly ill and nothing he tried would heal them. He then found out through the use of tobacco that the reason for it was that his uncles and his classificatory brothers were speaking critically of him behind his back, and this was harming the children. He had then gone over to their maloca, and demanded to know what it was they were saying about him, and telling them not to do thus because they were causing his children to fall sick. They told them what they had said about him, and soon enough his children healed.

Dance rituals are occasions in which people can sing aggressively critical songs to maloca owners and their families, in a way that will let them know in what ways they are being improper, and which will not cause them or their children to become sick. Such songs do not generate destructive retaliations, like surreptitious gossip and criticism can, for criticism in dance rituals is never supposed to be received with destructive anger. People who are told through a song that they are ugly, stingy, angry, ignorant or otherwise immoral must react by giving the singer gifts that show the accusers that the accused are moral people who work hard and produce.

Harsh, straightforward criticisms outwith dance rituals are widely deemed to cause people to become angry and hot, perhaps from the shame of public disgrace. It is for this reason, mambeadores claim, that leaders must learn to let people know of their faults and flaws without making them feel shame and anger. Otherwise, the victims of harsh criticism may react in a way that will cause the troubles to worsen.

Lying gossip is another dangerous iniquity. It is treated in the counsels and in abstract discussions of anger as the archetypal cause of anger. It is
widely considered to engender fights and other social tribulations. (I discuss one such case below, in section 10.3.4.4.) Some people are marked as known liars and gossips, and their destructive exploits told and retold with resentment or amusement at the discomfort produced.

There is no single animal or spirit that is linked to gossip, as far as I heard from my Muinane interlocutors. Rather, it seems to be a something which evil beings in general 'send' when they find that there are troubles between families or lineages. They do so in order to exacerbate fights, with the hope of setting of a pitched battle of sorcery and other death-dealing. The evil beings then stand back, laughing.

The Muinane seem to think that children are dangerous sources of gossip and excessive information. Many counsels and other everyday comments I witnessed portrayed children to be careless in how they speak, and liable to lie or to tell imprudent truths unwittingly. Several counsels stress the danger of listening to children's gossip. One story tells about a man whose little son told his father, 'Father, there is this person who keeps doing this [he stuck his tongue in and out of his mouth quickly and repeatedly] to my mother, when she works in the garden.' The man immediately cut off his wife's head. Some time later, the man was walking with his son in the forest when they came upon a little lizard, sticking its tongue in and out of its mouth. The boy said, 'Look, father, he is the one who used to do that to my mother.' The man then scolded his son for having tattled as he had, and was terribly sorry at having killed his guiltless wife. Ernesto and other men who told me this story stated that it is supposed to be addressed as a counsel to children. According
to Ernesto, mothers should tell it, and warn the child not to be tattle-tales lest their fathers orphan them.

Another short story of the Speech of Advice which instructs children not to be tattle-tales or gossips tells of a time when a community ate a red deer a hunter had killed. The adults warned the children not to tell anybody anything about this. When they left for the garden and left the children alone, the red deer's partner came in the guise of a man and asked the children what they had eaten recently. Most of the children obeyed the demand for silence, but one child imprudently disobeyed and quickly produced the information the deer was asking for. He even told the deer where the other's bones had been thrown in the river. The deer then forced the children to dive for every last bone. Finally, the deer dipped nearly all the children in hot vegetable tar and transformed them into little black birds.

Manuel told me that a particularly dangerous activity to indulge in was to discuss absent people critically in the presence of children. At some point the children can carelessly repeat what was said in front of the people referred to, who can say, 'They speak in this manner about us at this child's home,' and start troubles.

On one occasion in the community of Chukiki, the parents, the cabildo and the three teachers of the new school met to discuss the rules for the school children. There was much discussion about children's gossip, for there had already been troubles concerning the supposedly sexually provocative behaviour of some girls, and the incontinence of one of the teachers. The teachers and the cabildo asked the parents not to believe the children when they came tattling to them about events in school, but rather, if worried, to find
out from the teacher what had happened. Some of the parents agreed, but others claimed that they could not do that, for a child that was not hearkened to could come to say, 'I have no father, I have no mother to defend me.' There was a brief debate between all involved, as to whether children were inevitably liars, or whether on the contrary, children ultimately told the truth. The argument ended without a final conclusion.

This issue of gossip and tattling is of such importance in daily life, that people in their self-portrayals often include descriptions of themselves as quiet and unintrusive characters who are irritated by gossip-mongers.

10.3.4 Anger

Anger is the object of much discursive attention among the Muinane, more so than other undesirable thoughts/emotions. In fact, the greatest danger of most other improper thoughts/emotions lies in the anger they can induce. In their prescriptions and critiques, the Muinane regard anger as the emotion/thought of animals, akin to cannibalism and murderous intent. As such, it is understood to be a threat to the good life and to proper relations among kin, co-residents and clans. Extreme anger that produces violence and sorcery is the greatest threat to proper sociality; it causes the destruction of human life rather than the production of new Real People.

10.3.4.1 The workings and effects of anger

The angry Speeches of a Real Person, and especially those of a mambeador, can be dangerous to the health of women and children, and even of other mambeadores. Discourses explain this threat in different ways. As I
understood it, one explanation was that uncontrolled Speeches misdirect the predatory agency of the ritual substances against kin, causing them heat, diseases or other tribulations much as the same predatory agency would cause animals to die if directed against them. However, such misuse of true substances may transform them into spurious, immoral ones, a possibility clearly expressed in myths and in some people's interpretations of events.

A different notion I abstracted from events and discourses I witnessed was that angry Speeches directed against Real People are intrinsically immoral and animalistic, and therefore are not true Speeches that stem from moral substances. The thoughts/emotions and actions in question are caused by the 'fathers of anger' -- wild pigs, tapirs, jaguars, giant anteaters, and others-- who 'walk in others' names', in the fashion I described above (section 2.3). These beings place their substances in people, or speak through them in some other way, so that they cease to perceive as Real People and instead think the angry, incontinent, cannibalistic thoughts of animals.

10.3.4.2 Disease and the cessation of Speech

Whatever the case, addressing people angrily can cause them bodily and intellectual/emotional harm. In fact, the mere presence of a very angry person can cause ill effects. Leonor provided me with a good example of such an understanding of anger. Her husband Juan, normally a sweet, soft-spoken man, once berated her for some reason or another. Resentful at his angry words, she said that he had a "big-toothed one" - an animal- inside his body,
and that that was not the way his ancestors had said a man should speak to his wife. She called tearfully to her two granddaughters, children aged two, to keep away from their grandfather lest his anger sicken them. Later, she looked at Juan and said she hoped he would die, a statement in kind with others I had witnessed and heard about, and which are generally understood to be addressed to the beast inside the other, rather than to the Real Person him or herself.

On another occasion, Roberto aggressively yelled at Rosalba, a woman who was visiting his community, on account of problems between her and his son Napoleon. His classificatory nephew Manuel told me that this was not correct; that Roberto's behaviour had been a manifestation of the tyrannical, angry Speech of the *mochilero*\textsuperscript{250}, and not of the cool sweet Speech of Coca and Tobacco which the leader should speak. 'Rosalba might get sick because of all this, and then Roberto will get into trouble.' He added, 'One should never use angry Speeches against people, but only against evil.'

In different discussions on the subject of anger, several elders told me that it can cause people to cease to speak and support each other. The cessation of proper dialogues is often described as the 'intrusion of the tail of the thunder grasshopper.' This reference is not an attribution of causality, but a metaphor. The emphasis is on the fact that the tail of this beast is wide at the base, but quickly tapers to a point. The metaphor refers on the one hand to dialogues which are initially 'open' and promise to flow easily in view of the fact all the participants know the Speeches involved, but which then in fact

\textsuperscript{250} This is the local Spanish term for the *oropéndola*, a bird best known among ornithologists for its hanging nests.
become slow and difficult as the participants’ Speech becomes ‘knotted up.’ The dialogues finally ‘become closed’ – much like the tail of the grasshopper tapers out– and the mambeadores lapse into an uncomfortable silence that makes them all aware that there is something gravely wrong in them or in their environment. More importantly, perhaps, the metaphor refers to the ‘path of Speech’ between two men or malocas which may be clean and open, but which gossip and fights quickly cause to close down. In other words, the formal footings of their relationship change, are destroyed or are made untenable. When these paths of Speech between particular Real People, lineages and clans or malocas become obstructed, Men of the Speech of Tobacco cannot bear tobacco packages to invite each other to rituals or mingas any more. According to the rhetoric, without mutual support between Men of the Speech of Tobacco and between the lineages and clans they lead, rituals cannot be carried out, or are at best weak and ineffective. The material abundance, health and propagation they ensure are thereby threatened.

Roberto, again, was pointed out to me as the cause of one such dangerous cessation of dialogue. At a certain meeting, he had spoken angrily about Ernesto because of some problems between their communities, and had agreed to sign a letter written by the young men of the cabildo and which addressed Ernesto, accusing him of being a liar and an envious tyrant. Juan, a much calmer character, spoke quietly to Roberto about this some days later. Roberto said laughingly, ‘It is when the Mad One comes that I speak thus.’ He was admitting to Juan that his angry behaviour had not been

251 Roberto could not read or write, but he had learned to sign his name decades before, at a missionary school.
appropriate, and attributed it to an extrinsic source of madness.\textsuperscript{252} Nevertheless, the formal relationships between the two communities ceased at that time, and had not been renewed when I left the region a few months later. They held no rituals together, and failed to live up to their previously established intention to collaborate in the matter of dealing with the departmental government’s educational committee.\textsuperscript{253}

According to several mambeadores, extreme anger between elders can not only close the path of Speech between them, but also generate an escalation of accusations of sorcery and ensuing retaliations, the worst and most inhuman social scenario in Muinane rhetoric.\textsuperscript{254} For instance, Amancio had left Ernesto’s community in great anger after several confrontations with him, and had moved temporarily to Roberto’s. Some months afterwards, Roberto signed the angry letter I referred to above. This all coincided with two serious accidents among Ernesto’s people: his son wounded himself with a shotgun, and his brother nearly drowned in the Caquetá river. During a visit to Araracuara, one of the locals there told me that Ernesto was blaming Roberto and Amancio for these accidents, claiming they were plotting sorcery against him. (I return to the issue of sorcery in sections 10.3.5 and 12.1).

10.3.4.3 Violence

Violence is another animalistic and destructive result of anger. Juan, a very articulate speaker and a devotee of coolness, stated that war, fights

\textsuperscript{252} The ‘Mad One’ Roberto spoke about was male. I only heard one other reference to a masculine source of madness, and that was a counterpart to the False Woman.

\textsuperscript{253} Around that time, the government of the departamento del Amazonas was working with some NGO’s to try to motivate and help the native indigenous communities’ educational projects. Many of these involved the establishment of community schools.

\textsuperscript{254} Santos-Granero (1991: 102) states that the Amuesha believe anger both to precede and to trigger people’s capacity for evil acts. This belief acts as a deterrent not to social conflicts, but
between men and wife-beatings are part of times when the "atmosphere" enters people, darkening their thoughts, presumably in such a way that they cannot 'see' the difference between proper and evil behaviour. It is a time when the Speech of Conversation is gone; it is a time of evil. Different people told me about occasions in the past in which men and women of the communities in question had behaved violently, and the misfortunes that had ensued: Ernesto's violent tyranny had caused his community to disperse on at least one occasion, according to one of the secessionists. Manuel's jealous rage had caused him to attack his brothers, who abandoned him. Amancio beat his wife violently and frequently, and as a result had been abandoned. Several people noted that his situation was indeed sad: he was living in another community, with no wife or garden of his own, and worried about what he and his children would eat.

Some women too had allowed the madness to overtake them, and had physically attacked others. When people told me about this, their actions were the object of much ridicule, and blamed for the lack of esteem others showed them.

 Needless to say by now, the region of the Middle Caquetá is violent. Many Muinane, Uitoto and Andoke have died or been grievously wounded in the last few years, as a result of drunken fights and vengeful attacks for past injuries or supposed sorcery. Their attackers were usually natives themselves. There has been no long break for these peoples in this sense: the entire last century featured that murky madness that led people to kill each other, from

to public enactments of them, for fear of being accused of sorcery. Cf. as well Overing (1985b:276)
the rubber holocaust, where indigenous groups were pitted against each other- on to the penal colony and the coca boom\textsuperscript{255}. Currently, the region is under the political control of Colombia's largest guerrilla group. I do not know what effect this has had on internal violence. (See Appendix I)

10.3.4.4 Dealing with anger

One way in which anger is supposed to be controlled is through proper counselling and nourishment. In the meetings on the Speech of Advice, the elders stated that from very early on children had to be counselled not to bite or scratch other people. They said that mothers had to learn to pre-empt such behaviour, "cooling" the child constantly with herb baths and sweet manioc drink, and using minor physical punishment to discourage it from attacking others. They should refrain from playing at beating or spearing each other. Their play should be preparation for moral and convivial endeavours in the future: they should make little \textit{malocas} with sticks, or grasp each other in a dance ritual stance and sing in companionable brotherhood.

The counsels warn children against bad temper, telling them that as a consequence of it others will grow to dislike them and will never help them voluntarily with their tasks. The threat of lack of support in the face of great tasks is widely understood to be a daunting prospect. Counsels for girls warn them not to be scolds or argumentative, for should they scold and argue when they have husbands, their men would send them to work in the garden with no help as punishment for their bad temper. In turn, boys should be told that

\textsuperscript{255} Several Muinane and Uitoto men were guards at the penal colony, and as such had had to track and kill escaped prisoners themselves.
when they get married they are not to hit their wives when these scold and argue excessively, but rather to make them work in the garden on their own. The critical 'embitterment' insistently rehearsed in these portrayals states that soon the woman will tire of her work, and then the husband or mother-in-law will say: "For arguments, for gossip and for scolding you have much strength, yet for work you have none! Where is your anger now? Where is your strength now!?".

Inevitably, people do get angry. The mambeadores have a standard narrative on how to deal with this. The idea is that the man—it is always a man, and what is more, a *maloca* owner, who protagonises these narratives—sees that another person is furious. This other angry man (also a man, in the narratives I heard) yells, beats people up, makes threats, and generally behaves in an uncontrolled fashion. The *maloca* owner invites him to the *mambeadero*, or perhaps the angry person makes his way there on his own, and upon arrival angrily hacks at the pillars of the *maloca* with his machete, or perhaps cuts down the wooden drum. The *maloca* owner knows that he must not become angry himself, for that is what the evil agents who are making the other man misbehave want. He remains calm and asks the other to sit down. When the other complies, the *maloca* owner offers him *mambe* and tobacco paste, and asks his wife to provide the man with manicuera.

The *maloca* owner then asks the other what it was that was making him angry. The standard narrative places gossip and lies as the source of anger. Manuel told me about two occasions in which people of his community were very close to serious fights because of one man's gossip. In each case Manuel, who had been elected governor of the community at the time, sent
tobacco paste to summon all those involved, and had them face each other. In each case, the unjustified anger had been dealt with by showing the origin of the lying gossip; on one of the occasions, one of the furious victims of the gossip came close to shooting the liar.

Juan’s narrative concerning how to deal with anger was basically the same. He added two pragmatic details, however: he stressed that one first had to wait till the angry person quietened down, for if one attempted to talk to somebody who was still maddened by anger and screaming, one would achieve nothing but would instead become mad and angry oneself. However, one could not let too much time pass by without talking to the person about the problem, for otherwise things would get worse. And indeed, on one occasion in which he sternly addressed his brother and was yelled at in return, he refused to retire for the night or allow his brother to do so till they had talked things out.

Another way of dealing with anger is by exploring its aetiology through a mambeadero ritual, much like that Manuel carried out with his father to discover that different animals and the False Woman made him misbehave (see section 2.3). Dance rituals and maloca constructions deal with anger at a yet greater scale (see chapter 14).

10.3.4.5 Agency and the ambivalence of anger

Despite the dangers of anger, ‘it’ cannot be totally dispensed with, because it is also an important aspect of people’s agency. Proper human agency is to some extent predatorial, and often involves people’s angry redirecting of malignant agency against its sources. Angry Speeches are thus
acceptable and even necessary when they address evil beings. Proper anger is of the kind the leaders should wield, and which gives them their name of Áivójito: Men of the Painful (or spicy hot) Speech. This ‘Speech’ is strong and harsh, and kills or scares away the beings that harm a leader’s community. However, mambeadores sometimes claim that a true leader’s anger never touches his own heart. It does not come from his basket of knowledge, but from a second basket that is at the throat. Thus, though a true mambeador’s Speech may cause fear and appear to be furious, his heart and basket of knowledge remain cool, tranquil and untouched.

The moral and proper character of anger is sometimes commended in people’s self-depictions. I found particularly interesting the case of Roberto’s clan, the members of which were widely recognised to be angry people. Members of other clans, and one Uitoto, noted this anger critically. The Uitoto told me that this clan was hot, and that therefore, as was plainly visible, they could not multiply successfully. He told me to note how the other clans were successfully reproducing, and their number increasing, while this hot clan’s people were growing less and less through deaths, infertility and lack of abundance. Roberto himself found the case to be different. He often claimed that indeed his people were angry, much as the jávarata creature linked to the origin of the clan was quick to sting\textsuperscript{256}. But he insisted that their intrinsic anger was in truth directed only against those who would harm their people, and that the quick, harsh way in which they sometimes addressed other people was only angry in appearance; it would harm no one.

\textsuperscript{256} I do not wish to make my characters more recognisable than they already are. Let it suffice to say that some species of ‘Roberto’s’ clan’s totemic creature (an entire family – choleoptera) sting.
Another form of anger which is acceptable is the particular "red-faced" anger of the woman who works hard under the hot sun to grow spicy chills. People claim that when such a woman feeds people her chilli paste, and they feel its strong spice, they exclaim "This woman's anger is true!" This woman is said to have the right to counsel and embitter because she has shown herself to be productive. Despite the productive and moral character of this anger, however, it is still dangerous if uncontrolled. (See chapter 6).

In everyday life people claimed to be angered by the behaviours of others, even kin. They would exclaim, upon noting some behaviour or reporting it to me, 'That is when I get angry!' or 'That is when they make me get angry.' I find that young mambeadores in particular often made claims to anger, much as they made claims to knowledge and to general competence. My perception was that all their claims were ultimately claims to agency.

People alternated between unforgiving criticism and extraordinary understanding of others concerning anger, in manifestations of its ambivalent character. For instance, some people would interpret youths' expressions of anger as a youthful lack of knowledge and control, rather than as the manifestation of agency which the youths seemed to wish to make of them. Another example of this ambivalence towards anger was that of Manuel's daughter Cristina, a small thirty-year old woman of whom others were sometimes critical because of her foul temper. Several people told me that it had been her bad temper that had led her two or three (consecutive) husbands to abandon her. However, she was an incredibly hard worker, even by the standards of the tough and able-bodied Muinane. She would bustle her tiny self from task to task, and even managed to build a house for herself with
no help. Elena, whom I knew to be particularly unforgiving, turned to me upon seeing that house and said, "No wonder she is so angry! She's a real woman, that one!" She meant, I believe, that the other woman's anger was not the false carping of a lazy woman who has nothing to show for all her loud talk, but the excusable and sometimes necessary anger that is sometimes linked to production, fuelling it and resulting from it.

10.3.5 Sorcery

Sorcery, more so even than direct physical violence in the forms of 'fighting' and 'war' (iimukugai), is widely regarded as the most extreme manifestation of negative affects such as anger, jealousy and envy. The deadliest diseases and tribulations people suffer stem from it. Sorcerous attacks evince the sorcerer's inhuman lack of compassion for other people. It is an unforgivable abuse of knowledge and ritual substances, and inevitably leads to the death of the wielder.

To effect sorcery, an evil person -mostly an old man, in the Muinane's stories- carries out lone rituals in the late hours of the night, whereby he provides mambe and tobacco to evil beings in order to commit them to harm a victim. These beings then place objects or substances such as perfumes, ceramic shards, magic thorns, darts, tops and filth into their victims' bodies.

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258 I translate the Muinane term 'apichu' and the Spanish term brujería as 'sorcery,' and 'apichuminafi' and brujo as 'sorcerer.'
259 For the People of the Grub, of the Pineapple and of the Wooden Drum, sorcery often involves persuading the masiimi ('Whistlers', or 'Singers') to harm people. According to some, but not all, the Whistlers are the spirits of dead sorcerers. They are invisible, bloodthirsty, and know how to cause and heal all kinds of diseases. They travel by using 'jungle tobacco', a powerful hallucinogenic. They live in malocas and have social lives of their own.
bodies. These substances obstruct bodies' inner paths to cause pain, constipation, bleeding, and so on. Alternatively, the sorcerer can name proper substances into poisonous stuffs, through the ill-intentioned misuse of Speeches meant to effect the opposite transformation. Diseases that stem from sorcery are usually worse than animals' more common impingements, perhaps because the discovery of the origin of the disease, which is essential to healing, is very difficult. The regular healing rituals which involve the consumption of tobacco and *mambe* and the narration of Speeches of Apprising do not suffice, for they cannot reveal the source of the disease. This can only be done through the use of *yagé* and ‘jungle tobacco paste’, dangerous hallucinogens that empower people to ‘see everything’, and perceive the sorcerer who originated their disease.

Yet another form of sorcery is the capacity to transform oneself into an animal, preferably a jaguar, a tapir or a boa, and to travel the world in that guise. When people tell of men who had the capacity to transform into a beast—there are none nowadays to whom this capacity—they usually make the point that the person was extremely knowledgeable. Many of the *mambeadores* have stories to tell about uncles, grandparents and other men they knew in their childhood, and who could transform in that fashion. However, that capacity is morally suspect, since people in the guise of animals could prey upon people or otherwise endanger them. Juan, for example, denied that anybody who used such sorcery could be good. He used a standard rhetorical question which alluded to the inevitable bad end of evil beings: ‘Look...where did all those who could become jaguars end up? Dead! There are none left!’ (Similar things could be said about all those who
misbehaved in different ways: they ended up dead or in the shape of game or other animals.

The Muinane claim that sorcerers inevitably come to an evil end, in what seems to be a doctrine of retribution. This can happen in several ways. One is that the evil beings they harness to do evil always come back demanding to receive more *mambe* and tobacco. One day, the man will not have any available, and so the beasts kill his wife, or perhaps a grandson. Eventually, they will destroy the whole family and the sorcerer himself. Alternatively, the evil beings he sends out to attack some other person may inspect the victim and find him or her to be an innocent character. Aware that attacking an innocent person will inevitably cause the tobacco deity to kill the attacker, the evil being turns back upon the sorcerer, saying, ‘You lied to me...that person is innocent! Now it is you whom I shall kill!’, and it destroys the sorcerer.

Manuel, for instance, was certain that his Uitoto father-in-law had tried to sorcerise him, incensed by the hearsay that Manuel had threatened to shoot the man’s daughter, Manuel’s wife. He told me that he had become aware of threatening sorcery one day when his own shotgun spontaneously went off, barely missing him. His own innocence had saved him, he claimed. To investigate the matter he had smoked a roll of tobacco leaves until he ‘became drunk’ —that is, till he started to hallucinate. He had then flown through the air and landed at his father-in-law’s *maloca*, where he saw the old man meeting with other old men and plotting to kill him as they effected their sorcery. Afterwards, Manuel had faced the old man, demanding that he
confess. According to Manuel, the father-in-law had denied any guilt, but the man's own wife chimed in, 'Yes, you did try to sorcerise him! I saw you put out mambe and tobacco paste for that purpose! Why do you deny it? Tell him about it!' The old man refused to admit his guilt. Manuel claimed that his father-in-law died five years later as a retribution for his sorcerous homicidal attempt. He added, 'If only he had confessed to me, we could have fixed things and he could have lived for much longer...'

Another typical end to sorcerers' doings is that they get shot or trapped or otherwise wounded whilst they walk around disguised as animals. A common element in narratives of different kinds —Speeches of Apprising as well as numerous stories 'of Real People' which different narrators told me— is that some hunter shot or otherwise wounded a jaguar, a tapir or some other large beast, only to have it escape. The following day, some old man in a nearby community —the sorcerer— manifests ugly wounds that correspond to the wounds of the animal the hunter had shot or trapped. The old man claims that he fell or that he had some other accident, and eventually dies.

In people's autobiographical accounts or anecdotes, it was common for them to report sorcerous attacks upon them as vital events that had profoundly changed their lives and redirected them. Roberto remembered a disease that had nearly killed him in his youth, and for which his father had given him yage. 'Drunken' (that is, hallucinating), he had seen numerous old Uitoto and Andoke men offering mambe and tobacco to evil beings and plotting together to kill him. After that, he had felt better, and old men started to die in all the communities around him. One week a Uitoto fell, the next an

260 The Muinane sometimes smoke rolled-up tobacco leaves for ritual purposes.
old Andoke, and so on, because their sorcery had turned against them. Manuel and old Francisco had similar stories.

Suspensions and accusations of sorcery are very common among the Muinane, Uitoto and Andoke. Many middle-aged and old mambeadores are regarded with ambivalence in the region: they are knowledgeable healers and protectors for some, but for a few others, they are the main suspects in misfortunes attributed to sorcery.

One such case was that of Orlando, an old Uitoto-Miníka who lived in Araracuara. I met him in 1994 at Ernesto’s community, where Ernesto had asked him to heal him of some liver problem that the medical doctors had not been able to heal. Ernesto had seen in a hallucinogenic trance that somebody had placed a ‘spiritual’ spinning top in his liver, but the culprit who had placed it there, he claimed, must have been a great sage, because he managed to hide himself even from the yage. Not having discovered the culprit, he had not been healed. For Ernesto, Orlando was a sage too, and could perhaps heal him. Orlando himself, however, was the main target of Roberto’s anger and accusations of sorcery a few years later. Between 1997 and 98, one of Roberto’s grandson’s was stabbed to death, a son drowned, a daughter was reported to have died in a military bombing in the Llanos Orientales of Colombia, and a grand-daughter died from an amoeba infection. One day he returned from a trip to Araracuara, and told me that he had met Orlando. He reported on the dialogue, somewhat as follows: ‘I saw him and I said “Hello, Sorcerer!” He answered, “Why do you call me a sorcerer? Some people say that I am, but I am not. Why do they say this?” Then I said to him, “If they say
it it’s because there is a reason for it, you son of a prostitute! You have been attacking my children...you must be an animal, to do thus...they are defenceless...next time, try attacking me! We are both old men, we both know [i.e., they both possess dangerous knowledge]. We will see who is the strongest!’

Juan heard of the conversation between Roberto and Orlando, and told me that that was not a matter that they should have discussed ‘in the street;’ that is, it had to be dealt with in the mambeadero. He said that such troubles between old men or sorcerers would not harm the participants, who were knowledgeable and could defend themselves. ‘It is the rest of humanity who pays for their fights. Evil makes use of the situation, and sends gossip, dreams and false accusations so that more bullets fly...and then laughs at the sight of the havoc it has caused.’

Ernesto was certain that his father had died because of Antonio’s sorcery. Ernesto himself was the object of suspicion, however: on one occasion, a group of Andoke elders had been mambeing together out in a garden or in the forest, when a snake fell from a tree right in their midst. They sent a message to Ernesto demanding to know why he was doing such sorcery.

Pedro and Juan claimed that Manuel was heading towards a sad death because of some sorcerous activities. It was not that he tried to harm people, they told me, rather, he was dealing too closely with animal spirits and asking them for help. Someday not too far away, they would turn on him and his family.

285 I discuss the moral ambiguity of shamans and knowledgeable people in section 12.1.
I heard some expressions that were less than condemning of sorcery from Roberto and his son Napoleon, and Manuel. Like others, they stated that learning sorcery was not all that difficult; that it merely required one to misuse proper knowledge intentionally. The tobacco that was so powerful in achieving desirable ends could just as well be used for destructive purposes. At other times, they had reiterated that one should not use sorcery against sorcery, but merely point out to the Grandfather of Tobacco and other beings one's undeserved tribulations, and ask for help. However, on occasion they contradicted this by stating that there were situations in which sorcery—the aggressive, intentional misuse of knowledge in order to cause another person harm—was worthwhile. Indeed, Roberto once tried to persuade me to teach him 'how to harm people with photographs,' probably because he had heard stories relating to Haitian voodoo or some other such form of black magic. When I said that I thought it was evil to use such things, he answered quickly that he merely thought it would be good to use it for defence. He was particularly interested in having Orlando, his supposed Uitoto attacker, die.

There is a form of sorcery which is also evil, but which is less virulent than the more aggressive kind of sorcerous attack. It involves love charms and substances called ‘chundü’ in local Spanish. According to many Muinane, these concoctions are variously made of herbs, perfumed oils, dolphin fat and other stuffs. It is understood that they are somehow fed surreptitiously to a victim, in order to make him or her fall in love with another. It is said to be used by young men and women to get the love of someone who has jilted them or who simply does not show an interest in them. However, they cause the victim to suffer from jealousy, to have headaches, to wander purposelessly
or lustfully, and to become mad -that is, to be incapable of thinking about anything but some unworthy object. Several women I knew claimed that they had been given *chundū*, and that this explained their own questionable behaviour.
Part IV. On knowledge
11. The agency of material, subjective and divine knowledge

11.1 On ‘the knowledge of our own’

The Muinane’s rhetoric in the mambeadero and elsewhere tends to portray, as it takes for granted, the form and workings of the cosmos. It is a cosmos the Muinane understand to be populated by Real People and by beings endowed with subjectivities and socialities roughly but perversely akin to those of Real People. This is a ‘fundamentalist’ cosmos, where proper human subjectivity, agency and standards of morality are divine in origin. Real People are uniquely capable acting in a moral fashion. Other beings are their immoral inferiors, and seek to bring about the downfall of humanity. The sources, manifestations and the very ontology of both proper and improper subjectivity in this cosmos are material, or behave in a manner akin to material things; this fact, as well as the fact that material tribulations often involve evil subjectivities, are central to the Muinane’s understanding of their own agency.

To deal with evil and to achieve their moral purposes, Real People depend on the mostly male deployment of what I have glossed ‘the instrumental Speeches, among them the Speeches of Life, of Healing, of Apprising, of Work, of Felling, of Maloca Construction, of Pain and others, with their protocols and conditions. The different instrumental Speeches pertain to numerous fields of endeavour and to different moments in life (see, for instance, the chapter on transformations). Some are used on a daily basis, others more rarely; some converge with others or encompass them, some are
opposed to others, and so on. Most of them are understood to be tools for the transformation of evil substances and subjectivities\textsuperscript{262}.

I should note parenthetically that most Muinane men possess some ‘knowledge of our own’; there are no ‘shamans’ that stand out from the rest of the men. Some men are known for having more expertise in healing certain kinds of diseases, or for carrying out more effective Watering rituals. According to some of the men, in the past there were specialised \textit{kakūminaha} (literally, ‘Sucking People’) who through long learning processes and stringent diets acquired the capacity to see and suck out the material evil that harmed people. The \textit{mambeadores} sometimes claim that most of this knowledge has disappeared. No women today are strong healers in the sense of being capable of making diseases and evil dawn as game; there are some, however, who are said to be able to heal minor tribulations. As I mentioned in section 4.4, Sergio told me that in the past some women who licked masses of tobacco became esoterically perspicacious and capable of dealing with the more dangerous threats. Today, there are none such, and in fact, Muinane men and women claim that women have ‘no capacity’ for the \textit{conocimiento propio}.

To return to the Speeches: they are part of what the Muinane refer to in Spanish as \textit{el conocimiento propio}, the ‘knowledge of our own’\textsuperscript{263}. In my experience, the Muinane used the term ‘knowledge of our own’ in Spanish

\textsuperscript{262} In this section I do not address the counsels, another important element of the knowledge of our own. See sections 1.2, 5.2 and 12.5 for brief discussions of them.

\textsuperscript{263} The term ‘\textit{conocimiento propio}’ has no simple translation in Muinane. However, the linguist C. Vengoechea refers to it as ‘\textit{Ifásitu}’ following an informant’s statement (Vengoechea, personal communication). I understand that Muinane term merely to mean ‘all parts’ or ‘the whole thing’, and not to be a univocal name for the category of knowledge. Vengoechea is currently carrying out research on the Muinane language (cf. Landaburu 1996).
mostly to contrast it with the Speeches and other privileged discourses and
techniques of white men and other peoples of the region. I never witnessed
any attempt on their part at producing an exhaustive definition of the
‘knowledge of our own’, despite the fact that they spoke about it often in the
communities I worked in. However, numerous partial references I did hear
included within it the instrumental Speeches I mentioned above, as well as the
Speech of Advice, recipes for healing concoctions, the knowledge of riddles
and songs, the codes of dream interpretation, the techniques concerning the
prediction and control of weather fluctuations, dancer ritual protocols, and
other discourses.

The Muinane’s expressed understandings of the workings of the
‘knowledge of our own’ are part and parcel of their understanding of the
cosmos. Like the cosmos, the ‘knowledge of our own’ is characterised by its
materiality, subjectivity and divine origin. Let me explore this:

11.2 The materiality of the Speeches

Muinane rhetoric on the instrumental Speeches\textsuperscript{264} treats them as
material objects in themselves, that can be manipulated, damaged, burned,
moved and sullied. For instance, in one of his dialogues in preparation for the
arrival of guests to his dance ritual, Juan performatively listed to Pedro how
‘Our Father’ was at that very moment untying the Speech, giving it to them,
pouring it out for them, transforming himself into it.

\textsuperscript{264} The mambeadores treat the terms ‘Palabras’ (literally ‘words’, but I have preferred to
translate it as ‘Speeches’) and ‘conocimiento propio’ as nearly freely interchangeable.
This notion of the materiality of Speeches is sometimes expressed in terms of their consignment in ritual substances, mainly tobacco paste and coca. I witnessed discussions concerning the possibility of people coming to acquire knowledge merely through the consumption of substances. Ernesto, for instance, claimed several times that he had learned everything he knew— the Speeches of Apprising, the conjurations, and so on—from the yagé, through a hallucinogenic experience. Furthermore, though the mambeadores were insistent on the fact that the 'knowledge of our own' had to be learned through judicious attention to paternal instruction, they also insisted that substances were necessary in this process because they 'settled' or 'fixed' the knowledge in the basket of knowledge of the learning youth.

There is some ambiguity concerning the identity or duality of the Speeches and the substances. Sometimes the Muinane's rhetoric conflates them, indifferently replacing the term 'tobacco' or 'coca' for the terms for the Speeches, and vice versa, much like they could claim that a person had an animal, an animal tobacco, or an animal Speech inside. Mambeadores made claims to the effect that some substance spoke inside them; however, on occasion they also claimed that particular instances of substance consumption empowered Speeches which they already possessed. Sometimes they presented the relation between the instrumental Speeches and the substances differently: the former would provide the latter with a direction, a

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265 Cf. Gow (1990:87) for a quote of a similar claim among the Piro.
266 In chapters 4, 5 and 6, I also note that the state of a man's or a woman's plots of coca, tobacco and manioc reflect and affect the state of their knowledge and of their general health.
267 Having this alternative makes sense to me as far as the phenomenology is concerned, for people were undoubtedly aware that they knew chants, invocations and songs and that they could repeat them without using ritual substances. They simply found these expressions 'powerless' if not made agential by substances.
purpose, or a prey. Such Speeches would seem to have had their own agency and subjectivity, apart from the substances they acted upon. Again, however, these Speeches were supposed to come from previously consumed substances. What is clear is that substances and Speeches are materially inseparable; the precise nature of the link—consignment or identity—is not univocally established.

11.3 The subjectivity of the Speeches

The mambeadores’ discourses sometimes attribute human-like subjectivity and speech to people’s Speeches, in a manner akin to a homuncular theory of self. From Juan’s accounts, for instance, I gathered that Speeches evaluate the people that acquire them, and thus stay or leave, function or do not function, and so on, according to those evaluations. I once asked him about the issue of choosing leaders ‘by vote, like white men’. He said that this would not work among the Muinane, where to be a leader a man must speak or possess the Speech of Pain. He stated that people who were to have this Speech were somehow marked from childhood. The problem with a leader chosen by vote, he added, was that the Speech could find him to be ‘perfumed’, and therefore not a suitable abode for it. Another example brings together the notions of the subjectivity of the Speeches and of their conflation with substances: I once asked Juan what happened in a person when he or she felt shame. He answered that the Speech of Tobacco (which

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268 Cf. for instance Shanon (1993:99-101), or the late Platonist notion of the soul (Osborne 1991:30).
269 The Muinane link odours to ‘breaths’ and ‘airs’. Odours or ‘perfumes’ can furthermore madden, cool, or otherwise establish subjectivities.
stemmed from the substance inside the person) became aware of an error, and lowered its head in shame; this caused the person to do likewise.

References to the subjectivity of the Speeches are central to the Muinane's rhetoric on the moral use of knowledge. They reiterate in different ways that the Speeches can become resentful of the immoral manifestations of their host, such as expressions of lack of humility or ingratitude. For example, according to Juan, the counsels stress that one must never claim to have fulfilled some great purpose alone. He stated, 'That is why we say "<Uro> monótatihi" ("We must never say <I alone>"). If one says that, the creator, the Speeches, the substances or the ancestors who helped will become resentful, and will say, "Let us see how you do on your own!". They will abandon you and not help you.' Furthermore, the mambeadores claim that the Speeches are jealous: if a man uses the Speeches of another people, his own become resentful and angry.

Enrique provided me with another example of the subjectivity of the Speeches. He pointed out to me that Ernesto was widely known to be a tyrannical, bad-tempered character. He told me that a Yukuna sorcerer had told him that Ernesto had claimed too often that he was knowledgeable and strong enough to handle everything. The Yukuna sorcerer had stated that the knowledge had heard Ernesto and had said, 'Let me see if he can dominate me!' and had maddened him\textsuperscript{270}. For that reason he had become bad-tempered, his projects did not work, and his people were leaving him.

\textsuperscript{270} Excessive knowledge is a common threat in Amerindian milieus. Cf. for example Overing (1985b: 255) and Santos-Granero (1991: 107-113).
Like moral Speeches, Tobaccos and Breaths, their spurious counterparts the False Speeches and Animal Tobaccos and Breaths are also linked among themselves and sometimes conflated in discourses. They are also agents which speak and act on their own. What is most clear about them is not an unambiguous specific nature, but rather, the fact that what is pertinent for the narrators that mention them is the fact that they are dealing with an immoral material subjectivity. Again, the material and subjective character of these evil Speeches is central to the workings of the 'knowledge of our own.' I return to this below.

11.4 The divine character of the Speeches

For some of the clans, the tobacco is the sweat-cum-semen of the Grandfather of Creation (a.k.a. Grandfather of Tobacco), and the yagé too was a broken off part of his body. For others, tobacco stems from a feminine deity and coca from a masculine one. Whatever the case, the ritual substances originated in divine bodies. The Grandfather of Creation used these substances to make Real People. These people then had to grow, prepare and consume the ritual substances which constituted them and which they needed in order to live properly and reproduce.

Real People's proper thoughts/emotions stem from the proper substances which constitute their bodies, and from those they consume. These thoughts/emotions are therefore divine in origin; they are in a sense the moral thoughts/emotions of the Creator. However, it is (sometimes) clear that for the Muinane Real People's will can be distinct from that of the Creator. I think of the proper, 'divine' thoughts of Real People as quotes, or better still, to
go back to the Muinane’s own ‘cassette tape’ metaphor, as ‘recordings.’ The substances of the Creator which come to constitute Real People provide them with subjectivity ‘recorded’ or ‘quoted’ from the original subjectivity of the Creator\textsuperscript{271}. A Real Person’s moral thoughts and utterances are thus not necessarily the direct, co-eval will and speech of the Creator

Some of the specialised instrumental Speeches deployed in the mambeadero differ from the Speeches that constitute thoughts/emotions in that the mambeadores claim that the former are the Speech of the Creator sounding directly through people, at the moment they are being enunciated. One mambeador explained this to me by saying this was just like the case of satellites and radios. Though satellites are up in the heavens, mostly invisible while they emit their sounds, the radio makes those sounds audible to people down on earth.

There are several ways in which the Speeches are understood to work, and in which the wills that are understood to be involved differ. In some cases, it is the all-powerful deity himself who speaks, and the effects he names come to be in virtue of his will\textsuperscript{272}. In some cases, it is the mambeador who speaks, and understands himself to be quoting Speeches given by the creator at the time of creation. Sometimes these Speeches seem to be understood to be powerful in themselves, and to bring about the effect they name with no need for further participation from other agents; sometimes, the Speeches direct the agency of the agency-endowed substances which then act to bring about the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{271} There is a questionable implication to my use of the metaphor of quoting, and that is that usually, there is a subject that quotes. To pursue the metaphor, quotes constitute the subject for the Muinane (cf. Butler (1997:43-47), for a discussion in philosophy that converges with my arguments here).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{272} For an example of this among the Uitoto, Griffiths 1998: 140.}
effect called for. On occasion the mambeadores end these Speeches by directly addressing the Creator and noting that the mambeadores have already used the Speeches he gave them to deal with such situations, and that it was up to him now to ensure that the situation became as desired; this returns direct agency to the deity. Still other Speeches are understood to stem from the mambeador's will, and to address different beings to persuade them of some cause.

11.5 On the social and material manipulation of evil

Real People use morally produced substances and instrumental Speeches of divine origin to transform morally inferior, misanthropic agents, their substances, their thoughts/emotions and their agencies into their proper human counterparts. The latter are constitutive of a properly human, divinely pre-established way of life. My abstract view of these transformations is that they involve two main forms of manipulation. One is the 'material' manipulation of substances and agents, or of substance-like agencies, thoughts/emotions and tribulations. The other form is the social manipulation of subjectivity-endowed beings, which often leads to their effecting material manipulations. The material manipulations in question are often predatory in

273 I am dealing here with ethnographic data and analytical problems similar to those Tambiah (1968) dealt with. Tambiah refers to a 'barren debate about whether such ideas asserted that the word in its own right was powerful, or whether it acted through the participation of the supernatural or through the agency of the Lord's appointed.' (Ibid.:183) He proposes the following: "... it is clear that we are dealing with three notions which form an interrelated set: deities or first ancestors or their equivalents instituted speech and the classifying activity; man himself is the creator and user of this propensity; finally, language as such has an independent existence and has the power to influence reality." (Ibid:184) The same could be said for the Muinane, although I would reiterate that sometimes they do away with the last two notions with the claim that the deity speaks on, through people.
character, in the sense that they involve the death or destruction of some agent.

Let me explore these forms of manipulation:

When a person misbehaves or is sick, his or her kin may hold a healing ritual in their mambeadero to remove or transform the material sources of the spurious thoughts/emotions or disease. Such rituals involve embedded dialogues: at one level, there is a dialogue carried out between two human interlocutors: a main speaker and a what-sayer. At another level, this dialogue becomes a unit which as such addresses other beings: the tobacco deity, the Owners of animals, and/or the beings which must be rejected or destroyed. These may or may not respond through ‘signs’ such as a crackle in the fire, lightning, or a noise in the jungle. The mambeadores’ Speeches can shame animals for their defiling actions, on the basis of given standards of morality; they can scare such beings away with the threat of the predatory agency of their tobacco; or they can trick them into falling into a trap. Furthermore, the Speeches can be used to inform a deity or the Owners of animals of the undeserved plight of the victim, and demand through righteous imperatives that these beings deal with the problem. Persuasion, through coercion, appeals to love or to propriety, or trickery, is the name of the game. The mambeadores understand that the beings so addressed truly listen to what is said. If the claimant speaks from a moral and knowledgeable position, his listeners are constrained to behave consequently. The animal substances or Speeches leave the person to hide elsewhere in shame –

274 Other Amazonian peoples also attribute importance to the capacity to communicate with non-human beings. Cf. for instance Descola (1994:100, 101, 200) and Hugh-Jones, S. (1979:210-215)
perhaps in the form of an animal- and the deity and the Owners of animals respond by killing the miscreant or placing it in the path of the hunter. Free from such substances, the victim can again be a healthy, morally sociable person.

The 'material' manipulation of agents and substances often involves what I have called 'divine performativity' (following Butler 1993:12, 13). For the case of the Muinane, I will define this as the capacity of agents to bring about transformations in the world by means of naming or otherwise describing these transformations. The effects named come to be in virtue of the will of the subject that does the naming. Much like the Judeo-Christian God's 'Let there be light' is understood in fact to have created light, in many rituals the mambeadores similarly describe or order some effect, and in so doing understand that effect to be brought about by the very Speech they use. I must point out, however, that for the Muinane there always seems to be the alternative of imagining an agent who materially carries out the effect named; a transformation may be the purpose and powerful will of the deity or of the mambeador, but the Speeches that carry out the transformation may be imagined as a homunculus or some other material being.

A common example of such divine performativity takes place in most evening rituals in the mambeadero, which usually involve the recapitulation of the evils that affected the community that day, or that might do so on the following one. Each of these evils is then 'swept away', 'proscribed', 'blown away' by the mambeadores' rhythmic dialogues, which do so by stating that
these beings are being swept away, proscribed, blown away\textsuperscript{275}. Each night, the \textit{mambeadores} also transform the land which has been heated by the sun. Because the land is hot, people sleep restlessly and feel itchy. The \textit{mambeadores} state, 'It is now a cool land, a land of morning, a land of sweetness, a land of life...nothing bothers the children, the women, the young men, as they sleep...' When explaining this to me, Manuel claimed that at that point in the ritual, the women and children 'truly rest'.

Another example of divine performativity is the use of 'naming' (\textit{óvikihi}, \textit{mómonihi}). An example of it is the naming of the flesh of certain dangerous fish into manioc. This is understood to transform the original substance, pre-empting its more dangerous characteristics; the fish's pathogenic characteristics are pre-empted, because processed manioc is not pathogenic (cf. my discussion of sympathetic magic below). The Muinane are explicit about the fact that naming is something they do to achieve certain things, but also that it is a potentially dangerous thing to do. For instance, Manuel once scolded me for calling an airplane a 'fire eagle', the term which some other clans used for planes. He said, 'Do not name it that way...that is why they fall and burn! Call it a "canoe of the heights".'\textsuperscript{276}

Yet another example of the divine performativity of the Speeches are the instances in which they self-refer. In such cases, the \textit{mambeadores} enunciate lists such as 'This is the Speech of Life, Cool Speech, Speech of Healing, Speech of Satiety, Speech of Tobacco', and so on. By so naming

\textsuperscript{275} For a similar rite among the Uitoto, cf. Griffiths (1998:72, 206). Cf. as well Tambiah’s (1968:190-193) lists of phrases and words for gardening magic, which I find to be very similar to the Muinane’s performative expressions.

\textsuperscript{276} The title of my piece ‘Though it comes as evil, I embrace it as good...’ (Londoño-Sulkin 2000) is a Muinane aphorism that refers to the desirability of ‘naming’ the poisonous, the
themselves, these Speeches, make themselves capable in fact of producing satiety, life, abundance, health and coolness\textsuperscript{277}.

In their performative transformations, the Speeches often make use of what Frazer and Malinowski would probably have called ‘sympathetic’ or ‘contagion’ magic (cf. Tambiah 1968:186, 194), and Lévi-Strauss, ‘magical thought’ (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 30, 31)\textsuperscript{278}. Through Speeches, two substances or situations are explicitly likened, and then a discursively privileged characteristic of one of them is somehow attributed to the other as well and thereby, performatively, \textit{given} to it. For example, a healing chant for fractured bones describes the velocity with which a certain hanging vine, when cut, grows to reattach itself to the ground and set roots. When Sergio explained this to me, he showed me one such vine that we had cut with a machete a few days before. Indeed, the tough vine had already produced some 30 cms. of tender green shoot. At that rate, within a few days the vine would again reattach itself to the ground and spread out roots. The healing chant explicitly notes such speed, and matter-of-factly asks why the bone should take any longer to heal and become set\textsuperscript{279}.

\textsuperscript{277} Cf. Echeverri’s (1998:250) excellent example of a performative discourse among the Uitoto (without using the term ‘performative’, though.)

\textsuperscript{278} It is not my intention to discuss here the ‘scientifically objective’ healing power of traditional Muinane medicines, as if their knowledge were a shadow of Western science that prefigures it, as Lévi- Strauss claims for magical thought (1964:30). There is research currently being carried out (by the University of Strathclyde) in the Middle Caquetá to study the ‘active principles’ of certain traditional medicines. I did note some convergences between Muinane healing recipes and Western remedies, however. For instance, Ernesto used clay powder to heal diarrhoea, and so do some Western caolin concoctions.

\textsuperscript{279} On very similar rites in the Trobriand islands, cf. Tambiah (1968:194): ‘The logic guiding the selection of these articles is not some mysterious magical force that inheres in them; they are selected on the basis of their spatio-temporal characters like size and shape and their sensible properties like colour and hardness which are abstract concepts and which are given metaphorical values in the Trobriand scheme of symbolic classification.’
Sergio provided me with yet another good example of this. I was helping him make *mambe*, and he asked me to put a few handfuls of *yarumo* ashes into the coca powder (see section 5.1). He pointed out to me that despite the fact that the leaves had been burning hotly a minute before, they were already cool enough to handle. ‘That is part of a prayer to heal fevers,’ he told me. He stated that the conjuration involved noting that the *yarumo* ashes cool down quickly, that the fire that burns the garden also burns hotly, but soon dies out leaving cool, fertile ashes. Similarly, coca is toasted at a high heat, but cools down quickly. ‘Given that these things cool down so quickly, why should the child remain hot for very long? No, he must cool down quickly!’

The use of sympathetic magic may be a form of performative manipulation. On the other hand, sometimes the Speeches in which they are couched seem to treat the comparison between substances as a given formula, such that those who know it can quote it and thereby constrain the deity to carry out the healings. In such cases, it would be more a question of persuasion that leads to manipulative transformation, than of direct performativity.

To effect material and social manipulations, the *mambeadores* must first discover the substance or agent they have to transform. This is one important application of the Speeches of Apprising. Most such Speeches describe the origins of the ritual substances and cultigens, of clans and lineages, of animals and diseases, and so on. *Mambeadores* review these myths in their rituals to deal with tribulations, in order to discover which agents may have caused them. Once the ritual discloses the agent, the
mambeadores can address it, shame it, cajole it and so on, or point it out to the deity or to the Owners of animals. If the tribulations is not caused directly by an agent, but by some non-sentient object placed in the body by an agent, the Speeches of Apprising can also disclose it in such a way that the healer can remove it or transform it materially.

The use of hallucinogens in healing rituals also involves their capacity to make evil substances and agents conspicuous, and then to transform them. Pedro, for instance, told me about a time when he had taken yagé to see what had caused his daughter's foot to fester in a seemingly incurable fashion. The yagé spirit - another form of the creator - had shown him a giant thorn that a sorcerer had had the stars (who were a sentient, if evil, people) place in Pedro's daughter's foot. In his hallucination, Pedro had been able to materially remove the thorn, which had not been perceptible or manipulatable without yagé. The yagé furthermore had shown Pedro the sorcerer; it had been an old man from some nearby community. Pedro had blown upon him in his hallucination, and the man had fallen over. Pedro told me that his daughter had healed soon afterwards, and in turn the old sorcerer soon died.

The mambeadores' emphasis on the secrecy and mystery of the 'knowledge of our own' adheres to a similar logic. People must keep their instrumental Speeches more or less secret, for if disclosed a sorcerer might get a hold of it and manipulate it in a physical or social sense, to the detriment of the owner of the Speeches. It is particularly important for people to keep Speeches of Apprising concerning their own lineages' and clans' origins
secret. If these stories are acquired by sorcerers or beings with evil intent, they gain the means to destroy the clan

11.6 Knowledge as a predatory weapon

*Mambeadores*’ descriptions of the ‘knowledge of our own’ very often portray it as a very secret, very dangerous weapon. For instance, Juan once told me that possessing knowledge was like having guns, traps, axes, machetes and poisons – all weapons with which to kill, in the defence of one’s people. He told me that for that reason, he could not teach me everything he knew. Laughing, he said ‘What if you decide to attack me with your machete? I will have given you everything, and will have nothing with which to defend myself!’ Manuel’s son provided me with another example of the Muinane’s attribution of a weapon-like character to the Speeches. He told me that he had recently spoken to an old and very knowledgeable Uitoto. He told me that he had had to protect himself spiritually while talking to the old man, because the words of such an elder are like poison darts, machetes and so on. They can pierce, hurt and sicken the listener. ‘One has to protect oneself when talking with an old man like that one...one has to wear a rubber suit...like the ones divers use,’ he said. His ‘rubber suit’ was his own tobacco and coca, and a certain wariness.

It is common for men, in virtue of their knowledge, to claim to be fearsome and dangerous to any threatening agent. For instance, Sergio once

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described how he had managed to heal his wife from an ailment caused by the False Woman. He stressed that his own father-in-law had not been able to do so, and that after the healing, had addressed Sergio and said, 'Son-in-law, I cannot go as far as you go...you go one step beyond me, and I fear you. Whoever dares meddle with you will find himself in great trouble!' Sergio thus portrayed his own knowledgeability, and the recognition he received from his father-in-law. I could not help but note Sergio's proud little smile as he narrated this anecdote.

Manuel also insisted often on his own knowledgeable, dangerous character. One day he claimed to be suffering from a painful hip, at around the same time in which he was helping his classificatory uncle's family deal with some troubles. He said, 'It is the evil ones [causing me that pain, thereby] telling me to stay out of this matter...they are afraid of me because I know.' He also claimed that other maloca owners respected him and were afraid of him, because of the riddles he could take to them. Roberto was no different in this sense. Once, after carrying out a ritual to send the spirit of his dead brother Oliverio away, he told me that the 'atmosphere' during the ritual had been light most of the time, as it should have been when a good man dies. There had been one moment when the atmosphere had gotten heavy, he explained; for a brief instant, a different malignant spirit had unsuccessfully tried to slip into the dead man's maloca. 'He [the malignant spirit] heard me, and was afraid,' Roberto added.

Some men made their claims to knowledge-based agency with great bravado and humour: Antonio, for example, claimed that he would ravish the
False Woman, either with his own penis or with her penis-shaped tobacco container. And Sergio’s young son, upon seeing a lightning bolt in the horizon, said ‘I will take it by the tail, if it does that again!’, where the ability to deal with thunder and lightning was widely regarded to be a matter for very knowledgeable elders.

As with weapons, which must be handled competently, the mambeadores were very insistent on the importance of a thorough knowledge of diseases and their corresponding Speeches of Apprising. Amancio and Roberto once spent one long evening together telling four or five Speeches of Apprising which concerned the origins of coughs. Each one described mythical events, the origin of a certain kind of cough, and how the mythical beings dealt with them. Upon finishing his narrations, Amancio turned to Rafael and asked him whether he had missed anything. Rafael said that he had not, whereupon Amancio turned to the younger men listening and said that one had to ‘touch’ upon –i.e. mention or address the issue of- every possible ‘entrance’ through which animals could ‘slip in’ to cause coughs. If one did so, the evil agents would say ‘This man knows a lot...we had better leave or he will kill us.’ Not touching upon one of the pertinent stories would constitute leaving an entrance open for the being therein dealt with to come in and cause harm.

Juan and Ernesto independently shared this last notion with me. They spoke of the narration of a Speech of Apprising as ‘opening a book’. Once one opened a book, one had to read through it. The alternative –to leave unfinished a Speech of Apprising or a set of such Speeches concerning a single disease- was to ‘leave the book open’. An open book was a dangerous
thing for them; on the one hand, it left people unprotected because it would allow evil beings who had not been rejected to attack. It was also dangerous because the Speeches themselves had agency, and demanded proper treatment. An incensed Speech of Apprising could well turn against somebody who misused it, and attack him.\footnote{For discussions of similar native views of the necessity for thorough competence with knowledge matters, cf. Urbina (cited in Espinosa 1995:122) and Santos-Granero (1991: 2,3).}

Sometimes the \textit{mambeadores} present a less aggressive image of the Speeches themselves, although I suspect that the predatory form of the agencies involved is never totally absent. For instance, some \textit{mambeadores} claim that their rituals to heal and reject evil merely endeavour to show to all agents in the world the ritual holder's people's innocence and morality, and the undeserved, uncalled for nature of the virulent extrinsic attacks. The effect of this show, however, is to have the disease or tribulation abandon the victim of its own accord and return to its source to wreak havoc there.\footnote{Cf. Santos-Granero (1991: ch. 4), for a similar account among the Amuesha.} Alternatively and as I mentioned above, the deity or the Owner of Animals addressed notes the innocence of the mambeador and his family, and chastises the guilty animal for its unwarranted attack.

The \textit{mambeadores'} Speeches on cooling often stress the peaceful, pleasurable well-being which coolness brings about, and the unaggressive, gentle way in which Cool People treat others. On occasion they even dramatically portray the tranquillity and well-being they feel at the time, their intonation somehow reflecting sensuous relaxation. Cooling, however, ultimately involves quenching immoral intentionality-endowed fires or other pathogenic hot stuffs; it is therefore also predatory.
Other instances of apparently less aggressive use of Speeches are some of those that ensure the proper growth of cultigens. Manuel, for example, used Speeches one night to bring about the growth of the seeds he had planted that day. The Speeches demanded that the plants grow well, and that Water of Life pour upon them, and that the Mother of the Summer shine gently upon them, with no wind that would blow them away as long as they did not become rooted. These Speeches purportedly helped children grow and also be well. Again, a predatory threat against evil was not completely absent in such Speeches, since they involved the rejection of false winds, rains and plagues (see section 4.2).
12. The moral conditions of knowledge

During my fieldwork in Muinane communities, I was struck by numerous discursive self-depictions which men and women produced concerning their own competence and morality. I called their brief anecdotes and their longer narratives “moral self-portrayals” in my fieldnotes, and found them to make manifest their moral criteria. Among the things the mambeadores stressed in their moral self-portrayals were the great amount of knowledge they possessed, the authentically Muinane or clanic character of this knowledge, the propriety of their processes of acquisition of it, the legitimacy of their use of it, its effectiveness, and the respect and fear others had of them because of it. Women too produced numerous self-depictions, but expressed less of an obsession with their own agency, and no claims to dangerous knowledge.

As often mentioned, it was with equal or greater frequency that men and women produced negative evaluations of other people, concerning the same issues. In fact, most of the Muinane I knew were extremely critical of the morality and knowledgeable of others, questioning it often. They surreptitiously or openly denied the legitimacy of other’s exercises of knowledge, their good will, their formal correctness, and so on. They often found ‘proofs’ of the lack of knowledge of others, and of their misdemeanours.

From such self-depictions and critiques, as well as from the Speeches themselves and other discourses, I abstract the following principle of the Muinane’s understanding of the workings of the Speeches: the morality of their use and their agency or effectiveness, and the desirability of their results, are tied together. If Speeches are immorally transmitted, acquired or
deployed, they do not function well; if deployed in a formally correct manner and from a moral position, they necessarily produce desirable results. However, whether a particular instance of the transmission, use or acquisition of some knowledge was moral or not was obviously a question of interpretation. In fact, contestations of knowledge and morality were an everyday occurrence in the Middle Caquetá.

Below, I explore some of the main issues in claims to the morality or immorality of the use of the 'knowledge of our own.' the proper purpose of knowledge, the ultimate criteria for deeming it 'True', the formally correct manner of deploying it, its fixity, its acquisition, its ownership and its links to age.

12.1 On sorcery and the moral purpose of knowledge

A general moral condition of knowledge is that it be used for a proper purpose. As I mention above in section 7.2, the mambeadores claimed that the only 'True' knowledge was that which pertained to the Cool Path or Path of Life. According to their own exegesis of this claim, what it meant was that the only worthwhile, moral knowledge was that which was involved in the production of foodstuffs and ritual substances, and through these, in the multiplication of Real People. True Speeches led to material abundance, satiety, good health, tranquil community life and demographic increase.\(^\text{283}\)

A certain mythical event presents a clear contrast between proper knowledge and its spurious counterpart, sorcery:

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At First Time, some animals claimed that the creator’s True Speech was not true. They preferred to explore sorcerous knowledge, and collected substances for sorcery. Soon, however, they found themselves hungry and incapable of producing food. They sought the creator to beg him for manioc and other garden produce. He told them, ‘Eat your sorcery stones!’ They answered, ‘Those stones do not bring satiety!’ ‘Then why do you use them at all?!,’ he demanded angrily, and then condemned them to a miserable life of scavenging and eating filth, and to be game animals for Real People to eat.\(^{284}\)

There was a certain biographical anecdote that was almost standardised among Muinane men, and which echoed the moral of this mythical anecdote. At different times, several mambeadores told me about their ignorant and innocent youth, when they had been interested in acquiring sorcerous knowledge with which to harm enemies. In each case, each had asked his father or some other elder about this. The wiser elder had advised each overly eager youth against such deadly interests, which led to no production. And in each case, the elder had instructed the youth to ‘look at where those who used sorcery ended up’: invariably, in the myths and histories alluded to, sorcerers had died awful deaths and their lineages had come to tragic ends. I doubt that these events actually transpired in each of their personal histories; rather, I believe that important moral points and oft-repeated stories such as this one, which involved plausible interactions between stereotypical overly eager and ignorant youths and similarly

\(^{284}\) Cf. section 10.3.5
stereotypical wise elders, constituted an important ingredient in people's constnuals of themselves as moral people. Their frequent repetition and their moral plausibility made them an intimate part of their lives. What was important about them, after all, was that they were moral truths.

Again, whether or not a certain use of knowledge is moral or not, is a matter very open to contestation. As I mentioned in section 10.3.5, for instance, Pedro and Juan found that Manuel's use of his tooth necklace was sorcery, whereas Manuel saw it as the legitimate application of the material results of processes that domesticated evil agencies and transformed him into a moral person.

12.2 Dawning knowledge

The Muinane established a strong link between a person's agency and his or her moral behaviour, such that one was often deemed to be proof of the other. They made this abstract point explicit, too. The premise was that truly beneficial results of a kind that ensured a proper lifestyle could only be achieved through the moral use of knowledge, and that the moral use of knowledge necessarily produced beneficial results. Ultimately, knowledge could only be gauged as 'True' a posteriori, when it 'dawned' or 'made something be seen'; that is, when its effects became materially perceptible and beneficial. In the Muinane's abstract accounts, a mambeador who had

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286 Urbina noticed this as well among the Uitoto: 'Upon specialising in their family's tradition and organising their culture around it, most men of knowledge assume detractive attitudes towards the specialisations (constellations, systematisations) of other men of knowledge, which they judge to be incomplete, mistaken, or even negative and damaging.' (Urbina 1992: 16 my translation). For discussions on similar ambiguous moral evaluations of Amuesha, Piaroa, Piro, Barasana and Trio men of knowledge or shamans, cf. Santos-Granero
plenty of *mambe* and tobacco paste showed, in virtue of his possession of such substances, that his Speeches had ‘dawned’ and that he was indeed a moral, knowledgeable person. Similarly, a woman who possessed a beautiful, well-weeded garden and who always had an abundance of foodstuffs available, to that extent showed that she indeed knew the counsels of the Speech of Advice, and was a True Woman.

Juan and other *mambeadores* told me that a person may know every counsel of the Speech of Advice or a great many Speeches of Apprising, in the sense of having consigned them to memory. However, if his knowledge does not dawn in well-behaved children, in the healing of diseases, or in the production of foodstuffs and ritual substances, the Muinane will claim that he does not really know, that his Speeches were lies. In some Speeches of Apprising, for instance, jaguars and boas appear as leaders whose Speeches sounded beautiful, but which were mere appearance. They did not dawn, but instead led to death, hunger and other tribulations for their people. So memory is not True knowledge; True knowledge is that which has been committed to memory and furthermore has been used or made to dawn. Women’s knowledge can be questioned on similar grounds: their children’s misbehaviour, a poor garden, and failures in protocol during a dance ritual show that they do not ‘know’.

Examples of people’s knowledge and morality being explicitly recognised were frequent. When Raúl brought a peccary to Juan in response to the latter’s tobacco invitation, Sergio commented that Raúl had thereby

shown that he truly possessed knowledge. The young man's knowledge had
dawned in the form of game, and furthermore, he had judiciously and
generously given it to Juan. Others noted that it had been Juan's knowledge
that had dawned, since it had been his tobacco who had really killed the
peccary (see section 14.2.2.2). Failures to make knowledge dawn were also
frequently exposed. Amancio's was a case in point: people claimed that he
was very knowledgeable of Speeches of Apprising, and that he was a
pleasant man and a competent interlocutor in a mambeadero. Nonetheless,
they also claimed that his knowledge was false, for his very lifestyle of
itinerancy and material poverty showed that his beautiful Speeches had not
dawned. 287

12.3 The proper form and contexts for the use of knowledge.

12.3.1 Substances and protocol

The mambeadores' rhetoric treated certain formal and contextual
aspects of the Speeches as moral requirements that were central to their
functionality. For instance, they insisted in different ways that in order to work,
Speeches had to be deployed along with the formally correct consumption of
tobacco paste and mambe. It was common for the mambeadores to justify
their claims to knowledge by pointing at their containers of coca and tobacco
and stating that it was those substances that enabled them to speak at all.
They also claimed that youths who dared to speak in the mambeadero and

287 Beauty can be a manifestation of morality, or else mere appearance, with no real substance
behind it to guarantee its moral results. Cf. Overing (1985b:254)
had little produce to show would be shamed and silenced by their peers on this account.

The *mambeadores'* stress on the protocols themselves of the consumption of substances also exemplified the link between form and morality in the use of knowledge. As I discussed above, most animals failed miserably to *mambe* in a formally correct manner: they moved their mouths excessively, swallowed too fast, made noise while the *mambed*, fidgeted, and so on. To make the same formal mistakes as these animals made would be a vice, an impropriety in the use of substances which could easily lead to other failures (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).

### 12.3.2 Place and time

The place and time at which particular Speeches were deployed was of great importance to their workings as well. The ideal place and time for the deployment of most Speeches was in the *mambeadero* of the *maloca*, at night. For instance, Ernesto often contrasted the *mambeadero* to the kitchen (*cocina*, in Spanish). The former was the place of men and of True Speech, whereas the latter was the place for women and for gossip of the kind that does not lead to the production of anything worthwhile.

Manuel, for one, told me that the only place in which he dealt with serious matters was in the *mambeadero*, at night. He claimed that whenever people came to ask him anything important relating to Speeches at any other

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288 Ernesto’s expression should not be understood to mean that women’s produce is not valued. It is only to say that it is not their kitchen* gossip that brings about any desirable results.

*Malocas do not have kitchens, but they do have sections where women set up the equipment for manioc processing, and hearths where women cook. The wooden houses for nuclear
time, he would speak to them ‘of women’, that is, of lewd matters. He claimed that at night, however, he would sit quietly and listen to anybody who came to speak of him of tribulations and other matters, and would help them. Contrasts like those presented by Ernesto (above) and Manuel, between night-time and daytime and between the mambeadero and the kitchen were common. I found that they were more of a moral point than an accurate portrayal of on-the-ground behaviour: they were quite lewd at times in the mambeadero at night, for example, or could deal with serious Speeches in the day as well. However, their contrasts helped maintain the image of the exercise of Speeches as a privileged form of behaviour.

Several mambeadores explained to me that the night-time is the time for mambeadero rituals because it is then that evil beings wander the most, hidden by darkness, and it is then that they do most of their harm. The mambeadores must therefore be vigilant to defend their charges against attack. On the other hand, it is after midnight that the heat of the day finally dissipates, and when the cool of the morning starts. It is then that the world becomes truly cool, and people can rest best or learn the most esoteric Speeches.

12.3.3 The need for Speeches

Another contextual requirement of instrumental Speeches is that they must be applied always and only when there is a specific need for them. The Speeches should not be used ‘just so’, or mentioned recklessly. Otherwise, their use can be very dangerous. For instance, I once witnessed how several families do have kitchen compartments.
elders treated a girl who had been bitten by a snake. Several of them commented that the youths present should pay close attention, because snake bite chants could only be taught in situations in which they were needed. I paid close attention as two of the elders sang a beautiful song over the foot of the victim. The melody was nostalgic and sad, the lyrics rhythmic and easy to understand. I told Manuel that it sounded beautiful, and that I had learned it already. Manuel told me that I had to be careful, because singing that song at any time other than at an actual healing, even with the justifiable purpose of teaching them to some young man against the day in which it could be necessary, was not possible. Snakes would hear the chant and say ‘This person wants to be bitten,’ and they would attack. He added that one of his classificatory brothers had once disobeyed these injunctions. Manuel had chided him, and his brother had said he did not believe. Next day, a snake bit him.

Many Speeches, however, can be brought up in a mambeadero even if they are not to be applied at that particular point; there must be, however, a legitimate reason to do so, and the Speech in question must be dealt with carefully. Juan explained to me that when a father teaches a potentially dangerous Speech to his son, he does so with many protestations of the importance of the Speech, and then carefully rejects any evil being that the Speech may have invoked. Again, Speeches like the snake-bite healing song I mentioned above do not fit in this category.
12.3.4 The dialogical deployment of the Speeches

Another formal aspect of the Speeches that was central to their workings and furthermore to their moral valuation was their dialogical deployment. Juan’s use of the term *iimaji* -the Speech of Conversation- and his explanations of it provided me with some understanding of its complexity. This term referred on the one hand to the specialised form of dialogue of the mambeadero rituals, which was often different from normal speech in that it was very rhythmic and slightly melodic. On the other hand, the term referred more generally to the established possibility of communicating intelligibly with someone. Having *iimaji* with someone meant one knew how to address the other, understood the language, knew how, when and where to say things, and so on. For instance, Juan claimed he lacked *iimaji* with white men because he had not gone to school and did not know how to speak Spanish properly, nor how to behave properly at a meeting of white men. Tomás Román, the Uitoto president of the CRIMA, made a joke that exemplified this: he stated that among white men, it was proper and correct for one to speak in public standing up, and it was bad manners to do so with one’s mouth full. Among the Indians, he said, it was the other way around: it was impolite (and ineffective) to speak without a mouthful of coca, and one should be sitting down in the *mambeadero* to speak seriously.

Animals in the Speeches of Apprising were also often characterised by their inability to converse properly: they spoke simultaneously, interrupted each other, mimicked other’s Speeches, spoke too quickly or too slowly, became angry or simply ran out of Speech, and so on. Because they had no proper *iimaji* they lacked the capacity to achieve a moral lifestyle.
Juan explained to me the perennial need for ilimaji. He told me that the creator purposefully made the world in such a way that dialogue had to be permanent. People, though they resonated innately with his animating Speech or Breath, had to learn anew his Speeches -the instrumental Speeches, that is- as each grew up; for should people be born knowledgeable, they would not have to speak to each other. And without dialogue there would be no growth, change or procreation, no life, learning or production. He pointed out to me that one important distinction between Real People and rocks was that the latter lacked the Speech of Conversation, and therefore always remained the same, without growing or multiplying. For Juan, the terminal cessation of dialogue between brothers or between Men of the Speech of Tobacco was potentially deadly, and marked the presence of inhuman thoughts/emotions.

According to the mambeadores, True Speech or the Speech of Conversation never ends (limaji njeketatino). This 'never-ending' attribute of the Speeches is interestingly ambiguous. On the one hand, it seems to mean that a knowledgeable person always has things to say; when silent, it is never out of a lack of knowledge or of pertinent counsels about the situation. On the other—and this is my abstraction, and not an explicit native synthesis— it perhaps means that True Speech perpetuates human life and gardens, which sets forth the situation for more True Speech.

I witnessed several mambeadero rituals in which the speaking pair truly established a strong rhythm, and where their exchanges flowed smoothly and competently. Antonio and his sons remembered with great pleasure an occasion in which Juan and Antonio had held a very successful, very pleasant session of Speech of the Axe or Speech of Felling. They claimed that that was
the occasion in which it had been clearest to them that they were speaking or
witnessing True Speech: everything flowed, no distractions interrupted them,
both interlocutors knew the story well, and each provided the other with the
right support. They claimed that that had been a powerful Speech, as made
evident in the fact that all of them had felt pleasure and coolness.

Dialogues in which the interlocution did not flow well seemed to
produce the unpleasant feeling that they were not effective. In this regard, I
particularly remember an occasion in which Juan chose his son as his what-
sayer for an important dialogue he needed to carry out in preparation for a
dance ritual. His son, at age 25 or so, spoke very little Muinane and had only
attempted to dialogue in that fashion a couple of times before. I noted that his
what-saying was clumsy: mere "Hmms" with only very rare reiterations of key
points his father mentioned. More expert interlocutors have a wide range of
rhetorical alternatives: different ways of assenting, of encouraging the other to
continue, and of reiterating whatever it was the other had last stated. Later,
Juan told his son that he had to put more 'ánimo' (vigour) into it, and to try to
repeat more often the last words in Juan’s rhythmic iterations. Juan turned to
me and said something to the effect that the talk was not going so well,
because his son could not yet really give him strength.

12.4 Fixed knowledge

The mambeadores portrayed the ‘knowledge of our own’ to me as a
god-given matter. It was not something that was produced ‘humanamente’ (at
the level of humanity), but rather something that was given to Real People for
them to transmit, move, preserve and so on. To that extent knowledge was
fixed, and I witnessed many critiques in everyday life that made explicit the Muinane’s disapproval of any perceived manipulations or unorthodox usages of it. Mambeadores and sometimes women would claim that some mambeador ‘was not coming along the same path as his father’. While I was with Manuel, I noted that he had his own phrase to refer to deviations from ‘tradition’: He would say ‘It is modern,’ or ‘That is an invention.’ and note that it was unfixed.

There was a standard critical question, used to question others critically concerning undue changes in expressions of knowledge, or breaks in ritual protocols. In Spanish, the question was ‘In which article is that to be found?’ Those elders who had some grasp of legal terminology used it, comparing their tradition to a constitution with articles, paragraphs, and so on. Other versions of this question, of wider use among the elders, were ‘In which Speech of Apprising is that behaviour to be found?’ and ‘Which elder taught you that that is how that is done?’

A mambeador once told me about a time in which a Nonuya clan had held a dance ritual. When the singers arrived singing rather harsh critiques, the Nonuya elder who hosted the ritual rushed forward and imposed several spoonfuls of coca on each singer. Normally, he should have given some tobacco and coca, but on this occasion, the mambeador explained, the owner was trying to impede the singing. If the singers could simply not sing because their mouths were too full, they would be embarrassed. Old Francisco, observing this situation, had addressed the owner critically, using the standard critical formula: ‘Who taught you that that was the way to do things? Tell me the Speech of Apprising in which somebody did thus!’ This anecdote, following
a standardised narrative form, ended with the embarrassed admission of the owner of the dance, to the effect that there was no such story, whereupon old Francisco supposedly said, ‘Why did you do thus, then?!’

The counterpart to the mambeadores’ critiques of unorthodoxy were their positive evaluations of certain manifestations of knowledge as ‘our thing’ or ‘our Speech.’ They often made the point that the Speeches they were using and the ways in which they were carrying out rituals were unchanged since the time of their forefathers.

The Muinane found no contradiction between their claims to the effect that knowledge was a given and fixed matter, and their novel applications for knowledge or their experimentation with new contents to old Speeches. They experimented with applications of Speeches to new tribulations, and often found that the Speeches had been designed for that purpose to start with. One example I can think of is the transformation of a jail sentence into a maloca knot, through Speeches. Another example I noted was Manuel’s interpretation of an injury one of his classificatory brothers suffered while playing football. Manuel claimed that this had happened because no one had used the Speech that had to be used to inaugurate athletic fields. I inquired into this and found that one Speech of Apprising that dealt with certain diseases involved events that Manuel and others perceived to be similar to a football game. Manuel and a Uitoto acquaintance of his had indeed redeployed this Speech of Apprising, bricoleur-style, to new troubles; they had ‘inaugurated’ one athletic field by holding a ritual in which they rejected the evil that affected the hero in the football-like events in the Speech of Apprising.
Another Speech that grows is that of Advice, and the Muinane were explicit about this. They claimed that when accidents happen, they become counsels to beware of certain things. For instance, on one occasion Juan made several bundles of salt bark, and I helped him by carrying one across the forest to the boat. However, my bundle had a misplaced knot that rubbed my back and made a large blister. Embarrassed, Juan told me afterwards that this would now be *Fagōji* (Speech of Advice), a counsel to remind people to be careful when preparing bundles to carry, lest this harm kin.

12.5 The transmission and acquisition of knowledge

Another moral condition of knowledge, and one to which the *mambeadores* made many claims, was the propriety of the processes through which they acquired it. In what I found to be a standardised narrative, they often described the ‘courses’ they had taken in the *mambeaderos* of their fathers, grandfathers and other elders. They stated that they had spent numerous nights during long months and even years with these older men, suffering from the back pain, discomfort and sleeplessness of long vigils, whilst making concentrated efforts to behave properly lest the elders scold them for lacking the capabilities to learn. Similarly, the learning process had involved difficult ‘diets’ that included sexual abstinence and the avoidance of certain foodstuffs and behaviours.290

289 The Muinane often use terms from white men's lexicon on the field of knowledge, to refer to their own matters. They speak of the most knowledgeable elders as 'doctores' or as 'graduados' (graduates), of moderately knowledgeable adult men as 'universitarios' (university students); of the mambeaderos alternatively as 'bachillerato' or 'universidad' (highschool or university), and so on. Cf. Espinosa (1985: 120) and Griffiths (1998: 14) for similar terminologies among the Andoke and Úitoto.

290 For a similar ethnographic account of shamanic apprenticeship among the Amuesha, cf.
Manuel's autobiographic portrayals of how he became a moral character and how he acquired knowledge all placed him in his old father's *mambeadero*, listening carefully. The end result of such a process was what he was portraying as a given: both his character as a powerfully knowledgeable and moral person, and the legitimacy of his knowledge. In describing others, Manuel privileged similar principles: he questioned the extent of Pedro's knowledge, claiming that Juan, though younger than Pedro, knew more than Pedro did because he had sat longer with his father.

The transmission of knowledge is a problematic issue, given the character of knowledge as a weapon. According to Juan and others, to give knowledge to another was to arm him, and thereby to run the risk of being attacked. Furthermore, the 'weapon' they kept could lose strength. Even when conceiving knowledge as 'semen' this problem cropped up. As I mentioned before, for several clans tobacco paste is the sweat of the creator, but also his semen; it was a fertile substance out of which he made the earth and people. Men of knowledge, Juan insisted, guarded their knowledge, their semen and their tobacco, never spilling (or letting out) too much or too often lest they lose their strength. The great, knowledgeable leaders of the past all had few children for this reason; their tobacco/knowledge/semen were all directed at the procreation of the group, and not just of their own. They used their strength for the defence of their patrilines and clans, and thus their entire communities were their children.

On the other hand, being stingy with knowledge, tobacco and semen can cause the person to become ill, as these substances which are meant to

be let out and used properly, turn against the person who does not apply them to their purpose. However, I found that Uitoto-Nipóde mammbeadores stressed this more frequently than the Muinane do.291

I found that for the mammbeadores, the transmission of knowledge and its reception involved mutual responsibilities (once it was accepted that the knowledge could be legitimately transmitted). This had to do with the ways in which knowledge worked, its subjectivity, and the dangerous beings it could invoke. Elders' teaching responsibilities were on the one hand to make sure their children or pupils learned everything they would need to know to defend themselves and their kin properly. However, not everything could be taught to everybody: certain Speeches were only to be taught to patrilineal kin, and never to outsiders. The mammbeadores also emphasised that an elder who gave knowledge to another had to be careful not to endanger him.

One of the great threats of knowledge was that an excess of it could madden its holder.292 A young man who learned too much, too quickly, could lose all proper respect for others and believe himself to be all powerful. His knowledge could make him think too many thoughts at the same time, rather than allowing him the tranquillity and effectiveness of clear, directed single thoughts. Knowledge could also make its holder a target for evil beings, who would find him to be a potentially dangerous enemy and would be eager to dispatch him in a moment of carelessness.

These dangers where quoted in explanations as to why youths should get their knowledge within their own patriline: a father or a grandfather were

understood to be careful teachers who would lovingly make sure that their transmission of knowledge be properly gradual, lest their son or grandson be harmed. Other elders could be very knowledgeable, but would probably be less careful in their transmission.

The responsibilities of a teacher extended beyond the time of the teaching itself; for instance, Juan and Amancio insisted to me that an elder also had to be willing to defend the pupil, should the latter get into some form of esoteric trouble as a result of deploying the knowledge the elder gave him. They both told me repeatedly that there were things they could not teach me, lest the knowledge endanger me. They said that if either of them had been my father, then they could have been sure that I would stay at their side. In that case, they could help me and save me from whatever trouble I fell into as a result of any knowledge they had given me. As it was, I could be elsewhere on my own, and they would not be there to help me if I got into trouble for deploying that knowledge. My own kin could then ‘embitter’ them for having given me knowledge and then not taken care to protect me from its dangers.

In different discourses, the mambeadores also accentuated that pupils who received knowledge acquired obligations as well: they had to reciprocate the knowledge, make proper use of it without giving it away carelessly, and eventually, apply it in the defence of the elders who had given it to them.

One counterpart to the responsibility of the teacher was the obligation of the youth receiving knowledge to ‘pay’ for it with substances. This was especially true when the giver was not the father or grandfather of the learner, but an expert from some other clan. According to the rhetoric, when a young man asks an elder to teach him some healing conjuration or to tell him a
Speech of Apprising, he must first provide the elder with 'strength' to speak by offering him his nejéyi to lick from. If a man needs the help of a more knowledgeable other to heal some family member or to 'water' his child, he must give the other a larger amount of tobacco, and some coca as well. Sometimes this is called 'payment', but at other times, the receivers stress that is not payment but 'straightening'. Perhaps this term relates to the emphasis on clear directionality which the Muinane use to refer to a sense of purpose. A 'straightening' might thus be a move to make a beneficial purpose 'dawn' materially. When a man benefits materially from his knowledge by receiving substances, tools, money and so on, his Speeches will have achieved a moral purpose for him. Different mambeadores explained to me that without 'straightening', the Speeches inside the elder may protest that he has received nothing, no strengthening, in return for the healing or teaching he has produced. This is equivalent to using the Speeches and yet not benefiting from their material results, something which the Muinane find immoral or intolerable. The Speeches themselves, if treated as worthless of reciprocity or payment, become resentful or ashamed and stop working.

I, for one, was told that if I did not 'pay' for the knowledge my hosts gave me, it would never settle properly in my basket of knowledge. I found that the people I worked with had no problem receiving money from me instead of tobacco for their knowledge; money was white man's tobacco paste, and through commerce could be used to make other stuffs 'dawn' in a desirable fashion, in a manner not totally unlike tobacco. When I gave some

\[293\] On Watering rituals, see chapter 1 and section 3.2.
\[294\] Pedro once told me that Watering was expensive: people received guns, axes, hammocks and other such stuffs as 'straightening' for watering another's child.
money to Pedro and to his brothers, they told me that I had to take care of that knowledge, not spilling it. It was mine because I had paid and suffered for it, and I could thenceforth benefit from it but was also responsible for it. If and when I gave anybody some of that knowledge, I had to make sure they reciprocated it properly, for it had been difficult for me to come by. In Juan’s or Sergio’s words, ‘Carlos, you have spent a long time with us, eating disgusting stuffs, carrying our wood, bearing sleeplessness and back pain in the mambeadero...just to learn. How then can you just give away what you have learned? No, that cannot be!’ (I address this issue as well in section 4.4.)

A pupil was also responsible for not misusing the knowledge in such a way that it would endanger him or the elder who had taught it to him. I, for one, was warned against revealing Speeches that could be used by evil readers of my monograph to cause the Muinane harm. I also had to keep to myself the names of people, and should certainly avoid claiming that such-and-such a person possessed much knowledge regarding a certain disease or tribulation. Such statements could cause the teachers to be targeted by particular evil beings.

Another counterpart to the obligations of the elder who provides knowledge, was the fact that the receiver came under the injunction to care for the elder with that very knowledge, once the elder became too frail to do so himself. This injunction was addressed to me a few times as well. Roberto did so jokingly, after he had spoken to me about some esoteric issues: ‘Since I taught you this, you will have to heal me, when I am sick.’ A more serious

Juan in particular often joked about how disgusting white people found indigenous food: the grubs, the ants and the rotten manioc leaf broth. He did not find it disgusting himself, of course, and he found it pleasing that I rather liked it myself.
claim in this sense came from Ernesto and some other Muinane and Uitoto from the Middle Caquetá. They found anthropological research to be suspect, to the extent that the anthropologist learned from an elder but would hardly be around when the elder needed his 'trainees' to take care of him. In fact, several anthropologists and linguists who had worked in the Middle Caquetá were blamed for the death of several Uitoto, Andoke and Muinane elders in the region, given that these scholars received knowledge but did not return it properly. The knowledge had turned upon them, or else had become useless to them.

There is a less problematic element of knowledge, but one which is vital for the proper constitution of people, and that is the Speech of Advice. As I discuss briefly in section 2.2, parents must give counsels to their children so that they learn to discern proper and improper behaviour, and so that they behave in such ways that they avoid incurring the anger of others and therefore their attacks. Counsels are manifestations of love, and to be a True Man or a True Woman, a person must make manifest, through moral action, the fact that he or she was properly counselled. People's counsels often self-refer: they demand that children obey the counsels, lest in the future others say that their parents did not counsel them.

In the following sections I return briefly to the issue of the proper acquisition of knowledge.

12.6 On the ownership of knowledge

The mambeadores claimed that the creator deity and other beings from the time of creation gave each peoples –each group, clan and lineage- all that
which was to be their own: their territory, their clan name and jávarata (an animal, plant or object intimately linked to the clan’s origin, akin to a totemic symbol), their ritual substances, their dance rituals, their bodypaint patterns and feather ornaments and their Speeches. These elements were linked to each other and to each particular people, so that they were all indispensable. For example, Ernesto once told me that the undesirable situation his people found themselves in – their frequent illnesses, their lack of mutual support and their conflicts – stemmed from the fact that they were not in their ‘traditional’ god-given territory. The beings of the land they now occupied found them to be foreign, and moreover, their knowledge would not work against the evil of those beings. He also claimed that an unflagging disease that affected his father was caused by his land of origin, chastising him for having abandoned it.

People’s jávarata were also central to their personal constitution and to the workings of their Speeches. Some of people’s moral qualities and agencies were understood to stem from these jávarata. As I discussed above (sections 2.4 and 9.3.1), one Nonuya lineage’s jávarata was somehow linked to lightning, and according to its elder, this made its people quick to learn anything new they heard. However, the jávarata was also a point of vulnerability for its people. Juan, Ernesto and Roberto all maintained that the knowledge of the details of the origin of their clans were a great secret, for anybody who knew them could cause great harm and even the extinction of their clans. For instance, Roberto’s clan’s jávarata was an order of animals, and one species of this order appeared in a Speech of Apprising as the cause
of a time of madness and war in which numerous people, even kin, killed each other. Manuel feared that some sorcerer was somehow deploying this story against Roberto, who was particularly vulnerable to it because of his clanic links to the beast. Manuel claimed that it was making him imprudent and susceptible to start an escalating war of sorcery. The link between the creature and Roberto's clan was no secret, for that story was not the precise origin of his clan. Otherwise, presumably, Roberto's people would be threatened even more.

The ownership of knowledge—that is, a certain lineage's exclusive privilege and responsibility for using certain Speeches—was a recurrent theme in the Muinane's frequent discussions concerning the propriety of the processes through which people acquired their knowledge. Unilineal transmission within a patriline or clan was one important aspect of morally acquired knowledge. The mambeadores insisted on the fact that knowledge differs, however slightly, between lineages, between clans and between peoples, and that a man's particular lineage's knowledge is vital for his children's and his wife's survival. Theoretically, only elderly males from a man's clan, who sat in the mambeaderos of dead patrilineal grandfathers, possessed certain stories which the man needed to know. Hence the emphasis in the mambeadores' idealised portrayals of processes of knowledge acquisition, on the notion that the father or grandfather of the learner were the best sources of knowledge.

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296 In a Linnaean classificatory scheme.
297 Cf. Echeverri (1997:242) on Uitoto legitimations of applications of knowledge by references to the 'ancients'.
On many occasions I heard anecdotes of people telling others not to use the Speeches and substances of others, for this could anger not only the owners of those Speeches, but also the speakers’ own intrinsically jealous substances and Speeches. People could be very critical of others concerning this matter. For instance, Ernesto’s Nonuya guests at a dance ritual once sang him a harsh song in which they claimed that despite his having his own tobacco, he used the tobacco of another people. One of the guests interpreted the song for me. He bade me to remember that Ernesto and his brothers sang in Bora at the dance rituals, rather than in Muinane, and stated that that was the point of the song. It was a reiteration of a common critique against Ernesto and his siblings, who were constantly being accused of having been too influenced by their Bora mother. The song was ambiguous however; the man told me that the song could also be a claim that Ernesto was behaving like a white man, and that such behaviour was not suitable for a leader.

This emphasis on the ownership of knowledge often led to indignation and critiques over unexpected issues. For instance, Juan was rather incensed when I told him that one of the Nonuya was helping a forest engineer compile a list of the names of trees in Muinane. Most of the older Nonuya’s first tongue is Muinane, since all but a couple of the Nonuya-speaking elders had died during the rubber holocaust before the 1930’s, and the surviving children and youths had been raised among Muinane. To my knowledge, they were as fully competent in the language as any Muinane. Nonetheless, Juan found that it was incorrect for the Nonuya to be carrying out that work, with a tongue that was not ‘his own.’
Pedro's understanding of who owned knowledge even affected his evaluation of my work and his relationship with his brother Juan. He became furious with Juan when he found out that Juan had given me the names and order of birth of Pedro's children, while drawing a genealogical chart of their patriline. Pedro protested that that knowledge had been his to give to me, and not Juan's.

Sometimes the mambeadores chose to stress the similarities between their Speeches and substances, rather than the differences. From such a perspective, other people's knowledge was not necessarily bad or prohibited. In fact, they often claimed that to acquire knowledge from the elders of other lineages and clans would make a mambeador all the more competent in defending his own people. A notion that often came up in this sense was that no single man ever knew everything; in any set of brothers or of Men of the Speech of Tobacco, some had heard some Speeches enunciated by their forefathers, and others had heard others. They could thus complement each other.

There was an important caveat, however: any 'foreign' knowledge a man learned had to be cooled. The giver had to 'bless' the use the other would give that knowledge, and say, 'It is now yours,' or something to the same effect. Otherwise, the Speeches in question would find the situation improper, and would act adversely upon teacher and receiver.

This issue of the use of others' knowledge was central in several meetings in which the Muinane discussed the creation of schools in their communities. Older mambeadores and women protested that the Muinane today did not lead proper lives. They married incestuously, lacked proper
respect for elders and for each other, and thought only of money. The elders found that the cause of this was that the False Woman was misleading them, persuading them that the knowledge, substances and ways of white men were better than their own. They decided that what they had to do was to recover their own knowledge, especially the Speech of Advice. The counsels were to be the ‘base’ of Muinane children’s education in the new schools that would be established in the communities. Then and only then could the undeniably necessary knowledge of white men be taught to them. Without the Speech of Advice, the reckless incorporation of foreign knowledge would merely continue making everyone hot, as it was doing now. With the Speech of Advice, people could incorporate whatever foreign knowledge they found necessary, cooling it beforehand.

12.7 Age and knowledge

In their different portrayals of the ‘knowledge of our own,’ Muinane of both sexes emphasised its link to age. It was commonplace to point out that elders (jusiibo, pl. jusíito) were the most knowledgeable because they had ‘sat’ (in the mambeadero) with their grandfathers, whereas youths were ‘recent’ and had thus not had the chance to listen to age-old wisdom.

The mambeadores often described the mambeadero ‘courses’ in terms of a proverbial, youthfully ignorant boy being taught by an equally proverbial learned but surly old man. Autobiographical anecdotes as well expressed this stereotypical view of youths as lacking knowledge and elders as

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298 The communities of Villa Azul and Chukiki, and the NGOs they have worked with have invested much time and effort in discussions on how to implement this. It has been a difficult matter, to say the least.
knowledgeable. Manuel, for example, told me that as a youth he heard songs and stories in which certain people were named. He told me that because he had been so young and lacking in knowledge, he had thought that being named was a good thing. He had asked his father about this, and his father had explained to him that on the contrary, people were named in songs because they misbehaved. As with some other anecdotes, the circumstances in which Manuel told me this story, as well as its contrast with other accounts in which he made stronger claims to knowledge, led me to believe that what was most pertinent about it, even for Manuel, was not its 'historical' accuracy but the moral lesson that knowledge was something that youths lacked and elders possessed.

Older mambeadores' claims to knowledge often involved references to their age. Pedro and Manuel, for instance, made much of the fact that they were the oldest surviving men of their respective clans, and therefore to be the men of knowledge. Such claims, however, could be contested: Juan once told me about an occasion in which he had scolded Antonio for having claimed to be a jusiibo, an old and knowledgeable man. He told me that he had asked Antonio if his sons had already raised their children, like Antonio himself had. Antonio had answered that they had not done so yet, and so Juan told him he could not claim to be an old man. 'Only when one has raised one’s children to be just like one, with one’s knowledge, can one say that.' Only a man whose children were knowledgeable enough to have raised their own children well –

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299 'Naming' can be not only the performative act of transformation I discuss above, but also the act of pointing somebody out as an improperly behaved person.
that is, so that they 'walk along their father's path'- could truly claim to be a jusiibo.

The mambeadores often stressed the veracity of their statements by reference to their origin in old men. It was typical for them to follow some exposition of knowledge with some statement like ‘Así nos decía el finado’ ('That was what the deceased one used to tell us'). Thus spoke Juan and Pedro of their father, and Manuel and Ernesto of theirs. Oliverio's was a case in point. He had been the oldest surviving Muinane in the region for a few years, and as such was sometimes treated as the ultimate authority in matters of tradition. His death seemed to make him even more of an authority. For instance, Napoleon and Amancio were once debating about the term 'People of the Centre'. Amancio noted that in his experience, all indigenous groups – Yukuna, Muinane, Uitoto, and the tribes that lived in Leticia- claimed to be the people of the centre of the world. Napoleon stated that though it was so, it was truly the Muinane who were the people of the Centre, and that it had been none other than 'el alma bendita del finadito' (the holy soul of the deceased), his uncle Oliverio, who had told him so. That put an end to the debate.

Amancio's son Enrique also made use of the image of old Oliverio to portray himself as knowledgeable. He had sat for a few nights with the old man some months prior to his death. After Oliverio died, however, Enrique made much of those nights, claiming to have been one of the old man's favourites and a recipient of much of his knowledge.

Ernesto also told me that a youth should never attempt to make use of a Speech without first receiving the blessing of his father or of the elder who gave the Speech to him. It would be particularly improper for a man to step
ahead" of his father, i.e. speak before him, or use ritual knowledge without the father's permission, if the latter were still alive. A man's father should be his leader, healer, and caretaker, until he explicitly tells his son that he can proceed to apply the knowledge which he has given him. Juan told me that like other elders of the past, his father used to warn him about this. The old man would tell Juan that if Juan ever did speak before him in public, the old man would die of shame. 'I was always very fearful of this, and so I never spoke in public without my father's permission.' This issue was also touched upon in large meetings I attended, where elders decried the lack of humility and respect of young men, many of whom they said wished to be great leaders 'while their grandfathers and fathers are still alive'. This could and should be remedied, they claimed, by recovering traditional knowledge and behaviour. Ideal youths should show great discipline and a respectful, quiet desire to learn, and work hard to produce ritual substances to provide for their elders in order that the latter may teach them their knowledge. Most of the critical comments that I witnessed on this account rarely addressed or referred to a particular miscreant, but rather referred to a more collective and abstract 'youth of today.'

On one occasion, Alejandro confessed to feeling bad about a certain healing ritual he and his brothers often carried out. They often blew Speeches of Conjuration upon smoked chillies in order to treat themselves, their wives and their children. He stated that such rituals with chillies were actually best left to old men, for they heated up the hands of the mambeador that carried

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300 Younger men today tend to be more literate and competent in the use of Spanish than their elders, and to some extent this allows them to participate in regional political affairs in ways in which the older men cannot. This is a source of complex power struggles and moral
them out. An old man could take such heat with no problem, but a younger
man’s hands would become less apt for planting seeds. When he explained
this to me, Alejandro’s voice became sad and he said, ‘We do wrong when we
do this with the chillies. It is as if we were telling our father that we do not need
him anymore...that we know everything already, and that he can die and it will
not matter.’

Many prescriptions supposedly addressed to youths demanded that
they be respectful and solicitous towards all elders, both to avoid displeasing
them and incurring their anger, and to gain their esteem. The counsels stated
that a thankful old man pleased at a youth’s good behaviour could decide to
‘give’ him some useful Speeches even if he were not a member of his clan.
Fathers are supposed to discourage their sons from making presumptuous,
untimely claims to knowledge, lest some surly elder became irritated and
sorcerise the youth or bring a difficult riddle to his father at a future dance
ritual. One mambeador told me that youths in the past received this counsel:
‘Do not contest an elder’s knowledge, for he can crush your fingers like
crushing peanuts.’ By this, he explained, they meant that for a knowledgeable
old man to harm a youth would be an easy game.
Part V: Transformations
13. Basic Transformations

Men's endeavours to protect their kin from disease and other evil and to produce substances, as well as some of women's caring endeavours, involve the transformation or destruction of evil agents\textsuperscript{301}. Because they deal out death, these transformations may be described as predatory. Life for the Muinane seems to be to a great extent a chain of such predatory transformational processes: making a garden, building a house, healing the sick, preparing foodstuffs and ritual substances, hunting game and many other activities, involve preying upon other beings. On occasion the Muinane rhetorically treat the destruction of evil beings or the removal of their threatening agencies in terms of filtering or purifying process. In turn, filtering processes are sometimes treated in terms of predatory attacks.

In this chapter I explore a few basic transformations which the Muinane effect in everyday life or in basic productive activities, mainly food 'cooling', hunting, healing and gardening. In the following chapter I turn to two great ritual endeavours that involve many smaller transformations: the construction of a \textit{maloca} and dance rituals. This division into two chapter obeys only the requirements of monographic presentation; in fact, these different transformations are all imbricated in each other or can be presented at different times as encompassing each other\textsuperscript{302}.

13.1 Food Cooling and the Speech of Satiety

\textsuperscript{301} Cf. \textcite{Arhem's (1996: 199) discussion of the Makuna's understanding of predation as based on the metaphysical principle of transformation of death into life. Cf. as well Overing (1993).}

\textsuperscript{302} See sections 4.2 and 5.1, concerning the transformations involved in the preparation of
The Muinane do very little food ‘cooling’ (equivalent to what some of the Amazonianist literature calls ‘food shamanism’ or ‘food blessing’ 303) nowadays, in contrast to what some of them claim they should, and in contrast with some groups described by other ethnographers of Amazonia. I never saw game being “blown over” as the mambeadores claim it was done in the past.

Food shamanism refers mostly to fish and game; in my experience, the Muinane did not stress that fruit required it. In fact, garden fruit for the most part were presented to me as exemplars of that which was harmless and good304.

I gathered from the mambeadores’ stories that food shamanism posterior to a kill constituted a transubstantiation of the flesh into vegetable matter, a form of ‘cooling’ its pathogenic heat. This was done in each case through the particular Speech of Apprising which concerned the origin of the game animal and its particular evil. According to these Speeches, animals were told at First Time that they—and their substances—would cause diarrhoea, skin diseases and other pathogenic states. However, in those very Speeches of Apprising, the deity or being who transformed the animals also determined that whoever knew the stories of the origin of such diseases would thereby know how to heal them by rejecting them. The mambeadores told me that to carry out such food shamanism a man must review these Speeches of Apprising, and then make a silent invocation accompanied by a rhythmic

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whistle 'blown' over the carcass. This 'blows away' the animal's threat, cools the flesh and makes it edible.

Drawing insights from Vilaça (1992:67), I find that the Muinane’s 'cooling' or 'transforming' of flesh may be understood as a process by means of which the spurious substances of the animal –those which are perverse counterparts of subjectivity-endowing human substances - are removed from its flesh. That the flesh has the potential of causing consumers to behave like the animal consumed is reflected in a counsel according to which children should not eat the hearts of animals, lest they start to desire their own sisters like animals do. Sergio told me about another form of treatment of dead game which is similarly about the removal of spurious animal substances. In his prescriptive counsel to me never to touch a large animal that has just been killed, he said 'The animal's tobacco is still warm, and it can pass onto the arm with which you touch it...then it will hurt. What you have to do is seek out a little branch and whip the animal. That way, its tobacco climbs up into the little branch, and you just throw it away.' I never witnessed any such rituals, though on occasion people did protest that disease was rampant because nobody carried them out any longer.

On the other hand, Sergio explained to me that food shamanism posterior to the kill was not really necessary, because the more important preparation of the meat is carried out prior to the killing, when the mambeadores, with their Speeches empowered by tobacco, name the game as "fruit." This 'naming' is part of what the Muinane call 'the Speech of Satiety'. Among other things, this Speech describes and thereby ensures how the
planted cultigens grow in the garden, how evil cannot affect them, how they
mature well, and how there is no harm in them. They describe how people will
soon harvest the fruit of the garden—the manioc, the sweet potato, the
daiedale tuber, and others—and how they will be strengthened by those foods.
Sometimes the Speeches take the form of requests directed at the Creator,
demanding that the fruit mature quickly. However, these requests for fruit are
also simultaneously requests for game, which must be named as fruit so as to
pre-empt their pathogenic threat. When game is killed and this is interpreted
as a result of a Speech of Satiety, the dead animal is nominally fruit. This
nomination is performative, however: empowered by substances and
knowledge, it renders the originally pathogenic meat as innocuous as fruit.
The performative rhetorical question in these transformative Speeches creates
and reflects this harmlessness: ‘Why should this fruit [some piece of game]
make my children sick?’ Needless to say, this manner of a priori food
shamanism can also be seen as a removal from flesh of the spurious animal
versions of human Speeches.

For Sergio, any animal a hunter meets or kills is by definition ‘the game
of tobacco’, or ‘fruit’ to be ‘harvested’; otherwise, the hunter would not even
have seen the beast. In fact, Ernesto and others told me that a hunter should
never let a game animal or vermin he sees escape unscathed, for it may be a
disease or tribulation which the tobacco has caused to materialise. Not killing
it may imply suffering from its evil produce in the future. And in fact, I was on
several occasions surprised at the efforts they went to kill inedible little
opossums and tree rats.

13.2 Healing and hunting

In Muinane rhetoric, affects and diseases are reified as substances of sorts, and as such conceived to be characterised by their transitivity. For instance, undesirable affects, diseases and certain other evils may be removed from people through their transformation into game or other desirable substances or agencies. Most such transformations—among them, healing many of the 'diseases' which affect people's bodies and their relationships with other people—are instances of human predatory activity.

In several healing rituals I attended, the healer and a conversation partner or 'what-sayer' sat in the *mambeadero* and licked tobacco and *mambed* so that their thoughts would become 'open' and perspicacious, and so that their Speeches would have 'strength'. The healer then narrated or alluded to the mythical events that dealt with the different origins of the disease which affected the victim, trying to pinpoint which particular animal or other evil agent had attacked him or her. (The Speeches of Apprising involved were the same ones used in food shamanism.) The what-sayer interspersed comments or assenting expressions regularly, establishing with the healer a typical *mambeadero* dialogue characterised by its rhythm and sing-song intonation. One *mambeador* explained to me at another time that in some of the rituals, they discover the identity of the pathogenic agent through a sudden silence, or an explosion in the bonfire, or a particular sound in the jungle, which occurs at the very point in the narration of the Speech of Apprising in which the agent's name is mentioned. This signals that it is the culprit.
As the healing rituals continued, the dialogues addressed different beings: the deity or deities, the guilty animals, or the owners of animals, and denounced them, cajoled them, persuaded them or angrily scolded them using the Speech of Pain. Then healer and what-sayer performatively rejected the disease by means of Speech formulae in which they claimed to be sweeping it away, blowing it away, proscribing it; or else they described in an equally performative manner, how the creator deity rid them of it. Both persuasion and the 'magical' imposition of the speaker's will seemed to be considered to be the purpose in these rejections.

On some occasions, the healing rituals also involved the preparation of some concoction, the recipe for which varied according to the disease in question. Often it was crushed herbs in water. The healer would whistle softly and rhythmically over the stuff, an action that is called 'blowing' or 'conjuring'. As the healer whistled, he supposedly made silent invocations taken from the Speeches of Apprising, which tell of how mythical beings dealt with the diseases. In some cases the remedy was then given to the sick person to drink, in others, the person was bathed in the stuff.

Afterwards, on those occasions in which the victim soon healed and game was caught, the rituals were pronounced successful. The mambeadores claimed that the tobacco had transformed the improper thought or disease into game, in a manner to which they referred as 'making [the problem] dawn', or else, more clearly predatorily, as 'grabbing' the culprit, 'snaring' it, or 'placing it in the [hunter's] path'. Another way in which they stated it was that the
tobacco had visited the animal’s own evil back upon it, killing it\textsuperscript{306}. Whatever the case, the destructive disease or affect had been transformed into nourishing meat, and was understood thereby to be removed from the person\textsuperscript{307}. The victims in each case were therefore expected to heal or to manifest more moral thoughts/emotions.

Manuel provided me with a beautiful example of a story about diseases, improper thoughts/emotions and actions that stemmed from the presence of animals, their Speeches or their substances inside a body. It concerned a time, long ago, when his father had had troubles with Roberto and Oliverio, whom Manuel’s father addressed as brothers\textsuperscript{308}. In anger, his father had left the community in the Middle Caquetá and taken the path towards La Sabana. Two days along the path, he came to the house of Tiíri Marími, an old man. He told the old man of his tribulations, and Tiíri Marími told him his own story of past troubles:

Long before, Tiíri Marími’s own brothers had threatened to kill him, and he had left home because of this\textsuperscript{309}. He had licked tobacco paste and dreamed; in the dream, the tobacco had told him that the cause of his troubles would appear as game in his path. The tobacco had also instructed him to take that game and give it to a maloca of the People of the Grub, and to take the tobacco paste, coca and starch he would receive in return for it to his brothers, and to use that stuff to solve the troubles between them. Indeed, he

\textsuperscript{306} Among the Amuesha, once the sorcery that originates a disease is discovered, it is made to boomerang back to the suspected sorcerer (cf. Santos-Granero 1991).
\textsuperscript{308} Manuel’s father had been orphaned at an early age by the rubber-tapping Casa Arana, and Roberto’s father had finished raising him.
\textsuperscript{309} On tense relations between male siblings in Amazonia, cf. Gonçalves (2000), and section
had killed two tapirs and taken them to the People of the Grub. He had received coca and tobacco in return, and he had taken these home with him and had had his brothers sit with him to consume it. Then he had told them: 'It was just lies you spoke when you said you would kill me. See...they have dawned already.' If I understood Manuel's point, the old man had meant that the agent that had caused those threats to be spoken had been transformed into meat, for which Tiiri Mariimi had received tobacco. The brothers had admitted that this was true; that it had not been their own Speech which had spoken in that evil manner. If it had been their true Speech, Manuel explained to me, they would indeed have killed Tiiri Mariimi, but because they were false threats, the tobacco had made their substance dawn as meat, pre-empting the threatened actions. Tiiri Mariimi then told Manuel's father that he should return to his classificatory brothers and mend the troubles with them, for otherwise the troubles would follow him forever.
Figure 4. Anger dawns in the shape of a peccary, wrapped in a makeshift basket.
13.3 Gardening

13.3.1 The war against trees

The mambeadores' invocations pertaining to the felling of the forest to make gardens, and their own interpretations of the rituals and other activities linked to the felling, present these activities as part of a dangerous predatory process of transformation. The yearly destruction of a section of forest is understood to be an aggression against its inhabitants, who are thereby made vulnerable to hunters or killed, or else must be persuaded not to avenge themselves upon people.

When I was staying in his maloca, Manuel, his wife and his son decided to cut anew an old "rastrojo"—a garden that had been allowed to go fallow after a few years of service. It had been a garden perhaps 10 or 15 years before, and now looked like a young forest. That year they would not cut out a new garden in the denser, older forest beyond.

On that occasion, Manuel and his son legitimated their felling of the growing forest with references to trees' evil character. According to what Manuel told me, a few tree species have their own pathogenic agency, but for the most part their evil lies in that they hide ill-intentioned animals. This 'hiding' is not merely a question of animals camouflaging or concealing themselves behind a tree; rather, it is as if they were temporarily incarnated in the tree. There is some fixity in the relationship between animal species and the trees in which they hide; thus tapirs hide in jigáyuje, whereas pumas and jaguars

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310 I did not explore this issue in detail.
hide in redwood (*Brosimum rubescens*, a Moraceae) and *comino* (*Aniba* sp., a Lauraceae) trees respectively.

Often, the process of cutting down the jungle is said to be a ‘war’ against trees; a directing of heat and anger against them. In fact, there is a dance ritual known as Ámoka, the ‘dance of War’, the mythical origin of which is the transformation of mutual killings among people into a concerted attack on trees. Roberto added to this war-like image of the felling when he told me that in the past, men about to attack trees with axes used to lick a ‘hot’ herb called “iyuuba”, which made them particularly hot and angry and capable of destroying trees. They had to be careful then not to address angry words at other people, lest the heat of the herb harm them.

Manuel explained to me that the night before starting to axe down the trees, a *mambeador* starts a Speech of Felling in which he claims to be the very root of bad behaviour. He addresses the Grandmother Axe, or the Grandmother of the Summer (Grandfather, for some clans): “Mother, I speak badly, I act badly, I am angry. I am jealous, I am envious. Grandmother, come kill me! Finish me off! How could I get away from you? You would only find me.” Then the *mambeador* - an idealised character- addresses any animals which may be in him, in the maloca, or in the members of his family: “Hide! She is coming to kill me!” Fearful that the man may indeed be killed, the

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311 Catalina Londoño, personal communication.
312 Griffiths (1998: 100) writes that for the Uitoto, felling is a process of vengeance and bodily healing. Trees are guilty of causing heartburn, flatulence and indigestion, which is why some smell rotten when chopped down. This ‘true fight’ with trees ‘purges the fellers of their inner aggression and bad feelings which must be expelled, and turned toward the ‘outside’-the forest felling.’ This contrasts with Pineda’s statement (quoted in Espinosa 1995: 83) to the effect that among the Andoke, the felling was a hunt directed at trees, but that hunting – presumably, ‘hunting’ trees as well- was an act of alliance and copulation. Like the Uitoto and unlike the Andoke (as described by Espinosa), the Muinane posit a relation of enmity –not ambiguous affinity- between jungle trees and people.
animals jump out of him and hide among the trees and grasses close by. The following day, the Grandmother Axe and the Grandmother Machete then come along and cut these trees down, first close to the house, and then further away. The animals are left without a hiding place, and become visible to the eyes of the hunter, who may kill them.

Manuel and his son added that first one had to cut the forest and grasses close to the house, and then the forest further off; that way, the animals would move away from the house towards new hiding places. The undesirable alternative was to work in the other direction, in which case one drove the animals towards one’s home, until the only hiding place left is one’s body.

13.3.2 Juan’s minga and the Felling

Whilst I was living at their home, Juan and his wife decided to make a large new garden. Juan intended to cut down approximately a hectare\textsuperscript{313} of old forest, with thick patches of undergrowth and many thick hardwood trunks. This was a task that required a force larger than he could muster with his children, so he prepared tobacco paste and rowed down to his classificatory brother Antonio’s maloca to ask him to help him with the task of felling those trees. The invitation with tobacco paste was unswayable and could not be rejected, for Juan had already made invocations upon it that stated that that tobacco was for his brother and his brother’s sons, so that they would fell with him. On other occasions, I had heard people receiving tobacco making statements to the same effect: “It is not you who is inviting us, but he [the
tobacco]. We cannot say we will not go and help you, for then he would remonstrate against us, and we would suffer.” Antonio and his sons also received Juan’s tobacco paste with manifestations of pleasure, and licked it and smacked their lips loudly exclaiming about how tasty and ‘sweet’ (well salted) it was. They made jokes and remarks that evinced their great willingness to help Juan. Juan—and at other times, other people—remarked to me that that is how people should react to invitations to work: immediately, with great willingness and good humour.

On the night previous to Juan’s “minga”314, he gave the people of his home “Fagóji”; that is, he gave them counsels from the Speech of Advice. He counselled them to behave well, to be watchful of danger that might threaten them and the guests, and to work hard. The women were to prepare good caguana for all to drink, and under no circumstances to respond angrily to any provocations from the working guests, for if the latter felt lazy they could make use of that opportunity to get angry in return and abandon the job.

Juan told me then that it was very likely that at that moment, in his maloca across the river, Antonio was counselling those of his family who were coming to work. Antonio was supposed to tell them to ‘go straight to where we are going’, and ‘not to wander from the path, for there could be snakes and spines there.’ As I discussed above (section 7.2), this was a demand for purposeful behaviour. If Antonio’s case was like others I witnessed, he was probably telling the young men that they had been invited only to lick tobacco, mambe coca and work, and not to bother or joke with their classificatory

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313 His own estimate. I did not take measures of any of the gardens.
314 A reunion of different nuclear families (couples and their competent children) to work on a communal project, or to help a member of the community with some large task.
brothers’ wives; they had no business doing any such thing, lest any serious problems start. They were also to show much “ánimo”, that is, to work with manifestations of enjoyment in the task and company, such as joking and shouting to encourage each other, but still working hard. Trees had to be attacked with a will and with no hesitation or trepidation in the face of their size or hardness, for that way they are as easy to fell as if they were hollow. The timid axeman’s trees know his fear and weakness, and they become pure hardwood, and take a long time to be felled. Counsels before mingas, said Juan, also had to insist that people take great care not to hurt themselves, or exert themselves excessively in such a way that it might threaten their health.

Then Juan started to tell Speeches of Apprising and to reject evils, naming his Speech to be Speech of Work and Speech of Felling. At other times, Juan’s and Manuel’s descriptions of proper Speeches previous to felling the trees emphasised their rejection of all unpleasanties that could befall the workers. This included a long listing of accidents and their sources. The ideal mambeador performatively “sweeps away” cuts, objects falling from above, the stings of bees and ants, falls from felling scaffolds and so on. He also banishes people’s laziness and willingness to fight others, so that fights do not start between workers heated up by their efforts under the hot sun, and the task be interrupted or abandoned\textsuperscript{315}. It is understood that this sweeping and banishing removes the tribulations materially, and therefore they cannot appear at the worksite.

\textsuperscript{315} Cf. Griffiths (1998: 99), Espinosa (1995:81) and van der Hammen (1992:168) on invocations or rituals prior to the felling, among the Utoto-Nipòde, Andoke and Yukuna, respectively.
The Speech of Work and the Speech of Felling also refer to the transformations effected in felling in terms replacement (búnanihi). For example, Juan claimed that the sweat that people lose in felling or gardening is replaced by the manioc bread and the chilli broth that eventually result from the work. Some mambeadero discourses provide another example. Juan and Manuel, for instance, both told me that previous to the felling, a mambeador addresses the animals of the jungle in order to prevent their retribution for the destruction of their homes and wild cultigens. They tell the animals that it is not people who cut down the jungle, but the axe; however, she does not do so in vain, but rather in order to replace their fruit with proper fruit. Wild pineapples are replaced with true pineapples, wild caimo with proper caimo\textsuperscript{316}, and so on for each fruit. The animals are also told that yarumo (see chapter 5) will grow there, out of which they will feed, and that some day the garden will lie fallow, and they shall benefit from its unharvested fruits. The result of not making such an address are accidents, caused by vengeful animals: a little cut with an axe or machete are caused by a black agouti; branches and other projectiles falling on people from above are caused by different monkeys, raptor birds or lizards; a splinter in the eye is caused by the little kikii frog (see section 10.1).

The Speech of Felling also names the trees as ‘daledale\textsuperscript{317} of the axe’ and ‘mafafa of the axe’. By saying thus, the mambeadores transform the trees in such a fashion that they become easy to fell, much like these tubers are easy to cut or bite through. Indeed, the entire process of felling is referred to

\textsuperscript{316} Caimito pouteria.  
\textsuperscript{317} Marantaceae, Calathea sp. (Candre 1996 261)
as a meal in which the Grandmothers Axe and Machete eat the trees, saplings, vines and so on. This image is used in the Speech of Healing when people suffer intoxication; according to Sergio, the healer makes the following claim: ‘Given that the axe and the machete eat all kinds of filthy trees, itchy vines and poisonous saps, and yet suffer no vomiting bouts, and suffer no coughs, how can it be that my child [or brother, or wife, etc.] now vomits?’ Perhaps this matter-of-fact question endows people with that vital characteristic of the axe: that it suffers from no evil despite its contact with and consumption of dangerous substances.

Early on in my fieldwork I noted the discursive emphasis of the men on the dangers of the felling, and vaguely remembered an anthropologist’s argument to the effect that some peoples produce similar accounts as ideological ploys to give their work greater value. I found out, however, that it was indeed a dangerous activity. When several axemen are hacking away, a single large tree falling can drag down numerous others with a domino effect. As the Muinane men often repeat, a heedless worker can get crushed in the confusion. There are also snakes to worry about, all kinds of stinging insects, and vines which throw machetes or axes out of the planned trajectory, causing people to cut themselves. As an unsuspecting, inexperienced lumberjack, I was particularly surprised to find that trees and saplings also constitute threats from below: if bent nearly horizontal under the weight of a greater tree, they can wrest themselves free and straighten up with the violence of a catapult.

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In general, felling the jungle is hard work. In my experience and in the Muinane’s own prescriptions and descriptions, men and women firstly clear away vines, shrubs, small saplings and so on with their machetes, partly so that later the axemen can get more easily to the bigger trees. The roza, as the first task is called, is not as strenuous as felling trees, but often it is extremely uncomfortable work. Hacking away at thick undergrowth with the machete, one is very likely to incur the attacks of bees, conga ants, and the vicious little majiña ants, the bites of which hurt and sting for hours. At Juan’s felling there were several ‘filthy’ sections of forest, where there were the most vines and stinging insects and the biggest trees. It was in those spots that the machete and axe wielders had to work the hardest. Juan told me as we struggled with a thick section of undergrowth, our bodies itching with sweat and the stings of bees and ants, that it was in spots such as that one the best tobacco and coca would grow. That was where the greatest evil and uselessness lay, where the fire would eat the most, where there would be the most ashes to feed the coca and tobacco plants.

After the roza, the actual felling of large trees takes place. A man can toil for hours, and even for a day or two, hacking away at a single thick trunk. The larger trunks even require that people build scaffolds, so as to chop the tree above the buttress roots. It is all tiresome, sweaty work, and men consume much coca and caguana while they do it. At Juan’s minga the work was accompanied by much cheerfulness, although Juan found my participation slightly worrisome; as “owner” of the task, he was responsible for any troubles or accidents occurring during the work, and he feared that I would lack the experience to get myself out of trouble if a large tree fell in my
direction. He explained to me that on occasion people get hurt in felling *mingas*, and that the workers could make harsh 'embittering' suits to the owner for not taking proper care of them. An accident could be claimed to constitute proof of the lack of knowledge of the owner of the garden, and furthermore of his immorality, since somebody lacking in knowledge or without the support of someone knowledgeable should never convokve a *minga*.

Manuel once told me that sometimes, towards the end of a felling, when there are but a few half-chopped trees standing, the owner gives out liquid tobacco (Ilhibaiba) to the axemen as part of a process that beckons the wind to knock down those last few trees. He told me that once, at a Uitoto elder's felling, the host had given out the liquid tobacco too soon, and that the wind had blown in too quickly. It had knocked down several large trees, one of which had nearly crushed Manuel and his classificatory uncle Oliverio. Incensed, they had told the Uitoto that he lacked knowledge, and left the *minga* without helping any more.

Throughout Juan's *minga*, which lasted two days, he provided *mambe* to the men working. He also gave them tobacco paste after they finished the work. His wife was in charge of providing food and drink for all. After the work was finished, the host couple "paid"—they used the word in Spanish, 'pago'—the workers with manioc bread, garden fruits, and other food stuffs. Such 'payments' for felling or planting or for more esoteric help such as healing and teaching Speeches of Apprising and conjurations, is widely

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320 I could not help then but be reminded of Juan's counsel to his women prior to receiving the guests who would help him build his maloca. He had warned them against answering the helpers' protests and taunts, since some of them could be lazy people who would make use of any opportunity to get angry in order to have an excuse to abandon the work.

regarded as something indispensable. The stuffs received appease the Speeches and substances which are constitutive of the receiver, and which are on the lookout for the 'cooling' and 'nourishing' the person they constitute must get after effecting a hard or specialised task. If such 'cooling' is not forthcoming, these constitutive substances and Speeches become outraged at the person him or herself, and demand to know 'where is that which will cool you for what you have done?' Then the person may well fall sick.

Manuel told me that when people finish their felling, they can then say 'We are now healed. Who will bother us now? The ones who caused us evil and worries have been finished off. If any should bother us, it is lies...not lack of work.' Again, the point is that tribulations come from evil substances or from substances inside people that demand to become manifest through work; once the substances have been transformed into desirable manifestations, any new tribulations that come do not merit much attention, because they are understood to lack the substance to cause true harm.

13.3.3 Eating the jungle

After slashing the forest, the garden – although in Muinane the word for it at that time differs from the word used to refer to it after it has been burned and planted- has to be left to dry. Depending on its size and on the quality of the forest from which it was cut, it can take a few weeks, or months. The process of drying the garden, however, is not 'natural': the Muinane claim it to be brought about by human will and action which direct the agency of other beings. Manuel explained to me that the mambeador who owns the

with coca, tobacco and foodstuffs, among the Andoke and Uitoto.
garden must address the Grandmother of the Summer.322: "I have prepared your food already...it is yours. Do not let it go to waste. Smoke it and eat it, for what else are you to eat?" The trees and grasses and vines are there to be 'smoked' in a metaphorically culinary sense; that is, it is there to be dried. At that time, the garden still does not belong to Real People, but to the Grandmother. The mambeador also addresses animals, tricking them: "I have prepared a place for you to sleep in...Where else are you to sleep?" He directs the animals with his Speech, so that they move into the drying garden. All this is in preparation for the burning.

The ideal situation for burning a garden is after a spell of dry weather, when the wood, the leaves and the floor of the garden are dried out. Describing this, Juan went on to say that the for a few nights before burning the garden the mambeador 'speaks of burning'; he names the sun of the following day as 'Sun of Life', which shines brightly but is not too hot; he names the wind "True Wind", so that it does not blow like the spurious wind that blows out fires and tears at the roofs of malocas, but rather fans fires with a gentle, pleasant, continuous stream of air.

One Speech of Apprising which, according to Ernesto, should be narrated before the burning, tells the story of a man whose body had been eaten by ants, so that only his head remained. This head misbehaved terribly, and so the people tried to burn him in a garden. He leapt from spot to spot, somehow urinating, and the fire was extinguished at those spots. Before burning the garden, Ernesto told me, people should reject that head so that

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322 Again, other clans deem the deity of the summer to be male: the Grandfather of the Summer.
their gardens burn thoroughly. Otherwise, there will be many spots in the
garden that remain unburned, and then the owner will have to go from spot to
spot lighting new bonfires.

In their abstract, generalising portrayals of how these events should go,
different Muinane told me that when thunder crashes from the direction from
which rain usually comes, the couple who own the garden set fire around the
perimeter of their dry plot, so that any animals that have made their home in it
get encircled and killed by the smoke and flames. Ideally, the fire, if it is True
Fire, eats everything, leaving only ashes. Manuel described this burning as a
meal of the Grandmother of the Summer: she eats the large, dry trees, the
dry, abrasive saps, the dangerous thorns and all kinds of stinging, biting,
pathogenic animals, all of whom claimed in the past to be unconquerable, to
be True Tobacco, to be axes. For the Grandmother, however, they are merely
food; she can eat them and no harm comes to her from it. She transforms
them, and then vomits them back onto the garden as 'production'. After the
burning ends, the owners go about the garden piling any unburned wood and
leaves and making bonfires out of them, so that as much of the original
vegetable matter as possible becomes ashes.

Several times I heard tell that the smoke from the fire reaches the sun
and makes his eyes producing rain. This makes the ashes damp, so that
the wind does not carry them away. Once the burning is finished and it has
rained, the garden is ready for planting. It has finally become a garden owned

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323 Manuel and his wife sang a song during the burning, mentioning peccaries; I could not
ascertain the wording or its meaning, but only that it was meant to favour proper burning.
by people, rather than by the beings of the jungle or by the Grandmother or Grandfather of summer.

13.3.4 Planting and caring for the garden

In their rhetoric, the Muinane present a beautiful, well-weeded, and most importantly, a productive garden as one important proof of a couple’s state as Real People\(^{324}\). A True Man and a True Woman are hardworking and judicious, and their garden reflects this. Such a garden produces the abundance necessary to provide the all-important ritual substances and foodstuffs necessary to keep people healthy and cool. It also produces the surplus necessary for holding dance rituals\(^{325}\). Ultimately, this means that a good garden is essential to the making of Real People.

The planting and care for the garden also involve important transformations. Firstly, and as I mentioned above, there is the notion that evil or spurious jungle versions of fruit and cultigens are replaced by proper Real People’s fruits and cultigens. Secondly, planting is a way for women to get rid of their old age, which somehow accumulates upon them as their manioc ages. Men must plant for a different reason: their knowledge is like a seed, and furthermore, it is like semen. In fact, semen and knowledge sometimes seem to become indistinguishable in their references. Whatever the case, semen and knowledge must be carefully conserved, but must also be let out

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\(^{324}\) Among the Andoke, gardening is necessary in the continuous process of ‘becoming human’ (Espinosa 1995:79).

\(^{325}\) Griffiths (1998:152) notes that the Uitoto-Nipôde claim that they esteem gardening because it does not generate enemies. Furthermore, garden surplus ensures hospitality and helps create empathy and respect. The Muinane would probably differ, to the extent that gardening inevitably impinges upon beings of the jungle and awakens their envy and animosity.
at the appropriate moment, made manifest, made use of. Otherwise, they (–or
it?–) fester inside, protesting or chastising the *mambadór*. Men must actually
plant, or have their wives plant, lest the Speeches they learned and which
pertain to planting and raising cultigens become unsettled and angry inside
them at not being applied to their purpose, and cause the men to sicken.\(^{326}\)

Prior to planting, Manuel told me, a man speaks the Speech of Satiety
to ask (presumably the creator or the Mother) for what he wishes to grow in
his garden, and to reject what he does not. He names each fruit and cultigen
that will grow, and states performatively that each will grow well.

In my experience, couples and their children often planted their gardens
on their own, taking seeds from their older gardens. In a few cases, a *maloca*
owner held a Fruit Dance ritual, which involved people bringing them fruit and
seeds of all kinds. These were then shared among the 'insiders' of the maloca
–and perhaps with the helpers as well– so that all would have good fruit to
consume and seeds to plant.

In some cases I witnessed, couples held planting *mingas* in which
other people helped them. In some of these, the couple who owned the
garden would plant most of the various fruit on their own, but would ask for
help in the great task of planting the manioc.

Most young men start gardens close to their parents', on land which is
usually widely regarded to 'belong' to a patriline and to be their for their
exclusive use. They start these gardens with cuttings and seeds which their
parents give them. Manuel told me, however, that in his own view, to provide

\(^{326}\) Uitoto-Nipóde men made this point more emphatically to me than the Muinane, though it
was not absent among the latter. Cf. Griffiths (1998:113) on unplanted cultigens pestering
their owners. Cf. Echeverri (2000), on diseases that must be brought out of the body, where
anybody else with seeds was to have seeds in another's garden. Someday, he said, one might need seeds, and then all one had to do was go to a person to whom one had given seeds in time of need and ask him for some. The other could not turn such a request down.

I discuss the parental care of gardeners for their cultigens in Part II; here I will add what a Bora elder once told me. He claimed that the newly planted cultigens must be defended from animal threats, and so the *mambeador* uses Speeches to divert the original paths which animals used in the jungle and which now lead to where the garden is to be found. He reroutes them in circles, or makes them go around the garden and in other directions. Otherwise, animals will quickly find the garden and eat its produce before people have a chance to benefit from it. Some of the Muinane share a similar belief and use Speeches to deal with it. These Speeches presumably also serve the purpose of hiding the *mambeadores'* children from the sight of animals, or to divert the paths of the latter from the paths of the children.

Though I participated frequently in most garden activities, I found that there was little talk during the actual labours themselves that would converge with the view of those endeavours as somehow equivalent to child care. It was only in the night time rituals that any such notion came up. Once the garden is planted and on its way, most of the daily care of the cultigens is hands-on: women weed their manioc plots, and sometimes pile up the refuse and burn it to ashes with which to fertilise the manioc plants. The men do much the same with their coca. Tobacco grows rather quickly, so, at least as far as I witnessed it, a plot only requires one weeding early on in sprouting process.

they become desirable produce.
The tender sprouts do require transplantation, however. (See sections 4.2 and 4.3, where I address the issue of the tobacco plant's predatory attacks on evil beings.)
14. Great ritual transformations

14.1 Maloca building and domestication

Perhaps the single activity which condenses the most transformative rituals and the most intense social interaction among the Muinane and neighbouring groups is the building of a maloca. The maloca itself is heavily charged symbolically, and not unexpectedly, much of its symbolism involves the transmutation of substance-like thoughts and agencies. The maloca also has important political significance as a ritual centre; it is the place par excellence for Speeches to be deployed agentially and its ritual success is evidence of the knowledge and morality of the owners.

14.1.1 The maloca’s purpose

The reasons casually announced for building a maloca are purposefully ‘light’: Manuel, for example, said that he had announced his intention to build his maloca claiming that his previous house had become tight because too many daughters-in-law had moved in. Others, said Manuel, claim that the house is too small and therefore becomes too smoky with the numerous bonfires burning inside, and the smoke can harm the little children. In short, desirable population growth merits the construction of a big abode. The reason Manuel had given in the mambeadero, however, had been more esoteric: he had claimed that he had been told to build a maloca by “the spirit”. He told me that this had happened a few years before, when he had come back from an NGO-funded trip to the traditional territory of the Muinane. He had arrived home with a terrible, bloody diarrhoea. No conjuration or
remedy had healed him, so he had taken the stronger hallucinogen, the "ambil de monte", in order to see what it was that was afflicting him. In his trance, "the spirit" had asked him, "How can it be that an elder, the what-sayer of the cabildo, mambes in a mere hut?" Manuel said that the spirit had left without saying aught else, but that because he "knew a bit" he had understood what it was that the spirit had meant: that he had to build a maloca. Once he had made the decision, the disease—which had been no true disease, but a prompt- had disappeared.

Sergio explained to me and to his sons briefly that the true purpose for building a maloca was to seek the multiplication of people. This can be linked to the fact that the maloca is presented as a fertile woman in many Speeches and rituals. Its walls, ceiling, rafters and door stand for parts of the body, as do some of the tools kept inside. The dance rituals portray the door as a vagina, and the inside as a womb which, if fertile, propagates the lineage.

Ernesto once told me that the maloca constitutes an intangible wall around the community, protecting it from extrinsic diseases and other threats. The maloca also protects the community by incorporating into its own structure the very substances of evil, which, thus transformed and occupied, cannot cause harm. For example, Ernesto once stated that in the past elders built malocas upon noticing that their people were becoming pugnacious and overcritical. They would say "Perhaps what they need is work!" The work necessary to build a maloca would be the product of

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327 Cf. Griffiths (1998: 162), Hugh-Jones, S. (1993:100) and (1995) and Guyot (1972) for similar references among the Uitoto, the Tukanoans and the Miraña, respectively.
328 For the Uitoto, "the house and homestead are perceive as a human fortress enclosed within circles of mystical defence which have the mambeadero at the centre. The mambeador is thus a vigilant night-time house guard who watches over his family so that they may sleep
substances which were transformations of evil; in turn, the work would transform the substances which gave rise to people’s anger and tribulations. These substances would no longer cause harm, but rather, would constitute the sentient, agential house which protected the community.

Another standard reason for building malocas is an elder’s explicit wish to have a proper place in which to sit with his sons to teach them the Speeches he knows. Roberto told me that this had been Pedro’s case: in 1993 he had come to him with tobacco to ask for help in building a maloca. Roberto, as was necessary, had asked him why he intended to build one. Pedro had answered that he intended to make his two sons sit with him in the mambeadero and learn everything he could teach them. Roberto had then said he would indeed help, and that he wanted Pedro’s promise to ‘be seen’, that is, to be carried out.

Though people can mambe in different places, a proper mambeadero in a four-pillar maloca is understood to be a place from which Speeches gain greater agency. When Pedro finished his maloca’s last dance ritual, which marked the end of that maloca’s ritual cycle, his younger brother Sergio persuaded him not to burn it down as customary, but to wait. Sergio reported to me afterwards that he had asked his brother, ‘How can we regress to mambeing in a hut, after having mambed between the four pillars of a true maloca?’ The four pillars are a synecdoche for a maloca, and Sergio was peacefully.’ Griffiths 1998: 208

329 There are one-pillar and two-pillar malocas as well. These are of lesser status than the four-pillar malocas.

330 A maloca owner should carry out a certain number of dance rituals (in Pedro’s case, 4 or 5) over the life of the maloca. During that time, the maloca ‘works’ to protect its people. After the final dance ritual, which involves the partial destruction of the house, it no longer has the agency to protect its inhabitants, and should be burned down.
proud to be part of a lineage that had a full-fledged maloca. He defended his argument in terms of safety and agency as well: the maloca constituted protection for the community, because Speeches spoken within it became ‘stronger’ -more effective- than those produced outside or in a smaller maloca.

14.1.2 Support for Juan’s maloca

Building a maloca requires the support of many people, and therefore depends on the rallying power of the would-be maloca owner\(^\text{331}\). The Muinane themselves say that a man who lacks knowledge, coolness and proper relationships cannot build a maloca because he will lack support. The man who wishes to build a maloca – usually it is the man who stands as the owner-must possess much tobacco and coca, and his wife must have a very well-stocked garden. The Muinane note that for a couple to have the great amount of stuffs necessary for a maloca construction they usually have to be older, and to have numerous children and affines –brothers, sisters, sons and daughters-in law- to help them amass the needed ‘budget’. This is because the expenditure of tobacco paste to invite the people who will do the actual building, and then to “pay” them for each task in the building, is enormous. Furthermore, the maloca can take anywhere from 4 or 5 days to a month to build, and during that time the woman of the house and her daughters-in-law must feed the guests who are doing the building, plus her own family and helpers. Few new leaders or young men can get that kind of support normally.

\(^{331}\) Cf. Goldman’s (1963: 155) commentary to the effect that Cubeo housebuilding is the equivalent of an election.
There is also much rhetoric concerning the legitimacy, privilege and responsibility of building a *maloca*; some families are not "*maloca people*" because they were 'orphans' whose ancestry at some point was kept from transmitting the knowledge necessary to do so. Much political play goes on in deciding this. Previous displays of competence at production are also important, however. This is another case in which actions and institutions can be either cause or effect. This would be a matter for further ethnographic delving, but I believe that on occasion people among the Uitoto and Muinane who would not have an institutional 'right' to build a maloca nonetheless do so and come to be treated as legitimate *maloqueros*. In any case, anybody's legitimacy among them can come to be questioned, if they do not live up to their institutional responsibilities.

Once, for example, the priest at the Catholic boarding school wanted to build a little *maloca* for the school. He asked Manuel for *mambe*, to which Manuel said, "Padre, you cannot build a *maloca* with stuffs that are not your own. You have to work, if you want a *maloca*." According to Manuel, if the priest had built that *maloca*, it would not have functioned well for him in ensuring health, because the substances invested were not his, and because he lacked the great knowledge needed to direct not only the building but also the various rituals that he would have had to carry out afterwards.

Among the Muinane it is normally the eldest brother who is the headman and owner of the house. Even the exceptions seem to confirm the rule: Ernesto ousted his oldest brother from his leadership role arguing that the latter failed in his duties. Some of his own kin, and many people from surrounding communities insisted that Ernesto had no right to usurp that
position, seeing that he had an older brother. However, Ernesto and his
mother stressed that Ernesto was the eldest son of his father’s second wife,
and thus could legitimately become the leader and maloca owner. Ernesto’s
mother even drank hallucinogenic yagé one time, and claimed that the spirit
told her that Ernesto’s actions were legitimate, and that he and his brothers,
as children of different mothers, each had different knowledge and each were
the eldest of a different set of people. There was thus much production of
rhetoric around the issue of who had or did not have the privilege or
responsibility for building a maloca, and being the ‘eldest’ was an important
criterion.

Juan’s maloca construction was interesting in this sense. Until the day
he announced his intention to build it, I had thought that it was a fixed rule that
it was the eldest of the brothers who could build a maloca. However, Juan
explained to me that other brothers could build their own malocas if their elder
brother did not have one, or after he had had one and did not wish to build a
new one. He did say that it would not be a maloca in which his patriline’s
specific dance ritual—the dance of War—could be held, for that was indeed his
brother Pedro’s exclusive privilege. Juan could only hold the more common
and less exclusive Fruit Dance rituals. Pedro had recently carried out the ritual
that marked the end of his last maloca’s rituals, which meant that his maloca
stopped serving ritual purposes. Juan made use of the opportunity and
hastened to build his own, which Pedro seemed to resent perhaps because
he had planned to build another one a year or two later, but could not do so if
his brother had one.
Juan addressed Pedro and his other brother Sergio and insisted that he needed their help, and that they were obliged to help him, because without them he himself and his *maloca* would be incomplete. He and his wife would be the heart of that *maloca*, but they were necessary limbs, without whose strength the *maloca* could not be built or sustained. Presumably, this also meant that the limbs could not abide without a heart, and thus pressed home the brothers' obligation to help him. Pedro and Sergio agreed to help Juan, and Juan became the "*maloquero*," the *maloca* owner. They provided Juan with salt and *mambe* so that he would have the stuffs necessary to convoke workers; they did not have much tobacco themselves to make tobacco paste as well, but Juan had plenty of his own to make do. The wives of all three of them had enough manioc to feed the crowd who would help them build.

I realised during the work on Juan’s *maloca*, and during the weeks before and after it, that building a *maloca* required rallying power. It was an enormous task that demanded much work from many people, and so the maloca owner indeed had to be able to gather around him a lot of people. I accompanied Juan when he prepared the tobacco, made an *iimogaibi*, and following the protocols of the ‘path of Speech’, took it to Roberto and Ruben, his *Men of the Speech of Tobacco*\(^{333}\). As I mentioned before, tobacco paste delivered to somebody in that category is a particularly unswayable summons to help in the building endeavours. They received the tobacco well, and responded properly. It proved to be that people were indeed willing to attend to Juan’s call for help.

\(^{333}\) Griffiths (1998:165) refers to this relationship as ‘ritual friend[ship]’. Cf. Riviere (2000), on Guianan Trio considering the participation of outsiders from other settlements necessary for
Despite the penchant for moral critiques of the Muinane, critiques from which Juan was not exempt, there was wide recognition of Juan’s knowledge and of the legitimacy of his intention to build a maloca. People claimed that Juan was a man of stable temper, a hard worker, and not one to shirk his duties. He was also recognised to be excellent at answering riddles, which proved his knowledge publicly. Furthermore, Roberto stated approvingly to other members of the community that whenever Juan had received tobacco from others to help build a maloca, he had responded well and provided materials in excess of what was required, so that the builders had not found themselves short of materials through his fault. Even tough Elena, always very critical of her brothers-and sisters-in-law, grudgingly recognised Juan’s excellence as a True Man and commented that he would probably differ from Pedro in that he would make proper use of his maloca to defend them all well and to teach his sons his knowledge.
Figure 5. Oliverio’s small two-pillar maloca is burned down after his death.

Tobacco seeds were to be planted in the ashes, and according to Juan, the tobacco paste the harvest produced would bear Oliverio’s Speeches.
14.1.3 The transformed constituents of the maloca

Briefly, the building of a maloca requires several great steps. One is finding and bringing the elements of the wooden structure. Then this structure has to be assembled into a skeleton of a house. After this, people have to go to the jungle and bring 50 or 60 large bundles of puy palm leaves, plus many segments of chonta palm. At home, the puy leaves must be woven onto chonta planks to make peinillas - “combs”-, and these are tied to the wooden structure to make the roofing. When this is finished, the main task is done and the maloca is ready; the insiders and the helpers can then prepare the maloca for the dance ritual that inaugurates it.

Each great task is supposed to be preceded by ritual dialogues between the owner and his Men of the Speech of Tobacco. While they speak they consume much tobacco paste, and constantly dip their fingers into a pot of llibiiiba -liquid tobacco paste- which the owner sets out. The dialogues consist on the Speeches of Apprising and the Speeches of Maloca Construction that relate to the task at hand. These Speeches usually focus on the origin of the materials, the way in which they were discovered or made by the first mythical maloca builder, and the troubles he faced and successfully and unsuccessfully dealt with. Each narration is followed by the performative transformation or proscription of all evils, both those which the maloca is intended to pre-empt, and those which might threaten the workers during the execution of the task. The truth (or agency) of these Speeches is constantly reiterated, by means of the statement that it is not people, but the infallible True Tobacco, who speaks them.
One important and widely encompassing Speech of Apprising tells of the origins of spurious, rejected *malocas*:

First, the Grandson of the Centre (whose name and even number differs between clans) tried the *malocas* of fish: holes in sunk trees, under riverbanks, and so on. He found them unsuitable, and rejected them as improper. Then he tried out and rejected the *malocas* of earth: the lairs of agoutis and acouchies\(^{334}\), and the mounds of termites. He also tried and rejected the *malocas* of birds, and then started to come closer to the proper human habitation. He made diverse huts of the kinds people make in their gardens, or when staying out in the jungle overnight. Then he made a small, two-pillar *maloca*. He started trying different roofing materials, trying each kind of "*puy*", noting their imperfections and then giving them names and rejecting them. Finally, he built a proper *maloca* with four pillars, and roofed it with properly woven *puy*. The owner of the future *maloca* must reject all the spurious *malocas* and *puys*, lest his *maloca* not become a proper house for human habitation. Almost needless to say, there are also stories and prescriptive counsels concerning the way in which *puy* is to be chosen, harvested, tied up and brought home.

\(^{334}\)Following the descriptions of Emmons (1990:11), it would seem that the animal the Muinane know as 'tintin' (Spanish) or 'jikimo' (Muinane) is known to zoologists as the 'green acouchy,' or *Myoprocta pratti*. 
The most important elements of the wooden structure, on the basis of the emphases which the Muinane make on them in their rhetoric, are the wooden pillars. In much rehearsed stories and anecdotes of experiences, these long, thick hardwood trunks are carried with great effort through the jungle; since childhood boys are supposed to be constantly told that they must become strong so that as men they can carry pillars for their fathers-in-law without faltering shamefully. An interesting aspect of the stories involved in this task is that the pillars undergo a process of domestication: when growing in the jungle, the trees of the species prescribed for pillars hide jaguars and claim to be powerful kehémi (leaders) with power greater than tobacco's. In a myth, the tobacco deity listened quietly when they said this, waited till they slept, and cut them. He then brought them into the maloca, that is, he made them a part of it. In doing so, the tobacco transformed into true kehémi with the predatory agency to guard the people who live in the maloca from outside evil. The Speeches of the owner and the interlocutor effect this very transformation every time a maloca is built.

Manuel once described to me how many years before, his older sister had received a pillar that was being carried into their father's maloca by a group of workers from another maloca. As they carried it in, she had sung that she would eat snake, and then wipe her hands on the pillar. Manuel explained that this had meant that the pillar was no longer the hiding place of evil, but the useful, domesticated and unthreatening support of the maloca.\footnote{According to Pineda, quoted in Espinosa (1995: 101), the pillars of Andoke malocas are understood to be four boas that care for the community. This converges with the Muinane view of the maloca as constituted by protective, predatory elements.}
Another potentially predatory element of the maloca was the rafter above the door. Juan once told me about a time when his father had held a dance ritual; a few nights before it, he held a dialogue in which he named the into a trap of the kind used to capture and kill large animals such as tapirs and jaguars. Any evil which stepped through the door would then trigger the trap, which would fall (invisibly) upon the miscreant, killing him.

The gathering of the puy leaves and the weaving of the roof are two important steps in the building of the maloca, and the ones that require the most workers. As with other symbolically charged actions, the puy collection is accompanied by Speeches which tell of the true and spurious puys of the world, and of the animals linked to them. The latter are rejected, as are the false puys. I accompanied Roberto’s sons to pick puy for Juan’s maloca, and often they would point out to me the different species that constituted false puys that had been proscribed in the myths.

A central aspect of the symbolism of the building is what I would gloss as the ‘substantialisation’ of diseases, undesirable affects and potential troubles, and their pre-emption by means of transforming them into elements of the maloca. In his Speeches, for example, the owner may ask, “Given that the pillar holds upon its back the weight of so much wood, and his back does not hurt, why should my people’s backs hurt? I place that backache upon the pillar, who does not suffer from it. Why should it make me suffer, make my family suffer, when it is already there?” This pre-emptive capability of the maloca can also be applied to novel threats, which can be made to become a harmless part of the building: Sergio told me that when there was a jail sentence pending for kin, a Speech can be used which will transform that jail
sentence into a knot of the kind that ties several rafters together. How then, he asked, can the person be jailed, if the problem has been transformed into a knot? And so on, different aspects and elements of the *maloca* either transubstantiate evil, pre-empt it or else guard against it predatoriily.\(^{336}\)

Another salutary aspect of a *maloca* is linked to what is claimed to be its womanlike structure, its womblike interior, its vagina-like door.\(^{337}\) These elements can be effectively noted in Speeches that are supposed to help women give birth. For example, Sergio once told me that one such invocation notes that the *maloca*'s door-cum-vagina is penetrated by numerous people in one long line at every dance ritual, and the same line leaves through the door. The initial entering line is often explicitly compared to a penis, which in the case of a new *maloca* 'deflowers' the door which has remained sealed till just prior to the ritual.\(^{338}\) Sergio reiterated this, and then to me that the line of dancers coming out the door in the final song of the dance ritual constitutes the 'birth of people' – in a sense, the dance dramatises the desired effect of the dance: the multiplication of people through reproduction. Sergio's point, however, and one he stressed explicitly, was that despite the numerous legs, arms, and dancing poles that go through that door and which could potentially snag, the door never hinders anybody's exit. People never get stuck at that point. He added that this fact was part of the birthing invocation, which demands, "Many people go out the door of the *maloca* together, in line (in

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\(^{336}\) Cf. van der Hammen (1992:140), on the purpose of the *maloca* among the Yukuna.

\(^{337}\) In my experience, Muinane and Uitoto malocas are all females. However, according to Horacio Caile as discussed by Griffiths (1998: 162), the Uitoto also have male malocas. For a discussion of female, male and androgynous houses in Amazonia, cf. Hugh-Jones, S. (1993) and (1995).

\(^{338}\) In fact, Antonio, who acted as an insider prior to Juan's *maloca*'s inaugurating ritual, carried out a prior deflowering, or preparation for deflowering. He took scissors and cut the
dances), carrying poles, and yet none get stuck. Why should my child be stuck?"

Another important aspect of the dance that Sergio mentioned in his description to me of Speeches to help a woman give birth was that people never came out backwards. They come into the maloca facing in one direction, but inside they turn around and come out face forward. The Speech would include the question and forceful description, 'Why then should the child come facing backwards? It will not; it is now turned around.' Again, such questions are understood to be parts of Speeches that make the will of the speakers come to have the named effect.

14.1.4 On the domestication of ritual elements

When objects from the jungle are transformed into important ritual elements, the process by means of which this is done is called a 'bringing into the house'; in other words and for most intents and purposes, a domestication. This is the case with the pillars of the maloca, which in being 'made to enter the maloca' (jáfevehi) are 'made to speak the Speech of Pain' (áivojisuhí), or 'transformed into headmen' (kehésuhí). Each of these expressions has its particular verb in the Muinane language. They all converge on the notion that the previous evil predatory agency of these beings is transformed into proper predatory agency which does not harm the inhabitants of the maloca, but rather defends them by capturing and killing extrinsic threats.

messy puy leaves that framed the door, making it a clean-cut square. He made a joke about giving 'her' -- the maloca -- a (presumably pubic) haircut.

The manguaré, the pair of large wooden drums sometimes found in maloca\textsuperscript{340}, is one important element that involves such a process of domestication. Some maloca owners possess the knowledge and the patrilineally transmitted privilege to make one. According to the Speeches of Apprising which they must deploy in order to make these drums, the first manguaré was originally a proud manguaré tree who loudly proclaimed its invulnerability and its superiority to tobacco. As with the pillars, it fell asleep and was cut by the tobacco deity, who transformed it into a pair of drums. In this fashion the manguaré was made into a kehéi—a great headman—, a proper guardian. Several mambeadores explained to me that ever since, manguarés watched over the people in the maloca while the owner guarded the door, and were responsible for the entire maloca when it was left alone\textsuperscript{341}.

The transformation process of a manguaré is difficult: it involves carefully hollowing out the large trunk using fire. This process is also a process of healing: the ‘fires’ that constitute anger and visceral pain are destined to the manguaré, whose innards are eaten out by fire without it suffering, but rather benefiting from the treatment in the sense that it acquires a voice. In consigning those fires into hollowing out a manguaré, the manguaré maker ensures that they do not burn inside his people any more.

The stories and Speeches which the Muinane describe as part of the tasks of making coca-processing instruments also portray these tasks as transformations of the undesirable. For example, the wooden cylinder used for powdering the coca is hollowed out with fire, like the manguaré. This fire is

\textsuperscript{340} However, a dream could easily be interpreted as a call for a man to make a manguaré, even if his lineage has not had one for several generations.

\textsuperscript{341} Cf. Urbina (in Espinosa 1995:119), on the manguaré.'
presented in the Speeches as a transformation of an anger which caused the mythical hero in question to become inarticulate. Once transformed into fire, the 'anger' in turn transformed a useless tree trunk into a tool for further transformations. The hero was thereby freed of his dumb anger, and was further empowered by the good mambe he could then produce.342

Manuel’s frequent autobiographical anecdotes provided me with an excellent example of a transformative domestication: that which resulted in the creation of his tooth necklace. He presented the events involved in this process as profoundly formative of his posterior characteristics and lifestyle. In these anecdotes he often reiterated that in the past he had been an angry man, always picking fights and drinking too much alcohol. 'I used to treat my wife like I would an animal,' he said, 'and one day my father called me to the mambeadero, and said to me, “You are an animal! Leave!” But I withstood his scolding, and stayed. He also said, ‘People will gape at you...and I will eat you.” I answered, “Since when are people to be eaten?” He made me stay awake for four nights, and on the fourth night he explained things well to me. He said “Because I love you I said these things to you...but it is not to you that I said this, but to the one who has you [that is, the animal or animals inside Manuel]...Someone else who did not love you would have let you continue thus, evil, until you met a real man who would kill you.” That night he showed me how things were. I saw a muscular man, big and strong, and I blew on

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342 There are different portrayals of the origin of these tools. See section 5.1.
343 There is a verb in Muinane that refers specifically to the act of gaping at dead game brought home by a hunter. I believe this relates to the reported past custom of Muinane hunters to place their game where people could see it, presumably so that they would know that the hunters’ or healers’ knowledge had ‘dawned’, and so that others could claim their part.
344 Manuel often insisted that sleep deprivation can make someone ‘see’ things in a manner
him and he disappeared. I saw many men, well painted, with tooth necklaces...scary people, but they disappeared too. Then I rested [healed].

Thereafter Manuel started killing off the animals who had caused him to be violent, angry, jealous and a drunkard, and whom he'd perceived as people when in trance. He collected their teeth or 'weapons' for a necklace: there were tapir molars, peccary tusks, anteater claws, a giant armadillo tail sheath, and some jaguar, puma and ocelot canines. Though he told me this many years afterwards, he claimed that he still had to kill an eagle, to put its claws in his necklace. He told me he said the following to his necklace: 'When you were animals you used to claim that you were fire, the sun, rocks and thunder...but not anymore. Now you are truly People of the Painful Speech, and kehêmi (powerful headmen and guardians). Beforehand you used to skulk in hiding...with me you now show yourselves to the people. These [Manuel's children and grandchildren] are now your grandchildren.'

Manuel explained that the spirit of each animal whose teeth he had added to his necklace had become domesticated. He explained to me that when a tooth comes from a male animal, it has to be named as a 'coca picker'; when it comes from a female, it has to be named as a 'plower'. They thus became moral agents who participate in Real People's moral predatory transformations. The teeth in his necklace had been evil "axes" when they were [parts of] animals, but in being killed and transformed into a similar to how key hallucinogens can provide the taker with a privileged, all-seeing perspective.

345 These are claims to strength, destructive power, invulnerability and immortality.
346 Again, that which is moral is manifest, transparent, clear and available to sight. That which is immoral is often obscure, dark and concealed from sight.
347 Plowing the ground for peanuts is one of the agricultural endeavours of women.
beautiful necklace, they had become predators who worked for Manuel, killing purveyors of disease and negative affects.

Manuel added, using the generalising present tense, that when there is some disease affecting kin or the community in general, 'one' sits with the necklace and addresses the disease: 'Here it is [the necklace]! Is it that you wish to accompany them [the teeth]? But beware! It is tiresome for them! They have to slash the forest, pick coca, and toast it!!' And in fact, on one occasion at Roberto's maloca there was a loud explosion in a bonfire, and it seemed to Manuel to signify some threat. He addressed the teeth in his necklace, as a form of threat indirectly addressed at some agent involved in the explosion: 'Look! There is one who wishes to join you in my necklace!'

As I mentioned before briefly, some people found Manuel's use of the necklace to be dangerous idolatry and sorcery. Juan and Pedro, whom Manuel addressed as classificatory brothers, claimed that Manuel would offer the necklace mambe and tobacco and get it to hunt game for him. The day would come, they claimed, when he would offer too little coca, and the necklace would kill him. Perhaps they were not persuaded that the necklace of teeth was something that could become truly domesticated.
Figure 6. Transformations of evil

A mambeador with a tooth necklace.

A manguaré
14.2 Dance rituals

14.2.1 Transformations of different evils

It is not my purpose here to make a detailed inventory of the kinds of dances which the Muinane hold, or of the minutiae of the protocols involved. What interests me here is the rhetoric which presents them as involving predatory transformations of evil agencies, and as intended to ensure the health, well-being and reproduction of Real People. The functional character of the dances is understood to depend on the agencies of substances linked to proper sociality.

Dance rituals are held in malocas, and usually it is the owner of the maloca who is said to hold the ritual. He is generally the “owner” of what they call a “dance career” (carrera de baile, in Spanish), that is, he has the hereditary privilege and duty and the necessary knowledge to hold a certain kind of dance ritual. Other brothers or members of his settlement may host Fruit Dance rituals in his maloca as well, if they have enough tobacco, coca and food. The different kinds of dance rituals have different mythic origins, and constitute transformations of different evils into life-giving, healing, enjoyable dance rituals in which people benefit from eating and drinking wholesome stuffs and from using ritual substances. For example, the very secret story of the Charapa Turtle dance ritual (Tiiire) claims it to have been created by mythical people to bring an end to the bloodletting between fish and people; the Fruit Dance or Guacuri Sucking Dance (Nimi geene), is supposed to deal

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with diarrhoea and stomach pains. The dance of War (Ámoka) transforms a war among people into a war against trees. Other dances are the dance of Rotten Manioc Leaf broth (Fíraba), the dance of Ending or of Masks, the dance of Treading (Kíkusu), and the dance of Yadiko, to mention a few; I did not hear straightforward stories explaining the origins of these dances, for most such stories are regarded as dangerous secrets. However, they all involve aggression against evil beings.

There are dances which disappeared with the deaths of many Muinane clans; among these, the dance of vahúsiiba, which Manuel told me was originally carried out to cool the axe when it got too hot from too much work. Manuel himself claimed that his lineage had the traditional privilege to carry out a ‘dance of Flutes’. This dance is no longer carried out, but his descriptions were very similar to the general picture of the yurupari rituals of the Northwest Amazon: they played sacred flutes which women were not allowed to see.350

Most of the Muinane’s dance rituals have their corresponding counterparts among the different peoples of the region. Thus, the Andoke, the Muinane and the Uitoto all have what is called in Spanish ‘baile de frutas’, the Fruit Dance ritual.351 They also have Charapa Turtle dance rituals and Yadiko dance rituals. This set of correspondences is explicitly noted and often discussed in mambeaderos in the Middle Caquetá. Because of this correspondence, the Muinane establish relationships of Men of the Speech of

351 Among the different People of the Centre, and indeed in the Northwest Amazon, dance rituals seem to have similar explicit purposes: to deal with conflict or problematic social relations and ensure health and fertility. Cf. Espinosa (1995: 86, 218-231), Griffiths (1988: 156-179) and van der Hammen (1992: 252).
Tobacco with the Andoke and the Uitoto, and have done so for at least a couple of generations: Juan remembers that his oldest brother, who died young, once took him on a trip to the Andoke, bearing an imogaibi for their father’s Andoke Man of the Speech of Tobacco. Juan claimed he was very little at the time. It could have happened around 1955. However, neither Pedro nor Juan established such relationships with the Andoke, however.

14.2.2 Juan’s dance ritual

14.2.2.1 Treading the maloca

Once his maloca was built, Juan had to hold what is called a ‘maloca treading’ (pisada de maloca, in Spanish, or Kiikusu, in Muinane), the necessary first ritual to be held in a new maloca. The treading is the flattening and hardening of the uneven ground inside the new maloca, by means of having many dancers stomping on it all night long; this stomping is performatively represented as the destruction of worms and other evils in the ‘womb’ of the maloca, and its preparation so that it can properly reproduce people\textsuperscript{352}. According to different mambeadores, this should be done with a Fruit Dance ritual to which specific Treading songs are added. In fact, Juan and Pedro had scolded Antonio for his ignorance just a few months before when he had tried to have his maloca inaugurated or trod with a dance of War. It was indeed Antonio’s privilege to hold dances of War, but such a dance was not fitting for a maloca-treading ritual. However, when Juan sent out the imogaibi to invite the dancers, he demanded that they bring him Fiiraba

\textsuperscript{352} Pregnancy and fertility are focal matters in many Amazonian rituals. Cf. for instance, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996:24).
(Rotten Manioc Leaf Broth) dance songs. The rare Fiiraba dance ritual is supposed to be held by an elder for his firstborn son's firstborn, so Juan's dance ritual was simultaneously a “treading” and a public presentation of the names of Juan's firstborn son's son, and his lastborn son's daughter. Juan claimed that it was permissible to have his maloca trod with that kind of dance, though some people found it a break with 'the Muinane path' and claimed that Juan was under undue Uitoto-Minika influence from his wife.

14.2.2.2 Tobacco's prey

The Fiiraba and Ámoka dance rituals, among others, require that the dancers or guests bring gifts of game with them for the hosts, either on the day of the dance ritual or during the week or so prior to it. This is one important element of the salutary function of these rituals for the Muinane, because the hunting involved is a transformation of evil agents. When Juan prepared the imogaibi to invite people to his dance, his conjurations over the tobacco paste demanded that the tobacco make all envies, all anger, all disease fall as game.

In general, the Speeches for preparing tobacco on such occasions emphasise its predatory nature. For example, old Francisco once pointed out a little yellow bird to me. ‘Look. It stands on its perch...looks around...and flies and catches its prey close by. It does not need to go far, to catch its prey!’ Indeed, the little bird did not fly more than a few meters from its perch before snapping up some insect and returning to its branch. The old man continued,
'That is why he is named in the conjuration to prepare tobacco\textsuperscript{353} for dances...So that the people who hunt game to bring to the dance will not have to hunt far afield...they will just sit in their \textit{mambeadero}, and look around, and next day they will kill nearby, in the garden or on the path.'

Preparations for dance rituals also involve the concoction of \textit{llib\={i}niba}, a more liquid form of tobacco paste. At Juan's dance ritual the \textit{llib\={i}niba} was prepared and set out a few days before the actual dance ritual began, when all the helpers were already at the \textit{maloca} and people were working intensely in readiness for the arrival of the guests. Juan held a long dialogue with his older brother Pedro, in a Speech which he later described to me as "arming" the \textit{llib\={i}niba}. He named it as a tiger trap, as bullets and shrapnel\textsuperscript{354}, as axes, as hunting tobacco, as eagles, boas and jaguars of tobacco. Once this was done, the \textit{llib\={i}niba} was supposed to become such things to any agent of evil. Any "breath" of improper anger, any disease, any sorcerer coming into the \textit{maloca} to bother people would immediately spring the trap of the liquid tobacco, be shot by it, captured by it, cut by it, and so on\textsuperscript{355}.

For several nights before Juan's dance our nightly \textit{mambe} sessions or our sleep were interrupted by the far-off singing of people bringing game. One night we heard the deep voice of Ruben, Juan's Uitoto Man of the Speech of Tobacco, who also happened to be his sister's son, singing a game-bringing song as he approached the port in a canoe. It was midnight, and though the

\textsuperscript{353} The Uitoto-Nipóde name this kind of tobacco 'hunting dog tobacco' or 'tiger tobacco', so that it preys on animals through the groups of men who go hunting and fishing (Griffiths 1998: 169).

\textsuperscript{354} Contact with the mafia bosses in the 70s and 80s, and with national and guerrilla armies, have ensured that most of the Muinane know about automatic guns and grenades. They have had access to shotguns for several generations.

\textsuperscript{355} cf. Griffiths (1998: 142) on tobacco named as 'shotgun', 'whip', 'trap' and 'fire', for
mambeadores had not gone to sleep yet, the women had. One of Juan’s sons roused the women angrily, “Women! Wake up! You were told already that there is not enough caguana! Somebody comes, bringing game!” Juan’s wife and daughters-in-law left their hammocks and started bustling in preparation for the coming of bringers of game, while other women revived fires or fetched water; Leonor and Juan had often repeated that it would be shameful to make a comer wait excessively to receive his payment in foodstuffs, or not to have caguana ready for any visitors at that point in the preparation of the ritual.

Ruben entered the maloca with a collared peccary slung over his back, and singing in Uitoto, “The tobacco is crying from hunger...the tobacco is hungry for meat...”Juan excitedly interspersed commentaries in Muinane, “It was he [the liibiìniba] who caught it...he caught it!” and pointed at the liibiìniba. One of Juan’s sons leaped up to take the animal from the singer, and the entire maloca cheered ‘Jiiiiiiii!’ The comers –Ruben had been accompanied by two other men who brought gifts of fish- were directed to the caguana pot to drink, and then invited to sit with us in the mambeadero. Those of us present gave the comers mambe and tobacco paste, and they offered us their own. Ruben and Juan spoke casually for a few minutes about how and where the peccary had been caught. Meanwhile, the women prepared baskets with manioc bread, peanuts, plantains, kiigai and so on, and Juan prepared a satchel with an almost fist-size ball of tobacco paste, and some coca, to pay Ruben and his companions for the game they had brought. Holding a brief formal dialogue with Ruben concerning the kill, Juan said with satisfaction,

predatory and defensive purposes.

'The collared peccary [the word for which in Muinane is fáfaiba, which can be understood roughly to mean 'bitter fruit'] “embitters” [fáfaikutino] no more.'

Elsewhere I had heard that when a man’s guests bring plenty of meat, others know that he is knowledgeable and carries out his rituals properly. When during the days previous to the dance ritual several people brought game, people made different comments to the effect that tobacco was carrying out the task of transforming evil into nourishment.

14.2.2.3 The carrier cloth

Another transformation that makes part of some dance rituals is that of the carrier cloth. People who bring gifts of game often wrap the carcasses up in strips of carrier cloth. This manner of treating game is understood to be a reversion to animals of their own filthy, itchy, pathogenic but invisible carriers, which cause people muscular pains and some diseases. The tobacco reverts those carriers to animals by turning them into game; in killing the animal and wrapping them in a carrier, people are freed from the animal’s carrier, and heal. This transformation is particularly conspicuous and important in the Fíiraba dance, which in fact is also known in Spanish as baile de carguero 'dance of the Carrier cloth'. It is also known as baile de bautizo -the dance of Baptism. For this kind of dance, the Men of the Speech of Tobacco are charged with bringing carrier cloths in which the host’s children will be wrapped and carried in order to be named publicly. The carrier for the dance of Carrier cloth is different from the ordinary bark used for game, however. It is

357 For a discussion of effective hunting prior to a dance ritual as proof of the knowledge of the dance owner among the Uitoto, cf. Echeverri (1997:197).
made from a long strip of inner bark of a special carguero (carrier cloth) tree. The process of making it is painful, for the bark is tough to remove from the tree, and it has substances which eat through skin like an abrasive acid. This bark is beaten, washed, dried and singed at the cost of much effort, pain and skin, and thereby transformed into a soft, beautiful white strip of cloth. This strip is then carefully painted and “named” to protect the child around which it is wrapped. This process is yet another example of the Muinane’s domestication of inhuman evil: out in the jungle, the carrier was itchy and bad; through the agency of tobacco, fire, water and proper human work, it is turned into an object of beauty and protection.

Roberto, Juan’s Man of the Speech of Tobacco, charged his son Napoleon with the making of the carrier cloth for Juan’s grandson. On the day of the dance, Napoleon entered Juan’s maloca on his own, singing the appropriate song for the bearer of the cloth. Some mothers tried ineffectively to keep their children from looking upon the carrier cloth, for both the song Napoleon sang and the counsels of Fagóji warned against young children’s viewing it. The counsels in question warned that the consequence of a young child viewing the carrier is that his or her parents may die while he or she is still young. I could not explore the reasons for this, unfortunately, but it is commonplace in Muinane stories that there are different kinds of objects that should not be seen at certain moments. In any case, most of the children were fascinated by the colourful cloth, and most parents did not seem to feel threatened by the warnings. Ruben also brought a carrier cloth, and similarly entered the maloca singing a Uitoto version of the carrier cloth song.
After the entrance of the carrier cloths, the women mobbed Juan's grandson and grand-daughter and covered the terrified children in a sticky sap and then 'feathered' them with anthill cotton, a treatment which was meant to protect them from skin diseases and other troubles. Then two young unmarried women from Juan's patriline—in fact, there was only one available, so one of Juan's sister's daughters was drafted to accompany Herminia, Juan's brother's daughter—wrapped each child in one of the beautiful carrier cloths, and led a long line of dancers around the inside of the maloca. In the song they sang led by Napoleon, they repeated the children's newly endowed patrilineal names. In this fashion, Juan ensured that 'the public' and the deities knew who the children were.

14.2.2.4 Riddles, danger and fun

Fúraba and Fruit Dance rituals involve riddles, which the Men of the Speech of Tobacco and other guests sing to the owner of the ritual or to his insiders and helpers. Riddles often stem from myths which involve the origins of diseases that animals bring. As such, they are supposed to teach people about disease healing; if answered, they constitute both powerful attacks against any evil beings therein named, and warnings to evil agents that they will certainly die if they attack that maloca, because the owner knows their stories of origin.

On those occasions in which I witnessed riddles, these were sung by one of the Men of the Speech of Tobacco or other older male guest, along with some other men from his settlement who acted as a chorus for him when they made their first entrance into a host maloca. Usually the main riddler
carried a package which was supposed to hold the fruit or game piece about which the riddle asked. The songs made obscure references to what the object might be, what it looked like, what happened to it as it grew or rotted. For instance, one riddle I was told about spoke about young eaglets; it turned out that it was a song about guacuri fruit, which if allowed to rot on the ground grow a soft fluffy white fungus that looks not unlike the down of very young eagle chicks.

The riddlers usually came in using the rhythmic dance step, singing loudly and sometimes fanning the air in front of them with bunched tamíllu leaves, to fan away evil and remove animal traps. They went around the maloca stomping, but slowed down next to the mambeadero -now displaced to one side of the door, during the dance ritual- to fan more vigorously and to address the song more obviously to the dance owner or to one of his insiders sitting there. A youth or a woman from the host maloca would quickly receive whatever packages they carried, and would head to the back of the maloca, perhaps to explore their contents and 'cheat' as to the nature of the gift, in order to help the older men answer the riddle.

Then came a charming moment in most of the dances: the riddlers would stop singing, and the owner of the maloca and one, two or more of his insiders and helpers would stand up and go to them. They would stand in front of each other by pairs, one host to one guest, and would start an ornate, singsong dialogue. The hosts would ask the riddlers for clues, or would make questioning remarks concerning the object asked about. The riddlers would give cryptic answers, or tell the hosts that their questioning was not leading them anywhere. Throughout, they would be moving in very idiosyncratic ways.
Juan moved his head and arms in a very memorable fashion, well known to the anthropologists who attended dances in which he participated; some men—Oliverio among them—moved their torsos up and down and sideways punctuating their dialogues, so that together, two men holding a riddle dialogue looked like some avian courtship ritual. At Juan’s dance ritual Eusebio, a Uitoto elder, was truly magnificent in his drama: he sang his riddle and then, facing Juan, assumed an eager, childlike attitude, making faces of pleasure and encouragement towards the host as the latter suggested possible answers. Then, when Juan answered something that came close to the riddle’s answer, Eusebio would take little steps towards the host, as if unable to contain himself and keep the answer cryptic for a little longer. He would say, ‘You know! You know what it is! Say it!’ His riddle was challenging but not excessively difficult, and Juan told me afterwards that he too had liked the pleasant way in which Eusebio had presented his riddle.

Riddles can be great fun, but they can also be dangerous and humiliating. A man who is angry at a dance ritual host can make up a very difficult riddle and keep him guessing for hours. Ultimately, the host can be made to appear ignorant and incompetent, with the undesirable consequence that the legitimacy of his holding a dance ritual at all may be publicly questioned. In one case a Nonuya elder, angry about some previous slight from one of the helpers—not the owner— at a Muinane dance, asked the helper the same riddle for four hours. Apparently the event became a little contest between the two, a parenthesis in the ritual which continued around them, but the riddler simply would not let the matter go. At midnight he told the other one, ‘I was asking you about the Charapa turtle, and you could not find
the answer. You know very little. You are not a True Man, so do not play with us grown-ups.' Fortunately for the dance owner, the riddler was very explicitly addressing the riddle to the helper and not to him.

Manuel said that in the past, dance rituals were very dangerous; if invited, people did not know whether they would be cannibalised or killed. The riddles were particularly dangerous: they lasted for an entire day, and if not answered, constituted curses that would eventually kill the host of the ritual. Manuel claimed that his own father had died that way: he refused to answer in Uitoto tongue the question a Uitoto elder sang to him. It referred to the origin of the pillars of the maloca, and a disease linked to pillars killed him. Manuel said that he himself was widely feared for the difficulty of his riddles, but that to avoid being accused of sorcery or causing harm, he always gave away the right answer if the hosts looked like they could not guess.

The fear of difficult riddles is reflected in many counsels and prescriptions that warn against misbehaving around others or mistreating them, lest someday one hold a dance ritual and those others bring difficult riddles concerning that behaviour or slight. The mambeadores and the older women presented the dances to the younger people as a time when people had to be at their best behaviour, and avoiding at all costs any action that would make them suspects of any troublemaking whatsoever. Juan, for instance, told me that his father demanded that he stay next to him at dances, for fear that some other youth might sexually harass any girl at the dance, and Juan be blamed.

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The difficulty of the riddles and their potential for harm are often cited as another reason for the need of support among kinsmen. If a man cannot answer a riddle, perhaps a brother or a classificatory brother would happen to have heard it before, or to have heard some myth from an elder which might constitute an important clue to guessing the answer. Juan was particularly brilliant at this, and I once witnessed how he saved Antonio from great embarrassment. Antonio was holding a Fruit Dance ritual, and one old Muinane brought him a tough riddle. None of Antonio’s sons or sons-in-law stood up to face other riddlers when Antonio stood up to hold a riddling dialogue with the old man. Antonio failed to answer correctly twice, and twice the riddlers renewed their singing, reiterating the clues. Finally Juan, who had been sitting quietly in the mambeadero supposedly waiting for Antonio’s sons to participate, decided that he would have to enter the riddling. He paired off with one of the riddlers, who gave him clues in Uitoto while Juan moved his head and hands sinuously and answered and cajoled the other with singsong Muinane questions. Finally, with a rather magnificent gesture of outflung arms and uptilted head, Juan yelled, ‘Déhe!’ (Chilli plant!). This was indeed what the riddlers had been asking about, and they cheered him with the typical ‘Jiiiiiiii!’ After the dance ritual, different people commented about how shameful it was for Antonio’s sons that they did not stand up to help their father. Manuel even said to one of Antonio’s sons-in-law, who had been sitting in the mambeadero as an insider, that if Manuel’s own son-in-law ever failed to help him with riddles like Antonio’s son-in-law had, he would take his daughter back and leave the young man without a wife.
Not all, or even most, guests bring riddles to the dances. Most men and women just bring gifts of game or fruit packed in carrier cloths or strips of bark. Some also bring canes with grubs tied to them with string, or with store-bought goods such as biscuits and soap. At Juan’s dance, as in others I attended, some of the women would make their first entrance into the maloca singly, carrying a gift hanging from their forehead with a carrier cloth and playing rhythmically on a flute. One of the men would immediately fall into step next to the woman in question, with a hand on her shoulder to slow her stomping, running dance around the maloca. He would try to take the gift from her and to give her tobacco in payment, while she would struggle to keep dancing and ignore his proffering of tobacco. The point, perhaps, was to get him to proffer more tobacco. Finally, she would stop, receive the tobacco, and relinquish the gift.

These struggles can be hilariously funny. One of the women, for instance, skipped vigorously into the maloca playing loudly. She traipsed around in a circle close to the pillars of the maloca, and then made her way to Pedro in the mambeadero. She leaned her torso towards him vigorously and repeatedly, blowing her flute in rhythm with her movements. Pedro started to fake a series of high-toned screams of orgasmic pleasure, meanwhile leaning back on his seat with his legs open and kicking in the air, like a caricature of a woman having sex. The comic effect was that the woman was ravishing him with the flute. Everybody in the maloca was laughing uncontrollably at their antics. Finally Pedro stood up, danced with her around

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Women cannot sit in the mambeadero, but they can approach it and pass by it.
the maloca with exaggerated, clumsy stomping, and finally took her gift. One of the youths gave her an initial payment of a ball of tobacco paste.

When men make their entrance bearing gifts, they are accosted by the host women who fall into dancing stride with them and hang on to their shoulders, trying to make them stop and drink the sweet manioc juice they offer them. Sometimes insider men stand in front of them, demanding that the guest receive tobacco. Sometimes there is a struggle as the man tries to continue skipping around the inside of the maloca, until finally he accepts the proffered juice and the tobacco paste and allows the hosts to unburden him of his gift.

14.2.2.5 Game and payment

It is not my purpose here to delve in depth into the details of ritual exchanges. It is important, however, to note briefly that there is an explicit exchange going on at dance rituals. Guests bring different stuffs, depending on the kind of dance ritual, and receive in return manioc bread, peanuts, chili paste, tobacco and coca, and in Fruit Dances, a portion of some cooked game. The guests brought game to Juan’s dance: peccaries, collared peccaries, deer, armadillos, agoutis, many kinds of fish and some wild fowl. Some were smoked, others raw, and a few of the birds were even alive. Some people also brought fruit, if they had not been able to find game. Their gifts were all placed together on a large ledge at the side of the maloca. After the ‘entrance’—the first part of the dance ritual, where the Men of the Speech of Tobacco came in with their carrier cloths and riddles, and everybody else came in with their gifts—several of the insiders and helpers ‘paid’ everybody.
They would lift up a gift and demand, 'Whose is this?' The bringer would come forward, and the insiders would give him or her tobacco, manioc bread, peanuts and so on, roughly in accordance with the 'value' of the gift. Greater game received better payment360.

Again, Juan had counselled everybody during the previous days to be very careful with the payment. He stressed that somebody who did not receive payment could well leave the dance ritual incensed, and cause troubles afterwards. The same was true for the payment for the insiders and helpers. After all the guests had been paid for their gifts, Juan and Leonor redistributed the gifts of game among Juan's brothers and among the helpers. Elena reminded me then of Pedro's dance ritual some months before, when guests had failed to bring much game. The helpers had therefore received very little in return for their hard work, and had been somewhat peeved at this. (On helpers, see section 8.2).

14.2.2.6 The songs

Ernesto once told me that when counsels and normal criticism do not make a person change their misbehaviour, others wait for the opportune moment in a dance ritual and sing them a critical song. If that does not make the person aware, and change their ways, nothing will. Indeed, in dance rituals many songs constitute critiques of the behaviour of the owner of the ritual, his spouse, his brothers, his children, their wives, their in-laws. The different songs tend to focus on similar matters: meanness in distributing food or

reciprocating the gifts and game brought by the guests; lack of status or
knowledge which would make the dance ritual legitimate; violations of
orthodoxy; anger; laziness, etc. One striking song I heard a Nonuya sing
called Ernesto a ‘meat eater’; a translator explained that the singer was
thereby asking the owner whether he had invited people to dance in order to
eat them. I found this to be a commentary on the Ernesto’s despotism and
widely discussed bad temper. Some songs Sergio told me about question the
right of the owner to hold such a dance, some by stating that he is away from
his true land of origin, others by questioning the appropriateness of the
maloca.

Carmen told me that people should take critical songs addressed to
them well, and "strike back" by means of giving the singer manioc bread,
tobacco, peanuts and other stuffs. She laughed recounting the story of the
time somebody had sung to a dance owner’s wife that her legs were tubular,
like a gaahi fish (sp.?), rather than bulging and tapering beautifully. The
criticised woman had cried, instead of retaliating for the attacks with manioc
bread and chillies. Carmen also relished telling me about how Leonor had
once become quiet and morose when a nephew had sung to her at a previous
dance ritual that she was a braggart who spoke much about her family, yet
none of her brothers ever helped in the preparation of her husband’s rituals.

Another occasion for critical songs are the lisúji (Speech of Making
people drink) sessions. Juan held one the night prior to his dance ritual. The
men of the insiders and helpers, with the exception of Juan and his children,
sang critical songs to Juan, to each other or to their wives, as they offered
them gourdfuls of caguana. By means of these songs people can accuse each other of numerous misbehaviours and flaws: of being ugly, miserly, gossip mongering, loudmouthed and arrogant with little to show for their Speeches. The people found most songs funny, since they were just old songs they had heard before and which carried little impact. Some songs, however, were carefully thought out and carried more precise critiques. Sergio’s children, for example, accused Pedro of hogging land which was not his alone to hog, but rather belonged to all the descendants of Pedro’s, Juan’s and Sergio’s father. On that occasion I sang two critical songs to Pedro and Juan, protesting on the one hand that they made too much fun of me, and on the other that they spoke to their children in a language that was not their own –i.e., Spanish -. Sergio composed these for me, and though they were actual critiques, they were light-hearted and well received.

As I mentioned above (section 10.3.3), criticism that is not addressed to the party being criticised can affect the latter’s health or that of his or her family. The critical songs are explicitly considered to be a way for people to express their critical evaluations of the hosts, and for the hosts to know what is said about them, without anybody becoming sick because of it.

Not all songs are critical, however. Many relate to Speeches of Apprising pertaining to the particular dance ritual, naming the evil beings that were rejected or transformed. Others make allusions to fruit and their processes of planting, growing, falling off the tree or maturing, rotting and so on. Still others ‘name’ the dance owner and his family, calling upon them with

some cryptic reference to give the singer tobacco. These ‘naming’ songs are usually well paid for.

The singing protocols are complex, involving turn-taking between the different groups of guests that arrive at the maloca. There is also an order to the kinds of songs to be sung, although in my experience this ideal organisation is often broken. For instance, the songs relating to demons (mehimi) should be sung together at a certain time, the songs about the tree rats at another time, the songs about coatis at yet another time, and so on. The members of the communities of Villa Azul and Peña Roja seemed to be more orthodox about this issue, and I remember some men commenting that some of the youths had sung certain songs too early on in the dance ritual, breaking with the proper order. I did not explore this general issue in much depth, however.

At Juan’s dance, as in others I attended, the kinds of songs changed when the singers decided dawn was approaching; or rather, when they decided it was time to sing the ‘making the day dawn’ songs. The dance steps changed as well: the dancers lined up one behind the other — rather than the usual side-by-side alignment of most dance choreographies— and made their way out the door, without quite allowing the entire line to exit the maloca. Finally, at dawn, the entire line left the maloca and circled the outside of the maloca. Like a baby leaving the womb successfully at the end of a pregnancy — a metaphor that is quite explicit— the line of dancers came out the door of the maloca. All that was left was for the Men of the Speech of Tobacco and Juan to hold their ritual-finalising dialogue, and for people to go home.
14.2.2.7 ‘It is good already!’

Dance rituals are understood to be a dangerous time, in which there is a risk of shame and eventually of health troubles, but also to be an opportunity for great fun. The threats of disease and of discontent, and their transformation into desirable substances and gaiety, are part of what makes dances such great salutary events. In dances, healing knowledge is transmitted, diseases and antisocial thoughts are transformed, bad ‘airs’ are swept away with tamiillu. The critical comments that might harm people if spoken where they cannot hear them are also made public, so that the addressees can deal with them properly. Furthermore, people drink much caguana, which makes them fertile; they drink manicuera, which cools and sweetens their hearts; they lick tobacco, which cools them and provides them with moral thoughts/emotions and agency; and the men mambe. The potential for bad social relations, unhealthy bodies and general improductivity is turned into pleasurable, convivial, joyful activity. The fun and pleasure is privileged in the name given to the Speeches to be used in preparation for dances and in the dances themselves: imohiiji, the Tasty or Pleasurable Speech.

At the end of the dance ritual, after the dancers have made the day dawn and the maloca has spewed forth its numerous children, the dance ritual owner must hold a final dialogue with each of his Men of the Speech of Tobacco. These final dialogues are usually brief and standardised. They

362 According to Griffiths, ‘the Uitoto assert that it is the purifying spiritual essence of tobacco and manioc drinks consumed during the ritual that instills human and social thoughts in the minds of the people present.’ (Griffiths 1998: 173, my italics).
comment briefly on how good the dance was, and note that every trouble has been dealt with. Host and Man of the Speech of Tobacco reiterate that they will all be healthy now. Then the Man of the Speech of Tobacco says, *Medéikikuhi, menéjékukuhi, mahádukuhi, mamásivakuhi. Mubuékuji!* *Íimikuno!* "We have mambed, we have licked, we have drunk, we have sung already. We will be healthy now! It is good already! (We are finished already!)." Ruben and Juan, and then Roberto and Juan, held such dialogues. They found nothing to have gone wrong with the ritual, and were well pleased with the results.

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VI. By way of conclusion: a note on responsibility

To conclude, I shall write a few brief words about responsibility. A discussion of this issue can bring together much of what I have written above, redress some lacks in that material, and address an interesting aspect of the debate I presented in the introduction. I choose to privilege this matter because it is something about which people have often commented when I have told them stories about my experiences in the field. I am especially thinking about a Colombian lawyer and a Dutch anthropologist. They both found that responsibility or personal accountability was practically non-existent among the Muinane, because the blame for all misbehaviour, all antisocial thoughts and emotions, all damaging agency, could be deferred, perhaps via irresponsible parents who did not provide counsels or shape children properly, to misanthropic animals and their substances.

I would not agree with such an oversimplification. I find rather that accountability is a matter the Muinane negotiate all the time, and that in such negotiations they debate understandings of sociality, selfhood and agency, sometimes with arguments that converge with ours in academia. Napoleon’s was a case in point. When reproached for his scandalous adultery and his angry threats of violence, he protested that he could not be blamed for his behaviour. It was all his father’s fault, he claimed, because as a youth Roberto had carelessly consumed uncooled white men’s substances such as marihuana and aguardiente\(^\text{365}\). The juice of those substances had become semen, along with the juice of coca and tobacco. Out of such seminal juices Roberto had then gone and made Napoleon. Those hot substances had come
to constitute Napoleon, and made him misbehave. How could they blame him, he asked, if it had not been he who had made himself out of those substances? Presumably, Roberto could have deferred his own guilt, claiming that it had been some evil agent who had made him drink aguardiente and smoke false tobaccos.

Napoleon's rejection of his own guilt was not dissimilar to a durkheimian account, in the sense that he posited extrinsic impositions and constraints upon himself as an individual, so that his awareness and behaviour were limited to what this extrinsic 'immoral (animalistic-) cultural package' endowed him with. The same deferral was sometimes true for virtue: people on occasion claimed humbly that it was not they who had achieved desirable purposes, but the tobacco inside them with the deity's Speeches. In other words, the Muinane on occasion actively interpreted and redeployed public discourses on selfhood to present people as durkheimian 'dopes' (divine or animalistic, if not cultural), reminiscent of golems that are strictly constrained to behave according to scripts placed inside their heads by outside agencies.466

However, the discourses in question were also used to clearly indicate that there was an individual human locale of accountability for virtuous or flawed action. People could still deem the origin of some behaviour to be a divine or animalistic substance, but at least temporarily, this material subjectivity, the basket of knowledge it settled into and the body through which

365 A very strong alcoholic drink made out of sugarcane.
366 Cf. Pratchett (199-) for a funny, provoking portrayal of golems.
it became manifest congealed into a locatable Real Person, an accountable self, who was deserving of praise or needful of chastisement or healing.

The Muinane can bypass our Western polarity between, on one hand, an all-imposing society which thoroughly subjects the individual and on the other hand, a fully autonomous individual in charge of his own destiny. The Western legal problem of whether it is the individual or the social milieu that shaped him or her who is to be blamed for social injury does not apply for the Muinane, because the relationship between them is conceived differently. The Muinane posit an extrinsic material source of moral subjectivity, a pre-established morality, consigned in the ritual substances, foodstuffs and individual bodies of the collectivity. People must fashion these substances and subjectivities –intersubjectivities, since people share them into new individuals through intentional, collaborative ritual and educational actions. Once constituted, each individual has his or her own substances; these are like the substances of others, but are separate; individuals are therefore also autonomous.

Ultimately attributing blame or merit to the extrinsic sources of the effects does not translate into the ‘impunity’ which my lawyer and anthropologist above found disquieting, or into any lack of commendation for the virtuous individual. In dealing with miscreants, the Muinane ‘embitter’ the subject, (where it is not always clear whether the furious mambeador berating the miscreant is addressing the Real Person or the false Speeches inside him), and then carry out rituals that transform the Speeches, and rid the person of their immoral subjectivity. (I would note that the immorality is thereby reified, reviewed and exposed; and therefore made liable to re-
creations and change.) When dealing with virtue, they address the extrinsic source but do not fail to note that it worked through the individual because he or she was a good receptacle or vehicle for it.

A final note: I would claim that much of the sense which the Muinane make of everyday life 'fits' within the scheme I present here. However, I have not invested much in trying to convey some of the splittings inside their world; the contestations not only within the scheme, but of the scheme itself. These are there, clearly. On occasion, for instance, people's rhetoric seems not to make any reference at all to the understandings of the Muinane self as I have interpreted them, but rather to contest that view or bypass it altogether. Sergio's son, for instance, spoke of his father's bad temper not as a manifestation of animalistic influence, but rather simply as 'a vice,' which apparently he understood as a flaw in an essentialised self. I will address those in further publications.
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Appendix I: Brief notes on a history of the Muinane and the Middle Caquetá

In this appendix I will very briefly point out some of the historical topics which travellers, historians and anthropologists that have studied the Middle Caquetá or Amazon region deemed most pertinent. Since this is not intended to be a thorough historical account, I will also point out the bibliography that can be visited for further information.

One important topic of discussion is that of trade relations among the native indigenous groups prior to contact, and the strong impact of Western goods and new exchange relations on quotidian activities, intra- and interethnic relations, and native symbolic constructs. For many Amazonian peoples the dependence on white men's goods started centuries back; for the Muinane, probably in the early or mid 1800's. For the Muinane, as for other native groups, axes and other metal tools in particular quickly became fundamental symbols of abundance and multiplication. Other desired goods were mirrors, glass beads, machetes, knives, clothes, guns, ammunitions, combs, scissors, matches, fishhooks, cooking pots, needles, aguardiente, salt and cigarettes. These were exchanged for native wax, rubber, and some native produce.

Another topic of attention is the great demographic loss that resulted from slaving violence and epidemics. Much of the history of contact of the region is rather grim in this sense. For instance, in the 17th and 18th centuries there were great slaving networks exploiting the Gran Caquetá (which included what I call the Caquetá-Putumayo region) and the Colombian Llanos Orientales, seeking labour for Dutch, French and English colonies in the Guianas. Lusobrasilian slave traders sought slaves in the Amazon and Rio Negro for the production of cotton, tobacco, coffee, rice, sugar cane, beans, cacao and other stuffs. There are records of slaving expeditions in the Cahuinari river (in the headwaters of which the Muinane used to live at the time) in the late 19th century. In many cases, native indigenous groups would turn upon others, and even upon their own people, to obtain slaves to be exchanged for merchandise.

Contact also brought lethal epidemics. According to Pineda Camacho, more than 40,000 people died in the epidemic of smallpox that swept the Amazon river basin between 1743 y 1749 (en Domínguez y Gómez 1994: 141). Quinine and rubber tappers and traders transported other international pathogens later on, such as cholera. During the rubber boom, frequent contact with foreign blacks and whites, malnutrition and bodily punishments led to the acquisition and propagation of epidemics of smallpox, flu and measles. Other foreign epidemics were the flu, syphilis, herpes, leishmaniasis, tuberculosis, malaria, and others.

Another period of tragic demographic loss in the history of the region was the rubber boom. European demand for rubber supplies boomed at the
end of the 19th century, with the appearance of car tires (cf. Gómez et al 1995: 54) Most of the rubber came from Amazonia, though rubber tree seeds were taken to Malaysia early in the 20th century. The region the Muinane shared with the Bora, Miraña, Andoque, Nonuya, Ocaina and Uitoto was taken over by the Peruvian rubber-tapping company Casa Arana, which later became the English ‘Peruvian Amazon Company’ (cf. Domínguez y Gómez 1994: 58). Its headquarters were in La Chorrera (see map). Between 1904 and the early 1930’s the Casa Arana’s employees forced entire communities to migrate to rubber tapping camps as far as Peru, pitted groups against each other, and tortured, maimed and murdered thousands, in its efforts to make rubber tapping profitable. The rubber tapping business became much less profitable after 1914, with the entrance into the world market of rubber produced in British and Dutch colonies in Ceylon and India. However, smaller booms kept lower key rubber tapping going on in the 20’s, and then during and after WWII, until the 60’s369.

The Casa Arana itself tapped rubber in the region until the Colombo-Peruvian war of 1932. The people of the region still speak of themselves sometimes as ‘orphans of the Casa Arana.’ Ironically –considering the rubber tappers’ atrocities- the Colombian government agreed to pay the Casa Arana US$200.000 for their rights in the Putumayo, sum which the Caja Agraria finished paying in 1964.

The war between Colombia and Peru ended through diplomatic endeavours in 1934. By then, however, numerous soldiers had been sent to the Amazon. There was governmental interest in populating the region, to have national presence near the frontiers, to avoid foreign encroachments. There was governmental investment in improving travelling conditions in the region. For instance, in 1938 the roads between Araracuara and Puerto Arturo and between Pto Mosco and Angosturas were finished, making travel down the Caquetá river more viable. Some Muinane, working for Colombian rubber-tapping companies contracted for the job, participated in the works.

In 1939 the Colombian government established a penal colony in Araracuara. Its zone of influence extended far beyond Araracuara, however. It was created there on the basis of the perception of Amazonia as uninhabited, unused, unhealthy but vast and very rich lands (Useche 1994. p. 46). Relations between the native indigenous people and the Colony intensified in time. It started as exchanges of game meat and cultigens for machetes, axes, rope, clothes, alcoholic drinks, cigarrettes and other stuffs, but then natives started to do domestic work for Colony employees, to man their boats, to build canoes. Finally, some became guardians (ibid.: 158).

However, close interaction with guardians and prisoners led to problems which put at risk the property, the marriages and the very health and lives of the local people.

In 1971 the Penal Colony was closed because of its high costs, the impediments it set for true colonisation, and for its poor security conditions (Ibid:33).

In the 1970’s the coca boom hit the Amazon. Natives started to increase the production of their traditional coca plantations for a demanding market that paid well for it. There was a wealth of merchandise in the region, but prices skyrocketed as well. Many of the inhabitants of the Middle Caquetá participated in this process of production of coca paste for cocaine. As with other booms, such as those of feline furs during that and previous decades, the commerce brought changes into the livelihood activities and the relations within native social groups.

Missionisation and education were linked in the region. Most of the adults alive today in the Middle Caquetá spent some years in the missionary boarding schools of La Chorrera, Araracuara or Pedrera. Many of the Muinane remember the school in La Chorrera – founded in the 1930’s – where they stayed while they coured primary school. Memories regarding this are varied. Some stress that they were forced to speak Spanish and forbidden to speak their own tongue, at the risk of physical punishment. Others remember good treatment in the hands of teachers but much suffering in having to learn a foreign tongue. Others have ambivalent memories concerning the constant interaction with children of other ethnic groups such as the Bora and the Uitoto. Most of the children’s homes were far distant from the boarding schools – several days walk, in some cases – so the time they spent with their families was minimal.

In the 1960’s, protestant churches added their own missionising efforts to those of the Catholic church in indigenous territories. James Walton, a missionary and linguist of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, lived for approximately 10 years among the Muinane of La Sabana. He learned to speak their tongue fluently, and even today his Bible translations, teaching booklets and religious hymns – written in the alphabet he designed for the Muinane - can be found in some Muinane households.

Few of the Muinane alive today were alive during the time of the rubber boom. A few I spoke do did remember events of the time. The survivors had striking stories of escapes into the jungle, facing great difficulties to leave behind the rubber chiefs and their ‘boys’ – natives adopted by the chiefs and in charge of hunting down and sometimes killing fugitives. A few more remember a period of reaggregation in the 40’s and 50’s around La Sabana del Cahuinarí, their ‘traditional territory’. Most of them abandoned La Sabana during the following few decades to move to the Caquetá river, to escape frictions among themselves, to seek kin that had already moved to the Caquetá, and to be closer to the Penal Colony, a source of highly valued merchandise.

The Penal Colony’s buildings and lands were inherited by the Corporación Araracuara. It was in charge of carrying out research on agriculture, environment, fish and other matters. It became the main employer in the region, the main client for forest products and services, and the provider of petrol, beef, milk and other goods (cf. Useche 1994. pp. 175, 176). It was closed down in the mid-1990’s, and replaced by the SINCHI, another governmental environmental research institution. There were other employers and sources of money, merchandise and petrol, however: several fish merchants started a commercial business based in Araracuara and Pto. Santander in the mid 1970’s as well: they too provided merchandise, petrol and money in exchange for fish. The native communities around Araracuara

In 1988 the native peoples of the Caquetá-Putumayo won the legal case against the Caja Agraria, and were given the ‘resguardo Predio Putumayo’—that is, much of the land between the Caquetá and Putumayo river became a reserve, supposedly under their own political control. In 1991 the new constitution of Colombia further recognised indigenous rights and privileges. Many communities were recognised as such and started to receive minimal money allotments (‘transferencias’) from the government, to be invested in improving on housing, educational facilities and other causes. Several communities in the region have used their allotments to establish primary schools for their own children, with limited success in some cases, and failure in others. These endeavours continued when I left Chukiki in December of 1998.


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370 Resolución No. 030 del 23 (888) o 6 de abril, INCORA
Appendix II - The Muinane language – Generalities and Spelling conventions

The Muinane language has been classified as one of three languages constituting the Bora linguistic family, along with Bora and Miraña. Other so-called ‘People of the Center’ (neighbours of the Muinane who share similar ritual practices) speak Witotoan languages (several Uitoto dialects, Ocaina and Nonuya) or Andoque (a linguistic isolate). On these languages and classifications, cf. Echeverri (1997: 315-320), Patiño Roselli (1987), Vengoechea (1995, 1996), Walton (1975), Landaburu (1976), Montes Rodríguez (1996:86).

There are approximately 70 speakers of Muinane alive today. Many of these are polyglots who also speak Spanish and one or more neighbouring languages such as Uitoto, Bora, Miraña and Andoque.

Conventions for the spelling of Muinane words

The alphabet I use for the Muinane language is a rough working tool, based on the SIL’s linguistic research (Walton et al, 1997), conversations with the linguist Consuelo Vengoechea, and my own limited linguistic work. I could not make use of Vengoechea’s more sophisticated phonological work on this occasion; therefore I write differently the different phones of what she finds to be single phonemes.

Vowels

Phonetic Alphabet CONVENTION

| [a]  | a   |
| [e]  | e   |
| [i]  | i   |
| [u]  | u   |
| [a:] | aa  |
| [e:] | ee  |
| [i:] | ii  |
| [u:] | uu  |

Diphthongs

| [aɪ] | ai  |
| [eɪ] | ei  |

Muinane has two phonological tones: high and low. Low tones are sometimes descendant. High tones will be presented with a tilde, thus:
á, é, í, ó, ú, ì, áá, éé, íí, óó, úú, ìí;

Consonants

[b]  b (as in ‘bull’)
[β]  v (no English equivalent)
[ʃ]  sh (as in ‘show’)
[p]  [tch]  ch (as in the English ‘child’)
[d]  d (as in ‘dog’)
[d̪]  dy (palatalised ‘d’; no English equivalent)
[ ]  f (no English equivalent – similar to blowing a candle out gently.)
[g]  g (as in ‘go’)
[h]  j (as in ‘happy’)
[k]  k (as in ‘cat’)
[m]  m (as in ‘milk’)
[n]  n (as in ‘nose’)
[n̩]  ñ (as in Spanish ‘niño’)
[p]  p (as in ‘pop’, without the aspiration)
[s]  s (as in ‘sap’)
[t]  t (as in ‘tone’, without the aspiration)
[t̠]  ty (palatalised ‘t’, no English equivalent)
[ʔ]  (glotal stop)  h (no English equivalent)
[?]  ll (as in ‘adjacent’)
[y]  y (as in ‘Yiddish’, sometimes tending towards a very light [j].)  

Muinane also has a phoneme made up of a very brief postalveolar occlusive followed by sonorous retroflexed apical tap, the closest approximation of which is the Spanish ‘tr’, as in ‘truco’. (Vengoechea (1996: 559) describes it rather as an instantaneous sonorous predorsal consonant.)

One exceptional sound is to be found in the word which I write as ‘bêêcha’ (‘darling brother’, coming from a female Ego). The ‘ch’ there is somewhere between an English ‘sh’ (as in ‘bush’) and a German ‘ch’ (as in ‘Ich’).

Vengoechea claims that the syllabic structure of Muinane is CV. Many syllables that appear to be merely a vowel would have a phonological glotal stop (1996:557). I mark this on most occasions with an ‘h,’ but abstain from marking it altogether in some cases.
Appendix III. Social Organization, Kinship and Censa
Kinship terminology for male Ego
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Genealogical specifications</th>
<th>Term of reference</th>
<th>Vocative term</th>
<th>Spanish terms used, and <em>English</em> equivalent of the Spanish term</th>
<th>Ego’s referential and <em>vocative</em> terms for spouses of kin &amp; <em>Spanish</em> and <em>English</em> translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G+2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FF, FFB, MF, MFB (and other men in their generation)</td>
<td>Taádiyi</td>
<td>Tyáádi</td>
<td>Abuelo, abuelito Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>FM, FMZ, MM, MMZ (and other women in their generation)</td>
<td>Taágoyi</td>
<td>Tyáágo</td>
<td>Abuela, abuelita Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Kaani (reference to another's father)</td>
<td>Gií, Gií</td>
<td>Papá Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Seeji (reference to another's mother)</td>
<td>Gaá, Gaá</td>
<td>Mamá Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G+1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FB, FFBS (and theoretically, any male-linked men in the father's generation)</td>
<td>-koomoobo</td>
<td>Takoomoobo</td>
<td>Tío Uncle</td>
<td>Séejidoogo*, gáádoogo or gádahogo (or 1) &amp; Tía; Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>FZ, FFBD, MZ</td>
<td>-koomogo</td>
<td>Takoomogo</td>
<td>Tía Aunt</td>
<td>Kaaniyoobo, giíyoobo &amp; Tío, Uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Seejigaifiibo</td>
<td>Gáágaifiibo</td>
<td>Tío Uncle</td>
<td>Séejidoogo, gáádoogo or gádahogo (or 1) &amp; Tía or maderastra, Aunt or stepmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>B&gt; (older than Ego)</td>
<td>-ámiaabo, gaafiibo</td>
<td>Tahámiyaabo</td>
<td>(Propio) hermano, hermano mayor (True) brother, older brother ('true' as opposed to classificatory siblings)</td>
<td>Ityaniíguo, búje &amp; Cuñada, Sister-in-law**</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B&lt; (younger than Ego)</td>
<td>-giíhoobo, gaafiibo</td>
<td>Taglíhoobo</td>
<td>(Propio) hermano, hermano menor (True) brother, younger brother</td>
<td>Ityaniíguo, búje &amp; Cuñada, Sister-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Z&gt; (older than Ego)</td>
<td>-ámiyago</td>
<td>Tahámiyago, ŋüba*</td>
<td>(Propia) hermana, hermana mayor (True) sister, older sister</td>
<td>Ityaniibo, baadu &amp; Cuñado, Brother-in-law**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Z&lt; (younger than Ego)</td>
<td>-giíhogo</td>
<td>Taglíhogo, ŋüba</td>
<td>(Propia) hermana, hermana menor (True) sister, younger sister</td>
<td>Ityaniibo, baadu &amp; Cuñado, Brother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>FBD, FFBSS (and theoretically, any male-linked man in Ego's generation)</td>
<td>-naabo</td>
<td>Tañaabo</td>
<td>Hermano o primo Brother or cousin</td>
<td>Ityaniíguo, búje &amp; Cuñada, Sister-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>FBD, FZD, FFBSD, FFBD(?), MBD, MZD</td>
<td>-nago</td>
<td>Tañago, ŋüba</td>
<td>Hermana o prima Sister or cousin</td>
<td>Ityaniibo, baadu &amp; Cuñado, Brother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>FZS, FFBDS, MBS, MZS (and any female-linked kinsman or un-linked man in (male) Ego's generation</td>
<td>Fáñi Women do not seem to use this term...they would use tanaabo or endearing terms...</td>
<td>Fáñi</td>
<td>Hermano o primo Brother or cousin</td>
<td>Ityaniíguo, búje &amp; Cuñada, Sister-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Aachi</td>
<td>Gií, giíhi</td>
<td>Hijo, papi Son, little father</td>
<td>Táhiyaja &amp; Nuera, Daughter-in-law</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Àikigai</td>
<td>Gáá, gáha</td>
<td>Hija, mamita</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter, little</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>mother</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Àija &amp; Yerno, Son-in-law**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>BS, FBSS, FFBSSS (and theoretically any male-linked man in Ego's children's generation, except S)</td>
<td>Tasiibakajeebe (or: Tasiibakijeebe; or: Taiiibakijeebe</td>
<td>Tasiibakajeebe</td>
<td>Sobrino</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nephew</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Àija &amp; Yerno, Daughter-in-law**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>BD, FBSD, FFBSSD (and theoretically any male-linked woman in Ego's children's generation.)</td>
<td>Tasiibakajege</td>
<td>Tasiibakajege</td>
<td>Sobrina</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Niece</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Àija &amp; Yerno, Son-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>ZS, FBDS, FFBDS, FZSS, FZDS, MBSS, MBDS, MZSS, MZDS</td>
<td>Boobo</td>
<td>Taboobo</td>
<td>Sobrino</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Táhiyaja &amp; Nuera, Daughter-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>ZD, FBDD, FFBDD, FZSD, FZDD, MBDD, MBDD, MZSD, MZDD</td>
<td>Boogo</td>
<td>Taboogo</td>
<td>Sobrina</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Niece</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Àija &amp; Yerno, Son-in-law</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>G-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sons of 15-20</td>
<td>Iyachi</td>
<td>Gii, giihi</td>
<td>Nieto</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandson</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Táhiyaja &amp; Nuera, Daughter-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Daughters of 15-20</td>
<td>Áháikigai</td>
<td>Gáá, gáha</td>
<td>Nieta</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Granddaughter</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Àija &amp; Yerno, Son-in-law</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on Kinship

-Kinship terminology for a male Ego (among the People of the Pineapple, of the Grub and of the Manguaré)

-Anybody known with terms 1-22 is not eligible for marriage with Ego.
- Agnatic lines constitute patrilines; patrilines with common totemic ancestry constitute exogamic clans. Clans can be argued to have very similar or closely linked totems, in native explanations as to why they no longer intermarry.
-*Men can call sisters, classificatory sisters, daughters and grand-daughters ‘nība,’ a very affectionate term. Women can address men so related to them as ‘beecha’ (where the ‘ch’ sounds like the german ‘ch’ in ‘Ich’).

-Kinship terminology for female Ego:

-The kinship terminology for a female Ego is basically the same; however, they do not use ‘fānī’ (14) for for sons of siblings of either parent. They address all such cousins ‘tañaabo’, ‘brother.’
-None of the women I interviewed distinguished between ZS and BS, or between ZD and BD, calling the males ‘taboobo’ (19) and the females ‘taboogo’ (20). Some of the women from other clans might, however. Note that the People of the Cumare nut’s terminology for male Ego (below), and the general female Ego terminology are very similar.

Notes on affinity

-)(*)The terms gādoogo and gīyoobo are also sometimes translated into Spanish as ‘stepmother’ (madrastra) and ‘stepfather’ (padrastro), respectively. Reciprocal terms (how Ego addresses HZD, HBD, WBD, WZD and HZS, HBS, WBS, WZS) are respectively ‘ákidooogo’ and ‘áchiyoobo’
-)(**)The brothers, sisters and parents of any of those I have called ‘brother-in-law’, ‘sister-in-law’, ‘son-in-law’ and ‘daughter-in-law’ are collectively known as ‘nijūito’ (and addressed as ‘nijūibo’ for individual men, nijūigo for individual women). Ego’s spouse’s parents, however are not ‘nijūito’.

-The reference term for W is ‘taaba’; for husband it is ‘tāajje. WF, WFB, WFZ, WM, WMB, WMZ, HF, HFB, HFZ, HM, HMB, HMZ are all addressed as ‘baabo’. In other words, Ego’s actual spouse’s parents and siblings of the parents, regardless of gender, are ‘baabo’. WB and HB are are both ‘brothers-in-law’ (see table, for how Ego addresses ZH. WZ and HZ are both ‘sisters-in-law’ (see table, for how Ego addresses WZ).

-The terms for spouse’s sibling’s spouses vary. They can be addresed as ‘brother-in-law’ or ‘sister-in-law’ (according to gender), or if other kinship classifications apply, those can be used insteadl: “brother’, for instance. There are two other possible terms for a man’s wife’s sister’s husband (according to informants from different clans): ‘kīibo and dojihoobo (or dojiibo). (According to a Nonuya elder, the term dojiibo applies to a man who has illicit sex with Ego’s wife.)

Criteria for the classification of kin (Chukiki)

1. Gender (male or female), except for people classified as ‘baabo’ – ‘father-in-law’ or ‘mother-in-law’.
2. Relative age among the group of siblings.
3. Line (agnatic or cognatic) (MB ≠ FB; BS ≠ ZS)
4. Gender of the linking kinsperson, in the paternal line. (A distinction between cross-cousins and parallel cousins is only in effect on the paternal side).
5. Generation, except among among spouse-giving ‘nijūito’, where generations G and G+1 receive the same terms.
6. Ego’s spouse’s parents are distinguished from other affines.
Kinship terminology among the People of the Cumare nut and among Muinane-speaking Nonuya

The terms are basically the same as among the other clans, with the following exceptions:

- Instead of (7) for MB, they use (5) (elsewhere reserved for FB). This is an uncertain datum.
- Instead of (17) and (18), they use (19) and (20), and thus do not distinguish terminologically between male-linked and female-linked sibling’s children. Some of them find that the use of terms (17) and (18) among the clans of Chukiki is due to Uitoto influence.
- I never heard the term (14) among them, but instead they use (12) and (13). This is an uncertain datum.

Notes on residence and social organisation

The Muinane’s social organisation, like that of the Uitoto to whom they are intimately linked and with whom they regularly intermarry, is based on clans and lineages, where identity within them is reckoned through male line. Note that kinship terminology (for male Egos) reflects this: MB ≠ FB = FFBS; ZS = FBDS = MBS = MZS ≠ FBSS = BS, distinguishing between exclusively male-linked kin and others.

The Muinane can name some 20 Muinane clans, of which only 5 survived the rubber boom:

- the People of the Cumare nut (2 lineages),
- the People of Women (1 lineage),
- the People of the Grub (two lineages, one of which is nearly completely Uitoto-ised),
- the People of the Pineapple (one lineage) and
- the People of the Manguare (two lineages)².

Griffiths 1998: 268-271

The men of the People of the Cumare Nut live the community of Villa Azul, downriver from Araracuara, except for one brother who lives in Pto. Santander. One set of siblings of the People of the Pineapple live across the river from their classificatory brother (FBS) and father of yet another set of siblings of that lineage and clan, in the community of Chukiki. One lineage of People of the Grub – the children of two brothers- live upriver from the People of the Pineapple, and in close proximity to a man of the People of the Manguare. The other siblings of the latter live in Araracuara but understand their brother’s maloca to be their ultimate home. The settlements of these three clans constitute the community of Chukiki. They claim that these three clans are ‘brothers’ among themselves, and therefore cannot marry among themselves. Another lineage of People of the Manguare live in the multiethnic community of Araracuara. One lineage of People of Women live in Monocha, a Uitoto community the settlements of which are interspersed with those of Chukiki. Another lineage of the People of the Grub lives in the community of Guaymaraya; they, like the lineage of People of the Women, have become Uitoto-ised: they speak and sing in Uitoto rather than in Muinane. One family of a lineage of the People of the Woman live in La Sabana.

Given their limited numbers, their clanic exogamy and the prescriptions to ‘marry far’ (in their terms, ‘one should pick one’s gourd [i.e. wife] among peoples other than one’s own’), most of the Muinane men are married to non-Muinane women. Most of the settlements and communities in the region are therefore in fact multiethnic, consisting of the men of a patriline, their parents and unmarried sisters, and their in-marrying wives from diverse ethnic backgrounds: Nonuya, Andoque, Uitoto-Minika, Uitoto-Nipóde, Bora, and Miraña, as well as some very few others from more distant ethnic groups (Desana, Tukano, Yukuna and Cubeo). The Uitoto are the largest group in the region, however.

There are Muinane women to be found in most of the Andoque, Uitoto and Nonuya communities, as well as in the Bora, Miraña and even Yukuna ones downriver.

Many Muinane have left the region altogether, and there are some to be found in Bogotá, Florecencia, Leticia, Villavicencio, Puerto Asis, Puerto Leguízamo and other large urban centres.

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¹ (Cf. Londono Sulkin 1995: section 3.4.4.5.1)
² Griffiths (1998:271) mentions another Muinane clan called ‘People of the Tucan’. I do not have data on them.
Censas

Muinane community of Chukiki census, by clans:
Pineapple: 22 men + 10 spouses
Grub: 19 + 5 spouses
Manguaré: 9 + 3 spouses
Cumare: 5 + 2 spouses

Total Muinane living in Chukiki: 55
Total number of in-marrying women: 19 – 14 Uitoto, 2 Tukano, 2 Muinane, 1 mestiza

Muinane community of Villa Azul
People of the Cumare: 16 + 4 spouses
Spouses: 4 – 1 Bora, 1 Cubeo, 1 Andoque, 1 mestiza
Total Muinane in Villa Azul: 16

Other Muinane living in the Uitoto, Nonuya and interethnic communities of Araracuara, Pto. Santander, Monochoa and Peña Roja (regardless of gender and clan): 36+ (including several completely Uitoto-ised Muinane)

Approximate total of Muinane in the Middle Caquetá: 110+ (This number excludes a few women married into the Andoque community of Aduche, the Muinane in La Sabana, and those who live outside the region.)

Approximate total of speakers of the Muinane language (including Muinane-speaking Uitoto, Bora, Nonuya and Andoque, but not emmigrated Muinane or those in La Sabana): 70

Total intermarriages with Uitotos: 26
Nonuya/Muinane intermarriages: 2
Inter-Muinane marriages: 3
Other spouses: Andoque, Miraña, Cubeo, Tukano, mestizo, Matapi, Bora

Figure 8. A map of the region.

Key Communities
1 Muinane community of Villa Azul
2 Nonuya community of Peña Roja
3 Andoke community of Aduche
4 Puerto Santander
5 Interethnic community of Araracuara
6 and 7 Interspersed settlements of the Muinane community of Chukiki and Uitoto community of Monochoa
8 La Sabana
9 La Chorrera
10 Bora and Miraña communities
11 Yukuna community of Puerto Cordoba
12 La Pedrera
13 Other Uitoto communities
Glossary

(Muinane terms will be italicised in the glossary and in the monograph; Spanish terms will be italicised in the monograph, but not in the glossary.)

**aguardiente**: ‘firewater’, a strong alcoholic drink made out of sugar cane.

**ambil**: tobacco paste

**ambil de monte**: a hallucinogenic bark resin

*Bááñojiibo*: (pl. *Bááñojito*) Man of the Speech of Tobacco, a man who acts as another’s principal interlocutor for great rituals.

**caguana**: manioc starch drink

**chundú**: a sorcerous concoction, meant to induce love from a desired person, or else to kill an enemy.

**comadre**: a term of reference or address for a person’s child’s godmother, or reciprocally, for a godson’s or god-daughter’s mother.

**compadre**: a term of reference or address for a person’s child’s godfather, or reciprocally, for a godson’s or god-daughter’s father.

**embitter**: English translation for the Muinane term ‘fáfainihi’. In Spanish this is referred to as ‘reclamar.’ These are aggressive questions or invectives addressed at somebody, ultimately to claim that the other person should not have said or done whatever he/she did, for such doings had shown themselves to be ‘empty,’ or uncalled for, or beyond the competence of the miscreant.

**Fagóji**: the Speech of Advice, a large body of counsels with prescriptions and prohibitions concerning body care, marriage rules, alimentary diets, protocols and numerous other aspects of everyday life. They are usually formulaic, and often include explicit descriptions of the dangers of non-compliance with them.

**First Time**: the time of creation of the world and of the beings in it. I use this term loosely in this monograph; the Muinane have further splittings.

**hiijahooto**: see jähemina.

**imogaibi**: a dollop of tobacco wrapped in puy palmleaves, delivered as a summons or invitation to a large ritual.

**jähemina**: a deictic term for the inhabitants of a maloca.

**jiikávo**: helpers of the maloca owners at a dance ritual.

**kehémi**: (singular ‘kehéjí’) great leaders.

**Man of the Speech of Tobacco**: see *Bááñojiibo*.

**maloca**: (Spanish term) traditional indigenous multifamily house.

**mambe**: a green powder made out of the toasted and pounded leaves of the coca plant and the ashes of yarumo leaves, for ritual oral consumption among Muinane men.

**mambeadero**: the ritual coca circle, where men consume mambe.

**mambeador**: a man who consumes mambe.

**mambear**: to consume mambe.

**manicuera**: sweet manioc, and the detoxified juice made out of it.

**manguaré**: the large pair of wooden drums hung in a structure inside the maloca, and used for long distance communications and ritual purposes.

**másiminaha**: literally, ‘singing people,’ in Muinane. The term refers to the guests at a dance ritual. In Spanish they are known as los invitados.
**minga**: This is a term used in peasant and indigenous communities in much of Colombia, to refer to a work party.

**roza**: a first step in the felling of a section of jungle, whereby vines, grasses, small saplings and so on are cut down mostly with machetes, prior to the felling itself, in which axes are used against larger trunks.

**yagé**: a strong hallucinogenic drink, made out of the yagé vine (Banosteriopsis sp.)

**yarumo**: Cecropia, a very common lowland tree genus.