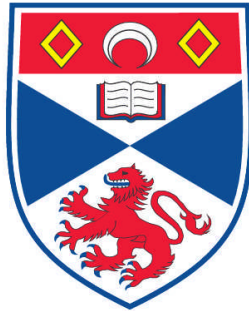


**KAMETSA ASAIKI:
THE PURSUIT OF THE 'GOOD LIFE' IN AN ASHANINKA VILLAGE
(PERUVIAN AMAZONIA)**

Juan Pablo Sarmiento Barletti

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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KAMETSA ASAIKI

THE PURSUIT OF THE 'GOOD LIFE' IN AN ASHANINKA
VILLAGE (PERUVIAN AMAZONIA)



JUAN PABLO SARMIENTO BARLETTI

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND
AMERINDIAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

2011

1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Juan Pablo Sarmiento Barletti, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2007 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in Social Anthropology and Amerindian Studies in September 2007; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2007 and 2011.

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For my *abuelito* Juan Barletti Valencia and my *compadre* Julián Miranda Casanto who taught me how to live well in their very own ways.

COVER: 'KAMETSA ASAIKI' BY NOÉ SILVA.

"Kametsa asaiki [the good life] is like this painting cousin... a man and his wife living happily, with beautiful faces... but there is always someone in the back, waiting, jealous of their happiness."

ABSTRACT



This thesis is an ethnographic study of the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* ('the good life') in an Ashaninka village by the Bajo Urubamba River (Peruvian Amazonia). My study centres on Ashaninka social organization in a context made difficult by the wake of the Peruvian Internal War, the activities of extractive industries, and a series of despotic decrees that have been passed by the Peruvian government. This is all framed by a change in their social organization from living in small, separated family-based settlements to one of living in villages.

This shift presents them with great problems when internal conflicts arise. Whilst in the past settlements would have fissioned in order to avoid conflict, today there are two related groups of reasons that lead them to want to live in centralised communities. The first is their great desire for their children to go to school and the importance they place on long-term cash-crops. The second is the encroachment of the Peruvian State and private companies on their territory and lives which forces them to stay together in order to resist and protect their territory and way of life.

I suggest that this change in organisation changes the rules of the game of sociality. Contemporary Ashaninka life is centred on the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*, a philosophy of life they believe to have inherited from their ancestors that teaches emotional restraint and the sharing of food in order to create the right type of Ashaninka person. Yet, at present it also has new factors they believe allow them to become 'civilised': school education, new forms of leadership and conflict resolution, money, new forms of conflict resolution, intercultural health, and a strong political federation to defend their right to pursue *kametsa asaiki*.

My thesis is an anthropological analysis of the 'audacious innovations' they have developed to retake the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* in the aftermath of the war. I show that this ethos of living is not solely a communal project of conviviality but it has become a symbol of resistance in their fight for the right to have rights in Peru.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This thesis, the fieldwork that it is based on, and the years of studying that preceded it, would not have been possible without the encouragement, trust, optimism, and much love that my parents, Lourdes Barletti and Diómedes Sarmiento, gave me throughout my years of anthropological training, even if they originally sent me to St Andrews to become an economist. I also thank my grandmother Lucila Tejada and my late grandfather Juan Barletti who instilled in me a great love for my country and trust in my ability to do whatever I proposed for myself if I really gave it my all. To them, and to my sister Paola, my aunts, uncles, and cousins, ¡*gracias!*

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parents in trying to get to know the confused, curious, and clumsy outsider in my first days in their villages. Parts of this thesis would not have been possible without the kindness of the Ashaninka people of the Ene River, especially Ruth Buendía and her sister Rosa Buendía. To all of them, *pasonki maroni noshanika!*

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And to the many I forgot that have helped along the way, thank you, *gracias*, and *pasonki*.

GLOSSARY



ACHARINEITE ('LOS ANTIGUOS, LOS ABUELOS')

'OUR ANCESTORS', 'OUR GRANDPARENTS', 'THE ANCIENTS'.

ASAMBLEA COMUNAL

'COMMUNAL ASSEMBLY' IN WHICH ISSUES AFFECTING THE *COMUNIDAD* ARE DISCUSSED.

AUTORIDAD

'AUTHORITY' IN A *COMUNIDAD NATIVA* ELECTED EVERY TWO YEARS. INCLUDES THE *JEFE/A* ('HEADMAN/WOMAN') *VICE-JEFE/A* ('VICE-HEADMAN/WOMAN'), AND *PRESIDENTE DEL COMITE DE AUTODEFENSA* ('PRESIDENT OF THE SELF-DEFENCE COMMITTEE').

AYOMPARI

TRADING PARTNER IN A NETWORK THAT COVERED THE WHOLE OF ASHANINKA TERRITORY. ALSO TRANSLATED AS 'FRIEND'.

CHORI ('SERRANO')

'ANDEAN'.

COMUNERO

'COMMUNITY MEMBER'. INHABITANTS OF A *COMUNIDAD* OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE.

COMUNIDAD NATIVA

'NATIVE COMMUNITY'. LEGAL NAME FOR TITLED INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES GRANTED BY THE PERUVIAN STATE.

CUSHMA

TRADITIONAL ASHANINKA LONG COTTON TUNIC WORN BY MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

KAMAARI ('DIABLO')

'DEMON'.

FAENA

GENDERED 'COMMUNAL WORK' PLANNED BY THE AUTHORITIES OF A *COMUNIDAD*.

KAMETSA ASAIKI

'GOOD LIFE'.

KIRINKO ('GRINGO')

'WHITE FOREIGNER'.

LICENCIADOS

MEN THAT HAVE COMPLETED TWO YEARS OF MILITARY SERVICE.

MANDO

SENDERO LUMINOSO LOCAL LEADER.

MINGA

'WORK PARTY' HELD BY ASHANINKA FAMILIES WHO INVITE MEN TO WORK IN THEIR GARDEN IN EXCHANGE FOR FUTURE PARTICIPATION IN THEIR *MINGA*.

OVAYERI (PL. OVAYERIITE)

'WARRIOR'. USED DURING THE WAR AS A TRANSLATION FOR *RONDERO*.

PATRON

'BOSS'. TIMBER CAMP OR *HACIENDA* OWNERS THAT HIRE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FOR MANUAL LABOUR. NOW USUALLY *MESTIZOS* BUT WERE MOSTLY WHITE UNTIL THE 1980S.

PINKATSARI/O (JEFE/A)

'HEADMAN/WOMAN'.

RONDERO

MEMBER OF THE *RONDA NATIVA*, THE INDIGENOUS SELF-DEFENCE MILITIA DURING THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR.

SANCION

'SANCTION'. RITUAL PUNISHMENT OF RE-SOCIALISATION.

SENDERO LUMINOSO

'SHINING PATH'. MAOIST GUERRILLA THAT STARTED THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR.

SENDEROS

'SHINING PATH *CADRES*'.

SHERIPIARI

'SHAMAN', 'HE WHO SUCKS TOBACCO'.

WIRAKOCHA

'WHITE PERUVIAN'.

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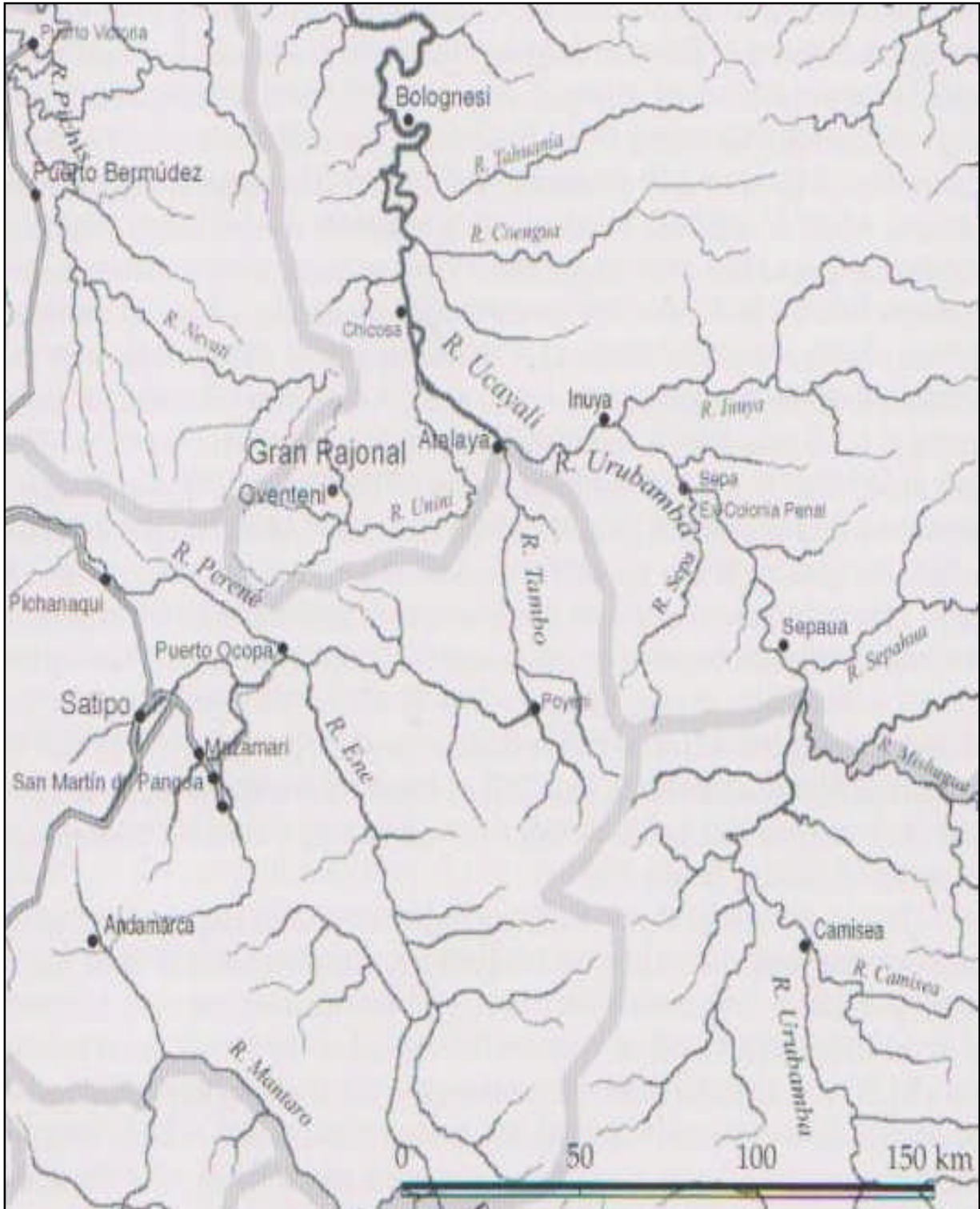
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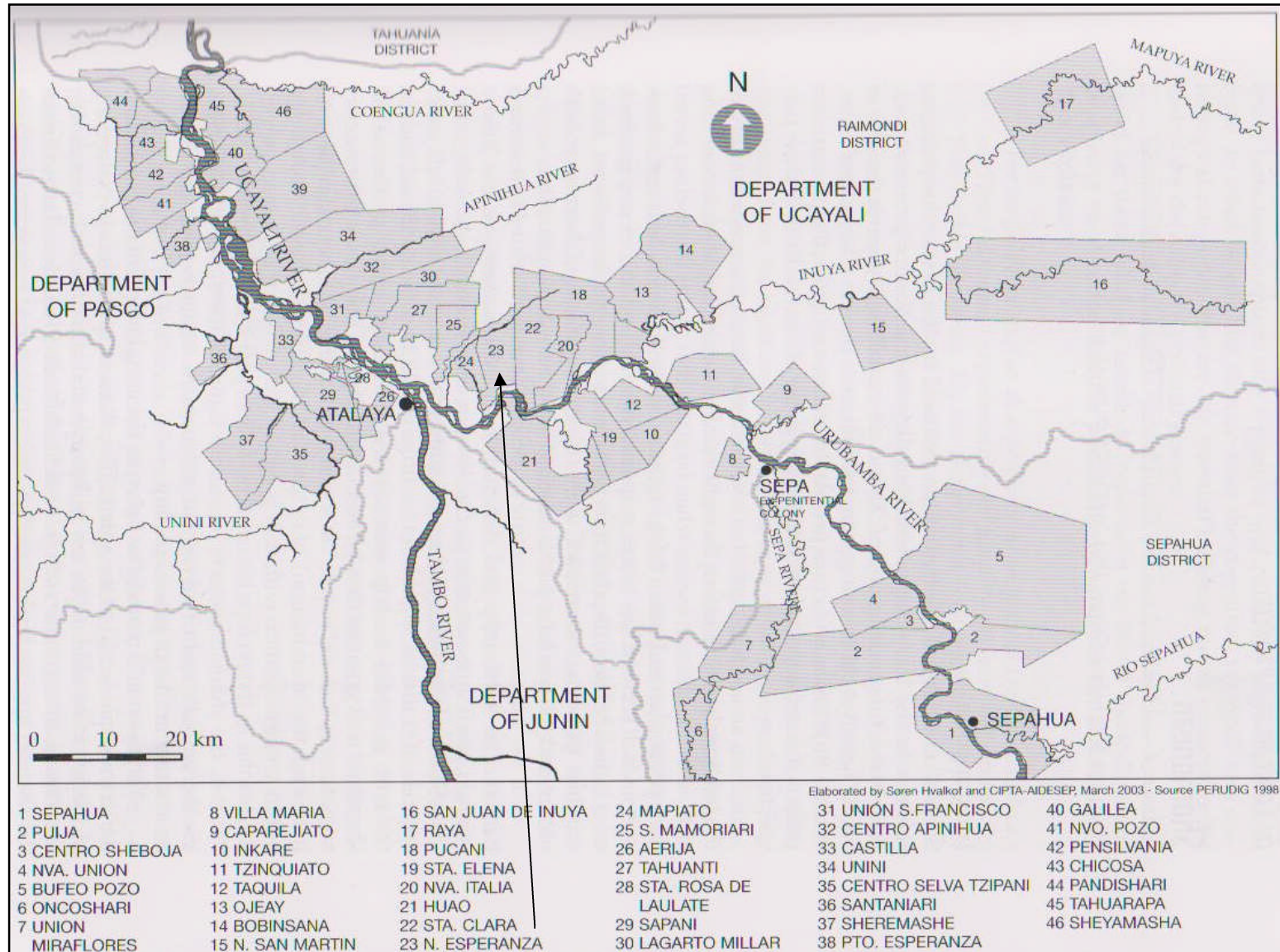
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UCAYALI REGION
(GARCIA DEL HIERRO ET AL. 1998:5)



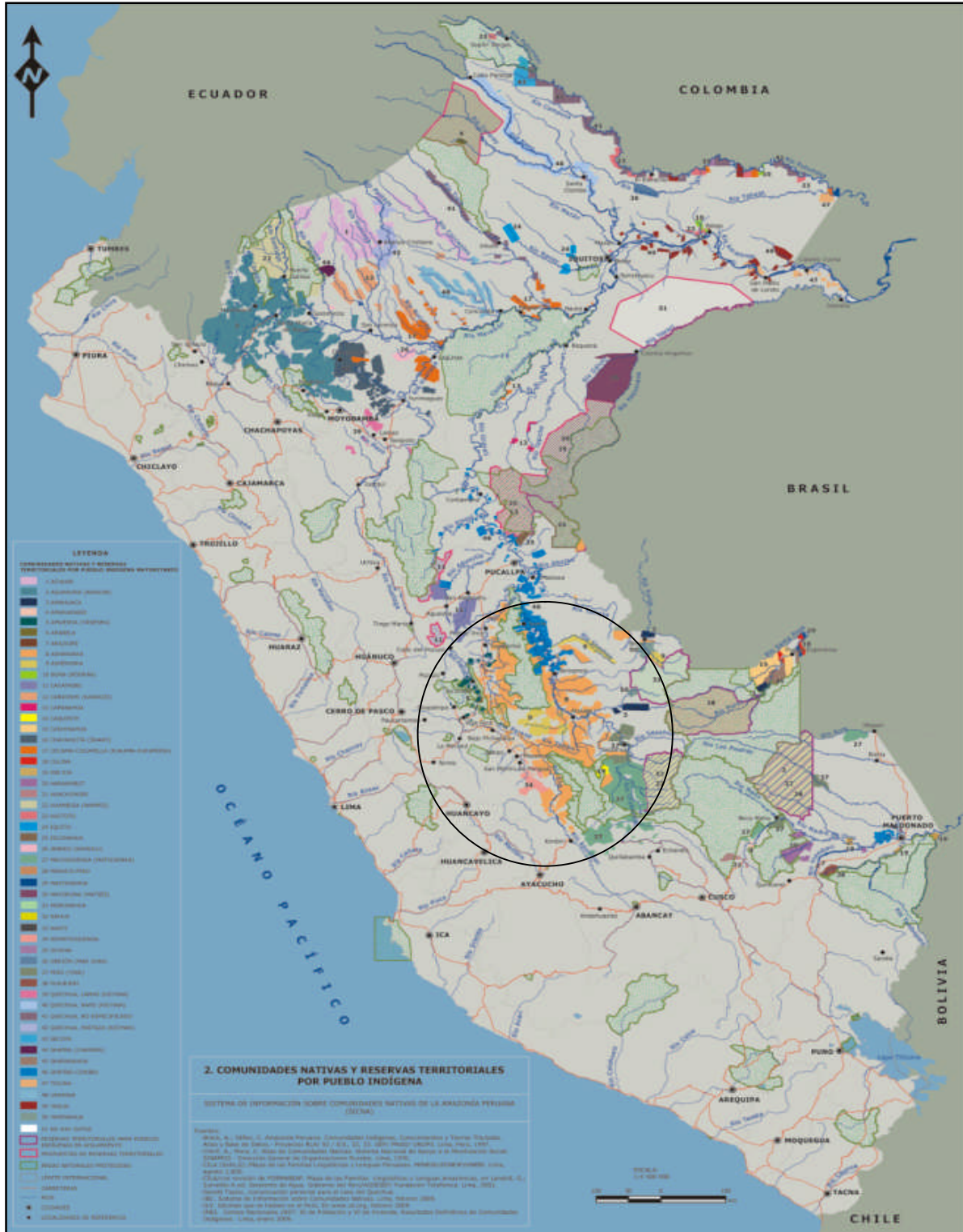
MAIN RIVERS AND TOWNS IN THE AREA OF THE STUDY
(HVALKOF 2004:38)



**COMUNIDADES NATIVAS OF ATALAYA PROVINCE.
 NUEVA ESPERANZA, MY MAIN FIELDSITE, IS NUMBER 23.
 (HVALKOF 2004:189)**



PERUVIAN ARAWAKAN GROUPS
(SANTOS AND BARCLAY 2005:XVI)



COMUNIDADES NATIVAS BY ETHNIC GROUP.
THE ORANGE ONES IN THE CIRCLE ARE THE ASHANINKA ONES.
(WWW.IBC.ORG)



**OIL AND GAS CONCESSIONS IN PERUVIAN AMAZONIA.
NOTE HOW MANY INCLUDE *COMUNIDAD* TITLED LAND.
(WWW.IBC.ORG)**

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SECTION I
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS



INTRODUCTION

TAKING THE 'GOOD LIFE' (VERY) SERIOUSLY

Humility comes only through an acquaintance with the epistemologies and ontologies of other cultures, an acquaintance achieved through rich ethnography which is acquired by taking seriously what others say about their social worlds. (Overing 1985:7)

OF FINDING ASHANINKA PEOPLE WHERE THEY SHOULD NOT BE

I first thought I had arrived in the *Comunidad Nativa*¹ ('Native Community') Nueva Esperanza, by the Bajo Urubamba River in Atalaya Province of the Ucayali Region of Peruvian Amazonia, by accident. Later I thought it was by coincidence as it was next to Santo Domingo (previously Santa Clara) where one of my supervisors, Peter Gow, had done fieldwork a quarter of a century earlier. It was only much later that I realised *compadre* Julián's *soga*² had been calling me from the beginning.

I knew a lot about Bajo Urubamba Yine (Piro) people from Gow's varied material. After all, the area is considered to be *their* territory in all those maps attached to ethnographies that so quickly localise people. However, the movement of Ashaninka people into new territories is a constant of their history. It was not that long ago (early 1900s) that half of the Tambo River was occupied by Yine people who moved to the Bajo Urubamba as the Ashaninka population expanded. There are Ashaninka people, apart from their 'traditional' territories³, in the Upper Urubamba, Purus, Inuya and Mapuya rivers, the Madre de Dios area and the Brazilian state of Acre. In fact, even if Gow mentions Ashaninka people living in the area in the early 1980s, no one considered the Bajo Urubamba as part of 'Ashaninkaland'.

1 Legal name for indigenous territories granted by the Peruvian State.

2 'Vine'. Informal name for *Ayahuasca* (Ash. *Kamarampi*; *Banisteriopsis caapi*).

3 Apurimac, Ene, Perene and Tambo rivers (Ashaninka); Apurucayali, Pichis, Gran Pajonal and Ucayali rivers (Asheninka).

However, I found that the majority of the indigenous peoples living in the *Comunidades Nativas* of the Bajo Urubamba are Ashaninka people, many of them migrants from the 'real' Ashaninka territories to the North and West. Some were descendants of groups that had been relocated to the area during the 'Rubber Boom' in the 19th Century, and another group from people in debt-peonage to Vargas at his La Huaira and Sepa *fundos* ('haciendas').⁴ However, many more descended from migrants who arrived in two recent waves. The first wave came from as far away as the Rio Negro and the Perene River in the 1950-70s as Ashaninka people in the area had lost their land to Andean colonists. These were mostly men brought for work, or looking for it, in the timber industry. The second was a wartime migratory wave of Ashaninka people from the Tambo and Ene rivers and the Gran Pajonal in the mid and late-1980s as *Sendero Luminoso* ('Shining Path') advanced in those areas.

This regional mixture of Ashaninka people makes the inhabitants of the Bajo Urubamba a very interesting part of the Ashaninka cluster, and makes the area ripe for anthropological analysis. It is noteworthy that even if they are one of the Ashaninka groups furthest away from Lima they present a high degree of what could be considered, from afar, as acculturation. However, the months I spent with them highlighted my initial arrogance and ignorance.

MEET THE 'REAL' ASHANINKA PEOPLE

Ashaninka people are the largest of all indigenous Amazonian groups, numbering almost 85,000 out of the 332,975 indigenous Amazonians living in Peruvian *Comunidades Nativas* (2007 Census). However, this does not only exclude those in the Brazilian state of Acre but also those living in urban areas, in voluntary isolation, and away from the main rivers in the Ucayali Region. Ashaninka people are not only a noticeable majority along the banks of the Tambo, Urubamba, and Ucayali but are also a large part of Atalaya's population and highly visible in smaller urban areas

⁴ See Gow (1991:47-50).

such as Bolognesi and Maldonadillo.⁵

Known as *Campa*⁶ until the 1980s, Ashaninka people are not new to the anthropological⁷, historical⁸ and travel⁹ literature on Amazonia. Schafer's (1982) article "Yo no soy Campa ¡soy Ashaninka!" ('I am not a Campa, I am an Ashaninka!') had such an impact that it stopped the academic and official use of the term in favour of *Ashaninka*. Hvalkof and Veber translate *Asheninka* as "our countrymen/women" (2005:99) whilst Weiss translates *Ashaninka* as "our siblings" (2005:6).¹⁰ Similarly, my informants translated *Ashaninka* as 'the people', 'countryperson', and 'sibling', highlighting the social character of this inclusive term as the prefix *A* is the plural inclusive. Their self-designation refers to the humanity of beings with a range which can cover, depending on the speaker's intentions, from ego's nuclear family to the whole of the group, all indigenous Amazonians, and even some spirits, animals, and plants that were human in the mythical past.¹¹

My informants call themselves *Ashaninka* or *Nativo Ashaninka*. *Nativo* ('Native') derives from the *Ley de Comunidades Nativas* ('Law of Native Communities') and is used pejoratively by non-indigenous people, replacing *Chuncho* nationally after the 2009 *Baguazo*.¹² *Nativo* is a tool for othering and legal invisibility as it is used to define

5 Satipo, the largest town of the *Selva Central*, is a different story. Even if the Municipality changed the pavement around the main square so that it now has Ashaninka crowns and other indigenous symbols carved onto it, most of the population is of Andean descent. As I was told by a Spanish ex-pat of long-term residence there, "It is like living in the Andes but with a better weather."

6 It is believed to come from *Canparites* and used pejoratively by Panoans (Varese 2006:79-80) or Yine people (Alvarez 1984:30), both guides for early Spanish explorers. See Varese (2006:115) for a historical following of the transformation.

7 Metraux (1942), Bodley (1970), Weiss (1974; 1975; 2005), Denevan (1974), Fernandez (1986), Rojas (1991), Hvalkof (1998), Veber (2003), Hvalkof and Veber (2005), Killick (2005), Varese (2006).

8 Tibesar (1952), Brown and Fernandez (1991), Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998).

9 Marcoy (1875), Ordinaire (1988), Clark (2001).

10 This is similar to other Arawakans. For example, Rosengren translates *Matsigenka* as "human beings" (2004:3) and Santos-Granero translates *Yanasha* as "we the people" (2005:xxii).

11 See for example Weiss (1975:309-44).

12 Hundreds of Awajun people blocking the highway into the northern Amazonian city of Bagua as part of an Amazonian strike organised by their National Federation were violently removed by the Police. This ended up in a day of violence and the deaths of an undetermined number of indigenous people and 23 policemen that has been labelled as 'The Peruvian Tiananmen'.

them as opposed to Peruvians.¹³ In terms of the State they are 'invisible' people living in an 'empty' space as Amazonia is still deemed to be an uninhabited space in the Peruvian social and political imaginary. The government's colonialist attitude imagines the area as the food source and powerhouse for Lima and a space for the natural expansion of Andean peasants. Indigenous Amazonian peoples' need for large expanses of land is not understood by Peruvian National Society, which considers that they are not using their territory in the 'right' way. This has become more obvious in the government's recent attempts to parcel out their territories and give sections as petrol concessions and in the *Perro del Hortelano* ('Dog in the manger')¹⁴ articles published by President Alan Garcia in El Comercio newspaper in 2008. These articles will be covered in the last Section of this thesis.

I say Ashaninka people are invisible because they are not seen to be there, ignored by legislation and prevented from a political space to represent their voice. They are invisible to law as most do not have birth certificates or National Identity Cards which defines a Peruvian citizen and allows access to State benefits and voting. The problem is made worse as most identity archives in the area were burned down by *Sendero* meaning that hundreds, if not thousands, of birth certificates have been lost. Still, many who have these identity documents have had their names misspelt or were given new surnames or names by the registrars. An example of their invisibility is that whilst the 1993 Census counted 53,000 Ashaninka people, the 2008 Census reported there were closer to 85,000. This growth in fifteen years is unlikely, especially when considering that more than 5,000 of them died in the war.

However, from an indigenous perspective, *Nativo* implies a historical transformation linked to a perspectival and spatial shift from living in the forest to living in titled 'civilised' *Comunidades*.¹⁵ This transformation is recognised in the change of name, *Campa* to *Ashaninka*, but also in bodily transformations. For example,

13 Ex. Casualties during the *Baguazo* were separated by the press into police, civilians, and *Nativos*.

14 A dog that will not eat what is around him but will not let anyone else eat it.

15 *Nativo* and *Indigena* serve as political self-designations for all Peruvian Amazonian peoples.

comments like “my mother was a little *Campa*” are common. This change of name, including the shift to Spanish surnames, confirms the change of body and all it implies from an indigenous Amazonian perspective¹⁶ thus distinguishing themselves from their *acharineite* (‘our ancestors’). Those living like the latter, and so ‘not yet civilised’, live like the wild and unpredictable *Indios* (‘Indians’). These transformations and changes in identity as time passes will be discussed in Section II.

LOCATING ASHANINKA PEOPLE

Ashaninka people did not have the luxury of contact in the 19th or 20th centuries as they were contacted in the 17th century. The intrusion has not stopped since and it has been especially testing since the opening of the intensive colonisation of Amazonia by the Peruvian State in the late 19th century. The different areas where they live today are a clear example of the historical construction of a ‘People’ as the variations in social organisation among their groups are clear examples of their very different historical experiences. We can find among their communities variations of (to name a few) dietary practices, material culture, Ashaninka/Spanish language proficiency, use of Western medicine and spatial organisation of villages. Thus, if we look at them without an inquisitive gaze their communities occupy the whole of a simplified spectrum between ‘tradition’ and ‘acculturation’.

As any map of *Comunidades Nativas* shows, Ashaninka people occupy most of the titled lands of the *Selva Central*, from the Apurimac River (Southwest) to the Purus (East) and the Lower Ucayali (North) rivers. Their titled lands cover such an extensive area that it is likely that most have not visited areas far from their own, especially so with the disuse of the *Ayompari*¹⁷ trading routes connecting them. However, Ashaninka groups are not only separated by land and rivers but by differences in the dialects they speak, the *Ashaninka-Asheninka* divide being the most

16 See Gow (2008) for what the change of name implies in indigenous Amazonia.

17 Long-range trading partnerships by Ashaninka men similar to the Piaroa *palou* (Overing 1992:184).

important one.¹⁸ However, even these two dialects present geographical variations that make the drafting of a single dictionary or School text impossible. Understandably, this also causes complications when spelling Ashaninka terms. I follow Spanish orthography, except that I replace Qs with Ks, as well as using italics for these terms. Spanish terms have also been italicised.

The area is also inhabited by a non-indigenous population of mixed origin. The majority are *Mestizos*, either local Amazonians of mixed indigenous-colonist descent or settlers with a mixed Andean peasant background. Whereas the first are locally considered as Amazonians, the Andean immigrants are referred to as *Colonos* ('colonists'), or *Chori* in Ashaninka language. The other key group are the descendants of the rubber barons of European background who settled in the area in the turn of the 20th century. Some stayed after the boom as *Patrones* of indigenous labour making a living out of agriculture, cattle or timber extraction. This is the small but powerful local elite of timber, transport and services merchants who identify as *Blancos* ('Whites'), or *Wirakocha* in Ashaninka language.¹⁹

As the reader may have deduced by now, it becomes difficult to talk about Ashaninka people as a whole due to the different social and political contexts that the different groups experience in the areas they call their own. Yet even among these differences and geographical distance one finds an idea of an Ashaninka "Imagined

18 Schafer (1982) suggests a distinction of the groups speaking varieties of Ashaninka language by using *Ashaninka* following the name of the river basin they inhabit. However, this solution is problematic as some groups do not call themselves *Ashaninka*. Acknowledging the lack of a term to group these groups, and the fact that they do not have a global autonym for themselves, Weiss (2005) keeps *Campa*, distinguishing the River Campa (Ashaninka) from the Pajonal Campa (Asheninka), whilst Hvalkof and Veber (2005) keep *Campa* as a general term but combine it with their self-designation: Campa-Ashaninka and Campa-Asheninka. Still, the identification of these groups is more complicated than that due to the fluidity of their own system of social classification. See also Ribeiro and Wise (1978).

19 However, these categories have a certain degree of permeability. It still is, as pointed out by Gow, that "These terms are not used to define people in abstract cultural terms but to locate them in specific social relationships. They are used to locate people in particular positions in the hierarchy of socioeconomic power in the region and to contest such placements. These classifications locate people in a particular vision of history, which is closely related to the particular system of commercial exchange that dominates the economy of western Amazonia." (1996:99)

Community” (Anderson 1983) based on their belief of being the 'real' human beings. For example, Ordinaire writes about an Ashaninka code of ethics that was recited in ritual salutations:

If you are hungry, I will share with you what I hunt and fish and the fruits of my garden, because you are [Ashaninka], and [Ashaninka] people must love each other with true friendship... If you are attacked by an enemy I will risk my life to defend you, because you are [Ashaninka]... If [a demon] kills you, your children will be mine, because you are [Ashaninka]” (1988:91-92)

Varese follows a similar idea when he writes that for an Ashaninka man, even if his *Ayompari* partner may not “[Belong] to my family or my kinship system; I might not even know him... he speaks my language; he is an Ashaninka. He knows the proper greeting, accepts my food and gifts, and repays them with others” (2002:34).

Ashaninka people, like other Amerindians, believe that humanity is all about practice. It is defined by the moral knowledge achieved through a set of practices learned and performed from an early age. These practices, in their Ashaninka version, are all aimed at their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* ('the good life'). However, this is not an individual pursuit as it only works as a collective which is evidenced by the word *asaiki*, the plural inclusive for *living*. Thus, my informants never told me “I know how to live well” but instead told me “Here we know how to live well”. This thesis is focused on this ethos of communal living as explained, discussed and practised by the Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people I lived among in the specific context created by the wake of the Peruvian Internal War and the despotic decrees passed by the Peruvian government regarding their territory and lives.

Even if Ashaninka people may see themselves, their bodies and practices as transformations of transformations²⁰ they do have a shared notion of a past in which their bodies were the same: that of their *acharineite* ('our ancestors/grandparents'). However, even if Ashaninka people do share an identity at the widest level, it is

²⁰ See Gow (1991; 2001) for a similar idea among Yine people.

more common to find it divided into more specific regional and local ones in an intricate chain of fractal identities, overlapping in parts and well-differentiated in others. Thus, as expected, different people and groups have different ideas of what it is to be an *Ashaninkasanori* ('real Ashaninka person'). Like the definition of who is part of a group and who is not is fluid, so is that of who is an *Ashaninkasanori* and who is not. Importantly, following Ashaninka ideas of the transformative nature of things, people can move in, out, or back into this state. For the purpose of this thesis I concentrate on the main notions of how an *Ashaninkasanori* is created in everyday life and how it pursues *kametsa asaiki* as explained by my Bajo Urubamba informants. In parts of the thesis I compare this to the notions on the topic of the people I met in the Tambo River during my shorter stay there.

Whereas I propose that *kametsa asaiki* is central to the life of Ashaninka people in general, I do not try to put forth the idea of a monolithic *kametsa asaiki*. Saying that indigenous societies are not static is stating the obvious as tradition is constantly being reshaped as, Gadamer (1975) writes, a static tradition is dead tradition. Instead, I suggest that it is only because of the centrality of the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* to their social life that Ashaninka people can be so flexible when adapting their practices to different contexts and to their different political interests and transform them, or themselves, without thinking of it in terms of loss.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Ashaninka people taught me that everything can transform. My initial intent was to carry out a study of how Ashaninka communities deal with the wake of the Peruvian Internal War²¹. I was born in Peru in 1984, on the day *Sendero Luminoso* celebrated the fourth anniversary of its war to topple down the Peruvian state. Although there were sporadic car bombs in Lima, I never really experienced a war that killed almost

21 Officially from 1980-2000 but in the Ashaninka experience from 1985-Present (in some areas).

70,000 of my compatriots, including between 5,000 and 8,000 Ashaninka people.²²

Although many Anthropologists have written about the war²³, they have focused their attention on the Andean region, neglecting Ashaninka people's experience. Indeed, there is a psychological study about orphan Ashaninka children in the Puerto Ocopa Mission (Villapolo and Vasquez 1999), an article condemning the war in Gran Pajonal (Hvalkof 1994), and some CAAAP²⁴ reports on the tensions of Ashaninka people's lives in *Nucleos Poblacionales*²⁵ (Espinoza 1995).²⁶ However, there has been no true attempt to understand the war from an Ashaninka perspective using anthropological tools. This lapse could be due to the difficulty of reaching the area in the last decade or, as with the academic silence on child-witch executions, it has been done to avoid placing them in a negative light. Even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to their credit, accepted their poor effort at trying to understand Ashaninka people's experience of the war. Consequently, I decided out of personal and anthropological curiosity, and moved by a great desire to make their experience public, to start ethnographic fieldwork among Ashaninka people.

As an Amazonianist-in-training, I was intrigued by three facts about post-war Ashaninka villages that clashed with the theoretical issues in the area literature. Firstly, I knew from the TRC's report that most of the violence on Ashaninka people had been performed by Ashaninka people themselves, especially in the Tambo and Ene Rivers. These groups are not only in close geographical distance but are joined by kinship networks and old *Ayompari* partnerships and trading routes. Furthermore, intra-warfare of such scale contravened the "Arawakan Ethos" (Santos-Granero 2002:42) which rests on the tacit agreement of no intra-group violence in Arawakan

22 In 2004 the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that, as a consequence the war, approximately 10,000 of about 80,000 Ashaninka people were forcibly displaced in the Ene, Tambo, and Perene valleys; at least 6,000 died and almost 5,000 were under *Sendero*'s control. However, Ashaninka Federations insist that the number of deaths is closer to 8,000.

23 Degregori (1990), Palmer (1992), Isbell (1994), Starn (1995a; 1995b), Theidon (2000; 2004; 2006).

24 Catholic Church funded Centre for Applied Anthropology.

25 'Population Nuclei' set up by the Armed Forces in some Ashaninka *Comunidades* during the war.

26 There is an *América Indígena* issue (1993) on the war but the articles are about Ashaninka people in general.

groups. Yet, the historical record shows that again and again this unspoken rule has been countered, with the Peruvian Internal War being the most recent example.

Secondly, most ethnographies about Ashaninka people highlight the fact that the spatial organisation of their settlements was best described as one of “Living Apart” (Killick 2005) in small family groups. Bodley defined these as “household group” (1970:79) which Weiss (1969:40) pointed out as the largest stable political unit in Ashaninka society. These

small groupings of houses consist of, usually, between one and six nuclear families linked by kinship and are characterised by a high degree of reciprocity and economic cooperation between the different domestic units that make them up, for example, joint work for the opening of new gardens and the repartition of hunted game (Pimenta 2006b:3)

This manner of spatially organizing social life has been justified in terms ranging from biological needs²⁷ to the fulfilment of a peaceful life²⁸. However, reports described post-war Ashaninka villages of houses built in close proximity to each other. This manner of organisation is now common and I later learned that one of the good things about living in a *Comunidad* is the close living they can achieve as 'civilised' people as opposed to their 'uncivilised' ancestors who had to live apart.

In fact, much analysis has been aimed at understanding how they could organise into large groups for rebellion when their life seemed so atomised.²⁹ We are told that when it occurs, collective action tends to be short-lived with families returning to living apart once the threat has been reduced. This leads Hvalkof and Veber (2005:226) to describe Ashaninka social life as one in which fragmentation and rupture are the norm and union and collective action are only transitory. While Craig suggests this is one of the “most puzzling aspects of [Ashaninka] culture” (1967:229), Renard-Casevitz (1993) argues that it is their trading relationships and their ability to

²⁷ See Denevan (1974).

²⁸ Killick dedicates his whole PhD thesis (2005) to the social mechanisms put into play in order to successfully interact as a group in spite of the distance between their settlements.

²⁹ See Brown & Fernández (1991) for accounts of the different rebellions.

keep social networks over vast areas that allows them to form large resistance groups. Even if this convergence is used as proof of messianic beliefs (Santos-Granero 2002), a recent move following Veber (2002) explains it through an analysis of cultural practices (Killick 2005; Sarmiento 2007).

Let's bring in to the analytical mix the third theoretical concept at play here: the famous lack of conflict resolution mechanisms in most Amazonian societies. As Santos-Granero (2000) summarises, their communities favour division to avoid major conflict.³⁰ However, even if this move is already undesirable because of the separation from one's kin, it becomes even less so today due to their gardens of long-term cash-crops (such as coffee and cacao), the materials used for building houses (corrugated iron and hard timber planks) bought with the money earned from cash-crops sales and the great importance placed on the Schooling of children. All this has taken most groups of Ashaninka people to become the most static in their recent history.³¹ However, Ashaninka people still travel constantly to participate in football championships and feasts held by other *Comunidades*. These are short trips that have replaced the long *Ayompari* trips and those taken by young men searching for brides.³² All these changes mean that people are much less likely to leave a village due to conflict and in fact no one did so in the two *Comunidades* I lived in even if there were some conflicts that would have merited it.

So, many post-war Ashaninka villages are static populations of ex-enemies living in close proximity who, we are told, have important prohibitions against intra-group war.³³ How does a society with no means of conflict resolution deal with this?

30 Due to what Rivière (2000:74,81) calls the "lack of tolerance for disharmony" and "low degree of tolerance for conflict". See also Rosengren (2000) for this strategy among the closely-related Matsigenka people.

31 Except, of course, for the days of the early *Reducciones* into Franciscan Missions in the 17th and 18th Century. In some contemporary areas, such as the Perene River and Satipo they stay put because there is nowhere else to go as their very small *Comunidades* are surrounded by privately-owned land.

32 These parties and football championships allow for young people to meet and start relationships. Additionally, many young men join the Army or Navy for military service. This was, usually, not explained as a way of getting out but as something to do as jobs in the area did not pay well.

33 See Renard-Cassevitz (1992; 1993; 2002) and Santos-Granero (2002) for these prohibitions which I

My curiosity took me to the field in order to understand how Ashaninka communities were, if at all, dealing with this. Thus, one of my main aims is to show how changes in the physical organisation of life change the game of sociality. I must note that Ashaninka people, even if living together, still see themselves as autonomous, self-sufficient and independent. This is more so as the need for money has become unavoidable and the attention men pay to cash-crops and/or work with *Patrones* has led to less hunting. Yet there is less game anyway due to overpopulation and deforestation caused by the opening of more and much larger gardens for cash-crops and the extraction of timber by companies or *Comunidades* themselves. This lack of what previous ethnographies, and to a certain extent those I lived among, would consider 'real' food has caused a re-organisation of the way food is distributed and shared through a re-definition of kinship networks. Obviously, this change in eating habits also brings changes on the conception of their bodies and thus of who they are, but this is not so simple. As I will show later, they see themselves as being in a process of constant transformation and have adapted 'real' food to deal with this. I must point out that manioc is still a very important part of their diet and is eaten every day or drunk in manioc beer.

To deal with the lack of game Ashaninka people now differentiate between 'real' kin and those they 'treat like kin' in a clear redefinition of their networks of sharing. Foodstuffs planted as cash-crops or purchased in Atalaya are sold in the *Comunidad* for a profit, usually following the *Ayompari* practice of delayed payment but with no reciprocity expected after it. Game and fish can be sold in Atalaya, to passer-by boats or to non-'real' kin in the village. Similarly, most families organise *mingas* ('work parties') in which they invite men to work in their gardens in exchange for a plate of 'real' food, bowls of manioc beer and future participation in their *minga*. Those with larger gardens hire neighbours or kin from elsewhere to work for them, paying them the rates paid by Atalaya *Patrones*. Atalaya ('Watchtower') is the

will discuss further on.

Province where I did most of my fieldwork and also the name of its capital.

GETTING TO NUEVA ESPERANZA

I got to Atalaya following anthropologist Søren Hvalkof's recommendation that I visited Joel Bardales, an Ucayali Ashaninka man who organized the *Comité de Autodefensa*³⁴ ('Self-Defence Committee') for the Bajo Urubamba and Alto Ucayali during the war. I planned to stay with him for a month and record the experience of Ashaninka people in an area that did not see as much fighting as neighbouring areas. This stay would also allow me to get used to being in an Ashaninka settlement before moving on to the Tambo. However, I quickly discovered my own ignorance.

I thought I would be going down the Ucayali until I met Joel in OIRA's³⁵ office. I sat quietly in the small room of wooden walls on the top floor of one of the largest buildings in Atalaya, waiting for him as he knew I was coming. After an hour or so I was introduced to OIRA's President, Daniel Marzano. I was surprised by how young he was but supposed he was one of those 'modern' Amazonian leaders described in so many ethnographies.³⁶ We had a friendly chat, marked by our mutual shyness. To OIRA's credit, I was never asked for money in exchange for a permit but Daniel did ask me if I could help by writing *Proyectos* ('Projects'). This became a common request; a federation official asking me to help with a project to attract funding and a blank look when I asked what they needed. There are people who charge federations hundreds of pounds to write these 'Projects' for them, the infamous *Proyectista* ('Project writer'). As a Tutor for first year Social Anthropology students I had read articles about how Gap Year tourists are sold as experts to local communities by the companies organising their trips.³⁷ I felt like one of them as I was expected to 'know' what should be done because of my training. My fieldwork,

34 Indigenous militia during the Internal War. Also known as *Rondas* (from *Ronda Nativa*, 'Native Round'). Its members are called *Ronderos*.

35 Atalaya Regional Indigenous Organisation.

36 See for example Brown (1993).

37 See Simpson (2004; 2005).

especially my work with federations, was a huge learning process on the workings of these funding projects.

Joel appeared after another hour of me giving away candies and Daniel apologizing for not smoking as I tried to find out more about the war but could get nothing from him. Joel, a tall broad man for Ashaninka standards, walked into the office wearing denim shorts, a blue cap, and brown caterpillar boots; his 'informal' Atalaya uniform.³⁸ Daniel called him uncle and I tried to imagine if this was 'real' kinship or not as they exchanged greetings in Ashaninka. He quickly introduced himself to me and asked Daniel to sign a letter allowing me to visit the *Comunidades* represented by OIRA as he was in a rush. After saying goodbye to Daniel, as I thanked him for the permit, Joel asked me to follow him as he went downstairs and turned right to Fitzcarraldo Street, leading me through the puddles and mud of the unpaved road.

I had not seen much of Atalaya as I had only arrived the night before and had quickly fallen asleep in a room with AC and cable TV. Atalaya is a place of contrasts and there is a lot of money to be made legally but much more to be made illegally. The area by the market and the port is a cacophony of motorcycle engines, *cumbia* and Andean music blasting out of the cheap bars of saw-dust floors and people talking (shouting), all framed by an air saturated with the smell of food. The small shops are collages of colourful skirts, shorts, tops, sandals, plastic buckets and bowls as well as cheap plastic toys made in China, flip-flops, machetes and wellington boots, from the large black ones for men to the small colourful ones for children.

It was during this short walk to the port that I first saw Joel in his full glory. He is an incredibly charismatic man, well-known for his role in the *Ronda* and his months as interim Mayor. As I heard him talk to people that stopped to greet him or called him from bars I saw in him the ethnographic obviousness of an indigenous

38 The 'formal' one included black trousers, a white short-sleeve shirt, black shoes and a belt with a coin purse attached to it.

Amazonian leader. I followed, walking quickly behind him, avoiding puddles and cursing having come in flip-flops as they stuck on the mud whilst his shoes were so clean. Anyone who has followed indigenous Amazonians by foot knows the grace with which they avoid obstacles or their keen eye to detect where the mud is dryer. I sighed; apart from learning the language I would also have to learn how to walk. That was also the last day I ever wore trousers in Amazonia.

Joel pointed at his canoe, unmistakably blue and yellow, and told me to get in it while he went to do some last minute shopping. A man with a moustache, Joel's father-in-law, *Jefe* ('Headman') of Nueva Esperanza, President of the Ashaninka Federation for the Lower Urubamba, and my future *compadre* and very good friend, Gerardo Zevallos, sat in Joel's canoe, joking with and teasing people in other boats as they prepared for their trips back home. Travelling bags bursting with clothes and shopping bags of rice, spaghetti, biscuits and the random bottle of soft drinks were being covered with the bright blue plastic sheets sold all over Peruvian Amazonia.

As I got to the canoe people around me, some sitting by Pedrito's mechanic shop sharing a beer, the boat makers working by the river, some preparing their canoes, and the usual groups of indigenous men sitting by the port waiting for news or arrivals, stared as I clumsily attempted to stay on my feet in the floating canoe. Gerardo, who Joel had said knew I would be visiting Nueva Esperanza, had stopped joking and helped me with my rucksack, asking where I was from and how long I would be in the area. He was surprised to hear I was Peruvian, a common shock among locals in my time in Amazonia. Once I sat and he had covered my things with plastic, he moved towards the back of the canoe, ready to operate the *pekepeke* engine. Joel soon reappeared carrying a bag of bread for his youngest brother-in-law (one-year old at the time and later my godson) and a black bag which I later learned meant he had purchased cartridges.³⁹ He boarded the canoe, smiled and said "Ya,

³⁹ It is illegal to own a shotgun or buy or sell cartridges without a license but this is not enforced apart from a time I saw a man having his taken away by an over-eager young Army officer.

Juan?"⁴⁰, before pushing us towards the Tambo with a wooden oar.

The Tambo has a milk-coffee colour in September, towards the end of the dry season which locals call 'summer'. I later learned to recognize the seasonal changes in its colour (from light brown, to a darker brown, to red) when I moved to Anapati by the Tambo. The Tambo is surrounded by green walls of high forest until there is a fast decline close to Atalaya. Then, as you turn right to the Bajo Urubamba the land becomes flatter, made obvious by the visible heights of the Tambo to your right.

I was surprised by the amount of traffic on the Bajo Urubamba. There seems to always be someone travelling up and down the river, from rafts or small canoes with 5.5HP *pekepeke* engines, timber of different sizes, convoys of cargo boats powered by potent *Johnson* engines, or huge boats carrying containers and tractors (in the rainy season, the 'winter') towards Sepahua and the PlusPetrol base at Las Malvinas. Understandably, all the traffic makes the river dangerous for canoes so there are large yellow signs to alert boats of settlements so that they will power down their engines. However, whilst *Centros Poblados*, villages inhabited mostly by non-indigenous people, are built by the river you can only distinguish *Comunidades* because of the canoes tied by the river during the day.

We arrived in Nueva Esperanza ('New Hope') after a couple of hours. This *Comunidad* is on the right bank of the Bajo Urubamba, five 'turns' away from Atalaya. Officially titled in 1989, it had Ashaninka families living there since the 1960s when the *fundo* Esperanza came into disuse after the death of its owner. His children from an Ashaninka woman stayed, the men bringing wives in and the women marrying men from the area. As Ashaninka *Comunidades* elsewhere, this settlement was initially named after the closest stream (Kinkón⁴¹) but later, when they registered the

40 This translates as 'Ready Juan?'. However, in Ucayali Spanish *Ya* is the translation of the Ashaninka *Ari* which translates into English as 'OK' but it is also used as 'Hello'.

41 Named after a child who disappeared during a fishing trip and was believed to have been taken away by the Master of the Forest. This is a fantastic story that began as a personal anecdote thirty years ago but was told to me as a myth that I plan to discuss in the future.

Comunidad, they were told to choose a better name for it.⁴² Even if it is one of the smallest *Comunidades* of the area in size (4,900 hectares when the average is 8,000) it boasts one of the largest populations (410 people in 64 families). More than half of its inhabitants are related to each other by kinship links through the first three families to live there: the Mirandas, the Reateguis and the Velas. One third of the *Comunidad's* population was born there but there are many adults from the Tambo, Ucayali and Gran Pajonal and a few others from the Ene, Satipo and Rio Negro. Apart from the regional mix it has a blend of people that have held positions in political federations, others trained by the SIL, and others who grew up in Catholic missions in the Tambo or in the last large *fundos* of the area.

We unloaded the canoe and headed up to the village. I looked around excitedly for 'traditional' markings, trying to remember where I had put my notebook, but all I could see were palm roof houses and woven baskets hanging from their walls. The village was empty except for some children playing football on the huge pitch in the middle of the houses and some women washing clothes by the taps installed by Joel when he was Mayor. A couple of the boys playing football wore European nations' football strips and a small boy with a huge round stomach ran in an oversized Arsenal FC strip. Joel led me into his house; a large brick building that I thought was a depot when I first saw it.⁴³ Any initial romanticism of the fieldwork enterprise in Amazonia was finally destroyed when I walked in and he told me, I still do not know if truly or humorously, that his fan had broken a week earlier as I looked at the mosaic of calendars and photos stuck to the walls of his living room.

Joel called his wife. Sisi is a beautiful woman, much younger than him, and after a brief introduction scolded him for not telling her they would have a visitor

42 This is common in the Bajo Urubamba where most *Comunidades* have Spanish or Spanishised Ashaninka words names. For instance, Takinti, after a mythological warrior whose body was hard like a turtle's shell, was changed to Taquila when it was registered as the registrar did not believe that name was good enough.

43 His house still respects the important Ashaninka spaces of the house: a space where the family slept, a large open social space, and a separate kitchen.

and apologised for not even having manioc beer. They spoke in a mixture of Spanish and Ashaninka language, Joel using more of the latter than she did.⁴⁴ Joel took the bags of food I had brought with me to the kitchen, outside the main building, where Sisi started to inspect them. He then excused himself to go get the vice-*Jefe* ('vice-headman'), Enrique Miranda, and I was left on my own. I sat by a window looking out at the football pitch which seemed of an official size (I later found how proud they were of it), the bright blue School behind it and the large Communal House made of concrete and corrugated metal to the left. I saw many more houses at a distance and the immensity of the forest framing the whole village. By now children gathered by Joel's house, staring at me and hiding when I looked back. I heard music coming from some of the houses and static from the radio being operated in the Communal House. Were they finally acculturated after centuries of resistance? Why was this village so different to the accounts of settlements elsewhere? Was this area for Ashaninka people who did not want to live like Ashaninka people?

Joel walked in an hour later followed by Enrique, still in his boots and carrying an old machete, displaying the stone-face look Ashaninka men have in old photos. They both smelled of what I would later easily recognise as manioc beer. I greeted him in Spanish; he replied in kind and introduced himself as 'Miranda'⁴⁵ as we clumsily shook hands and he sat opposite me. Sisi brought a pitcher of manioc beer which was given to me with a green plastic bowl and I poured myself the first bowlful of what would be my main diet for the next two years. Weird, I thought as I poured, she had told me there was no manioc beer so I worried of the 'no manioc beer means you are not wanted' story. I later learned Sisi had 'borrowed' some *oshiteki* ('manioc beer paste') from her cousin and neighbour Neli. I tried to down as much as I could and passed the dry bowl on, realising everyone in the room had

44 Sisi only spoke Ashaninka language with her grandmother and sometimes with Joel, especially when mocking my language proficiency.

45 At first Ashaninka men only told me their surnames but not their first names. I believe this is the way they expected to relate to unknown Whites from the days of *Patrones*.

been looking at me. Joel smiled and asked if I liked it; Enrique still looked serious.⁴⁶

Joel had told me earlier he would explain I was visiting in order to write the history of the *Ronda*, of which Enrique had been one of the leaders. The two men spoke in Ashaninka, allowing me to hear the language in full conversation for the first time. I picked up some words from what I had learned from SIL texts and lessons with Enrique Casanto, an Ashaninka man living in Lima. The vice-*Jefe* left, after giving a careful look at my signed and sealed permit and informing (warning) me that there would soon be an Assembly for me to introduce myself and explain what I was doing there. After he left, Joel explained Enrique was worried I may be a *Sendero* spy, otherwise why would I be so interested in the war? Understandably, this was a common concern during the first days of my stay in the village.

Joel asked Sisi if the food was ready as he walked outside towards the kitchen and called out “*Kate Juan, poya kaniri!*” (‘Come Juan, eat manioc!’). He had to translate it into Spanish when I looked confused, and smiled as I wrote it on my little notebook. As I tore into my first piece of manioc he thought I would stay for a fortnight. I thought I would try to push it until the end of the month. None of us thought I would end up living in the area for two years.

OF MY AND THE RESEARCH PROJECT’S TRANSFORMATION

Everyone in the village was bilingual to different degrees but most communicated in Spanish. However, even if I am a native speaker, Ucayali Spanish is clearly distinctive from my own use of it.⁴⁷ With time I became proficient in it and enough in Ashaninka language to interview speakers with little Spanish proficiency, although I

46 I got used to this serious stare in my first few days in Nueva Esperanza. The only person that came up to me was Mañuco, an Andean man married to an Ashaninka woman, who, in an incredible state of drunkenness, welcomed me to the *Comunidad* and hoped I was there to film a documentary because “these people are cool”. The rest looked at me suspiciously from their houses, and some children even cried as I walked around the village. I envied my friend Conrad Feather who did fieldwork among Nahua people, “the most affectionate people in the Amazon” (2010:25), three days downriver.

47 Or, Gow asserts, it is an indigenous language on its own. It could be considered as a *creole* similar to *Quechuanol* but it is more complicated as it mixes indigenous Amazonian languages, Quechua and Spanish.

always had someone at hand to translate or correct my interpretations. Still, most of my fieldwork was in Spanish as it was dominant in the *Comunidades* of the Bajo Urubamba. Spanish was less commonly used in the Tambo even if most people were perfectly bilingual. The translation of their Spanish into English has not been straightforward so I have decided to translate to the best of my ability into straight grammatically-correct English as the specificities and 'colour' of their Spanish is not translatable. Ashaninka, part of the Pre-Andean Arawakan⁴⁸ languages (Riet and Tastevin 1919-1924), is not a disappearing language in some parts of their territory, although that could be said about its written aspect as no one placed much importance on it except for indigenous politicians and NGOs.

People were polite from the beginning as they invited me to their houses for manioc beer or food in the very Ashaninka way of analysing strangers. However, it was only after I started working in gardens, communal works, going on fishing and hunting trips, and dancing and drinking at parties, that people started to get used to my presence and trust that I was not a terrorist spy. By the time I got to Anapati by the Tambo, after more than a year in the Bajo Urubamba, I had gone through a process of 'becoming' that was not obvious to my eyes. After a fortnight in Anapati, as I joked in a manioc beer round following a successful fishing trip, my uncle Bernabé looked at me approvingly from his hammock and told me "you have learned well in the Urubamba *notomi*⁴⁹, you have become like an Ashaninka [person]". People around me smiled as a new *pajo*⁵⁰ was served and I introduced a cigarette into the round. I felt Bernabé was trying to honour me and I appreciated his commentary but did not understand what he meant until the following September when I was leaving Nueva Esperanza.

Compadre Gerardo had rented a generator and organised a going away party

48 The other Peruvian Arawakans are Kakinte, Matsigenka, Nomatsigenka, Yanesha and Yine peoples.

49 Son/nephew as I was his sister-in-law's son.

50 Traditional drinking bowl made from a dried gourd (*Crescentia*).

for me. Everyone enjoyed buckets of manioc beer, *chabelitas*⁵¹ of *trago*, a few cans of beer, my last cigarettes, and 'feast food', in this case chicken stew served with rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, manioc, and beans. We danced under the light of energy-saving light-bulbs as my godson⁵² Kendis played a selection of Amazonian and Andean popular music. *Comadre* Adelina and some of my aunts sang in Ashaninka language, aided by manioc beer, and I for once forgot to record everything and take photos. I sat and enjoyed the evening, dressed in the maroon *cushma* I had received from my host as a going away present.

Late at night, I cannot remember the time as my watch had already been claimed, Gerardo asked for the microphone and started one of his Headman speeches. But this time it was not about 'drinking with our stomachs not our heads' or about advising children they should not take what is not theirs. This time it was about me and my time in the *Comunidad* as he recalled our hunting and fishing trips, our work in the Federation, our nights out in Atalaya, our trips to Lima and listed the game and fish we had eaten together, highlighting how much I liked manioc beer. He reminded everyone how some had wanted to kill me at first when they thought I was a *Sendero* spy and that I had lived *tranquilo* ('peacefully') throughout my stay. He then invited other people to take the microphone and they similarly recalled our experiences, especially what we had eaten together and how I had learned to eat, drink, joke, and speak like an Ashaninka person. I was repeatedly told throughout my stay that I was 'becoming' like an Ashaninka person and in this last party people confirmed that, as *compadre* Enrique, the same man I met that first day in Joel's house, told me, "*ya te has vuelto como Ashaninka compasho*", I had become 'like' an Ashaninka person.

I was told in many different occasions that I had a 'strong' body because of what I had eaten and drank and that I lived 'peacefully', having learned aspects of

51 A glass Coca-Cola bottle which is the common measure for S/.1 (£0.20) of cane alcohol.

52 *Compadrazgo* relations are not only acquired at baptism but also from School graduations.

the moral behaviour of 'real' human beings. I had gone through a great and complicated transformational process of 'becoming': from terrorist spy to *pelacara*⁵³, to *Patrón*, to oil company engineer, to teacher, to *Ayompari*, to *Compadre*, and finally to son, nephew, uncle and brother.⁵⁴ I went from children being threatened with me when they misbehaved to becoming godfather to some of them. This kind of transformation is essential for what it means to be an Ashaninka person and for their understanding of the world. They believe to have always been transforming into something else, seeing their past, present, and future as a continual process of 'becoming'. Indeed, for them “there is no such occurrence as the creation of something out of nothing, but only the transformation of something out of something else” (Weiss 1972:169). Take this into account as you read the rest of this thesis as it becomes impossible to understand contemporary and past Ashaninka practices from another perspective.

As I transformed, my research project transformed with me. I started my fieldwork in Nueva Esperanza with the idea of living in an Ashaninka community that did not experience the war as *Sendero* never created a base of support in the area. How wrong I was. The people I lived among and visited taught me that being in a 'state of war' is absolutely relative. It is wrong to assume that because they did not have or produce as many casualties as their *paisanos* ('country people') elsewhere they did not experience war. My insistence on talking about the war with people who do not wish to talk about it made them, rightly so, suspicious of my intentions. After a period of frustration I started to understand them and realised how poorly I had set up my study. I thought Ashaninka people would be talking about the war daily but, as I learned with time, they go to a great extent to avoid showing negative

53 Literally 'face peeler'; White men that roam Amazonia cutting indigenous peoples' faces off and selling them for cosmetic surgery.

54 Even if, as I am sure many before have, I hated when people confused me with a tourist, this was preferable than being confused with a petrol company engineer. I never wore trousers or long-sleeve shirts and only wore boots when working in gardens in a naive attempt to make my difference from *Comuneros* and similarity to engineers less obvious. I never used sunscreen or insect repellent, finding that with time and a change of diet both the sun and insects stopped being problematic.

emotions such as anger and sadness as these can control people and make them act antisocially. It is their reticence to talk about the war, the common comment that during it “we couldn’t live well” and the constant affirmation that now they were determined to ‘live well’ that shifted my interest to *kametsa asaiki*, the ‘good life’.

KAMETSA ASAIKI, THE ASHANINKA ‘GOOD LIFE’

The ‘good life’ is a complex social philosophy that can be found among most, if not all, indigenous South American societies.⁵⁵ It is a philosophy that emphasises the relational and the constitution of the ‘real’ human person as the nucleus of kinship. However, this is not a permanent state but one that must be achieved communally as with ‘good life’ practices also come practices of social rupture such as war and witchcraft accusations. It is not the actual living of the ‘good life’ that is important, as that is theoretically impossible, but its pursuit.

Most Ashaninka people spend their whole lives trying to perfection the very difficult art of conviviality. However, over-romanticising indigenous Amazonian practices and restricting the everyday pursuit of the ‘good life’ to the domestic limits our scope of analysis. Let me be clear from the beginning that I do not wish to present them as “angelic” as Anne-Christine Taylor (1996:206) would wrongly portray the “English School of Americanists” (Viveiros de Castro 1996:189) description of Amazonian sociality. Viveiros de Castro argues that this approach, “the moral economy of intimacy” (Ibid:189), overemphasises consanguinity, the consubstantiality that results from commensality, and the continuous sharing of food and beverages as the basis of Amazonian sociality. He argues that by emphasising the local and domestic domain, Amazonian people are presented as “gentle peoples who value peacefulness, have an ‘intellectual’ ideal of manhood and attempt to maintain harmonious relations at both the intra- and intertribal levels by practising

55 Ex. *Sumaq kawsa* in Quechua, Piaroa *adiupawi* (‘tranquil life’) (Overing Kaplan 1975; Overing 1985b) or Yine *gwashata* (‘to live well’) (Gow 2000:52) It has been integrated as one of COICA’s (the umbrella organisation for indigenous Amazonian political federations) main two pillars.

reciprocal generosity.” (Santos-Granero 2000:268) I disagree with this view as my anthropological analysis, like that of other members of the ‘English School’, places great importance on these relations but is not limited to the local and the domestic. The ‘English School’ shows that the domestic and supra-domestic levels are not detached and must be analysed as being fundamentally related.

When discussing *kametsa asaiki* I was constantly reminded that even if it is the goal, it is a very difficult social state to reach. *Kametsa* is a very positive word translated as ‘good’ in many different ways. Thus, when they translate *kametsa asaiki* into Spanish they say *vivir bien* ('to live well') but also say *vivir lindo* ('to live beautifully') or *vivir tranquilo* (to 'live peacefully'). Notably, *asaiki* is not living in the existential sense but in the physical sense of 'being' in one place. For example, *pisaiki* is a common invitation to sit down when visiting a house and *nosaiki* translates as ‘I live in [a place]’. Interestingly, the opposite of living a 'good life' is not living a 'bad life'. There is no direct word for 'bad' in Ashaninka language as they say *tee onkametsa* ('not good'). Instead, I was told those who do not 'live well' are those who do not 'know' how to do so due to their upbringing lacking what most Ashaninka people believe to be necessary for the transmission of this knowledge. This ideal life is also very difficult due to the negative aspects in individuals that they openly accept and point out. Ashaninka life, like that of other indigenous Amazonians, is shaped by what they perceive to be the latent possibility of conflict and their deep aversion to it.⁵⁶ However, people also have positive aspects that must be nurtured and practised from an early age. It is the practice of the latter and the control of the former that becomes the base for *kametsa asaiki*.

I interpret the concept to imply ‘living well’ in one place, an important preoccupation now that most Ashaninka families live in villages, as opposed to the separated settlements of the past. This, and the issues presented by the wake of the war, the State, and National Society, presents them with a series of challenges that

⁵⁶ See Santos-Granero (2002) for a summary of this belief in different Amazonian societies.

they recognise their ancestors did not have to deal with. Accordingly, contemporary Ashaninka people cannot follow many of the practices they believe allowed their ancestors to live a 'good life' as, I was told constantly, they did indeed lived a 'good life'. However, even if their present way of life is very different to their ancestors', *kametsa asaiki* is still thought to be the ideal way of social interaction. Thus, in order to understand Ashaninka people we must take *kametsa asaiki* as seriously as they do. Focusing on the everyday acts of *kametsa asaiki*, the "aesthetics of living" (Overing 2000:3), will allow for an in-depth understanding of their own preoccupations and their way of living. *Kametsa asaiki* must not be considered as solely relevant to the domestic, wrongly restricted analytically to the feminine, but as the most important guide to how they relate to the outside and incorporate it when necessary.⁵⁷

This is an unpredictable historical moment for Ashaninka people due to the actions of the Peruvian State and other outsiders around them. It is this unpredictability and the acknowledgement that not everyone knows how to 'live well' that leads to a period of intense creative innovation as they navigate through a series of conundrums. This is a period of picking and mixing social tools, assessing if they can be added to or replace some of those inherited from their ancestors to aid their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*. As we know, Amazonian societies must risk engaging with the frontiers of society and the outside in order to allow society itself to continue to exist. Accordingly, many of the current *kametsa asaiki* practices have been adapted from the knowledge of Whites, a powerful but dangerous 'Other'.

It is especially because of the destruction of war that *kametsa asaiki* becomes such an important project for their *Comunidades* and political federations. As I will show, it is not only about disconnected peaceful living but a conscious act of resistance to the violence exerted against them. It encompasses the political dealings with the State and other outsiders as it becomes a fight in and outside villages to live

57 The danger but potential fecundity of outsiders in Amazonian thought has been noted before. Among these see Overing (1992), Rivière (1993), Gow (2001), and Viveiros de Castro (2001).

the way they want to and ensure the reproduction of 'real' human beings. It is the defiance of a State that seeks an axiomatic relationship with them as citizens as it pushes them to stop being *collectively* to live as *individuals*, to which they respond by priming the egalitarian relations of kinship.⁵⁸

I take the war and its aftermath not only as a period of destruction but also one of creative activity. *Kametsa asaiki* in the wake of the war is not about going back to how life used to be in a romanticised past. Interestingly, even if the decades before the war were decades of debt-slavery and abuse by *Patrones*⁵⁹, they are usually described as a time of abundance and peace. However, whilst there is a desire to reproduce some aspects of this romanticised past, there are many aspects of those 'uncivilised' ancestors they do not want to reproduce. I suggest their love-hate relationship with their ancestors' way of life is reflected in what they perceive to be the keys for *kametsa asaiki* today. It includes the care the ancestors put into their social relations but also the correction of the aspects they lacked.

Those I lived among believe their state of being *civilizados* ('civilised') gives them the knowledge that their ignorant ancestors lacked for a better life. Thus, their ancestors' mishaps were attributed to their own ignorant wrong choices, reflecting the "gnostic attitude" Varese attributes to Ashaninka people:

Error... is a consequence of ignorance and the cause of perdition of humanity, which was primordially transformed into animals. ... Error and ignorance of norms are causes of real and symbolic perdition. The consequence of this concept is a gnostic essential attitude: Knowledge saves; ignorance leads to being lost. (2002:31)

The interesting point is that whether changes today are thought as being intentional and well-planned choices, the changes the ancestors went through were not. Those I lived among believe their 'civilised' state grants them the knowledge needed to deal with problems their ancestors did not have to or did not know how to deal with.

58 Platt (1986) has highlighted a similar re-ordering of relationships leading to ethnocide in favour of citizenship imposed by the liberal State in the Bolivian Andes.

59 See AIDSESEP (1991) and Garcia del Hierro et al. (1998).

That is why they affirm that those who do not 'live well' do so because they 'do not know' how to do it.

Kametsa asaiki is not a worry unique to Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people. A study by the Central Ashaninka del Rio Ene (CARE) to find out what the *Comunidades* they represented wanted the Federation to do was called the *Kametsa Asaiki* Project. However, even if most believed that the desire for *kametsa asaiki* was shared by all, I do not propose that they all believe it is reached in the same way.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF CONTEMPORARY KAMETSA ASAIKI

Ashaninka people are in constant change. The key is they do not see these changes as inconsistent with their lives or as a process of 'becoming' that is unique to their lives today. *Kametsa asaiki* has been moulded through a creative process of audacious innovations⁶⁰ to adapt to changes. This elasticity when facing the conundrums of contemporary life works well because they act with their mind set on *kametsa asaiki* rather than on worries about tradition. This is of vital importance for the understanding of past and contemporary Ashaninka practices as they appear to be both subversive and conservative towards their 'traditional' practices. The analytical problem is that to an unreflexive eye these innovations look like acculturation.⁶¹ However, a romantic concern for the loss of 'traditional' practices among indigenous peoples implies a very different understanding of what knowledge is and what it is useful for. I cannot express this better than Gow has:

Knowledge is important in so far as it defends the ongoing process of kinship, and it is redundant or dangerous if it does not. ... The native people of the Bajo Urubamba do not see their ancestral cultures as heritable property, but as weapons for the defence of kinship. At particular times such weapons may be useless, and

60 "[P]rimitive institutions are not only capable of conserving what exists, or of retaining briefly a crumbling past, but also of elaborating audacious innovations, even though traditional structures are thus profoundly transformed." (Lévi-Strauss in Gow 2001:9)

61 See Vilaça (2008) on questions of the lack of attention for the Amazonian context, or Gow (1991) for the specific Bajo Urubamba context. This will be discussed in the following section.

are dropped, to be picked up later when circumstances change. ... It is the living who must be defended, with whatever comes to hand. Native people fear the loss of their children, not their "culture". (1991:285-6)

Kametsa asaiki, in its contemporary form, is built around five main ideas. Firstly, Ashaninka people say you must live like an *Ashaninka legitimo* or *Ashaninkasanori* ('real Ashaninka person'). It is important to remember that, like any identity, its definition has been changing with historical context. Generally speaking, it is someone who lives in the emotional order learned from, and the body created with, the love and care of his/her kinspeople. The development of the Ashaninka body, and to a certain extent the control of their emotions, depends on a second important aspect: eating and sharing 'real' food. The changes forced on and adapted by Ashaninka society require a third factor to ensure a 'good life'. This is about empowerment and being 'civilised' and requires money, a School education, intercultural medicine⁶², and the need for a new type of 'civilised' leadership. Achieving all of this requires a fourth factor under threat from different external agents: *aipatsite* ('our earth/land/territory'). These are all related to the fifth contemporary aspect, the need for a strong political federation to defend their right to pursue *kametsa asaiki*.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis consists of twelve Chapters organised into five Sections. Section I, Chapter 1, **CONTEXTUALISING THE 'EMPTY' SPACE**, discusses the last forty years of the history of the Atalaya area, concentrating on the last decades of State intervention. It sets the context in which the Ashaninka people I lived among developed their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*, showing some of the problems they face that their ancestors did not have to deal with.

Section II, **OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF THE ASHANINKA HISTORICAL BODY**, also deals with the past but in a very different way. Chapter 2

⁶² The importance of Western medicine as a backup or reinforcement to traditional medicine.

aims to show how my informants rendered their historical experiences coherent to themselves by looking at the events they recalled as the highlights of their past. This past is separated in a series of *Tiempos* ('Times'), starting with *Perani*, the mythical beginning, and ending with today's *Tiempo de la civilizacion* ('Time of Civilization'). I propose that they understand change through the bodily transformations in these 'Times' and so their memory is a memory of bodily change. Chapter 3 follows the transformation to describe the current state of 'being civilised' and the worry on the possibility of *volverse como Mestizo* ('becoming like a *Mestizo*'). I suggest that even if there are many similar characteristics between these two states, Ashaninka people want to 'become civilised' as it gives them the knowledge necessary for *kametsa asaiiki* today, but strive to not 'become like *Mestizos*' as it implies a loss of humanity. Chapter 4 is an account of what they believe is possible to do as 'civilised' Ashaninka people and what it means to be an Ashaninka person from that perspective.

Section III, **KAMETSA ASAIKI: 'LIVING WELL' LIKE A 'REAL' ASHANINKA PERSON**, describes the three main pillars of *kametsa asaiiki* that my informants said they had inherited from their common ancestors. Chapter 5 describes the importance they place on eating the right type of food, 'real' food, for the formation of Ashaninka 'strong bodies'. I show that due to the shortages in the 'real' food of the ancestors, young couples have developed new 'real' food with the same skill by acquiring, cooking, and eating it together with their children and closely-related people. Chapter 6 describes sharing and emotional restraint. I show the seriousness with which Ashaninka people talk about emotions and the necessity of practising and advising children on the performance of the positive ones and the active avoidance of the negative ones. I also discuss the idea of sharing and how it has changed with food scarcity and purchased goods. I propose that these changes have caused a re-organisation of sharing networks and their notions of kinship. These two Chapters do not only seek to explain how these pillars are taught and learned through example and advice but also how they are put into practice in spite

of the changes from the time when they were practiced by the ancestors.

Section IV, **OF ASHANINKA PEOPLE, KITYONCARI KAMAARI, AND THE DENIAL OF KAMETSA ASAIKI IN THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR**, opens with Chapter 7, an account of the events of the war in the Ene, Tambo, and Atalaya areas from a combination of printed sources and interviews to Ashaninka people. Chapter 8 describes what my informants told me about the war as the denial of *kametsa asaiki*, and Chapter 9 expands on this by discussing the belief of the transformation of the people that followed *Sendero Luminoso* into demons. I propose that it is important to understand local meanings of violence in war, such as these transformations, if we want to reach an understanding of the processes of reconciliation in its wake. However, I do not see war as entirely a process of destruction as it has taken Ashaninka people to a process of extreme creativity as they deal with its aftermath.

Section V, **OF THE NEW INGREDIENTS FOR THE OLD KAMETSA ASAIKI RECIPE**, shows Ashaninka people's resilience and creativity by discussing the new aspects of *kametsa asaiki* developed to deal with the conundrums presented by contemporary life in Peruvian Amazonia. Chapter 10 deals with Sanctions and other conflict resolution tools; Chapter 11 deals with new forms of leadership in *Comunidades* and federations; and Chapter 12 deals with Inter-cultural health, Education and Money.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: KAMETSA ASAIKI AS RESISTANCE

In their introduction to a recent edited volume, Joanna Overing and Alan Passes state that "it clearly makes an enormous difference to the results of an anthropological study... when *from start to finish* attention is focused upon indigenous voices and points of view, rather than upon grand structures of mind, culture or society" (2000: 2) It is following this advice that I take *kametsa asaiki* as the key to understand the Ashaninka people I lived among. My understanding of it is based on how they

talked about it and practiced it inside and outside their villages as I lived, travelled, ate and laughed with them.

Kametsa asaiki is fundamental to Ashaninka people's understanding of the world and to who they are. It is what makes an Ashaninka person, granting them their moral perspective, the moral high ground they believe separates them from others. I wish to show that the fact that they pursued *kametsa asaiki* as they believed their ancestors did is clear evidence that they are not actors without agency or acculturated victims of the encroachment of National Society. *Kametsa asaiki* is, like Ashaninka people, in constant transformation as they deal with forces pressing them to change their lives. I trust that by the end of this thesis it will become obvious to the reader that *kametsa asaiki* has become a political act of resistance against the colonising attempts of the Peruvian State and National Society. *Kametsa asaiki* is a complete denial of the State's attempts to create a direct relation of dependence and servitude from individuals, in favour of the great value Ashaninka people place on kinship and independence. It is an example of indigenous Amazonian peoples' resilience and creativity as they challenge domination and colonisation in their active endeavour to preserve their desired way of life. Ashaninka people are products of history but not victims of it. In a very Marxist sense they make their own history out of circumstances that were not of their own choosing.

I realise that by talking of a concept as being shared by all the members of an indigenous society I risk falling into the essentialist trap. Different Ashaninka people had different ideas of *kametsa asaiki* and the places where they chose to live (town as opposed to *Comunidades*, *Comunidades* closer to urban areas as opposed to more secluded ones) are statements of this difference.⁶³ However, there are two things to take into account. Firstly, as social analysts we tend to essentialise the people we lived among and write about, but they are as likely to essentialise their own groups

⁶³ I must note that my fieldwork took place entirely in *Comunidades* so I cannot comment much about the life of Ashaninka people in urban centres or in secluded areas.

when they talk to us and between themselves about their practices. Secondly, I do not see different views of *kametsa asaiki* as being ambiguous but instead as testament of Ashaninka people's social elasticity, a plurality of visions of the same goal. For the purpose of this thesis I take what appears to be the main trend of *kametsa asaiki* ideas among those in the Bajo Urubamba complemented with that of the Tambo. Thus, I am not trying to sell Ashaninka people as a monolithic collective or 'Nation' as some of their politicians do.⁶⁴ Indeed, even if Ashaninka society in the macro-level could be considered as a 'society against the state' (Clastres 1987), the interactions of its members in the micro-level are not so as they relate differently to it based on experience and different opportunities.

The differences between their lives in different contexts are obvious for an outsider and for themselves, even if they do see commonalities among their groups based on a shared morality guided by *kametsa asaiki* as the tool for the creation of 'real' human kinspeople. Thus, I seek an understanding of the social relations Ashaninka people are involved in from the perception of *kametsa asaiki*. Mine is an account of the creativity of daily life as they transform their social practices and incorporate that of outsiders in order to live the way of life they desire at a time when the things necessary for its 'traditional' version are not readily available.

I miss those misty early mornings in which I sat outside Joel's house, smoking a cigarette and writing on my notebook as I waited for breakfast. My neighbours would come up and share a cigarette, asking why I was on my own and if I wanted to come over for breakfast to their houses. Children would sometimes ask if I was sick or if I was missing my family; why else would I be on my own? I had to present the 'I am studying' excuse to be left to be when I was concentrated on my notes or had to hide under my mosquito net for that. But being on your own or staying under

64 I understand why they use the concept of 'Nation' instead of *etnia* ('ethnic group'). As Ramos (1998:185) states: "As a politically insipid term, ethnic has been relegated to the realm of culture. And as a rule culture is regarded as politically innocuous. Instead, the expression... [Nation] has the force of a political tool... [the] only semantic vehicle that aptly conveys the quest for legitimate social and cultural specificity." Some leaders expand it to an 'Arawakan Nation', including Yanেশa people in it.

your mosquito net for too long is a sign of sickness-sadness, jealous thoughts or laziness. I was invited on every moment to participate in sociability, to eat, drink, talk, work, joke, laugh, protest, and worry together. That is how Ashaninka people create a community of similar⁶⁵ moral beings; that is how they strive to 'live well'.

Let's now move on to understanding the historical context in which the Ashaninka people I lived among pursue *kametsa asaiki*.

⁶⁵ I take this from Overing's (1996) assertion that in indigenous Amazonia "being of a kind' means the most intimate, convivial kinship."



JOEL INTERVIEWED IN LIMA



GERARDO SETTING A YOUNG SOLDIER'S ARM



"ASHANINKA PEOPLE TRAVEL CONSTANTLY TO PARTICIPATE IN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND PARTIES ... THESE ARE VERY SHORT TRIPS AND HAVE REPLACED THE LONG AYOMPARI TRIPS."

TRAVELLING WITH THE NUEVA ESPERANZA FOOTBALL TEAM

(PHOTO BY JONATHAN McCLEOD)



"... YOU ONLY KNOW WHERE COMUNIDADES NATIVAS ARE BECAUSE OF A SIGN AND A GROUP OF CANOES TIED BY THE RIVER DURING THE DAY."



***"...HUGE BOATS CARRYING CONTAINERS AND TRACTORS TOWARDS
SEPAHUA AND THE PLUSPETROL BASE AT LAS MALVINAS."***



***"...TURNED RIGHT TO FITZCARRALDO STREET..."
(FITZCARRALDO STREET IN THE DRY SEASON)"***

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISING THE 'EMPTY' SPACE

This Chapter will set the context for the rest of the thesis. It will show history from the 'outside', that is, from what we know from the historical record as Ashaninka notions of the past will be discussed in the following Section. I will not attempt a historical review of all we know about Ashaninka people due to word restrictions and because it has been done in great detail elsewhere.⁶⁶ Even if the same could be said for the history of Atalaya up to the years before the Internal War,⁶⁷ it is important to introduce the reader to some important recent episodes that affect the Ashaninka people in this area. I will start with the early days of land titling, and later of debt-slavery, and then pass on to the Internal War and its wake, which includes the growth of political federations and the expansion of the extraction industry (timber, gas, and oil) in the area. Even if these events have forced change at times, Ashaninka people have taken these instances as creative opportunities as their great degree of social elasticity has allowed them to adapt to or manoeuvre around these changes.

The years between 1950 and the mid-1980s were marked by Lima politicians' resolute promotion of the colonization of Amazonia.⁶⁸ This was specially so from President Fernando Belaunde's rise to power in 1963 when colonisation became the response to all of the country's problems. His ideology was summarised in his

66 See for example Ortiz (1961), Garcia del Hierro et al. (1998), Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998), Hvalkof and Veber (2005), and Varese (2006).

67 Gow (1991), Hvalkof (1998) and Garcia del Hierro (1998).

68 By 1950 Tambo and Ene men were recruited *en masse* for logging on the lower Tambo, Urubamba and Upper Ucayali. In the same period, Gran Pajonal Asheninka around the Catholic mission of Oventeni became indentured peons on large cattle-ranching haciendas (Hvalkof 1986; 1987). The colonisation around Satipo was also a violent period that has been well-documented by Barclay (1989) and Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998).

philosophy of “*La Conquista del Peru por Peruanos*” (‘The Conquest of Peru by Peruvians’) (Belaunde 1959) in which Amazonia was imagined as Lima’s future *despensa* (‘larder’) and as free land for landless Andean peasants. This was partly in response to the social pressure for land as he sought to avoid peasant uprisings such as those in La Convencion and Lares valleys in 1959. Belaunde’s colonialist attitude towards Amazonia is made obvious by his use of a variation of the Zionist slogan for Palestine: “A land without people for people without land” (Ibid:105). Even if he constantly referred to the exploitable riches of Amazonia, he never mentioned indigenous people except to point out how “absurd [it is] to think that areas of sixty or eighty thousand hectares are reserved for twenty or thirty families... These families live a primitive life [and should be concentrated] in lands adequate for permanent agriculture”⁶⁹ (Ibid:108). His policies caused a massive influx of Andean colonists to who forcibly took over large areas of indigenous peoples’ territories.⁷⁰

It is only from the mid-1970s, after the shift of priorities during General Juan Velasco's government, that the Peruvian State legally recognised the existence of indigenous Amazonian societies and granted them constitutional rights as citizens.⁷¹ As part of his attempt to solve the land issue, Velasco’s government introduced the *Ley de Comunidades Nativas* (‘Law of Native Communities’) in 1974. This Law established the legal recognition for indigenous communities which were granted juridical personhood and property rights over land and forest resources.⁷² Furthermore, it established that the territory of the *Comunidades* was inalienable and could not be divided into plots, sold, or embargoed. These measures protected indigenous groups from further disintegration and granted them a greater social

69 This attitude was not new as a special education plan drafted in 1931 concluded indigenous children had to be “incorporated to civilization through ambulatory Schools and boarding Schools” (Ballon 1991: tII 220).

70 See Benavides (1980) and Chirif (1980 and 1982).

71 However, most did not vote for at least another decade as voting rights were not granted to illiterate people until 1980. Even today many indigenous people do not have DNIs, preventing them from voting.

72 From now onwards I differentiate between *Comunidad* (plural *Comunidades*), the physical political titled space, and community, the social group living in it.

recognition which led to a greater participation in the national public space after centuries of marginalization.

Comunidades are a new form of economic, political, and social organization for indigenous peoples. As I will explain in the following Sections, the *Comunidad* has been a huge physical and social re-organization of space and practices for Ashaninka communities. In the Ashaninka case it has become a sign of their ‘civilised’ state and, I will show, extremely important for their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*. One of the most important changes is the introduction of a series of positions of responsibility and leadership. The Law’s Article 22 states that the responsibility for the running of a *Comunidad*’s affairs falls on the “Management Board... constituted by the Headperson, Secretary and Treasurer.”⁷³ The Headperson is the legal representative for all the economic, judiciary and administrative activities the *Comunidad* is involved in. The Secretary keeps the Minutes and the Register of *Comuneros* (‘Community Members’) whilst the Treasurer is in charge of the management of funds and accountancy books. However, in theory, decisions are not taken by these *Autoridades* (‘Authorities’) as the “General Assembly is the maximum organism of the *Comunidad*... formed by all *Comuneros* in the Register” (Art. 21).

However, things changed quickly after General Velasco’s government. A 1978 amendment prohibited the granting of property titles over land with forestry aptitude as the State became the owner of those areas and now has the prerogative to grant them in use to the *Comunidad*.⁷⁴ Consequently, *Comunidades* now have property rights to less than half of their titled territories. Alberto Fujimori’s government hardened the stance on these matters in the 1993 Constitution which eliminated some of the main safeguards for communal property such as the prohibition of seizure of the *Comunidad*’s territory in embargo. Additionally, even if communal property is

⁷³ The Ashaninka term for a leader is *Pinkatsari* which has been translated in many different ways that will be discussed in the Chapter on leadership.

⁷⁴ This is done by applying for timber extraction permits. The process is expensive and complicated so *Comunidades* usually end up letting *Patrones* do it in their stead, for the latter’s profit.

still inalienable, land can fall in abandonment following to a series of guidelines⁷⁵ that, of course, do not coincide with indigenous ideas of land use.

Atalaya is infamous for the human rights violations of indigenous people that became internationally public in the late-1980s.⁷⁶ Around the same time, the Internal War forced by *Sendero Luminoso* hit its most violent years in Ashaninka territory. *Sendero* started its war in the Andean region of Ayacucho in 1980 and took it to the Apurimac and Ene rivers in the mid-1980s in response to pressure from the Army and Navy in the Andes, finding shelter among Ayacucho and Huancavelica families that had invaded Ashaninka lands on the left banks of these rivers in the previous decades. Whilst originally it was only seen as a refuge, the area soon became a 'liberated zone' due to Sendero's interest in the cocaine business and the lucrative levies they imposed on timber companies. By 1985 they controlled the Apurimac and Ene valleys and the traditional land routes into Pangoa and Satipo. *Sendero* did not only prohibit Ashaninka and Nomatsigenka people to travel to Satipo for work but also to plant cash crops, thereby cancelling any sources of money. A year later they started activities in the Tambo River.

Sendero's actions started with incursions to sack missions, such as Cutivireni (Ene) and Cheni (Tambo), and NGO projects such as the Save the Children base in Otica (Tambo). This provided them with tools and other goods to divide among their followers and, importantly, disconnected the area from the influence of powerful outsiders. This early period included visits to *Comunidades* in which many Ashaninka people were sold the *Sendero* project with promises of airplanes, stores, and riches. The initial attraction to *Sendero* has to be understood in light of the historical context of the area: a mixture of invasions, uncertainty from government projects, and drug trafficking. Once there were shows of support by the local population *Sendero* started to recruit volunteers and forced others into their ranks, taking young people for

⁷⁵ See Aroca and Maury (1993).

⁷⁶ There is a thorough study of these events in AIDSESEP (1991) and Garcia del Hierro et al. (1998). For the present-day debt peonage in areas close to Atalaya see Bedoya et al. (2007).

political and military indoctrination in their 'People's Schools'. However, even if I do not know of any *Sendero* documents regarding Ashaninka people, it seems obvious from what I have been told that they were not seen as revolutionary material. Brown and Fernandez (1991:96) summarise the view of a former MIR member, a militia that acted in the area in the 1960s, that had important links to *Sendero*:

We must teach [Ashaninka people] how to live... There they are, with their little arrows, hunting, fishing... they are very lazy. We think that their children should be taken to Schools and universities to be educated so they can teach their parents, show them what work really is... [They] must believe in the [Marxist-Leninist idea of the] new generation... so that they can really understand the need for change.

Once *Comunidades* were under their control they were dissolved, in most cases by force, and its *Comuneros* were separated into 'Support Bases' that provided supplies and soldiers to *Sendero's* 'People's Army'. By the end of the 1980s *Sendero* had fifty-seven Support Bases, the largest ones of 300 people, organised into five Popular Committees (Fabian Arias and Espinoza de Rivero 1997:33). Life in the bases was strict as the word of the leaders was law and people had to do as they were told. Life followed *Sendero* discipline upheld by a strict rule of three self-criticisms and execution at the fourth fault for faults ranging from showing discontent to trying to escape.⁷⁷ By 1990 *Sendero* controlled most *Comunidades* in the Tambo and all in the Ene and Apurimac, which meant the disappearance of fifty-one out of the sixty-six *Comunidades* of the area. (Espinoza de Rivero 1994:4) The war expanded onto the Gran Pajonal, Ucayali, and Bajo Urubamba to the east and was already being fought in the Pichis, Palcazu, and Satipo area to the north. It is believed that at the height of their power *Sendero* had more than 10,000 Ashaninka people under their control.

Sendero's cruel violence and strict control caused a violent reaction by Ashaninka groups starting in 1990 after the assassination of their main political

⁷⁷ I will discuss testimonies of life in these camps in Section IV.

leaders.⁷⁸ As part of its attempt to destroy Ashaninka formal organisational tools *Sendero* had murdered or banished as many leaders and teachers as they could of the ones they had not been able to turn into the Party. This was the case in the Tambo where on 22 July 1990 Pablo Santoma, CART's⁷⁹ President, and two other local leaders were kidnapped from a meeting in which *Comunidades* were deciding the organisation of an armed resistance to *Sendero*. A *Sendero* column led by an Ashaninka man who was also one of CART's leaders took the three men upriver to Anapati where the population was forced to watch as the three leaders were hanged and had their throats slit.⁸⁰

Tambo *Comunidades* decided to fight back, agreeing to send ten men every month to the centre of the defence which was set at Poyeni, 'The Frontier'. There was no initial support from the Armed Forces as its local officers believed all Ashaninka people were on *Sendero's* side so Ashaninka men fought with bows and a few hunting shotguns and Ashaninka women defended their villages with spears and knives. It is notable that the *Comites de Autodefensa* ('Self-Defence Committees'), better known as *Rondas*, were not organised under Army or Navy pressure as in the Andes but were indigenous organisations due to the lack of military presence in the area. *Ronderos* were in charge of defending the line separating *Sendero* territory and free territory as well as raiding their camps to free those under their control in patrols that could last from two days to a fortnight.

Tambo *Ronderos'* success led to the establishment of a military garrison in Poyeni a year later, which stayed put until 1994, and the *Comunidad* becoming a 'Population Nucleus', a refugee camp for rescued and escapee Ashaninka people.⁸¹

78 The Pichis case is similar. The MRTA killed Alejandro Calderon, their leader, upon which the area organised under his son Alcides. Ashaninka forces committed excesses that have been studied in detail by the TRC (CVR 2002:270-5).

79 Ashaninka Federation for the Tambo River.

80 This was so traumatic that most fled immediately after the column left and once they came back they moved the village upriver, a three-hour walk from the original one. The gardens of cash-crops that had been planted before the war are still being used though.

81 The other three were Betania (Tambo), Puerto Ocopa (Perene), and Cutivireni (Ene). Valle

By 1993 there were over 5,000 Ashaninka people living in the Nuclei and more arrived every month. (Rodriguez 1993:68) By 1994 Ashaninka *Ronderos* had liberated half of the 10,000 Ashaninka believed to be under *Sendero* control (Fabian Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:31). A year later it was deemed to be safe enough for groups in the Nuclei to start moving back to their *Comunidades*, in part supported by the governments' Programme for the Support of Repopulation. This programme had problems of its own as its only goal was the return of people to their former *Comunidades* and did not help people wanting to relocate in the areas in which they had been refugees for years. Additionally, many groups went back to territories that had been invaded by Andean colonists in their absences, a problem that persists in the Ene.

I believe it is important to think of the war not only as a destructive process but also as one of creative engagement. Ashaninka people came out of it badly hit but their social flexibility has taken them to a successful process of trial and error as different social practices have been changed, borrowed, or created, in order to deal with the problems presented by the war's aftermath. These tools will be discussed throughout this thesis but especially in Section V. In order to understand the context they live in today we must also consider the *Ley de Arrepentimiento* ('Repentance Law') passed in 1993, an amnesty to people involved in what was legally defined as terrorist activities. It applied to anyone processed for terrorism or involved in this activity that showed repentance by renouncing terrorist activity and giving information on the group's activities or its members. Depending on the information they provided and the extent of their participation they had their sentences reduced, were absolved, or avoided trial.

However, in practice the law means that victims and perpetrators are now living in close physical proximity in Ashaninka villages. Even if most Ashaninka

Esmeralda and Kiteni (Ene) served the same purpose but for non-indigenous people. Even the *Rondas* were separated as Ashaninka people had their own and *Mestizos* a separate one.

people believe their *paisanos* in *Sendero* were deceived, they are still considered to be dangerous because of what they learned among them and the transformation they are believed to have suffered. There is great resentment among *Rondero* leaders for what the law did. I was told that "Because of the law... we had to let back [the 'repented'] even if we did not want to." Thus, *kametsa asaiki* has become an important communal and political project in the wake of the war in order to be able to deal with what happened, and one of resistance and defiance at a moment when the threats presented by the State and other powerful outsiders require them to stay united. The war and its aftermath will be covered in full in Section IV.

Ashaninka people's lives today are also affected by the extractive industries. Atalaya is well-known for timber extraction as most of the timber exported by Peru originates in this area. The huge extraction has caused the depletion of fine timber and a decrease in game through deforestation and disturbances due to trucks and tractors working in large State-granted concessions and in illegal timber camps. In recent years the area has had an even more disturbing experience with the discovery and extraction of natural gas in Camisea. Even if the Atalaya area is not considered as suffering from a 'direct impact' of these activities, the amount of heavy traffic that goes up the Urubamba towards Camisea has a massive disturbance in Ashaninka and Yine lives. The traffic is such that it makes it dangerous for canoes to cross the rivers due to the waves created by the passage of cargo boats and, even worse, the traffic has made fish banks move away, greatly diminishing the availability of fish. *Comunidades* along the Bajo Urubamba are paid a ridiculously low compensation for these disturbances that work out at £1,000 per year. In Nueva Esperanza this meant that each family received around £16 every year.

Even with all these disturbances, Atalaya was not considered as part of the provinces that received part of the taxes the government was paid by PlusPetrol, the company exploiting the natural gas. However, 2004 marked a historical moment of unity between the different inhabitants of the area as they, under the leadership of

Ashaninka Mayor Joel Bardales, fought for a slice of the millions. Hundreds of indigenous, *Mestizo*, and White people organised strikes and blocked the Ucayali and Bajo Urubamba. Their protests, strikes, and march to Lima, as well as Bardales' fierce negotiations, took the government to grant Atalaya part of the FOCAM⁸² that adds up to around £8 million every year from 2005 onwards.⁸³ This coalition dissolved soon after, showing the differences in their goals as soon Atalaya *Patrones* and *Mestizos* pushed for the dreamed highway to take their products by land to Satipo and Lima while indigenous groups fought against it due to the influx of people that would come into the area.⁸⁴ As expected, most of the FOCAM money is spent in unnecessary works in the town.⁸⁵

It is also important to note how fast the population of the *Comunidades* of the Bajo Urubamba has grown as they now average 200 people whilst Gow's estimates for the early 1980s had them at around 100. This is a combination of migrations and better health care for indigenous peoples, especially through vaccination programmes and quarterly visits by health brigades to check on infants. Additionally, more people own shotguns and large nets so it becomes easier to hunt and fish when the animals are available. Their diet has changed from game, fish, and planted products to include tinned fish, pasta, rice, and other products bought in Atalaya. This is funded through work for *Patrones* but more and more through the sale of cash crops which is becoming the largest source of income for Bajo Urubamba

82 Taxes received from the extraction of gas in Camisea.

83 This movement has many similarities with that of the 'Forest People's Alliance' in Brazil (see Graham 2002:194).

84 The transport of timber to Lima by land rather than to Pucallpa by river would increase their profit. The road would also allow for large coffee, cocoa, and fruit plantations like those around Satipo to be opened closer to Atalaya. Additionally, there is a dirt road that runs on the right bank of the Tambo up to Poyeni which is mainly used by timber companies but it is also used by Satipo coffee and cocoa buyers. The ease to sell their produce, albeit at cheaper prices, allows Tambo Ashaninka people to rely less on *Patrones*. Family's economies are based on cocoa, supplemented with work for the timber companies working in their own *Comunidad* which paid twice as much as Atalaya *Patrones*. Younger men look for jobs in Repsol and its exploration contractors which pay twice as much as the timber companies do. The different opportunities and attitudes to paid work will be explored in Section V.

85 Including a huge library, which is empty, and a paved road leading to the Mayor's house. The Mayor only starts to give out gifts in *Comunidades* in the weeks before the elections.

families and is already so for the successful cocoa growers of the Tambo. Even if large timber companies are not common in the Bajo Urubamba as fine timber is scarce, they do work extensively in the Tambo. This is why many of these villages are composed of wood plank houses with corrugated metal roofs that timber companies give as part of their payment for timber extraction. It is very difficult for *Comunidades* to cut their own timber legally, which is owned by the State, due to the obstacles placed by government agencies, the high prices of the applications, and the corruption involved in it. However, the success of the indigenous mobilization for the strikes around the FOCAM led to a confidence of success for future protests. The swiftness with which they organised led by their federations was seen again when their territory and lives were once again threatened by government actions, this time the passing of a package of Legislative Decrees in 2007 that led to the infamous *Baguazo* two years later.

It is within this historical framework that we must understand the reaction provoked by these Legislative Decrees in *Comunidades* and the federations that represent them. The Executive launched a campaign in October 2007 to justify a package of ninety-nine legislative decrees through a series of articles and speeches in which President Garcia warned the public of the existence of groups attempting to prevent Peru's advance towards development, the free market, foreign investment, and modernity. He compared these groups, in which he included *Comunidades*, to the *Perro del Hortelano* ('the Dog in the Manger') describing them as relics of the past blocking Peru's development. Today, 75% of Peruvian Amazonia has been given in concession to gas and oil companies as opposed to only 15% in 2004. These exploration and extraction areas creep into the territory of 95% of *Comunidades*. This is in addition to the government's refusal to grant titles to the *Comunidades* that have applied for them but are yet to receive them, or to grant land extensions to hundreds of *Comunidades*. This is all even more dangerous when we consider that Peru has the largest indigenous Amazonian population but the smallest protected area for these

peoples. The continuous unilateral change of rules of the game in which they and their *Comunidades* are involved do not give them any kind of trust on the State and violates their right to have rights. That is, their right to pursue *kametsa asaiki*.

All this shows an obvious attempt by the Peruvian government to concentrate land and natural resources in private hands. The decrees Garcia's government attempted to bully through Congress are more than just about property rights and access to natural resources, they are an attack on ethnic identity and on indigenous peoples' right to life which States have the obligation to guarantee as well as to recognize their special relationship with their territories and natural resources. These rights are recognised by the Peruvian State through a number of international treaties, mainly the WTO's 169 Convention and the United Nations Declaration for Indigenous People's Rights. However, in 2008 a WTO Commission concluded that the Peruvian State had not implemented the Convention and recommended the government to advance immediately in the design of appropriate mechanisms of participation for indigenous peoples. The Peruvian Congress is yet to debate a law for indigenous consultation but the President of the Congress elected in 2010 has promised it will happen during his presidency.

The accumulation of frustration and mistrust took AIDSESEP⁸⁶ to call for the first Indigenous Amazonian Peoples' National Strike on 9 August 2008, demanding the repeal of laws they believed infringed their rights, and the right to be consulted before projects that would impact them directly were given in concession. A year later, on 9 April 2009, after another frustrating period of promises, reports and dialogue tables, AIDSESEP called for a second National Strike which ended with the violent events in Bagua which I will discuss in Section V. Both protests were based on three points. Firstly, the threat presented by President Garcia's anti-*Comunidad* discourses which blamed indigenous Amazonians' poverty on the lack of productivity of their lands and natural resources, as well as their ignorance of more

86 Umbrella organisation for most indigenous Amazonian organisations in Peru.

profitable modes of production. Secondly, they protested the lack of direct consultation to indigenous peoples about the new decrees, which violated the WTO's 169 Convention and the UN's Declaration for Indigenous People's Rights. Thirdly, they were against the content of the decrees as they ignored the complex relationship between indigenous peoples and their territories.

These three points show that this government aims at weakening the social fabric of *Comunidades* and their capacity for organised action against large-sale extractive projects. The government has stopped the titling of new *Comunidades* and has introduced changes in favour of an easier division of communal lands into private plots which only makes it easier for mining and oil companies to control them. The government's insistence that indigenous peoples and their organizations are incapable of making their own readings of this context, and so they are being manipulated by dark forces behind them, is very dangerous as it not only discriminates legitimate social actors but also keeps the Executive in an irresponsible state of blindness and deafness. These traumatic historical experiences have left indigenous groups with a deep insecurity in regards to their territory and a generalised mistrust of politicians and external economic interests.

That is the context; let's move on to the people.

CONCLUSION

KAMETSA ASAIKI AND BECOMING VISIBLE

This thesis is an examination of Ashaninka people's ideas of *kametsa asaiki* and its transformation. I believe that a serious understanding of this philosophy of life will let us reach a deep understanding of their life project. Their flexibility and the adaptability of *kametsa asaiki* to change have allowed them to resist through centuries of encroachment and maintain a definite identity as indigenous peoples. I will show that it is their ability to think in terms of the transformations of their bodies, of their perspective, and of the way they perceive and use *kametsa asaiki* which has allowed them to survive centuries of violent attempts at colonization by more powerful groups ranging from the Inka to the Peruvian State. This elasticity allows them to mould most new pieces to fit it in their social puzzle.

For the Peruvian State, as for so many other organisations throughout history, Amazonia is a great empty territory waiting to be conquered. It is waiting to have its natural resources – rubber, timber, oil, coca, gold or natural gas – plundered, or to be colonised by landless Andean peasants. Ashaninka people, as many other indigenous Amazonians, are 'invisible' in the eyes of the Peruvian State as most do not have an ID Card and thus cannot vote, access state benefits and so, to a certain extent, they do not exist.⁸⁷ Their territory, even if given to them with official titles, is still seen as empty as it is not used in the way the State thinks it should be. In fact, until the 2009 *Baguazo* they were not more than tourist attractions or obstacles to development. Thus, it is not surprising that the political organisations of the different rivers I visited aim to get ID Cards for all the inhabitants of their jurisdiction as it will

⁸⁷ A Congressman infamously declared that he would not trust the number of victims the TRC had registered for the war until he saw the ID numbers of all the dead in their list. His great ignorance of the lack of ID cards among indigenous people and the burning of registries in Ashaninka territory or the Andes is telling.

not only grant them access to a few State benefits but, most importantly, would position them as an influential block of voters in regional elections.

Kametsa asaiki is about ensuring kinship by getting the things and following the right practices necessary to create 'real' human beings. Change in tradition does not redirect this mission but provides them with different tools to achieve it. The Chapters of this thesis will present these tools as they were discussed by the people I lived among in the context of the historical events and changes that have been introduced in this Chapter. Let's now move on to find out how Ashaninka people believe they have experienced these years and how they recall their actions and those of their ancestors in the historical events that they deem worthy to remember. Those are the events that they believe have caused their bodies to transform.



KENDIS READYING THE PEKEPEKE ENGINE FOR A TRIP BACK HOME.

SECTION II

"THE ANCIENTS DID NOT KNOW HOW TO WEAR UNDERWEAR":
OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF THE ASHANINKA
HISTORICAL BODY



INTRODUCTION

OF ASHANINKA BODIES AND ASHANINKA MEMORIES

This Section will discuss what change means and how it is experienced by the Ashaninka people I lived among. They spoke of their past as being separated into different *Tiempos* ('Times')⁸⁸ starting at *Perani* ('before'), the mythical beginning, up to today's *Tiempo de la civilización* ('Time of Civilization'). When discussing these periods different people emphasized the bodily transformations they and their ancestors experienced in processes of becoming⁸⁹ as time passed and new foods were eaten⁹⁰, new clothes were worn, and new beings appeared in the world. The key is that these transformations are physical but also moral as specific bodies give specific perspectives⁹¹ that, I propose following their statements, granted them specific moral repertoires. I will argue that in order to understand how they experience change we must understand their ideas of the transformational nature of the body, the transformations they believe to have gone through historically, and how these have influenced their perspective.

Halbwachs (1992) got us thinking analytically in terms of how the past is shaped by the concerns of the present. It is this awareness of the present as actively constructed by the social beings that inhabit it which makes the past worth remembering, giving it historical significance as sequences of acts and events that

88 This was always said in Spanish. Fewer people said *época* ('epoch').

89 My informants use the Spanish *volverse* ('to become'). *Volverse como X* ('Become like X'), or *Se ha vuelto como X* ('Has become like X'), or *Nos estamos volviendo como X* ('We are becoming like X').

90 Similarly, see Oakdale (2008) for the importance of food in thinking about change among Kayabí people.

91 Ashaninka people's thought and practice fits 'perspectivism' as outlined by Viveiros de Castro: "The world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human and nonhuman, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view" relating to their bodies (1998:469). A being's point of view — whether a being observed appears as a peccary, jaguar, or human being — depends on the kind of body from which that specimen is observed. See also Lima (1996).

have contributed to creating the present. Of course, memory is also a representation of lived experience which holds relation to real events. Halbwachs gave us insight on how memories are fundamental to the creation and maintenance of community and its importance in guiding social and political action. In this sense, memory helps explain the present situation of those whose past is remembered, elucidating the manner in which the group, the 'we' of the present, came into existence through the actions of the ancestors who fashioned 'our' world. Connerton kept us on a similar line but his analysis is closer to the Ashaninka lived experience of the body as a receptacle of memory. He asserts that “[T]he past is, as it were, sedimented in the body... memory is sedimented, or amassed, in the body” (1989:72). Thus, the body is inscribed with and becomes a container of memory.

Historical representation is a very selective process. The interesting point is finding out why my informants told me what they did about the past, which I cannot say are stories of what 'really happened', and avoided events we know did happen. I believe that the meaning of what they recalled is not fortuitous but depends on the context in which they told it. Their narratives use the past in a creative manner, combining elements of their common past to benefit their interests in the present. In this sense, the conscious appropriation of history involves both remembering and forgetting, both dynamic processes full of intentionality. Thus, specific instances of the past are remembered and forgotten not only for an understanding of the past but also to reflect on their lives today. I propose that *Tiempos* are a conscious re-creation of themselves in the present through these narratives of the past.

Lambek's argument that “memory is never out of time and never morally or pragmatically neutral” (1996:240) fits well with the Ashaninka case. The people I lived among are skilfully reinventing themselves with the past they construct in their narratives. They strategically narrate it as empowering social action as their stories of the past describe both positive and negative change as being stimulated by *their own choices* not the actions of outsiders or more powerful beings which may be more

obvious from a quick reading of the historical record. Thus, any misgivings they have suffered are believed to be due to their own ignorant errors. This is the gnostic attitude that Varese attributes to Ashaninka people:

Error... is a consequence of ignorance and the cause of perdition of humanity, which was primordially transformed into animals. ... Error and ignorance of norms are causes of real and symbolic perdition. The consequence of this concept is a gnostic essential attitude: Knowledge saves; ignorance leads to being lost. (2002:31)

Had they known better, I was constantly told, they would have fought back the *Patrones*/defeated *Sendero* earlier/etc. Of course, we know of Ashaninka people who killed *Patrones* and joined large-scale rebellions against missionaries, all in the name of *kametsa asaiki*. However, even if their accounts might not be what 'really happened' they are part of the "processes whereby individuals experience, interpret, and create changes within social orders" (Hill 1988:3). Whatever the veracity of these accounts may be, they show the Ashaninka body as being imbued with memory, which is a memory of the body. The body becomes the form and content of their recollection of the past⁹² and, I argue, their tool to think about the present and the future. Hence, it is not only important to think of what they prefer to remember but also how they do it as "Cultural meanings are embedded not only in the events and personalities chosen to be... remembered but also in the process itself of remembering the past." (Cormier 2003:123). It is only through the body that they can put the past and the future in context.

Discussing temporality implies thinking about change which, especially when talking about indigenous peoples, forces us to the debate between 'tradition' and 'acculturation'. I agree with Vilaça's critique that: "[Acculturation studies] do not pay enough attention to the indigenous sociocosmic conceptions... [I]ndigenous sociology is above all a 'physiology' so that in place of 'acculturation'... [we have] transubstantiation and metamorphosis (2008:183)". This Section follows the

92 I take inspiration from Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro's (1985) assertion that, for Tupinambá people, vengeance becomes the form and content of their recollection of the past.

Amazonianist trend in analysing these social processes in the context of the centrality of the body and its transformations to indigenous perspectives. I believe that analysing how they think of their bodies and its historical transformations can shed light on how they think about change and experience it as for Ashaninka people, like other Amazonians, “to change tradition is... 'to change body'” (Vilaça 2007:184). This is crucial when we consider that those I lived among believed they were becoming ‘like *Mestizos*’. Several Amazonianists have noted that Amerindian lived worlds point more to a constant 'becoming' than a stable 'being'.⁹³ Thus, to see their ideas of 'becoming like *Mestizos*' as loss of culture/tradition is a grave oversimplification as it imposes an essentialised notion of cultural practices they do not share.⁹⁴

It is unnecessary to remind the reader that bodies are socially constituted, in the sense that they are constructed as an object of knowledge or discourse. Or that from an indigenous Amazonian point of view bodies are not asocial biological objects but the locus of the construction of sociality, the “primary site where personhood, social identities, and relationships to others are created and perpetuated.” (Conklin 2001:xx) There is a tendency among indigenous Amazonians to think of the human body as transformable (Viveiros de Castro 1998) and it has been suggested that in their thought the body is inherently unstable.⁹⁵ Ashaninka perspectives focus on the centrality of the body, its construction, and its transformations. This body is not a generic biological trait but a socially constructed entity built through experience and social relationships.⁹⁶ They construct their desired bodies through eating some substances, avoiding others, by choosing to wear different clothes, which become an extension of their body, and by living together.

Ashaninka language does not have a word for body so the Spanish word

93 Ex. “For the Araweté, the person is inherently in transition; human destiny is a process of other becoming.” (Viveiros de Castro 1992:1)

94 Except during politically-staged performances of ethnicity.

95 See for example Taylor (1996) and Vilaça (2005).

96 See Gow (1989; 1991) for similar ideas amongst the related Piro (Yine) people. See also Vilaça (2002; 2005; 2007).

cuervo ('body') is used in its stead. In fact, the closest Ashaninka word is *nowaka* ('my flesh') or *i/owaka* ('his/her flesh'), which is the same term used for that of animals. Weiss tells us that "The parts of the body that [Ashaninka people recognize and name are also] recognized in the bodies of animals... and are given the same names. The human heart, for example, is..., *nosire*... The corresponding organ in any other creature, whether it walks, swims, or flies, is... *isire* (his heart)." (1975:426) However, *noshire* is more than just the heart as it is also translated as 'my soul' or 'my thoughts'. This does not mean that the heart and the soul are the same, but rather that the heart is the seat of a person's soul and true thoughts. Weiss explains that:

[T]he heart is understood to be the seat of thought and speech, the function of the brain being unknown. "I think about him" is, in the [Ashaninka] tongue, *nokenki-sireiri* (literally "I relate about him in my heart, or soul"). One informant... argued that the soul actually pervades the body, which is why a blow on the head or on a limb can do great damage, but the center of the soul remains in the heart. (1975:427)

Weiss points out that Ashaninka people feel "contempt for the physical body because of its limitations, and its insignificant role as mere "clothing" or "skin" of the soul." (1975:258) Similarly, I was told that upon death the body may decay underground but the soul may stay behind as a ghost or may head for the sky. In fact, I was told by an old *sheripiari* that upon his teacher's death "he left here his former clothing, his former skin to rot... but what was his soul here went and lived with the good spirits." It seems that the human body is simply the clothing of the soul, and so what is put on it (ie. clothes, paint) is only a different clothing for the internal locus of Ashaninka personhood.

Like other Amazonians, the Ashaninka body grants them their perspective on the world and therefore of whom they are in relation to everyone else. I propose that this perspective also includes morality as, at least in the Ashaninka case, it is obvious that having the 'strong' body of an *Ashaninkasanori* ('real Ashaninka person') is only achieved through relations of positive morality by acquiring and consuming food in

the way taught by *kametsa asaiki*.⁹⁷ Comparatively, White and Andean people are said to be different, physically and morally, because of what they eat and drink and their stinginess as they do it.

This understanding of past and possible future bodily transformations constructs their sense of the present and their own identity. Following the view that “...the notion of the person and a consideration of the place of the human body in the vision that indigenous societies produce of themselves are fundamental for an adequate comprehension of the social organization and cosmology of these societies” (Seeger et al. 1979:3), this Section seeks an understanding of Ashaninka peoples' accounts of their past, their understanding of who they are in the present, and their ideas of what they will become in the future. This will be done through an analysis of what I was told about the Ashaninka body and how it has transformed since the days when they were the only beings on earth.

I suggest that in the Ashaninka case the conscious production of historical memory arises from the contemporary necessity for a definition of collective identity. Thus, historical consciousness of this sort is not the next step in a cognitive understanding of the past but is taken as a model by choice. The events they choose to remember about the past are strategic and context-specific and so can be modified as time passes and their needs change. Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people, with such a mix of dialects, degrees of adaptation, and regional origin, all in an area that is not part of their ‘traditional’ territory, need these collective histories for the sake of social cohesion at a time when they must be united to deal with the impositions on their lives by powerful outsiders. This memory also becomes necessary when claiming belonging to the area now that their territories are under threat. As Malkki asserts, “[C]ollective histories flourish where they have a meaningful, signifying use in the present... actors produce historical consciousness where they need it for the sake of

97 See Londoño Sulkin (2005) for an insightful account of the link between morality and perspectivism among Muinane people.

life and action.” (1995:242)

I ask the reader to join me in thinking of Ashaninka bodies like Lévi-Strauss did of myth: transformations evidencing historical processes. I aim to look at social change as Ashaninka people experience it, that is, from the perspective of their mode for producing transformations. In Amazonia bodily transformations can be caused by the exchange of bodily substances following activities such as sexual intercourse, sleeping together, living in close proximity, and participating in homicide, or by modifications to the kinds of clothing, as well as by sharing food and eating together.⁹⁸ I believe that, like their Yine (Piro) neighbours, Ashaninka people experience the world as an ongoing “system of transformations”:

The shifts... in style of clothing, shamanry or ritual life... are genuine changes, and must be understood as so by the analyst. They are understood to be so by Piro people. But they do not raise... the problem of continuity and change, for Piro people know that they are transformations of transformation. (Gow 2001:309)

I am not the first to highlight the importance of Ashaninka ideas on the transformational nature of things. Weiss wrote four decades ago that for them “there is no such occurrence as the creation of something out of nothing, but only the transformation of something out of something else.” (1972:169). I use this idea as an analytical tool to help me unpack the anthropological questions surrounding these changes. Following Vilaça's work, I believe that instead of focusing on changing traditions we should focus on the changes in bodies that create them.

I am aware that there may be other ways of remembering the past and note that there are some who recognize other shorter *Tiempos* or different versions of the experiences in these. It is clear that the past is never represented in a uniform or uncontested way, even within the same society. However, for the purpose of my thesis I look at the main line of understanding of the past that I encountered in the Bajo Urubamba. I believe that the accounts of these *Tiempos* were sorted out by so

⁹⁸ See for example, Conklin (2000; 2001), Fausto (2007), Gow (1991; 2000), Lagrou (2000), Rival (1998), Vilaça (2005; 2007).

many different people in such a similar manner because it has become a political necessity to do so as this view is coherent with their present-day *kametsa asaiki* project. I must also note that there was more emphasis put on specific *Tiempos* depending on context as the 'Time of Slavery' had more emphasis in political contexts and the 'Time of the Ancestors' was emphasised when complaining about the lack of game. It is also important to note that different *Tiempos* receive different emphasis by different age groups. I will not address all these variations due to a lack of space but recognise their importance and will definitely concentrate on them in future research. It is also interesting to note that the separation into *Tiempos* was done when speaking in both Ashaninka and Spanish.

Before we move on I must recognise that by discussing concepts such as 'history', 'time', 'memory', and 'body', I am immersing myself in debates that surpass the borders of our discipline. However, it is not my intention to embark on a deconstruction of these notions as academic concepts but to treat them 'ethnographically', that is, in the way they work and are used in Ashaninka everyday life. I use these terms because it is the only way to translate the terms my informants used so that they can be understood by the reader.

Chapter 2 is the first of this Section. It will guide the reader through the processes of 'becoming' and body transformation that my Ashaninka informants believe they, as part of an imagined community, and their ancestors experienced in the *Tiempos* in which they divide their past. I point out that, in common with other indigenous Amazonian peoples, they believe that the changes in their bodies were caused by the consumption of new food and the wearing of new clothes. I follow these transformations paying a close attention to the shifts in perspective that came with them. Chapter 3 will deal more explicitly with their ideas of their current 'civilised' body and the 'civilised' perspective that comes with it. I expand on what Ashaninka people in the Bajo Urubamba say about their lives as 'civilised' people and the advantages it grants them over their 'uncivilised' ancestors. Finally, Chapter

4 will show this perspective in action in everyday life through their belief that the most important part about being 'civilised' is knowing 'how to defend ourselves' and 'how to live in a *Comunidad*'. It is noteworthy that whilst it is highly attractive to 'become civilised' there is always the danger of 'becoming like *Mestizos*' which is highly undesirable and dangerous. Whilst 'becoming like *Mestizos*' is a serious loss of humanity, 'becoming civilised' is about empowerment in the pursuit of the 'good life'. For my informants being 'civilised' is not opposed to 'tradition'; it is a conscious choice to counter the ignorance of their ancestors.

This Section is my contribution to the Amazonian literature dealing with indigenous notions of the past that has flourished in the discipline in the last twenty years.⁹⁹ The question of the historical creation of the body is extremely important for my Ashaninka informants and their ideas and accounts of these transformations must be taken seriously if we want to understand how they experience change, who they believe themselves to be today, and what they believe to be in the process of becoming. This way of thinking about the past is one of their 'audacious innovations', "a new way... [of rendering] their recent historical experiences coherent to themselves... which they [seem] to find both intellectually and emotionally satisfying." (Gow 2001:9) In the end, the question of the body is a question of how they negotiate their position in the world.¹⁰⁰

Let's now move on to the *Tiempos*.

99 See especially the papers in Hill (1988) and Fausto and Heckenberg (2007). See also Taylor (1993) and Gow (2001).

100 For recent discussion of indigenous Amazonian understandings of embodiment and selfhood see Basso (1996), Belaunde (2000; 2001), Conklin (2001; 2001a), Descola (2001), Fisher (2001), Gow (2000; 2001), Lagrou (1998), McCallum (2001), Vilaça (2000; 2002) among many others.

CHAPTER 2

ASHANINKA *TIEMPOS* ('TIMES') AS A MODE OF ORGANISING THE PAST

I will now group the accounts of the different *Tiempos*. The first is *Perani* ('before'), the mythological past, in which the errors made by my informants' ancestors led to their first transformation as people became animals, trees, rocks, and Sun and Moon left for the sky. What followed was the *Tiempo de los antiguos* ('Time of the Ancients/Ancestors') which covers the lives of their ancestors left on earth after the transformational heroes left for the sky or under the earth. There is no discernible epoch in my informants' accounts until the *Tiempo de la esclavitud* ('Time of Slavery') which started when a young woman, going against her father's warning, fished White people out of a lake. This led to the time of *Patrones'* rule, as Ashaninka people back then 'did not know how to defend themselves'. There was a transition as the first *Comunidades* were titled during the *Tiempo de los gringos* ('Time of the Missionaries') but it was superimposed by the *Tiempo de la subversion* ('Time of the Subversion'), the Peruvian Internal War which leads to today's *Tiempo de la civilizacion* ('Time of Civilization'). I warn the reader that I do not claim these *Tiempos* are experienced by all Ashaninka people in the same way as the model is mainly from the Bajo Urubamba, although parts of it are present in the Tambo. These *Tiempos* should not be seen as having clear boundaries but instead as fractal and overlapping as these are part of a much larger continuous transformation.

I have not been able to find this model in older ethnographic works about Ashaninka people. It must be noted that whilst Tambo Ashaninka people do use parts of this model today they did not do so in the 1960s as Weiss does not mention it in his very complete account of the area. This leads me to think that these historical markers are a recent introduction to Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people's

understanding of time as a similar model is used by their Yine neighbours.¹⁰¹ Could it be that this view is an import added to local indigenous peoples' practices that has been adapted to their discourse as the 'civilised perspective', which I will discuss in the next Chapter, requires a different way of dealing with time? I propose that this model becomes necessary as a project of group cohesion but will have to retake the question of the origin of this model in my future research.¹⁰²

For now let's start, as my favourite myths do, with *perani*.

PERANI ('BEFORE')

Ashaninka people are certain they were the first beings on earth. Back then they ignorantly ate earth thinking it was manioc and drank watery mud thinking it was manioc beer. This is an example of Ashaninka perspectivism as they detach themselves and point out differences from their ancestors based on their different bodies. The ancestors saw these important 'real' foods as they did because they did not have the perspective necessary to see things differently and thus ate mud through ignorance. As I was told repeatedly, "they did not know how to eat".

The world became what it is today due to the transformations carried out by a series of mythical heroes and tricksters. *Perani* there were only Ashaninka humans and most animals and plants did not exist in a world with no seasons or the darkness of night. Moon, *Kashiri*, was an Ashaninka man and had not yet conceived his son Sun, *Katsirinkaiteri*. However, many of these early humans would lost their original body after being transformed by *Avireri*, a powerful transformative being. Fewer people were transformed by Sun on the day he left for the sky, and others by spontaneous transformations. These transformations were triggered by the subject's transgressions such as stealing *Avireri*'s fruits – turning his nephews into monkeys –, being too violent – turning warriors into wasps and porcupines – or being a

101 See Gow (1991:62).

102 This would not be the first important 'indigenous' practice being imported from the *Mestizo* or White world. See Gow (1996) for an account on the import of *ayahuasca* shamanry from *Mestizos*.

drunkard – turning a drunk into a fly attracted to manioc beer – . All

[W]ere sudden transformations... [marking] the metamorphosis of a member of the original human... stock into the first representative of a particular species of animal or plant... [or] some feature of the terrain. ... [The] original [Ashaninka] population... supplied the material from which was fashioned much of what else is found on the earth's surface. (Weiss 1975:309-10)

TIEMPO DE LOS ANTIGUOS ('TIME OF THE ANCIENTS/ANCESTORS')

The 'Time of the Ancients/Ancestors' is the product of Avireri's transformations, the first bodily changes in memory. After these they found themselves in a world physically similar to the one in which they live in today. Some were now animals, allowing humans to eat game and fish accompanying the manioc they had learned to plant and make into manioc beer.¹⁰³ This gave them the first combination of 'real' food in their memories of the past. But it is also important that they say they started to wear cotton *cushmas*¹⁰⁴ as they learned how to spin cotton and weave it. These two changes are significant as indigenous Amazonian "Bodies and their extensions— clothing and ornaments— are also sites of perspective; thus changes in clothing, diet and surroundings entail changes in perspective." (Belaunde in Santos-Granero 2009:494) This statement fits in with the way I have seen Ashaninka people deal with clothes.

The world was now fractured into sky and earth and people started eating the foodstuffs and wearing the clothes that my informants believe to have formed the bodies of their *acharineite* ('our ancestors/grandparents'). This would not change for a long time. Veber follows the historical record to show "There are no indications that the *cushma* has changed substantially over the past three or four centuries."

103 A girl in her first menstruation is taught how to by a still human Cricket. He asks her not to tell where she got real manioc and how she learned to make manioc beer but she does tell her mother upon her insistence. As punishment, manioc stopped growing immediately into huge pieces and now has to be planted and waited for.

104 Long, sleeve-less cotton tunics worn traditionally by men, women, and children. These are not commonly worn in the Bajo Urubamba but are in other areas like the Gran Pajonal and the Ene River.

(1996:160). 17th Century drawings by Spanish explorers and early 20th Century photos depict men and women wearing *cushmas* similar to those worn today. An old man I met at an Anniversary party in Oviri (Tambo) told me, as we discussed the clothing worn by young men and women, that “In the past our grandparents didn’t have underwear... both men and women didn’t wear it! And they only had one *cushma*, old... and wore no shoes. They didn’t use mosquito nets either... They didn’t know...”

It is not known exactly when Ashaninka people started to spin and weave cotton. I was told that in *Perani* people wore *cushmas* made from *yanchama*¹⁰⁵ until women were taught how to weave by Spider when she was still human. Spider taught her granddaughter how to spin, who in turn taught other women once her grandmother was transformed into an arachnid by *Avireri*. Anderson records a version of the myth of Spider that ends: “When we go to the forest we can see the threads she leaves there so that flies will fall into her trap. Flies were [Spider’s] favourite food. She ate them as if they were... birds.” (2000:207). Her non-food diet, or ignorant perspective of flies, sheds light on what Ashaninka people think of these ancestors, even those carrying important knowledge such as weaving. The use of *yanchama cushmas*, even if less desirable than cotton ones, did not stop then as I was told of men in parts of the Ene wearing them over penis belts until the 1950s and Elick (1970:126-7) reports having seen children wearing similar *cushmas* in the Nevati in the same decade. The use of this material has also been recorded by Veber (1996:160-162) who writes that these were made in times or areas of cotton scarcity and that some people in Gran Pajonal knew how to make them as recently as the 1980s.

What type of perspective was given by this cotton-clothed and 'real' food-fed body? I can only refer to what Ashaninka people told me about these ancestors. We can see their accounts from two perspectives. At times they are described as people

105 *Olmedia aspera*.

who 'lived well' in peace and abundance as they were skilled hunters with strong moral bodies created by the copious amounts of game, fish, and manioc beer available to them. I think these accounts, explained in the next Chapter, are part of a highly essentialised and romanticised notion of what life used to be before the Internal War that has been developed to support the post-war *kametsa asaiki* project.

TIEMPO DE LA ESCLAVITUD ('TIME OF SLAVERY')

There does not seem to be any salient transformations until the arrival of the *wirakocha* ('White people'). This marks the beginning of what some call the 'Time of Slavery', recognised as a time of *Patrón* abuse caused by the ignorance of Ashaninka people who "didn't know how to defend themselves".

Varese gives an Ashaninka account of the arrival of White people:

[White people were] in a lake. Near there lived [Ashaninka people]... One day [an Ashaninka person] heard the barking of a dog coming from the lake. 'Good,' he said, 'I'm going to catch it,' and he took along some plantains to do so. But plantains are food for people, and the dog refused to eat them. Instead, all the virakocha came out of the lake and began to chase [Ashaninka people] and... killed all of them... The only survivor was a shiripiari... (2002:152-153)

Weiss tells a variation of the myth of contact that also emphasises violence:

Long ago [an Ashaninka man]... was fishing in... lake [Ompikirinkiani]. He first used a papaya on his hook, but without success... Finally, he baited his hook with another [person's] child – and pulled up the Spaniards [who] pursued him [and]... sliced [him]... up... (1975:415)

These accounts show the great difference perceived between the Ashaninka body and that of Whites. The Ashaninka man sees them as humans from afar and uses papaya as bait. But he is only successful when he offers them a child, an obvious reference to cannibalism. Following their 'you are what you eat' ideas it is clear that Whites were not considered to be human.

There are at least two centuries between Ashaninka people's first contact with

Spaniards and the re-opening of their territory (1840s) after the independence enjoyed following the Juan Santos Atahualpa rebellion (1752). I did not find myths about this successful rebellion and the decades of freedom enjoyed after it. Instead, the arrival of Whites jumps to a much closer date when Ashaninka people were used as rubber tappers or taken to work in *fundos* ('haciendas'). Many people I lived with vividly remembered the last days of their life as children in Bajo Urubamba and Ucayali *fundos* with parents who "did not know how to defend themselves". An old man told me:

I was born in the Tambo, with my father and my mother. We used to eat a lot of fish, there was lots of it in those days... there used to be lots of birds. There were no villages; we lived on our own, away from others... I just walked around in my *cushma*; we would sometimes go visit family to drink manioc beer. We walked around with dirty mosquito nets; we didn't know about soap, we used to wash with leaves... Poor body! You slept dirty, now there is soap, there are Schools... we had no *Comunidad*... we only had a *Patrón* and lived working like slaves. We never got paid, only some pots or clothes. The *Patrón* didn't know how to feel sorrow for us; he would punish whenever he wanted. We didn't know back then...

There is also a strong memory of the stories told by parents and grandparents of the *ovayeri* ('warriors') that participated in the *correrias*, seduced by the products White bosses exchanged for the indigenous people they kidnapped. As I was told, "they sold them as if they were chickens!" Tales about the *ovayeri* are always full of blood, uncertainty and fear as these 'uncivilised' men did not respect *kametsa asaiki*: "When they went to war they just killed anyone. No one said 'this is my cousin, this is my brother-in-law'. It was a blood-bath." Another man told me: "My grandmother used to tell that it was horrible... 'Oh no, the *ovayeri* are coming, we must escape!' And they would run away and hide in the higher grounds... That is why the ancients had to live hidden in caves or in the forest without clearing paths." It was emphasized this was due to their ignorance, as today's 'civilised' people know these practices are wrong. The 'uncivilised' bloodthirsty warriors were fuelled by the use

of the powerful magical plants that are uncommon today in the Bajo Urubamba and are thought to only be used properly in Gran Pajonal, where my informants believed Ashaninka people lived most similarly to the 'uncivilised' ancestors. Pajonal Asheninka were described almost as if they were 'Others' in an 'uncivilised' state in terms of food, dress, violent practices, command of Spanish, etc. I was told many times that Pajonal Asheninka people eat snakes, still wear *cushmas*, and may kill you if they do not like you.

Even if the following Chapter shows the romanticised way people speak about *kametsa asaiki* in this *Tiempo*, it was also made obvious that life in *fundos* and in settlements faced with the *ovayeri* ('warrior') threat was one of suffering and restrictions. Families moved constantly to avoid raids, contagion, and slavery or were violently punished as men and their children were tied to *Patrones*, forced to pay unpayable debts.¹⁰⁶ It is noteworthy that whilst the neighbouring Yine see their experience with *Patrones* as the beginning of kinship and 'civilisation' (Gow 1991) my informants never referred to that time as such. Instead, *Patrones* were cruel men who denied them the right to have ID cards, titled communities, and an education which are all important parts of being 'civilised' and of *kametsa asaiki* today.

This *Tiempo* brought the introduction by *Patrones* of Western-styled clothes, *tocuyo* (industrial cotton) *cushmas* and metal tools. I was told "The *Patrón* said 'don't wear *cushmas* that is no good, wear clothes'. And the ancients stopped wearing them. They were paid in trousers or a shirt for months of work. They didn't know." What did they not know? I was told that, due to their perspective and lack of Schooling, they were ignorant of their rights and the value of money, subserviently giving into *Patrones'* demands. Therefore, "they didn't know how to defend themselves". The transformation of Ashaninka bodies in this *Tiempo* involves a change from traditional cotton *cushmas* to *tocuyo* ones, as well as the adoption of Western-styled clothes

106 Stories of *Patrón* cruelty to their debt-peons were very common. People were tortured for small mistakes or killed when sick or injured. See AIDSESEP (1991) and Garcia et al. (1998) for an account of the indigenous experience of this period in the area around Atalaya.

introduced by *Patrones* as payment. These Ashaninka people had the formidable bodies of the past but still lacked the knowledge to deal with *Patrones* that would enslave them for decades.

TIEMPO DE LOS GRINGOS ('TIME OF THE MISSIONARIES')

Things changed again during the 'Time of the Missionaries' which overlaps the later days of the 'Time of Slavery'. This is when the more recent Catholic and Protestant missions were established in Ashaninka territory.¹⁰⁷ The lessons of 'civilisation' started with missionary guidance, schooling, and changes in dress. Let's keep in mind that "...although it may function as equipment, clothing cannot be dissociated from an entire context of transformation... Clothing is a constituent part of a set of habits forming the body." (Vilaça 2007:185) The relation between the body and clothing has also been highlighted by Santos-Granero: "Given such an intimate connection between bodies [and] clothing... it is not surprising that changes in dress and bodily transformations are perceived as... the same thing." (2009:486) These statements fit for the Ashaninka lived experience.

For instance, people at the Cheni Mission (Tambo) were encouraged to trade in *cushmas* for western-styled clothes and missionaries taught the importance of wearing underwear instead of penis belts. I was repeatedly told the ancestors 'did not know' how to wear underwear which my informants saw as an important sign of their present 'civilised' state.¹⁰⁸ Boys and girls at the missions received industrially-made clothes and learned how to sew their own. I was told of this knowledge with pride as it is 'civilised' knowledge learned from Nuns, very different to that learned from Spider. For example, Chato, who studied at the Cheni Mission until he was 15 and left to look for work in Atalaya, constantly recalled those days when he wore

107 It is interesting that these more recent missions are highlighted in their memory but I did not find any references to the decades spent in missions before Santos' rebellion.

108 One of my fondest memories of villages life are the long rows of underwear hanging out to dry under the sun, arranged from small to large.

shirts he made himself with the cloth provided by the Nuns. He recalled they looked very funny as they were made from cloths of different colours and patterns. He was very proud of his knowledge and constantly told me, to his wife's embarrassment, that he was the one who fixed their children's clothes when they had holes in them.

Importantly, missionaries and the teachers they trained were instrumental in changing Ashaninka people's alimentary practices.¹⁰⁹ The introduction of new crops and animals has had a huge impact on their diet and therefore their body. This, as expected from their point of view, created a moral change with their new perspective. This is linked to the teachings of missionaries, similar to what is learned at School today but also including lessons against warring and selling children. A booklet printed for the 45th anniversary of Poyeni, the largest *Comunidad* in the Tambo, informs that until 1959 they: "[L]ived dispersed, moving constantly to avoid diseases and... the continuous wars between Ashaninka as they were under the command of the warrior Tyonkitsi." This coincides with what many informants recalled of their families living in the high parts of the Tambo, away from the river, for protection from raids.

Thus, following Poyeni's booklet, the creation of *Comunidades* brought peace. *Comunidades* are not only thought of as the titling of land and the election of *Autoridades* ('Authorities') but also the building of a nucleated community around a School instead of the dispersed households of the past. The concept of the *Comunidad* has a sense of peaceful life which many attribute to 'civilisation'. For example, many people said missionaries taught them how to go around the obstacles put by *Patrones* against the titling of *Comunidades*. An Ucayali man said *Patrones* told them: "'It's no good to have a title for a *Comunidad*, you are going to be communists... don't listen to the *gringos*, they are face-peelers!' But that was not true! The *gringos* were nice, they taught us many things." *Patrones* also told them they had no need for an ID card and to not send their children to School as it would make them lazy.

109 See Stoll (1982:120-125).

I have heard many say that *gringos* brought *tranquilidad* ('tranquillity/peace'). Most described those years as the start of their transformation into 'civilised' Ashaninka people and others described it as the beginning of their *despertar* ('awakening') as they learned their first lessons on 'how to defend themselves'. The new food and clothes and the knowledge learned in this 'Time' had a deep impact in their bodies. However, this process of becoming was deviated by the Internal War.

TIEMPO DE LA SUBVERSION ('TIME OF THE SUBVERSION')

The transformational process leading to 'becoming civilised' was halted by the war with *Sendero Luminoso*. This process of becoming will be described in more detail in Section IV but for now it is important to note that their memories of the war are mostly about the body and how it changed as they did not eat enough or ate things considered to be non-foods. In fact, the participation of Ashaninka people in *Sendero* is explained by the transformation of body/perspective they experienced after being fed macabre substances like human flesh, breasts, penises and dogs. I was repeatedly told of the great suffering caused by the lack of food in the *Nucleos Poblacionales*¹¹⁰ ('Population Nuclei') which made people thin and prone to diseases. The idea of being *anemico* ('anaemic') was repeated constantly, highlighting the horrible transformation people believed to have gone through. There are accounts of Ashaninka people rejecting the food brought in by charities and the government, like oatmeal and quinoa, which was instead fed to animals.

The hardships and lessons of the war gave foot to the most recent transformation among Ashaninka people. Apart from all its negative aspects, the war is perceived as a moment of learning or awakening as the lessons and knowledge I was told were learned from it puts them back in track to 'becoming civilised'. The aftermath of the war increases the desire of Ashaninka parents for their children to go to School and learn the 'civilised' knowledge that will allow them to deal with the

110 Refugee camps set up by the Peruvian Armed Forces.

outside. I was repeatedly told the war happened the way it did only because they were ignorant and did not understand *Sendero's politica* ('politics'). Had they known what they now learn in Schools things would have been different. I was repeatedly told they now 'know' and children are learning invaluable lessons at School that will prevent *Sendero* from repeating what they did in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

TIEMPO DE LA CIVILIZACION ('TIME OF CIVILIZATION')

The Ashaninka people I lived among see their bodies as a historically constructed proof of change. Today, the mixture of war, timber and petrol companies, and the large numbers of people in villages creates a context that forces them to find new alimentary solutions which in turn puts them through a new bodily transformation. The product of the most recent process of becoming is today's 'civilised' Ashaninka body. This body, and its perspective, is constantly compared to that of their common ancestors and to the tales of the *Indios* living up the Inuya and Mapuya. The latter are said to eat raw meat, be extremely violent and 'not know how to eat' non-indigenous foods such as *fariña* or sugar. This perspective is also compared to that of Ashaninka people elsewhere who are thought to not have 'civilised' yet.

The first sketch of an Ashaninka garden I have ever seen (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:188) shows twenty different edible plants. By far, sweet manioc was the most abundant plant in that garden followed by sweet potatoes. Their centrality is not surprising as these two are the main traditional ingredients for manioc beer. Other vegetables and fruits included plantains, taro, pineapples, maize, peanuts, sugar cane, beans, papaya, and oranges. These, with game and forest products, were the base of their diet. Their gardens are focused on consumption as for Gran Pajonal Asheninka "The production of commercial crops... is very limited and has a modest contribution to their economy" (Ibid:183). However, most of the gardens I have worked in the Bajo Urubamba and Tambo show a very different picture.

Whilst Hvalkof and Veber describe a nutritious 'traditional' Asheninka diet¹¹¹, I found children in the Bajo Urubamba with blonde streaks in their hair, an obvious sign of malnourishment. Interestingly, some people saw this as a sign of a bodily transformation and recognized it as blonde hair, just like that of the *gringos*. Gardens like the one described earlier have been replaced by ones that still have manioc as main crop, but have replaced the great variety of foods for self-consumption with crops that can be sold in towns or the *Comunidad*. Most Bajo Urubamba families have at least a garden of rice or plantains and Tambo ones large gardens of cacao or coffee.¹¹² This new way of planting, and therefore eating, was constantly compared to that of the ancestors. Chato told me that:

The ancients planted for the sake of it... [They] didn't think when they planted... rice here, maize over there... there was no order... But [their plants] grew beautifully! But it was too little, they couldn't sell it, make money. Now you have to know how to plant and how to sell.

The ancestors were not successful agriculturalists in the economic sense as they did not know how to plant for profit and had to rely on *Patrones* for industrially-made objects. Contemporary Ashaninka people believe they know better due to their 'civilised' perspective and knowledge. However, they also agree that the ancestors had much better diets which gave them stronger bodies than theirs.

The Bajo Urubamba diet is based on manioc, plantains and fish or game when available, the former more commonly than the latter.¹¹³ This is supplemented with beans, spaghetti, canned fish, rice, and collected products like fruits, palm or larvae. Manioc beer is crucial in their diet as, I have been told and experienced many times,

111 See Denevan (1974) for an opposite conclusion about the Asheninka diet. However, this has been proven wrong as he did not consider the nutritional impact of manioc beer and of larvae.

112 The choice depends on what was learned from Missionaries and later NGOs but also on what gets better prices. Coffee is becoming popular in the Bajo Urubamba but households still supplement the money they get from cash-crops with working timber. Tambo Ashaninka men are less likely to work for timber companies unless they are working in their *Comunidad*.

113 The lack of meat and fish in their diet is due to men paying more attention to cash-crops but also to overpopulation and the influence of petrol and timber companies which scare animals away.

it *engaña al hambre* ('deceives hunger'), filling you up easily. I was often told manioc beer is very good for your body, or as Joel once put it: "it has from vitamin A to Z".¹¹⁴ I was told it is one of the substances that create their desired 'strong' body. Other substances consumed today include poultry, for *mingas* ('work parties') and feasts, as well as cane alcohol.

Today's body is not only the result of new eating habits but also of changes in clothing. Not many people born in the Bajo Urubamba remembered wearing *cushmas* as children. Today children only wear them for School activities¹¹⁵ and they are made from *tocuyo*, even for boys. The adults who own *cushmas* wear them on cold nights but most importantly for political meetings or protests. So, *cushmas* are mainly worn in contexts that require people to show their Ashaninkaness. Ashaninka people place great importance on the use of underwear, trousers, shirts, dresses and shoes for feasts. Primary and Secondary School graduations have a dress code of shirts and ties for boys and dresses for girls. Similarly, football teams have full uniforms and most people have a special set of clothes they change into as they reach Atalaya if they are not planning to stay by the port.¹¹⁶ It is the combination of the new diet and clothes that they believe confirm their 'civilised' perspective. But there are more markers to confirm it as this transformation is also recognised in the change of name, *Campa* to *Ashaninka*. For example, comments like "my mother was a little *Campa*" are common, associating *Campa* with the 'uncivilised' past. Change in name, including the shift to Spanish surnames, confirms the change of body and all it implies from an indigenous Amazonian perspective.¹¹⁷

What it means to be a 'civilised' Ashaninka person must be understood in the context of the whole historical transformative process they believe to have

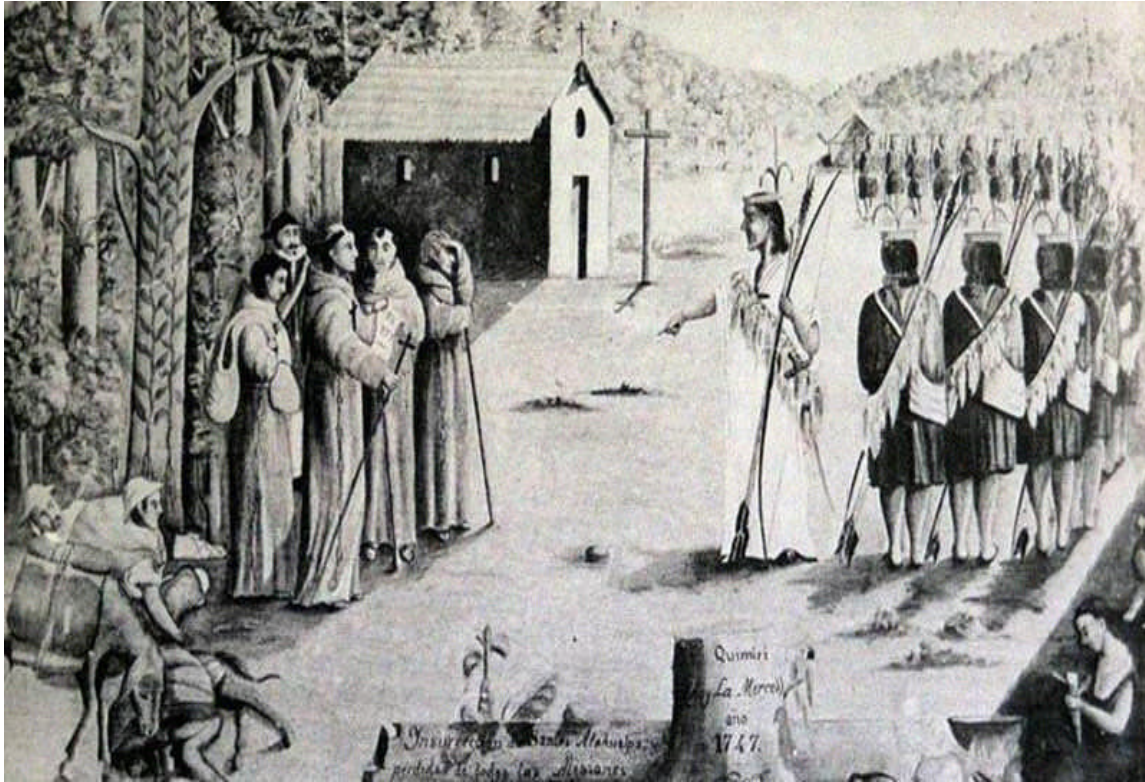
114 The high nutritional value of manioc beer has been recorded by Hvalkof and Veber (2005:209).

115 In events such as the Intercultural Bilingual Week.

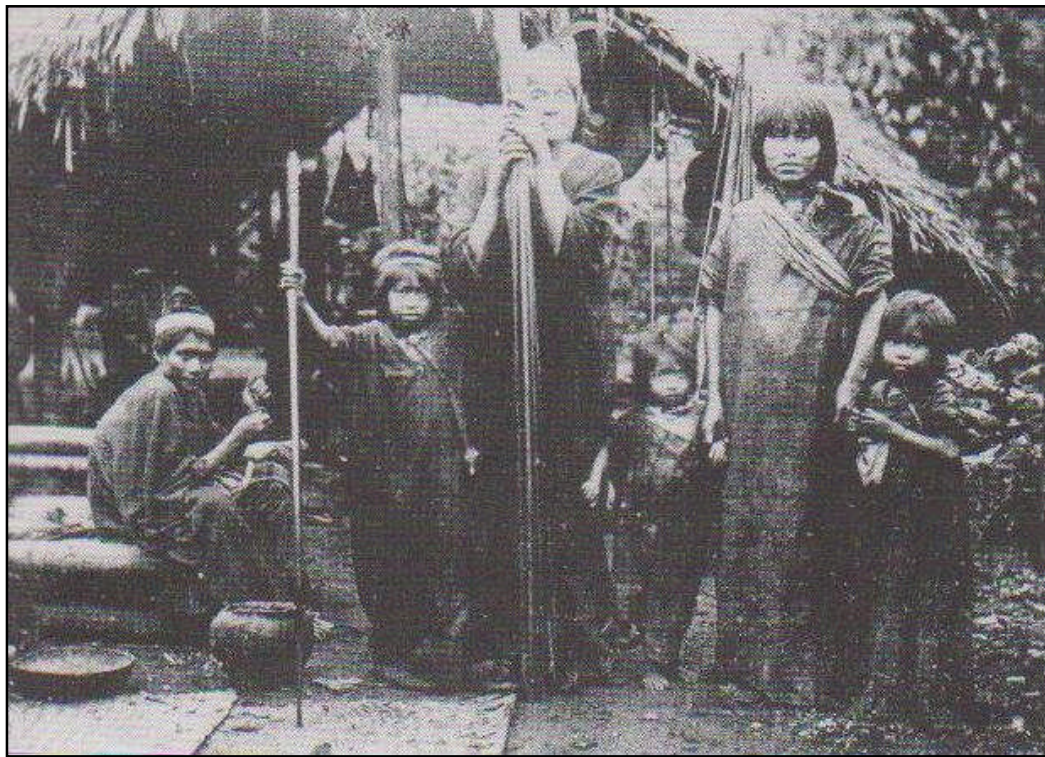
116 Usually trousers or long shorts for men with clean t-shirts with no holes or dress shirts and shoes for men. Similarly, women wear dresses or skirts and tops and may wear flip-flops or sandals. This is also influenced by White/*Mestizo* people in Atalaya as there are government offices to which people are not allowed to come in unless they are wearing trousers.

117 See Gow (2007).

experienced. I will show throughout this thesis, but especially in the rest of this Section, how they compare their present body and perspective to that of their common ancestors. But for now, let's see what this present body transformation and its perspective allows them to do in everyday life.



18TH CENTURY DRAWING OF JUAN SANTOS ATAHUALLPA.
ASHANINKA PEOPLE IN CUSHMAS TO THE RIGHT.



ASHANINKA FAMILY IN CUSHMAS, EARLY 20TH CENTURY
(TAKEN FROM GARCIA DEL HIERRO ET AL. 1998:89)



ASHANINKA FAMILY, 1960
(TAKEN FROM WEISS 2005:47)



ASHANINKA TEENS AT AN ANNIVERSARY PARTY
(NUEVA ESPERANZA 2008)

CHAPTER 3

OF THE ASHANINKA 'CIVILISED' BODY AND ITS 'CIVILISED' PERSPECTIVE

Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people believe their 'civilised' perspective is made obvious by how some 'traditional' practices have been altered or replaced by others. The most important ones for *kametsa asaiki* – conflict resolution mechanisms, money, education, new forms of leadership, and 'inter-cultural' health – will be discussed in Section V. I was told that many of the ancestors' practices are not followed today because they now have better ways of doing things that are more coherent with their 'civilised' state and that can deal with issues the ancestors were not faced with. For example, Gerardo told me that whilst he had to prove his in-laws that he was a good hunter before getting married, young men today have to prove they are able to get a job or enough money to run a household. The means have changed but the focus of the economic activities has not.

However, these changes are not only related to the domestic domain but include political mechanisms aimed at communicating with people throughout Ashaninka territory which is a much easier task today as they do not live at large distances from each other. For example, the functions of *Ayompari* trade and manioc beer feasts have been replaced with activities that fulfil their original purposes but also deal with new needs. I do not know of any *Ayompari* partnerships at work in my fieldsites and was told this is not done in those areas.¹¹⁸ *Ayompari* trade is Ashaninka people's most famous mechanism of social inclusion.¹¹⁹ As Killick (2005:62), I was told this word meant friend but other definitions include "he who gives me things"

118 However, some *Kanujasati* ('the inhabitants of the high parts') families in voluntary isolation periodically go down to Ene *Comunidades* to trade indigenous objects for tools and plastic bowls.

119 See Bodley (1973), Schafer (1988), Hvalkof and Veber (2005), and Killick (2005) for in-depth explanations of these trade partnerships.

(Schafer 1991:134) and “he with whom I exchange things” (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:228).¹²⁰ This was a relationship between men, or rarely between women, who live in different settlements, are unrelated by kinship and can belong to different Arawakan groups (Bodley 1973). It created long chains of exchange going from the northernmost Ashaninka areas by the Ucayali and Pichis to the Apurimac in the south. Hvalkof and Veber explain that this system of deferred reciprocity is based on Ashaninka people’s “right to demand” and their “obligation to give” (2005:232).

Schafer's (1988) study of *Ayompari* trade, the most complete on the topic, suggests that even if in practice it was the exchange of scarce (metal tools, *cushmas*¹²¹, salt) and luxury (ornaments, magical plants) goods between people with different access to them¹²², its true purpose was the accumulation of social relations to increase a man's social sphere and personal prestige as well as communicating settlements that would otherwise not be connected. *Ayompari* acted as a redistribution mechanism, dispersing industrial goods and indigenous products throughout their territory thus allowing for economic equality and material homogeneity in the group. For example, a person worked for a *Patrón* for months and was paid a box of cartridges. This box could be traded in the *Ayompari* network for a *cushma*, even if it has no equal value in relation to the work invested in making one.¹²³ *Ayompari* trade cancelled the monetary value of an object in favour of the social value it had in the trading network which gave Ashaninka people control over their system of economic values. Hence, objects’ real value was on the fact that they could be exchanged and so become social relations.

It used to be very important for a family to have a male member away for

120 Ethno-linguist Thomas Buttner believes the term comes from *compadre* which becomes *cumpari* in Quechua and is Arawakanised to *ayumpari* or *ayompari* and *niompari* (“my partner” or “my friend”).

121 *Cushmas* are the most important indigenous objects for Ashaninka people and the most valued object for *ayompari* trade, showing the importance of the role of women in this trade as they weave them. Today *cushmas* can be bought in towns but only the white ones are valuable for trade.

122 Those closer to Whites traded metal goods for 'traditional' goods with those further away.

123 A box of cartridges costs around £12 whilst *cushmas* cost £25-30. It takes five days of paid work to buy a box of cartridges but up to two months to make a *cushma*.

months every year as his *Ayompari* relationships granted them access to material resources as well as strengthening their position in the local group. However, adult men today do not travel as much as they spend most of the year working their cash-crops or working for a *Patrón*. I was called *Ayompari* by many when I first got to the Bajo Urubamba but this is similar to the use of *amigo* ('friend'), used in Atalaya by unrelated people wanting to participate in a social exchange.¹²⁴

The exchange of information and networking that used to be provided by *Ayompari* networks has been replaced by other practices and technologies. For example, some of its functions have been substituted by the visits made for *Campeonatos* ('Championships') and *Aniversarios*¹²⁵ ('Anniversary feasts'). The latter include large parties that last for a couple of days in which people catch up with their family and friends from different *Comunidades* over manioc beer and 'feast' food.¹²⁶ *Aniversarios* are 'civilised' large-scale *masateadas* ('manioc beer parties'), periodic gatherings in which a household invites others to come and join them in drinking manioc beer. Previous ethnographies explain that *masateadas* are opportunities for alliances between settlements or local groups to be strengthened by "creating a space of community which extends further away from the settlement." (Killick 2005:93) Guests have no obligation to reciprocate the invitation but usually do so in order to show their equality, or stop attending when they want to show that they want to cut relations with the hosts.

Killick (2005:66-77; 2009) writes that Ucayali Asheninka people, contrary to other Amazonian groups including their Tambo and Bajo Urubamba *paisanos*, do not believe individuals can grow together into a community of similars by sharing food,

124 It was common for men of the same age group to call each other *Promoción* ('graduates from the same class') especially those who were in the military service or in School together.

125 Although there cannot be an Anniversary celebration without a Football Championship, the latter are also organised for other reasons. An Anniversary requires a large party and large quantities of meat and manioc beer whilst Championships only require manioc beer and allow for *Comunidades* to make money as families sell food to the visiting players and their supporters as well as keeping half of the entrance fees paid by participants.

126 This is ideally 'real' food (fish and game) or new 'real' food such as chicken. These are usually stewed and accompanied by manioc, rice, sweet potatoes, and even potatoes.

drink and sociality.¹²⁷ Killick concludes that the power of manioc beer is in its ability to bring people together physically as it cannot bring them together in a more permanent sense. I experienced manioc beer to be more than a drink, it is 'real' food and important in giving them their ideal bodies. It is especially important today when game, the 'real' food *par excellence*, is scarce. Additionally, *masateadas* are not only about manioc beer but also about feast food, a new type of 'real' food. The importance of 'real' food will be discussed in Section III.

Even if current *masateadas* are not held in the same way described by previous ethnographies, they are still very important social mechanisms following similar actions and etiquette. In their 'civilised' incarnations (Anniversaries, Championships, Graduation Ceremonies and national holidays) these feasts follow calendar dates and are organised in Communal Assemblies where *Comuneros* decide which holidays to celebrate and how much money, food or manioc beer will be required from each family. Invitations written in a very formal Spanish are sent to other *Comunidades* and these parties are usually very well attended, doubling or tripling the population of a *Comunidad*. Attendees wear their best dresses, trousers, shirts and shoes, all serving the same function as White *cushmas*.¹²⁸ These opportunities to meet new people and catch up with kin and friends from other *Comunidades* in a large scale have replaced *Ayompari* trade's networking power.

The exchange of information is also made easier by the generalised use of radios, both for listening to the news and for communication. Most *Comunidades* have

127 And so do other Arawakan groups such as Yine (Gow 1989), Matsigenka (Johnson 2003), and Yanasha (Santos-Granero 1991) peoples. This is also common among other Amazonians such as the Tukano case for which Hugh-Jones notes that "affinity, highlighted in the early stages, blurs into co-resident consanguinity" (1979: 237) or the Piaroa case in which "the idea is that those who in the first instance are dangerously "different in kind" (e.g. as in-laws) become 'of a kind' through the process of living together" (Overing 2003: 300).

128 White *cushmas* are the most prestigious and were saved for special occasions such as visits to other settlements. Thus, it seems as if the everyday *cushma* has been replaced by everyday clothing, whereas there are special clothes for formal 'civilised' events such as Anniversary parties (trousers and shoes) and political meetings (White *cushmas*). See Gow (2007a) on clothing and the transformation of its uses among Yine people.

a radio from deals with timber or petrol companies and go on air between 6-7AM and 5-6PM for communication between *Comunidades* or federations in Atalaya and Satipo. Additionally, Atalaya's Market port and the OIRA building a few blocks away are also neutral centres for the exchange of information between Ashaninka people visiting the town. The bars on Fitzcarrald Street, the cheapest in Atalaya, serve the same purpose. The Annual Congresses of the different federations also allow for people to meet and exchange information, which is later relayed to their *Comunidades*. Finally, the generalised use of *pekepeke* engines speeds up the travelling for visits as most *Comunidades* own one or people pay low fares as passengers on passing-by canoes.

However, even if *Ayompari* is not necessary for 'civilised' *kametsa asaiki*, its essence, delayed reciprocity, is central to many practices, from food distribution to participation in Championships. Recently, Hvalkof and Veber reported that football rules in Gran Pajonal “are adapted on great measure to the Asheninka concept of what is a game. For example, there is no winner and loser of the match.” (2005:220)¹²⁹ The Ashaninka people I lived among think very differently. For starters, teams are not allowed to play in a Championship unless they pay the entrance fee and even the friendly matches in a *Comunidad* or on weekend visits to nearby *Comunidades* encourage small bets. Interestingly, football matches are moments in which they become ‘Others’ and ignore respect to kinship and emotional restraint. Instead, they shout at each other, compete violently and act resentfully when they lose. Sometimes the visitors even leave without tasting the manioc beer that has been prepared for the occasion. Championships, as other ‘civilised’ occasions, are packed with formalities such as referees, uniforms, and team delegates sitting with the organizers to ensure time is taken fairly and that the rules accorded at the beginning of the day, put down in writing and approved by the signature of the delegates and captains of all teams,

129 Lepri has a similar conclusion on football among the Ese Ejja: “A tie was the most acceptable outcome as it eliminated the possibilities of violence” (2005: 459).

are followed.¹³⁰

Football has become a very important part of Ashaninka social practices. Championships are a 'civilised' way of collecting funds that combines their desire for money with their ideas of reciprocity. Even if all the *Comunidades* in the area or even from other rivers may be invited to play, those that show up are usually those that received the *apoyo* ('support') of the host *Comunidad* when they organised their own Championship. In this case it is about monetary support as the host will keep half of the bets paid in by the participants. *Apoyo* is the same word used by a man inviting other men to work in his work party. Therefore, it is a case of delayed reciprocity and trust, the basis of *Ayompari* trade. *Campeonatos* are like *mingas* or other activities in which I was told you must *devolver* ('give back'). It is noteworthy that the invitation to take part of these events, like with smaller scale *masateadas* held by families, is not only a manifestation of conviviality but also a manifestation of a desire for a larger-scale community. I will cover this idea in the next Section.

Finally, due to the ease in getting paid work and the industrial goods available for sale in towns, there is no need for the exchange side of *Ayompari* trade. Paid work and the sale of cash-crops allow them to buy their own goods with standard prices throughout the area, replacing the 'indigenised' value of objects in *Ayompari* trade with a market value and an understanding of money. Thus, *Patrones* are no longer the direct link between work and industrially-produced goods. Even *cushmas*, the star of *Ayompari* trade, and other indigenous woven products such as *tsarato* bags and *tsompirontsi* baby slings can be bought in Satipo or Atalaya. From a 'civilised' perspective *Ayompari* is not necessary as they now know how to use and understand the value of money. Money, as I will explain in Section V, has become an integral part of *kametsa asaiki*. If we took a quick look at the *Comunidades* we would find that

130 Similarly, Ewart points out that for Panará people "Playing football is a 'White' (or non-Indian) people's activity, during which many of the men go to great lengths to present themselves in the proper Brazilian way appropriate to the game, wearing full football kit and even adopting Brazilian names for the duration of the game." (2003:272)

the need for money has changed Ashaninka life tremendously, even transforming practices that were considered as markers of Ashaninkaness in the past.

Let's now move on to how my informants talk about their 'civilised' state in comparison to that of the 'uncivilised' *Indios* living in the area.

OF INDIOS ('INDIANS') AND NATIVOS ('NATIVES')

Sitting one morning by the radio as Miqueas operated it, we overheard a conversation about a corpse coming downriver to Atalaya. Miqueas, leader of the Ashaninka militia for the Bajo Urubamba, asked who the dead person was. We found out that the dead man was a timber worker, the son of a well-known Yine teacher from nearby Rima. Miqueas immediately asked the other radio operator, "was he shot by an *Indio*?" The operator did not know but did not discard it as the man had been killed near Raya, days away in the territory of the unpredictable *Indios*. Men around us discussed theories of who must have killed the young man, most agreeing on the *Sharas*¹³¹, the stereotypical *Indios*. This was not just out of prejudice as men are injured or killed in their raids on timber camps every year. However, we later learned that the man had been killed by a *Mestizo* in a fight.

This episode taught me a lot about how they people I lived among saw themselves. Many referred to *Indios* as *los calatos* ('the naked ones'), their nakedness being the first signifier of their difference with 'civilised' *Nativos* ('Natives') like Ashaninka people and their Yine neighbours. They, and the Tambo Ashaninka I know, make a clear distinction between *haber civilizado* ('having civilised') and *no haber civilizado* ('not having civilised'). This should not be taken as an adoption of *Mestizo* or White practices in a desire to become more like them as even if their knowledge is tempting their lack of morality is too grave. Veber writes that:

The notion of civilization is borrowed from settlers but carries somewhat different connotations and meanings... 'becoming civilized'... refers primarily to the

131 Probably from their constant use of *shara* ('good'). (Peter Gow and Conrad Feather, pers. comm.).

acquisition... of non-native knowledge that may allow a wider range of manoeuvre vis-a-vis, and control over, relations with settlers. It does not include an acculturative vision of the Asheninka becoming in any way "like" one of the other ethnic categories known to them (1998:384)

It gets confusing when this interacts with their ideas of 'becoming like a *Mestizo*'. Even if it and 'civilisation' are being experienced at the same time they are two separate processes feeding a same body. Being *Mestizo* is not equalled to being 'civilised' even if these two states may share many characteristics. 'Becoming civilised' is a very attractive state whilst 'becoming like a *Mestizo*' is not.

Those I lived among believe they are the true 'civilised' Ashaninka people. They believe their Ene and Gran Pajonal *paisanos* lack this perspective, evidenced in their use of *cushmas*, face paint¹³², and diet akin to that of their ancestors. Furthermore, *Sendero* coming into Ashaninka lives through the Ene and the initial support they gave to the Maoist movement is seen as proof of Ene people's ignorance. They are also thought, in the Gran Pajonal case, to be overtly violent and able in the use of the magical plants of the ancestors. Similarly, Matsigenka people are seen as less instructed in 'civilised' life and are still feared for their able use of *pusanga* love magic. Many talked about Amahuaca people as if they were on their way to 'becoming civilised' as they now wear clothes and live in villages in titled *Comunidades* they did not have when most Ashaninka men over 40 worked in their area. Still, their savagery is an important part of how they are imagined as I was told that they must have eaten human flesh in the past because they only briefly boil game, *hasta que espumea nomas*, eating it when it is still rare.¹³³ I was also told the *Amahuaquitas* ('the little Amahuacas') do not use salt, which has deeper implications

132 My informants call them, mockingly and in reference to their different bodies, *los pintaditos* ('the little painted ones') or *los cojudos pintados* ('the painted idiots') due to their face designs.

133 Ex. Yine ideas of 'civilised'/'wild'/'real' people are about the kind of food they eat (Gow 1991). These groups form the different poles or "images of difference" (Gow 1993:342) between 'being civilised' and 'not having yet civilised' for my Ashaninka and Gow's Yine informants.

for Ashaninka people going back to the days of salt trade.¹³⁴

I was constantly told of the dangers in the Inuya and Mapuya rivers where *Indios* live. Last year a Nueva Esperanza man working timber in that area was shot with an arrow that skewered him but he was evacuated in time and saved. Still his wound confirmed their ideas of their savagery. José, who worked timber in the Inuya for two decades, told me “They are the naked ones... *Indios!* That is why they shot him; they steal sugar, manioc flour... And it was a big bamboo arrow... like a hook... how do you take that out without hurting him!” My friend highlighted their ‘uncivilised’ state by referring to their violent ways, their stealing and their arrows. Ashaninka arrow-heads are made from the heart of the *chonta* palm¹³⁵ whilst *Indios* make bamboo arrows, easier to acquire and carve. The juxtaposition is one of knowledge between the Ashaninka material, which they see as more sophisticated and hard to get, and that of the *Sharas* which is readily available along the banks of the Inuya and Mapuya.

Their savagery and obvious intention of killing men is highlighted by the shape of their arrowheads. Ashaninka arrow-heads can be smooth or have teeth carved to the sides.¹³⁶ I was told *Indios*, as described above, have a sharp point and two sides that curl so if the person shot tries to take the arrow out it will cause tear and more bleeding. Their ‘uncivilised’ state is also highlighted in the way they eat. The reason for their attacks on timbermen is always explained as them raiding timber camps for sugar and *fariña*, which people say they love as if they were children¹³⁷ but, due to their ignorance, they ‘do not know how to eat it’ and make themselves sick from over doing it.¹³⁸ However, I was told they are changing their

134 See Renard-Cassevitz (1993; 2002).

135 Some men make arrow-heads from knives, a practice I was told was introduced during the war.

136 An exception is the arrowheads I was shown by people who fought in the war and by younger men prepared for a return to violence. These were designed to create as much damage as possible.

137 Joel once said that if there were that many timbermen in his *Comunidad* he would also shoot them. However, the defence of their territory against timbermen is not accepted as the reason why *Indios* raid timber camps.

138 A timber boss found a group lying in pain with swollen stomachs not far from his camp.

ways due to missionary influence and that *que los civilicen* ('that they are civilised [by someone]') is a positive move. Even indigenous leaders in Atalaya believed a large EU funded project for the Mashco-Piro Reserve was a move "to civilise them". As we can see, being *Indio*, 'uncivilised' or 'civilised' are all relational concepts referring to how a person/group stands in relation to another.¹³⁹

As expected, there are disagreements between those who claim to 'have civilised'. Tambo Ashaninka people find many differences between the way they and their Bajo Urubamba *paisanos* live. The former know the latter area well as many men have worked for *Patrones* there and families found refuge there during the war. Many visit their kin living there or travel to Atalaya for work, shopping or studies. Most told me they had negative experiences and memories of their life among *las garzas*¹⁴⁰ and cherish being back *en mi sitio* ('in my place').¹⁴¹ The aspects of Bajo Urubamba life they said to dislike show their different opinions on how each performs 'civilisation' and *kametsa asaiki*. These aspects are those that have to do with the different historical experiences in both areas. As I was told "It was not the same over there; they fought a lot because they drink alcohol. They didn't know how to drink peacefully, how to live peacefully." People also commented with disgust that some Bajo Urubamba women add sugar to manioc beer. These differences in the consumption of substances show their preoccupation for different bodies, especially with alcohol as it, I will show later, makes Ashaninka people act like their immoral Andean 'Other'.

The worry is also passed to the town of Atalaya where there are many Tambo youth studying in NOPOKI, a Catholic Church training School for indigenous teachers. However, many have had to leave it because of fears of witchcraft or

139 See Gow (1993).

140 "In Ucayali they are like herons, they shit White." Ucayali-Urubamba people do not use as much sweet potatoes in manioc beer.

141 Tambo Ashaninka people resent that some Ucayali *Comunidades* did not allow them to stay due to fears they might be *Sendero* spies. However, they rarely mention that most families escaping *Sendero* were treated very badly in the Tambo refugee centres.

illnesses attributed to it: “There are too many witches in Atalaya... it is even worse because we are not from there, it is very dangerous for the youth”. For example, Clay left Atalaya because of stomach pains that were later diagnosed to be caused by witchcraft sparked by “jealousy... that is what happened to many of them in NOPOKI... they just had to stop studying.” I will discuss Ashaninka ideas of the immorality of Atalaya in the next Section.

Urubamba Ashaninka people are perceived as wanting easy money without thinking of the future. Sebastian, who lived in the area for a decade and still visits his family there, told me:

I have to work before I get old. Plant cacao, coffee... and take care of it. Over there they just work timber. They don't know how to take advantage of their money, they just spend it, drink it instead of paying people to work their garden. They give a little to their wife... When they get old they will be sitting, raising chickens, eating boiled manioc and salt like a widow¹⁴² and will not be able to work.

Similarly, a Tambo man in Nueva Esperanza commented after another *Comunero* sold one of his cows: “Instead of using that money to hire people [to work his gardens] he buys a cheap engine... it won't last him for long. He has no vision!” Similar attitudes were highlighted by people from other places. A Chanchamayo Ashaninka teacher told me: “I'm not from here, I have other ideas... we must work cacao, coffee... be patient, wait... people here don't know how to take advantage. They are impatient... they just want to go work timber. Later some are going to have beautiful cacao gardens and the rest are going to be jealous!” Similarly, a Tambo Ashaninka teacher stated at a Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka Federation meeting, in response to delegates complaining about the lack of support from the regional government:

That is why the government calls us land-hoarding *indigenas*. We only want to live where there are trees so we can sell them to *Patrones*. [What] about agriculture? Only a little bit of manioc, a couple of plantains, we don't produce for sale like the

142 No fish or game, usually brought by a healthy man. Manioc, on the other hand, is easy to grow.

outsiders¹⁴³... Let's see, who has 200 chickens? We are happy with a little bit of salt, a little fish.

There is an emphasis in 'growing' (agriculture) rather than 'finding' (hunting and gathering) in these discourses of 'civilisation'. Hunting and gathering seems to be attached to the 'uncivilised' past whereas planting and the different techniques being learned to deal with different cash-crops is attached to being 'civilised' people. This is an interesting question that I will have to leave for future research.

This perceived laziness¹⁴⁴ is joined by their perceived feebleness. When discussing PlusPetrol activities in the Bajo Urubamba a Tambo man told me, "I thought that over there, as they speak Spanish well they would know how to defend themselves better".¹⁴⁵ Tambo Ashaninka people were surprised that the daily wage in Atalaya is £2.5 and that timber prices are very low in comparison to those of the Tambo where companies buy it straight from *Comunidades* and pay them a daily wage between £3.5 and £6. *Comunidades* also get better deals from timber companies such as Anapati that received a hydroelectric generator, along with all needed to install lights in its houses and streets.

Let's now move back to focus on the Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people and see what they believe their 'civilised' state allows them to do in their villages.

143 "*La gente que viene de afuera*"

144 Laziness is very negative and should make a person feel *verguenza* ('shame'). It gives too much free time to think negative thoughts like stealing or leaving your spouse.

145 However, a few months later Repsol did the same thing in the Tambo.



PLAYERS DURING A BREAK AT A FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP



A VERY MUDDY FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

CHAPTER 4

KNOWING HOW TO DEFEND OURSELVES AND HOW TO LIVE IN A COMUNIDAD

The most important aspect of 'civilised' Ashaninka people is their knowledge. They place great importance on formal Schooling as part of their new perspective and the *despertar* ('awakening') coming from it. Roberto, like most parents I know, worries about his children attending School. He constantly compared the 'civilised' knowledge gained in School¹⁴⁶ with their ignorant ancestors: "[P]eople have woken up, they understand. We know as we have set foot in a School... It won't be like with our grandparents or parents who worked for nothing. The time of slavery is over; we know how to defend ourselves."

I was constantly reminded that even if the parents and grandparents of those I met lived in times of abundance, they were also victims of the abuse of *Patrones* as they did not know how to defend themselves regarding fair payment or the value of products. A man told that me his parents, who lived their last years in an Ucayali *Fundo*, "[D]idn't know about money. They were given some clothes or cartridges for months of work... but they should've been paid a lot; they used to work all day! ... The *Patrón* would punish them, beat them badly! ... [But] they did not know so they did not complain."

One of the most important gains from knowing how to defend themselves is being able to live in titled *Comunidades*. Accounts of Ashaninka living organisation in the past, and at present in other areas, shows a preference for households separated by expansions of forest. Killick writes that in Pijuyal (Alto Ucayali) "Although most households were 10-15 minutes walk apart, some were situated over an hour away from their nearest neighbours." (2005:31) Each household lived some distance

146 *Yontantsipanko* ('the house of knowledge/knowing').

through the forest from others and families spent long periods with little contact from others. Localised clusters could be discerned in the group, with the houses of married children remaining close to that of their parents but eventually moving further apart with time. This is in line with Weiss' (2005) and Hvalkof and Veber's (2005) description of the spatial organisation in 1960s Tambo and 1980s Gran Pajonal. However, Killick's account is more surprising because of how recent it is. I believe he does not put enough emphasis to the *Mestizo* families he found living in the nucleated centre of the *Comunidad* as it is plausible that the presence of these outsiders in the immediate vicinity would have discouraged Asheninka people from congregating around the centre. To his credit, his later publications mention that these patterns were being abandoned in favour of centralised living.

We are told that Ashaninka people live dispersed because they believe close proximity leads to disagreements and violence fuelled by anger and jealousy. Hence, physical distance is put into place to allow for *kametsa asaiki*. Those I lived among, as I will discuss in Section III, also recognised that close proximity fuels conflicts. I was told that the 'uncivilised' ancestors and some of their contemporary *paisanos* with 'uncivilised' perspectives lived that way to avoid feuding. However, the current general consensus did not favour living apart. Houses in the Tambo and Bajo Urubamba are built side by side around large communal spaces shared for meetings, parties, sports and education. They believed their 'civilised' perspective allows them to live in villages unlike their 'uncivilised' ancestors who lived in the forest.

Villages have been observed among Ashaninka people since the 1960s. Mayer's study in the Ene concluded that:

[V]illages... form under the initiative and leadership of people who have been displaced from colonized areas. They have been in contact with modern society and have realized the need to unite and to establish Schools to be able to better defend themselves from the harmful effects of social change... (1971:21)

The historical phenomenon of 'civilisation' coincides with a movement from

dispersed settlements in the forest to village organisation in *Comunidades*. Lepri's assertion for the Ese-Ejja case in Bolivia fits with the Ashaninka experience:

Their perception of their historical position merges space and time as... the distances in time and space end up coinciding: the people that in the past used to live... upriver were left behind, both spatially and temporally. Movement downriver is oriented towards sedentarity... coincides with the end of violence and the beginning of peaceful life. (2005:468)

The great desire for Schooling takes people in the Bajo Urubamba to favour villages of houses built next to each other organised around a centre that includes the School, football pitch, and Communal House. The similarity of this setup to urban towns with a public area and offices in the centre is not coincidental but a deliberate choice at representing 'civilised' living.¹⁴⁷ They are proud of the size of their football pitch and organise communal works to clean the paths between the houses, which they call *calles* ('streets'), and around the School and Communal House. This organisation of their social space is, in every sense, the product of a historical process as *Indios* and the ancestors lived in the forest but 'civilised' people live in villages with a School. I propose that these changes should lead to a re-orientation of studies of Ashaninka spatial organisation. Instead of centring on understanding how they can organise into large groups so efficiently even when they live so separated, we should concentrate on understanding how they can 'live well' even in contexts where they live so close to each other.¹⁴⁸

I believe this spatial organization is not completely different to the essence of 'living apart'. The nucleated centres of *Comunidades* act as the separated households,

147 Similarly, Ewart points out that the centre of Paraná villages is "[T]he location of transformation [and] maintains a special relationship with the space beyond the village from where innovative transformative forces may be drawn..." (2003:276).

148 Village spatial organisation has been covered extensively for other areas of indigenous Amazonia, most famously among Gê groups. See for example Ewart (2003), Lea (1992; 1995), and Turner (1979). Today it seems to be a common trend for most Ashaninka groups to move from separated settlements to villages for reasons that I will touch in this thesis but will delve into more thorough comparative study of these changes in spatial organisation in the future.

as most houses are linked by kinship or will be in the future through their children.¹⁴⁹ People visit their friends and family in other *Comunidades* in similar ways and for similar reasons those in the past visited other settlements. The difference is that people in the nucleated centres do not move away from each other as time passes as they have a specific territory in which to live and a social anchor keeping them centred: the School. Their great desire for their children's education and the difficulty to move their children to a School in another *Comunidad* becomes strong reasons to stay in one place. They are also anchored to the *Comunidad* because of their cash crop gardens and the materials they now use to build their houses. Houses are now built with wood planks and have corrugated metal roofs, both costly and forcing permanence as they cannot be abandoned as easily as traditional houses. These changes in attitude are related to the importance placed on money as part of *kametsa asaiki*. As they say, they 'have woken up' and now know its true value.

It is also very important to highlight the influence of the war on their current spatial organisation. Many Tambo and Ene *Comunidades* I visited only started to live in villages after the war. At first it was necessary to do so in order to defend the community from future *Sendero* attacks. However, the School is now the main reason for this organisation as education is a central part of 'knowing how to defend oneself'. Comparatively, Bajo Urubamba villages were built in such way from the beginning, probably due to their inhabitants having lived in contact with *Patrones* for a longer time. This is not to say that living in villages is a utopia as close proximity creates problems between those who participated or whose families participated in different sides of the war.¹⁵⁰ As a side note, I briefly want to mention that there are two views on why Ashaninka people have titled *Comunidades*. Whilst Hvalkof (1998) describes the Gran Pajonal experience as them trying to separate land from that of

149 Young Ashaninka couples in the Bajo Urubamba are formed from people in close proximity. Thus, Schoolchildren are potential affines and future kinspeople. See Gow (1991) for a similar (re)creation of kinship among Yine people.

150 This, and the possibility of reconciliation, will be covered in Section IV.

colonists, Killick (2005:195-221; 2008) describes it in terms of them needing a title to secure a School. I do not see an opposition here as from a *kametsa asaiki* point of view they both feed the same idea of having the place and knowledge in order to successfully reproduce social life. Land and education are about freedom for the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*.

If we follow Ashaninka ideas of the volatility of people's emotions, discussed in full in Section III, we can see why there is much concern over dealing with the problems arising from so many people living in close physical proximity. The large concentration of people leads to having fewer resources due to overhunting, which leads to a re-organisation of the networks of sharing game and of alimentary habits. Close proximity also leads to a re-organisation of property ideas which are now very explicit in *Comunidades* as theft has become a serious problem. Also, the *Comunidad Nativa* as a political institution brings new forms of leadership that are granted coercive power by the State. Thus, the Headperson can sign contracts for the *Comunidad* and must authorise timber permits if a *Comunero* ('Community member') wishes to extract timber from their titled land.

I propose that the large concentration of people in villages leads to a more obvious inequality between neighbours which my informants believe leads to highly disruptive cases of envy.¹⁵¹ Witchcraft moved by envy has become a greater problem and seems to have replaced the *cutipa* ('vengeance')¹⁵² performed by forest spirits as the main cause for illness.¹⁵³ This is framed by a re-engineering of reciprocity practices as there is less food available but more people looking at what is brought into the village. This highlights the differences between Ashaninka people in ways that were not possible in the past and increases the accusations of stinginess. It seems plausible that the envy that my informants felt of their neighbours' accumulated

151 See Hewlett (2000) for an example of how sedentarization causes inequality among Baka Pygmies.

152 From the Quechua for "to return, to exchange". See Regan (1993).

153 See Izquierdo and Johnson (2007) and Izquierdo et al. (2008) for a similar idea in contemporary Matsigenka *Comunidades*.

goods is projected on others, forming an assumption that everyone has jealous thoughts even if they all uphold great degrees of, at least verbal, modesty. All these factors are complex and I will discuss them in the following Sections of this thesis.

No wonder then that the 'civilised' perspective is so important, to the point that I am convinced my informants believe it to be necessary for *kametsa asaiki* as 'civilisation' allows them to 'know how to live in a *Comunidad*', which in turn allows for *kametsa asaiki*. Thus, from a 'civilised' perspective, they seem to equate 'civilisation' with *kametsa asaiki*. It is only because of their contemporary bodies that they act like 'civilised' people and so can coexist in a social and spatial proximity that would have been impossible in the past. 'Living well' today is not only about emotional restraint and sharing, inherited from the ancestors and discussed in Section III, as their present spatial organization requires a change in rules. The 'civilised' perspective allows them to find new ways to deal with the problems arising from the present context, such as new conflict resolution tools, education, inter-cultural health, new forms of leadership, and money, all covered in Section V.

Importantly, the *Comunidad* introduces a new way of identifying oneself as well as a new political persona to play with. I found a difference between how older and younger people talked about their place of origin.¹⁵⁴ Whilst older people defined themselves as *Tamosati/Enesati* ('from the Tambo/Ene') younger people did so in terms of their *Comunidad*: *Anapatino/Esperanzino* ('from Anapati/Esperanza'). The *Comunidad* also changes the way they think about property as things inside the territory are either owned by a person or by the *Comunidad*. Thus, the latter becomes an actor that 'owns' timber and can therefore pay for its own expenses with its own products. This is one of the big clashes between indigenous thought and Peruvian Law, as whilst indigenous people think of the territory of the *Comunidad* as theirs, the natural resources on and under the soil are, legally, property of the State. Rivers are also property of the State and thus outside the titled territories of *Comunidades* even if

154 In Spanish *mi sitio* ('my place') or *donde he botado my ombligo* ('where I left my navel').

people consider it as *their* river. It seems that this change in ownership of land and resources due to the Law of Native Communities has been one of many catalysts in changing how Ashaninka people think of their place of origin. There has been a change to owning the land where your village is built, and thus identifying with it, as opposed to identifying with the river by which you were born but do not own.

'Civilised' ideas on money and its need for *kametsa asaiki* have also changed the way people perceive ownership. As expected, gardens are owned by the person that clears and plants them and any *Comunero* can open one in a space that has not been claimed by someone else. However, there are NGO programmes that show how people think differently than expected in these 'egalitarian' societies. For example, many reforestation projects planned as communal enterprises run into problems when people decide to plant the tree saplings in their own gardens with the obvious intent of owning the trees in the future instead of planting them in communal areas.

The rigidity of some of the *Comunidad's* 'civilised' political spaces has made Ashaninka people develop a different identity that deals with that aspect of life; the *Comunero*¹⁵⁵, a legal member of the *Comunidad*, as opposed to the *Ashaninka*. This complementary duality is an important part of being a 'civilised' Ashaninka person and can be best seen in action at the highly formalised *Asambleas Comunales* ('Communal Assemblies') in which *Comuneros* participate throughout the year. The ones I participated in were led by the Headman or Schoolteacher as, I was told many times, the latter's 'civilising' knowledge make it his or her responsibility to guide the Authorities through issues they may not understand. 'Civilised' Ashaninka people believe in consensus, at least in theory¹⁵⁶, so everyone must sign each agreement on the notarised Minutes book kept by the *Comunidad's* Secretary. Like in Championships, kinship expectations are ignored in the formality of the meeting and *Comuneros* do not call each other using kin terms but instead use their first names or

155 Note that there is no translation of this term into Ashaninka language.

156 After a model introduced by SIL missionaries (Stoll 1982).

the titles of the position they occupy in the *Comunidad*. Even worse, some people may be publicly embarrassed and others show outbursts of anger as, usually, men discuss communal issues or put forth complaints. Women sit together in the back or to a side, as a sort of choir, complaining about the things men are saying or giving their opinion on what are the problems in the village and what they believe men should be doing better. These meetings are spaces for the externalization of all the rounds of gossip going on in the village. But once over, people switch back to being *Ashaninka* as they separate into manioc beer rounds or share cigarettes on their way back to their houses. Similarly to Championships and Anniversaries, the shift during an Assembly is also marked by people not dressing in their everyday clothes, an explicit show of the perspectival shift.

Assemblies, like Championships and manioc beer parties, are acceptable mechanisms of emotional release in which people change as they are influenced by substances or change persona. These releases may not be acceptable as an *Ashaninka* but the 'civilised' perspective allows them to do this. Being 'civilised' is vital for *kametsa asaiki* as it deals with the new aspects of life in the *Comunidad* that cannot be solved with old *Ashaninka* practices. Thus, the 'civilised' perspective, and its *Comunero* identity, allows them to respect their Authorities and do as they are told when sanctioned, or to celebrate Anniversaries and other holidays eating and drinking non-*Ashaninkasanori* ('real *Ashaninka*') food. Those deemed to 'not know how to live in a *Comunidad*' were said to have characteristics that did not go with those of 'civilised' people. *Kametsa asaiki* does not work without 'civilisation'; hence, 'becoming civilised' is now an important part of the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*.

Being 'civilised' does not clash with being an *Ashaninka* person. On the contrary, these two are complementary practices of being in the world that feed on each other.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, many *Mestizos* see *Ashaninka* people as being in a

157 Similarly, Rival states that for Huaorani people "in villages with a School... the past... was backwards, brutal, people were poor and starved to death and compare it unfavourably to the present (peaceful, ordered and prosperous). However, in practice people did not consider the traditional and

liminal state as they are not as 'traditional' as they used to be but have not become as 'civilised' as *Mestizos* wish they were. Becoming an 'Other' is definitely a historical process in this case. So, what did my informants mean when they said they were 'becoming like *Mestizos*'? It gets more interesting when we think of all the different identities overlapping in the Ashaninka 'civilised' perspective. I think, following Vilaça, that this transformation and its acceptance is a clear statement that they believe to experience both the Ashaninka and the *Mestizo* point of view:

By saying that they are 'completely White,' the Wari do not mean they are losing their traditions, or their culture, as we may think in seeing them drinking alcohol, eating rice, using rifles, or dancing forró. Rather, they now have the experience of another point of view. (2008:186)

I have tried to show that this identity, and the memory of how they got to it, is inscribed in the Ashaninka body. The Ashaninka self-image must have changed upon contact with the 'Others' that appeared in the different 'Times'. Indigenous Amazonian bodies are open to the influence and incorporation of other bodies and persons.¹⁵⁸ But it appears as if the biggest influence in their transformation has been non-*Ashaninkasanori* (non-'real Ashaninka') food and clothes.¹⁵⁹ How is this transformation into an immoral being experienced? It is definitely seen negatively as people referred to 'becoming like *Mestizos*' in a mockingly way when they discussed how they were forgetting knowledge of the past that would be helpful today. People who went away for seasons and came back changed, not wanting to do certain tasks or forgetting how to do others, were said to think they were 'like *Mestizos*' as they believed they were too good to follow for Ashaninka practices.

modern activities and lifestyle to be incompatible but as complementary. 'Civilisation' and modern customs are for the public sphere... Local cultural customs are relegated to School holidays and the intimate sphere. Consequently, village populations develop two different practices and ways of being in the world" (1996:477).

158 See Lepri (2005) for the Ese Ejja case. See also Caiuby Novaes' (1997) insightful notion of the "Play of Mirrors" according to which self-image is determined by the way a group or an individual perceives itself as being perceived by an other.

159 See Oakdale (2008) for a similar case among Kayabi people.

Are they experiencing a redefinition of humanity or are we placing barriers where there are none? Gow (2001) suggests that Yine people see these transformations as a repetition of transformations that 'the ancients' experienced in mythical time. I think it is the same case for the Ashaninka people I lived among, adding that it is not only the ancestors in *Perani* who went through the transformation but also more recent ancestors, including their grandparents and parents. However, if identity is in the body, then do Ashaninka people have, like Vilaça asserts of Wari' people, two different bodies? I suggest this is so, but that they are only successful in changing voluntarily from one body to the other because of their 'civilised' perspective. This perspective understands the need for these different personas as they seek to share the knowledge of powerful outsiders in order to have profitable or peaceful relations with them, or to act as those outsiders whilst in the village in order to deal with issues they cannot deal with as *Ashaninka*. This shows their recognition of the difficulties of living in villages and the active search for mechanisms to prevent any potential problems from escalating into issues that could destroy conviviality. Their 'civilised' body and its perspective are proof of their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* as they seek to ensure the 'good life' of future generations of Ashaninka people.

WHOSE BODY IS IT ANYWAY? EATING YOUR WAY TO BECOMING AN ASHANINKA PERSON

This discussion seeks an understanding of what it means to be an *Ashaninka* for the Ashaninka people I lived among. It stems from my frustration and the impotence felt by some of my younger Ashaninka friends when they did not pass interviews to access locally and internationally-funded education programmes as they were not deemed to be *Ashaninka* because they lacked fluency in Ashaninka language. Sadly, in these settings, being an Ashaninka person is all about what you can see or hear. I do not deny that being able to speak the language is important in the everyday life of some areas, more so in the Tambo than in the Bajo Urubamba. But it becomes

especially important when, in *cushmas*, head dresses. and red *achiote*¹⁶⁰-painted¹⁶¹ faces, they stage Ashaninkaness in the public sphere. There is a clash of ontologies here. The outsider gaze looks for a 'traditional' specimen of the native, which definitely requires language proficiency. At the same time, following Ashaninka ideas of the morality and knowledge granted by their body, someone who eats 'real' food and lives among Ashaninka people surely knows how to speak Ashaninka language. They taught me I too was changing as I learned the language during the time I lived and ate with them.

This is another example of how the body is a site for memory as it is proof of kinship relations and other similar relations of care. Your body is what it is because of the care and food, or lack of them, received throughout your upbringing. I have not developed this aspect of memory because Gow's work on the Bajo Urubamba¹⁶² deals with this extensively. He argues that kinship, for the Yine people he lived among, is their history. Vilaça is in the same line when she writes that "In the human body, Wari' read histories of social relationships, corporeal records of caring in both meanings of the word." (2007:175) I believe the Ashaninka case is the same, adding that if kinship is history, as Gow would say, it is a history inscribed on bodies.

Language proficiency *is* an indigenous marker of belonging. In similar vein, teachers of Andean descent were called *hispanos* ('hispanics'), in reference to language, but were also called *comepapa* ('potato-eaters') in reference to the staple food making up their bodies. However, is this language proficiency about communicative competence and being part of a speech community or is it about something greater? I believe this is about being able to behave in an expected way, not because of an ease of communicating in the same language but because of what knowing Ashaninka language entails. It entails having lived among other Ashaninka

160 *Bixa orellana*

161 I once witnessed a leader being asked by a journalist in Lima to paint his face with *achiote* for an interview. He had none but, on the journalist's insistence, he painted it with her lipstick as, he told me later, it would make his interview more powerful.

162 See Gow (1991; 2000; 2001).

people, which in turns implies knowing *kametsa asaiki* rules and thus knowing what makes up a 'real' person. Conviviality and commensality produce a body that provides the moral perspective that most Ashaninka people believe to share. Having lived among them in the Bajo Urubamba, even if I was not as fluent in the language as I would have liked to, helped me jump over barriers when I moved to the Tambo.

However, what about those who are not as fluent as they are supposed to be? My godchildren and most of the boys and girls I know, as well as many of the young men and women I met in the many Anniversary parties and Championships I attended in the Bajo Urubamba were not completely fluent in Ashaninka language. They could speak it and understood their parents and grandparents but were not fluent enough to translate everything my ignorance prevented me from understanding or to pass the interviews to access further education even if they had gone through the hardships of finishing secondary School. Are these young people, some of them now parents, not Ashaninka people?

If we maintain the view that only the 'real' food of the ancestors makes an Ashaninka body then they are in big trouble. Eating game was not as common as I expected from the ethnographic images of abundant game and sharing, with manioc beer parties that lasted for days. Instead, due to the context I explained in the previous Section, most of our meals contained small pieces of fish, rice or plantains, and manioc. What happens to the Ashaninka 'strong' body when it is not fed the 'real' food of the ancestors? I met many young couples who ate rice, beans, and other non-'real' foods but were also proudly pursuing *kametsa asaiki*. Many young men, and this includes some of the Yine I met, were frustrated at the lack of opportunities they had as they were not as fluent as the organizations wanted them to be for scholarships. As my godson Kendis, a recent Secondary School graduate, told me, "I'd love to know more *idioma* ('Ashaninka language') but what am I supposed to know if my father only spoke to me in Spanish?" The previous generation's desire to have their children learn the Spanish they suffered for not knowing and thought was

necessary to 'defend themselves' in their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* has produced Ashaninka youth that do not fit into the external standards of what an indigenous person should be. Ashaninka language can be learned at School but you cannot be told how to be, speak, and feel like an *Ashaninkasanori* ('real Ashaninka person') should. I believe my friends would agree that you have to eat, drink, and live your way to it.¹⁶³ This process will be explained in the following Section.

My informants believe their new diet is creating a new body. This change is made more evident by the clothes people wear following Atalaya and Satipo fashion.¹⁶⁴ Young couples, and some older ones as well, talked of some new 'real' foods that were also good at creating Ashaninka 'strong' bodies. This re-ordered 'real' food, to be discussed in the next Section, allows them to have the best of two worlds as it creates the strong and moral bodies necessary for *kametsa asaiki* but also grants them the knowledgeable perspective in 'civilised' matters their ancestors lacked. I will suggest, following Fausto, that in the case of this new 'real' food, "Things that, at first sight, appear inauthentic [are] expressions of the way indigenous peoples appropriate and digest the Other." (2007a:97)

The Ashaninka people I know, as many other Amazonian groups, put more effort on reaching the goal of *kametsa asaiki* than in the specific form of getting it. This pursuit is about being flexible and willing to adopt or adapt what comes, and language is an important part of this. In the end, as Gow (1991:285-6) states:

The... people on the Bajo Urubamba do not think of their culture as a possession to be inherited or squandered. The ability to speak Piro... is acquired knowledge. Such knowledge is acquired in relationships between kin, and responds to the contexts of such relationships. If parents fear that an inability to speak Spanish will lead to the enslavement of their children, then they encourage their children to learn Spanish... [They] fear the loss of their children, not their "culture".

163 This was made obvious by my old mother-aunts who scolded me for drinking beer or *trago* and eating White people's food such as onions as they said they caused my bad Ashaninka language.

164 See also Gow (2007a) and Santos-Granero (2009) for similar cases in Peruvian Amazonia.

CONCLUSION

PROXIMITY MAKES *NOSHIRE* ('MY HEART/SOUL/THOUGHTS') GROW STRONGER

This Section, and those that follow, are part of my attempt to follow Joanna Overing's advice to 'think in terms of people thinking'. Why is thinking about their body and its transformations so important for Ashaninka people? If we consider this question from an Ashaninka perspective of the transformational nature of things we can find a very serious concern for belonging and humanity, a worry that puts into context what it means to be a 'real Ashaninka person'. This term, as with all other 'real' things, gets redefined by the people living through these transformations in order to create a sense of belonging attached to the idea of a continual Ashaninka identity. It also shows, following their accounts about the transformative nature of their own and their ancestors' bodies, their well-thought openness to the 'Other'.

Those who believe to have 'civilised' still see a great deal of common aspects between them and those Ashaninka people they believe to be living with another perspective. To make this clear let's consider Varese's idea that an *Ayompari* partner "[D]oes not belong to my family or my kinship system; I might not even know him, but he speaks my language; he is an Ashaninka. He knows the proper greeting, accepts my food and gifts, and repays them with others." (2002:34) Thus, we could say that the high value placed on *kametsa asaiki* and the morality it professes is seen as the main link between the Ashaninka people of different areas. At the same time, those who believed to be 'civilised' were quick to mark the differences between them and the rest. This brings up an interesting question: is there a limit, in terms of transformation, that people must pass in order to become an 'Other'? Or are the limits re-drawn every transformation? I believe it is the latter. All the different perspectives of the Ashaninka people living in Peruvian Amazonia do have

connections, especially those related to morality. In that case, is the body, like myth, a historical object that aims to obliterate time? If they see themselves as transformations then there is no need to obliterate time. They would say they have been in constant change and that their body is proof of their historical experience.

As I explained in the Introduction, this Thesis is an attempt to understand how and why Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people dedicate their lives to the pursuit of the 'good life'. I believe that those who talked to me about *kametsa asaiki* believe that a 'civilised' perspective is vital for its pursuit. But I think they do so because the *kametsa asaiki* they experience is based on the 'civilised' perspective. From this view, only a 'civilised' Ashaninka person would know how to make *kametsa asaiki* work in regards to all the constraints that are set on their lives today. It is as if the *kametsa asaiki* they were pursuing and talking about was one which equals 'civilization' as it does not work without it. That is why it is so necessary, at least for those I lived among, to be 'civilised' Ashaninka people.

Let's now find out the *kametsa asaiki* practices the Ashaninka people I lived among told me they inherited from their ancestors and how they experience them from a 'civilised' perspective. I must warn the reader that the accounts I received about this past were highly romanticised and essentialised. As I have shown, the ancestors participated in extended periods of intra-communal violence which took them to live apart from each other to avoid feuding. The romanticism of my informants' accounts must be put in the context created by the wake of the Peruvian Internal War and the violence exerted against them by the State and other actors in the area. Thus, Ashaninka people decide to separate themselves from the rest by going back to the basics: the teachings from a common peaceful and beautiful past. I hope the reader will see the big difference between *kametsa asaiki* theory and practice and that, as expected, different people have different takes on how to 'live well'.

Let's now move to how I was told the *acharineite* ('our ancestors/grandparents') lived beautifully.



GERARDO LEADING A COMMUNAL ASSEMBLY IN SHIRT AND TROUSERS



MANIOC BEER TABLE AT A FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

SECTION III
OF *KAMETSA ASAIKI*: LIVING WELL LIKE A 'REAL'
ASHANINKA PERSON



INTRODUCTION

THE ASHANINKA 'GOOD LIFE'

The Ashaninka people I lived among in the Bajo Urubamba and Tambo rivers dedicate their lives to learning and perfecting the very difficult art of conviviality. When discussing *kametsa asaiki* ('the good life') I was constantly reminded that even if reaching it is the goal, it is a very difficult social state to reach. *Kametsa asaiki* is not a permanent individual state but one that must be achieved communally as with 'good life' practices also come practices of social rupture such as witchcraft accusations and war. This is a philosophy that emphasises the relational and the constitution of the 'real' human person as the nucleus of kinship.

Kametsa is a very positive word that means 'good' in many different senses. Thus, when they translate *kametsa asaiki* into Spanish they say *vivir bien* ('to live well'), *vivir lindo* ('to live beautifully') and *vivir tranquilo* (to 'live peacefully'). *Asaiki* is the plural inclusive for 'living' but not in the existential sense but in the physical sense of being in one place.¹⁶⁵ For instance, *pisaiki* is the common invitation to sit down when visiting a house and *nosaiki* translates as "I live in [a place]". Interestingly, the opposite of living a 'good life' is not living a 'bad life'. There is no direct word for 'bad' in Ashaninka language as people say *tee onkametsa* ('not good'). Instead, those who do not 'live well' are those who do not 'know' how to. I was told this is due to their upbringing process lacking what is believed to be necessary for the transmission of this knowledge.¹⁶⁶ This ideal way of life is also very difficult due to the many negative aspects in individuals that they openly accept and point out. Ashaninka life, like that of other indigenous Amazonians, is shaped by what they

165 Similarly, Gow translates the Yine *gwashata* as 'to live well' or 'to stay/reside continuously' (Pers. Comm.)

166 See Kidd (2000:120) for Enxet ideas of conflict arising from people "who act without knowledge" and Belaunde (2000:210) for the Airo-Pai notion of those who have "been badly brought up".

perceive to be the latent possibility of conflict and their deep aversion of it. However, people also have positive aspects that must be nurtured and practised from an early age. It is the practice of the latter, and the control of the former, that becomes the base for the Ashaninka 'good life'.

'Living well' is an especially important preoccupation now that most Ashaninka families live in villages as opposed to the separated settlements of the past. This, together with the other issues presented by the aftermath of the war, the State, and National Society, presents a number of challenges they recognise their ancestors did not have to deal with. Thus, they cannot follow many of the practices they believe allowed their ancestors to achieve the 'good life' as, I was told constantly, their ancestors did indeed live a 'good life'. This peace is, at least in discourse, said to have been altered by recent historical events such as the war. An old widow told me when I asked her if she believed that she 'lived well':

I live well... I don't live well... I don't know. The other [Ashaninka] people are stingy with me and I have heard comments made behind my back. They start talking when they drink manioc beer... they don't talk if they are not drinking. It isn't like it used to be when I lived with my family; now that there are people from many different places they make trouble. After the war they have come from different places and live gossiping, it is not how it used to be when we lived peacefully, drinking manioc beer happily.

I propose that their experiences during the Peruvian Internal War take them to have a highly-romanticised notion of life in the decades preceding it which were really decades of slavery and abuse by *Patrones*.

However, even if their present way of life is very different to that of their ancestors, *kametsa asaiki* is still upheld as the ideal way of social interaction, especially now that it becomes more difficult to pursue. The decision to pursue *kametsa asaiki* is also an important way to separate themselves from their neighbours by highlighting their moral values:

If we want to live well we cannot live like the Andeans, fighting... they are stingy, they do not share with their neighbours. We do share... When they come to our village they bring their business and make money but give nothing back to the *Comunidad*. We share with the Andeans; we give them manioc beer... But when we go to their house they don't give us a thing... they don't know how to feel pity for us. They don't know how to live well.... We know.

As I explained in Section II, Ashaninka people constantly compare their lives with those of their *acharineite* ('our ancestors/ancients'). The lives of the latter are seen as having both negative and positive aspects. Although a large part of *kametsa asaiki* today is said to be about living similarly to how the ancestors did, I have never heard an Ashaninka person say he or she would like to live exactly like they used to. For instance, at the 2008 Ene River Congress an Ashaninka man working for the Tambo River Municipality stated his worry that the local federation's defence of the Ashaninka right to live "like [a real Ashaninka person] would make everyone live like in the past, like our grandparents did, but the people, especially the youth, are changing their way of life." Even if most feel nostalgia for all the lost knowledge in medicine and yearn for the abundance of game of the past they are also happy with the 'civilised' knowledge of the present that allows them to do things their ancestors were not able to.

The following two Chapters will discuss the *kametsa asaiki* practices that, I was told by my Ashaninka informants, were inherited from their ancestors. I will discuss the three that were deemed to be most important: eating, sharing, and performing and controlling emotions like an Ashaninka person should. The first Chapter will look at how these practices are taught and learnt, and will discuss commensality and the 'real' food that Ashaninka people consume to build their desired 'strong' bodies. The second Chapter will discuss Ashaninka ideas on sharing and the control and performance of negative emotions.

CHAPTER 5

EATING YOUR WAY TO KAMETSA ASAIKI

LEARNING FROM ADVICE

My months in Nueva Esperanza were spent living with an Ashaninka couple that had no children. However, my neighbours José and Gali, who in time became my *compadres*, have five children. Like most families I know, they had two other children who unfortunately died as babies. When I was their neighbour their youngest three children were under five and the oldest two were twelve and fifteen years old. After our first *minga*¹⁶⁷ together, partly due to his surprise at seeing a White person trying to clear a garden, José started to invite me to his house almost daily. I spent many early mornings sitting on their *emponada*¹⁶⁸ drinking manioc beer and having my first experiences around Ashaninka children. Gali always had manioc beer and also sold *trago*¹⁶⁹ so their house was always full of visitors at night drinking, smoking my cigarettes, chatting, laughing, and getting into the random fight. After one of those nights when José and I would drink until late as he told me about his life as a young boy in the Cheni Mission (Tambo), I asked if I could sleep there because my house was empty and I was too drunk to tie my mosquito net in the dark. He gave me a bed sheet and I covered myself as best as I could and passed out.

I got up before five in the morning as their youngest child, my godson, started crying. Gali got up and started to talk to him to calm him down. At that time he was

167 This Quechua word is used in the region for the working parties in which men help a kinsman or close friend in their garden in exchange for manioc beer, 'real' food, and future participation in their own *minga*.

168 Houses are separated into three spaces. The *emponada*, a flat surface made from the bark of the Pona palm, is an open space on which visitors sit and drink. The other two spaces are the kitchen, usually closed by walls and more private where the family and their close visitors eat. The third part is what the Ashaninka translate into Spanish as the *cuarto* ('bedroom') in which families sleep and keep their valuables. This is a walled space with a door.

169 Locally-made cane alcohol.

nicknamed *Hospital* as he had been born in the Atalaya Hospital. When he calmed down Gali started to sing to him. It was unusual to hear Nueva Esperanza women singing in Ashaninka language as they only seemed to do it for their children so I thought it would be a good opportunity to get a song recorded. I tried to fight my hangover as I took out my recorder and started to record the song from the outside of their room. I lit a cigarette just as my *compadre* walked out of their room and sat next to me. I forgot about the recorder as we discussed how to work out the planting of his rice so that it would be ready in time for San Juan Day (26th of June) when its price doubles. After having a bowl of manioc beer served by his daughter I remembered my recorder, found it, and put it back in my *tsarato*¹⁷⁰.

Weeks later I sat in Atalaya with Miqueas working on the transcriptions of some myths I had been told upriver by an old woman. Once done I asked him to help me translate *comadre* Gali's song which I had not heard yet. The recording continued past the song and we could hear her speaking softly to her young son. I asked Miqueas what she was saying; he smiled and replied: "she is advising your godson". She was telling her young son:

When you have your own family you should be like your father. He goes out hunting so that you and your siblings can eat, so you are never hungry and grow strong. He is not like others who do not feel sorrow for their children. When we need something he finds a job or plants rice for sale. He always treats me well and we never fight. You should be the same with your wife, go to the forest, bring game for her to cook and she will give you manioc beer. You will drink it peacefully and will live well together.

Gali's advice on the art of 'living well' made me pay more attention to the advice Ashaninka parents gave to their children. Parents give different types of advice throughout their children's life, even after they become parents themselves. These are given constantly when the children live in their parents' house, usually in the mornings but could be given at any time during the day like when a parent is

170 A cotton shoulder bag used by Ashaninka men.

teaching a child how to do a gender-related task or when a child is playing too violently with his or her siblings. It is notable that most verbal communication between children and adults is centred in the giving of advice.¹⁷¹

By the time I recorded Gali's singing I had not been in the *Comunidad* for too long and was more interested in learning what people thought about the war. It was very difficult to get people to say why they thought some Ashaninka people had joined *Sendero* and killed their *paisanos*, especially as they did not know me very well. I now understand that their reluctance to judge why some people do certain things has to do with their ideas on individuality.¹⁷² It is the acceptance of this individuality that, from an Ashaninka perspective, makes it so necessary for parents to teach their children about the correct performance of positive emotions and the control of the negative emotions that may be destructive to the people around them and to themselves.¹⁷³ This is the wisdom that has been learned from their own parents, thus their children's *charine* ('grandparents'), and they are sure to let their children know that. For example, I once heard Celso advise his son Carlos on how it is not good to get into arguments. He concluded by telling Carlos "That's how your grandfather taught me and that's how I teach you so that you can live peacefully". This shows that this knowledge is not just his idea but it also comes from the collected knowledge from a line of much wiser people, like Celso's father, a man who Carlos enjoys following to his garden or to the river, learning from him as he does.

The process of learning how to pursue the 'good life' is one that does not stop until death. I was told that the tactics and abilities for a successful *kametsa asaiki* are

171 Kidd's assertion that "Speech is understood as a key element in the creation of knowledge and, to a certain extent, the process of gaining knowledge is conceived of as somewhat mechanical". (2000:116) fits well with the Ashaninka case. For similar conceptions of how children are taught by being spoken to in Amazonia see Overing (1988:179) for the pedagogical value of myths. See also Belaunde (1992:98) and Passes (1998:57).

172 Similarly, Johnson writes that for Matsigenka people "Such individuality is by itself a sufficient explanation for much behaviour. I found it difficult to get people to speculate on the motives of others or even talk about individual differences." (2003:125)

173 However, as it has been stressed before, this autonomy should not be confused with a rampant asocial individualism. See for example Overing (1989:162) and Santos-Granero (1991:254).

learned from the *consejos* ('advice') and example given by parents. However, similarly to how Ashaninka children learn their gender-specific tasks from observation, imitation, and practice, *kametsa asaiki* knowledge is practised and nurtured through personal experience. Older people, with more practice and memory are thought to be more efficient at performing it than younger people who are expected to act antisocially. I found this interesting as there are accounts of Ashaninka people in the past marrying at what is now considered to be a very young age. How can Ashaninka people who do not know how to perform *kametsa asaiki* correctly have children to whom they will have to teach *kametsa asaiki*?

But then I was told that in the past Ashaninka people ideally did not marry until their early or mid-twenties.¹⁷⁴ I cannot assess the veracity of this but it shows their ideas of a more peaceful life in the past. Currently, most girls get pregnant or get married by their mid-teens to men in their late teens or early twenties. This is seen as a ridiculously young age by many adults as, I was told, "What does she know at that age! She won't be able to take care of her children, she won't be able to cook... at that age they are just following their mothers all the time... Boys will not be able to hunt, to work... What do they know about family?" Similarly, whilst ethnographies tell us that Ashaninka men travelled great distances looking for wives this has changed and many marriages are either made in the same *Comunidad* or are started in the many visits young men and women make to Atalaya or to other *Comunidades* for Anniversaries and Championships.¹⁷⁵ The large amount of adolescents in villages makes the sexual lives of young adults more complicated, especially from the point of view of their parents, and increases their possibilities of acting antisocially.

José has a daughter that is soon to be fifteen. Many of his friends, most of them

¹⁷⁴ I was told grandparents scared young men and women from having sex by telling boys that their penis would be ripped off if they put it in a girl's vagina and telling girls that a boy's penis would rip them open. I was told that, as expected, this did not prevent them from having sex when they got to their late teens but it was emphasised that they were old enough by that time.

¹⁷⁵ The shift from 'living apart' and *Ayompari* trade to living together in *Comunidades* and marrying in the community creates a radical shift in the space of affinity. I need to do more research about it and will definitely expand on it in the future.

married, joked about how they wanted to be his son-in-law, telling him that if he gave them their daughter they would bring him meat and fish. José joked back saying that he also wanted a radio and a shotgun if they really wanted his daughter. However, he has found young men trying to sneak into his house at night to have sex with his daughter. When we talked about this he always told me he was not bothered about his daughter having sex but was angry that these young men were sneaking into his house. He told me:

When I was young I would do the same things, I had my little friends. But she should be careful, she should not get pregnant. I always advise her that should get a boyfriend and have fun but she is too young. She should first learn, live peacefully, and she'll meet a good man.

José worries his daughter will get pregnant and then move in with a young man that will treat her badly, or worse, she will be a single mother and he will have to raise his grandchild.¹⁷⁶ Most people I know agree that young people should not get married and have children because they would not know how to cope with all the work and responsibilities and have a happy house. That is, they would not be able to do their part in the communal pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*:

When you're young everything seems so lovely, but later they stop loving each other, they fight, the man hits her... the wife might cheat on him... That's why it is not good to marry when you are young, one should travel, learn... it's easy to break up when there's no child. They will realise on their own when the time comes.

It is this ignorance that makes young people so dangerously anti-social and why it becomes so necessary for their parents and other respected elders (godparents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts) to advise them on how to live peaceful lives. More recently this responsibility has also been passed to Authorities. For example, a friend who is Headman of a *Comunidad* I once visited complained over a bowl of manioc beer right before going to mediate between a young wife who had ran away with another man and her husband: "why can't young people live

¹⁷⁶ Some men go to extremes and join the Army or take long-term work to avoid parenthood.

peacefully, live well. I am going to have to be there for ages... it is going to last all day." The fact that there are so many young couples is seen as negative due to their lack of life experience and therefore lack of practised *kametsa asaiki* knowledge. Young people are perceived as not being completely capable of 'living well' due to their impulses and the lack of control over their emotions that, even though they have been learning since birth, will be tested and perfected through life. I will discuss the control of the emotions in the next Chapter. However, it is important to first discuss how the community of similar individuals to which an Ashaninka person owes this control and desire to 'live well' is created.

KATE, POYA KANIRI! ('COME, EAT MANIOC!'): EATING LIKE A 'REAL' ASHANINKA PERSON

The most important Ashaninka mechanism for building communities and people is that which takes place around a plate of food. This is also the stage where large part of the learning on the 'good life' takes place. All the Ashaninka houses I visited had enough plastic bowls or *pajos*¹⁷⁷ to serve manioc beer for at least four visitors. The high social and nutritional value they attribute to manioc beer takes women to demand their husbands to buy, or trade foodstuffs for, bowls and large cooking pots. Men oblige when possible as they see the importance of manioc beer for politics and working parties. The women who own large metal cooking pots often have them borrowed by other women they have close relationships with so that they can boil larger amounts of manioc for manioc beer in one go. From the mid-1990s savvy candidates give out plastic bowls with their name and political symbol on it when they campaign in *Comunidades*. These have become extremely common in houses of the area.

However, I noticed that even if there were plenty of bowls for manioc beer, food was usually eaten from one plate. Pieces of boiled or roasted manioc or

¹⁷⁷ Bowls made out of a dried gourd (*Crescentia*).

plantains were put on one plate and pieces of fish, or less commonly game, were put on another. There may be an extra plate with some salt on it or a small pile of it was put next to the manioc. Whilst most adults drank manioc beer from a personal bowl, food was eaten by tearing pieces from the large pieces on the communal plate. A family eats from the same one or two plates and in occasions when there are visitors there may be a plate for men and one for women and children¹⁷⁸, or one for a couple if they were the only visitors. The exceptions were birthday parties and 'civilised' celebrations such as Graduations and Anniversaries in which every person receives their own plate.

At first I thought this was done to avoid eating from the same bowl from which manioc beer was drunk. I understood the practicality of putting large pieces of meat and manioc so that people could just tear pieces off them as it would not require them to buy much cutlery except for spoons for soups. But as food started to get scarcer as seasons changed and most women preferred to make soups out of the little fish or game they could get, some houses served soup in the plastic bowls that were used for manioc beer. Two or three people would sit around the same plate of soup and eat together. However, as portions got smaller I realised adults, especially men would take some spoonfuls, eat some pieces of manioc or plantain, and then pass the plates on to the children so that they would not be hungry. Adult hunger was to be satisfied with manioc beer instead, which is very filling and *engaña el hambre* ('deceives hunger'). The sight and sound of a child crying due to hunger is one of the worst images I have from my time in Amazonia. Older mothers usually commented on how some young single mothers left their babies crying of hunger and did not seem to care and others would advise their daughters when they were not feeding their children well. However, I still had not understood the importance Ashaninka people place on the way they eat.

One cold morning I sat outside my house eating a packet of biscuits and

178 Men sit separately from women and children in social activities.

smoking a cigarette. There had only been manioc and plantains on the menu for the past days and this was my last treat left. I saw Delfin coming towards me as I put the last biscuit in my mouth. I felt awful, I did not want him to think I did not want to share with him. He sat next to me and joked, “Why are you eating on your own like an Andean? You are being stingy; you didn't even save one for me!” To make things worse, his visit was to invite me to his house to have some *cunchi*¹⁷⁹ soup as his son-in-law, Rafael, was visiting and had been fishing all morning. As we walked to his house he told me, in his characteristic good humour, “Come so that you can eat like an Ashaninka person, don't eat on your own as if you had no friends“. I was given a spoon and sat next to him to enjoy our plate of soup. Once finished I took out some cigarettes and shared them with him and Rafael as we passed around a large bowl of manioc beer. I asked Delfin what he had meant when he said I should eat like an Ashaninka person. He smiled and explained:

We eat like Ashaninka people, like my grandparents used to eat... it is our Ashaninka way. We eat together because we love each other... because we are a family... we live well this way. *Choris* [Andeans]... eat on separate plates, they don't share... [A *Chori* man] doesn't love his wife or children. When he has game he takes it to Atalaya and sells it so he can buy alcohol. He beats his wife all the time, he doesn't feel sad when he's gone for days and his children stay crying of hunger. I like to go to the forest and bring back any game, peccary, monkey... I give it to my wife to cook and then we eat together... drink manioc beer together... we get drunk peacefully then fall asleep and wake up happy. That's how we live beautifully.

By getting food for them, cooking it, and eating it together, Ashaninka parents are actively showing their children their love and care. Through these emotions they show their children they worry about their happiness as they would feel *pena* ('sorrow') if they went hungry. Sorrow and love are the most important of positive strong emotions for Ashaninka people and extremely important for *kametsa asaiki*. From an Ashaninka perspective eating together and feeding a person is an explicit

179 Small cat fish. (*Pimelodus Sp.*)

statement of care. It is through eating together that children are taught the basics of Ashaninka social rules, especially that of sharing with the ones you love and care for. Children are encouraged to share what they have and some parents smile proudly when their child takes out a piece of what they were chewing and offer it to another person. Conversely, I was told of the case of a woman who used to live in Nueva Esperanza but had left to Pucallpa a couple of years before my arrival. She had left saying she would never come back due to the many arguments she had with other *Comuneros*. José described her as someone who “didn’t know how to live peacefully in a *Comunidad*” as her relations with her husband and children were terribly bad. As I was told: “She never fed her children, she would beat them... she treated them like she felt no sorrow for them.” Not feeling sorrow for them meant that she had no desire to have a positive and loving relation with her children. This relation is perceived to be very important, especially for young children as they are still in the early stages of socialisation and setting the foundations for a 'strong' body. If they do not receive the example of these positive emotions from their parents, how will they learn how to feel them?

Ashaninka people show great pride in their sharing of food. I was always reminded that I would never go hungry in a *Comunidad* because someone would always feed me or if there was no food I could at least have a bowl of manioc beer to deceive hunger. Whilst at first my hosts would organise for someone to feed me when they went away, this was not necessary as the weeks passed as I would just leave the house around breakfast time and go for a walk. It became common to hear *Juancito, kate poya kaniri!* ('Little Juan, come eat manioc!'), a common invitation for food, and invitations for manioc beer were even more common. Julián, a very skilled hunter, would send one of his young children to get me for a meal whenever he had a successful hunt. I would follow the child but on my way people would invite me into their houses for manioc beer. This happened successively as I passed in front of other houses, to the point that I would sometimes reach Julián's house tipsy and very

late. In these visits, and in the many manioc beer parties I attended, I was told that I should never feel sad and be on my own because I had many friends in the *Comunidad* and should go visit them instead. Being/eating alone is saddening whilst being/eating with others is the opposite.

This is, of course, common among indigenous Amazonians. For example, Siskind concludes that for Sharanahua people “[e]ating with people is an affirmation of kinship. Refusing to share food is a denial of all relationships, a statement that the other is an outsider. When people are eating and offer nothing one feels more than hunger, one feels alien and alienated.” (1973:9) Ashaninka people say eating meat and drinking manioc beer together makes people happy and strong. Manioc beer is also an important part of Ashaninka conviviality as, like a plate of food, it is the combination of the work of an Ashaninka husband and wife. People told me repeatedly how getting game and fish are moments of happiness. This was made obvious during communal fishing trips in which men, women, and children participate. I was told that in the past, when people did not live close to rivers in order to avoid raids, the ancestors would sing as they descended from the higher grounds to fish. As Joel told me: “The ancestors waited for that very important day... When the day arrived they would go down singing happily because they knew they were going to eat loads of fish together.” I already explained in Section II the importance Ashaninka people place on the substances they eat. Here I highlight the importance of eating it with other people. This commensality, in addition to the rest of the knowledge their parents and other people close to them give them, will allow them to become 'real' Ashaninka people. That is, people that know how to pursue the 'good life'.

The happiness part of the social equation of eating is very important as the sharing of food and drink, and the laughter and happiness associated with it, creates a community of similars. Vilaça (2002:350) comments that Wari people

[R]ecognize that, through our bodies, we are linked to each other, not just by ties of birth and blood, but also by the many forms of sociality and care giving—the feeding, holding, grooming, cuddling, love-making, healing and work—exchanged in the course of daily life. Such life-supporting exchanges create bonds among individuals that are simultaneously and inseparably both physical and emotional.

Ashaninka people would agree with this statement as I was told that eating the same things together creates bonds among people that make them have similar characteristics. For example, many of them make fun of the way White people laugh. I was told, and was used as an example, that whilst White people laugh '*ho ho ho*', Ashaninka people let out a continuous '*hee*'. Their way of laughing is very catchy and they would smile surprised or laugh the first times I 'accidentally' laughed like an Ashaninka person. I got the confirmation of the difference between the bad humoured Whites and the good humoured Ashaninka people at a manioc beer party in the Tambo River. After I told a joke I had heard from an Ucayali Ashaninka man I had all the men laughing for the first time in my stay. Bernabe, my uncle, laughed and then told me: "You have learned well in the Urubamba... you have learned to joke like an Ashaninka!" As we know, laughter among Amazonians is an expression of conviviality, an "eminently social phenomenon that immediately involves all concerned... it is an acknowledgement of the social harmony that brings together those who share in these moments of joyfulness" (Rosengren 2010:107). By living and eating with Ashaninka people I was 'learning' how to act and feel like one.¹⁸⁰

Eating the right things also allows for the production of strong Ashaninka bodies. This was made obvious by the many times I heard people comment things like "Oh, I am not strong, it is like I have never eaten peccary!" or "My sister says I should not eat so much capybara, I am getting too fat!" Another example came from my initial reticence to drink manioc beer. My first day working at a garden I would

180 The opposite transformation is also possible. A woman who had left to work in Lima as a maid came back to the *Comunidad* and people said she had become 'like a White person' because she would not eat certain things and spoke differently. See Santos-Granero (2009) for a similar case.

drink water when thirsty and just drink sips of manioc beer to be polite. On the second day I was told to stop doing that or else I would be too weak to work as, Enrique explained, water makes a body weak whilst manioc beer makes it strong. Months later a friend's wife commented when I got to their garden as they were planting cacao seeds with their daughters: "It's great that you came to work Juanito, we need a strong man, full of manioc beer, to move the earth."

However, not all food makes happy and strong people. Plantains and manioc, even if eaten constantly, are not seen as very nourishing. *Comadre* Adelina told me many times that when she was a child game was plentiful and she ate a lot of meat as her father hunted large animals like tapirs and peccaries. Now it was not the same because animals ran away due to the Andeans, the timber or oil/gas companies, and because they had become *mañosos* ('crafty') and knew they had to run away from shotguns. She explained that sometimes she felt:

Very sad, there's not as much game as there used to be. Your *compadre* sometimes goes hunting for days and he can't find any. We only eat fish, but in the past there used to be so much game. My father would bring tapir, peccary, monkeys... we ate happily and people would come and drink manioc beer. People would dance and sing... it was beautiful! Now it is not the same.

Similarly, Victoria, one of the oldest women in Nueva Esperanza, commented at a Communal Assembly discussing a contract with a timber company:

I don't want the timber company to come back. There used to be animals everywhere, they would walk into the village... But now they know about shotguns, they know about chainsaws and they escape. That's why my husband, my son, my son-in-law... go out hunting and bring nothing back, it isn't like it used to be. It's the timber men's fault... there used to be a lot of food here...

Adelina and Victoria, as many other adult Ashaninka people, agreed that eating game and fish, *comida legitima* ('real' food), like the ancestors did is necessary to build a strong body and a key part of *kametsa asaiki*. As Raul told me:

Living well is to live like the grandparents lived, they shared everything, you ate a

bit of everything... if someone brought something from the forest... they shared it... they also shared drink, if someone had manioc beer they would tell everyone to come and they would drink until they finished it.

In fact, food was constantly cited as being the main reason why many people's parents moved to the Bajo Urubamba: "My mother brought us when we were little, in Gran Pajonal there is no fish, here we used to eat so much fish... so much game... when we first got here... there was enough to share. Someone would kill an animal and they would cook it and invite the rest to drink manioc beer and eat." People constantly commented on the importance of the sharing of food and drink for the ancestors and the happiness it gave them.

Many Ashaninka people complained that today they get sick of illnesses they do not recognise because they do not eat as well as their ancestors did. These ancestors could, I was repeatedly told, live for more than a hundred years and had children well into their eighties. As I was told in the Ucayali:

My grandfather used to tell me... the ancients lived well, ate well. Why? Because there was a lot of fish, game... They lived happily, moving houses whenever they wanted, going to the places where there were more animals... There they ate well, peccary, whatever they wanted. They ate the best food... that is what my grandfather used to tell me. And they would never get sick; they didn't know any diseases! They had beautiful, strong bodies... Now look at us, you can go out hunting and come with nothing. That's why people get sick and die.

As I explained in the previous Section, contemporary Ashaninka people recognise that the bodies of their ancestors looked different. For example, I was told that the men did not used to have any facial hair whilst many Ashaninka men today do. I discussed this curiosity with a friend, Hector, who said he believed this was because of the changes in their diet as people today were not able to solely eat the 'real' food the ancestors ate. He, as well as many other men, believed one of the culprits for these differences was alcohol. I did not think much of it and told him I thought the difference was due to some Ashaninka women having children from

White men. Hector looked at me and laughed at my idea as both of his parents were Ashaninka.¹⁸¹

I completely misunderstood the importance of his commentary and still did not understand why they said eating the same food their ancestors ate was so important. I had similar experiences with federation leaders in Lima who after a couple of days of being there always asked to go to the Amazonian markets in 28th of July Avenue where they could eat Amazonian game and fish and drink manioc beer. At first I used to tease them, telling them that I ate everything I was given in the *Comunidad* yet they would not eat 'my' food. For them, however, it was all a potentially dangerous situation as they were in Lima, the centre of White people, and were eating their food and interacting with them. Thus, it is not a matter of taste or of eating something you are used to, as the federation leaders were showing their worry that their bodies were in danger of transforming in these long visits to the capital. Going back to Hector, he was telling me that Ashaninka people's bodies, including his own as he has a short moustache, are changing because animals are becoming scarce due to the petrol companies, timber men, or colonists scaring them away and preventing them from eating the 'real' food their ancestors ate.¹⁸²

This is all more serious if we consider how careful they are about what they eat as it does not only influence their bodies but also those of their children and spouses. For example, when one of the spouses is dieting during *sheripiari* ('shaman') treatment the other spouse must also follow similar food restrictions. Similarly, when a woman is pregnant she and her husband must avoid eating certain things that will be seen as dangerous to the child as they will have negative effects on its physical

181 I much later noticed that this is probably to the men not using the traditional depilatory shells that older ethnographies people say were always kept in a man's *tsarato* bag.

182 Ashaninka people do not believe their high rate of population growth influences the scarcity of food. The individuality of people and their freewill for movement are also attributed to animals. I have also been told that the Owners of different animals are angry due to the oil and timber companies destroying the forest and so are not letting any of their animals out to the forest.

shape.¹⁸³ Once born the baby will not be fed certain animals that have negative emotional characteristics that they may adopt and are instead fed substances to help with a positive growth. However, consuming non-food substances also has an effect on the body and its emotions and can make a person act in irrational ways. For example, many of the young men that come back from military service are said to act so violently and disrespectfully when they get back because of the things they consumed during their time away. I was told that it is not only the lack of 'real' food that changes them but also the fact that soldiers are made to eat gunpowder as part of initiation rituals. Similarly, the consumption of non-foods by the Ashaninka people in *Sendero Luminoso* is believed to be the reason why they were able to act so violently against their fellow Ashaninka. I was told they were fed human penises, dogs, shoes, plants that are considered as inedible, and were not able to drink manioc beer. This will be expanded in Section IV.

My informants had a varied diet and young couples in Nueva Esperanza ate more of what would not be considered as 'real' food than what would be. However, I believe that this definition is changing with the 'civilised' perspective, as now game, fish, and manioc beer are not the only 'real' foods. For example, I was told that soup has the same quality that game has in creating strong bodies. This soup is not the broth made from boiling fish or game but it is made with chicken or any other meat and spaghetti, rice, potatoes, and the use of pepper, cumin, and other condiments bought in Atalaya. Of these ingredients only rice and chicken can be grown or raised in a *Comunidad* and the rest of the products are bought in Atalaya with money from working for a *Patrón* or selling cash crops. Another example of this new 'real' food is the food prepared for 'civilised' celebrations such as Graduations and Anniversaries. These may include game but are usually chicken stews served with rice, beans and

183 For example, I was told that eating crabs will make the baby take the form of one and would therefore make giving birth very complicated. This is common among other Arawakans, see Bennet (1991:169), Johnson (2003:114) and Rosengren (2006:84-85) for similar beliefs amongst the closely-related Matsigenka people.

manioc.

When my male Ashaninka friends would see their children hungry they would get their bow or shotgun and go to the forest, if they had not been asked already by their wife. As Ashaninka courtesy demands, I would ask them where they were going even if it was obvious due to their boots and shotgun. Many would say “I am off to the market!”¹⁸⁴, and laugh.¹⁸⁵ The creation of 'real' food is the combination of male and female work. The man's part is in a dangerous setting, the forest, where he goes due to a great desire to prevent his children from being hungry and therefore sad. This preoccupation beats any fear he might have for what he might see or encounter in the forest. The woman's part is back in their house where she receives the dead animal and through her care produces the food and distributes the meat that will produce 'strong' Ashaninka bodies amongst those she loves.

However, since less people are able to find large game and more are dedicating instead to planting rice or going to work timber, it seems reasonable that their definition of what is 'real' food will change. Timber men still go to dangerous spaces, staying away from their family for months in dangerous settings like the Inuya or past Sepahua, living among non-Ashaninka people to make money so that their children can eat and wear clothes. This money is then used to buy products in Atalaya or from other *Comuneros* such as chicken, canned fish, spaghetti, rice, and spices.¹⁸⁶ The woman will then make these separate ingredients into food that will

184 In similar vein, “The Piaroa linked the shopper in the market-place with the hunter in the forest” (Overing 1992:182), differentiating shopping as a predatory activity instead of one of exchange.

185 When someone was ill and a specific plant was required from the forest this definition would change. In that case, Joel would say that the forest was his *farmacia* ('pharmacy').

186 This seems to contradict what Gow saw in the 1980s in the same area with regards to 'real' food. Gow writes that “With the exception of alcohol, virtually no food items are purchased with money, nor can subsistence products be easily converted into cash” (1989:569) and that “For native people, 'real' food is free, but it is not defined strictly by the absence of payment. 'Real food' is produced locally, through human interaction with the land” (1995:48). I have shown that these two statements are no longer applicable to the context of the Bajo Urubamba. This is definitely more complex but the money used to buy this new 'real' food is also made from human interaction with the land but is not seen as remotely the same as the interaction with the land in gardening, hunting or gathering. I do not know enough about other areas to make a definite conclusion but it seems that the change to this new

have the same social power as the ancestors' 'real' food. This kind of food, if there is no game available, is what men expect when they go to a working party or a feast.

I must point out that, as I will expand in the following Chapter, the sharing of food is not generalised. This could be attributed to food scarcity but is also due to people just not wanting to have close positive relations with everyone. At times people might be given manioc beer even if they are not liked but they will rarely be fed. To be fair, people that know they are not liked somewhere only show up when they have been drinking and I found that only those explicitly invited to parties went to them.¹⁸⁷ Someone who is not liked will not be asked to leave but may be ignored until they do so. Others, to avoid angering the drunken person, may give them some drink and ignore them until they leave or pass out.

It has been said (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:224) that *masateadas* ('manioc beer parties') are moments where outbursts of negative emotions such as anger or sadness are acceptable or at least the expectations on their control are relaxed. I would instead say that it is a moment in which people are expecting these to happen but these outbursts are still considered to be antisocial acts. The drinking of manioc beer produces a conundrum: it is necessary for the production of sociality but when taken to an extreme it becomes destructive of the same sociality it was trying to create. Ashaninka people believe there is a potentially angry person in every drunk as whilst drunken one cannot access the skills of emotional restraint learned throughout life that I will discuss in the next Chapter.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Rosengren asserts that for the closely-related Matsigenka people "drunkenness is also seen as a state in which people can come in contact with their own true selves (*noseire*) which means that the social restraints set by the generally shared sense of community may be discarded in

'real' food due to a scarcity in game will keep redefining the way food is shared in these communities.

187 This was compared to the days of the ancients when everyone was invited to join in parties.

188 See Kidd (2000:126) for the Enxet notion of drunkenness bringing a temporary reduction in knowledge.

order to let the suppressed self take over and dominate.” (2000:226)¹⁸⁹

That is why so many chiefs and teachers advise attendants at parties to “drink with your stomach not with your heart”. People are told that when they get 'tired' they should go back to their houses and have a good sleep instead of staying and getting into fights. It is noteworthy that manioc beer drunkenness is considered as different to that caused by alcohol. The former, a 'real' food, causes a drunkenness that, following their ideas on substances and their impact on body perspective, does not always lead to trouble as the person is drunk from an Ashaninka substance. However, alcohol-fuelled drunkenness was considered to be very dangerous as it is a foreign substance that alters a person's perspective and makes them act like an Andean 'Other'.

The opposite of the sharing of food practised between people that care for each other is the experience of hunger suffered when Ashaninka people visit Atalaya. Every time I was there I found at least one Ashaninka friend who was in town to get money owed by a *Patrón* for past work. However, these trips were many times done in vain as *Patrones* would invent problems to delay the payment, forcing the men to sleep by the river or find a hostel that would let them pay later. Every morning there were groups of Ashaninka men congregating around the Market port or the port at Mangualito, sitting and watching the river to see if anyone they knew arrived. I spent many mornings sitting with them sharing the biscuits, bags of bread, and soft drinks that are sold by women by the port. Other times I would find groups in the infamous Fitzcarrald Street, sat in the many bars where a quarter of a litre of alcohol could be bought for £0.20. Men drank until they ran out of money and then would look for someone to lend them money so they could keep drinking with other men, or walked around the bars looking for a friend they could join.

This feeling of hunger is why most Ashaninka people I know hate going to

189 The experience of drunkenness as an experience of one's 'true self' is also made obvious by the term for someone in a drunken state (*'shinkitakena'*) being the same as someone under the influence of *Ayahuasca*.

Atalaya. When in Atalaya people sourly commented they would much prefer to be back in the *Comunidad* where they would be able to eat and drink without spending any money: “In the *Comunidad* I can eat peacefully, at least there is manioc beer to deceive hunger... who is going to invite you for some food here in town!” The lack of desire for sharing they see in Atalaya confirms their belief of having the high moral ground over the rest of the people living around them. They highlight that Atalaya people would never feed them for free and would rarely buy them a drink even if they knew them. People in Atalaya, who they perceive as being rich, are explicitly showing they do not want to have a caring relationship with them as even if they have food and see Ashaninka people passing hunger they will not give them anything to eat. The exception is, of course, when an Atalaya person wants something from an Ashaninka person.

I finally understood the huge importance of 'real' food and eating together on my last day at Nueva Esperanza. The *Comunidad* had organised a going away party for me and *compadre* Gerardo had bought some petrol for the generator so we could have music all night. At one point the music stopped and my drunken *compadre* said he would like to say some words. He said that I could come back to the *Comunidad* whenever I wanted and that he hoped it would be soon as I now had many godchildren, *compadres*, and friends. He also reminded everyone that even if at first some were reluctant of letting me stay, with time I had learned to drink manioc beer and to eat what they eat. He gave a list of the things we had eaten together, reinforcing the bond we had developed through the shared consumption of food and drink and through our work in the Federation and in his garden. When he was done he invited other people to give goodbye speeches and their message was similar. By eating with Ashaninka people for so long I had learned to eat like they do and therefore live like they do, in the process becoming *como familia* ('like family').

This discussion on the importance of food and eating together shows that, like many other Amazonians, Ashaninka people consider a lack of generosity to be one of

the worst personal and social defect. They are sure to teach their children this through the sharing of food I already mentioned. A *shampitsi/o* person ('stingy'; *mezquino/a*) is exposed to different types of social pressure in order to make him/her share the product of their work with the rest. These products include game, fish, or agricultural foodstuffs, but can also include the desirable objects bought in Atalaya. Instead, a person should be *pimantatsiri/o* ('he/she who shares a lot'). However, there is a difference in the way hunted, fished, or harvested foodstuffs and bought material goods are shared. The following Chapter will discuss Ashaninka ideas of sharing and will close with a discussion on the control of negative emotions. These two are the last of the three main pillars of the *kametsa asaiki* my informants said had they had inherited from their common ancestors.

The reader will find that these three pillars are intertwined as they all feed into each other. The following Sections will show how these three main ideas—generosity, the control of strong negative emotions, and sharing—are present in many other of their current practices aimed at the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*.



COMMUNAL PLATES AT BREAKFAST.
CLOCKWISE: PLANTAINS, CATFISH SOUP, EGGS, SNAILS, AND A BAG
OF SALT IN THE MIDDLE.



CLOSING A BRANCH OF THE ANAPATI RIVER FOR COMMUNAL FISHING



MAKING MANIOC BEER. THE GIRL ON THE RIGHT IS GRATING A SWEET POTATO WHILST HER COUSIN MIXES BOILED MANIOC.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING HOW TO SHARE AND HOW TO CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS

TIENES QUE DEVOLVER ('YOU MUST GIVE BACK'): GIVING AND RECEIVING

One of the greatest internal problems in *Comunidades* today is stealing. Most of the time it is people taking manioc or plantains from another person's garden but at times it can be as serious as people breaking into someone else's house to steal desirable goods such as batteries or sugar. These thefts are usually attributed to boys but I think these accusations, especially when done in public spaces such as Communal Assemblies, are aimed more at their parents than at the boys themselves. As I said earlier, young people are more likely to act anti-socially as learning how to live well is a life-long process. However, it is believed that if children act against *kametsa asaiki* it is because they do not 'know' how to feel *verguenza* ('shame') for their negative actions, which shows that they are not receiving the right advice or example from their parents.

Joel had a large manioc garden on which we had worked a lot and on which he had spent money hiring workers and organising working parties. However, he was tired of finding different parts of the garden where manioc had been stolen from, which took him to present his case at a Communal Assembly. He stood up, explained his case and finishing by saying "siblings, ask, don't be thieves!"¹⁹⁰ Joel had no problem with sharing his manioc as we had many people visiting to ask if they could take some manioc from his garden and he never said no. He would go to the garden with them or ask them to take it from a specific part of the garden. Sometimes he would even offer his manioc, like the time we visited a neighbour who

190 One of the common translations of *Ashaninka* is *hermanos/as* ('brothers/sisters'), an image of consanguinity not affinity.

said he had no manioc beer because his manioc was still too young. At the Assembly he let everyone know that stealing was wrong and, as the well-respected person he is, advised the rest they should “give good advice to their children”.

The scarcity of game and, to a lesser extent, fish in the Bajo Urubamba, as well as the large amount of people living in close proximity in Nueva Esperanza, prevent them from following the extent to which food was shared in the time of the ancestors. Juaningo, a man in his sixties told me:

I share because our grandparents taught us to do it... [They] taught us we should share the meat of large game... When they got some they would share it with everyone... we share with our family, our neighbours... When there is manioc beer we share, happily, with everyone... My mother taught me how to share, that is why I have also taught my children to share... We are not like the Andeans who don't know how to share...

It is important to note that Ashaninka people do not only share game. They also share fish and other foodstuffs like avocados, pineapples, manioc, or plantains. Manioc or plantains may be given out to people that ask for it, like Joel did with his manioc, but sometimes people will send fruit or even sugar cane to other houses. However, due to its scarcity and its great demand, game is the most complicated edible product to share .

Things today are very different than in the days of the ancestors who used to share everything with everyone. Houses are built close to each other so everyone can see who or what goes into them, as opposed to the days of scattered living in which nobody could see other people's game. Men sometimes use a different path into the village when they come back from hunting in order to avoid running into people or may hide their kill or catch in their bags as they walk quickly to their houses, ignoring or making polite excuses to invitations to drink manioc beer. People that realise this will still mock the hunter, calling out from their houses asking for at least a little fish or the game animal's head for a soup. The hunter might just smile back, embarrassed. Obviously, honesty about the possession of food is not complete and it

depends on many factors including the size of the animal, the quality of its meat, and the links the hunter, his wife, or mother in the case of single men, have in the *Comunidad*. Even if the Ashaninka people I lived among are taught from an early age how negative it is to be *watsatsinari/o* ('he/she who does not share meat'), I was told that households are forced to act this way because it has become more difficult to find game. Javier explained as he led me through a path taking us directly to his house as we returned from an unsuccessful hunt:

I always think of sharing when I kill an animal... but when I kill something small it is only for my family; it is not that I don't feel sorrow for others but if I share we will have nothing to eat. It is easier with fish because you can give a couple to your neighbours but not with game... I can only share when I kill something large like peccary... but still you can't give some to everyone... The custom is to share; we have to share with our family... It's not like in the time of the ancestors when there was a lot of game.

A friend once commented, half-joking, that it was unfair that his wife had distributed most of the peccary he had killed that morning among his married daughters and now they only had a small piece left for a watery soup. Most of the men I discussed the sharing of meat with said they would happily share it when they killed a large animal but agreed that small animals should be kept for one's children.

Interestingly, the shortage of game has created a redefinition of kinship networks as people discussed having 'real' kin as opposed to people that they 'treat like' kin. The responsibilities of sharing were only respected with the first group, close relatives of either a husband or wife, living in physical proximity. It could be argued that this has to be done because of how physical social organisation has changed. Whilst in the past people lived in separate houses extended throughout the forest, today they live in villages of close physical proximity which means there are more hunters in the same area but also more people with whom one has a responsibility to share.

When hunting for large game, Ashaninka men usually go into the forest with

their dogs, on their own or sometimes in groups of two or three. A man may take his wife with him if he is hunting for small animals close to the village or taking advantage of a *restinga*¹⁹¹. The killing is done by men who will also skin the animal if the skin can be sold in Atalaya.¹⁹² The animal is then taken back to the village and given to the hunter's wife or mother who cuts it into pieces and decides who, if any, will get a piece. So, even if the man kills the animal and experiences all the physical and emotional dangers attached to the task, it is the woman who cuts it and decides on its distribution.

One morning Joel brought a large peccary to the house, took it to his wife Sisi and went to rest. When he was up a couple of hours later it had been chopped into pieces and put into two different containers. He asked about a large piece: "And this large one?" His wife looked at him and said, mockingly, "It's for *comadre*, leave it there! Or did you cut it yourself?" Women, or children if they have any, then take the meat to whoever it was intended for or may keep it and give it to the intended people when they visit. These would be their *familia legitima* ('real kin') and *compadres* or close friends with which they were in good terms and who usually give meat or fish to the hunter's household. These households will also redistribute part of the game they receive, making the network of people that care for each other even wider. As expected, this distribution is not done very publicly but is done as discretely as possible in a village where everyone knows what is going on. For example, some of my *compadres* would come to my house and quietly invite me to go with them to eat in their houses instead of circulating food into the house I was living in. Like the parents who feed their children, the sharing of food with other households evidences a level of kindness and care that Ashaninka people see as an intrinsic part of their identity, of being human, and of the strengthening of communal life.

191 This is when the river grows leaving small islands of earth on which animals congregate.

192 Women do kill small animals that they might find in their gardens using a machete. There are cases of women that are good hunters but these are usually widows. I was told in the Perene that women should never hold a man's bow or shotgun, just like men should never hold a woman's cotton spinning stick. However, I never saw this prohibition being respected.

I was repeatedly told that receiving food brings the responsibility to *devolver* ('give back'). This responsibility is not only about food but, as I will explain later, includes different favours that people who care for each other do, like participating in working parties or helping when someone is sick and cannot carry out tasks like getting manioc or firewood. The reciprocity for a product or favour is delayed until the situation arises when the person can 'pay back' the favour. It is clear that these exchanges are based in a relationship of trust and delayed reciprocity mirroring the *Ayompari* trade I explained in the previous Section. In the same sense, the exchange of food and favours are not the only outcome of the relation. Like eating together it is an important sign of care and concern for the person and their family. But most importantly, both *Ayompari* trade, and I extend this to everyday sharing and reciprocity, are based on Ashaninka people's "right to demand" and their "obligation to give" (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:232).

The people in Atalaya who never feed Ashaninka people lack this humanity or ethical value. They choose not to share even if they may be rich from an Ashaninka perspective. My Ashaninka friends always pointed out their stinginess and desire for making money. For example, a friend told me that he would give his money to his wife because she was *como serrana* ('like an Andean') and would not spend it. My informants criticised how Andean buyers at the port in Atalaya¹⁹³ were so picky when buying their chickens or how they paid so little for their rice and timber. Joel told me a story of an Ashaninka man many years ago who was given a shotgun as advance payment for mahogany. His *Patrón* asked him to mark the timber with his initials and throw the pieces onto the Ucayali so he would then pick them up downriver. The Ashaninka man cut a piece of timber of the same size as the shotgun, threw it onto the river and thought that was the end of a fair exchange as both were of the same size.

193 Every morning there are around a dozen buyers of Andean descent waiting by the ports in Atalaya for canoes with products they can buy, like game, live animals, or agricultural products.

People in Nueva Esperanza have a much closer example of Andean stinginess in Mañuco, a man from Ayacucho who was married to an Ashaninka woman. The couple and their family lived in a small island in front of the *Comunidad* where his daughters studied in the primary School. After he learned of the high prices game gets in Atalaya he decided to give cartridges to some men in the *Comunidad* to hunt for him so he could sell the game in Atalaya in the hope of making a large profit.¹⁹⁴ However, he salted the meat of the four peccaries he received instead of taking it straight to Atalaya as he did not know that salted meat gets less than half the price that fresh meat does. People found his misfortune hilarious and thought he had it coming for having so much meat and not sharing it. When Gerardo found out a week later as we drank manioc beer, he advised him that he should not take salted game to Atalaya. He advised him to instead “share it in the *Comunidad* and you will make a better profit, you will get game back... you will make friends!”

A few weeks later Mañuco killed a sloth and took it across the river to the *Comunidad* so that someone would help him cut the meat as his Ashaninka wife, who would normally skin the animal, was away in Atalaya with their children. He only wanted a small piece for a soup and said that whoever wanted some could take what they saw fit. However, Ashaninka people do not eat sloth as eating it makes a person as lazy as the animal so no one helped him. He could not understand why they did not want his meat, started drinking alcohol, and passed out. He got up the morning after and left, hung-over and carrying the sloth, still not understanding why no one wanted what he saw as perfectly good meat.

His attempt to show he cared for others ended up with him leaving the village in a state of anger, making people avoid him and confirming their stereotypes of

194 Some younger unmarried men sell the game they hunt in the *Comunidad* or take it to Atalaya. Some older men do this too but these are usually those specialized in hunting for sale. I have seen fish and game being sold in *Comunidades* but it was not common and it was always at reduced prices. It is noteworthy that whilst Ashaninka language is used all day in the Tambo, they switch to Spanish for economic transactions. There is a very large separation between selling (behaving like an Andean) and distributing (behaving like an Ashaninka person).

Andeans as people who do not know how to control their negative emotions, as opposed to Ashaninka people who place great importance to the control of these emotions.

YO VOY Y LE BOTO MI RABIA EN EL MONTE ('I GO AND THROW MY ANGER AWAY IN THE FOREST'): KNOWING HOW TO CONTROL STRONG NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Just like they recognize different emotions with a positive effect on the daily pursuit of the 'good life', Ashaninka people also recognise emotions that are negative for *kametsa asaiki*. They fear the potentially negative influence of strong emotions on a person and the community as these emotions are considered to be a relational state. This is of course a common trend among indigenous Amazonian projects of conviviality.¹⁹⁵ An important part of 'living well' is to know how to control these emotions so that they do not rupture a household or a community. But it is also important to know how to deal with those in that state. For example, I witnessed many cases of fights when one of the sides would walk away to avoid escalation and this was never seen as that side losing face but as he or she doing the right thing, especially when the aggressor was drunk.¹⁹⁶

Ashaninka people are trained on the emotional aspect of *kametsa asaiki* from a very young age, learning that knowing how to nurture good emotions is as important as knowing how to control the negative ones. Whenever we discussed an adult person who had done something considered to be anti-social, usually an outburst of anger which many times started with jealousy, I was told the person was

195 See the papers in Overing and Passes (2000) for more on the importance of the flourishing of positive emotions and the control of negative ones in Amazonian 'good life' projects. See also Santos-Granero (1991) and Belaunde (1992; 2001). The control of anger is also present in projects of conviviality elsewhere. See Heald (1998) for an account of Gisu people (Uganda) who stress the virtues of self-restraint in a society which defines men in terms of their capacity for anger. The basic dynamic of Gisu society is seen to lie in the interplay of an aggressive individualism with the restraints demanded by social living.

196 This is common among indigenous Amazonians. For example, see Mentore (2005:48) on how Waiwai people control physical violence with a convivial attitude towards potential aggressors.

loco/a ('crazy'). I never really put much thought into it because it sounded like something I would say for a similar reason. However, I later came across a word, *omposhinitanakeri/o* ('he/she who is controlled by a strong negative emotion'), which changed the way I thought about their ideas of the control of strong emotions. I was repeatedly told about cases in which this state took the individual to act with awful consequences to his family with a loss of control that even lead to the person's death.

Ashaninka people believe that *kisaantsi* ('anger') is the most negative of emotions. It is believed to have a very negative impact on the person and can very easily take the person to act violently against those around him or her. Anger is such a negative state that shamans commonly ask their patients to avoid being angry at all costs as part of the strict diet they must follow during their treatment. These are so important that the times shamanic treatment does not work are attributed to the patient not having followed the diet strictly. This was the case of Genrri, a young man from Anapati in the Tambo, who lived away from his family as he studied in NOPOKI, a Catholic training School for indigenous teachers in Atalaya. I was told he got gravely ill and after seeing a well-known Atalaya shaman for treatment he was told to follow a diet and was then taken back to Anapati by his sister. He died a few days later because he did not follow the shaman's indications: "He was told to not be angry. The [shaman] told him to not say motherfucker, shit. But he did not follow [the diet]... he died angry, shouting like a madman".

Anger takes over a person and makes them do things that, most of the times, are later dismissed as an emotional attack on a normally peaceful person. This is similar to the violent behaviour of some drunks when they have been drinking cane alcohol or beer. As I mentioned previously, manioc beer drunkenness is not seen as dangerous as that fuelled by alcohol. For example, Celso, a Nueva Esperanza *comunero*, came back from six months working timber to find that his wife had ran away to Atalaya with another man, leaving their four children with his sister. He went to Atalaya to find her but instead spent the money he had been paid for

working six months, about 500 pounds, in only one week. He told me as we sat in a canoe on the way back to the *Comunidad*: “I had all the money I had been paid and because of anger I spent it all drinking. I haven't even bought clothes for my children... anything! You know what anger does to you.”

However, the control of anger can be mastered through time even if it is understood to be such a dangerous emotional state. Ashaninka people would never say that a person that knows how to 'live well' does not ever feel angry. Instead, a person following *kametsa asaiki* ideals knows how to control that emotion so that it does not control him. For example, an Ashaninka friend really wanted to have a baby with his new wife who was twenty years younger than him and even if they had been together for four years they had not been able to. She had two babies from a previous partner but unfortunately both had died in the two years before my arrival and he had three children of his own who lived with their mother elsewhere. I was drinking manioc beer one morning with José and saw him leave his house carrying his shotgun and walking quickly towards the path leading to the forest. This behaviour was unusual as he would normally have come to say hello or come for a bowl of manioc beer before going hunting. José commented, when I asked if he knew what was wrong with our friend, that:

He gets angry, he must be very sad that they cannot have [a child]. But he's not like others who shout or beat their wives when they get drunk... He gets his shotgun, goes to the forest, and brings a [bird]. He comes back peacefully and gives it to his wife to make soup... he leaves his anger in the forest. I do the same; I go to my garden, work a little, and throw my anger away... I come back as normal, I ask, 'Is there any manioc beer?', and drink it peacefully.

During my work in political organisations I learned that anger can be channelled for good or rightful goals. This, of course, can only be done by those that have learned how to control it and can prevent it from having a negative impact on their lives, showing that the emotional side of *kametsa asaiki* is not only about avoiding these negative emotions but to know how to control them and use them for

the benefit of the community.¹⁹⁷ I once discussed with some friends after a meeting in Atalaya how many Awajun mayors there are in Peruvian northern Amazonia as opposed to Ashaninka mayors. One of them said he believed Awajun people had so many successive mayors because

They do it with anger; they remember how much they have suffered. That is why they vote for their countrymen and win the elections. Here it is as if people have forgotten about everything that happened. I grew up with my father working in a hacienda; I saw how he was punished by the *Patrón*. That is why I fight, I remember how he suffered and I feel angry.

My friend believes that the memories of a past of abuses and injustice gives them the anger that in turn grants them the will to travel and vote for their people and get them elected into local governments. Thus, anger can be channelled and put into practice for specific gains.

The day after I told José and Miqueas about our conversation and they agreed that just like some people do not know how to 'live well' some do not know how to be angry. In this case, they explained that anger can rightfully be used so you can *devolver* ('give back') something negative done to you. Note that this is the same word used for the reciprocity after receiving food from someone. There were a few cases of attacks on a person that many others agreed that the afflicted person should be able to 'pay back' what was done to him. For example, a man's nephews had been sleeping with his wife, their 'real' aunt, who then left him and ran away to Sepahua where the young men were there finishing secondary School.¹⁹⁸ Once back from School the young men joined the military service because they were scared their uncle, one of the leaders during the war in the Bajo Urubamba, would kill them. A few saw his control as admirable but others thought he was stupid for not giving

197 This is about knowing how and when to represent these negative emotions. This has been highlighted for other Amazonian societies (See for example Kidd 2000:122-123).

198 I was told the boys had learned to use *pusanga* in Sepahua from Matsigenka people who are thought to use it skilfully as her having sex with her 'real' nephews was unthinkable. I have not seen a generalised use of *pusanga* by Ashaninka people even if I have heard of it many times.

them back what they did to him. One manioc beer round on a full-moon night we discussed what he would do now one of his nephews was back. He said he would do nothing, and another man said: “You don't know how to be angry, he has fucked you and you still call him nephew. I would call him cousin [brother-in-law], what is he going to say? He will just be quiet. I would take his wife away when he has one.” Another clear example of this 'giving back' to create balance was when the close kinsmen of an assassinated person would take revenge. However, this is not practised anymore and conflict resolution tools have been developed in order to deal with these kinds of problems. I will discuss them in Section V.

Another strong negative emotion that Ashaninka people recognize as very problematic to their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* is envy which is cited as the most common reason for *daño*¹⁹⁹. Genrri, the young man from Anapati who died after failing to follow the diet given by a shaman, had become ill due to witchcraft caused by envy. I was told that he was not only a very gregarious young man but also a good student and fantastic football player. He also had more than enough money for his expenses outside NOPOKI as his father would send him a monthly allowance from the money he got from selling cacao in Satipo so it was believed that one of his classmates had either done it him/herself or had paid a witch to do it. I was told that a person can be envious for many different reasons like money, football proficiency, or material possessions. I was told many football championships in the Tambo are plagued by witches trying to get the best players injured so that their teams will win. However, witchcraft is also caused by seemingly trivial things like a baby being born with hair, which was said to be the reason why a woman had killed her ‘real’ niece through witchcraft.

Comadre Adelina told me that the baby “Was born with hair [on her head], beautiful... and [the witch] said, why was my baby not born like that... she must have killed her because of envy”. The woman now lived in Atalaya as she had been

199 Literally 'damage' but I translate it as 'witchcraft'.

expelled from Taquila (Bajo Urubamba) for previous allegations of witchcraft. Making things worse, her brother-in-law and father of the dead baby had been the Headman at the time of her expulsion. Therefore, Adelina told me she was “sure she is still angry for being kicked out of the *Comunidad*... that is why she did the witchcraft”. Adelina had learned what happened whilst visiting her son Jainer in Taquila and recounted what had happened, showing a clear Ashaninka perception of the power of emotions:

[The baby’s mother] says that when they got to Atalaya [the witch] asked her 'Why do you bring your little baby? She is going to die.' And she died in the trip back [to their *Comunidad*], she got very ill... How did she know she was going to die? She had gone to visit her sister, how was she to know she would do witchcraft [to her baby] due to her anger and envy... if she is her real family! Why would she do that! She must not feel sorrow for her, she must still be angry she has to live in Atalaya.²⁰⁰

Another example of the negative power of envy and its link to witchcraft is that of Reynaldo, a Cocama man married to an Ashaninka woman. His whole family had to leave Tzinquiato (Bajo Urubamba) because of witchcraft done to his oldest son who did not die but lost the use of both of his legs. Reynaldo was convinced this had been done because of envy as when they lived in Tzinquiato:

We didn’t lack a thing. I had a large manioc garden, rice, beans... my children always had game, fish, clothes, notebooks. My wife had plates, soap, cooking pots... That is why they did witchcraft to my son. That is why my wife doesn’t want to go back; we are going to stay in Atalaya even if we also suffer here.

Even if he went back to Tzinquiato to check on his gardens and was still one of the *Comunidad*'s Authorities he preferred Atalaya, even if he struggled to find work, because it had a secondary School. His wife told me she missed the *Comunidad* but feared for her children as many people hated her husband.

200 Evidence that revenge is common among Ashaninka people and that it is not only physical. See Beckerman (2008) for an overview on Amazonian practices of revenge.

I experienced a more personal case of the impact of envy when I went back to Nueva Esperanza after a long stay in the Tambo. I went to visit *compadre* José and found he had lost a lot of weight, looked very pale and did not have his usual cheer. I asked what was wrong with him and he said he had been vomiting and had diarrhoea for the past week. I was worried and asked what had happened as he had been ill the year before due to witchcraft from which his leg had not fully healed. I asked him if he had been diagnosed by a *vaporadora* ('vapour healer')²⁰¹ and he nodded, adding that she had found a needle in the pot which signalled witchcraft. I asked if he knew who it was and he said he did not but explained:

That's how envy works. Look how they have left me, skinny, I can't even eat... some feel envy that I have a *compadre* from the outside. The others say that you give me too much money, that you bring me presents and clothes for your godson. But, have I ever asked you for money? We became *compadres* because of our friendship.²⁰²

Envy is not only seen as the main cause for witchcraft but as the main cause why people steal. For example, at a meeting for the Atalaya Sub-Region cocoa project in Nueva Esperanza a former Headman, after only him and his son-in-law had signed up for the project, stood up and advised the rest: "Brothers, think well about this, it is a great chance. You will then see some brothers with a beautiful cacao garden, they will have money... and [you] will get jealous and will want to steal from them." Another example is that of a man known for robbing chickens or sending his wife or children to do it. He had lost the fingers of one of his hands due to a disease he caught whilst working timber in Brazil. However, people in Nueva Esperanza agreed that this had happened because he stole so much his body was becoming

201 Different types of witchcraft can be diagnosed by a shaman but also by a *vaporadora* ('vapour healer/diagnostician'). These women place plants in a pot with water in which they later drop a hot stone or axe head. The patient then covers himself with a *cushma* or plastic sheet and bends over the vapour, trapping it under the *cushma*. After a while the plants in the pot are inspected and foreign substances may be found leading to a diagnosis of witchcraft.

202 José is a very friendly and hospitable man. Not only does he have me as *compadre* but also has *compadres* from other *Comunidades* that visit him and bring him gifts.

ugly.²⁰³ After we got notice that he was the main suspect for the disappearance of some of our neighbour Moises' chickens, my host's wife commented: "He keeps doing it again, he is no good. He just sits there drinking alcohol, laughing... he doesn't know how to feel shame." We all agreed with Moises when he added that "He is now used [*acostumbrado*] to doing that". It is important to note that just like knowing how to 'live well' and how to control one's anger, it is also important to know how to feel shame which allows a people to differentiate between right and wrong.²⁰⁴ Children are not expected to know this as they are still learning it from their parents' example and advice, but adults are. At present, conflict resolution rituals such as *Sanciones* ('Sanctions') are aimed at teaching or reminding people how to feel shame, suggesting this emotion is being used as a social regulatory mechanism. I will discuss Sanctions in Section V.

Ashaninka people believe that negative emotions can be linked to being *peranti* ('lazy') which gives a person too much free time to think bad thoughts. For example, I was told that a woman who was caught stealing many times did so because "[Her husband] leaves her [in her house] all the time. I tell him that is wrong... she starts having bad thoughts; she looks at what other people have. She does nothing, just sitting there. She starts thinking of stealing, she becomes lazy." The link between the lack of control of the emotions and lazy people is important because these two negative qualities show that the person was not taught or did not have a good example to follow on how to control those emotions and how to be hard-working. Parents advise their children not to be lazy and actively teach them the positive side of work. I never saw a girl following the menarche rite of passage in which a girl lived for up to 6 months inside a small purpose-built house learning

203 We can see a link between morality and the body. Similarly, people constantly pointed out the 'happy' faces and 'strong' bodies of people following *kametsa asaiki*. As I mentioned earlier, I propose that there is not only a connection between bodies and perspective, but also a connection between perspective and morality.

204 Similarly, Kidd describes shame amongst Enxet people as "the result of 'arriving at a knowledge/understanding' that one has behaved inappropriately and without due love and restraint" (2000:127)

gender-related tasks such as the basics of running a house and was especially taught to never be lazy. The whole point was to create a woman prepared to be a mother that knew how to be useful to her fellow Ashaninka in the creation of ‘real’ people. At the end of her seclusion, she was told by her grandmother “to not be stingy, envious, to not gossip, [to] not lie, to not exaggerate comments, suggesting that if she found out about something she should be silent, keeping quiet and eating the news” (Fabian Arias and Espinoza 1997: 49). Even if boys do not go through a similar ceremony they are still taught that laziness is very negative. When a young hunter kills his first animals he takes them back to his mother who will cook them for the family. However, he will not be allowed to eat his own kill for at least his first three kills as this would make the boy be a lazy man and a bad hunter in the future.

The power Ashaninka people believe these negative emotions have on a person can be exemplified in the case of child-witches. Like I mentioned earlier, most of the cases of witchcraft that my informants told me about were started by envy. I was many times told about the cases of adult witches, *matsi*, who have intentionality in their acts led by a mixed feeling of envy and anger. These are people that trained to become shamans but chose to become witches in the process and can be paid to do witchcraft on people. However, the case of child-witches is different. Peruvian Arawakan ideas on child witchcraft have recently been summarised by Santos-Granero (2004), the first anthropological work to tackle head-on the sociological explanation of Ashaninka, Nomatsigenka, and Yanesha perceptions of child-witches.²⁰⁵ The accounts I received about child-witches were in the same line as what he explains the Ashaninka beliefs on the subject to be. I was told child-witches were not completely conscious of what they were doing or of their great, but potentially deadly, power. I believe the figure of the child-witch is proof, from an Ashaninka point of view, that young people do not know how to control their strong negative

205 It is worth considering why Matsigenka and Yine peoples do not have these ideas of child-witches. I would not know how to answer this question but it will be an interesting one for the future.

emotions. In fact, Santos-Granero explains that among Yanesha people, the children perceived as potential witches were those who “showed signs (such as hot temper, gloominess, disobedience, and disrespect) of having been introduced into the arts of witchcraft.” (2004: 278) Therefore, when a child-witch feels jealousy or anger he or she unknowingly can, due to the power they have received from their *kamaari* (‘demon’) teachers, cause grave harm to a person which will many times lead to their death even if they did not intend to do so. If the people that share their food with those they want to show their care and love to and live their lives actively controlling their strong negative emotions are the best example of *kametsa asaiki*, then child-witches are the opposite. Child-witches go against the conviviality rules that expect them to act showing care and love to their close kin. I will expand on these beings in the following Section.

I have not been able to separate my discussion of commensality and sharing from the sphere of emotions because it becomes impossible to explain one without the other as the sharing of food is the product of the positive emotions that are performed in order to prevent the negative ones from controlling other human beings. Ashaninka people find it obvious that someone who does not feel sorrow for someone he or she claims to love does not really love that person. Let me clarify this with the use of *pusanga* love magic. The Ashaninka song 'Tears of the *Aroni*' tells the story of an Ashaninka man who takes the eye of the *Aroni* bird in order to prepare a strong *pusanga* to make the woman he loves fall for him. The *Aroni* is said to be constantly sad, evidenced in its melancholic cry: *atatau*. I have been told that when one is under the effect of *pusanga* one cannot help but feel incredibly sad, nostalgic for no reason to the point that it threatens one's health. This is suffered by anyone as age or skill in the control of emotions does not influence the outcome. The *pusanga* user then avoids seeing the object of his/her affection for two or three days while he or she follows a strict diet. During this time the other person becomes sadder as his/her heart grows fonder when he/she does not see the *pusanga* user. The user

then goes to see the person affected by the love magic, changing his/her deep sadness into happiness and love.

Using *pusanga* is a way to deceive the emotions that are an important part of the 'good life', but these emotions are too strong to be controlled without the active participation of both sides and the effect of the *pusanga* wears out with time. Most parents advise their children to not ever use *pusanga* because it will ensure a bad marriage. They may at first seem to be in love but they will end up separating once the love is over as there is no real sorrow, love, and care to keep them together.²⁰⁶

206 Interestingly, Dobkin de Rios suggests that in Iquitos: “[T]wo kinds of love are accepted... one is clean and... [leads] to a permanent relationship... [but] never lasts. Rather, the second type of love, which results from witchcraft, is the only... that endures.” (1972:62)



COMPADRE JOSE, COMADRE GALI, THEIR OLDEST DAUGHTER, AND YOUNGEST SON.
THEY ARE SITTING ON WHAT WOULD BE THE *EMPONADA* BUT IT IS INSTEAD MADE OF TIMBER
PLANKS. THIS AND CORRUGATED METAL ROOFS ARE EXPENSIVE BUT HIGHLY DESIRABLE.



ASHANINKA HOUSE.

THE FRONT SPACE IS THE *EMPONADA* AND THE FAMILY BEDROOM IS IN THE BACK.
THE KITCHEN IS BEHIND THE PHOTOGRAPHER.

CONCLUSION

FAMILY AND 'LIVING WELL'

For the first part of my fieldwork Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people called me *Ayompari* ('friend') or *niompari* ('my friend') after their trading partners of the past. This term has become the Ashaninka translation for *amigo* ('friend') which is used by people who do not share a kinship relationship and are not in politics when they would call each other *hermano/a* ('sibling'). I was surprised when some old Ashaninka women called me *notomi* ('my son'), to which I responded in kind by calling them *ina* ('mother'), but these women were few so I wrongly did not pay much attention into it. Some small children had called me *tio* ('uncle') before, which had only made their parents laugh.

However, this all changed when I travelled to the Tambo with Miqueas. Most people started to call me using kin terms and suddenly I had aunts, uncles, mothers, brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces. Some of the men, savvier in the ways of Whites, did call me *amigo* but I was never called *Ayompari*, at least not in the same way Urubamba people did. The only time I was called *Ayompari* was after someone asked me where I was from and replied *nosaiki Comunidad Nueva Esperanza* ('I live in Comunidad Nueva Esperanza') or *nopoña urubambaki* ('I come from the Urubamba'). People then rightfully called me *Ayompari* because that is where their grandparents' and parents' trading partners used to come from.

Older men, women, and young children dealt with the outsider that spoke Ashaninka language and drank manioc beer like they would with an Ashaninka person showing up for a visit with someone born in the *Comunidad*.²⁰⁷ Thus, since Miqueas called me *iye* ('brother'), people fit me into kinship networks relations as his

207 I do not mean that people would accept me or consider me to be an Ashaninka person. I was sometimes referred to as being *como nosotros* ('like us') but I think the similarities stopped there.

brother. As flattering as it was, I found this strange especially as so many in the Bajo Urubamba had warned me to be very careful in the Tambo as some people could think I was a *Sendero* spy because of my beard. I think that the Ashaninka people that have been in close contact with *Mestizo* society through work or in the Armed Forces do not call an outsider using kin terms because they do not feel they would be able to respect the relationship that the kin term implies from an Ashaninka perspective. This is a set of values that people learn throughout their lives by living with other Ashaninka people, that is, the rules to *kametsa asaiki*. It is also plausible that Ashaninka people do not believe Whites would see this kinship link in a positive light and would even be offended by it due to the uneven power relation between them. These men may call me *amigo* because it is what they would expect from non-Ashaninka people in Satipo with whom they seek positive and equal relations. Similarly, many Bajo Urubamba men called me *Don Juan* when I first arrived and would only give me their surname when I asked for their name because that is how they expected to relate to White *Patrones*.²⁰⁸

Through my close relationship to Miqueas, I fitted into the kinship position in which he did. After some time and an obvious show to respect these links, I felt people did invite me into their circle of responsibilities that the relationship implies. For example, people asked me for things but I knew I would get something similar, or at least of a similar perceived value, back.²⁰⁹ I had food being redistributed into my household because I gave out cartridge shells, nylon, or fishhooks, and my young godsons also put apart a small part of the fish they caught for me. But kinship relations are not only about giving and receiving but about the way a person acts

208 I actively tried to stop this by telling people I was not a *Patrón* which only took them to call me *gringo*, then Juan which then became Juanito ('little Juan'). Some people called me using kin terms and I was comfortable to do the same, especially when I could fit them in kinship relations with other people. These long chains of kinspeople make it simple to see why Ashaninka means 'we the people' and *noshaninkajei* ('my many Ashaninka') means 'family'.

209 I now understand that the desire of wanting to have a positive relationship with me was as important as the practical use of the object. Thus, it is more about the context in which the goods are acquired and, especially, where they come from (See Hugh-Jones 1992). This evidences a current valuation of the *Ayompari* ideas of the social value of the objects being exchanged.

towards someone they are related to.

People in Anapati, where there is electricity from a hydroelectric engine, congregate almost every night to watch DVDs more for the fun of getting together and laughing than for actually following the plot. The volume is set low and whilst at first I thought this was because they had a much better hearing than I do, which they do, I later realised they do it because following the film is not as important as having fun from the short snippets you do get to see as you share the experience with the group drinking manioc beer, sharing cigarettes and joking and laughing. One night we watched a Bruce Lee film that included a scene in which he is saved by another character they all referred to as his cousin because he had helped him throughout the film. Towards the end his 'cousin' was badly beaten trying to defend him and seemed to be dying. I said, "His cousin is so good, look how he defends him!" Maribel, my cousin, turned around and replied: "Cousin, have you ever met a cousin that was bad to his cousin?" That is, an Ashaninka cousin that knows about *kametsa asaiki* and its responsibilities.

The Peruvian Internal War presented Ashaninka people with the grave problem of fighting between kin in a scale that had not been experienced since the 'Time of the Ancestors'. The war became a negation of all that means to be an Ashaninka person as it was impossible to 'live well'. The next Section will discuss the Peruvian Internal War as the Ashaninka people I lived among in the Bajo Urubamba and Tambo, and those I visited in the Ucayali and Ene rivers, told me they experienced it.



**CRACKING OPEN A TURTLE TO COOK IT FOR A
*MINGA***

**SKINNING AND CHOPPING UP A CAPYBARA
FOR DISTRIBUTION**

SECTION IV

ES UNA HISTORIA BIEN LARGA Y BIEN TRISTE ('IT'S A VERY LONG AND VERY SAD STORY'): OF ASHANINKA PEOPLE, *KITYONCARI KAMAARI* ('RED DEMONS') AND THE DENIAL OF *KAMETSA ASAIKI* IN THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR



INTRODUCTION

OF WAR AND ITS DEMONS

*There, where you hear the voice of Ashaninka people,
men and women, children, youth, and teachers
bravely resist violence
crying out for peace, justice, and the right to live.
(Ashaninka woman in Fabian Arias 1997: 76)*

In 2004 the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that, as a consequence of *Sendero Luminoso's* attempt to topple down the Peruvian government, approximately 10,000 of about 80,000 Ashaninka people were forcibly displaced in the Ene, Tambo, and Perene valleys. at least 6,000 died and almost 5,000 were under *Sendero's* control.²¹⁰ By 1990, at the height of its power in Amazonia, *Sendero* controlled the entire Ene River and the Tambo River down to Poyeni, the largest Ashaninka community in the area. Fourteen out of thirty-five *Comunidades Nativas* of the Tambo and all thirty of the Ene disappeared as people escaped or were taken by *Sendero* into the forest, in many cases voluntarily. By the end of the following year, the *Comités de Autodefensa*²¹¹ had rescued 2,800 Ashaninka people in the Ene and by 1993 had rescued more than 1,000 in the Tambo and around Puerto Ocopa. These people were taken to one of the five *Nucleos Poblacionales*²¹² in the Ene and Tambo which quickly became overpopulated and hit by food scarcity and a succession of *Sendero* attacks.

The TRC counted 69,280 deaths for the war, almost three times the average proposed by human rights organizations. Atypically, *Sendero* was found responsible

210 Ashaninka political federations insist that deaths are closer to 8,000.

211 Self-Defence Committees, the legal name for civilian militias during the war. See Espinosa (1995) for the laws and practices around these militias also common in the Andes.

212 Refugee Camps organised by the Army and Navy in Ashaninka *Comunidades*: Poyeni and Betania in the Tambo, Puerto Ocopa in the Perene, and Cutivireni and Valle Esmeralda in the Ene.

for 53% of the deaths when in similar conflicts State forces are usually accountable for most deaths.²¹³ It is usually cited that Ayacucho was the worst-hit area of the whole war, accounting for 40% of all its deaths and disappearances. In fact, the TRC concluded that if the ratio of victims to population for Ayacucho was the same for the whole country then there would have been 1,200,000 deaths and disappearances in the country as a whole. However, if we apply the same exercise to the worst estimates of Ashaninka case, the war would have caused 2,800,000 deaths, and disappearances.

Although many anthropologists have written about the Peruvian Internal War, most of the attention has focused on the Andean region²¹⁴, neglecting how Ashaninka people experienced the conflict. Indeed, there are a few articles written from a psychological perspective about orphan Ashaninka children growing up in the Puerto Ocopa Franciscan Mission (Villapolo and Vasquez 1999), an article condemning the war in Gran Pajonal (Hvalkof 1994), and some reports on the tensions in Ashaninka people's lives in *Nucleos Poblacionales* commissioned by the CAAAP²¹⁵ (Espinoza 1995). However, there has been no attempt to understand the war from an Ashaninka perspective. This lapse could be due to the difficulty of reaching the area in the last decade or, as has happened with the academic silence on child-witch executions²¹⁶, it has been done to avoid "a negative stereotyping of 'others.'" (Whitehead 2004:6).

Leslie Villapolo (2003), a Peruvian psychologist that has worked for over a decade with Ashaninka children in the Puerto Ocopa Mission, found that the presence of Ashaninka people that were active *Sendero* participants and are now

213 I am not trying to say that the Armed Forces were not responsible for human rights violations. However, the number of these is inferior to other Latin American experiences such as El Salvador where of 22,000 denunciations of human rights violations investigated by the Truth Commission, only 5% were attributed to the FMLN. Comparatively, the Army caused 85% of these and death squads with links to it committed the other 10% (Binford 1996:117).

214 See Degregori (1990), Palmer (1992), Isbell (1994), Starn (1995a; 1995b), Theidon (2000; 2004; 2006).

215 Catholic Church-funded Centre for Applied Anthropology

216 See Santos-Granero (2004) on the anthropological silence about Arawakan child-witches.

living in *Comunidades* is silenced from their collective memory of the war. I found the same contradiction in the *Comunidades* I lived in and visited. Instead, *Senderos*²¹⁷ are described as outsiders who imposed violence on Ashaninka people as they forced them into their ranks, making them learn how to be violent as I was told their own violent practices had died with their ancestors. This idea is supported by a highly-romanticised vision of the decades before the war as a time of peaceful living and food abundance. Far from it, those decades were violent as many Ashaninka families were in debt-slavery to Atalaya's White bosses and others were in violent confrontations with Andean colonists in the Apurimac and Ene valleys. This memory has become the hegemonic memory of how the war is remembered in the public and political spheres.

However, a closer look at how the war is remembered can tell us much more. After being in a *Comunidad* for a while and seeing through the collective memory of the war into the personal one, I found great resentment among Ashaninka people for what some of their *paisanos* did during the war. I found that many had been seduced by *Sendero's* impossible promises and had joined voluntarily, participating as combatants on their side. I also learned that cruel acts were not only performed by *Sendero* as there are episodes of *Ronderos*, the members of the Ashaninka self-defence militia, being as cruel to those they captured.²¹⁸ Still, it was very difficult to get Ashaninka people to explain why they thought some of their *paisanos* had participated in actions that resulted in the death of their people and the destruction of their *Comunidades*.

Primo Levi (2004: 104) wrote that the worst violence in camps during the Second World War was not physical abuse but the destruction of everything he classified as human: honour, solidarity, compassion, and the ability to act. Similarly, Ashaninka people described the war as a negation of what it means to be an

217 Grammatically it should be *Senderistas* but Ashaninka people call them *Senderos*.

218 See CVR (2002:270-5) for the Pichis Ashaninka violent take of Puerto Bermudez, a *Mestizo* town.

Ashaninkasanori ('real Ashaninka person'). It became impossible to live following *kametsa asaiki* practices which, I have shown up to now, they value greatly and believe they give them the moral high-ground over their neighbours and other outsiders. I want to emphasise that the war was experienced as an attack on *kametsa asaiki* practices and thus the very meaning of what it means to be a human being. Kinship was broken as 'real' kinspeople were separated for years as children were taken away to camps in which families were not allowed to live or eat together. Most of the fighting was between Ashaninka people in what became a war between brothers, cousins, parents-in-law and children-in-law. What made kin and friends turn on each other in such a cruel way disregarding *kametsa asaiki*?

The most common and traumatic memories of their experience in *Sendero* camps are about the lack of food and the non-food people were made to eat. These memories are presented in narratives that highlight their worries about the emotions and their body. This is very significant, especially when combined with what many people told me about their *paisanos* in *Sendero* ranks being *kamaari* ('demons'). What can these clues tell us about how Ashaninka people understand their experience of violence during the war? It all becomes easier to understand when we consider their past, and in some parts present, practices of the banishing, torture, and murder of child-witches. How do these children, the base for *kametsa asaiki*, become monsters that can kill their own kin?

The following three Chapters are an attempt to reach an explanation of the violence experienced by Ashaninka people during the Peruvian Internal War following their ideas of the transformative nature of beings. By taking into account two types of memories of the war, the collective and the personal, I will explore how Ashaninka people understand the origin and nature of the violence practised during the war. I must point out that most of the accounts I recorded in the field are from those who lived in the *Comunidades* that were not taken over by *Sendero* although I also met many people who had been in *Sendero* camps and few that told me about

their participation in attacks against *Comunidades*.

It is not my intention to assess the veracity of their narratives of war. This is especially so with the details about the diet most believed *Senderos* partook of. However, I think their narratives should be looked at as a clear example of the extreme terror caused by the war as they try to make sense of how their fellow 'real' humans became internal enemies in a reflexive exercise aimed at comprehending the process of extreme lethal violence from their own point of view. I am driven by the need to have a specific understanding of how people make and unmake lethal violence, especially in cases like this one that seem so out the parameters of humanity and so meaningless due to its cruelty. However, it is our task to fit this violence back into pre-existing social frameworks as "violence starts and stops with the people that constitute a society: it takes place in society and as a social reality; it is a product and a manifestation of culture. Violence is not inherent to power, to politics, or to human nature." (Nordstrom and Martin 1992:12)

Achieving an understanding of Ashaninka people's experience of violence during the war is only possible if we:

[F]irst deny it special status... [avoiding] quarantining war as a 'disease' –a matter for security specialists—but try instead to grasp its character as but one of many different phases or aspects of social reality. ... [placing] war back within the range of social possibilities, as something made through social action, and something that can be moderated by social action... rather than viewing it as so exceptional as to require a 'special' explanatory effort. (Richards 2005a:3)

Even if the narratives of war discussed in this Section may frame it as 'meaningless violence', we must be wary of this type of analysis. The ethnographic study of cases of extreme lethal violence does not only provide us an important tool for a cross-cultural understanding of violence but also adds to our knowledge of these processes of violence in order to avoid those "tomes whose theoretical conclusions concerning field realities are grounded in personal politics and supposition, not in fieldwork." (Nordstrom 1997:xvi)

I seek an understanding of Ashaninka people's experience of the war and its aftermath not as the passive control of indigenous people, common in interpretations of similar contexts, but as a social process packed with deep anthropological questions. I must note that even if for the purpose of this thesis I separate Ashaninka memories of the war into two main trends, these could be separated into more depending on agents' different motivations and experiences of violence. Even if I have tried to be faithful to as many of these different voices as possible, I must note that the voice of males is more recurrent than that of females due to the access I had to gendered moments in which the war was discussed.²¹⁹

The first Chapter of this Section will give a brief description of the war in Ashaninka territory. The second Chapter will describe the collective and personal memories of the conflict and show how it was experienced as the denial of *kametsa asaiki*. Finally, the third Chapter will analyse how my informants understand the participation of Ashaninka *Senderos* against Ashaninka *Comunidades* as a transformational process that made them into demons. I close the Chapter by trying to find out what reconciliation looks like from an Ashaninka perspective.

219 Women's roles in the kind of violence practised in Amazonia have been seriously understudied (van der Dennen 1995). Women's voices are too often left out of stories of war and peace, and hence left out of our understanding of violence (Erickson 2008).



RONDEROS PARADING IN A VERY MARTIAL MANNER
(TAKEN FROM GARCIA DEL HIERRO ET AL. 1998:107)



RONDERO FORMATION AT THE 2010 FABU CONGRESS

CHAPTER 7

ASHANINKA PEOPLE AND THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR

There is much Anthropology written about the Peruvian Internal War and *Sendero Luminoso's* organisation and ideology that I cannot repeat here due to a lack of space.²²⁰ This Maoist group started its war in the Ayacucho highlands in 1980, not far from the Apurimac Valley to which *Sendero* cadres retreated in 1982 after a successful joint offensive by the Army and Navy. The area, traditional Ashaninka and Matsigenka territory, was originally seen as a safe heaven. However, the great support found among Andean peasants that had invaded the area in previous decades took *Sendero* to look for a more permanent foothold in the area.

Before we jump to a discussion of the war it is important to understand *Sendero's* idea of violence. Theidon asserts that "In this rigidly authoritarian movement, violence was not instrumental but rather an end in itself." (2000:542) As Degregori notes:

Blood and death must be familiar to those who have decided to 'convert the world into armed actions'. The evangelical allusion to the Redeemer—'the word made flesh'—is fully recognizable and not at all gratuitous. It announces Guzman's and *Sendero's* attitude towards violence. She is the Redeemer. She is not the midwife of history; she is the Mother of History (1997:67).

Indeed, Abimael Guzman²²¹ insisted each village would be required to pay its "quota of blood" as it would take one million lives before victory would be achieved.

Sendero's arrival coincided with that of another powerful outsider group: Colombian drug traffickers. This group was attracted to the area by a combination of favourable factors: the lack of State presence, the large quantity of cheap labour and

220 Degregori (1990), Palmer (1992), Isbell (1994), Starn (1995a; 1995b), Theidon (2000; 2004; 2006).

221 *Sendero's* founder, leader and ideologue.

the large stretches of land available. *Sendero* soon became the liaison between the traffickers and the local coca producers, acting as security details and enforcing the production of coca among the unwilling. *Sendero* secured arms from the traffickers (Hvalkof 1994:24) and money from the levies they charged to timber companies. By then their control of the area was such that they closed traffic on the Ene and prohibited the use of the paths leading from the Pangoa area to Satipo, thus immobilising the indigenous population. *Sendero* also eliminated any possibility for indigenous families to make money as this meant they could not travel for work and were also prohibited to plant cash-crops. The long-term plan was for Ashaninka people to grow foodstuffs to feed the forces of Andean peasants who were considered to be the real revolutionaries. These communities²²² were not perceived as having any revolutionary potential or as a field in which to develop serious political work due to the idea of the ‘uncivilised’ *chuncho* in the Peruvian imaginary. An ex-MIR²²³ cadre who Brown and Fernandez believe had strong links to *Sendero* in the 1980s asserted that Ashaninka people had:

[T]o be taught how to live... They're just there with their little arrows, hunting, fishing—they're very lazy. We [of the MIR] thought that we must take their children to the Schools and universities in order to educate them, so that they could return to educate their own parents, show them what work is. (1991:96)

With Ashaninka areas around Satipo and the Perene, Apurimac and Ene rivers under its control, *Sendero* expanded its area of influence to the Tambo in 1986. In order to create a power vacuum like they had done elsewhere²²⁴, *Sendero's* activity in the Tambo started with the sacking of missions and NGO projects such as the Save the Children base in Otica and the Franciscan Mission at Cheni, as well as the *fundos* of the area. An old man from Cheni recounted their first appearance:

222 Those Ashaninka communities along the Perene that were organised into villages with cash-crop economies were seen as peasants.

223 Revolutionary Left Movement that had experiences with Ashaninka people during their war against the government in the 1960s.

224 They had earlier sacked the Franciscan mission at Cutivireni (Gagnon 1993:81).

We never imagined the enemy would come, not even in dreams! ... [*Senderos*] first came to take clothes [from the Mission's storage house]... they wore clothes full of holes. We let them take it because they had guns but also because we felt sorrow for how they looked. They were thin... But then they came back to take people... They started to kill, to punish... for nothing... and that we could not take. It has been very sad here.

Sendero did not expect the indigenous population to organise into some kind of worthy resistance so once the area was free of any power groups that could counter *Sendero*, Ashaninka settlements were visited for indoctrination meetings in which they were promised riches and power but were also given threatening advice. This chain of events was the same that had been put into practice in other areas of Ashaninka territory.

Their early visits were to recruit volunteers, allowing people with children to excuse themselves: "Their leader told us: 'If you have children you will not come with us, take care of them, advise them to not be thieves, liars. You will have to join us later when the feast [armed conflict] starts if you want to or not.'" Yet, contrary to their council, *Sendero* columns stole food from those they visited: "Chicken, duck... [*Senderos*] wanted everything for their meals." They also passed their first ethnocentric laws, showing *Sendero's* deep ignorance of the people they assumed would join them voluntarily as most of my informants felt these rules were transgressive to their practices. For example, a man told me "[*Sendero* leaders] said that those with two wives would be punished. My uncle had two wives so he kept quiet... some still had that custom. The *Senderos* said they were going to punish the man and then give the wives to someone else." However, these early episodes of non-violent encounter transformed into violent confrontation: "When they first came we were nice to them, respected them... why did they come to fuck us over if we are poor?" *Sendero* moved to kill or banish any indigenous leaders, teachers and pastors in the area that refused to join them. Leaders were replaced with people chosen by *Sendero* and teachers were replaced with Andean *cadres* who would indoctrinate

teenagers and adults in Schools. *Sendero's* tight grip over the area took the Peruvian government to declare a State of Emergency in 1987.

Sendero started to take young men and children, some by force, for instruction in political and military issues in the *Escuelas Populares* ('Peoples' Schools') set up in their main camps. This was followed by the forced disbanding of *Comunidades*, considered as part of the 'old order', and the mixing of their populations into a number of dispersed camps which allowed for the control of the population and its organization into movable units for war. Some people were trained for the *Ejercito Popular* ('Peoples' Army') but most joined the *masa* ('mass') which also participated in acts of violence but spent most of their time working in gardens. All these groups were under the control of White, Andean, and very few Ashaninka *mandos* ('leaders'). These dispersed camps were organised into *Bases de Apoyo* ('Support Bases') which in turn were organised into *Comites Populares* ('People's Committees'). In 1989, at the height of its power in the area, *Sendero* had fifty-seven Support Bases of two to three hundred people each, divided into five People's Committees (Fabian Arias and Espinoza de Rivero 1997:33). By 1990 fifty-one of the sixty-six *Comunidades* of the Apurimac-Ene-Tambo area had been disbanded and their population taken to camps or had fled to safety (Espinosa de Rivero 1994:4).

Life in these camps was, the reader will find, a distortion of all that indigenous Amazonians expect from everyday life in their communities. The *mandos'* word was law and the mass was harshly punished if they questioned any of their instructions which ranged from working in gardens to participating in military tasks. Upon arrival to camps people were given new names and were separated from their families. Meal times were highly regimented, the day followed strict schedules of work and training, and people were forced to uphold a hygiene standard that included women wearing braided hair like Andean women do and the use of Western-styled clothes instead of *cushmas*. I was told *Sendero* leaders told the mass that it did not matter if their "clothes had holes as long as they were clean". Those

who dared counter the orders of their leaders, always based on *Pensamiento Gonzalo* ('Gonzalo Thought')²²⁵, were put through public rituals of self-criticism. People were allowed three of these and were killed upon the fourth infraction. These infractions ranged from laziness or looking sad, seen as proof of a desire to escape, to adding too much salt to the communal soup. Escapees were discouraged by the warning that their family left behind would be killed and that the Army and *Ronderos* would rape the women and torture the men if they surrendered to them.

The groups in these camps were mobilised for attacks, indoctrination visits and public executions throughout the area. Even if old people did not participate in attacks as they were too slow, I was told by a number of people that children were sent in front of the columns in order to save the adult combatants from traps and were also active in the sacking of villages. These groups were also mobilised for the highly-ritualised public punishments *Sendero* has become infamous for. The following excerpt from my notes summarises the accounts of three Ashaninka men present in a football championship in Unini in 1989 when the only *Juicio Popular* ('Peoples' Trial') in the Ucayali took place:

Suddenly a group of *Senderos* came out of the forest as the participants were getting ready to start playing. Jesus: "We had heard about the *terrucos*,²²⁶ but we didn't know them... we wondered who they might be. Not even in dreams had we thought they would come... they really surprised us." The group was well armed and wore no masks. Some of the youngest members were Ashaninka men and women in their middle and late teens. They, translating for a White leader, ordered everyone to form into ranks, men on one side and women on the other. The leader called out four names. The first was the owner of a small *fundo* in the area, the second a local *Patrón*, the third an Ashaninka man and the fourth a *Mestizo* teacher. The four were tied and taken to the *Comunidad's* School. The males in the *Sendero* column then formed a team and played in the championship while the females

225 Gonzalo was Abimael Guzman's *nomme de guerre*.

226 Army slang for *Senderos*.

guarded their weapons and prisoners. People played as planned and tried to avoid angering them as they were scared. Rogelio: “They stayed for a long time... played football... but later we saw how they killed, women were crying; they didn’t want to see. But we didn’t know what to do... we weren’t organised yet so we didn’t oppose them. We were scared.”

After football the four men were brought from the School and made to kneel in the middle of the semi-circle that had been formed by everyone else. The first man tried was the *fundo* owner who didn’t let children use a path he had cleared on their way to School. *Senderos* tied a rope around his neck and pulled him around and hanged him for a bit but ended up letting him go with a beating and a warning that next time he would be executed. The Ashaninka man was warned that he couldn’t have more than one wife and had to let one go. This was a misunderstanding as he had already left one because she had been involved with a *Sendero cadre* which the *Sendero* leader did not know. He said his *cadre* would have to marry the woman and honour her pregnancy. The third one was a *Patrón* who: “used to go to Atalaya and give the *Guardias* [Police] pigs or money and so they would come and punish his people²²⁷. He was forgiven but first hanged him with a rope like that we use to start engines. He kicked and screamed and they let him go.”

The teacher had different luck. José, a former Ashaninka teacher who had known him personally said: “The *Senderos* didn’t forgive him. He had previously said that when he was in the Army he had killed many *tucos* as if they were dogs. [*Senderos*] forgave him that time because he was drunk but then he went to tell the Navy he had seen them. This time they caught him sober. I had told him to stop bragging about the Army, to go live somewhere else but he did not listen.”

The *Sendero* leader called for “a [jaguar] that has not eaten yet” and a young Ashaninka man came forward. He was given a knife by the leader who announced the man was a parasite and was to be punished “by President Gonzalo's decree”. The young man grabbed the teacher by his hair, pulled his head back and cut his

227 *Su gente* ('his people'), showing an idea of ownership common in the 1980s and early 1990s.

throat with a kitchen knife. People cried or tried to look away but, I am told, they were too scared to react. As instructed, they made proclamations to *Presidente Gonzalo*, the Party, and the war.

THE RONDA ('INDIGENOUS MILITIA') FIGHTS BACK

By 1990 *Sendero* controlled the Tambo down to Poyeni which became known as *La Frontera* ('the frontier') where the Ashaninka last defence was set up. Poyeni played host to people from different Tambo and Ene *Comunidades* that had been disbanded by *Sendero*. That year Ashaninka political organisations started to organise *Rondas*, indigenous militias, in their areas of influence. The decision was made in different areas after *Sendero* murdered federation Presidents such as Alejandro Calderon in the Pichis and Pablo Santoma in the Tambo.²²⁸ I was told leaders decided that "We have been fighting among us for so long, why don't we fight them instead?" This is notable as, contrary to the Andean region where they were prompted by the Armed Forces, Ashaninka *Rondas* were organised by indigenous initiative.²²⁹

Still, many did not want to cooperate with the Army or Navy because they refused to give them weapons, took those the *Rondas* confiscated from *Senderos*, and were highly oppressive of indigenous people visiting or seeking refuge in urban centres. This attitude had been extended to OIRA, the indigenous Federation for Atalaya, following *Patrones* who accused indigenous leaders of siding with *Sendero*. I was told by indigenous leaders at the time that their offices were considered to be an "office of terrorists" and their walls were graffitied with similar slogans. Leaders were taken to the Naval base in Atalaya for random interrogation and only freed days later or were harassed by Police checking for ID cards, which very few indigenous people had at the time. Additionally, some *Comunidades* were scared of the repercussions of organising into *Rondas* as they had heard that for *Sendero* "el

228 The death of Pablo Santoma was shocking because it was carried out by a column composed of mainly Ashaninka people that was led by a former leader of the same Federation.

229 Some were formed by peasants rebelling against the revolution (Starn 1995b) but still moved by the fear of soldiers accusing them of being *Senderistas*.

soplon siempre muere" ('snitches always die'). When I say that being in a state of war is relative, I think of the Ashaninka men in areas that did not see much lethal violence who told me how every time they left for a patrol they did not know if they would come back as they had no idea of what or who they were going to find in the forest. This feeling was also shared by their family and friends back in *Comunidades*, added to the worry of what would happen if *Sendero* appeared in their *Comunidad* while the armed men were away patrolling.

The *Ronda* is also known as the *Ejercito Ashaninka* ('Ashaninka Army') or *Ovayeriite* (plural for *ovayeri*, 'warrior') in Ashaninka. However, as I have described earlier, any tales of the *ovayeri* of the past describe bloodthirsty Ashaninka assassins/rapists/thieves that raided villages to kill men and take women and children as slaves to be traded with *Patrones*. Instead, contemporary *ovayeri* are peacekeepers, men to emulate that were always ready *para defender* ('to defend')²³⁰. The transformation of the *ovayeri* to fit this new scenario is testament of Ashaninka people's ability to creatively adapt to new situations. Their leaders actively sought the official recognition of the Armed Forces in order to get weapons, ammunition and food from them but these were denied as Ashaninka people were believed to be on *Sendero's* side. Thus, the fighting in the first year of the resistance was done by men with bows, arrows, and a few hunting shotguns, and women that defended their villages with spears and knives. The men patrolled with White bands tied along their foreheads and painted their faces with *achiote* like, I was told, the ancestors did when they went to war. I was told many *Ronderos*, again like the ancestors, carried *ivenki* magical plants tied to their necks, ready for consumption if required.

Even if they did cooperate with the *Ovayeriite* a year later, there is still resentment towards the Armed Forces as they did not support Ashaninka people's defensive efforts in the beginning of the conflict and are now unable to stop *Senderos* and drug traffickers in the Ene and Apurimac. I was told by a Tambo *Rondero* leader

230 For the collective memory *Ronderos* only defended whilst *Senderos* only attacked.

that the support they received from the Armed Forces was minimal and that soldiers and marines used *Ronderos* as bait: “The Army never came, the Navy did but when we went out patrolling they would send us first as if we were bait”. Every Tambo *Comunidad* free from *Sendero* control, including the disbanded *Comunidades* finding refuge in them, sent groups of men to Poyeni every month for the defence of the area. Travel down the Tambo was restricted at Poyeni with cables stretched from one side of the river to the other. Poyeni quickly became a settlement of more than 2000 people when on average Ashaninka *Comunidades* have 300 members.

The story of the defence of Poyeni is heroic but parts seem, even for those telling it, to have a mythical aspect to it:

[*Senderos*] surrounded [Poyeni] with 300 or 400 people. They shot at us for hours but when they tried to cross the [Poyeni] River it raised and many drowned... we killed the others, around 140. I do not know if, as they say, it was God or if it was luck.²³¹ We used to patrol in groups of 200 or 250, going far away, all the way to the Ene walking for days. The Army came with us when they had the base [in Poyeni] but they would walk behind us... we were like bait. Ten or fifteen men from every *Comunidad*, from Kanuja [the last *Comunidad* on the lower Tambo], ten, ten, ten... later it was only five. That is how we fought in the Tambo and we pacified it.

Ashaninka *Rondero* narratives tell of a memory of being the true victors of the war, the *pacificadores* (‘pacifiers’) that are today forgotten by the government. An Ucayali *Rondero* leader told me:

We would send urgent messages to the Navy when [*Senderos*] appeared but they took two or three days to come help. That is how it was since we organised ourselves. Had it not been for the brothers in the Gran Pajonal, the Tambo and us in the *Ronda* here there would not be any peace.

231 From a book written by a Missionary that has a short account of the defence of Poyeni: “Since dawn when they had first crossed the stream, a pouring rainstorm had turned the normally manageable Poyeni into a swollen torrent. When the *senderistas* plunged into the stream swept some of them away. Unable to swim and encumbered with weapons, the terrorists died” (Miller 2001:135). Poyeni suffered three large (I was told there were at least 300 *Senderos* in each offensive) and desperate attacks on 14 September, 2 October and 23 November 1992. The first one came only two days after Abimael Guzman’s capture in Lima.

Ronderos constantly talked about how useful their skills as warriors and knowledge of the forest had been for the Armed Forces:

The Navy... had a *convenio*²³² with the federations in those days... so that Ashaninka men would enlist. Before that a lot of [Marines] would die when they patrolled as they did not know how to move in the forest. But we are warriors! We know how to walk in the forest... that is why they wanted us... we had to teach them.

Ronderos had quick success in liberating the camps of the Tambo. In response, *Sendero* leaders disbanded their camps and took the mass into the forest, moving constantly as they escaped from *Ronderos* and the Army. By 1994 the Tambo and most of the lower Ene were free of *Sendero* control due to a combination of successful *Rondero* attacks, the cholera epidemic that hit the area and the malnourishment of the survivors which made hurried movement difficult. *Sendero* leaders decided to start killing those infected with cholera as a desperate response to the epidemic but this only made people more prone to escaping as they had less family members to leave behind. Joint *Rondero* and Army attacks in the Ene achieved great gains such as the capture of Centro Tsomabeni which had been the largest *Sendero* base in the area. This move liberated more than 3000 people and led to the discovery of more than 1200 bodies in 300 common graves in the area. A year later refugees started to move back to their original settlements in the Tambo soon followed by movement back to the Ene.²³³ The returnees organised themselves in villages in order to be able to defend themselves better. This organisation is still the norm in the villages I visited along the Bajo Urubamba, Ene, Tambo, and Ucayali.

CONTEMPORARY SENDERO WORRIES

Even if Ashaninka *Ronderos* affirm they pacified the area, most people worry about

232 Translates as 'covenant' but is the same term used for the deals reached with oil companies.

233 I cannot expand on the traumatic experience of the movement back to their *Comunidades* due to a lack of space. However, many settlements were moved from their former locations to avoid the memories of what had happened. Some groups experienced deaths due to starvation because of the lack of organisation of the movement back.

the possibility of *Sendero's* revengeful return. Throughout my months in the field conversations would stop and children were told to be quiet whenever there were news about *Sendero* on the radio. Rumours about someone spotting a *Sendero* patrol or mysterious boot prints in the forest were a constant every month. Additionally, I have heard many Ashaninka people say that the only reason they have to be scared of is *Sendero* as they are the only ones that can really harm them.

Many of my Bajo Urubamba informants believed *Sendero* would re-start its war in their area as they probably thought they 'did not know' what had happened the previous decades, as opposed to the Tambo where *Senderos* were heavily defeated. The Headman of an Ucayali *Comunidad* commented on rumours of a *Sendero* column in the area: "We cannot say that the *subversion* is over. Don't trust the Army! *Senderos* are still about! They are waiting... We are unprepared; the *subversion* is going to keep getting stronger, they are waiting, analysing us." Many worried about reports of Ashaninka people of the area that had gone to the Ene looking for work but had ended up joining *Sendero*. A *Rondero* leader commented: "Urubamba people in the Ene can give information about our *Comunidades*, tell them who is who. They seem to be following *Senderos*, they have sold their conscience". Similarly, those in the Tambo thought the war would re-start in their area as revenge for having defeated *Sendero* during the war. This is the same reason why many Tambo Ashaninka said they would not travel to the Ene as the *Senderos* hiding there would surely kill them if they found out they were from the Tambo.

I experienced a *Sendero*-related scare in Nueva Esperanza during a Communal Assembly in November 2008. The Assembly took place in the School and ran as normal, with people dozing off and children complaining about hunger. Suddenly three boys ran into the School shouting "*Vienen los terrucos!*" ('The terrorists are coming!'). A few minutes of chaos followed as women shouted and men ran to their houses to get their shotguns or bows. *Compadre* Chato, a Tambo man who experienced the war as a teenager, told *comadre* Gali to take all their children and try

to make it to neighbouring Santo Domingo to their *comadre* Sara's house. Men told their wives to run to the forest and someone told me later he had told his wife to jump off a cliff and kill herself and their children if she saw them coming. Joel quickly ordered the men into five groups and they ran in different directions. It was only when *compadre* Julián shook me and told me to follow him that I realised I had just been sitting watching and listening. We headed for the trench dug close to the port and the main path into the village. Another group ran to *la carretera* ('the motorway') a path connecting all *Comunidades* on that side of the Bajo Urubamba. Joel's group went the way the boys had seen an armed man in camouflage clothes carrying a shotgun that had shouted at them until they ran back to the village. Another group went in the same direction but closer to the river. I waited in the trench with five other men for an hour (which seemed five) as *compadre* Julián tried to re-assure me and the others by saying that it was impossible these were *kityoncari* ('reds') because they never attacked in daylight.

At the end it had all been a misunderstanding. The boys had been stealing watermelons from a small *fundo* next to Nueva Esperanza. The owner's son, just back from military service, was carrying a shotgun and wearing camouflaged trousers and army boots as he checked the watermelon patch for animal trails. He shouted at the children when he caught them stealing but they ran away before he had been able to say anything else. Some people found humour in this and commented that the young man must have been very scared when he saw all the men with bows and shotguns. However, the women complained for days that men were getting lazy, were not making enough arrows and that if it was for real it would have been awful. From then onwards most men came to meetings with either their shotgun or their bows. *Comuneros'* perception of visiting outsiders also changed after this event.

A month later people were very worried about a young man that had come from the Tambo to visit family as not even his hosts could find him two days after his arrival. People were worried: "We don't know him... We have to be careful; he

might be a spy coming to see how we are doing.” At the end, the young man was found drunk in a house half an hour away from the nucleus. Some men invited him to their houses to drink manioc beer *para analizarlo* (‘to analyse him’). The impact of the *Sendero* scare presented itself differently on some *Comuneros*. A few weeks later Chato and I finished a trench under his house for his children and wife to hide in case of an attack. He told me as we worked:

If they come I will follow them or they can kill me if they want to but my children have to be saved. I tell them, ‘if they come you are going to run’... but the children don’t know how it was... At least they can hide in this trench, the bullets won’t reach them.

Others dismissed *Sendero* worries with comments such as “We have always been warriors, they will not defeat us in our own land! Now we are organised, now we know... *Senderos* will not surprise us again.”²³⁴ There is, however, the constant worry that the Armed Forces are not doing their part. I was told by a former Ucayali *Rondero* leader that they had gone to the Naval base in Atalaya asking for weapons and ammunition last time they heard rumours of *Sendero* columns in the area but were told “Why do you want weapons if there is no *subversion*... If they come back you must not kill them because of human rights...” Another leader complained:

We don’t want to act anymore because of those human rights. The human rights sometimes save [*Senderos*].²³⁵ But I ask myself: if the human rights do not believe they are terrorists, why don’t the human rights talk to them? It is because they are in big cities so they do not know what is happening here. If I am here in my house and they come to attack me, what am I supposed to do? I have to defend myself and my family; I cannot keep my arms crossed. We must respond!

234 I was repeatedly told that now they are *organizados* (‘organised’) it is easy to get the *Ronda* on the move when there is a problem. Being ‘organised’ is linked to the ‘civilised’ perspective. For example, I once joked with a group of women that I was a ‘face-peeler’. Some got very serious and asked if this was true; I said I was but had left my face-peeling machine at home. Teresa said that I better not try anything because *Ronderos*, “Now that we are organised”, would quickly arrest me.

235 The *Señores de los Derechos Humanos* (‘Messrs of Human Rights’). They are always personified and spoken of in the third person.

Similarly, a leader of the Ene *Ronda* told the Army Officer in charge of coordinating with *Rondas* in the area after his presentation in the 2009 CARE Congress:

We are the real warriors... the ones who have always defended the people. You have never supported us... who do you think you are to come tell us what to do? You just come to bother us and tell us stupid things about rules instead of helping us like you should. The Army used to accuse us of being terrorists, and then used us as bait... why should we go ask for help to your bases if we are always the ones fighting back?

A Tambo River delegation went to Lima in May 2008 to ask for governmental help to exhume the bodies of three *Rondero* leaders that fell during the conflict. The group wanted to take the bodies to Poyeni, where the secondary School is named after one of these, Emilio Anita, in order to give them *cristiana sepultura* ('Christian burial').²³⁶ As we can see, the memory of the war is even inscribed in the environment.²³⁷

Let's now move to a more explicit discussion of how life during the war is remembered in *Comunidades*. It will become obvious that the memories of those who were *Rondero* leaders are very different from those of the rest. I am also aware that time has changed these memories and that it will do it again in the next decades. However, for the purpose of my thesis I have teased out the two general trends of how the Ashaninka people I discussed the war with recalled its events.

²³⁶ I do not know if this is because Poyeni has a large Christian population, or because that is the way some people refer to a burial in Peru in general.

²³⁷ The conflict is also recorded in their daily environment (trenches, School names, bullet holes on walls). I will expand on this important issue in future research.

CHAPTER 8

OF ASHANINKA WAR MEMORIES

In my first weeks in the Bajo Urubamba I was repeatedly told there had been no Ashaninka *Senderos* as these were described as outsiders with distinct physical traits. A witness of the column that passed through the *Comunidades* of the Bajo Urubamba told me their leader was: “...White, tall, with eyes like a cat”.²³⁸ It was common for them to have beards which became associated with being a *Sendero*, to the point that an Ashaninka friend who had been a refugee in the Ucayali told me it had been difficult to be accepted in his host *Comunidad* because of his beard. Similarly, many in the Bajo Urubamba asked me to refrain from going to the Tambo because they might confuse me with a *Sendero* spy due to my beard.

As time passed, people started to mention Ashaninka young men and women in their memories of the *Sendero* columns that attacked or visited their *Comunidades*. I learned that just like who is or is not in a state of war is relative, also, from an Ashaninka perspective, who was a participant *Sendero*. This depends on different factors including whether they were forced or acted voluntarily, and the amount of support they gave. So, if they escaped from captivity early in the war they were *escapados* (‘the ones who escaped’); if released towards the end of it they were *engañaditos* (‘the little ones who were lied to’); if rescued by *Ronderos*, they were *recuperados* (‘the recovered ones’); or if they came back after the war was over they were *arrepentidos* (‘the repented ones’). Theidon finds a similar ambiguousness in the categories for those that participated in *Sendero* in Ayacucho. The Ashaninka case corresponds with her assertion that:

If you are a bit confused, that is precisely the point. Ambiguity is what allowed this

238 In one of the many recaps of the *Senderos* that visited the *Comunidades* of the Bajo Urubamba I was told their leader announced: “*Compañeros*, we have come from Cuba to liberate you”.

to work. In contrast with positive law, which is based on categories that are mutually exclusive, these categories are porous and fluid. There is a gray zone in communal jurisprudence that allowed for a great flexibility in judging... transgressors, taking into consideration the particularities of each case. Ambiguity was a resource... The gray zone of jurisprudence left space for porous categories— and for conversions, moral and otherwise. (2006:451)

These classifications have a relation to how *conciente* ('conscious') people were of what they were doing as many Ashaninka people were said to have "sold their consciousness to the reds"²³⁹. Therefore, these terms try to find how aware they were of what they were doing by attributing them different degrees of responsibility. What is interesting is that whilst Theidon asserts these classifications are about finding a descending degree of culpability and responsibility, the Ashaninka case is different. Whilst the 'ones who were lied to' are on one side of the spectrum of participation, the opposite side, those with the most guilt, are those who had *agarrado arma* ('carried a weapon') and thus participated in attacks to *Comunidades*. This includes those who were *Sendero* leaders, those who formed part of their security details, or were soldiers of the 'People's Army'. However, from an Ashaninka perspective it is they who were least conscious of what they were doing when they were violent as they "were not people anymore". This does not mean that they are not guilty, but it does mean that there is a way of understanding what they did.

With time I learned there had been Ashaninka people actively participating in the cruel punishments and attacks on *Comunidades* but also learned that at times *Ronderos* had been as cruel. Like Bernabé, my close friend and uncle told me, "It's a very long and very sad story nephew; why would you want to hear it? To remember is to be sick again." I was avid to hear it because the ethnographic representation of this variety of experiences allows us to reach a much more complete understanding of the events of war. This is especially important for the Ashaninka case which is not

239 This is always said in Spanish and is used in other cases such as Federation leaders receiving bribes from companies or for other people that accept payment from candidates to vote for them.

even part of the national memory of the conflict. As Feldman points out:

Ethnographic representation can pluralize and expand what narrative genres and voices are admissible. This is particularly so when ethnography is practiced against monophonic, stratified information cultures and cultures of the state. Such multiplication of historical voices is not merely a matter of textual representation, for whenever the stratification of discourse in a society is interrupted by a previous cancelled voice we are witnessing the active and creative emergence of novel political subjects. (1996:229)

A CLASH OF WAR MEMORIES

As expected, there is a contradiction between the collective and personal memories of the war. The presence of Ashaninka ex-*Senderos* living in Ashaninka villages is silenced from the collective memory which presents *Senderos* as outsiders who imposed violence on them and forced them into their ranks. However, after some time I saw through the collective memory of the war into the personal one and found great resentment for what some of their *paisanos* did during the war.

The collective memory of universal victimhood allows for the representation of Ashaninka society as a united community coming out of a period of imposed violence. Visitors to a *Comunidad* are exposed to it as it is necessary for the procurement of aid and a reversal to *kametsa asaiki* practices in the wake of the war. In practice, this memory downplays the suffering of victims by making them live and interact with former *Senderos*. This memory is a clear example of the emotional restraint Ashaninka people consider to be important for the 'good life' that I described in Section III. This memory also avoids dealing with a public reconciliatory process or one of vendetta that would create more division at a time when there are too many threats that require them to stay together.

With time I was exposed to the personal memories of the war, only made public when emotional control fails. It shows victims that have not been allowed a space to mourn and reconstruct their lives after a war that wiped out a large part of

the adult males in the Ene and upper Tambo. The personal memories clearly differentiate between victims, those who did not participate in *Sendero*, and the ex-*Senderos* in which it is now difficult to trust. Even if both memories agree that the lethal violence of war was forced upon them, they differ in their interpretation of how Ashaninka violence originates. The collective memory sees the performance of violence as something they had forgotten about and so was either taught by *Sendero* or re-learned from the memory of their ancestors in order to defend their families. This is a memory of 'civilised' Ashaninka people who did not know how to kill, as opposed to the 'uncivilised' and bloodthirsty ancestors who excelled at war.

The learning process of violent performance that *Ronderos* went through is vividly present in their memories of the war. This can be seen in patrolling songs such as: "I have joined the *Ronderos*/Oh mother, I am screwed/I have to learn how to patrol/And I have to learn how to kill". *Ronderos* also attributed some their excesses during the war to what they had learned from the training exercises they were put through by the Armed Forces. Although not many men were explicit about these exercises, some described learning how to get testimonies from presumed *Senderos* by drowning them face first in an empty petrol drum full of water mixed with washing powder or chillies. Those who declared their allegiance to *Sendero* were given to the Armed Forces along with any weapons found in their possession. When Repentance Law was put into practice some *Rondero* groups were told to 'punish' *Senderos* themselves as, a Tambo *Rondero* leader told me, "We had, as they say, *carte blanche*. Sometimes we just killed them and threw the body into the river." Another leader told me that:

We were told to not take *terrucos* [to the Navy in Atalaya], that we should just punish them ourselves. 'Tie him, throw him to the river. We can't do anything to them here... he'll be back out soon'. The Police now tell us the same thing when we catch any thieves and take them to Atalaya.

Some *Ronderos* told me they had been surprised of the blood-thirst and ease to

kill of fellow *Ronderos*. These episodes were mostly attributed to the man being taken over by the power of an *ivenki*.²⁴⁰ I was told that the most powerful *ivenki* are those that make you 'brave' (*valiente*), thus violent and blood thirsty. I was told these could only ever be used when war was certain and only if you knew the diets before and after taking them because if not you could end up losing control over your actions and fighting your own people, in a parallel to those who are said to be in an *omposhinitanakeri* state ('controlled by strong negative emotions'). A man recounted how he had seen *Ronderos* cut *Sendero's* bodies into piece with machetes, opening their bodies and taking their organs out in a macabre performance of ascribing difference to the dead person's body, and thus showing that, in contrast, their own body was indeed human.²⁴¹ Similarly, some Ashaninka men that were in the Army during the war told me some officers made them eat gunpowder to make them 'braver' and willing to participate in the torture and group rape of captured *Senderos*. I know a specific case of a young Ashaninka soldier who was forced to rape an Ashaninka girl suspected of being with *Sendero*. He recalled how she begged in Ashaninka language but the he and his platoon of, he said, gunpowder-influenced men raped her, cut her breasts and burned her alive.

I do not mean to give any kind of excuse for these atrocious actions. In fact, as Bourgois points out, "[T]he boundary between protector and cowards is often ambiguous and inconsistent... Once again, such a... 'gray zone' (Levi 1986) obfuscates responsibility from those primarily responsible for the terror" (2001:5-34). However, if we give serious consideration to Ashaninka worries on how the consumption of powerful substances can affect bodies and perspective we can see how the use of these substances is an important part of their understanding of the excessive actions

240 Magical plants used for many different effects: heightened agility to avoid arrows, creating wind walls to deflect arrows or making the enemies' bows break. Most of these are chewed and then rubbed on their bodies or spit to the wind.

241 This is also how game animals are treated. See Hinton (2001) for cases of execution and torture during the Khmer Rouge in which prisoners were kept in ways making them resemble the animals they were described as being by their captors.

of *Ronderos* and Ashaninka men in the Army.

Additionally, we cannot deny the influence of revenge on the escalation of atrocities²⁴² in *Rondero* violence. It is notable that many people told me that, as opposed to the “Arawakan Ethos” (Santos-Granero 2002:42), their ancestors had practiced vendetta raids in response to the assassination of their kin and that these would still be happening had they not ‘become civilised’:

Someone was killed... Then his family would get together, they would call his uncles, his cousins, his brothers and they would attack. [The killer’s family] would be drinking manioc beer peacefully and [those seeking revenge] would surround their house and get them good with their arrows! But then the other family would repeat, they just kept warring, they didn’t believe in anything! [Both sides] would carry on fighting until someone stopped.²⁴³

These could also be approached analytically as a “culture of terror” akin to the early 20th Century Putumayo narratives that created a “space of death” (Taussig 1987) around the violent practices of rubber barons against the indigenous population.²⁴⁴ I would like to expand on these topics but I will have to leave it for now due to a lack of space. For now, it is important to note that *Rondero* violence, which at times reached the extremes of *Sendero* violence, is downplayed and attributed to the defence of their communities. Their acts of cruelty are not part of the collective memory of the conflict in which they appear as heroic peacekeepers.

Furthermore, the collective memory excuses most of their *paisanos* who “have followed the reds” by attributing their violent actions to fear and ignorance as they believed in *Sendero*'s promises of stores, cars and money. A Tambo Ashaninka man who was a refugee in Atalaya and stayed living there after the war told me:

It’s all the *Senderos*' fault, they bring another *ideologia*... they went to *Comunidades*

242 See Arendt (1998) and Feldman (1991).

243 See the papers in Beckerman and Valentine (2008) for a variety of accounts of revenge practices in indigenous Amazonia. See Stewart and Strathern (2002:108-136) for a theoretical discussion with a variety of ethnographic examples from different regions.

244 The same could be said about *Sendero* leaders, outsiders that reproduced the ideas of the barbarism of Amazonian *chunchos*. This is an assumption that I have no way of proving for now.

teaching about *politica*... *Patrones* used to have *paisanos* as slaves and in order to make this better you had to go steal from him; if there is a tractor you had to burn it because it was paid with your father's work, with your work. Some people thought that was good, they didn't know... *Senderos* bought their conscience, they gave them some things and they fell for it. When they realised what was really going on it was too late... they took advantage and killed many people... some for gossiping, they just said 'this one is no good' or if they had a problem they just said one morning 'he's no good' and they had him killed by the evening.

Legally, *Senderos* who surrendered under 'Repentance Law' had to be reintegrated to communal life. This law has been highly problematic as in many *Comunidades* the Army forced the reintegration of 'the repented ones' and did

[N]ot make a clear distinction [between] displaced Ashaninka [people who] did not choose to be with [*Sendero*] but were forced to participate [and] those who actively participated in violent actions and assassinations. (Aroca and Maury 1993:29)

However, it did solve the issue of having to deal with them whilst in a state of war.

Personal memories show a different understanding of violence as they recognise Ashaninka people as violent actors and try to rationalise their actions. These memories shows a strong resentment towards *Senderos* who denied them the possibility of 'living well'. For example, Camukin, a Tambo Ashaninka man living in Nueva Esperanza, told me his brother:

[F]ollowed them... due to fear. He had just returned as *licenciado*²⁴⁵ and became one of their leaders. But he was killed in a confrontation. I am not sad because he was very wrong. People say they were fed dogs, and that is why they became demons. He even tried to kill my mother because she would not follow him.

If the people that share their food with those they want to show their care and love to and who actively control their strong negative emotions are the exemplars of the 'good life', then *Senderos* are the opposite. Today, their *Sendero* past is perceived as a period in which they forgot how to 'live well', how to feel sorrow for others and

245 Man that has completed the military service.

how to control their dangerous emotions. Accounts of the war always included affirmations that, both in *Sendero* camps and in *Comunidades*, one could not 'live well'.

THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR AS THE DENIAL OF KAMETSA ASAIKI

Ashaninka people describe the war as an experience that denied any possibility of acting like a 'real' human being. Their narratives of the war are accounts of violence performed with the utmost cruelty as people were not shot but were killed by machete, arrows, hanging, spears and traps, or were tied and had large stones dropped on their heads. Houses were sacked and burnt with people trapped inside whilst others had kerosene poured on them and were set on fire. Tambo *Ronderos* recall stories told by Ene refugees of attacks on *Comunidades* in which *Senderos* not only raped women and girls but also introduced sticks into their vaginas and anuses. Whole bodies or body parts (usually limbs) were found hanging from trees with signs that stated from days and times of attacks to warnings such as "This is how snitches die". Some bodies were found missing their hearts²⁴⁶, reproductive organs, or had their foetus extracted.

I was told that those in *Sendero* camps lived:

Like pigs... We lived hiding in the forest, moving all the time. We had to sleep on mud with no mosquito nets or blankets... We weren't happy anymore. [W]e were sad... we didn't eat; we would think about our family... about our garden, we had nothing to eat... we had no freedom to eat with our children...

Making things worse, "People did not call each other *noshaninka*, but they made us call each other comrade... we could not use our name, we had new names."²⁴⁷ Those in camps participated in weekly meetings in which those present listed the faults committed by other members of the platoon, even members of their family. These

246 Which is the container of the soul in the Ashaninka body. See Nordentoft (2005:9) for similar acts during the war among Nomatsigenka people in Pangoa region.

247 Which could also be understood as part of the forced transformation people in camps said to have experienced. See Gow (2007) for an account of how the change of name confirms a transformation among indigenous Amazonians.

impositions lead many to suicide, some by eating poisonous frogs (Nordentoft 2005:35). Children in camps, but especially once *Sendero* leaders took the mass into the forest to escape *Rondero* and Army advances, died of starvation, thin to the bone. To make matters worse, parents were not only forbidden to cry for their loss but, due to their constant movement, they were not allowed to bury them. The following statements by Ene and Tambo Ashaninka people that I met throughout the area evidence the terror suffered by those who 'followed' *Sendero*:

We walked night and day; many people were thin, weak... very pale! [A]naemic as they say. People were so skinny they couldn't work... I tried to hide some food but I was scared as they would punish you... We saw them die, hungry. [*Senderos*] wouldn't let us cry... I wanted to die, but my children were still alive. They were too weak, I felt so sad I couldn't feed them, I felt so much sorrow for them... My husband said we had to escape... they did not survive. We left some of our family behind... I wonder how they felt, sad, thinking, where is my uncle, where is my aunt... (Ene Female)

Some people were too sick to keep walking; they would just kill them because they said that if we left them they would just run away to the Army. But how would they run away if they could not even walk! *Senderos* had no sorrow... We just had to walk... all day and night without eating. It was sad... we were hungry, thinking about our family. Maybe they were also sad, thinking about us. People were skinny and white [pale] like when my husband comes from working timber for too long... If they saw you thinking too much... if you looked too sad, they would punish you for wanting to escape... *Senderos* were not like people... they did not know how to feel sorrow for us. (Tambo Female)

We had to kill our own family... our own children. The leader would say 'kill him' and you had to do it... they felt no sorrow... [A]t times we heard the *Ronderos* nearby... [but the *Sendero* leaders] would make us go faster... We could hear them from [helicopters] above 'We will not hurt you.' In our language! But we just had to move... they didn't know how to feel sorrow, they would cut their throat [of those too weak to move] with a machete and we had to leave them there. I didn't want to

see; I just walked faster and closed my eyes. (Tambo Female)

People were forced to kill... *Senderos* said: 'If you do not kill him I will kill you'... or they would kill your family... [*Senderos*] were used to killing; they were not scared of anything. They were angry all the time, some say they used to make people eat human flesh, drink blood.... They would just kill, they felt no sorrow... those bastards were not like people anymore. (Tambo Male)

It was... like being a slave. We were always told to work... but they never did... it was like working for a *Patrón*. We had to work in the day, work in the night... you felt like you wanted to die, only work. And there was no real food, only a bit of manioc, plantains... not even some salt! But then when we had to move [due to the joint *Rondero*-Army patrols] it was worse, watery soup made of anything... People got sick, you can get sick from not eating... their bodies were white, you could see their bones. It was very sad; I would sit and think of my garden, of eating peccary... But you could not show you were sad if not they would get angry. If you sat to rest your leader would come and shout at you and hit you. If you were too tired to work you were taken to the Self-Criticism and punished. The fourth time they would kill you. (Tambo Male)

If someone was ill they were just left there to die or they were killed... we could not stop to cure them... [*Senderos*] would just slit their throat. [The leaders] said that if we cured them and left them behind they would go and tell the Army... where we were... The Army would come and kill us, rape all the women, cut us open... But [*Sendero* leaders] did the same! I saw them... many times! They did not know how to feel pity for us... We started to hear the helicopters... they would say, go to Poyeni, go to Cutivireni... we are not going to hurt you. We would think, 'Is this true?'... It was in [Ashaninka] language. But I did not care, let them kill me if they want to, I do not want to follow them. We escaped; we walked for days, all full of cuts. We did not have anything to eat... my son died. We were hungry for days... then it is that the *Ronderos* found us and took us to Poyeni, our clothes all full of holes. (Tambo Male)

Most of the people that told me about life in *Sendero* camps during the war remembered that when someone complained about issues that went against *kametsa*

asaiki they were executed “in the name of the Party”. A former leader at Quempiri in the Ene remembered infractors were put in the middle of a circle formed by other *Senderos*. A member of the ‘Principal Force’ would then carry out the execution using a rope or a knife. Even if some of these executions were not witnessed by the mass, I heard from many different people that leaders forced the platoon, especially the deceased's family, to celebrate the death, laugh, drink manioc beer, and say proclamations to the Party and Guzman.²⁴⁸

However, those in the free *Comunidades* also lived in fear. As a man from Poyeni explained in a manioc beer round: “There is no way we would’ve been drinking like this, talking. It was all quiet; we were on guard all night.” I was told in the Bajo Urubamba that:

[Marines] would fly over in their helicopters... it was very scary. They threw people off the helicopters... dead or alive. Sometimes they shot from the helicopter. I was scared... I wanted to run but then they would say I was a *tuco*.

Thus, *Comunidades* lived in a state of war and were impeded to pursue *kametsa asaiki*. Ashaninka people could not sit and drink manioc beer, there was not much time to work in gardens, they could not go fishing on their own or until too late, there were no feasts or football matches and men spent most of their time patrolling. Even the land was marked as *Ronderos* dug trenches in their *Comunidades* and families dug trenches under their houses as refuges for children and women in case of attacks.

The uncertainty and terror of what was happening can also be seen in stories that Ashaninka people do not relate to the war such as those about the many faceless corpses I was told were found in the Ucayali that were attributed to *pelacaras/pishtacaras/sacacaras* (‘face peelers’), White people who cut off and steal people’s faces. It is plausible that this is a way of understanding deaths caused by *Sendero* executions as we know they executed some people by dropping large stones on their heads. There are also stories about the Navy in Atalaya that remind me of

248 See also CVR (2000:256).

stories Andeans told me about the Army in Ayacucho when I was there doing research for my undergraduate dissertation. I was told that the Army kept monsters in cages that were fed the corpses of people who died from torture in military bases and other prisoners, illustrating the perceived destructiveness and evil of military forces. Similarly, I was told by Ashaninka people that the Navy dealt with local witches in order to keep order in Atalaya during the war. A powerful witch called 'Black Cape' who was known to have killed many people was warned by the Navy:

Some people say that the Lieutenant told him to forget about doing those things and took him to a high part where they have like a big blender, like the ones of the juice ladies in the market... they threw in people they killed and they just came out to the river as if it was juice.

Some people in the Tambo, and I have heard similar reports from the Ene²⁴⁹, told me that the reason why there are not as many peccaries as there used to be before the war is because they were raped by soldiers and so their Owner has taken them away. This shows how the people in *Comunidades* were not only dubious of *Senderos'* humanity but also of the humanity of the members of the Armed Forces.

Ashaninka *Senderos'* past is perceived as a period in which they forgot how to 'live well', especially forgetting how to feel sorrow for other Ashaninka people. Instead, they are thought to have learned lessons of violence and other negative behaviour which are not believed to have been forgotten completely. For example, most of the anti-social behaviour in Tambo *Comunidades* is linked to a person's, or even their parents', *Sendero* past. A *Rondero* leader during the war commented on the drunken disorder a young man caused in a *Comunidad* I was visiting: "When I'm drunk I like to laugh, to tell jokes... not to be annoying like him. He's a bad drunk, his father followed *Sendero* in those days. He and his brothers are weird." Similarly, the behaviour of a man who I was told was constantly "stealing, lying... [and rented] his wife and daughters to timber men" was attributed to him having been a *Sendero*. A

249 Sandro Saettone, pers. comm.

man who opposed all the ideas presented by a Headman during an Assembly was said to do so because he had been in a *Sendero* camp in his youth. Finally, I was also told that a woman who killed her husband in the Bajo Urubamba did so because “She was a *terruca*²⁵⁰ in those days... she has not yet forgotten all she learned!”

The most common and traumatic memories of the Ashaninka experience in *Sendero* camps are about the lack of food and the non-food people ate and how this transformed their bodies. Memories also recall the negative emotions Ashaninka people felt and the lack of knowledge on how to feel good emotions that they recognised in *Senderos*. If the people that share their food with those they want to show their care and love to and live their lives actively controlling their strong negative emotions are the best examples of *kametsa asaiki* then Ashaninka *Senderos* are the opposite. This is very significant, especially when combined with what many people told me about some of their *paisanos* in *Sendero* ranks become *kamaari* ('demons') because of the non-foods they consumed.

What can this tell us about how Ashaninka people understand their experience of violence during the war? It becomes easier to understand if we compare it to Ashaninka ideas of child-witches. These children are seemingly normal Ashaninka people who become violently anti-social as they transform into monsters that can even kill their own kin. Their lack of control of their negative emotions leads them to harm those living around them, going against the conviviality rules that expect them to act with care and love to their kin. The next Chapter will describe Ashaninka ideas on child-witches and see how these can shed light on how Ashaninka people make sense of the violence experienced during the war.

250 Army slang for terrorist adopted by *Ronderos*.



ASHANINKA CHILD RESCUED BY RONDEROS FROM A SENDERO CAMP
(TAKEN FROM GARCIA DEL HIERRO ET AL. 1998:21)

CHAPTER 9

UNDERSTANDING ASHANINKA PARTICIPATION IN THE PERUVIAN INTERNAL WAR

Many of these boys never wanted to fight, they did not know what it meant to fight. ... It messes them up... The souls of the murdered follow these soldiers back to the homes and their families, back to their communities to cause problems...

These soldiers have learned the way of war. It was not something they knew before. ... We have to take this violence out of these people... teach them how to live nonviolent lives like they did before.

And the thing is, people want to learn, to heal. This violence, it tears them up inside, it destroys the world they care about. They want to return to a normal life like they had before. (African healer in Nordstrom 2001:228-229)

Child-witches are different from adult witches because the latter have intentionality in their acts and choose to become witches during their shamanic training. Instead, I was told child-witches are initially not conscious of what they are doing or of their great but potentially deadly power. Weiss (1975) writes that Ashaninka people believe child-witches learn witchcraft in their dreams, which was corroborated by the people that explained these witches to me. The children are visited in their sleep by a *kamaari* ('demon') disguised as a bird or insect. These creatures take advantage of the child's innocence, giving him small pieces of meat which the child eats not knowing it is human flesh. The dream is repeated many times and the child acquires a taste for human flesh.

If we take into account the importance Ashaninka people give to what you eat, who you eat it with, and how it defines your perspective, we can see that the eating of this extreme non-food can cause an important transformation on a young Ashaninka body. As the macabre diet continues the child loses its human nature and

becomes *matsi* ('witch'). "[The child] dreams that it is burying things... [including] food refuse of any kind, chewed coca... pieces of cloth, hair, etc. These buried materials... enter the victim's body and strike him down with sickness." (Weiss 1975:293) It is because of the high importance given to *kametsa asaiki* and the solidarity it teaches that their actions are thought to be demonic as they are not only disruptive but also evidence a complete lack of control and an evil nature. By gaining the perspective of a demon the child can act cruelly against other people in his vicinity as he no longer sees them as human beings.²⁵¹ Weiss writes that:

Demons consider human beings... their legitimate prey. [The] hordes of evil spirits in the universe are driven by an insatiable urge... to attack and inflict maximum damage upon any human being they encounter. ... they inhabit, not the ends of the earth as do the good spirits, but actual [Ashaninka] territory... and thus constitute an ever-present danger. (1975:165)

Reflecting on Ashaninka people's perception of how these children become monsters helped me get a better grasp of how they understand Ashaninka participation in *Sendero*. As I pointed out earlier, intra-group violence is not new for Ashaninka people and I was told many stories of the bloodthirsty *ovayeri* of the past who raided and murdered Ashaninka people they were not related to. However, the most inhumane aspect of child-witches is that they act, like Ashaninka *Senderos* did, against those living in close proximity and even their parents and siblings. In same vein, an Ashaninka man told me that during the war: "My *paisanos* have killed their brothers, their mothers and their fathers... parents saw their children getting killed and children saw their parents being killed." From an Ashaninka perspective, child-witches and Ashaninka *Senderos* are transformed into extreme anti-social beings who do not know how to feel sorrow for others. Their inhumane actions assure Ashaninka people that they have become demons.

251 Comparatively, Anderson (1985:42) recorded a myth in which monkeys refer to Ashaninka hunters as warriors not long after Avireri had transformed them from humans into animals.

DEMONIC CLEANSING IN AN ASHANINKA CONTEXT

The punishment these child-witches were, and in some cases still are, put through must be understood within Ashaninka ideas of humanity as it is precisely because these witches are not considered to be human that they are tortured in ways that would otherwise be regarded as extremely cruel. After being identified by a shaman²⁵², child-witches are tortured to force them to reveal where the evil charms making the person ill are hidden. Punishment is also intended to make the child-witch cry as it is thought this will make them forget their dark knowledge (Weiss 1975:293).²⁵³ Santos-Granero summarizes different accounts on these punishments:

[H]ot peppers may be rubbed into their eyes, or they may be hung upside down over a smoking fire or tied on a smoking rack... In addition, accused children are starved because they are believed to feed mythically on human flesh. ... They are beaten with sticks or vines, whipped with stinging nettles, or submerged in water until they almost drown (2004:277-78)

We know from the historical record that even the parents of children accused of having done witchcraft against them or close kin often reacted violently against the accused:

However innocent of evil intentions... the reaction of the community is one of merciless fury. If it has been established that a child has been practising witchcraft against members of its own family... it will be executed by its own parents or elder siblings. (Weiss 1975:293)

If after the punishment the witch did not produce the evil charms or the victim died, the child-witch was always executed in horrendous ways. Santos-Granero summarises:

The... execution depends on the wishes of the victims, their relatives, and the acting

252 By drinking *ayahuasca* (*Banisteriopsis caapi*). However, as seen in Santos-Granero (2004), this is not always so strict.

253 Weiss does not expand on this but I believe it has to do with the idea of making the witch feel a human emotion in order to aim at some kind of re-humanisation. This is mirrored in the Sanctions that I will discuss in the next Section.

shamans. [Child-witches] can be stoned to death, shot with arrows... burned alive... buried head first and face down into an armadillo hole, left in the forest tied to a tree to be eaten by a jaguar, or covered with honey and tied up naked to a tree close to an anthill. The corpses of dead children witches are generally burned and/or disposed of by throwing them into a river. (2004:279)²⁵⁴

If *innocent* children can become demons and so put through this horrific ordeal, can this process shed light on the transformation Ashaninka *Senderos* are thought to have gone through in the war?

FROM PAISANO TO DIABLO: DEHUMANIZING THE INTERNAL ENEMY

I am trying to understand what Ashaninka people say happened to some of their *paisanos* during the war so that their *kametsa asaiki* values were replaced with lethal violence.²⁵⁵ War shaped moral life, challenging concepts of human conduct and what it means to live in a community of similar human beings.

Like I said earlier, most of the Ashaninka people that participated in *Sendero* activities are thought to have done so due to fear and deceit. However, while they lived under their control, some for over five years, they are said to have suffered a transformation that is completely understandable for Ashaninka eyes. I must first point out that I am not denying the role of terror in Ashaninka peoples' participation in the war.²⁵⁶ However, I think it is important to pay attention to their ideas of the nature of this participation in order to get a full understanding of their experience of violence.

Many people told me *Senderos* acted the way they did because *ya no eran gente* ('they were no longer people') and had become demons. If not, why would they take part in cruel actions such as the massacre in the *Comunidad Tahuantinsuyo* west of

254 I must point out that child-witches were not always killed and some were traded or given to missionaries.

255 The discussion of why seemingly 'normal' people reach high levels of violence is not new. See for example the Browning (1993) v. Goldhagen (1996) debate.

256 For more on terror and its role in violence during war see the papers in Sluka (2000).

the Ene. The TRC reports that 300 Andean and Ashaninka men, women and children entered the *Comunidad* declaring they were *Ronderos* and called all families to the Communal House for a meeting. Luckily, many were still in their gardens and did not attend. Those who did were reprimanded for organising a *Ronda* after which, one by one, men and women were taken out of the House to be killed by two *Senderos*:

'[The] women started screaming when they were killing them, Ah, they are killing me... they are Reds! That is when people started to realise [what was going on]... they started to cut... [the children] with machetes, we were all falling on the ground... I felt like someone had soaked me with water...' [People were killed] with... arrows, machetes and some were strangled with rope. Of the five women that were killed, two had been raped... [two others] had one of their breasts cut out, and the fifth had her foetus cut out of her womb. (CVR 2000:269)

Just like innocent children walk into the trap set by the *kamaari* who turns them into witches, I was told that those who 'followed the reds' fell into their trap because of their ignorance. I was told they did not understand their violent plan and believed in their promised future of riches and power. Let's contextualise this with Varese's argument that for Ashaninka people:

Error, as a possibility of abnormal action, is a consequence of ignorance and the cause of perdition of humanity, which was primordially transformed into animals. ... Error and ignorance of norms are causes of real and symbolic perdition. The consequence... is a gnostic essential attitude: Knowledge saves; ignorance leads to being lost. (2002:31)

The innocent child, untrained in life and therefore ignorant of *kametsa asaiki* practices, becomes a witch. However, I was never told that those who followed *Sendero* did not know how to live well before the war. Generally, they were kin and friends with whom people had been in perfect coexistence with before the war which makes the violence more difficult to understand. Instead, almost all the people I discussed the war with believed they were all ignorant as they did not have the 'civilised' knowledge they get from Schools today which would have allowed them

to understand *Sendero's* project and see its danger from the beginning. Take into account what a teacher told me about an ex-student of his who he witnessed executing a man:

He had been my student in Chicosa, a good boy. He killed him with a knife as if he was a pig... he didn't know how to feel sorrow anymore. Why did he follow them? ... He must be dead by now. He must have been afraid and then he changed when he spent time with them... *Senderos* promised so many things but they weren't able to fool me because I had studied but some people didn't know better. How were they going to get helicopters, airplanes, stores...? He must've suffered a lot... [Ashaninka people I *Sendero*] were not people anymore, they were demons.

Once under *Sendero* control, by force or not, the transformation of some into demons started through the daily activities they participated in. In order to understand this transformation we must go back to the accounts of what I was told people were fed in *Sendero* camps.

EATING LIKE *SENDEROS*, BECOMING LIKE *SENDEROS*

As I said earlier, Ashaninka people believe eating 'real' food and drinking manioc beer makes Ashaninka 'strong bodies'. They are very careful about what they eat as it not only influences their bodies and emotions but also those of their children and spouses. For instance, a pregnant woman and her husband will avoid eating certain things seen as dangerous to the foetus and will later feed the baby substances believed to help the formation of the right kind of body.²⁵⁷ However, ingesting non-food substances also has an effect on the body and its emotions. For example, many non-Ashaninka products like cane alcohol, wine and beer are said to make Ashaninka people act irrationally. Their actions under their influence are likened to how Andean men are believed to act driven by anger and jealousy, beating their wives and children and losing control of their actions.

We can also see this preoccupation with the consumption of non-foods from

257 See Rival (1998) for Huaorani ideas on building the right type of body and socialising children.

the side of *Ronderos*, and not only from the use of *ivenki* plants that I mentioned earlier. These men had a deep worry of what the blood they believed to ingest when they killed someone was doing to their bodies.²⁵⁸ Killers must follow strict diets and periods of isolation in which they cannot sleep in order to avoid an encounter with the *Mironti*.²⁵⁹ The *Mironti* is a demon that looks like a very large tapir and has an inverted perception of gender as he confuses male killers' testicles with breasts. The demon rapes and impregnates the man who falls in love with the *Mironti* and forgets his own kin as he pines for the demon. He will never get his memory back and ends up dying after giving birth to frogs, lizards, and even small monkeys.

I was told that the ritual to avoid the *Mironti* had to be shortened due to the war and some had to do with only ingesting vomitory plants upon which the killer vomited pieces of what seemed to be meat, referring to the idea of the consumption of the murdered person's body. I know of cases in which *Ronderos* went to the extent of going to the hospital in Satipo to request a dose of the contraceptive jab in order to avoid being impregnated by the *Mironti*. I even heard an account during my fieldwork about a man who died of cirrhosis, and thus had a swollen abdomen, but was believed to have died from a *Mironti*-related pregnancy.

As we can see, the consumption of these substances transforms Ashaninka people into anti-social others. Just like the child-witch becomes inhuman by eating human flesh, Ashaninka people attribute the violent change in some of their *paisanos* to what they ate in *Sendero* camps. As it became impossible to eat 'real' food due to their continuous movement and restrictions they had to get along with eating products usually considered as inedible. An Ashaninka woman said they were fed

258 Belaunde (2006a:130) notes that "The blood let by people has a transformational effect upon lived experience, and daily experience from other cosmological space-times" See also Belaunde 2006 for an insightful account on Amazonian haematology. Homicide in indigenous Amazonia is gravely dangerous as the enemy's blood is said to penetrate his killer's belly in revenge and is extremely dangerous if the homicidal man does not follow a period of seclusion and dieting (Albert 1985:375; Alès 2007; Arhem et al 2004:224; Belaunde 2005:187; Conklin 2001:161; Fausto 2001:467; Lima 1995:132; Viveiros de Castro 2003:47).

259 See Regan (2003).

“soup made from nails, corrugated metal, shoes and footballs” (Fabian Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:34). Others said they had eaten snakes and earth and were not able to drink manioc beer except when celebrating successful attacks or executions. Most shockingly, I was told by non-*Senderos* that those in camps had been forced to eat human parts, most notably penises, and dogs. There are stories that *Senderos* made medicines from human fat and Nordentoft was told they “drank the blood of the dead as if it was breast milk” (2005:54). These beliefs were reinforced by the many bodies found missing limbs, penises, breasts or foetuses, understood as evidence that *Senderos* ate humans. This is not easy to corroborate but it shows that those who were not under *Sendero*'s control believe that their *paisanos* who were had gone through a huge transformational process. It is noteworthy that many people who survived the camps say they were forced to eat these non-foods and would not have had they been given the choice, hinting at the possibility of a forced transformation.

The reader may think I am actively avoiding seeing these actions from the perspective of those believed to have gone through this transformation. On the contrary, it was difficult to find a *Sendero* who participated in violent acts that would talk about the transformation. Participation was usually expressed in terms of fear and of acting out of ignorance. Some mentioned having eaten dog and other types of meat they could not recognize and most talked about the traumatic experience of seeing people around them transform as they lost an incredible amount of weight²⁶⁰, changed colour becoming pale or black and purple from infections²⁶¹ and dying. Additionally, people talked about having to wear clothes other than *cushmas* and women pointed out they were forced to braid their hair like Andean peasants do. I was also told of the clashes between *Sendero* and *Rondero* alimentary practices. I was

260 Which is actually the way people describe demons, very skinny and pale figures that may look similar to human beings but have macabre characteristics that separate them.

261 This was common among people dying of cholera, “She turned black, all purple around her mouth.” See also Miller (2001:94)

told by *Ronderos* who participated in the liberation of camps that the first thing they did was to feed those they rescued. However, people rejected the food. Whilst some understood this as fear, as it was common for *Senderos* to feed prisoners before killing them, others said that this was due to them having 'got used to' a different diet. Thus, life in the camps was experienced as a forced transformation into dangerous Andean 'Others' like *Sendero* leaders.²⁶²

I have never been told that Ashaninka *Senderos* had the physical characteristics of demons. This is common in some areas of the Andes where people say that *Sendero* cadres had the physical characteristics of monsters: "We killed them and saw their bodies... They had three belly buttons and their *sexo* (genitals) were in another part of their body" (Theidon 2000:548). However, we know from the literature on Amazonian bodies that human form does not guarantee humanity²⁶³ as "What you see is not always what you get" (Rivière 1994). For example, Ashaninka people say demons and good spirits are rarely seen in their original bodies. Even if *tsumiri* ('mermaid') has a head resembling an axe and a large black body with yellow spots, it can only be seen in this state by a shaman whereas we see it as a White woman with long blonde hair.

However, what did make the change obvious was the transformation of their moral perspective as *Senderos* stopped seeing others like fellow Ashaninka people and were able to kill, torture, and, it is believed, eat human body parts as they acquired the perspective of a demon. There were more clues pointing at the transformation. For example, I was told that *Senderos* had bases in the high parts of the Tambo and Ene valleys believed to be inhabited by evil spirits. I was told they even had a base in *Pakitzapanko* ('The House of the Eagle') which is the mythological source of all the other Amazonian groups. Comparatively, *Ayacuchano* peasants believed *Sendero* cadres lived among monsters of the Andean night like *pishtacos* and

262 I am aware this transformation into an Andean person is more complicated than this but I will have to leave it for future research.

263 See for example Taylor (1996) and Vilaça (2005).

condenados (Theidon 2006:120).

I do not wish to claim that all Ashaninka people explain the participation of some of their *paisanos* in *Sendero* through this transformation. However, we must take into account the terror of war, especially as it was fought between kinspeople and neighbours. If we follow the historical accounts of the warriors of the past we can see that groups of Ashaninka men have been known to raid other Ashaninka groups for the kidnapping of women and children that were later traded to White bosses until the mid-20th century.²⁶⁴ However, I have never found an explicit description of these men as being demons. *Sendero* violence included torture, ritualized executions, and the dismemberment of bodies. This more individualized type of violence is more akin to the punishment carried out by Ashaninka people to child-witches or *Patrones* to their indigenous workers than to the ancestors' 'uncivilised' wars. *Senderos*, child-witches, and *Patrones* perform a brand of violence that shows they do not believe to share a same type of humanity with their victims.

Indeed, I was also told the ancestors were bloodthirsty and under the influence of magical *ivenki* plants, hence not in their 'normal state' by definition.²⁶⁵ They are regarded as not being 'civilised' and therefore not having the knowledge that Ashaninka people today say prevents them from fighting with each other. It is also important to point out that these were groups of men raiding groups of Ashaninka people that did not live in their immediate territory. As I explained earlier, Ashaninka people are skilled at excluding and including people into their 'community of similars' when necessary. Physical distance or even linguistic variation may have allowed for this so those of the Gran Pajonal could raid the Tambo, those of the Tambo could raid the Ene, and so on. I believe the depiction of Ashaninka *Senderos* as demons is so common because it is the best way to explain how people were able to act in such horrendous ways towards their own kin and

²⁶⁴ See for example Brown and Fernandez (1991:3-25) and Hvalkof and Veber (2005:120-22).

²⁶⁵ *Ivenki* are normally chewed, showing their preoccupation for the impact of consumed substances.

friends, as opposed to the warriors who never raided their own kin.

The dehumanization of Ashaninka *Senderos* allows for two things. Firstly, it gives Ashaninka people an understanding of why some of their *paisanos* were able to act so cruelly against them and their *Comunidades*.²⁶⁶ Secondly, it is part of their justification for acting cruelly against Ashaninka *Senderos*, giving *Ronderos* a legitimate reason to act with lethal violence against them even once they moved into the Population Nuclei as refugees. I presume that, like Theidon asserts for the Andean context:

When villagers began to strengthen the boundaries of their communities, it implied justifying the violent acts they were committing against one another. It would be necessary to construct difference—to construct the Senderistas in their midst as radically, dangerously ‘Other’. (2006:441)

It would be plausible to look at these ideas as an Ashaninka way of abdicating, or even attributing, responsibility for the horrendous deeds of the war but I will have to leave that discussion for another time.²⁶⁷

FROM DIABLO TO PAISANO: CAN YOU RE-HUMANISE A DEMON?

Let's now try to turn the issue on its head. Is it possible to re-humanize these demons and invite them back into human social life?

Chato once told me about a young woman who used to live in Nueva Esperanza but had moved to Lima to work as a maid. She had been back for a visit after being away for years and had changed drastically as she spoke differently, claimed she had forgotten how to speak Ashaninka language, dressed differently, and did not want to eat the food she was offered in the *Comunidad*. Her transformation had not only been physical as she looked differently and did not eat

²⁶⁶ Isbell (1994) highlights a similar fact as Andean peasants described *Sendero* cadres as foreigners.

²⁶⁷ We can also see a parallel between these Ashaninka narratives of victimhood and those Waorani accounts of victimhood surrounding the Palm Beach killings (High 2009). This is especially so if we combine the violence with their narratives on ignorance and knowledge. There seems to be a strong connection in the way these two peoples narrate and understand these processes of violence but I will have to look further into it in the future.

the same food but the new body had a new morality as she did not behave in ways that Ashaninka people that care for each other do. As Chato said, “she had forgotten how to live in a *Comunidad*”. I wondered what would happen if she ever came back for good, would she be able to become an Ashaninka person again by eating with her family and slowly re-learning, or remembering, *kametsa asaiki*?²⁶⁸

People told me she would remember these practices with time as she had the memory of the basics of *kametsa asaiki* she learned before leaving. Why are then child-witches never allowed a process of re-humanization? Why are they killed, given to missionaries or families living in towns or traded to White bosses? I believe this is so because the still un-socialised child is not believed to have achieved any proficiency in the art of *kametsa asaiki*. If for Ashaninka people humanity is about practice then child-witches cannot be transformed back into a human being as they have no *kametsa asaiki* practices to remember. This must be understood in the context of their and other indigenous Amazonians' belief that humanity is not inherent but rather a position that must be fought for all the time.

However, is the transformation back to a human state possible for those who became demons during the war? What happens once the war is over and people go back to their *Comunidades*? A Tambo *Rondero* leader told me that “Because of the Repentance Law we had to accept them even if we didn’t want to.” I was told by many and have confirmed this with other sources that many of the Ashaninka people who were political or military leaders, guides and translators for leaders, and many that had participated in the ‘Peoples’ Army’ as combatants either died during the war or were killed once they were caught or went back to *Comunidades* as ‘repented ones’. For example, an Ashaninka man who had been a *Sendero* leader in Otica recalled his arrival in Poyeni after escaping from *Sendero*:

When we got there my *compadre* recognised me and defended me from the *Ronderos*... That is why they let us in. [If not they] would have killed the male and

268 See Santos-Granero (2009) for a similar case among Yanéscha people in which the woman is considered to be a Yanéscha person after an extended period of living in the community.

female leaders, like they did with [those coming] from other *Comunidades*... we used to see their bodies floating downriver... (CVR 2000:262)

I was told other leaders are hiding in faraway places such as the Mapuya River.

This does not mean that those who escaped *Sendero* camps or were rescued from them were easily accepted into the *Comunidades* that acted as Population Nuclei. Once the group that had escaped Otica had settled in their allocated space

The people from Poyeni stigmatised [them] as terrorists, generating quarrels and arguments... Poyeni people were scared that Otica would... attack them as they thought they were still with Sendero. This fear persisted even after Otica went back to their territory. (CVR 2000:262)

Ronderos “had [refugees] under continuous harassment, physical punishment and even torture, including children, women and men” (Fabian 1995:164) to the extreme that I was told of a case of a *Rondero* raping and killing a baby that had survived a *Sendero* camp. The worry was such that incoming groups were separated and families moved to different sectors to have them under closer observation. Similarly, many Bajo Urubamba and Ucayali *Comunidades* did not let Ene and Tambo Ashaninka people escaping the war stay with them.

The first test newcomers were put through was to see if they could speak Ashaninka language fluently in order to prove that they were Ashaninka people.²⁶⁹ It was easier when whole families came in as adult men were rarely accepted on their own unless they had strong kinship links to the *Comunidad*: “We knew it was a spy when they came on their own, with no families”. After being interrogated by *Rondero* and Army authorities they were incorporated subject to permanent observation and the men were expected to be active in *Rondero* patrols. Most incomers were put through a *callejon oscuro* (‘dark alley’) in which people formed into two parallel lines and the newcomers had to pass through the two lines whilst being beaten up by

269 It is plausible that Ashaninka *Senderos* fluent in Ashaninka language hid in *Comunidades*. However, as I discussed in Section II, language proficiency has many more layers to it. From an Ashaninka viewpoint, it is only attained through the right body perspective and so it is a sign of humanity.

those forming them. I have been told that most newcomers were seen as possible spies or infiltrators and were still considered as enemies for years after the pacification of the area. In fact, the Population Nuclei remind me of Agamben's State of Exception (2005), a context in which whatever legitimacy of rule was guaranteed by the exercise of violence. In this case, the conviviality rules of *kametsa asaiki* were suspended in favour of a coercive rule of violence and strict law dictated and violently upheld by Army officers and *Rondero* leaders.²⁷⁰

Newcomers were watched for between six months and a year to see if they acted following *kametsa asaiki* ideals: "We gave them a permit to live [in the Nucleus] and we studied them, analysed how they lived. If they lived peacefully with their family and planted manioc we let them stay." That they planted manioc was important, not only because it represents a desire to settle²⁷¹ but because it is the main ingredient for manioc beer which would allow them to engage socially with other human beings. Manioc beer is the drink of human beings and at the time was one of the only 'strong' body-making substances available as men spent their days patrolling and so did not hunt.²⁷² These characteristics were important to assess if the newcomer could act as a human being as the others had to be sure that they showed a desire to live peacefully.²⁷³

However, Goffman (1963:9) asserts that losing a stigma means exactly that, passing from someone with stigma to someone who has corrected it which does not mean that the memory of it disappears. As I explained earlier, ex-*Senderos* are still perceived as the cause for much everyday conflict in *Comunidades*. Today the goal is

270 See Heald (1998) for a similar occurrence in post-independence Uganda where vigilante groups were formed to deal with fears of physical violence, witchcraft, and theft, thereby using violence to control violence. These leaders remind me of Amazonian notions of coercive war leaders.

271 See Theidon (2006:452) for an account of Andean ex-*Senderistas* being given land as part of their reconciliation/re-humanising project.

272 The importance of feeding these bodies was such that it was present in songs sang upon the return of kin. A woman sang at her son's return: "We in harmony/ have welcomed him/ and have fed him everything/ and we will drink manioc beer/ so that he will be happy/ with his mother-in-law, children and family" (In Fabian Arias and Espinoza de Rivero 1997:80)

273 Also common in the Bajo Urubamba with refugees who had weak kinship links in the area.

not forgiveness but to “*recordar para que no nos engañen otra vez*” (‘remember so that they won’t lie to us again’). That is, to live with the memories of what happened in order to avoiding the ignorance that led them to be deceived by *Sendero*. However, this has to be done without the anger that would rupture conviviality in a village, which is achievable through the emotional restraint taught by *kametsa asaiki*.²⁷⁴ These practices have been reinforced with the development of conflict resolution practices, *Sanciones* (‘Sanctions’), to help control these strong negative emotions. I will discuss them in the following Section.

Theidon (2006:456) asserts that in the case of Ayacucho peasants:

Reconciliation is an ongoing process of replacing antagonistic memories with memories of previous social bonds—and of replacing a recent history of fratricidal violence with a history that recalls longstanding practices that condemned the taking of human life.

Reconciliation, in the Ashaninka case, is a process of re-humanisation seeking to replace memories of lethal violence with ones of the positive relations of the past and the shared desire for *kametsa asaiki* in the future. This is why the collective memory divided into *Tiempos* that I discussed in Section II is so important as it creates a sense of human community with historical continuity. The interpretation of Ashaninka *Senderos* as humans that became demons that must now be made back into humans seems to point at the recreation of a common bond of humanity that Akhavan suggests when he writes that “beyond a mere recital of objective facts... reconciliation requires a shared truth—a moral or interpretative account—that appeals to a common bond of humanity.” (1998:738) Ashaninka communities have shown some examples that this re-humanisation process is possible, but it is too early to tell.

CODA: ASHANINKA VIOLENCE AND THE MYTH OF THE ARAWAKAN ETHOS

A recent collection (Hill and Santos-Granero 2002) of papers by students of

274 See Theidon (2006:453) for Andean peasants’ call for “remembering without rancour”. This, however, is made in the context of conversion to Christianity in the wake of the war.

Arawakan-speaking peoples identifies a series of characteristics that they believe to be shared by all these peoples. However, none of the papers in the collection deal explicitly with Ashaninka people, the largest of Arawakan groups. Following Veber (2003) and agreeing with Killick (2005) I believe that the inclusion of Ashaninka people into this matrix is hasty. Whilst some of their ideas may hold for some general Arawakan past practices, I do not believe they do for the Ashaninka case.²⁷⁵ This is especially true as they highlight messianism as being an intrinsic part of Ashaninka practices²⁷⁶, which Veber has rebutted with historical and ethnographic proof.²⁷⁷

Hill and Santos-Granero's argument sees any behaviour that goes against this ethos as influenced by a polluting proximity to other societies. For example, they assert that "the only Arawakan groups that practised endo-warfare were those that had undergone significant processes of transethnic change." (2002:32) They expand:

The comparative study of Arawakan histories demonstrates with striking clarity that warfare was suppressed within Arawakan ethnolinguistic groups and within the larger regional formations in which they were embedded... Organized raiding and slaving, institutionalized cycles of vendettas, and forms of collective violence linked to ritual practices are almost entirely absent from the historical and ethnographic records on Arawakan societies. (Ibid:18)

However, recent history shows a very different story as all Peruvian Arawakan groups experienced the Peruvian Internal War in one way or another. This ranges from the open violence experienced by Yanesha, Ashaninka, Matsigenka, Nomatsigenka, and Kakinte peoples, to the changes in the Urubamba where Matsigenka *Comunidades* hosted Ene Ashaninka refugees. Santos-Granero (2005) even uses the war as an example of Arawakan unity in a later work, discussing the Ashaninka-Yanesha alliance as an example of the ethos. He seems to be saying that

275 Or for other present-day Arawakans from what I learned in the field.

276 See also Brown and Fernandez (1991), Métraux (1942), Ortiz (1961), Santos Granero (1991, 1992), and Varese (2006).

277 "[T]he notion of Asháninka messianism derives its veracity more from its scholarly repetition than from grounded analysis; it has created a "black hole" in place of ethnography that an approach that takes heed of practices, narrative and structural, may begin to fill." (Veber 2003:183)

alliances withstand transethnic change but his analysis does not take into account the violence between Arawakans during the war. Although the war was an example of Arawakan people uniting for a common goal, Ashaninka people of different federations were also killing each other whilst others fought in *Sendero* ranks. I refuse to see this as a polluting influence on otherwise peaceful peoples.

The essentialist attitude of this 'Ethos' ignores the adaptive capacity and flexible mechanisms of group inclusion/exclusion that Arawakan peoples have shown throughout history. These flexible systems of classification allow for a great political versatility and show how they can be allies at times and enemies at others. This shows that 'culture' is not static as people react differently to different events by deploying the social mechanisms available to them in the ways that benefit them the most. The historical record shows many cases of the calculated contraction/amplification of the *paisano* category which allows them to react differently, including violent confrontation, to different contexts.²⁷⁸ Instead we must try to understand how they redefine their ethnic boundaries and thus their definition of humanity. This is important as it explains, as I have shown with the transformations experienced during the war, who is the enemy, who is not, and how ex-enemies can become allies.

For example, there are many historical and contemporary oral accounts of 19th and 20th century *correrias*, the days of the *ovayeri* who raided Ashaninka groups for women and children to trade with *Patrones* as workers, sex slaves, and future 'civilised' peons. As I was told, "they sold them as if they were chickens!" Tales are always full of blood, uncertainty and fear as these 'uncivilised' men did not respect *kametsa asaiki*: "When they went to war they just killed anyone. No one said 'this is my cousin, this is my brother-in-law'. It was a blood-bath." Another man told me: "My grandmother used to tell that it was horrible... 'oh no, the *ovayeri* are coming, we must escape!' And they would run away and hide in the higher grounds... That is

278 See Sarmiento Barletti (2007) for a number of these rebellions.

why the ancients had to live hidden in caves or in the [forest] without clearing paths.” Some of my friends had parents or grandparents who had been sold as children.

I was also told vendetta attacks did take place in the past and could happen today in some areas. As a Headman explained, “My uncle used to tell me, ‘war was like a game for your grandfather... he was bloodthirsty’. In those days they did not go to the *Patrón* looking for work when they wanted something... they took little children and the *Patrón* gave them shotguns, cartridges, machetes...”²⁷⁹ The Authority recounted this when dealing with a case of murder in which he highlighted the importance of having 'civilised' rules at *Comunidades* to prevent vendetta attacks. There are links between *correrias* and vendetta killings which hint at the transformation of the practice from direct murder to forcing into slavery.²⁸⁰ Additionally, there is reference in one myth recorded by Anderson of “the time when we still had vendetta attacks on each other” (1986:68). He also includes a myth in which a group of monkeys, when they had just become animals, refer to a group of hunters as *ovayeri* (‘warriors’). Additionally, there are many myths about warriors and warring among Ashaninka people in the mythical past.²⁸¹

In spite of what we know about Ashaninka intra-group violence, Renard-Cassevitz (1993; 2002) claims that the ex-*Campa* share a prohibition of raids and vendettas between them. She writes that *Ayompari* partnerships gave partners a safe passage through their partner's territory but this implies that the lack of a partner would make passage a violent one, reminding us of Lévi-Strauss’ assertion that war is failed exchange (1943:138). However, she is right in highlighting the suppression of internal antagonism to allow for the better expression of external antagonisms among Arawakans. I found this at practice in the wake of the war as Ashaninka

279 See Fernandez (1986), Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998), and Hvalkof and Veber (2005).

280 See Varese (1973:69), Fernandez (1986:63), and Espinoza (1993). This begs the question whether this change is reproduced in the change from killing child-witches to giving them away to missionaries.

281 In fact, some animals (wasp, porcupine) look the way they do because they used to be warriors.

people's followed communal projects of conflict resolution and re-socialization/humanization to leave the war behind and present a united front to all the difficulties they face today. The contemporary alliances between Arawakans and their capacity to give quick response to crisis situations show that their mechanisms of inclusion are still applicable in spite of the great changes they have suffered.²⁸² For example, Ashaninka and Yine people in Atalaya united for common gains in the 2005 and 2007 national strikes but quickly disbanded and did not want a bi-ethnic Federation for the Bajo Urubamba. Thus, not only has messianism among Arawakans been over-emphasised, but also their inability for joint action without it.

282 See Sarmiento Barletti (2007) for a historical and ethnographic assessment of these practices.

CONCLUSION

A CLASH OF WAR MEMORIES

These three Chapters have been an attempt to understand how the Ashaninka people of Peruvian Amazonia experienced the Peruvian Internal War. The main collective discourse explains that most of the *paisanos* that followed *Sendero* performed violent acts on their side due to fear and ignorance and so they are also victims. However, the personal memories explain the participation of these Ashaninka people in acts of violence in a very different way.

I believe that if there is a possibility for a reconciliatory process it is necessary to start by reconciling these two memories as the personal memories of individual mourning are not recognised by the collective memory of universal victimhood. Thus, if the whole of Ashaninka people are ignorant victims then *Senderos* must be forgiven and allowed back into social life.²⁸³ It would be easy to go back to anthropological ideas of what the lack of conflict resolution means in Amazonian societies²⁸⁴ and expect their communities to fission. However, this would be ignoring the threatening context they face due to the activities of petrol companies and the horrific re-arrangement of laws by the Peruvian government. It would also mean ignoring the great value Ashaninka people attribute to living near a School and the 'civilised' knowledge it imparts, which they believe will prevent them from falling

283 There is of course much more to this. Federations use the discourse of victimhood to attract funding and demand things from the Peruvian State. Additionally, whilst I have not done fieldwork in Adventist *Comunidades*, I am sure they have a very different way of dealing with the aftermath of the war. For the influence of Christianity in post-war conflict resolution elsewhere see Theidon (2004) for the Andean context and Stewart and Strathern (2002:109) and Howley (2002) for the Melanesian context.

284 See for example Santos-Granero (2000) for an analysis of cases of fissioning in Yanesha communities as a response to internal conflicts. However, his examples are outdated, especially if we consider the importance indigenous people in that area of Peruvian Amazonia give to Schools and long-duration cash-crops.

for lies like those of *Sendero* and thus know how to defend themselves in the future.

The group of Ashaninka people I lived among emphasised the need for *kametsa asaiki* practices in the wake of the war. But they were not only talking about emotional restraint and eating 'real' food as their 'good life' now includes new rituals of conflict resolution, inter-cultural health, education, new forms of leadership and the need for money and a strong political Federation. Their pursuit of the 'good life' cannot be seen any longer as an internal issue but as a political act of resistance against an oppressive State. As part of this they have adopted and 'Ashaninkasized' conflict resolution techniques from the Army which have had some success in resolving conflicts in *Comunidades*. The physicality of the military punishment is downplayed in favour of the extreme shame caused by public punishment as they believe that making the anti-social actor feel the emotion that should have stopped him/her from acting negatively will allow him/her to remember or learn how to feel it. The knowledge of this important emotion will thus prevent them from repeating their negative actions. It seems that the adoption of these *Sanciones* ('Sanctions') as a conflict resolution practice has had some effect in making people believe in the emotional rehabilitation of their neighbours.

The collective discourse of the war is an ideal present of unity but one sees the differences in everyday life when the beautiful bodies and strong *noshire* ('my heart/soul/thoughts') cannot bear controlling the emotions they are supposed to. It is then that the 'creative innovations' that have been introduced to the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* are necessary to deal with the intensity of life in villages. As Ruth Buendia, President of the Federation for the Ene River stated in their 2009 Congress: "Our *Comuneros* were bait during the war, now we just want to be let alone to work."

The next Section will discuss Sanctions and other practices that have been adapted to Ashaninka social life in order to deal with the aftermath of the war and other factors discussed in Section I as the Ashaninka people of the Bajo Urubamba re-take their pursuit of the 'good life'.



**RONDEROS LEADING A PRACTICE RUN OF THE RAISING
OF THE PERUVIAN FLAG AND THE SINGING OF THE
ANTHEM BEFORE PERU'S INDEPENDENCE DAY.**

SECTION V
OF THE NEW INGREDIENTS FOR THE OLD *KAMETSA ASAIKI*
RECIPE



INTRODUCTION

OF AUDACIOUS INNOVATIONS IN THE BAJO URUBAMBA

I noticed *compadre* Julián waving at a distance as I was leaving my house for the *Comunidad*'s port to head downriver to drop some friends that had been visiting me in Atalaya. I waited for him and we walked down to the port together as he wanted to see if there were any canoes so he could go fishing. Julián was happier than usual because he had heard on the radio that the Peruvian Congress had cancelled Law 1090²⁸⁵, the first of nine laws that the Amazonian Strike which had finished a couple of days earlier had been organised against. However, I had also heard the news that morning and explained that Law 1090 had not been cancelled but had been voted to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Commission and would be passed for vote in Congress a week later. We reached the port and I sat on a trunk as he looked downwards at the river and commented: "It is getting so shallow! The river used to be much bigger, now it is so shallow. He won't have any water left to sell to us!" I laughed and asked, "Who is going to sell you water *Cumpa*?" He replied, seriously this time: "That's what they are saying *Cumpa*... that with those laws they will start charging us for water... Alan Garcia wants to make us disappear, one of these days he is going to kill us like peccaries!"

I thought about Julián's comment on my trip downriver, even if it was not the first time I had heard similar comments. Signs at a protest in Atalaya a year earlier included slogans like *Alan Garcia es el perro* ('Alan Garcia is the dog'), *Alan Garcia terrorista* ('Alan Garcia terrorist'), and others demanding him to resign his position as President. For the Ashaninka people I know it is all very simple when it comes to Garcia: he wants to make them disappear so he can take over their territory. *Colonos*

285 An amendment to the Forestry Law which would allow for 'unused' lands in *Comunidades* to be given away in concessions

(Andean 'Colonists') and *Senderos* came in force during Garcia's first government (1985-1990), and his second government (2006-2011) has filled the area with companies exploring for or extracting gas and oil and rumours of *Sendero's* return. In fact, he is regarded by many as being the *Ashitarori kityoncari* ('Owner of the Reds') or the *Ashitarori compañía* ('Owner of the Companies'). Garcia has been very explicit on what he thinks about indigenous Amazonians and was even recorded in national television saying that they are not "*ciudadanos de primera clase*" ('first-class citizens') and portrayed them in a series of open letters in El Comercio newspaper as the *Perro del Hortelano* ('Dog in the Manger').

The previous Sections of this thesis have described contemporary Ashaninka people's perceptions of how their lives have changed when compared to that of their *acharineite* ('our ancestors'). My informants recognise that contemporary Peru presents them with many challenges to *kametsa asaiki* ('the good life') that they cannot control. The context created in the area by the impositions of the State and the influence of timber and petrol companies has physically altered their territory and limited their access to the resources they believe to be important for *kametsa asaiki*. All this has forced changes on the lives of Ashaninka people and other indigenous Amazonians that, as I have shown throughout this thesis and will focus on in this Section, they have creatively adapted to.

As I explained earlier, *Comunidades* face new kinds of internal problems as families "Living Apart" (Killick 2005) now live in villages. I was told:

Our grandparents/ancestors used to live peacefully... they didn't live in villages, just family by family, separate in the forest... That is how we used to live... separate from each other, far away and we would sometimes visit each other... But now we are not like that, we have the colonists around us... we had the terrorists... we have the petrol company, the timber company... so we have formed our community to live peacefully and defend ourselves.

This manner of organisation is largely to take advantage of the education and health opportunities most *Comunidades* are provided with by the government and NGOs.

Furthermore, leaving a *Comunidad* after a conflict has become more difficult for families due to their long-term cash-crops, the difficulty to get their children's documents from the Ministry of Education office in Atalaya to transfer them to a different School, or the more expensive timber houses with corrugated metal roofs that they cannot take with them. These changes have made Ashaninka families the most localised in their recent history.

However, even if I was repeatedly told that this proximity makes *kametsa asaiki* more difficult to pursue, my informants still perceive it as the ideal way of living and it is compared in a very positive light to the dispersed settlements of the past:

It is beautiful to live in a *Comunidad*... the ancients would live far apart and would only visit each other sometimes to drink manioc beer. Now you can drink everyday with your family, with your neighbours... We drink happily and we talk, we make jokes. We can play football, we can make large groups to go fishing. It's beautiful!

Similarly, they recognise that even if the *kametsa asaiki* practices inherited from their ancestors are helpful, they are only so to a certain extent. Ashaninka people are now embarked in a creative process of borrowing and creating new tools from the Peruvian State and National Society to add to those inherited from their common ancestors as they seek to reinforce their conviviality practices and ensure they can still 'live well' in spite of all the changes.

The focus of the following three Chapters is to describe the skill and creativity my informants show when devising new strategies and adopting some from other people in order to help their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* in contemporary Peruvian Amazonia. These are the tools contemporary Ashaninka people believe to be important for *kametsa asaiki*. I must remind the reader that Ashaninka people believe they are able to face these changes in such a way because of their current 'civilised' perspective granted by their bodies in the *Tiempo de la civilizacion* ('Time of Civilisation') which allows them to tackle problems their ancestors could not.

The old problem of safekeeping *kametsa asaiki* is now being addressed with

new tools linked to their 'civilised' state. Chapter 10 will deal with their new rituals of conflict resolution; Chapter 11 will deal with their new forms of local leadership and the creation of political federations; and Chapter 12 will deal with their belief in the need for a School education, Money, and Inter-cultural Health. I aim to show that Ashaninka people actively recognise and deal with obstacles to *kametsa asaiki* as they seek to be active builders of their lived social world. I take from Lévi-Strauss via Gow when I consider these examples of their creative and adaptive capacity as 'audacious innovations'. Gow (2001:9) explains that for the Piro (Yine) case, and I propose that also for the Ashaninka case:

An 'audacious innovation' seemed... to be the best description of what Piro people had done with the historical circumstances they had endured. They had not simply submitted, or survived, or resisted. They had turned around and invented a new way of living that rendered their recent historical experiences coherent to themselves, and which they seemed to find both intellectually and emotionally satisfying.

The reader will note that the terms related to their new practices such as *Sanciones*, *Salud Intercultural*, *Educacion*, *Autoridades*, and *Federacion* are all in Spanish. I must point out that this does not mean that 'civilisation' is about being monolingual in Spanish. On the contrary, 'civilisation' is about a good understanding and desire for 'intercultural' knowledge and practices as the world and knowledge of the 'Other' is added to Ashaninka everyday life in order to ensure the reproduction of Ashaninka society today. I believe these terms are kept in Spanish because they are knowledge that are not associated with *Ashaninkasanori* ('real Ashaninka') knowledge even if they are now considered as important for *kametsa asaiki*.

The practices discussed in the following three Chapters are not arranged in order of importance as different informants attributed different importance to these practices but did agree that they are all necessary for *kametsa asaiki*.

Let's start by taking a look at their rituals of conflict resolution.



**JULIÁN AND I DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT OPENS THIS SECTION.
(PHOTO BY JONATHAN McCLEOD)**



**"ALAN GARCIA DOG IN THE MANGER", "LAND IS NOT TO BE MORTGAGED"
(ATALAYA, 2008)**

CHAPTER 10

ASHANINKA RITUALS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Why do you beat your wife? What example are you giving to your children? ... Why don't you live peacefully? To live peacefully we must live without fighting... drink peacefully and share... if we fight we are not living well, when we drink peacefully and we talk that is living well. (Authority at a Sanction in Nueva Esperanza)

Santos-Granero (2002) has summarised the wide discussion about how most indigenous Amazonian societies lack successful means for conflict resolution. He explains that, due to the social and spatial proximity in these communities, large conflicts are rarely solved and usually end with one of the conflicting parts leaving the community. The Ashaninka people I lived among recognise that living in close proximity to other people allows for more chances for conflict.²⁸⁶ I explained in Section II that I was told that the *acharineite* ('our ancestors') lived in detached settlements in order to avoid fighting and that there are reports of Ashaninka people in other areas still living in this manner.²⁸⁷ Old Ashaninka men told me stories of Tambo families living away from the river and moving constantly to avoid *ovayeri* ('warrior') raids. However, whilst the ancestors lived separately to avoid conflict and thus 'live well', the Ashaninka people I lived among live in villages in order to satisfy the needs they recognise as important for *kametsa asaiki*. Whilst the re-organisation of life from dispersed settlements into villages was due to external pressures, today they praise the advantages of living together as an important part of *kametsa asaiki*.²⁸⁸

286 See Killick (2005) for a similar belief among Ucayali Asheninka people.

287 See Hvalkof and Veber (2005) and Killick (2005) for accounts of Ashaninka people living in detached settlements.

288 See Arhem (2001) for an insightful account of the process of change from *maloca* organization to that of villages among groups in the Pirá-Paraná area. This process was also kickstarted by external

The idea of the ancestors finding *kametsa asaiki* by living apart was evident in an episode I experienced in Nueva Esperanza. A group of us were in a hunting trip two days into the *Comunidad's* territory trying to find game for Joel's birthday party. Suddenly Enrique, who was leading the group, found some footprints, a surprising find this deep into the forest. I was informed that we were almost outside the *Comunidad's* boundaries and into the free space between it and the huge forestry concession of the *Consortio Forestal*, a Spanish-owned timber company. We followed the footsteps for a while and reached a manioc garden; there had to be people close-by! Joel told us to wait and went ahead with Enrique. Some minutes later we heard whistles and shouts followed by what seemed to be women shrieking. I looked at Miqueas and Kendis behind me; they seemed as clueless as I was. I heard Enrique's highly recognisable voice, shouting: "Are you Ashaninka!" Miqueas looked at me, smiling, and whispered excitedly: "They are people!"

Miqueas went to see what was going on and came back a few minutes later to ask me to wait for a while before walking the few minutes separating us from what I was told was a small camp as he said Joel had told him that the people there may get scared if they saw me. This only made me more impatient, who were these people? I gave Kendis my shotgun in case it made things worse and waited with him for half an hour or so until we heard Miqueas calling us. He explained that they had ran into an Asheninka family: an old man, his wife and five daughters. The women had escaped to the forest when they heard us earlier. Miqueas said Joel had explained I was coming to visit but Miqueas told me to be careful. I cannot deny I was a little bit scared at first but it proved to be one of my fondest fieldwork memories.

We stayed for a couple of hours and had some fantastic roasted game and manioc beer. I did not take any photos so as to not make it worse but everyone in the family wore cotton *cushmas* and the girls had red *achiote* designs on their faces. After

influence but, like the Ashaninka case, the concept has been internalised and made into an important part of their present 'good life' projects.

eating, drinking, and receiving a pair of depilatory shells as a present, we headed back for the path leading to the next resting area built for long hunting trips. The men commented excitedly about our visit. The family was from far away in the Ucayali that had been moving looking for open land. No one could explain how they got there but the way they talked about them made it sound as if they thought they were relics of the past. Enrique said excitedly: “Look at how they live beautifully *compadre!* Did you see those girls? They must know how to sing beautifully! They paint their faces beautifully! Did you see? They live like the ancestors!”

Joel later told me he had invited the head of the family to come live in the *Comunidad* but he said he would rather stay where he was as he had everything he needed. The man had told Enrique to stay and marry one or two of his daughters but Enrique, a single parent, said he had children and a coffee garden he could not abandon. When I asked them as we sat at night my friends recognized that these people were probably enjoying *kametsa asaiki* but also remarked that they had obviously ‘not woken up yet’ and were living how they were because there is a lot of game in that secluded area and no one to bother them. As I was told, “They would not know how to live in a *Comunidad.*” It was really a question about ‘civilisation’; they lived like the ancestors because they did not have to face the problems that took ‘civilised’ Ashaninka people to organise into villages.

Anapati, like most upper Tambo *Comunidades*, was abandoned during the war and later completely rebuilt into a village with a grid system when its inhabitants came back from the Population Nuclei where they had sought refuge. The war has changed Ashaninka perceptions about social organisation from one of living apart to avoid conflict to one of living together in order to be able to ‘defend ourselves’. But this is not just the physical defence of the people but their organised ‘civilised’ defence of their rights attained through education. Similarly, houses in Bajo Urubamba villages are built around a centre that includes the football pitch, the Communal House, and the School. Whilst a few families, usually those with animals,

have houses away from this centre they usually live a short five to ten minute walk from it. Living this close forces people into constant interaction with their neighbours which, following their perception on the volatility of people's emotions, leads to more opportunities for conflict. As I have explained throughout this thesis, Ashaninka people are very averse to conflict and are taught from a young age to control their anti-social strong negative emotions. However, they also recognise that not everyone knows how to control the emotions that threaten *kametsa asaiki*.

The close proximity of their houses, food scarcity and the undesirability and difficulty to leave a *Comunidad* has taken them to develop new tools to cope with the complications this spatial organisation has for *kametsa asaiki*. I want to start by showing two examples of conflict resolution tools recently incorporated into the practices of the Ashaninka people I lived among. The first is the way some of the problems that affect conviviality in a *Comunidad* are dealt with by using Government agents and the second is how anti-social behaviour in a *Comunidad* is dealt with *Sanciones* ('Sanctions').

A MIDWINTER ASHANINKA MURDER

One cold morning I sat at Chato's house drinking a bowl of *caliente*²⁸⁹ listening to him complain that he could not burn his new garden for a rice field because it was still raining and all we could do was drink. Suddenly I heard Miqueas' very recognizable voice calling out for me. He was in a hurry and wanted me to come upriver with him to Tzinquiato, another Ashaninka *Comunidad*. I asked why and as he accepted a bowl of manioc beer he explained, "A *comunero* has been murdered." The loud conversation of women sitting close to us suddenly stopped. Chato asked: "Was he killed by [the] *Kityoncari* ['reds']?" Miqueas explained it had been the dead man's wife, someone many of them knew. The woman had killed her husband with a machete and thrown his body into the river and most agreed she had probably been

289 Warm manioc beer.

helped by a lover. I asked why she had done it and Chato explained, and Miqueas agreed, that it was because she had “followed the reds in the Time of the Subversion”. In this case, the violence and cruelty the woman acted with was related to her belonging to *Sendero* where she would have learned this kind of lethal violence foreign to ‘civilised’ Ashaninka people.

Miqueas downed his bowl and asked me to come with him as Javier, Tzinquiato's Headman, had asked him to write a report of what had happened and then take it to the Police in Atalaya so they would arrest the woman. This must not be understood as them blindly respecting Peruvian Law. Instead, like with many other practices of National Society, they have chosen what they find useful and added it to their repertoire of tools for protecting *kametsa asaiki*. In this case, it was preferred that the Police took the woman away as dealing with the problem internally would cause more violence and rupture in the *Comunidad*. As we went upriver, protecting ourselves from the rain with a small piece of blue plastic, Miqueas explained that if she was not taken away her dead husband's family, numerous in the Ucayali, would kill her. Her family would then want to get revenge and it would all get out of control. I had not heard of assassinations in the Bajo Urubamba or Tambo except for those considered to be made by witchcraft or those of timber men working in the Mapuya.

We got to Tzinquiato and went to the Headman's house. Reynaldo, the *Rondero* leader, was also waiting for us. We were offered a large bowl of manioc beer to share as they explained what Javier had already told Miqueas via radio, including that the woman, originally from around Puerto Ocopa, had followed *Sendero* in the 80s. As we were led to the Communal House, where the woman was being kept, I said death by machete was a cold-blooded way to kill and an awful way to die. I was assured *Senderos* were used to killing that way as, Javier reminded me, “they didn’t know how to feel sorrow; they would even attack their own family with a machete”.

There were two *Ronderos* standing by the door, probably more for her

protection than to prevent her from escaping. Some children were on their tiptoes trying to see inside the wood building through one of its windows. As I walked in I saw the woman sitting on one of the benches at the end of the dark room. She was wearing an old white blouse but I could not see her face as it was covered by her oily black hair. Miqueas and Javier started to speak to her in Ashaninka whilst Reynaldo sat next to me translating as I took notes. The woman said she had grown tired of her husband being drunk all the time and beating her and her children. He left to work timber for months every year and then drank all the money he made or used it to sleep with other women in Atalaya. She was tired of his laziness as other women and their children had good clothes and were well fed but she wore the same old clothes and her children only ate because she and her oldest son went fishing or they got some food from others. Her children did not have notebooks or pencils for School. She asked, how were they meant to learn? Reynaldo told me she had been accused of witchcraft in the past, accused of being jealous of other women and their children.

Headpeople repeatedly told me that they cannot force people to act in specific ways but can only *aconsejar* ('advise') them. I will expand on this later but for now it should be known this is similar to the advice parents give to their children that I discussed in Section III. I could not understand everything Javier said but his tone and the way he moved his body was one that I had become used to among Headmen when they advised people. He told her she should have thought more about her children, that people do not marry to be fighting, and that she should have asked for her husband to be sanctioned or should have left him instead of killing him.²⁹⁰

I felt sorry for the woman as she had no family in the *Comunidad* for support and looked, like many Ashaninka women do, much older than the 30 years her expired ID card said she had. I wrote a two-page report of what had been said and added a paragraph in which Tzinquiato's Authorities requested prompt Police

290 Advising may seem ridiculous at times. A man in Cheni was shot and had a hole torn on his side, of which he died not much later. The Headman stood next to him and advised him he should not have slept with the married woman whose husband shot him.

presence for her arrest and taking to Atalaya. After reading it out loud the Authorities present signed and stamped it. During the trip downriver Miqueas said we would have to go straight to Atalaya, even if it was already getting dark. He explained: "There are many [of the dead man's family] close by. When they find out they will want to go kill her. It's better if the police comes and take her away so they won't kill her... her family will want revenge..."²⁹¹ I told him that I did not know if I could control my anger if someone killed my sister; Miqueas agreed and said he understood as he would want to do the same but he could not think that way as he was an *Autoridad* ('Authority') and had to act quickly to prevent more violence. As he explained: "To live well we cannot be fighting, killing... We must live united to live better... when we fight there will be problems, we must not talk badly of others behind their backs; we must be nice with the people that come to visit us." Ashaninka people now avoid vendetta cycles by replacing retaliatory justice based on their principles of reciprocity with the Peruvian system of penal justice after which the offender cannot claim to be offended and seek retaliation for prison.²⁹² This idea is also present in banishment being the highest punishment in *Comunidades*.

This episode shows two important contemporary Ashaninka worries. The first is the suffering they went through during the war and the second is the choice of what aspects of Peruvian National society to add to their social practices. Both of these worries have to do with the very old Ashaninka question of the safe-keeping of *kametsa asaiki*. Effectively, they give the State the problems that they cannot resolve without threatening conviviality, similarly to how child-witches were given away to Missionaries or *Patrones*. I must note that the Police is not the only State office used to

291 This is similar to the Yanomami case: "The difference between this system of retaliatory justice and a system of penal justice lies above all in the fact that... the offended get revenge, then the offender becomes the offended, avenging himself in return, and so on; in other words, the offended party becomes the offender party once reparation is obtained." (Alès 2008:63)

292 Vendetta cycles were never discussed as being explicitly necessary for social reproduction as in other Amazonian societies, ex. Taylor (1993), Alès (2008). It was explained as an act of love and care motivated by the sadness and anger (directed outward) caused by the loss of a close relative. It resonates with what has been said of revenge as a passionate act crucial to reincorporating suffering people into social life (Alès 2000; Overing 1986). I will have to look more into this.

resolve or prevent conflicts as the Ombudsman for Women and Children is used to resolve issues of domestic violence and of children being abandoned by their father.

I have been told that in the past large conflicts were dealt with techniques similar to those summarised by Santos-Granero (2002). However, the changes introduced to their lives by the socio-economic context in which they live requires them to use their well-known adaptive and creative capacity to develop and borrow new conflict resolution tools to ensure their survival as a group. This is especially important as their current social organisation in villages allows for more conflicts in everyday life. The most important conflict resolution tool to deal with what Ashaninka people in *Comunidades* perceive to be anti-social behaviour is *Sanciones* ('Sanctions'). These were imported from the Armed Forces, the closest representatives of the State for many Ashaninka people.

Remember that in addition to military presence in *Comunidades* during the war, most *Ronderos* were trained by the Army. Additionally, many men join the military service every year²⁹³ as recruiters play with Ashaninka ideas of their past as warriors and of their knowledge of the forest. Even if many regret having *servir a la patria* ('served the fatherland') most see it as an experience in which they became 'men'. For example, an Ashaninka man who had been drafted into the Army during the war told me:

I escaped when I was sixteen ... because I had a fight with my brother... and went to Atalaya. The soldiers lied to me, they told me 'Come, you'll study, you'll make loads of money, you'll eat well'... they lied to me! I didn't know back then... They put me in a boat and took me to Satipo, then Pichanaki... They trained me, punished me... I became a man! Then I went to the Ene, to the Tambo... to fight [*Senderos*]... Each time we went out in a patrol one or two of my [friends] died... But nothing ever happened to me, they had taught me well! I went back to Atalaya three years later but my father didn't want to know a thing about me, I liked money and I

293 Not only young men as I know older men that enlisted to deal with strong emotional situations like their wife's death.

liked to drink so I found a job and stayed living here.

This is telling of the changes in values these men experience. The anti-social actions of some of these young men were perceived to be a big problem in *Comunidades* and were dealt with Sanctions when possible.

SANCTIONS: CARGAR EL SAQUITO ('CARRYING THE SACK')

Almost every *Comunidad* I have visited in the Bajo Urubamba and Tambo had a system of Sanctions introduced by *Rontero* leaders during the war and the years after it. These are used to deal with disruptions of sociability, especially violent behaviour and stealing. Sanctions combine military physical punishment and Ashaninka ideas of emotional responsibility, socialization, and conviviality. The physicality of it is obvious and the emotional aspect is based on the emotions Ashaninka people believe to be important for *kametsa asaiki*. My informants attributed anti-social behaviour to different things but the most important was *no saber tener verguenza* ('not knowing how to feel shame').²⁹⁴ This is perceived to be partly due to a deficient teaching of the tools for *kametsa asaiki* as children. Shame is an emotion a person has to know how to feel in order to be able to recognise positive from negative actions.

Sanctions deal with an individual's lack of shame. The person is put through a punishment that takes place in the most public space of the *Comunidad*: the football pitch around which most houses, the Communal House, and the School are usually built. Sanctions balance the emotional contradiction in the Ashaninka individual, re-socializing the subject by making him/her feel the shame for anti-social behaviour that a person pursuing *kametsa asaiki* would. Feeling shame during the ritual punishment will make the person avoid repeating the negative behaviour as by experiencing shame they will know how to feel it. This type of punishment that forces a being to feel a strong positive emotion as an act of re-socialisation or re-humanization is not new among Ashaninka people. This mix of physical and

²⁹⁴ *Verguenza* ('shame') allows people to recognise negative actions. When someone gets a red face due to embarrassment people commonly joke "Why do you blush, have you stolen something?"

emotional punishment is, in a general sense, similar to that of child-witches.

In its current form, the sanctioned person pays moral retribution to the victim by asking for forgiveness, promising to not do it again, and going through a session of advising by an Authority. The session of advising deals with the lack of advice the culprit is believed to have had as a child from his or her own parents. This seems to be linked with the Ashaninka 'gnostic attitude' as these infractors only act antisocially because they are ignorant of the right way of action. However, retribution is also paid to the community as the experience of shame will, in theory, avoid future anti-social acts from the same person. This is all expecting that a person is 'civilised' as I was told that one who is not may not agree to follow the punishment or will not fulfil their promises of not doing it again.

The most common reason for a Sanction in the *Comunidades* I lived in and visited was violence, domestic²⁹⁵ or between *Comuneros*. For a person to be sanctioned the aggravated part must first ask for it. Let's take as an example the case of Pablo. He was called one summer morning to the Communal House by Nueva Esperanza's Headman upon his wife's request. Pablo had drunkenly beaten her the previous evening and she had ran away to her parents' house. Although we all knew he had done it before this was the first time he was being sanctioned. Communal Authorities including the Headman, vice-Headman, and the President of the Self-Defence Committee, as well as some of the woman's family members, waited for him in the House. This is a very large building which has no walls and is right next to the football pitch so many families could look into it from their houses. Some people even visited houses closer to the House to drink manioc beer and watch. Even if those not involved should not be there some of us sat by the radio, inside the same building, as if we were expecting news from other *Comunidades*, just to hear what was being said.

²⁹⁵ Although in the case of domestic violence this was usually the husband acting violently against his wife I have also seen women being sanctioned after beating their husband.

The sanctioned man apologised and promised not to do it again which made the whole process quicker as these meetings can last for hours. He signed a declaration saying he would change and would never do it again. All the Authorities present signed and sealed the paper which was also signed by the wife and her family. Throughout the meeting the Headman gave him advice in the characteristic strong voice without shouting or losing his temper. He advised he should not drink so much alcohol as when drunken one can do things that will later be regretted. He reminded him one does not marry a woman to beat her and gave him advice on how to behave instead. He finished saying that even if they were a young couple they should try to 'live peacefully' for their children or else go on their own ways as he could not force them to stay together.²⁹⁶

After this the Authorities decided on his sanction. Two *Ronderos* carrying bows and arrows took Pablo outside in a very martial manner. He was handed an empty sack and sent to fill it with earth. Luckily for him we had been putting out pipes for Chato's house the day before so there was a large pile of earth close by the Communal House. It was decided that he would run thirty laps around the football pitch carrying the sack on his back. Many watched from their houses as he ran. From my experience at watching previous and later sanctions, parents use these rituals to advise their children against anti-social behaviour, warning them that if they misbehaved they "will too have to carry a little sack". Pablo fell many times as he ran but completed the thirty laps after which he was told to do 100 push-ups, sit-ups, and squats, all carrying the sack. The *Ronderos* overseeing the Sanction, one of them his neighbour and good friend, made sure he did it properly and corrected him when necessary. Sanctions are one of the few moments when an Ashaninka person can tell another what to do. They work because they are moments in which kinship

296 As I mentioned earlier, adults discouraged young marriage and advise their children against it: "After some time you will regret it. You will not be able to go travelling, drinking... or studying. It is beautiful when you are young... but when time passes... it is not the same. You first think you love each other but when you grow up you will start looking at others and the problems start."

expectations and responsibilities are abandoned, just like in football championships and Communal Assemblies.

Although Sanctions varied between *Comunidades*, they always had the same public aspect to it.²⁹⁷ For instance, Sabaluyo's Headwoman shocked other *Comunidades* with her sanctions. At first I thought people talked so much about her because she was a woman but then I learned it was because she was very strict with her Sanctions. She photocopied the section of the *Comunidad's* Constitution dealing with Sanctions and gave a copy to every household "so that they can see that they chose the sanctions... so they cannot complain later." The most memorable Sanction was when she tied an adulterous couple in their underwear to the posts of one of the goals of their football pitch for twenty-four hours.

However, the most organised system of sanctions I have seen is that for Tambo *Comunidades* decided by their Federation after a witch was killed in a *Comunidad* earlier this decade.²⁹⁸ Tambo *Comunidades* decided that the highest Sanction would be expulsion from a *Comunidad* and that murder would be dealt with by calling the Army in Puerto Ocopa for the arrest of the culprit. In my first visit to Anapati, my father-uncle Quentisha fell to what everyone thought was witchcraft. One of Anapati's *Autoridades* came to our house to encourage him to go see a *sheripiari* ('shaman') downriver so he could find out who the witch was or who had paid one to do it. He told him: "The *medico* ['medic'] will make you see his face... you'll see who has done the witchcraft. You'll tell us when you come back... we won't touch him, we now have our rules... it is not like it used to be."²⁹⁹ We will vacate him from the *Comunidad*." Therefore, the *sheripiari* also acts as a legal tool as he is the

297 I have also witnessed young children receiving Sanctions in School for faults like fighting or too many absences. The sanction is also physical as another Schoolmate, usually the one with the best marks, follows them with a stick as they do exercises in the football pitch. Other Schools make children run around the football pitch, in a child version of the adult Sanction.

298 A man was ill and a shaman found that it was caused by a specific witch. This was denounced to the Authorities who asked the witch to stop. However, the man died and his family murdered the witch. Many *Comunidades* lamented not having a shaman to resolve similar cases.

299 Whilst many told me witches are not killed anymore I know of cases in the Ene in which witch-children have been tortured, beaten close to death, or killed.

basis for the accusation of a person as witch.³⁰⁰

Before I move on to the next Chapter I want to make a short note on ‘customary law’. Ashaninka Sanctions exemplify the creativity and the capacity of Amazonian peoples to change and adapt their systems for resolving or preventing conflicts. It becomes obvious that, following Moore’s work among Chagga people in Tanzania, we cannot discuss this Ashaninka take on ‘customary law’ without emphasising its temporality, rejecting “the illusion from outside that what has been called ‘customary law’ remains static in practice” (1986:319). These public ritual acts of re-humanisation that were not practised a decade ago have become an important mechanism of law and of the reconstruction and strengthening of sociality as they re-take their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* in the wake of the war.

I am going to have to leave a more in-depth discussion of Sanctions for the future, especially on the importance of the performative aspect of this ritual of re-humanisation/socialisation and re-establishment of a moral community. I propose that Sanctions are part of a larger project of transition from war to *kametsa asaiki*. I agree with Theidon’s conclusions from her study of transitional justice in post-war Ayacucho in which she points out the importance of looking at communal projects of transitional justice instead of only paying attention to State-guided processes:

From this perspective, law is not just a set of procedures but also of secular rituals that make a break with the past and mark the beginning of a new moral community. Although the literature on transitional justice has focused almost exclusively on the international and national sphere, transitional justice is not the monopoly of international tribunals or of states: communities also mobilize the ritual and symbolic elements of these transitional processes to deal with the deep cleavages—or accentuated—by civil conflict. (2006:436)

Sanctions are seen as one of the things that come with being *civilizado* (‘civilised’) and that separate them from the violent days of their ancestors like

300 This changed during the war as *Rondero* leaders gave themselves the freedom to accuse and punish and/or kill suspected witches. See Santos-Granero (2004).

having a titled *Comunidad*, Schools, and wearing underwear. These new ways of resolving conflicts, like Sanctions or Tzinquiato's request for Police intervention, become an important way to avoid violence and division at times when there are large amounts of people living together that cannot easily leave *Comunidades* if conflict arises. However, the management of these tools require people that not only know how to deal with the State and National Society but also carry the respect for and knowledge of *kametsa asaiki* that a 'real' Ashaninka person should. The following section will describe what Ashaninka people believe a good *Jefe/a* ('Headperson') to be and what their role is in *Comunidades* today.

CHAPTER 11

OF AUTORIDADES ('AUTHORITIES'), FEDERACIONES ('FEDERATIONS'), AND THE POLITICAL FIGHT FOR KAMETSA ASAIKI

PARA SER AUTORIDAD HAY QUE SABER HABLAR ('TO BE AN AUTHORITY ONE MUST KNOW HOW TO SPEAK'): LEADERSHIP

The re-organisation of social life into villages not only brings new tasks that must be carried out communally but also brings new leadership roles to be filled. As I explained earlier, *Comunidades Nativas* legally have *Autoridades* ('Authorities') democratically elected every two years. The *Comunidad* is led by the *Jefe* ('Headperson') who has political powers sanctioned by the Peruvian Constitution. However, Ashaninka people actively prevent these leaders from having the power to decide authoritatively on the *Comunidad's* dealings. Hvalkof writes that an Asheninka Headperson "may be referred to as 'the chief' by outsiders, but has no other formal powers than those his followers and supporters assign him" (2004:47). These are usually very charismatic people that get others to do things by being cunning enough to convince them. Most Headpeople I met were great story tellers, drinkers, often offered large quantities of manioc beer for communal work, and were charismatic enough to keep people from boredom in the long Communal Assemblies they lead. Most were also good football players and/or gave money to the men of the *Comunidad* for their bets in Championships. The ludic aspect of leadership that has been highlighted for other Amazonian societies³⁰¹ fits well with the Ashaninka case.

Headpeople and other Authorities require these skills as they are responsible for maintaining the social relations that are important for *kametsa asaiki*, especially when problems or conflicts that may damage the fragile fabric of conviviality arise. It is also necessary for good Headpeople to have the very important linked skills of

301 See for example Overing (2000).

saber hablar ('knowing how to speak') and *saber aconsejar* ('knowing how to advise') which helps them prevent conflicts or manage their resolution as in Sanctions. As expected, success in the latter requires excelling in the former. I was told knowing how to speak was to speak convincingly, with the knowledge to be heard and without losing one's temper. This stems, to a certain extent, from the respect and perception *Comuneros* have of these figures. Headpeople are also expected to deal with the positive and negative relations between the *Comunidad* and the outside that may affect the reproduction of sociability. Thus, from a superficial view, Ashaninka headpeople follow Brown's description that Amazonian leaders

Rather than leading through implied or real coercion... guide their supporters toward collective action through persuasive language and example, both based on recognized authority. This authority is both ascribed and achieved—ascribed because leaders must have a strong group of kin who can form the core of their following, achieved because leaders must be models of competence, generosity, and tact. (1993:310)

Headpeople are usually elected for having two very important types of knowledge. Firstly, they know how to interact with the outside, be it State Agencies, *Patrones*, or private companies, and secondly, they are well-versed in *kametsa asaiki* practices. I say usually because some do not have both of these kinds of knowledge. In fact, some of the older ones may only have the latter and some younger ones only the former. In these cases, due to the context they are living in, the knowledge of the dealings with the outside is preferred as there are other older well-respected *Comuneros* that help with the example of the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*. It becomes more important for Headpeople to know how to deal with different outside agents, be fluent in Spanish and know about *documentos* ('documents') and *tramites* ('paperwork'). This knowledge is usually acquired through formal education and experience.

I was told that the combination of these kinds of knowledge gives them the ability to be heard and so they can advise those considered to not know how to 'live

well' or allow them to reach a consensus when dealing with the needs of the *Comunidad*. This is important if we consider that never in recent history have so many free Ashaninka people lived in close proximity as in today's *Comunidades*. This proximity is believed to be the ideal spatial organisation as when people lived apart from each other "they lived badly, they would make war for anything... sad, it was very sad". Instead, being a *Comunero* is to "live peacefully, free to work on my garden, on my land³⁰², to fish, to hunt". I was told *Comuneros* can now live peacefully as there are no more wars between Ashaninka people because "problems are solved with the [Headperson] who speaks and decides on the gravity [of the fault] and the Sanction".

For example, there was a problem in Anapati when people started to gossip heavily about the one of the *Comunidad's* Authorities links to Repsol which was soon to start extracting natural gas in neighbouring Cheni. Many believed he had paid for his television and DVD player with money received from Repsol so he would convince the others that the company was in their good interest. This was not unheard of in the area and I know many leaders that were offered money for the same reason by different companies. Maximo, Anapati's Headman, called for an Assembly to discuss a CARITAS project but also because he was worried about all the gossiping and wanted to ask *Comuneros* to stop arguing. He advised them

We're here to talk, to drink, to have a good time, to share... not to fight. Friendship... we're family, we are friends. It's no good to be gossiping, inventing things that we don't know if they're true or not. That's why we made a *Comunidad*... I am going to keep advising you to live peacefully until my term is over.

Note the use of the word advising. This is one of the important roles of the Headperson and other respected Authorities. For example, the Leader of the *Ronda* of a Tambo *Comunidad* told me that "like the Headman I also advise the youth... it is necessary because sometimes they don't know." The outcome then depends on the

302 Ashaninka *nopatsite*; Spanish *mi territorio*.

respect the person has for the Headperson and/or on his capacity to convince them by being charismatic or by presenting an undeniable reality based on his knowledge of Ashaninka practices and/or the dealings of the *Comunidad* with the outside.

This quality is also respected in other adults as it is an important part of how they teach their children the basics of *kametsa asaiki*. However, Ashaninka adults would never advise a person who is not their child, grandchild or godchild; it is only Authorities that do this. The lack of this knowledge will cause those they are meant to lead to not fully respect them and so not take into account what they say. For example, the vice-Headman of a *Comunidad* I once visited did not participate in Sanctions because *Comuneros* believed “He doesn’t know how to give advice, he only shouts, why would people respect him if he acts that way? An Authority must know how to speak, how to give good advice so that *Comuneros* will listen to him.” This man used the leadership characteristics he learned in the Army and so was not respected enough to have his advice taken into account.

The importance of speech for Amazonian leaders has been most famously presented by Clastres (1989:151-156). He highlights the correlation between speech and power in indigenous Amazonian societies, to the point that he asserts that “Indian societies do not recognize the chief’s right to speak because he is the chief: they require that the man destined to be chief prove his command over words” (Ibid:153). This resounds with the Ashaninka experience. However, whilst Clastres would conclude that Ashaninka Headpeople say ‘nothing’ as they are just repeating the advice on the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* that has been passed through generations, I think this is not so in the current context when these reminders are seen as being very important for everyday peaceful interactions. In fact, as we saw for the case of Sanctions, these have become highly formalised in some spaces, to the point that this knowledge gives some Authorities the coercive power to impose punishment. People encourage their kin and neighbours to listen to the Authorities’ advice as, at the end, it was deemed to be for everyone’s good. I believe these practices reflect the change

in settlement pattern and the reductions in mobility I have explained earlier. It becomes necessary for Authorities to give out their advice, and *Comuneros* see it as such because there are more chances of people acting without *kametsa asaiki* knowledge. Additionally, these speeches are always public, showing that knowing how to speak is opposed to gossip. These speeches urging action following morally beautiful ways are always addressed to the community as a whole. They may be directed to a crowd, as in the start of a party, but even when they are directed to an individual in Sanctions or other contexts, they are indirectly directed at the community. Ashaninka people would agree with Ewart's statement that for Paraná people "Ideally then, morally and socially beautiful living relies on speech and action being out in the open" (2008:515).

The change in the perception of the responsibilities and power of leaders can be seen in how the term has been translated in different historical periods, especially when comparing their roles before and after the introduction of *Comunidades Nativas*. When Weiss was in the field in the late 1960s *pinkatsari* ('leader') was translated as "he who is feared" (1969:48). However, based on fieldwork in the 1980s, Rojas translated the term as "he who is respected for his personal qualities" (1994:227). Today, a good Ashaninka Headperson knows that, as opposed to *Patrones*, they cannot force people to do what they want. Instead, these leaders know they must convince and motivate people to do things.³⁰³ For example, when dealing with the FORIN project³⁰⁴, Juan, Inkare's Headman, was clear from the beginning that he could not force people to take part: "We're not in the time of slavery, this work is voluntary. Don't think that you have a *Patrón*. But if we don't work together [*Patrones*] will take all the forest and you will still owe them money." *Comuneros* worked together and sold their timber in Pucallpa four months later for a good

303 It has been pointed out that, in most cases, "Amazonian people do not obey, but perhaps follow or join in" (Overing 2000:67). See also Lévi-Strauss (1967), Overing Kaplan (1975), Clastres (1989), Thomas (1982), and Rivière (1984).

304 Indigenous Forestry Project.

profit. Another example of their unwillingness to be told what to do comes from the *Comunidad Tzinquiato*. Reynaldo told me that the School brick walls had been badly fixed with the money provided by the Ministry of Education as *comuneros* had done the work themselves instead of hiring a bricklayer. He explained:

[The *Comuneros*] just did it themselves, without bringing someone who knows. The teacher told me, 'Reynaldo tell them!'. I told her, 'they won't listen teacher! You can't tell them what to do, they will get angry; they will say one wants to know more than they do.' So they did it between themselves... they must have paid themselves a lot instead of bringing someone who knew what he was doing. And they did a terrible job. They should have left it like it was!

A final example is that of *faenas* ('communal work'). Participation in these activities organised for both men (i.e. clearing the football pitch and the main paths in the village) and women (i.e. clearing the land around the School) is mandatory for all *Comuneros*. My informants were very free in the way they organised work and no one was told what to do or where to start even when working in a person's garden during a *minga* ('work party') as everyone knew what needed to be done and they just went for it. Even if most *Comunidades'* Constitutions dictate fines for those who do not show up for work, the only one that enforced them in the recent past was Santo Domingo and only because of their Catholic priest. In practice, about half of the men, those in a good or neutral relationship with the Authority organising the *faena*, participated in them.³⁰⁵ Attendees complained they should not be working for others as these tasks are for everybody's benefit. But, like a Headman once recognised, "Only the *Patrones* can force people to work, not us. This work is for us, we're not working for an *empresa*³⁰⁶."

305 This attitude to communal work leads me to conclude that, like attendance to *masateadas*, attendance to the former is also based on an individual's desire to engage with others in the production of sociality. In same vein, see Passes (2000) for a discussion of communal work as a way of producing sociality among Pa'ikwene people. Those who did show up to communal work reminded me of Overing's (1989) ideas on the satisfying and fun nature of group work among indigenous Amazonians. See also Goldman (1979:66).

306 'Company', which in the area could be a timber or oil/natural gas one.

I have also witnessed a more coercive attempt to deal with these absences. The Headman in question, Luis, was a young man that after his first weeks in charge was considered to be doing a poor job because he was too forceful and seemed to enjoy his power. People often complained about his management of communal work, especially the FORIN project. Whilst the *Comunidad* had been told the project would allow them to get a fair price for timber without forcing everyone to work every day he was trying to do the opposite. Making matters worse, he publicly criticized those that did not work. All this made *Comuneros* very unhappy and they were sure to show their discontent. At first, forty eight men showed up to cut and roll timber on to a stream that would take it out to the Ucayali. A week later fifteen men had enough and by the beginning of the second month only Luis, his brothers, and his nephews were working. People told me they did not want to work because he acted like a *Patrón*, shouting and insulting people and doing nothing himself:

Here [in a *Comunidad*] you can work in your garden peacefully... it's not like with a *Patrón* who is shouting at you, telling you go do this, go bring water... No one tells you what to do, you can rest and drink manioc beer and then go back to your house to eat with your family. What's wrong with that guy, is he crazy? If I wanted to work for a *Patrón* I would be working timber in the Inuya!

I was told he even separated the best food for him and stole the cans of tuna provided by FORIN for the workers. Luis got very angry when discussing absences to FORIN work at an Assembly a week later, concluding that those who did not want to work should leave the *Comunidad*. A former Headman commented as we sat in a manioc beer round after the Assembly:

He doesn't know how to speak... how to give advice. When I was Headman I knew some would come work one day, others another day. Everyone has their own responsibilities... We cannot force people like a *Patrón* does. He cannot just shout at everyone. When will that boy wake up!

Weeks later a group of us drank in Atalaya with Luis when we were told that a teacher who had stolen money from the *Comunidad* was being sent back to teach.

Luis, who was drunk, got up and said “He won’t come back... one of these days I’m going to beat up that bastard”. He then left and some laughed but most looked worried. Julio said “How is he going to say that if he’s a Headman. He must be drunk... that guy is crazy.” As I explained in Section III, those who cannot control their emotions and are controlled by them are perceived to be 'crazy'. A Headman is expected to behave in a, if not exemplary, at least positive way following *kametsa asaiki* ideals.

A final case of negative leadership is from a Communal Assembly held in the same Bajo Urubamba *Comunidad* for a cacao project. Atalaya Sub-Region engineers explained they would bring all the materials, but *Comuneros* that wanted to take part would each have to open a garden of at least two hectares and plant the seeds. Luis interrupted and asked who would pay for his work opening the garden. The engineer thought he had not understood that the whole product would be his and tried to explain it again. Luis decided not to take part and told the rest not to because it would be a waste of time to wait for three years before getting money. After the meeting a former Headman told me as we walked to his house:

I give thanks that I have never worked for a *Patrón*. Some just want everything given to them. He doesn’t want to get in the cacao project so in the Assembly says no, that who’s going to pay him to open his garden. But it’s for him! He just wants money quickly, he gets things from the *Patrón’s* store, and then he has to go work timber to pay back the debt... they get used to that after working for a *Patrón* for a long time.

This comment can be seen as a critique of laziness but it has more to it. I never asked Luis why he had turned down the project in such a way but I got some mixed answers from other *Comuneros*, most agreeing that it showed his lack of knowledge about that type of work. This could also be read as mistrust of projects that seem too good to be true but I dismissed this at the time as he had been such a big supporter of the FORIN project. Luis was replaced a few weeks later as he lost the respect of the *Comuneros* who would not stand for his leadership style.

I wrote above that Ashaninka Headpeople only match Brown's description of Amazonian headmen superficially because there is a more complicated background in action in recent years. Whilst in the past Ashaninka leaders did not have many benefits apart from prestige, the figure of the Headperson currently allows for much more when it comes to the relations he mediates with the outside. This is new because of the power bestowed on them by outsiders, which I will explain a few lines lower, but there are previous examples of coercive Ashaninka tyrants. The most infamous is the case of Venancio, *cacique* at Washington in the confluence of the Unini and the Ucayali, who led large slave raids during the Rubber Boom. Washington was a settlement of over 500 inhabitants which he moved every year to the Sepahua or Purus rivers to tap rubber, first working for Fitzcarld and Scharf but later as a rubber boss himself. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Weiss translates *pinkatsari*, today translated into Spanish as *Jefe*, as "he who is feared". It is important to remember that, as highlighted by Chaumeil (1990:107) for the Peruvian context, the *curazcazgo* political system, which implies a sense of coerciveness in rule, was imposed by missionaries and superimposed on traditional social organizations of leadership. However, this position has also been altered by the daily exchanges of Headpeople within and without the *Comunidad*. These figures are allowed a large degree of power by *Comuneros*, as seen in Sanctions, and Peruvian Law, especially in the power to sign timber contracts and permits for the *Comunidad*.

This power can be easily abused as Peruvian Law not only makes a Headperson the legal leader of the *Comunidad* but also the official representative for their dealings with the outside. Thus, they can receive loans in advance for future timber contracts and can take a *Comunidad* into large debt that will be later only payable with timber contracts. This was the case of Santo Domingo where the Headman's mismanagement took the *Comunidad* to owe over £12,000 to timber bosses and shops as he spent long terms in Atalaya and used the *Comunidad's* funds to pay his own debts. I know of some long-serving Headmen with illegal contracts

with timber companies which give them good personal profits. Their power also allows them control over which *Comuneros* may extract timber from the *Comunidad's* land which is a constant source of conflict. Thus, the tyrant that Ashaninka people, as other indigenous Amazonians, have actively prevented from gaining power is allowed power by the Peruvian State and by other outsiders such as NGOs, timber bosses and oil/gas company representatives. However, even if some do have the best canoes or large corrugated metal-roofed houses, it must be said that many are hard-working people that end up putting their own money into their office. Travelling to Atalaya or Satipo and staying overnight is not cheap and *Comuneros* do not give monetary support to their Authorities. Additionally, Headpeople usually give out petrol and other items at the request of some *Comuneros*, a gift more than an act of sharing as the favour is rarely repaid.³⁰⁷

Why are Ashaninka people in the Bajo Urubamba willing to give up some of their autonomy when they elect these leaders? The root of this power is in knowledge as an important tool for their defence. Some of these leaders may become tyrants for sections of their office in their dealing with the outside, but it is obviously not as simple to be a tyrant in their dealings within the *Comunidad*. These people are elected into office because of the advantages they will bring to the *Comunidad* and to the defence of *kametsa asaiki*. Plus, in theory, any *Comunero* can be elected as Headperson, at least giving a sense of equality in the possibility for inequality. While Clastres argued that the leader receives more than he returns (1977:175), Killick points out that “in the Ashéninka case... an individual can only maintain a degree of authority as long as he is still seen to give something useful to those around him” (2007:476). This is the case for the Bajo Urubamba but there are also restrictions on their power imposed by the duration of their terms in office which only last for two years. Thus, their possibility for tyranny is short-lived and if it gets out of control

307 It is in these cases that we get a whiff of Clastres' idea of leaders being a “prisoner of the group” (1987:175).

they can always be replaced like in Luis' example I gave earlier. What is interesting is that whilst in the past the lack of chiefly characteristics would have caused fissioning and migration, now it just causes gossip and lack of participation as movement is difficult and highly undesirable.

Ashaninka people believe having Authorities is proof that they are 'civilised'. They believe that having these leaders is the reason why there is no more war between them.³⁰⁸ Being 'civilised' is related to the Ashaninka desire to 'live well' as the knowledge of Headpeople and 'civilised' Ashaninka people allows for an easier policing of the boundaries of the 'good life'. This knowledge, achieved through *la educacion*, formal Schooling, is now seen as necessary for *kametsa asaiki*. But before we move on to a discussion of Schools and education I want to move to a short discussion of indigenous political federations which were perceived to be very important for *kametsa asaiki*. Take into account the characteristics for a good leader I have outlined here as they are the same for Federation leaders, but heightened. It is especially important that they know how to deal with the outside but especially important that they know how to speak in order to communicate their work to the *Comunidades* they represent.

OF THE POLITICAL FEDERATION AND THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS

I used to be scared of being killed by the terrorists, of them killing my family... now I am scared of the oil company... where will I go if it comes, where will we get water from if they contaminate the river? What will we eat! (Ashaninka woman)

Towards the end of my fieldwork Ashaninka people discussed the necessity of political federations to protect their right to 'live peacefully'. My informants agreed

308 Some people born in areas of Christian influence told me this was because of missionaries: "Civilisation... we cannot be killing each other. The missionaries have taught us that we cannot sell people to the *Patrones*." This can be read as being part of the civilizing knowledge.

on the need for an organisation to defend their way of life outside the *Comunidad* as their autonomy, independence, and their possibility for self-sufficiency are now gravely threatened. As a leader once told me, “We are not going to fight among ourselves like the ancestors did, we are going to fight against the laws... it may take five, ten years, but we will do it anyway.” The *Federacion* becomes especially important when dealing with the defence of *aipatsite* (‘our land/territory’) and coordinating action against its threats. Like with Authorities in *Comunidades* but to a much greater extent, this type of leadership must be “reconceived as a response to the regional and global forces bearing down on Amazonian peoples.” (Brown 1993:320)

Before I start this discussion I must highlight its shortcomings. The following is a work-in-progress and part of a larger and future project on federations and indigenous political representation in Peruvian Amazonia. This was originally planned as a whole Section of the thesis but had to be cut down as the thesis grew. Hence, I cannot do the in-depth discussion about indigenous political federations in Atalaya and Satipo that I wanted to because of word count restrictions. Still, I believe that it is important to include a short discussion as most Ashaninka people believed these were very important for *kametsa asaiki*.

ALAN GARCIA'S PERRO DEL HORTELANO (‘DOG IN THE MANGER’)

On 28 October 2007, President Garcia published the first of three articles on what he called the “*Sindrome del Perro del Hortelano*” (‘Dog in the Manger Syndrome’). The articles highlight what he perceives to be an anti-development attitude by groups that do not use the natural resources where they live and insist no one else does. In a clear allusion to indigenous Amazonians, and showing an expected ignorance of their practices which was made more obvious in the days following the massacre at Bagua, he wrote: “There are millions of lazy hectares that could be used for timber... millions of hectares that communities... have not cultivated and never will [...] And all for the taboo of ideologies, laziness, indolence or the dog in the manger.” (El

Comercio 28/10/07)

He continued explaining there are:

[R]eal *Comunidades*... but there are also artificial ones that have... 200,000 hectares but only use 10,000 for agriculture and the rest are lazy property... whilst their inhabitants live in extreme poverty waiting for the State to help them instead of putting value to their... lands by renting them... if they are not productive for them, they would be with a high level of investment or knowledge brought by a buyer... But demagogy and deceit say those lands cannot be touched because they are sacred objects... (Ibid)

As a last insult, he denies any importance to indigenous Amazonians living in voluntary isolation, legally protected by the Constitution:

[Activists] have created the figure of the 'uncontacted' Amazonian native... unknown but presumed to be, for which millions of hectares must not be explored and Peruvian oil must stay under the earth whilst the world pays \$90 per barrel. They prefer that Peru stays poor... (Ibid)

There were laws debated in Congress at the time which related to land tenure and the State's right to 'unused' communal land. Their passing in Congress seemed improbable at first but they were quickly debated and passed in the days before the signing of the FTA with the United States. AIDSESEP, the national indigenous Federation for Amazonia, called for a strike throughout Amazonia to start on 9 April 2009. At the time I was in Nueva Esperanza and the local Federation, OIRA, called for the blockade of the Bajo Urubamba and Ucayali, and Atalaya's landing strip. Hundreds congregated in each blockade aiming at preventing any resources of reaching Atalaya, Sepahua, and the PlusPetrol base at Camisea. The protesters held for weeks until a deal was reached with the mediation of the Catholic Church after the Navy arrived to force PlusPetrol boats through before the river got too shallow. Ashaninka and Yine leaders agreed to let them through only if a group of Congress representatives came to learn their *realidad* ('reality'). Two Congresswomen arrived a few days later and after a short visit full of manioc beer, game, and them being

dressed in *cushmas* and painted with *achiote*, the boats were let through. There were moments of tension as people recognised their younger *paisanos* in Navy uniforms but it did not reach violence.

However, we got news a month later of the morning of violence outside Bagua in northern Amazonia. That morning would later be referred in Peru as the *Baguazo* and by foreign journalists as “The Peruvian Tiananmen”.

OF THE BAGUA MASSACRE AND ITS AFTERMATH: NATIVOS VS. PERUANOS

Did I have feathers on my head and murdered the policemen? How can you ask me that if I was not even there! (Minister of the Interior Mercedes Cabanillas denies any responsibility for the events in Bagua)

Compadre Julián's premonition of President Garcia killing indigenous Amazonians as if they were peccaries proved to be true. The Police's attempt to break up the blockade of the highway into Bagua, a city in northern Amazonia, at the ominously called 'Devil's Curve' ended up in a day of bloodshed that seems to have re-engineered the political space for participation that indigenous people are allowed in Peruvian National Society.

Paul Unkuncham, an Awajun man, described his experience to a journalist:

On Friday at 6AM we were surrounded by 1000 policemen... We only had spears and sticks but they started to shoot at us. I did not understand why they were shooting at me if I was also Peruvian and we were only protesting for our land. As I have served [in the Army] I went up to them to ask why they were doing that... then I felt two bullets on my arm.

Interviewed on live television soon after the violence erupted, President Garcia commented on the fairness of Awajun peoples' demands: “[Indigenous amazonians] are not first class citizens! How can 400,000 *Nativos* tell 28 million Peruvians: 'you have no right to come here'? ... That is their huge mistake! Those who think that way want to take us to irrationality and primitivism.” Days later the government

purchased an ad in the New York Times (14/6/09) arguing that:

Extremist political movements have convinced... the indigenous population that they would be robbed of their land. This led to the blockading of roads and the interruption of production plants. As required by law, the police proceeded to clear the roads and were attacked with firearms, with the result of 24 casualties.

The government's official stance was that indigenous Amazonians were incapable of the large-scale organisation seen in the strikes that had lasted for almost two months (April 17-June 5). The government reproduced the mainstream portrayal of indigenous Amazonians as ignorant *chunchos*, denying the possibility they could know their rights and ILO's Covenant 169. The government explained these "barbaric" acts were not the conscientious actions of Amazonians but their moves after having been misled as they "do not speak Spanish and are very easily manipulated by their leaders who do" (PM Yehude Simon 07/06/09). According to this discourse, their leaders were manipulated by outside powers as Garcia and his Ministers spoke, in a clear allusion to Venezuela, of an international conspiracy: "Who profits from Peru not extracting its resources, not selling its Oil? There are people that must understand that Peru cannot stop..." (Ibid)

By presenting the protesters as primitive savages driven like feeble cattle by external forces, they did not only feed a stereotype but, importantly, they delegitimized their political movement. Far from it, the indigenous movement in Peruvian Amazonia is not the capricious move of a group of misled leaders but the expression of being fed-up with a violent historical process of attempted dominance by a succession of powerful outsiders.³⁰⁹ In this level, *kametsa asaiki* stops being a communal project of conviviality and becomes a pan-Amazonian political project of defiance made more obvious with the growth of the indigenous political movement and the attention placed on them by the media after the *Baguazo*.

However, even if it is easy to romanticise their political fight for the right to

309 See Veber (1998) for an insightful account of the context and practice of the development of the Asheninka indigenous political movement in Gran Pajonal.

have rights, it is as easy to talk about corruption and project mismanagement. I do believe that the indigenous Amazonian political movement allows for the defence of their way of life on a stage to which they did not have access fifty years ago. There are many cases of federations that have achieved very important gains for the communities they represent, ranging from the defence of their territory to campaigns for ID Cards. However, the question in the backdrop of a discussion on these organisations is whether these are still grassroots organizations. To what extent do these federations fit in the Ashaninka understanding of leadership and social organization? To what extent do they actually have the support of the *Comunidades* they represent? Hence, to what extent can they decide for the hundreds of people they represent?

It is, of course, never as simple as it seems. When I first arrived in Atalaya OIRA represented almost 120 *Comunidades Nativas* inhabited by Amahuaca, Ashaninka, Asheninka, Shipibo, and Yine peoples along the Ucayali, Unini, Bajo Urubamba, Inuya, and Purus rivers. However, by the time I left the field two years later, OIRA had been separated into a series of smaller federations after problems arose about the repartition of money achieved from the deals OIRA signed with PlusPetrol and mistrust for the possibility of mismanagement of future ones with Petrobras and Repsol which had been granted areas for exploration by the government. I have lost the information of the precise names for all these federations but there were at least six: one for the Unini, two for the Upper Ucayali (FARU and FECONACA), two for the Bajo Urubamba (FABU and OIYPA), and one for the Purus. OAGP, for the Gran Pajonal Asheninka, had separated from OIRA much earlier. Most of these federations had their own offices and sought funding in different ways. Those of the Ucayali arranged timber contracts and waited for Repsol to make a deal with them if oil or gas were found in their area in the future.³¹⁰ Those

310 This was similar to the Tambo case which signed a deal with Repsol towards the end of my fieldwork. Conversely, the Federation for the Ene vehemently opposed petrol company exploration and acted violently against their attempts. However, this Federation was in a different situation to

of the Bajo Urubamba received money from PlusPetrol which had previously been paid to OIRA but was taken away from them due to mismanagement and to the company's divisory policies. PlusPetrol decided they would not renew their deal with OIRA and would only deal straight with the people of the Bajo Urubamba so the Ashaninka and Yine people of the area founded their own political organisations.

The first Federation was called FIBU³¹¹ and united Ashaninka and Yine peoples. However, it was soon split into one for Ashaninka people (FABU³¹²) and one for Yine people (OIYPA³¹³), each signing a separate deal with PlusPetrol. Divisions between federations became bitter as there were attacks and malicious gossip as OIRA ran out of funds and federations did not share their funding with others. OIRA's mismanagement was clear and had been accepted by their leaders in public meetings. At the end, the meetings calling for a united front against petrol companies, once OIRA stopped receiving funds from them, ended up creating more divisions. At the time I would only get frustrated but now I see these episodes as an example of the well-known capacity of these people to separate when there were not enough valid reasons for unity. The lack of a clear charismatic leader in OIRA did not help either, as the other federations were led by older men more experienced in indigenous politics. However, it becomes as easy to unite again for a shared purpose which was clear in the quick organisation that took place during the local action in Atalaya during the strikes organised by AIDSESEP.

So, *Comunidades* actively seek independence in everyday life but look up to these federations for leadership. Is this contradictory? I always found interesting that some *Comunidades* were, in theory, strict about seeing a permit from their Federation before I could stay there "for work" but were fine with me staying if I was only visiting. This only happened to me upon my first arrival to Nueva Esperanza but

those in Atalaya and the Tambo as it receives money from Spanish cooperation agencies and the Rain Forest Foundation UK.

311 Indigenous Federation for the Bajo Urubamba.

312 Ashaninka Federation for the Bajo Urubamba.

313 Yine Indigenous Organisation for Atalaya Province.

then I was never asked to show the permit again. I did not need a permit until I went to the Tambo River but then it was a purely ceremonial thing as it was quickly granted to me. However, *Comunidades* did take these signed and sealed documents seriously in the case of outsiders showing up unexpectedly and unaccompanied by someone they knew.

But then, why do *Comunidades* not help federations when they run out of money if they do see them as having an important function? When I first arrived in Atalaya I proposed that *Comunidades* opened communal gardens from which to raise money to fund their Authorities' trips in their representation and also the expenses of the federations that represented them. That never happened. This has to do with the sources people believe these dealings should be funded from as Authorities work for the *Comunidad* which has its own resources (timber) to pay for its expenses. Federations were to do the same from the money they received from their deals with companies working in the area. But this also has to do with the separation of these leaders from their *Comunidades* of origin. As Brown has noted before

[T]heir long absences from community life and the intercultural skills acquired on their travels soon raise questions about their influence at home. A foreign visitor to Indian communities may find himself importuned by residents questioning the legitimacy of their own leaders, who are rumored to spend all their time in the capital or to be amassing large fortunes diverted from international aid intended for local development. (The tradition of criticizing tendencies toward self-aggrandizement dies hard in egalitarian Amazonia.) (1993:318)

These stories of corruption, some backed up by undeniable evidence, are popular in every *Comunidad*. But at the end, it is as if the need for these figures outweighs the gossip and ideas of corruption. These are leaders created by historical context and the necessities required to thrive in it. As I have explained throughout this thesis, there is a need for more than the knowledge arising from kinspeople as it has become necessary to add the 'civilising' knowledge that can only be attained from the outside or from agents trained in the world of the other. And it is not as if

Comunidades get no say. Five delegates from every *Comunidad* attend the Congresses organized by the federations that represent them and have the right to speak and vote on the decisions taken. I am not saying that Ashaninka people in the Bajo Urubamba did not see Federation leaders in a positive light. They do. But the outsiders that negotiate with them, as with Headpeople in the local level, grant them all-mighty powers of decision that *Comuneros* do not.

This is important because *Comunidades* at times may refuse to follow some decisions taken by federations. How does this ambivalence work? It is the same process that *Comuneros* go through with their communal Authorities. It becomes necessary to have the figure of the strong Authorities in a *Comunidad* due to the necessity of 'civilised' practices and order in their villages. People will then decide when they take their decisions or not and it is always up to leaders to be able to convince them. The important point is that *Comunidades*, as individuals do with their local authorities, retain their ability to reject such leaderships. Thus, it is only in the presence of a major threat that leaders with more powers of domination can arise as people follow individuals who are able to offer them gains that they could achieve on their own. And these are times that really need that. My two years in the field gave me many chances to join protests in Atalaya and the rest of Amazonia as well as hearing about negotiation trips to PlusPetrol offices in Lima. The leadership and charisma of some of the men and women leading these federations united Ashaninka people in large protest groups in which they dressed as the ancestors and performed as *Indios*, 'uncivilised' and angry, in order to fight for their right to be allowed a 'civilised' *kametsa asaiki*.

OF STAGED AUTHENTICITY AND BEAUTIFUL BODIES

As a final note, I would like to highlight the skill with which Ashaninka politicians and *Comuneros* alike represent themselves in political protests and meetings. I take MacCannell's idea of "Staged Authenticity" (1979) from the study of tourism and

apply it to indigenous peoples' political representation. This practice is intertwined with Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialisms" as Ashaninka people look for a united front for these protests in spite of the differences they recognise between themselves (1987:205).

One of my favourite things about political protests in Atalaya was the impressive sight of hundreds of barefoot Ashaninka people in *cushmas* and faces painted in a variety of designs³¹⁴ as my friends dressed in ways that they had told me their ancestors used to. These occasions, congregated by their federations, took them to Atalaya to show their dissent with the government's latest infliction on *kametsa asaiki*. This was also common at Congresses, which started with representatives dressed as described above but by the third day the noticeable majority were back in trousers and shoes because of, most said, the heat.

Does the fact that these two types of dress co-exist in the same social space imply that they have the same function? I propose that these are specific markers of their 'civilised' state as they can wear these types of dress for occasions when the communication of a specific identity is necessary: *cushmas* for representations of indigeneity, and trousers and shirts for representations of 'civilisation'. The use of the *cushma* for occasions when indigenosity has to be shown has been discussed before. For instance Elick (1970: 121) writes that:

Cushmas and achiote paint have become symbols of what it is to be [Ashaninka] as opposed to the way of life introduced by outsiders... We have seen growing discontent with the way of life introduced by missionaries and observe that wearing a *cushma* is a way of expressing their own interests.

Similarly, Hvalkof and Veber (2005:237) assert that:

The Asheninka use of the *cushma* shows how an ordinary article of clothing can become a means to communicate a specific identity... The *cushma*, a

314 Compare this with what I mentioned earlier about people having sets of clothes to wear in Atalaya to which they change into by the port. These always include shoes or at least flip-flops. See Conkilin for an analysis of "exotic appearances as markers of indigenous identity" (1997:728) and Oakdale (2004) for the uses of 'culture' and 'Indian ethnicity' by Brazilian Amazonian political groups.

corporealisation of custom, acquires an aggregate value as a sign within interethnic communication... the sign of the victorious Asheninka identity.

As I explained in Section II, the *cushma* is also a ceremonial dress for marking their identity in other formal stages such as the graduation ceremonies of programmes training indigenous people. However, I cannot generalize this for the whole Ashaninka cluster. I have been to a Congress in the Ene in which people dressed differently as *cushmas* were worn on top of t-shirts by most attendants, showing daily use, and only a few dressed in the trousers, shoes and t-shirts common in the meetings around Atalaya. A few of the Federation leaders that came from Satipo did show this duality in dress, wearing *cushmas* for meetings but changing to other clothes once these were over.

I must leave this discussion for now. In the meantime, I propose that the use of the *cushma* and all the other body-marking techniques attached to the ancestors is perceived as a way of re-indigenising the body after the succession of changes they believe they have experienced throughout their history. At the same time, Ashaninka people are playing with and refashioning “national-level identities that they know to have been attributed to them... [putting them] to use for their own locally specific purposes” (Oakdale 2004:61). I agree with Hvalkof and Veber’s proposition that:

By promoting such an image, Asheninka leaders transformed the same characteristics that had been used to discriminate them as uncivilised in order to redefine themselves as noble holders of a differentiated identity. (2005:236)

Dressing *como Mestizo* (‘like a *Mestizo*’) is not necessary in these political stages as the whole point is not to play on the same level or beat them at their own game³¹⁵ but to show how different they are. It is about impressing them with their beautiful moral bodies. And if it scares the audience, as when they change their chants in Spanish for high pitch staccato shouts, that is only better.

One of Ramos’ main points in Indigenism is finding out why, in the Brazilian

315 See Taylor (1993).

context, “have so few Indians attracted so much national attention?” (1998:284) The question in Peru is the opposite, why have so many Amazonians caught so little attention where it matters? It is only in the last two years, and because of the *Baguazo*, that they have started to have some kind of impact in the national media. Indigenous Amazonians have participated in the Peruvian Army in the wars against Ecuador and the war against *Sendero Luminoso*, but they are not part of the memory of those conflicts. The Awajun man stating his surprise at being attacked by the Police even ‘if he was also Peruvian’ makes this clear.

This is also clear in a comment by my late *compadre* Julián as we listened to Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian novelist, being interviewed on the radio one morning. At one point the interviewer highlighted the fact that the novelist has a double nationality (Peruvian and Spanish) to which Julián asked: “*Compadre*, what does it mean to have a double nationality?” I explained, and he smiled and said, “So he is two things at the same time... and they let him do it?” I nodded. “Then why does Alan Garcia not let us be Ashaninka and Peruvian and live peacefully?” We laughed, but as with most of the things my friend and teacher told me in those days of protests and the uncertainty of losing their territory it got me thinking. The type of citizenship that the Peruvian State offers to indigenous people is based on a series of ideological and legal discourses that proclaim universal equality of membership and participation in the national political community and the market economy. However, the political experience of indigenous Amazonians has repeatedly proven the cruelty of a hierarchical social order in which privileged classes can exercise a discriminatory and selective right over subordinate groups that are deprived from, or allowed a mutilated version of, their basic individual and collective rights.

I now re-take my discussion of the new practices aimed at *kametsa asaiki*. It is because of all the threats on their lives that my informants agreed on the importance of ‘knowing how to defend ourselves’. Federations are important for this, but the key is in Schools.



**ATALAYA ASHANINKA LEADERS AT THE ANTI-EU SUMMIT
(LIMA 2008)**



**ATALAYA ASHANINKA LEADERS LEADING A PROTEST IN LIMA
AGAINST THE BAGUAZO**

CHAPTER 12

OF EDUCATION, MONEY, AND INTERCULTURAL HEALTH

*I did not know I was Peruvian until the gringos
taught me! (Ene River Ashaninka man)*

OF EDUCATION: POR LO MENOS HE PISADO UNA ESCUELA ('I HAVE AT LEAST SET FOOT IN A SCHOOL')

The Ashaninka people I lived among are obsessed with Schools.³¹⁶ One of the biggest differences they see between themselves, 'civilised' Ashaninka people, and their 'uncivilised' ancestors is that the latter never had access to the 'civilising' knowledge they believe to have acquired through formal education. This lack is seen as the main reason why their ancestors were fooled by *Patrones*. I was told the ancestors:

Didn't know how to defend themselves, they were scared, they saw the *Patrón* as if he was a god, he was the only one they had to respect but there was no justice for them. If he owed one of the *paisanos* for their work he would just give him a packet of cartridges for a whole month's work.

This view also fits with how my informants see their more 'traditional' *paisanos*. This deceit by *Patrones* still happens to a certain extent as many men go for months without getting paid, but it was believed that now they were better off as they could negotiate wages and were confident *Patrones* could not be as ruthless or act with the impunity of previous decades.

Ashaninka people believe they were lied to in the past by different outsiders, from *Patrones* to *Senderos*, because they did not have the knowledge that they get today from Schooling which would have let them realize they were being fooled. As I explained previously, most of my informants believe *Sendero* was so successful in controlling some of their *paisanos* during the war because they did not have the

316 The attraction to education among indigenous Amazonians has been noted before. See for example, Gow (1991:229) and Rival (1992; 1996; 2002).

knowledge to realize how negative their *politica* ('politics') were from the beginning. However, it was made clear that this would not happen again due to the knowledge they have achieved from a combination of having experienced *Senderos'* actions and from School education.

Early one morning in Atalaya, as I sat in a canoe waiting to go up the Bajo Urubamba, I was told by an old Ashaninka man who had grown up in an Ucayali *fundo* ('hacienda'):

Now, because education has reached us things are changing, the youth understand, they have finished primary, secondary School and they know. Parents are also starting to know their *realidad* ['reality']. [*Patrones*] have been lying to us; [they] only wanted to humiliate us and not let us live peacefully. It was not in their good interest for people to get an education because then that person would stop him, would contradict him as he knew his rights.

The Ashaninka people I lived among believe School education is an important part of *kametsa asaiki*. As a friend told me:

We want to live peacefully like the ancestors did... no one forced them to do anything, no one wanted to take their land away. We want that peace... that's why I make my children study... I advise them to study hard, to learn so that they can defend our territory, so that they know and won't be fooled. That's why education is so important... they have to learn so that they can help us.

Another man expanded:

The ancestors didn't live in villages because they didn't know how to. They lived far apart so they wouldn't fight... but now it's all organised, it's peaceful, you can work peacefully and drink manioc beer. Before there were no Schools, people didn't know how to read or write so we didn't understand... now things are changing, we have our Title, we know about wages and they can't fool us in Atalaya. That's why it is important to live in a *Comunidad*.

Thus, education is thought to provide them with an important part of the knowledge needed for *kametsa asaiki* in contemporary Peru. This is the knowledge that civilises people, letting them *despertar* ('wake up') and so understand their

realidad ('reality'). This knowledge will help them deal with *Patrones* and shopkeepers, understand how the State and its offices work and grant them a general awareness of their rights as Peruvians. Additionally, this knowledge, in conjunction with the 'civilised' perspective, allows for the adoption of new conflict resolution mechanisms like Sanctions. This knowledge, like the other tools discussed in this Section, has been added to those inherited from the ancestors in order to aide their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*.

The Ashaninka people I know that have gone to School, usually only Primary, are very proud of it even if most did not finish it. Having learned how to read, write, basic maths, and the 'civilising' knowledge they believe to be implied in Schooling, adds to their identity as 'civilised' Ashaninka people. Marcial, in his late forties, pointed out the importance of his children going to School:

The children are learning... that's why it's good to live in a *Comunidad*. The children now know; they won't be like us old ones who never learned. Now everyone can make some money to buy salt, soap... it isn't like with the *Patrones* that used to fool us because we didn't know.

Another example showing the importance of attending School comes from my stay in Anapati. Miqueas, who had completed the 2nd year of Secondary School, requested the Headman to call for a Communal Assembly to ask the unknown witch hurting his father, or whoever had paid one to do so, to stop. After the meeting he told me his brothers had not called for the Assembly before our arrival because they did not have the knowledge he had acquired from Schooling as they had not gone to School because of the war. He believed he had a better appreciation of how to deal with the situation because he had "at least set foot in a School". This phrase was also used by some men when they were comparing themselves to other people that acted in ways that were perceived to be negative to *kametsa asaiki* such as fighting or stealing.

Most Ashaninka political leaders I know are former Schoolteachers or Secondary School graduates elected due to the knowledge they acquired through

Schooling and interaction with Whites as this knowledge is perceived to be important for what these organisations do today. However, Federation leaders recognize that even if some Ashaninka people have completed degrees, the government does not see them as having the capacity to manage big responsibilities. Leaders agreed that at the time of reaching landmarks such as the Otishi National Park or the money from the Gas at Camisea they were “the ones who fight for it and then they [INRENA³¹⁷, Municipality] keep it... They say we do not have the [management] capacity but we do. We now know!”

However, in part following ideas among *Mestizos* that indigenous people are *ignorantes* ('ignorant'), I have been told by *Mestizos* that leaders use their education in detriment of the people they represent. A variety of people, from boat makers to *Patrones*, told me that “The only thing those who have studied do is take advantage of their *paisanos* who have not studied.” I did witness some indigenous teachers taking advantage of the *Comuneros* in the *Comunidades* they teach in. For example, most of the School directors in Atalaya Province stole part or all of the money that the Ministry of Education gave every School for new paint and other changes in 2008. Most *Comunidades* in the Bajo Urubamba and Alto Ucayali areas closer to Atalaya denounced this and asked their federations for help. FABU, the Ashaninka Federation for the Bajo Urubamba, presented reports to the UGEL³¹⁸ on the condition of their members' Schools, showing that all teachers had misused the money. Weeks later, as I travelled down the Ucayali for a football championship, I learned of a Yine teacher in an Ashaninka School downriver that had not only kept all the money but threatened *Comuneros* she would close the School if they told on her. I was told that “[Ashaninka people] downriver... don't know how to complain. The teacher lies to them, tells them she'll close the School. Who does she think she is, the Ministry of Education? And they believe her and say nothing. They don't know, they haven't

317 State agency in charge of natural resources.

318 Local Ministry of Education Office.

woken up yet.” This was understood as those Ashaninka people not knowing enough about how things work and so did not complain. They acted like ‘uncivilised’ people did before having been ‘woken up’ by education.

An important part of being a ‘civilised’ Ashaninka person is to understand the benefits and consequences of carrying a Peruvian National ID card, the DNI. FABU’s President advised the participants of their 2009 Congress that “in order to fight I must have my DNI. You won’t get a thing without documents.” This is contrasted with the ‘Time of Slavery’ when I was told *Patrones* actively prevented Ashaninka people from having birth certificates and DNIs. *Patrones* told them, “You can’t have a birth certificate, an ID, because you don’t travel to Lima, who’s going to control you in forest?”³¹⁹ Ashaninka people learned of the importance of DNIs during the war as people were stopped by the Armed Forces and asked for them. Those lacking one could be arrested as potential terrorists and some were forcibly drafted into the Army.

The importance of the DNI is such that it has been added to myth. I was told one about a bicycle-riding forest spirit who takes an Ashaninka man to Atalaya for a beer drinking session. They spend so much money, dollars which the spirit withdrew from a tree, that they were confused with drug-dealers by the bar owner who calls the Army. Upon the soldiers arrival they are asked to show their DNIs and are arrested when they cannot produce one. The soldiers take them to their base where the man and the spirit explain that the money was from their work as timber men. The soldiers do not believe them and so torture the spirit by choking him and trying to burn him. However, the soldiers fail to hurt him and, after a distraction created by the spirit, the Ashaninka man escapes. The spirit then tortures and kills the soldiers.

I was also told a story about a *kirinko* (‘gringo’) travelling in Amazonia who upon meeting a Peruvian man who offers his service as a guide asks him for his DNI

319 Later they did everything possible to prevent them from titling *Comunidades*, telling them it would make them communists.

“to see if he is a good person”. The importance of the DNI from an Ashaninka perspective is such that one of the first actions carried out by FABU after being founded was to reach a deal with the local government so that Ashaninka people of the Bajo Urubamba could get free birth certificates and DNIs. I must point out that this should not be understood as them wanting to become formal Peruvian citizens. Instead, the goal is for all Ashaninka people to access State services and vote so that an Ashaninka person can be elected as Mayor and gain the power to decide freely on their futures. Citizenship is only attractive when it adds to *kametsa asaiki* and the safe reproduction of kinship.

The obsession with documents by ‘civilised’ Ashaninka people does not stop with DNIs but extends to written documents. Interestingly, it is not always about what the document says but about the document itself. Upon my arrival to Nueva Esperanza I was told I had done well by first getting a permit to visit *Comunidades*. Had I not done so I could have been confused with a *Sendero* spy, which happened anyway. However, documents are not only about dealing with outsiders but are an important part of ‘civilised’ life in a *Comunidad*. For example, the minutes for every Communal Assembly are recorded on a notarised book and everyone present at the meeting signs and writes down their DNI number to show their agreement with the decisions taken. I was even told a myth about a fight between a jaguar and a monkey who decided to fight on a given day and signed a document agreeing on it.

Documents are made more powerful by the excessive formality of the letters needed for requests to government offices. This formality is then passed on to other documents such as invitations for football championships and anniversary parties which are formal to the point of ridicule. Ashaninka people recognise education is important as learning to read and write will allow them to present and understand the documents required to do almost anything in the governmental offices in Atalaya, like the INRENA, Police, Ombudsman, Local Education Office, or Health Network, and understand the documents sent to them from these offices or by

people claiming something against them such as Oil/Gas companies or *Patrones*. Documents are especially important now that most of my informants recognised that they had to prove belonging to and ownership of their territory with pieces of paper as the State ignores their much more complex relationship to their land.

Knowing one's rights and knowing how to work the legal machineries of the Peruvian State is perceived to come with the formal education process that produces 'civilised' Ashaninka people. Education has 'woken up' Ashaninka people, letting them see the reality of things. This knowledge becomes especially important when dealing with money in selling or buying products and being paid and paying for services. The relationship between Ashaninka people and money has dramatically changed in the last decades as they have gone from working for months for almost no pay to negotiating pay rates with *Patrones* or prices at shops. Money is an important part of their contemporary life as it allows them to pay for objects and services necessary for *kametsa asaiki*.

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KIREKI ('MONEY')

One morning Joel and I stopped for manioc beer at Raul's house on our way to his garden. As we drank and talked about his coffee, which would soon give its first harvest, Raul said: "To live well we must plant rice, coffee and cacao. This way I'll be able to take care of my wife and my children. If I don't plant coffee it'll be the same, [if I do] I'll have plates and pots for my wife and clothes and notebooks for my children." Raul, like the Ashaninka people I know, believes money is important for *kametsa asaiki* as it pays for things that have become necessary for it. These not only include material goods but also services.

Living in the 'civilised' *Comunidades* of the Bajo Urubamba brings a series of economic responsibilities. For example, people must give money or buy products for the organisation of communal celebrations such as Anniversaries, Championships, and Graduations. But it gets worse. If someone wants to leave Nueva Esperanza for

another *Comunidad* they must pay two-hundred soles. If they left without paying they would not get a certificate that some *Comunidades* would request to let the person move in, unless he or she was born or had strong family ties to the *Comunidad*. The *Comunero* will also be forced to leave the materials acquired as part of communal deals with timber or oil companies such as corrugated metal roofs. The situation in the Tambo is different:

When my brother left Sheboja they did not charge him like they want to do with him [Carlos who was leaving a *Comunidad* in the Bajo Urubamba to go back to Anapati]... He asked to be paid for his work in communal works... he had carried cement, bricks... all that! The community agreed that he had been hard working and asked him what he wanted. He asked for two cows and took them with him.

Ashaninka people have different ways to get paid work but always for very low wages. The daily wage in Atalaya for 2007-09 was £2 for a day of work and £3 if the workers brought their own lunch. Wages are higher in the Tambo where people get paid £4 or £5 pounds per day of work. This has a lot to do with the different relations Tambo *Comunidades* have with the large timber companies working there. However, even if my informants complained about the wages they were paid by *Patrones*, they paid Ashaninka people working for them the same wage. This was a common criticism by people working for their older kin but the complaints were complicated because of kinship relations as they were usually hired by their fathers-in-law or uncles to work for them. For example, I met Ruso, a young Ashaninka man, sat on a bench in Atalaya's main square one night. I was going to get some dinner and invited him to come along as I had not seen him for weeks. He said he had no money as he had just arrived from working for his stepfather for a month in Chicosa to buy his School materials. He complained about the wages:

I thought that because he is my family he would pay me at least £3 [per day]. But he is only going to pay me £2 and he has not even given me any of it! I am going to have to go back to get my money, it will be expensive... He has only given me some money for food.

As I walked up to Nueva Esperanza one morning I saw a *Mestizo* man I did not know walking towards the port. He did not look very happy. I went to Moises' house, the first one as you reach the village, and asked the men drinking manioc beer who the man was. Moises explained:

He came offering £70 for a month rolling timber. But who's going to go for that, it's too little, it's not enough... people here know how it is! It's not like with the ancestors who didn't know about money. Instead we mocked him, we told him to go get people from Atalaya!

My informants tie this attitude to the knowledge achieved through education, which lets them recognise what is and is not a fair wage. Delfin expanded:

In the past timber bosses would come asking for ten, fifteen men. Now they go far away, looking for painted idiots to whom they pay little and won't complain. Here we know [our rights], the month finishes and we leave. Those downriver don't know, they haven't woken up yet, they make them work hard and at the end they don't even pay them their whole wages. They just wait and wait... they don't know how to complain.

This was not the first time I had heard people commenting about this topic nor would it be the last as they constantly contrasted their present-day 'civilised' knowledge to how little Ashaninka men of the past knew about money. I was told by an Ashaninka man who had worked for timber bosses in Sepahua in the 1970s that

[*Patrones*] used to call us 'the little chickens'... we were paid only £40 [monthly]. It made me angry [to be called that], we were like chickens to which you throw anything and they run to eat it without thinking. But now people know, they've set foot in a School. [*Patrones*] used to come from Pucallpa to take people because people over there already knew. Now they go far away looking for people, we aren't going to [work] for so little!

Due to the low wages and the prospect of very good profits, Ashaninka families in the area are resorting to cash-crops such as rice, plantains, peanuts, coffee, and cacao. Many in the Bajo Urubamba complement this by selling timber, usually

illegally, risking it being confiscated. Some men still work for timber bosses but for shorter periods of time than in the past. Others look for work in other areas and travel as far away as Satipo for the coffee harvesting season and some young men travel to the Ene to find work in the coca business. This is more common among men coming back from the military service who get hired as bodyguards for coca paste convoys. I was told by a young Ashaninka man who had just come back to Atalaya from the Tambo that

There are many from X [going to the Ene]... they come back loaded with money... They get paid £350 a month. I could send £250 to my mother and she could use half to hire people to work in her garden.

However, whilst people in the Bajo Urubamba complained that PlusPetrol did not hire them to work on their cargo boats, there are similar jobs that not many Tambo Ashaninka would risk doing even if they pay well. When Discovery, a company contracted by Repsol for gas exploration in the Tambo, looked for workers in *Comunidades* of the area they got less than they needed even if their wages were high and so they had to bring people from Satipo. Two Anapati men worked for them and now have TVs, DVD players, and one of them has a refrigerator. I was told by one of them that they were the only ones that worked because the older men said “the *gringos* were going to kill them [and] empty their bodies.”³²⁰

In my last months in the field federations advised the people they represented to make objects they could sell like fishing nets or boats. My informants and their federations are tired, or not hopeful, of waiting for the government to fund the projects they believe they rightfully deserve. At the same time there is great mistrust of NGOs and Regional Government projects as many people are wary of the intentions of those behind them. The EU-funded FORIN project is a clear example. It gave *Comunidades*, quoting a Shipibo forestry engineer, “Support so that you can

³²⁰ This is an updated version of the face-peeler. Instead of White men killing people to take their faces off, I was told there are now White woman that can fly and kill indigenous people to steal their organs which they will later sell. I was told that some these had been caught close to Satipo but they were released as they had permits signed by President Garcia.

make your own capital... work in one place... legally, without getting in trouble with the law.” FORIN paid for the technical process and materials necessary for *Comunidades* to extract and transport timber for sale in Pucallpa. However, some mistrusted this sudden help as government offices are always trying to prevent them from cutting timber forcing them to do it illegally and thus sell it at very low prices. People were convinced FORIN was making money in some way or another “If not, why would those countries of Europe give so much money?” People even started calling it the JODIN³²¹ project. There was a similar problem with the Atalaya Sub-Region's cocoa project. Anyone could sign up for it and get free seeds, plastic bags, and fertilizer, and after three years their whole harvest would be bought by a company that would export the cacao to Europe, paying higher prices than those in Atalaya. Five years later the project would buy a machine to make cacao paste which would let them add value to their product. Many people did not trust these promises. A frustrated friend told me: “I told [the Headman] 'we must open a large garden for the cacao project'. But he told everyone it was all lies, that there was no reason to do this.”

In December 2008, CARITAS sent a short census to Anapati asking how many people lived there, how many were in different age brackets, the area of their territory, etc. An Assembly was called to debate whether the census should be filled or not. It was decided that it was too dangerous to give out that information and that it would only be filled after talking to their Federation's President, scheduled to arrive the following week. This surprised me because many of them had planted cacao, coffee, beans, had built latrines in their houses, and were soon to build new kitchens as part of different CARITAS projects. However, many feared the census may come from Repsol which was soon to start operations in the area. These reactions are logical if we consider that they never got gifts for free. In their experience, it is always for their timber, their river, or their lives.

321 From the Spanish *joder* ('to fuck/screw').

There were some success stories in March 2009 as FORIN came to an end. It worked well in *Comunidades* with Headmen that were able to make *Comuneros* trust they would be successful and who did not have opposing interests. FORIN has been unsuccessful in *Comunidades* where Authorities had timber interests with Atalaya *Patrones* that countered the activities of the *Comunidad* in the project. At Mapiato (Ucayali), the Headman convinced his *Comuneros* with a passionate speech. Concluding it he said:

We must wake up... learn how to sell our own resources, stop being robbed. FORIN wants to wake us up so that we work with wages according to what is fair... It's sad that many *Comunidades* get sanctioned by the government, they are going to have to pay large [fines]. We must work, like [FORIN] say, legally!

Another Headman told me, after finding his *Comunidad* had lost a large amount of illegally extracted timber to the Ministry of the Environment:

We can't take timber out even if we really need to... they take it away quickly. Why don't they show us the steps to follow, teach us... so that we stop breaking the law, so that we won't have the Ministry as our enemy?

Most Ashaninka leaders I know agree it is time to make money following the rules of the State.

Before closing my discussion on money, I would like to highlight the uncomfortable coexistence of two different economic rationalities in today's *Comunidades*. The first, reciprocity, is ruled by the product's use value whilst the second one is ruled by economic exchange and guided by individualism and profit. These two are at work in every *Comunidad* I have visited and generated a social tension that has become more acute as market economy values are meshed with traditional ones. As I explained much earlier, the two rationalities engage in instances, as in the delayed reciprocity of *Ayompari* trade being used in instances of borrowing money or buying products on credit from other *Comuneros*. However, economic differences between Ashaninka people have become more obvious now that they live so close to each other, creating tensions in *Comunidades* that they are

still able to control as the *kametsa asaiki* rules of reciprocity and sharing are still upheld. However, it seems obvious that the predominance of one of these two rationalities will change as economic inequality and scarcity take people to other options.

As a final note, I cannot deny the similarities in the deferred exchange of payment between *Ayompari* partners and that of *Patrones* and their workers. In fact, most people preferred advanced payment, to the point that it was cited as one of the main reasons why FORIN did not work. But at the same time, men laughed at the idea of 'their' *Patrón* being like their father's or grandfather's *Ayompari* partners. Bodley warned us about this erroneous conclusion three decades ago:

The resemblance between one's patron and one's *Ayompari* is only superficial, however. A patron is always treated with deference and respect, while one's *Ayompari* is supposed to be argued with (1973:595)

Thus, it is all about the equality between the two parts. Ashaninka men wait for their payment and may go see their *Patrón* for advances but it is always a unilateral relationship of respect as the *Patrón* is not subject to indigenous mechanisms of control. It never gets to the point of the heated public verbal duels in which unhappy *Ayompari* partners argued for lateness in the delivery of their promised objects or the quality of these objects that Varese saw in the Gran Pajonal in the 1950s.³²² The ritual aspect and the moral responsibilities between the partners are not present at all in the exchanges with Whites who, as constantly pointed out by my informants, see their exchanges in purely economic terms.³²³ Ashaninka men always complained about how crafty White and *Mestizo* buyers were when weighing the game they took for sale to Atalaya, always trying to take some weight off or deducing the standard

322 See Pimenta (2006a) for a comparison between *Ayompari* practices and Acre Ashaninka people's understanding of sustainable development projects.

323 This distinction is of course not new in the discipline. See Strathern (1988:177-178) for a discussion on the absence and presence of ritual in different types of exchange: "mediated exchange" (traditional exchange, objects are a prolongation of the person) vs. "unmediated exchange" (exchange with Whites, objects reduced to economic products).

prices for inexistent imperfections in the meat. However, they were strict when it came to the prices in their shops and the credit they gave to Ashaninka people. A friend pointed out humorously, but in a sense of fairness, that they should also sell their machetes, bowls, and clothes by weight so that they could also argue about the weight like they did with their game.

Money buys the material goods necessary in everyday life for the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* such as clothes, pots for making manioc beer, and bowls to drink it, plates for eating together, notebooks for studying, nylon line and cartridges for fishing and hunting and the ingredients for feast food. We must understand their need for these industrial items by contextualising their interest with the cultural practices they use to domesticate these objects of alterity into everyday life. And of course, following Hugh-Jones (1992), this has to be looked at in the context of history and how the use and importance of these materials has changed throughout time. Falling into a sentimental perspective of the introduction of these goods as a purely negative influence in their lives, or of them as passive consumers of Western products, only makes it impossible for us to understand their use and the importance they place on these items. In the case of Ashaninka people this starts with an understanding of the use of industrial goods and their “Cultural Biography” (Kopytoff 1986) in their mythological accounts.

The myth of *Inka*, a shaman with tool-making knowledge, shows how they think of themselves as the original source of these products and of the White knowledge related to industrial items. Thus, it is only because Whites kidnapped *Inka* that they amass the fortunes they do today. This belief is backed up by the historical record as there is evidence that the forges left behind by Franciscans when they were expelled from the area by the Juan Santos’ rebellion in the 18th Century were used by Ashaninka and Yanesha people until the invasion of the area by Republican troops in the 19th century.³²⁴ Once again, Ashaninka people’s view of

324 See Santos-Granero (1988).

their ordeals in the world is explained as them lacking or losing knowledge that would have made their lives much easier.

However, money does not only buy material goods but allows for the payment of services important for *kametsa asaiki*. Money is needed to pay for medicines and the expenses of going to Atalaya for Hospital or shamanic treatment. This is important as there is a recognition that due to the changes in diet and the close contact with outsiders there are diseases that cannot be treated solely with indigenous knowledge but must be treated with a combination of Ashaninka and White health practices.

OF INTERCULTURAL HEALTH

I will not be expanding on Ashaninka ideas of 'traditional' health prevention and treatment³²⁵ as it is not the focus of my study. Ashaninka people place a great importance on health as it allows a person to carry out their daily activities. As a friend told me as we worked: "Health is to be healthy... your body doesn't hurt and you can work, fish, hunt and play football." Conversely, disease is "to have pain all over your body, to have to stay in your house and not work." We can see why they believe health prevention is an important part of their 'good life' as disease would prevent the person from being involved in the activities aimed at *kametsa asaiki*. Ashaninka people, in a clear example of their social flexibility, separate the ailments to be treated by the different health specialists available. They agree that there are afflictions that can be self-medicated with plants or the help of indigenous specialist-led treatment but others need White medicine and specialists. Of course, those caused by witchcraft must be dealt with by a shaman.

Why is there a need to use Western medical specialists and products if the ancestors did not use them? I find, from my many conversations about the topic, that

325 See Lenaerts (2006) on plant and *sheripiari* ('he who sucks tobacco'; 'shaman') health practices.

there are two main reasons why some diseases cannot be cured without the help of Western medicine. Firstly, the consensus was that large part of the ancestors' medicinal plant knowledge has been lost as I was told that today "you don't even realise that you might be wiping your ass [with a medicinal plant]". This was more obvious in the Bajo Urubamba than in the Tambo but the idea was present in both places. Secondly, there are some diseases that the ancestors never had to face as they were brought by outsiders. I was told these required the knowledge of those that brought them to be cured. I would like to add a third point, a recognition that if Ashaninka bodies are 'becoming like *Mestizos*' due to their change in diet and practices, then a different type of treatment is necessary to treat the ailments affecting these new bodies. It is due to a mixture of these reasons that my informants speak of the need for Inter-cultural Health³²⁶, treatments that include aspects of Ashaninka and Western medical practices, as an important part of *kametsa asaiki*.

Almost every *Comunidad* I have visited has a *Promotor de Salud* ('Health Promoter') trained to give shots and medicines for basic things like tooth aches, fevers, and diarrhoea. They are in charge of the *Comunidad's* Health kit and charge value prices for their services to refill it. These are people who were trained during the last Indigenous Health programme ran by AIDSESEP. Very few *Comunidades* have a Medical Post, and when I was in Anapati they were promised a mini-Hospital by a Dutch NGO. Those without these facilities receive trimestral visits by nurses for check-ups for young children and pregnant mothers. These visits are popular and most mothers take their children to be checked or to receive cough and fever medicine. These services are free of charge if they have signed up for the government's Integral Insurance for which they need a DNI.

Trust in Western health practices depends on context. That Ashaninka people take the medicines or injections from the Promoter in their *Comunidad* or those given during the nurses' visits does not mean that people will happily show up to the

326 Ashaninka in politics call it *Salud Intercultural*.

hospital in Atalaya due to the intrusive treatments and the way they are treated by the staff. Thus, surgery is only agreed to in extreme cases. For example, most men with hernias are afraid of going to Atalaya for surgery, which is periodically free, because they are scared their penis will be made shorter. I was told that “they pull your nerve and [your penis] gets shorter... who’s going to want a little penis?” I must also highlight that this acceptance of Western medical knowledge should not be read as a contradiction to shamanic knowledge and the use of medicinal plants.³²⁷

I was repeatedly told it has become difficult to find good *sheripiari* (‘shamans’).³²⁸ Nueva Esperanza has an old one, Aparicio, who is respected by some, feared by others, and dismissed by another few. Some say he cannot cure because of the copious amounts of alcohol he drinks every day and others say he knows witchcraft and is not trustworthy. However, most believed those who did not get healed after his treatment were to be blamed for this as they probably ignored the strict diets the shaman gives as part of his treatment. As José commented: “Then they say he’s not a good *medico*... that he doesn’t know how to cure. But how are they going to get cured if they don’t follow the diet? Not even the best would cure them!” Most Ashaninka people and *Mestizos* that follow shamanic treatment have no doubt on the method of healing. If people do not get cured it is because they got to a shaman too late or they did not follow the diet strictly.

Note that Chato called Aparicio a *medico* (‘doctor’). This can be seen as him translating *sheripiari* into a concept in Spanish he thought I would understand better. But the insistence of people to call them *medico* more often than *curandero* (‘healer’), which is common in Atalaya, takes me to conclude that even if they clearly separate Western and Ashaninka treatments, they see their practitioners as similar figures. Ashaninka people are well aware of the different options available for healing. I

³²⁷ I separate these two because even if some *sheripiari* know a lot about medicinal plants not all do. It is usually old women that have the knowledge of medicinal plants, later passed on to their daughters and granddaughters.

³²⁸ This is taken to an extreme in parts of the Ene where I am told people have lost faith of their *sheripiari* because of their inactivity during the war (Antonio Sancho, pers. comm.)

know of Health Promoters who send patients to a shaman and shamans that send patients to Health Posts. Ashaninka people go to a shaman and if the treatment does not work they go to the Health Promoter or Health Post, and vice-versa. They have a clear idea of what inter-cultural health is and are comfortable with their choices and options. This is consistent with *kametsa asaiki* because of how elastic it is. It is only for the outside observer that some practices seem subversive to their 'tradition' but for them it is only logical to mix and match in order to ensure survival and the reproduction of 'real' human beings.



ROLLING TIMBER IN THE BAJO URUBAMBA



PRIMARY SCHOOL (NUEVA ESPERANZA)



**GRADUATING CLASS OF 2007
(NUEVA ESPERANZA PRIMARY SCHOOL)**



**JESUS AS A MANINKARE (SPIRITS THAT AID SHAMANS).
BY NOE SILVA, AN ASHANINKA SHAMAN**

CONCLUSION

THE ASHANINKA MORAL HIGH GROUND

I must confess that I had over-romanticised expectations of Ashaninka people when I was leaving for the field. I felt heart broken when I walked into my host's house, build with bricks and a corrugated metal roof, did not see any *cushmas* and heard more Spanish than Ashaninka language in my first days in Nueva Esperanza. At first I felt I needed to go somewhere more 'traditional' where I would learn the language quicker and see how 'traditional' Ashaninka people dealt with the war's aftermath. But once the fears of why I was there passed and I went from *Sendero* spy to *Patrón* to friend, Bajo Urubamba Ashaninka people taught me there is no contradiction between the way they live and *kametsa asaiki*. Even if they speak Spanish and give their children cough medicine and shots for high fevers, have showers and radios in their homes, wear jeans and fake Caterpillar boots to parties for which they buy electricity generators to play Andean popular music, these innovations are made with the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* in mind. They are, like they have done before, taking what they want from the outside in order to defend their desired way of life. I was blind to the skill and elasticity with which they find balance and adapt to new situations in order to 'live peacefully' as 'civilised' Ashaninka people.

The very few tourists, photographers, journalists and NGO workers that I met in the area were pessimistic about Ashaninka people's survival as a distinctive group. The lack of the expected material culture in *Comunidades* convinces these observers that they are disappearing and becoming *Mestizos*. Non-indigenous Atalaya and Satipo dwellers see this transformation with optimism, hoping someday indigenous Amazonians will become more like them. Most non-indigenous people I met in my travels were surprised that someone who had been to University abroad was travelling so far away to live among Ashaninka people since, as I was told by a

Hotel owner in Satipo, “You can’t even talk to *them*... they are not like *us*, you must be very careful!”. Some hoped my stay among Ashaninka people would ‘civilise’ them and likened my fieldwork to missionary work.

Even if their own markers of what it means to be an *Ashaninkasanori* (‘real Ashaninka person’) may have changed with time, my informants believe they are as ‘real’ as they can be. Even if they may joke, saying things like “*aca no somos abogados, somos ahogados*” (‘we are not lawyers, we are drowning’) their main political ambition is to once again have an Ashaninka as Mayor of Atalaya province.³²⁹ Even though they know that “*Mestizos* won’t like that... [they will say] how are they going to govern if we own everything, if we’re the *Patrón!*” they still think it is possible. This is, of course, no small feat. But the determination is obvious. Like a leader told me “We’re going to make history. We must make history!” The Ashaninka people I lived among know that the government’s recent interest in their territory is due to the riches under it: “Now the companies are coming in they care about Amazonia, now the government wants the land. Not many years ago Amazonia was just animals for them, including us; we were like animals for them.” All this leads them to see how important it becomes to be connected and represented in the regional and national picture through education as well as political federations.

The Ashaninka people I know are sure and proud to have the moral high ground over the rest of the people they know to exist, be them *kirinko* (‘White foreigners’), *wirakocha* (‘White Peruvians’), *chori* (‘Andeans’), or even the *simirintsi* (‘Yine people’). The *Mestizo/White* city, be it Atalaya, Satipo, or Lima, is asocial, amoral, and dangerous. These places are full of beings who do not know how to live well and show their lack of humanity by not even being interested in learning how to do so. I once had a conversation with three Ashaninka young men, usual travellers to Atalaya, one of whom had spent time in Lima, on whether they would prefer to live

329 Tambo River District is governed by an Ashaninka (his mother is Ashaninka) but Satipo Province is not.

in Atalaya or stay in a *Comunidad*. Kendis, Marcial, and Segundo told me:

K: Nothing happens in Atalaya. What is there in Atalaya? Nothing!

S: It's all about money, we are much better here.

K: Here you can eat. If you are hungry in Atalaya no one will ever give you food. When you're in a *Comunidad* and you go to a house, you know how hunger is sometimes, people will tell you 'here, have some manioc' and at least you can eat.

M: Who's going to feed you for free in Atalaya!

S: Here you can go fishing, you get a good catch and you give it to your family, in town it's all about money. Who's going to give you anything for free?... If you don't have money you don't eat and there's not even manioc beer to fill you up. The thing is to go, find work and come back with money.

I explained in the previous Chapters that the giving of food is one of the basics of *kametsa asaiki* as it is synonymous to care and consideration. People in towns not sharing with Ashaninka people even if they seem to have so much makes it clear that they not only refuse to have a caring relationship with Ashaninka people but do not care about them at all. My Ashaninka friends are convinced that theirs is the right way to live. I was told repeatedly that if only President Garcia knew their *realidad* ('reality') he would not act the way he does. If only White and *Mestizos* would they realise what *kametsa asaiki* is they would see how right it is and let them live peacefully.

There is a real fear among *Mestizos* and Whites of what indigenous Amazonians can do. This is obvious in strikes when they close roads and block rivers. These are times when "it's not good to be White" like a European-descent woman told me in the back of a truck as we crossed an Ashaninka roadblock close to Satipo during the July 2008 Agrarian Strike. The faces of non-indigenous people were a mixture of fear and disdain as Ashaninka men and women in painted faces, *cushmas* and crowns, marched in the streets of Atalaya. These are times when people leave their *Comunidades* dressed like the *acharineite* ('our ancestors') and go to towns to protest against petrol companies, the lack of spending in their *Comunidades*, the

corruption in the local government, etc. These are times when Ashaninka people show that passing *kametsa asaiki* on to their children is not only about teaching them to share or how to control their emotions. Now they need money to buy the goods necessary to follow their practices or to pay for medical treatment. Now they must send them to School to learn the knowledge Whites have used against them for such a long time so that they will never be lied to again.

Kametsa asaiki has become an explicit act by 'real' human beings to avoid domination by the groups that actively oppose it with their actions and decisions.

And it is here to stay.

SECTION VI
CONCLUDING REMARKS



BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

KAMETSA ASAIKI AS DEFIANCE

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

KAMETSA ASAIKI AS DEFIANCE

John Bodley predicted almost forty years ago (1972:3-10) that the extermination of Ashaninka people in an ethnocidal catastrophe driven by 'progress' was almost complete. I am sure he is glad to know how wrong he was. I walked into an Ashaninka village for the first time only a decade after they had left one of the cruellest experiences in one the bloodiest wars to have ever been fought on Latin American soil. I joined them as they went through a process of creative innovation, navigating through the internal and external problems left by the Peruvian Internal War and the new issues of the specific context of the Atalaya area. I met ex-enemies dealing with processes of reconciliation/reconstruction after a war that had decimated their population when I had expected no 'traditional' means of conflict resolution. I learned that most of the deaths in this cruel war had been caused by Ashaninka people themselves, contravening an "Arawakan Ethos" (Santos-Granero 2002:42) resting on the tacit agreement of no intra-group violence. I found Ashaninka people living in an area where they were not supposed to, and living in large villages of extreme physical proximity when I expected them to be living in separated settlements. I wondered why people did not move away after intracommunal conflict but was pleasantly surprised when I learned of the new processes of conflict resolution, or re-humanization from their point of view, that have been put into practice to deal with this close physical proximity. This is of note because, as I have

discussed throughout this thesis, this change of spatial organisation from one of 'living apart' has changed the rules of the game of sociality.

'LIVING WELL' IN 21ST CENTURY PERUVIAN AMAZONIA

This thesis has been a first step in an ethnographic project about Ashaninka people's pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* ('the good life') in a context marked by the wake of the Peruvian Internal War, the rise of extractivist industries in Atalaya, and the passing of despotic decrees by Alan Garcia's government in Peru. I have focused especially on how the war and its wake affect this pursuit and make it into an inter-communal project of reconciliation and reconstruction. I will not do a summary of the Sections of this thesis as each of these has a short conclusion but will move to touch on some of the main points. With these I do not seek to 'close' this thesis but rather show what I now know about the Ashaninka people I lived amongst for more than two years and the issues that were important in their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*.

I started my study, methodologically, very naively as I was trying to learn directly about the war. However, I ended up finding that without their present project for the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* I could not learn or understand any of the issues I had raised in my research proposal. It has been my intent to show that *kametsa asaiki* is central to any understanding of Ashaninka social life and practices, especially in a context like that of the Bajo Urubamba. This context requires them to find new social tools in order to be able to retake their pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* that was interrupted by the war. However, the objective in the post-war is not to go back to an idealised past of abundance, sharing, and peace, but to re-structure and creatively adapt Ashaninka society to the current state of affairs in Peruvian Amazonia. They have taken what they learned during the war and the lessons they believe to have acquired from schools and crafted them into weapons to counter the power of outsiders. They have borrowed, created, and adapted other practices, filtered through their current 'civilised' perspective, that have allowed them to create

a project of *kametsa asaiki* that fits with the requirements of contemporary life in the Bajo Urubamba.

INNOVATING AUDACIOUSLY IN AN ASHANINKA VILLAGE

A valued part of *kametsa asaiki*, and of having ‘become civilised’, is the desire to live in large villages of close physical proximity as opposed to the ‘uncivilised’ ancestors who had to live apart in order to avoid feuding. However, this requires many of those ‘audacious innovations’ Lévi-Strauss talked about and I have discussed thoroughly in this thesis. My informants believe that they ‘know how to live in a *Comunidad*’ which lets them stay in a village and not move due to conflict. This is highly-valued as there is a great desire for children to go to school but also to the importance placed on long-term cash-crops and the building of houses with more expensive and hard to move materials such as timber planks and corrugated metal roofs.

Of course, this manner of social organisation brings problems to be dealt with that originate in the volatility of people’s emotions, which take to fights and witchcraft. It also brings a lack of game and fish from the over-use of the land and rivers in the *Comunidad*. But these conflictive issues have been skilfully tackled with the shifts between *Comunero* and *Ashaninka* that become possible once they use the terms and responsibilities introduced by the laws of the Peruvian State, or the transformations allowed by the use of different clothing during communal assemblies, anniversary parties, and football championships. This close living has also called for a redefinition of sharing networks, and of who is one’s ‘real’ kin as opposed to those one ‘treats like’ kin. I have sought to understand what this new experience of living in a *Comunidad* means from an Ashaninka perspective, demonstrating the salience of accounting such a question ethnographically.

In fact, we must not understand the Ashaninka ‘good life’, and many of its other versions in indigenous Amazonia, as a monolithic set of practices but as a key

communal goal for which practices can be shuffled, adopted, forgotten, or remembered. I have made it my point throughout this thesis to show that this ethos is not monolithic as today's is an era of trial and error of social tools and practices. I suggest that it is only because of the centrality of the pursuit of *kametsa asaiki* to their social life that Ashaninka people can be so flexible when adapting their practices to different contexts and to their different political interests and transform them, or themselves, without thinking of it in terms of loss.

The communal efforts for a return to *kametsa asaiki* have become the central axis of the Ashaninka project of reconciliation and reconstruction in the wake of the Peruvian Internal War. The lessons of reciprocity, emotional control, and of the types of food that create Ashaninka 'strong bodies' that the Ashaninka people I lived amongst believed to have inherited from their ancestors have taken them to alter communal leadership institutions as well as introducing rituals of re-humanization to deal with the requirements of living a 'civilised' life in *Comunidades*. It is important to remember that their present view of *kametsa asaiki* is guided but what they believe to be 'civilisation', the techniques necessary for 'becoming civilised', and the tools necessary to maintain that state.

In the case of my informants, they place great importance in schooling, the acquisition of money to buy the material goods and services necessary for *kametsa asaiki*, inter-cultural health to deal with illnesses affecting a body that is in constant metamorphosis, a strong political federation to defend their territory and rights, and communal leaders with more coercive power granted in specific moments (such as when dictating and enforcing *Sanciones*) and the knowledge to use external agents (such as the Police or the Army) to defend conviviality in the *Comunidad*.

But all these contemporary tools are seen in the context of what they believe to be an ever-transforming world and, importantly, an ever-transforming body. In fact, where 'theoretically' we would expect Ashaninka people eating diets of tuna, rice, and potatoes as losing their Ashaninka bodies, the constraints put by the context in

Atalaya has taken families to search for new 'real foods' and re-invent as they carry on with their task of creating 'real' Ashaninka bodies. This process, which they say is making them 'become like *mestizos*' is a never-ending approximation to becoming inhuman, but one they fight every day to avoid.

EMPHASISING THE ASHANINKA 'STRONG' BODY AND ITS EMOTIONS

The body has been one of the main topics in Amazonian anthropological research since the 1970s. This study has been in large part inspired by these works, but at the same time has been in direct conversation with them using my ethnography of Ashaninka people. It would have been impossible to understand Ashaninka people, their practices, and what they say without paying a very close attention to their ideas on the body and on the power of positive and negative emotions. As I have mentioned, my Ashaninka informants believe to be 'civilised', and it is safe to say they wear their 'civilisation' on their bodies. They believe they see things the way they do, and thus require the new ingredients for *kametsa asaiki* they believe to require, because their bodies and perspectives are very different from those of the ancestors. Indeed, they mark their communal past and separate it into *Tiempos* with these transformations in mind. This communal past reinforces their belonging to the area, to which they are relatively recent migrants, but also creates a sense of group cohesion amongst Ashaninka people from a large variety of territories that becomes important at a time when many seemed to be trading the old identification of people by rivers to one in which they identify themselves by *Comunidad*. The reader will have also seen the importance my informants placed on their bodies and emotions in their narratives of the war. The Ashaninka experience of the war and the process of reconciliation in its aftermath cannot be separated from this. Of course, there are still many more points to develop, and I have highlighted these throughout the thesis, to which I will direct my future research.

As such, the care and defence of the body and its emotions is not just an individual task but it is a very important part of the communal pursuit of *kametsa asaiki*. However, as we have seen, *kametsa asaiki* is not merely a communal project of conviviality but it has become a tool for defiance of the Peruvian State and its impositions on their lives. It is a conscious political choice in their fight for the right to have rights. From what I learned in my two years in the field, it is not that Ashaninka people want everything: they want their rights to be respected and, above all, the recognition of their right to be themselves.

“WHY DO YOU PUT YOUR RUBBISH IN OUR RIVER?”

The Ashaninka people I lived among do not see themselves as the victims of progress Bodley thought he saw in the 1970s. Today they have a reading of *progreso* (‘progress’) and *desarrollo* (‘development’) that equals it to *kametsa asaiki*. I make a note of this in the Conclusion because it is something that seems so obvious but that I had not given enough attention when I was in the field. The Peruvian State, as other countries with indigenous groups concentrated in areas of natural resources, is purposefully ignorant of what the ‘good life’ (or whatever they want to call it) is and how this affects the way they plan their present and future. Peru has been found again and again lacking in their responsibilities in regards to the WTO’s Covenant 169, especially those relating to the consults of local people before letting large-scale extraction projects into their territories.

In practical terms, I have shown that Ashaninka people are not anti-development or anti-monetary exchange or anti-timber, and are definitely not the ‘dog in the manger’. Ashaninka people see these positively, as long as they add to their present idea of *kametsa asaiki* and to its main goal. As the representative for *Comunidad Inkare* at a meeting with PlusPetrol said after a naive petrol company worker used the over-done discourse of indigenous Amazonians as being anti-development:

If *Compañias* would protect our land like us and our grandparents before us have, we'd happily let you be. But the only thing you care about is... filling your pocket with money. Don't say *Nativos* don't want development! That's not true. ... We want a development that is beneficial for us, that lets us live peacefully, that does not pollute our rivers and leave our children hungry. Do I go and put my rubbish in your house? Then why do you put [your rubbish] in our river!

My informants believe that humanity is about practice. Thus, they are explicit in their view that they are the true 'real' human beings on earth, and they are happy to show that their beautiful moral ways are the actions of true human beings. Their bodies are proof of their belonging to the land and of the moral knowledge that has been passed on from the time their ancestors were the only beings on Earth. My informants see themselves as the architects of their own future and have repositioned *kametsa asaiki* practices to allow them to do so. At the end, the question of *kametsa asaiki* is a question of morality, humanity and the reproduction of future generations of *Ashaninkasanori*, 'real' Ashaninka human beings. And, as my friends showed me every time they could, that is worth fighting for.

OF BEERS, CIGARETTES, BEING CALLED BY AYAHUASCA VINES, AND 'LIVING WELL'

My *compadre* Gerardo was adamant that he would take me back to Atalaya after a short two-week visit in Nueva Esperanza in March 2010. Early that morning, as I fought the hangover from the manioc beer party the night before and tried to put my things together in the dark, I noticed my *comadre* Adelina was already up in the kitchen roasting some manioc for my trip and filling a plastic three litter bottle with manioc beer "*para que no sufras de hambre en tu viaje compasho*" ('so you will not suffer from hunger in your trip *compadre*'). Gerardo and the rest of the people that had been part of the drinking party started to get up and the, let us call it ritual, of not letting the traveller leave commenced. I had experienced this before, always with great frustration. Manioc beer and food were served and people sat back chatting as if it

was any other morning. I really have to go, I thought; it was the first time I was flying out of Atalaya to Satipo and I was looking forward to the aerial view of the Tambo. It took at least two hours of convincing and the threat that I would go stand by the river to call a passer-by boat to take me downriver for Gerardo to get up and say, smiling but in 'advising' mode, "*Ya compadre, no estes rabiando!*" ('OK *compadre*, don't get angry!'). I laughed and we got as many people as we could in the canoe and headed downriver.

We arrived in Atalaya at around 10AM to find that the airplane would arrive five hours late. Having nothing to do we went for breakfast and a couple of beers. We found other people I had met during my time in the Bajo Urubamba on our way and others were called from our table in one of the bars on Fitzcarraldo Street. This short field visit had been an excuse to see them but justified as a fortnight to clear up some questions that had popped up from my fieldnotes whilst in St Andrews. However, the visit only made me realise how little I knew about them as intriguing new questions popped up as a group of at least twenty of us shared beers, cigarettes, and laughter. Sitting with them I truly understood what my good friend, *compadre*, and teacher Julian had told me about having arrived in Nueva Esperanza responding his ayahuasca vine's call.

I must now do the typical disclaimer, but never so honest and heartfelt, that I must end this thesis with the realisation of the impossibility of ever being able to fully encapsulate their society and way of living in a package that honours their creativity. The richness and vitality of their social lives is irreducible to paper and I do not have the skill or imagination to give the reader a better picture than the one I have. Sitting there among my friends, as I received the empty glass of beer, filled it and downed it before passing it on to my right, only confirmed my belief of the violence imposed on their incredible projects of sociality when their creative adaption to change is confused with acculturation. If my good friend Conrad Feather calls Nahua people "The most affectionate people in the Amazon" (2010:24), then I

am convinced that the Ashaninka people I lived among must be the most creative ones.

Yes, *kametsa asaiki* may be in no small part a rhetorical peace as, I have shown throughout this thesis, it is impossible to reach due to the vicissitudes of human beings that Ashaninka people openly accept. The reorganisation of social life into villages is a move motivated by historical context that has created a redefinition of the game of sociality. Community life in a *Comunidad* is not perfect due to the factors influencing it from the inside and outside that I have discussed throughout this thesis. But this does not mean that the pursuit of the 'good life' is not central to Ashaninka social life. The Ashaninka people I know proudly pursue it as it is the only way in which 'real' human beings ought to live.

I got up from my seat and said my goodbyes. Gerardo walked out of the bar with me to call a motorcycle to take me to the airport. As I stopped one and started to get on I looked back and told him I hoped things in the Federation got better, that I hoped they were able to squeeze more money out of PlusPetrol, and that Petrobras and Repsol were unsuccessful in their explorations in the Bajo Urubamba. Gerardo smiled, looked at me tenderly, and said, as so many Ashaninka people did when I worried too much, *eero piwashireta Juanito, pisaiki kametsa* ('don't be sad little Juan, live well').



FAMILY 'LIVING APART' IN THE ASHANINKA COMMUNAL RESERVE.

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AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE MARKET PORT (DRY SEASON) AS I LEFT ATALAYA FOR THE LAST TIME. THE LONG GREEN BUILDING WITH A RUSTY ROOF TO THE RIGHT IS OIRA.