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# **Interculturality and the Indigenization of Modernity: A View from Amazonian Ecuador**

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## **BETWEEN AMAZON AND ANDES**

This essay is set in the interface between Amazon and Andes, an extended and fascinating rugged topographical zone where the Andean piedmont grades into the Upper Amazon thence to the Amazon Basin. The article is designed, in part, to problematize the distinction between “lowland” and “highland” South America, and in large part to come to grips with culture and interculturality of a people often dismissed as marginal—or marginalized as anomalous—by both Andeanist and Amazonianist central concerns. After discussing the area in historical, geographic, and cultural dimensions, I turn to the Canelos Quichua indigenous people of Amazonian Ecuador to sketch interrelated aspects of their enduring system that I have not previously drawn together and condensed in this manner (Whitten and Whitten 2008).

The Amazonian-Andean interface ranges in various widths, heights, and spaces from Colombia through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. It is variously called the Upper Amazon, Montaña, Oriente, Yungas or *selva alta*. Focusing on the region in Ecuador-Peru, Julian H. Steward (1948) noted that prehistoric waves of east to west Amazonian migrations spent their force against the barrier of the Andes.<sup>1</sup> This static topographical determinism—they just couldn’t get up that hill!—belied the variety, creativity, adaptability, and dynamic intercultural, linguistic and political mosaic of the peoples of this complex region as well as their interconnectivity with peoples of the Andes and Amazon basin regions, as many archaeologists, ethnohistorians, ethnographers and linguists have revealed and are to this day revealing. Prehistorically, within what is now Ecuador, this area was part of a vast system of long-distance trade ranging

from Central Amazonas across the Andes to coast and thence north to Mexico and south to Peru, beginning 4,500 years ago with coterminous co-traditions emerging 3,500 years ago<sup>2</sup> and enduring until the Spanish conquest.

At the far northwest sector of the Marañón Valley, just east of the Andean Llanganati region of mountainous and riverine high forests, lies the territory known specifically since at least 1750s as “the forest of Canelos” (e.g. La Condamine 1757; Spruce 1908:164; Whitaker 2004:28). The focal area about which I write is only forty miles east of Baños, at the base of the active snowcapped Tungurahua volcano. On a good day, with no landslides, one can get to Puyo from Baños by car or bus in a little over an hour. During bad times the road may be closed for two weeks or more due to heavy landslides.

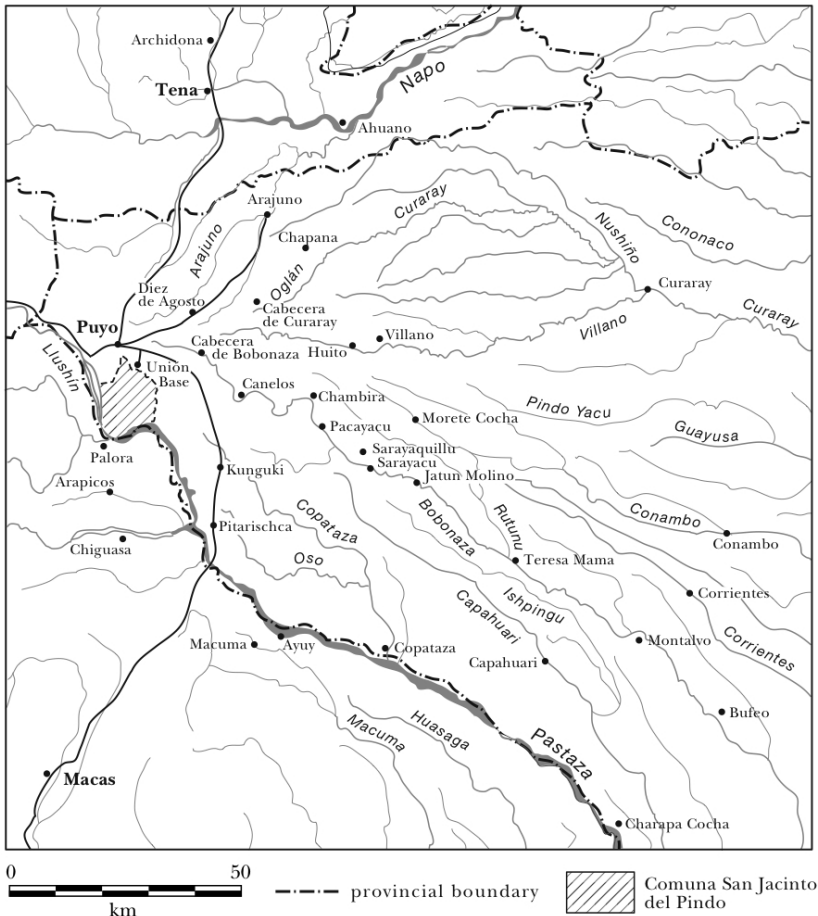


Figure 1: Pastaza Province and Immediate Environs

Clearly Amazonian, the area is the only sector omitted from the definitive book *The Smithsonian Atlas of the Amazon* (Goulding et al. 2003:195). From an Andean perspective, one historian specializing in Ecuador and its indigenous movements repeatedly refers to the area as “the eastern Amazon basin” (Becker 2007:110), implying to most geographers that it exists somewhere near Santarém, Brazil. From either Amazonian or Andean (“lowland” or “highland”) standpoints this area is clearly marginalized in professional literature though of significance in Amazonian history and pivotal to aspects of Andean indigenous modernity. For these reasons, I now sketch some geo-historical dimensions of the Canelos region of Ecuador before going on to the key aspects of this article.

Historical acknowledgment of this region places stress on the northern area directly east of Quito across the high wet *páramo* in the Sub-Andean cloud forest area. In 1536, a scant two years after the Spanish conquest of Quito in 1534, Captain Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda identified a place or region known as Canelos from his expedition’s terminal point of Quijos (specifically near the Cosanga River and the foot of the Sumaco volcano). Quijos territory, ranging from the Quijos Valley to the Upper Napo where Omagua territory began, constituted a crucial trade node between people of Amazonia and Quito predating the Inca (Carvajal 1934[ca. 1541]; Garcilaso 2005[1859]; Oberem 1971; Uzendoski 2004). The Inca continued to exploit the resources of the region radiating out of Quijos, although it constituted a land beyond their dominion. In Atunquijos (contemporary Baeza), Díaz de Pineda learned of the Land of Canela and a place called Canelos that existed farther to the east (Carvajal 1934[ca. 1541]; Cieza de León 1918[1881]; Latorre 1995). The land was said to be inhabited by dispersed people of this tropical forest who spoke different languages and were aggregated under the rubric “Canelos.” Confronted by hostile and well-organized natives, Díaz de Pineda did not travel further east into the canopied *montaña*.

A pattern of colonial violence flowing from the Spanish conquest was forged in 1540-1541 when Gonzalo Pizarro and a relatively small band separated from the huge expedition made up of Spaniards, *indios*, dogs, horses, and pigs that left Quito to find the Land of La Canela and the Land of El Dorado. The ethnohistory becomes murky in its cultural topography and actual geography, though vivid in its historical horrors. Although authors from Orton (2006[1891]) to Spruce (1908) to Von Hagen (1955[1945]) to Whitaker (2004) imply or state explicitly that some segment of this expedition reached sites in the Canelos area—presumably in the Bobonaza-Curaray-Ishpingu river regions, where a tree which produced a flower pod (calyx) with a cinnamon flavor, grew—I

can find no evidence of a 16th century visit to this region by the early conquistadors-colonial administrators, nor could Marcelo Naranjo (1977) or Anne Christine Taylor (1986, 1999). Taylor (1986:266) argues that we can extrapolate known events in the Napo Region for the Bobonaza region, and I agree with her.

Pizarro's group and/or his splinter group seemed to spiral eastward north of the Napo River (see conjectural map in Carvajal 1934[ca. 1541]:48; also Renner 1993), where they finally encountered people where Canela trees (called *ishpingu* here, as in the Canelos area), grew. Frustrated by the low quality and sparseness of the canela trees, and by the fact that the people he tortured could tell nothing of fabled El Dorado to the east, Pizarro executed some of the natives in two brutal ways: he burned them alive on a barbecue frame, throwing the cooked pieces to the war dogs, and he sicked ("dogged," *aperrear*) the dogs onto the living people to kill, dismember, and eat them raw (e.g. Carvajal 1934[ca. 1541]:51; Garcilasso 2005[1859]; Cieza de León 1918[1881]; Von Hagen 1955[1945]; Varner and Varner 1983:119-124; Hemming 2008:22). He did all this in the Land of Canela somewhere east of Quijos before arriving in the region where the Coca and Payamino rivers flow into the Napo River. There he reunited with Francisco de Orellana, again splitting the now decimated expedition crews, with Orellana's group beginning the well-known journey of Spanish "discovery of the Amazon" (Carvajal 1934[ca. 1541]; Von Hagen 1955[1945]; Hemming 2008).

Documentation of the actual area of Canelos, which is the focus of this article, comes from the Dominicans, who claimed the area as their dominion some forty years after the Pizarro expedition. But again, reliable information is scanty. In 1887 the Dominican Abbot François Pierre traveled from Quito to Quijos to Archidona and Tena, then cut south across the Napo taking a known route southward across the headwaters of the Curaray and Villano river valleys to arrive in Canelos on the banks of the Bobonaza River. His description of his own voyage is highly accurate. Places and peoples are depicted such that we easily recognize his route and stopping places a hundred and twenty years later. He takes care to note locations of the Zaparoans and Waorani, and where the former resided. He notes that Zaparoan-speaking, Jivaroan-speaking, and Quichua-speaking people have long been part of the Canelos system and he writes about those people who fall outside of that system. He also notes that much attention was given to the northern, Quijos-Omagua regions, where, in 1578-1579, a bloody uprising led by Quijos shamans (called *pendes*) was followed by escalating and pervasive violence and terror that lasted for years (Oberem 1971). Pierre, who had access to Dominican archives

of the 16th-century, notes that four curates and their entourages out of Quito were exploring riverine systems and encountering many people in the region radiating out of what is now Puyo (Pierre 1983[1889]:96-97; Naranjo 1977:131-133).

These Dominicans established the first (and ephemeral) mission of their order at “Canelos” in 1581, moving it from near Puyo to Indillama, to Chontoa, and then to or near the present site of Canelos on the banks of the Bobonaza River where the territory radiated northward toward Villano and eastward toward Pacayacu and Sarayacu (Stirling 1938:24; Whitten 1976:206-210). Four priests—one of whom was the “Venerable Padre Sebastián Rosero,” who was later sainted—and their retinues came from Andes to Amazonia to reconnoiter the area and to “found” Canelos as Dominican dominion, and as an early and ephemeral nucleation. The route they traveled, though, is obscure. It is unlikely at that time that they traveled through Quijos-Archidona-Río Villano. Most likely, the indigenous trade from Canelos to Baños to Pelileo to Ambato, and from Canelos to Riobamba through the region of the Huamboyas, attracted the attention of the expanding Dominican Church. But at this point we only know that the Dominicans moved into the land of the Canelos at a very early time, though they spent relatively little time there (Reeve 2008).

They claimed ecclesiastical dominion to an area where Quichua was spoken, and where the Inca had never penetrated. It is an area where indigenous people of the Montaña and Upper Amazon traveled from east to west to exchange with Andeans (Corr 2008). It is also an area with a clear regional cultural system (Reeve 2008) where Zaparoan and Jivaroan were spoken and where people in the latter two cultural-ethnic systems waged interminable raids on one another. For the next century and a half Andean Dominicans manifested a sporadic presence in the area from Puyo to Canelos, and we know relatively little about any dynamics in the Canelos area except that the region was known to Andean people through an east to west flow of goods, particularly *ishpingu*, and also broom fiber, cotton, dyes, capsicum, tobacco, calabashes, bottle gourds and bird feathers.<sup>3</sup>

Looking west to east, from highland to lowlands, Andes to Amazonia, it seems clear that for the next century and a half Andean peoples knew of and feared the “eastward way,” said to be inhabited “by savage Indians, terrifying beasts, and deadly disease” (Whitaker 2004:226). It was with the La Condamine expedition from France to Quito to test Sir Isaac Newton’s hypothesis that the earth bulged at the equator that scientific exploration and travel trumped religious dominion in supplying information to a varied populace. In 1742 the Ecuadorian geographer Pedro Maldonado, who had early joined the La Condamine expedition, decided to travel down

the Amazon by way of the Bobonaza-Pastaza-Marañon, a voyage he had contemplated taking on this very route some thirty years before (Whitaker 2004:228). He was followed seven years later by Jean Godin, a member of the expedition, who originally intended to return to Europe with his young Ecuadorian wife. It was the later journey of the wife that dramatized the region known as the “forest of Canelos.”

An Amazonian milestone for Western history occurred in 1769 due to a brave voyage by Isabel Gramesón de Godin, a.k.a. Isabel Godin des Odonais, to join her husband, Jean Godin, who had previously traveled this route down the Bobonaza to the Amazon and up to French Guiana (Godin 1827[1770]). Unable to return for his wife, Jean Godin waited twenty years until she came to him. Her journey began in Riobamba and fractured in Canelos because of the recent abandonment of the nucleated portion of this area on the Bobonaza River site due to a smallpox epidemic.

During her travels in the Bobonaza River region, she and her companions, all but two of whom died, became lost. After a month of starvation at “Ishpingu Cocha” just east of what is now Montalvo (map in Whitaker 2004:252), she wandered alone in the forests of the region for perhaps another month before her rescue and transport to Andoas was publicly revealed (Whitaker 2004). It was Quichua-speaking “indians” of Canelos who rescued her from near-death (fortunately, she spoke the language), took two weeks to build a 40-foot dugout canoe, and kindly took her to their Zaparoan-speaking cultural congeners at Andoas, and thence to La Laguna, principal site of the Mission of Maynas near the confluence of the Huallaga and Marañon rivers. Eventually her story came to the attention of all of Europe as the saga of the first woman to descend the Amazon and then to reunite with her husband in French Guiana.

From at least the mid-18th century the characteristics of this area became increasingly known to scientists such as French geologist Charles-Marie de La Condamine (1757) and later English botanist Richard Spruce (1908) as “the forest of Canelos.” This referred to the faux cinnamon *ishpingu* that drew early conquistadors and later explorers and traders to the region.<sup>4</sup> Spruce (1908:102-170), after finishing his voyage in 1857 from Tarapoto and the Río Huallaga up the Bobonaza and thence to Baños and into the Ecuadorian Sierra, described other particularities of the forest, specifically noting the abundance of cryptograms (lichens, mosses, liverwort, epiphytic ferns), not found together in such exuberance and profusion in other regions of Amazonia (see also Renner 1993:6).

The region of Amazonian Ecuador drained by the Pastaza, Ishpingu, Bobonaza, Conambo, Villano and Curaray Rivers constitutes a geophysical-historical conjuncture wherein—with the exception, until recently, of the

western Waorani (Cabodevilla 1994; Rival 2002)—interacting indigenous peoples speaking distinct languages (Jivaroan, Quichua, Zaparoan) and constituting a relatively coherent regional culture experienced violent intrusive influences. The violence of sporadic intrusion was complemented by a flow of riverine and terrestrial trade and an interchange between lowland and highland peoples in a system sketched by such scholars as Udo Oberem (1971), Mary-Elizabeth Reeve (1993-1994, 1994, 2008) and Michael Uzendoski (2004, 2005a, 2005b) for the Quijos area to the north-northwest, but remains murky in the Canelos region (but see Naranjo 1977). In this article I try to offer some dimensions of the contemporary regional system to stimulate discussion and research. With this lengthy orientation to the region we turn now to our central focus.

## INDIGENIZATION OF MODERNITY AND INTERCULTURALITY

I want to call attention to the emergence in the late 20th-early 21st century of the indigenous-global conjuncture set within the Andean-Amazonian interface. Marshall Sahlins offers a perspective on the structure of the conjuncture that should be useful for both Andeanists and specialists in “Lowland South America” in his book *Culture in Practice*:

various indigenizations of modernity undertaken by people who have escaped the death sentence imposed by world capitalism now offer a whole new manifold of cultural variations for a renewed comparative anthropology. (2000:271)

My focus is on interculturality and “indigenizations of modernity”—both of which contribute to “alternative modernities”—manifest by the Canelos Quichua, Napo Runa, Andoa, Zápara, Achuar and Shiwiar people of Pastaza Province, Amazonian Ecuador. By zooming down on the Canelos Quichua contemporary indigenous people, I seek to combine shared information from peoples speaking languages from three distinct families in three distinct classes of the Andean stock of the Andean-Equatorial language family (Greenberg 1960)—Quechua, Jivaroan, and Zaparoan—to understand some of the dynamics of alternative modernity as it emerges from time to time in a dynamic regional cultural system.

## CULTURAL TOPOGRAPHY

Before we get to *interculturality* let us take a glimpse at culture by reference to meaningful mythology, significant festival performance,



nation-changing ritual drama, and indigenous political action (Whitten and Whitten 2008). Topography is a good place to begin, especially if we are to problematize the “lowland/highland” bifurcate. Throughout Amazonia when indigenous people signal their view of their near and distant spaces they place west on top, east on the bottom, and north and south to the right and to the left (Sullivan 1988; Whitehead 2003). As a cosmograph this orientation focuses on the dynamics of the sun rising out of primordial water on the eastern edge of the earth to begin its journey over land, forest, rivers and mountains, tilting first slightly northward at midday to cross the vertical apex at the center—forming the cosmic *axis mundi*—and then back westward where it goes underwater at the western edge and travels slightly southward and then eastward at night (Sullivan 1988). Day’s end signals a dangerous cooling and the emergence of nocturnal forces of chaos and predation controlled by the moon. The moon itself, as we shall see, represents fertility and fecundity, of people and of plants.

The cosmology, cosmogony, and modern cosmography of the Canelos Quichua indigenous people who live in the Upper Amazonian-Piedmont region of east-central Ecuador fit this pattern perfectly. Indigenous tellers quickly point out that in beginning times-places—times of great transformations in specific places—the sun did not make its appearance until well after the moon’s incest with his sister, the Common Potoo bird.

## AN AMAZONIAN ORIGIN MYTH<sup>5</sup>

In mythic time-space, the “ripe” or full moon (*pucushca* Quilla) would descend from a sky ladder to visit this nocturnal bird, Jilucu. She wanted to see her lover and so, one night, she cooked a seed from *widuj*, the *Genipa americana* tree, and later painted moon-man with its juice to make him beautiful and so that she could “see” (*ricuna*) just who this handsome person was. In the early, nearby, predawn skies that he illuminated, Moon Man appeared, beautiful to be sure, but recognizable as her *turi*, her brother. How she cried when she realized that she had committed incest. Her sisters, *Genipa americana* (Black Woman) and *Bixa orellana* (Red Woman) cried with her; down came the rain as the stars joined in with their weeping. And then came the dreadful merger of torrential rain, earthquake and flood. The rivers swelled, volcanoes erupted, and the earth shook and shuddered. The emerging earth people in beginning times-places were all swept eastward toward the great river sea, and perhaps also to the ocean sea, traveling on hastily constructed balsa rafts on which they had placed mounds of manioc and other goods.

With chaos and violence all around him Indi, the sun, came out of his cave at the base of the Andes and hurtled skyward, going straight up; as he broke out through the deluge thousands of bubbles exploded around him and fell to earth. As they fell the colored bubbles congealed into seed beads and the white bubbles crystallized into salt. As the flood subsided and the earth calmed down to its current periodic rumblings and shakings, Indi created order by establishing the east-west regularity we know today. The emerging fully human beings, Runa, trekked homeward, going from east to west toward the Andean foothills, now rich in volcanic ash and ripe for tropical swidden gardens, always following the path of the now consistent sun trails. This east to west trek initiates an important dimension of *callari rucuguna*, beginning times places. The Runa recognized ancient habitation sites by the *chontaduro* Peach Palm and *huayusa* Ilex trees planted by their pre-human shamanic forebears. In their treks they also resurrected “lost” brothers through experiments with the edibility of bracket fungi, arriving at their original destinations with expanding populations and deep knowledge of Amazonia.

Let us return to Indi. In today’s world, the world of fully human beings and transformed spirits in what we call culture and nature, manioc is the life-sustaining staple crop. Manioc must have strong solar illumination to propagate, to grow, to mature, and to produce large edible roots. It was hummingbird (Quindi), who, as younger brother of Quilla, the moon, was transformed into Indi, the sun, by Nungüi, the undersoil feminine spirit of manioc-producing garden soil. This occurred after episodes of violence, desire, and jealous spite and envy that resulted in the transformation of beginnings-times spirit woman Nungüi to contemporary master spirit of garden soil and pottery clay. However these stories are told by Jivaroan-, Zaparoan-, or Amazonian Quichua-speaking people, east-west directionality from beginning times-places orders a system where, during the day, masculine Indi provides the energetic illumination for manioc to grow, while at night, overseen by the masculine moon, undersoil feminine Nungüi nurtures the manioc stems—who are her daughters—to promote growth. Planting manioc stem cuttings, *lumu jichana*, is done by women at the time of a full moon so that each new manioc garden enjoys an ontogeny of *quillu pachama*, the ancient fecund yellow illumination without the dangerous burning powers associated with the sun. The mythopoetic cultural-ecological phylogeny of mythic-time space (*unai*) to beginning times-spaces (*callari rucuguna*) through times of destruction to times of the grandparents to now times are represented in their respective domains in the ontogeny of the manioc garden.

## THE TOPOGRAPHICAL REORIENTATION

A reorientation occurred in indigenous political topography in northern South America with the coming of the Inca, and then with the Spanish. The Inca cosmological orientation was east-west, focused on the rising and the setting sun (Rowe 1946:300). But in its conquest of the Andes the political-economic orientation subverted this east-west primordial directionality in the Tahuantinsuyu Empire and imposed a south-north orientation that in many ways attenuated Amazonian systems from the centers of emerging Andean political economy (Richardson 1994). The Spaniards, intrigued as they were by the possibilities of exploiting the gold in the Land of El Dorado and the profitable products of American cinnamon, tobacco, capsicum, broom fiber, calabashes, bottle gourds, cotton, and dyes in the Land of La Canela to the east, nonetheless maintained the north-south primary directionality so contradictory to Amazonian cosmivision. Furthermore, active indigenous resistance to conquest and colonial exploitation, beginning in the Quijos territory and in the Jivaroan territory as early as 1579 (Santos-Granero 1992:215) set up barriers to highland-lowland political-economic integration and exacerbated the fission between Andes and Amazonia. Actual social relationships, however, among Amazonian and Andean peoples perhaps intensified during Incaic and later Spanish hegemonic reorientation of space-time.

## THE CANELOS QUICHUA

The Canelos Quichua people of east-central Ecuador are an Amazonian people who live on the fringe of Western Amazonas, in an Andean nation. The Canelos Quichua are of the Upper Amazon canopied rain forest, and are one of the many indigenous peoples of Ecuador whose cultural orientations resonate with one another, different though they may be in specifics. From time to time the indigenous people from both "lowlands" and "highlands," along with others in various socioeconomic classes, have moved as a chiliastic Amazonian-Andean political force united by intersecting cultural systems to change the face of the nation. Many Canelos Quichua people intermarry with Achuar and Shiwiar Jivaroans, and less so with Shuar Jivaroans. It is likely that approximately twenty percent are bilingual in Achuar. Their name derives from the widely dispersed settlement of Canelos, in to and out of which Dominican friars moved from time to time to temporarily nucleate segments of the people and to launch their mission *visitas* hither and yon in a vast and

rugged mountainous rain-forest territory to which Spain laid claim over Portuguese pending domination.

Culturally, Canelos Quichua territory includes regions of the Bobonaza River system, especially, in addition to Puyo and Canelos (moving east), Pacayacu, Sarayacu, Teresa Mama, Montalvo, down to Nuevo Andoas in Peru, where other ramifications of culture are encountered. Northward Canelos Quichua have long lived on the edges of Waorani territory in sectors of the Villano and Curaray River regions (Reeve 1993-1994, 1994, 2008; Cabodevilla 1994). Within their territory the Canelos Quichua people seem to “emerge” out of a confluence of Zaparoan people (especially Zápara, Andoa and Shimigae) and Jivaroan people (especially Achuar) in the Bobonaza River region. To the north of the Bobonaza and to its south hostilities between Zaparoan and Jivaroan peoples escalated in mutual hostilities, but were buffered through an emergent and expanding culture whose carriers spoke a dialect of the Quechua language identified as “Canelos Quichua.”

*Ethnogenesis*—the emergence of a people in specific times and places, in indigenous historicity, and in Western history—clearly came to define the Canelos Quichua people in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries as a sustained cultural identity forged by a synergy of mutually hostile Zaparoan and Jivaroan people communicated through the Quichua language. They again emerge in indigenous memory in several languages as a cultural force of Amazonia at a time when the Liberal Republic of Ecuador appears on the world capitalist stage in the 1890s. This period is appropriately remembered as *alfaro rucuguna*, one of many “Times of Destruction.” The name “*alfaro*” comes from the great liberal *caudillo* Eloy Alfaro Delgado, sometimes known as “*el indio alfaro*.”

### *Amazonian and Incaic Quechua*

Turning to language, Bruce Mannheim’s (1991) clarification of two divisions of Quechua helps clear the way for setting aside common erroneous stereotypes. Our first difficulty in understanding ethnogenesis is the sheer fact that Quichua is related to Quechua, best known as the language of the imperial Inca. All Quechua dialects, including those known as Quichua (Kichwa) are frequently, although erroneously, associated exclusively with the high Andean regions of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Mannheim makes it very clear that Canelos Quichua belongs to a northern branch of “Peripheral Quechua” and Incaic Quechua belongs to a southern branch of “Peripheral Quechua.” Both diverge radically from “Central Quechua.” Canelos Quichua and Inca Quechua are related, but one probably did not

derive from the other. Peripheral Quichua borne by the Inca was a language of conquest in Andean Ecuador in the fifteenth century, but its entry into what has become Canelos Quichua territory and its eventual domination over Jivaroan and Zaparoan languages in parts of Ecuador's Amazonian regions remains an intriguing problem. It may have been introduced from the southeast (Amazonian) region of San Martín, Peru, as I suggested in *Sacha Runa* back in the 1970s, a position that Mannheim supports. Its southeastern to northwestern flow would be through the Marañon Valley region. Although clearly related to Andean Ecuadorian Quichua dialects, there are conservative features of the Amazonian Quichua dialects that perhaps relate to Amazonian Peru, more closely than to the Ecuadorian Andes.<sup>6</sup>

### *Defining Features of the Canelos Quichua Indigenous People*

The Canelos Quichua manifest features throughout their territory that, in their specific configuration, are but partially shared with their neighbors. I sketch these to show why I do not simply lump them together as “rainforest Quichua” as has now become fashionable in some quarters. The following aggregated cultural themes and complexes are salient to discussions of Canelos Quichua culture.

- *Extraordinary interculturality, not just “multiculturalism.”* A deep historicity (Whitehead 2003) of relationships to Zaparoan peoples (Zápara and Andoa-Shimigae), and to Jivaroan peoples (especially Achuar and Shiwiari), is definitive. In the 2000s these historicities have been ethnogenetic in the emergence of Andoa, Zápara, Shiwiari, and Achuar in a re-territorialization of ethnicities, as separate—though intercultural—entities. Gow (1993) explores the dynamics of such systems for sectors of Western Amazonas in Peru and Ecuador.

Canelos Quichua men and women seek to balance experiential knowledge (*ricsina*) with cultural knowledge (*yachana*) and visionary experience (*muscuna*) with learning (*yuyana*, *yuyarina*). Central to the transformative paradigm involving these critical concepts is the *yachaj*, the “one who knows,” the “possessor of knowledge.” This concept often means “shaman” when applied to males, but may also be used to refer to master potters, who otherwise are known as *muscuji warmi*, or *sinchi muscuyuj warmi*, strong visionary woman. This paradigm pertains to two realms of existence, one called *nñucanchi yachai* (our cultural knowledge), and the second *shuj shimita yachai* (other cultural knowledge). As shamans and master potters show us again and again, one cannot understand one's own people's perception without understanding something of the lifeways and

thought processes of other peoples. This translates perfectly in the modern Spanish *interculturalidad*, one of the hallmarks of the contemporary Ecuadorian indigenous movement and a concept now written in to the new Ecuadorian constitution of 2008. A particular paradigm of knowledge, power, vision, and reflexivity does not map readily onto other Amazonian or Andean systems, but is reminiscent of many of them when generalized into “interculturality.”

Let’s return now to the list of particular complex features that have long characterized Canelos Quichua culture.

- *A kinship system with strong emphases on intergenerationality and affinity, where people continuously rework their affinal ties so as to “consanguinize them,” so to speak.* In this system, a marriage, whether by arrangement or elopement, is eventually cognized as some replication of affinity resulting in descent from grandparental generations. And in these generations the historicity of interculturality is again confronted, absorbed and elaborated.

- *A system of cultural transmission of knowledge and imagery in a parallel way through men and through women.* Men pass cultural imagery and knowledge on to other men, through shamanic gnosis, while women pass imagery and knowledge to other women through Amazonian ceramic design, decoration, and imagery probably of Tupi origin. One cannot overemphasize the importance of ceramic techniques and imagery in cultural transmission in Canelos Quichua culture, something which is not shared with living peoples of Ecuadorian Amazonia or of Ecuadorian Andes.<sup>7</sup>

- *A festival system that has elements of performance from Amazonian societies and from Andean societies, but which nonetheless emerges repeatedly in historical sources and perseveres in the present, as unique in its configuration.* Critically important here is that this kinship festival, which recounts in performance the origin of the people before and after destruction, while leading toward destruction, also connects the living people to the historical and contemporary dominance from the outside world and enacts a resistance to that dominance that, in its very enactment, threatens to unleash the awful transformations that led to and lead to the end of the world. This festival epitomizes the dramatic action of what Lawrence Sullivan (1988) calls the *Primordium* (the beginnings of everything) and the *Eschaton* (the ending of everything). Here, as is characteristic of other systems of Amazonian cultures, ritual enactment to express the end of everything—the *Eschaton*—precedes the mythic origins of the world and people—the *Primordium*.

With this sketch I return to the themes of ethnogenesis and the indigenization of modernity.

## ETHNOGENESIS AND THE INDIGENIZATION OF MODERNITY

In the spring of 1992 the Canelos Quichua, Achuar and Shiwiar marched collectively to Quito in a moving social drama known as “The March for Land and Life.” Initially following the east-west path of the sun, 3000 trekkers bedecked in feather- and animal-skin headdresses, women carrying pottery drinking bowls and men beating snare drums, blowing pottery cornets, playing vertical and transverse flutes, and in a couple of cases carrying and beating slit gongs, started up the Andean slopes. The first night was spent in Río Verde in the veritable montaña where groups of shamans collectively took *Banisteriopsis caapi* and communicated about ancient ties to ancestors and spirits. Next came a reunion of Amazonian and Andean people in Andean Salasaca, where intercultural communication between diverse humans and diverse spirits never before experienced by living peoples was reported. As the procession swelled in numbers and moved northward toward Quito it was described as *jistashina*, like a festival; and *amarunshina*, like an anaconda. Arrival in Quito, a camp out in El Ejido Park, and myriad activities ranging from shamanic curing by men and pottery demonstrations by women to dramatic acts of civil disobedience forged a system within the heart of power of Quiteño experience that resulted in the grant of over one million hectares in Amazonia to be divided among indigenous ethnicities—some still emergent and inchoate—of Pastaza province.

The full story of the millennial trek to Quito is a long and involved one (Whitten et al. 1997; Whitten and Whitten 2008). But my point should be made—indigenous people created their niche in the modern nation as an alternative to Western capitalism. An *indigenization of Amazonian modernity* was demonstrated in the heart and cerebrum of the power system of Ecuador—Andean Quito—from which it ramified nationwide and world wide.

This indigenization of Amazonian modernity quickly became imprinted on the face of the Andean republic, just as Jilucu’s *Genipa americana* was imprinted on the face of the moon. Building on the triumph of 1990 when an indigenous uprising occurred nationwide, in 1992 the myriad of nonindigenous people of Ecuador and an Amazonian segment of indigenous people, were able to view each other in rather stark relief. Interculturality was and continues to be underscored across Andes and through Ecuadorian Amazonia in public declarations since 1992. This surge of ideological interculturality gained enormous impetus during the undeclared war with Peru in 1995 when prominent members of the Ecuadorian military acknowledged key roles played by people of

Shuar and Afro-Esmeraldian cultures of eastern and western Ecuadorian regions. Unmentioned, however, was the role of the IWIAS special service indigenous unit, stationed in Shell, comprised heavily of Canelos Quichua soldiers, plus Shuar soldiers. (The name Iwias comes from a Jivaroan cannibal monster.)

### *Self-Essentialization*

The Canelos Quichua, Achuar, and Shiwiar marchers and protest campers clearly essentialized themselves. One example of this was the telling of collective intercultural mythohistories to those who would try to listen in El Ejido Park in Quito. Short stories told to reporters referred to previous treks from the Upper Amazon to Quito, and the camping Runa were specific on just which of the “old ones” from the times of the grandparents made such a trek, where they stopped to rest, and how in some cases the ancestors of the old ones accompanied them as returned spirits in the form of great jaguars. By relating this not-so-distant history tellers wanted listeners to know that trekking westward and northward to Quito to avoid catastrophe was well within the ethnogenetic modernity of this living indigenous body. By the time they reached Quito the trekkers numbered about 10,000 people, and included coastal and Andean Afro-Ecuadorians.

## **A TRANSCENDENTAL MYTH OF THE CREATION OF POTTERY CLAY**

A mythic episode from Beginning Times Places was also told, but was harder to follow for most listeners. This episode is one that Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his book *The Jealous Potter* (1988), calls the “essential myth” in “Jivaro” cosmology (he is referring only to the Shuar). The myth is central to Canelos Quichua cosmogony, though Lévi-Strauss scarcely mentions these people or their pottery. Indeed, when Rafael Karsten (1935:99-100; also D. Whitten 2003:85; Whitten and Whitten 2008:102, 169) wrote about how the Quichua speaking people of Canelos brought their ceramic art “to a remarkable degree of perfection,” he emphasized the quintessential cultural focus on this pottery in contradistinction to that of the Shuar (“Jivaro”). The omission of Canelos Quichua pottery is particularly odd in Lévi-Strauss’s extended discourse in that pottery manufacture, imagery, symbolism, quotidian, festival and ritual use constitute a transcendental place in Canelos Quichua cosmogony, cosmogony and historicity in ways not evident at all among the Shuar. The fact that Lévi-Strauss himself turns to Karsten for information on pottery and cosmology makes this



emphasis on the “Jívaro” and near negation of the Canelos Quichua even more puzzling.<sup>8</sup>

This takes us to the story of Squash Woman and Moon Man, one of many such tales told by indigenous men and women in El Ejido park in Quito in the spring of 1992. Here I offer some key elements before returning to reasons for their omission in Lévi-Strauss’s *oeuvre*.

### *Squash Woman and Moon Man*<sup>9</sup>

In Beginning Times-Places (*callarirucuguna*) beautiful voluptuous Squash Woman, oldest of five or six daughters of the Widow Bat Woman (the others in birth order are *Bixa orellana*, *Genipa americana*, Corn Woman, and Nitrogen-Fixing Bean Woman), was living deep in the forest in a great oval house surrounded by a huge garden. The woman would feed her husband green, uncooked squash, which he loathed. He accused her of saving the ripe squash and cooking them for herself, but she showed him that she had sewn up her lips and said, with her mouth closed, “how can I eat cooked squash, I cannot even open my mouth” (this spoken with lips closed by the teller). But he tricked her and witnessed her cooking ripe squash and opening her mouth wide, stretching the elastic-like threads.

In great anger he cursed her, walked to a sky-ladder vine, called *chaca* (or *chacana*) on which he had descended in the previous story. This ladder is a nitrogen-fixing *Bauhinia* species of vine, a contemporary rain-forest icon of a mythical *axis mundi*. He began to climb, playing sad songs on his three-hole transverse flute. Quickly now Squash Woman scurried around the great oval house which was precisely oriented to east-west with a central axis going straight up and straight down. She picked up everything and put her feminine paraphernalia, including items for pottery making, into a huge net bag or basket that she slung over her back. She began to climb, and climb and climb. But Moon Man reached the sky, saw her coming up, and in great anger said to her “you defamed me when you tried to deceive me.” He cut the vine-ladder and she and all of her household and garden belongings fell to earth with a great thud, and she broke her back, and she defecated. Then Quilla blew on the woman with his magical breath, “*Suuuuuuuuuuu* Jilucu” he said, “you become Jilucu (the common Potoo bird), and your feces will become special pottery clay.”

### THE ANNUAL *AYLLUJISTA* (KINSHIP FESTIVAL)

During the “March for Land and Life” from Puyo in Amazonia to Quito high in the northern Andes, indigenous participants described the

event as “like a festival.” Mary-Elizabeth Reeve, after eighteen months of intensive ethnographic research in Curaray, wrote this about their festival significance: “history shares with ritual the process of reaffirmation and potential renegotiation of a shared social reality” (see also Reeve 1985:138-178; 1988a:121-156; 1988b, 2008; Whitten 1976:165-202; Whitten and Whitten 2008:119-166). The Curaray Runa are part of the cultural system I have been discussing. The Canelos Quichua hold an annual (or sometimes semiannual) festival in every territory and hamlet where there is a manifestation of the Catholic dominion—a chapel, or even just a niche with a cross. While men trek on a two-week hunt for forest game and fish, women make highly significant arrays of pottery, and gallons and gallons of *asua*, a brew made from masticated cooked manioc. The festival is divided along lines of a central myth of Beginning Times-places, that of the union of Quilla, the male moon, and Jilucu, the female Potoo bird who transforms mythically into Nungüi, the master spirit of garden soil and pottery clay.

The array of creative imagery imparted to ceramic vessels is enormous (Whitten and Whitten 1988), but in every festival someone makes an effigy of the moon and someone makes one of Jilucu. The very division of the festival is into two parts, the male moon part and the female Potoo part, each represented by a festival house oriented on a precise east-west axis. As the festival proceeds with participants moving en masse back and forth between the two houses, joining with each other and then breaking apart, men and women sing in falsetto about their ancestors, about beginning times-places, and about *unai*, the time of amorphous chaos when everything was sentient but those creatures who were to become historical and contemporary humans crawled on their hands and knees like babies and spoke only in two tone hums, <sup>mm</sup> <sub>mm</sub> <sup>mm</sup> <sub>mm</sub>. This hum, by the way, is used by the shaman in séance to evoke mythic time space (*unai*) prior to bringing to him the spirit masters of the river and forest in the form of the giant anaconda and the great black jaguar. While dancing women toss their heads so as to make their hair fly back and forth as a feminine Nungüi analog to this male shamanic hum.

The festival culminates in a ritual summoning of a bamboo-pole simulacra of the great multicolor anaconda from the river; it is born by four Runa men who represent black jaguars. They lurch through the Catholic chapel, if there is one, and symbolically destroy it, bringing about the potential for the great upheaval of volcanic activity, flood, and darkness where the indigenous people are swept eastward toward and into the river sea. *Tucurina*, ending everything, is enacted. This ends the festival in an enactment of what Lawrence Sullivan (1988) calls the *Eschaton*.

In El Ejido Park in Quito, in the late spring of 1992, indigenous people tried to impart such imagery to those who were interested in their arrival. And they failed. Rather than listen to the assembled indigenous people from Amazonia, questions were raised *about* them, questions that may be considered to be epistemic distortions that could prevent our understanding of the many manifestations of indigenization of modernity.

### EPISTEMIC DISTORTION

“Who are these Indians?” many asked. “Where did they come from?” They are not Jívaro (Shuar); they are not Auca (Waorani). Others answered: “They are the *yumbos*, ancient acculturated *indios* from the Oriente, who used to come to Quito to cure and to trade.” Some Quiteños remembered that there is an Andean ritual performance during the time of Corpus Christi in the small indigenous communities surrounding Quito, and in south Quito, where the enactment of the arrival of a Yumbo troupe takes place. The Yumbos arrive, dance, and transform the open performative arena into a tropical forest drama in the space of Amazonian death. The dancers signify the wild and free shamanic power of the naked savages, and the trading power of Andean–Amazonian connectivity of the market-oriented “Yumbo.” Two *yumbo* dancers divide into predator (*auca* hunter-with-lance) and prey (*yumbo*-as-peccary-person). The peccary person flees through a forest of swinging palm lances borne by the other male performers, but is caught hiding in a *tambo*—Amazonian shelter or resting place—by the hunter, and killed. Then, after payment of a fee to a shaman, the peccary person is resurrected and transformed to the Yumbo, and the Andean dance of delight begins. This is what Lawrence Sullivan (1988) calls the *Primordium*, where life arises out of violent death.

While the *Yumbada* is a festival where people play (*pugllana*) with images and symbols (Salomon 1981; Fine-Dare 2007), the Amazonian people in El Ejido park in Quito in 1992 were pragmatically *en-acting*. There was no play here. The camp out was most serious. Indeed, indigenous people in El Ejido Park raised the question of whether they would live to return to their own territories, or whether *tucurina* (ending everything) might be imminent. Many passersby near the park looked away, and said that their city was in a state of contamination. These are “*indios alzados*,” they said, Indians out of place. We are reminded of Mary Douglas’s analysis of anomalies and dirt as “matter out of place.” Following her mode of thought Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999) wrote of the stereotypes of “dirty indians,” referring to mestizo notions of “*indios fuera de su lugar*,”

indians out of place.

“The March for Land and Life” resulted in indigenous people of Pastaza Province being awarded over one million hectares of surface territory, beginning a struggle for legal and quotidian possession that continues today in ever-escalating dimensions because of the state control of subsurface oil and minerals. The struggle resulted in the temporary abandonment by the Runa of Sarayacu in 2002, and for a few years thereafter, of their kinship festival and a substitution of guerrilla-like encounters with petroleum company people over subsurface rights. In 2007 one of the leaders of the anti-petroleum movement, Marlon Santi, was elected president of the Confederation of Indigenous People of Ecuador, CONAIE, with its headquarters in Andean Quito. He is the third Amazonian president of this national organization usually associated only with the Andes.

## COLONIAL HISTORY AND ETHNOGENESIS

According to the governor of the province of Maynas, Francisco de Requena y Herrera (1991[1784]; also Cabodevilla 1994:476), the Puyo-Canelos sector of the Andean foothills-Upper Amazon was the jumping off point for travelers to the Jesuit controlled Huallaga-Marañón Spanish territory of the Mission of Maynas with its locus at the confluence of the Huallaga and Marañón rivers, founded in 1638 (the Jesuits were expelled in 1767). By the 18th century, and probably before that, Canelos was the cultural switchboard not only between Andes and Amazonia, but also for the Zaparoans of the Napo, Curaray, Conambo, Bobonaza, and Ishpingu river systems, the Achuar of the Capahuari and Copataza river systems, and some of the Shuar to the south, then and now known as the “Chirapa.” Over thirty years ago Marcelo Naranjo (1977) argued that Canelos emerged and endured as a *refuge region* for people from all of these areas, and as such was the site of preference for traveling curates and explorers seeking labor and knowledge.

The concept of ethnogenesis does not only refer to a people’s own sense of coming into being; in Western history it refers to the symbolism of “being” as a social and cultural “fact” of history. As such, signification looms large. People are remembered and so inscribed not as whom they say they are, but as they were or are named, framed, and written down. What the name for a people “stands for,” is what symbolism is all about. The late Edmund Leach (1982:107) argued that “the naming of relationships marks the beginning of moral sanctions.” For the early Church in this region—the Dominicans in the late 1500s—the symbolism of “Canelos” was that

of a *reducción*, reduction (nucleation) to control the “savage” Jivaroans and Zaparoans, among others. The *reducción*, after all, was what the mission was expected to accomplish, and it could only do so if it claimed that it had, indeed, executed the task of semi-civilization of colonial Christendom as a wedge between savage peoples. In short, maintenance of a Western polarity between tame (*manso*) and fierce (*bravo*), acculturated and pristine, was essential to the Mission of these men of the cloth. On each side of the dichotomy we find not “humans” but “*indios*,” an appellation of multiple stigmata originally applied to all native peoples of the Americas by Cristobal Colón in 1493, and subsequently elaborated as early-modern Western mercantilism transformed into modern capitalism.

By the time the concepts of “indians” and “Canelos” and “Jívaros” become imprinted in history all “indians” have been separated out of Western development, and have been divided into—and contrasted as—the “reduced Christians,” on one side of the polarity, and the “heathen savages” on the other—the tame and the wild. François Pierre (1889) documents convincingly that the Dominicans carefully divided the territory of Macas-as-Jivaro from Canelos-as-Quichua—the former as savage and the latter as semi-civilized—and strove to maintain this distinction even though using the same techniques of reduction and evangelization in both “savage” and “semi-civilized” sectors of their dominion. Although classed in perpetuity as heathen—wild savages—some Jivaroan people were also baptized from time to time. Indeed, the renowned warrior Sharupe, leader of the Chirapa, who waged constant war against the people of the Puyo-Canelos area, was baptized with great ecclesiastical pomp and circumstance as José María Sharupe in Andean Riobamba in the 1890s (time of *alfarorucuguna*, one of many periods of destruction). Jivaroan people were also nucleated as the Canelos remained essentially dispersed and resistant to proselytization.

*Historicity*—high salience given to past events and people in indigenous discourse (Whitehead 2003; Whitten and Whitten 2008)—again enters our anthropological understanding. The concept of “Runa,” as “fully human being,” reemerges as focal in several territories of Upper Amazonian Ecuador in the 1890s. The fact that territory and Runa run together through time and the fact that the Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, Andoa-Shimigae and Zápara people in various locations often use the word “Canelos” to refer to people from the Runa territories, leads to a focus on the term “Canelos” as a multicultural and intercultural ethnogenetic way of life that developed out of antiquity and projected into specific histories of a nation-state and three vast regions: Amazon, Andes, and their complex Andean-Amazonian interface.

## EPISTEMIC DISTORTION, ACADEMIC STRUCTURALISM AND THE STRUCTURE OF CONJUNCTURE

Structuralism, in its Lévi-Straussian renditions as manifest, for example, in the four-volume *Mythologiques* series, or in its “neostructuralist” modes (Carneiro da Cunha 2007:vii; Fausto and Heckenberger 2007:8) are foundational to one prolonged theoretical moment of Amazonian studies. The other moment or movement is that of “cultural ecology” which often seems bent on removing “culture” from the process of analysis. Marshall Sahlins (2000:17) writes of structuralism and cultural ecology as creating a “theoretical schismogenesis, an atmosphere of irreconcilable difference.” Following Lévi-Strauss, though challenged extensively by such scholars as Jonathan Hill (1988), Terence Turner (1988) and Neil Whitehead (2003), to name only three, the Lévi-Straussian notion of “cold” societies inextricably tied to endless mythic cycles and so unable to become part of Western history, motivates all-too-many colleagues (e.g. Taylor 1999:194-6) to regard people such as the Canelos Quichua and the Napo Runa, as exemplars of a pervasive Ecuadorian Amazonian conundrum. Rather than understand their system as it has emerged in history and engaged (and engages) in national political economy from time to time, she applies many labels that specify or imply marginality, hybridization, “acculturation” and anomaly.

Simply stated, the Canelos Quichua are just to be “too hot” to treat “structurally.” Turner (1988:238) calls this the “fallacy of misplaced fahrenheit.” Instead of understanding their system of social order and disorder and cultural orientations, they are labeled “incaized,” “hybridized,” “Christianized” and other appellations that contrast with authentic “Jívaros.” The shades of Dominican dominion cast a pall over ethnographic or ethnohistoric enlightenment about peoples and their transactions in this region.

But structure there is to be found if one seeks structure in conjunctures, as long advocated by Marshall Sahlins (1981, 2000). Sahlins draws the concept of conjuncture from historian Fernand Braudel (1980[1958]) for whom a conjuncture is a period of dynamic time of from ten to one hundred years. The idea is to understand the cosmological scheme of a given people as it articulates to the pragmatics of changing political economy. For Sahlins, the particular reference points of indigenous cosmological schemata and quasi-hegemonic political economy constitute the “structure” (see also Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:9).

To understand structures of conjuncture we drop the Western

assumptions of structure standing apart from history and events, and take people as they are. Salient relationships that constitute a dynamic conjunctural structure of Canelos Quichua lifeways may be revealed in exquisite relief in situations in which symbols within their mythology and mythohistoric metaphors become manifest in ritual drama and fuse with quotidian knowledge and pragmatic action. Fusion, often expressed in song and ceramic art, occurs through male shamanic gnosis and through female pottery manufacture and imagery. We must explore this a bit.

In the four-volume "Introduction to a Science of Mythology," we learn in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1969) what was suggested earlier in *Structural Anthropology* (1963a), *Totemism* (1963b), and especially in *The Savage Mind* (1966) that myth is a relatively pure key to the workings of culture because it survives radical change or transformation. Mythical work breaks the continuous flow of culture into segments that, while not obvious to natives themselves, nonetheless can be understood by the Western analyst savant in terms of recombinant binaries through expansion and contraction of the oppositions, their classifications and their imbricated hierarchies. Eventually we come to the structure of mind that culture obscures. In the fourth volume, *The Naked Man* (1981), we get to ritual, which, opposite to myth, tries (apparently in vain) to remake that which is cut into discreet segments of meaningful relationships into continuities. Both myth and ritual are *extractable from cultural matrices* to be studied comparatively "in their own right" (Handelman and Lindquist 2004).

The structuralist exercise is always interesting; but it a-historicizes all tellings, often excises tellers who seem to the analyst to not represent the "authentic language" anticipated in anthropology (Jívaro being favored, Quichua marginalized), and the actions and praxes of people involved in specific events become nonexistent. Indigenous people do engage in political activities that actually alter the structure of the nation-state. In the case presented above they describe their activity as "like a festival," bring their mythology through playful discourse, song, melody, rhythm, and ceramic imagery into strong consciousness and endeavor to educate people "of other cultures" (*shuj shimita yachai*) of the durability and even adaptability of their ways of life. By so doing they indigenize modernity by placing themselves and their cultural orientations into coeval juxtaposition with the dominant system (contra Johannes Fabian 2002[1983]).

The energy so radiated within the nation state is analogous to the sunlight nourishing manioc by day. This is easy to grasp. What is more difficult to understand is that within this same system of mythopoetics exists the sense of the fecund moonlight governing planting of manioc, and the powerful feminine image of undersoil powers of fertility to allow

the manioc to grow and to do human bidding rather than exercising its inherent feminine power of predatory blood sucking from human children. If we are to understand the indigenization of modernity we must move into the deep metaphors of indigeness itself—the *longue durée* undergirding the conjuncture—not transform these systems of signs and symbols into a Western mode. In short, we must explore indigenous hermeneutics within multiple dynamic modernities, eschewing Western hermetics of unified developmentalism and systemic binaries of savage and semicivilized. One salient antecedent for this endeavor is Karl Marx, who wrote: “As people express their lives, so they are” (Whitten and Torres 1998:25); another is Michael Taussig (1987:135) who wrote: “From the represented shall come that which overturns the representation.” Michael Uzendoski (2005b:252) takes this perspective in his ethnography of the Napo Runa: “the people of Napo speak [...] through the voice and poetics of *pachacuti*—destroying, recuperating, and transforming society and history.”

The concept of *pachacuti* involves transformation (*tucuna* in Quichua), which in turn involves articulation of indigenous cosmological schemata to extant political economy. The simile “like an anaconda” was used in 1992 by indigenous marchers to refer to their collective indigenous body undulating toward the Quito power-head. Runa, in this culture, hold to a cosmic truth, which is comparable in its ineffable power to that of the doctrine of consubstantiation of the Eucharist and the corporeal Resurrection of Christ in Roman Catholic Christianity. This is the deeply held cosmic postulate that the anaconda of the water realm is related to the male penis in the household domain, a conjuncture of fertilization mechanisms that can penetrate the nation-state and cause a dangerous rebirth. This root metaphor fits very well with Sullivan’s concept of the *Primordium* of South American religious systems.

When a boa constrictor is encountered among the Canelos Quichua, it is first bludgeoned with a pole, and then, after death, its head is severed, its still-beating heart removed, and the body buried well away from water. The head and pulsing heart are taken home, processed into magical substances and the remains buried far from the body. The body forever endeavors to grow toward the head, and if it connects an explosive life-restoring phenomenon known as *tupaj amarun* takes place causing massive upheaval and at times evoking *pachacuti*, a return of space time of a healthy past to that of a healthy future. In indigenous discourse we can abstract a strong sense of an intensification of the union of our culture-other cultures (*ñucanchi yachai-shuj shimita yachai*). In nationalist orientation, as expressed by a myriad of intellectual and media commentators, we come upon a veritable renaissance of interculturality.



## THE DUALITY OF ETHNOGENESIS

To return to ethnogenesis, symbolism—the key to the semiotics of structuralism—is also our key to the structure of the conjuncture. *Cultural emergence constitutes a signifier*. In indigenous discourse, what is signified is oneness out of—or even into—diversity and interculturality. Beginnings times-places, *callarirucuguna*, is stressed in what sometimes seems like an epiphany of insight into cultural rebirth arising out of the death of collectivities, in a great transformation (*tucuna*) from its own reflexive ending (*tucurina*).

Ethnogenesis in history (what is written down), however, may often signify *a*-culturation—the movement of culture from one ethnic system to a new one—and hence *loss of culture* from the donor. This is the position taken or implied by Philippe Descola (1994) as well as Anne-Christine Taylor (1999), among many others. It is here that the genesis of epistemic distortion lies. The Canelos Quichua “cannot be” if their pristine roots have been so intertwined as to negate the false historical assumption of bounded tribes speaking distinct languages and traceable through multiple contacts with outsiders, what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) calls the “savage slot” of both anthropology and of the mass media. Saignes’s (1999:61) definition of culture fits this slot perfectly. He writes: “colonial native culture [...] lacks the attributes traditionally associated with the phrases ‘a culture’: internal consistency and outer boundedness.” The characteristics of Canelos Quichua culture, listed above, do not fit with either Saignes’s or Taylor’s ideas of Andean culture or Amazonian culture, and so the attributes of culture loss, acculturation, hybridization, Incaization, Quichuaization, and more are heaped on to create a murky miasma of misunderstanding.

In the Runa system I am describing, identity is found in the Quichua language and also in Achuar and Záparo ancestries and antiquities, and increasingly in Andoa, Shimigae, Caninche, and even Cocama descent systems. A polarity exists wherein indigenous ethnogenesis of a people (Runa), of fully human beings, is opposed to a Western historical ethnogenesis of *a*-cultured “indians” as inscribed, for example, in the section of “Tribes of the Peruvian-Ecuadorian Montaña” in the *Handbook of South American Indians* (Steward and Métraux 1948). In the first—*indigenous ethnogenesis*—a vigor of oneness subsuming diversity and a turn to mythohistory for future understanding is epitomized. In the second—*historical ethnogenesis* of *a*-cultured indians—a stupor of diversity-into-hybridity leading to cultural *mestizaje* creates national and perhaps anthropological ideological order by silencing indigenous voicing (Brown and Fernandez 1991:213).

Michael Uzendoski (2005b:165) challenges such epistemic distortion: “Taylor’s otherwise stimulating piece [...] continues the stereotype in arguing that Amazonian Quichua speakers are ‘assimilated’ (*manso*, weak), and ‘generic’ natives with ‘linear and periodized historical ideologies’ very different from those of the ‘traditional’ groups of the region.” This is doubly unfortunate inasmuch as a case can be made for the homeland of at least a large sector of the Jivaroans as lying in the Andean Piedmont of eastern Loja, according to Mauricio Gnerre (personal conversation, June 1988), while the Canelos Quichua (but not the Napo Runa) may have a homeland in San Martín, Amazonian Peru, in the southern Marañón basin. Even without such a polarity that plays the game of “who is more Amazonian or more Andean than whom,” it is obvious that Jivaroans and Amazonian Quichua speakers have had vertical ties to sub-Andean and Western Amazonian systems for a very long time, and further, that their cultures have been intertwined to form a region of braided traditions for a long time.

## RETURN TO THE INDIGENIZATION OF MODERNITY AND INTERCULTURALITY

By now I am sure that some readers are thinking of my proclivity here to essentialize, a process thought over the past two decades or so to be something of a substantive anthropological disease akin to theoretical eclecticism. Marshall Sahlins helps us here. In “Goodbye to Tristes Tropes,” Sahlins bemoans the strong tendency of contemporary anthropologists to eschew all forms of essentialism—to turn away from people who self-consciously want the world to know who they are—and in the process reinvent “tradition” or, as we might put it, reemerge into the World Culture-of-cultures as distinct peoples. He cautions us as to this tendency by historical hegemonic analogy:

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a bunch of indigenous intellectuals and artists in Europe got together and began inventing their traditions and themselves by attempting to revive the learning of an ancient culture which they claimed to be the achievement of their ancestors but which they did not fully understand, as for many centuries this culture has been lost and its languages corrupted or forgotten [...] They created a self-conscious tradition of fixed and essentialized canons [...] All this came to be called the Renaissance in European history, because it gave birth to “modern civilization” [...] What else can one say about it, except that some people have all the historical luck? When Europeans invent their traditions [...] it is a genuine cultural rebirth, the beginnings of a progressive future [ethnogenesis]. When other peoples do it, it is a sign of cultural decadence, a factitious recuperation,

which can only bring forth the simulacra of a dead past [acculturation]. (Sahlins 2000:478-479)

## SUMMARY

Following the introduction to the history and topography of the region of the “forest of Canelos,” I turned to the central theme of this essay, the indigenization of modernity. My next move was to illustrate pervasive mythic cosmology to orient the reader to Canelos Quichua Amazonian perspectives on the very edge of the northern Andes. The relationships that obtain in language, culture, and even topography between the “lowlands” and the “highlands” are heightened as we move through culture, interculturality, and take up the subject of ethnogenesis in indigenous thought and in written historical portrayal. Building toward an indigenous structure of conjuncture, I treat “epistemic distortion” in various academic sectors and attempt to counter or deflect what I take to be such distortions by reference especially to Sahlins (2000) and Uzendoski (2005b).

Indigenization of modernity has clear millennial proclivities (Whitten 2003). By millennial one evokes an English metaphor for the Quichua concept of *pachacutij* (Uzendoski 2005b:ix), as “the return of space-time (chronotope) of a healthy past to that of a healthy future” (Whitten 2003:x). Indeed, the intertwining of modernity and its indigenization, the genesis of alternative modernities and emerging culture are present in a myriad of intercultural systems to which, hopefully, more and more ethnographers will turn their attention, working—again it is hoped—with historians, linguists, literary professionals, and above all spokespeople for those in motion in the maw of Western modernity who endeavor to appropriate modern accoutrements of life through counterhegemonic and transformative systems of indigenous meaning.

## NOTES

*Acknowledgments.* A brief version of sections of this essay was prepared as the second keynote address for the first meeting of the Society for Amazonian and Andean Studies at Boca Raton, Florida. I greatly appreciate the invitation by Rachel Corr to deliver this address, and for her comments on an abbreviated version of it. Stimulus to expand the paper to its present form came from Laura Rival, whose encouragement led me to submit to *Tipiti*. Thank you Laura. Kathy Fine-Dare and Mary-Elizabeth Reeve read early drafts of the keynote address and its expansion and made significant comments that helped me frame this version. Michelle Wibbelsman read an early and penultimate version and offered valuable comments. Michael Uzendoski has contributed in many ways to my thinking and his comments following my address in Boca Raton helped frame the

final manuscript. To clarify some points on history and language, respectively, I wrote to Kris Lane and Bruce Mannheim, both of whom replied quickly, and with accurate and detailed information, which I greatly appreciate. I am particularly indebted to Sibby Whitten, whose careful and critical reading vastly improved the later versions. My greatest debt is to the people of Canelos Quichua culture, and their Achuar, Andoa, Zápara, Caninche, Napo Runa, and other relatives, who have guided Sibby and me through intricacies of their lives and patterns of thought for a very long time.

Well after this paper was completed I received a copy of the book *Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia: Anthropological Perspectives* (2007), edited by Carlos Fausto and Michael Heckenberger. Except for a couple of references to “neostucturalism,” I have not been able to incorporate materials from this book into this essay.

1. The actual quotation from Steward in the *Handbook* is this: “*Chuncho* belong to the Tropical Forest Peoples. They appear to represent a series of migratory waves that had spent their force against the barrier of the Andes, where representatives of many widely distributed language families [...] subsided into comparative isolation” (Steward 1948:507).

2. See, among others, Marcos 1986; Lathrap et al. 1975; Porrás Garcés 1987.

3. See Whitten and Whitten *Puyo Runa* (2008) and references therein for specifics of Canelos Quichua dynamics. For serious work on the Zápara in the regional system, see Reeve (1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1993-1994, 1994, 2008). Achuar Jivaroan is set forth ethnographically and ethnohistorically by Descola (1986, 1994), and Taylor (1986, 1999).

4. *Ocotea quixos*, “American Cinnamon” ([http://zipcodezoo.com/Plants/O/Ocotea\\_quixos/default.asp](http://zipcodezoo.com/Plants/O/Ocotea_quixos/default.asp), accessed July 15, 2008). A photograph taken in 1929, probably in Pacayacu, depicts five indigenous people loaded with huge bundles of “*flor de canelo*” presumably setting off for a trip upriver to the Cabecera de Bobonaza, thence to Puyo and on to Baños and Ambato. See Marín (1930, photograph facing page 223).

5. An Achuar version of this, which has different twists, turns, and implied meanings, is given by native Alejandro Taish Mayaprua (2004); see also Philippe Descola 1986, 1994). For Napo Runa versions of the lower Napo, see José Miguel Goldáraz (2004, 2005). More information is in Whitten and Whitten (2008).

6. To be sure I presented this fairly I sent this section to Bruce Mannheim who, on 22 July, 2008, replied: “I would add that one of the problems with the extant classifications of the Quechua family is that modern national boundaries were anachronistically used as nodes in the classifications, at least tacitly, creating chimerical subgroups like “Ecuadorian Quichua,” “Bolivian Quechua,” and the two Peruvian subgroups. This has much more to do with the institutional arrangements around the scholarship than with the histories of the languages themselves; so even descriptively, linguists have tended to think of (and describe) the lowland Quichua varieties as displaced highland Quichua—whence the disagreement you and I had with Rodolfo Cerrón at the workshop in Urbana two years ago. The issues are similar on the eastern slope of the Andes around the

border with Bolivia.”

7. Much of the information on myth and mythohistory comes from ceramic imagery and women’s songs, fortified at times by male exegesis and tellers’ narratives. For samples and illustrations of this imagery see Whitten and Whitten (1988, 2008).

8. The original French version of *The Jealous Potter* is one of seven full-length books republished in one volume, *Oeuvres*, to celebrate Lévi-Strauss’s importance to a new kind of ethnography and anthropology on the eve of his 100th birthday. Reviewer Patrick Wilcken (2008), writing for *The Times Literary Supplement*, summarizes this group of publications as follows: “In them he [Lévi-Strauss] tied up loose ends, pursued miscellaneous issues left over from the original *Mythologiques* quartet, while clarifying arguments and fielding criticisms.” This reviewer, too, mentions only “Jivaro” mythology vis-à-vis pottery imagery and symbolism.

9. See footnote 5, above.

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