

SHAMANISM AND INDIGENOUS YOUTHHOOD THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

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Abstract

This article deals with contemporary shamanism among young Indians in Brazilian Amazonia. It explores the meaning of shamanic practices for today's Amazonian young Indians. The article focuses on the *ayahuasca* ceremonies practiced by young Manchineri living in both the indigenous reserve and urban areas in the State of Acre, Brazil. Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out between 2005 and 2007. Shamanic practices produce symbolic capital that may credit in one's own native community and in interethnic relations. The spiritual and traditional knowledge, trust, values, and instructions on life generate cultural capital, social capital, as well as ethnic capital. Through shamanism young people have an active role in the construction of their agency and personhood, as it also is about youth's own decision to interact with the spirits and other humans. Shamanic practices have marked a turning point in the lives of many native young people.

Keywords: Shamanism, ayahuasca, Manchineri

Resumo

Este artigo discute xamanismo contemporâneo entre os jovens indígenas na Amazônia Brasileira. Ele foca sobre o uso de ayahuasca entre jovens Manchineri tanto na reserva quanto no contexto urbano no estado do Acre, Brasil. Busca-se entender o significado da prática de xamanismo para os jovens indígenas. A pesquisa etnográfica foi realizada entre os anos de 2005 e 2007. As práticas xamânicas produzem capital simbólico que possa trazer prestígio na própria comunidade e nas relações interétnicas. Conhecimento espiritual e tradicional, confiança, valores e instrução para a vida produzem capital cultural, capital social e capital étnico. Através do xamanismo, os jovens têm o papel ativo na construção de sua agência e pessoa, pois decidem eles mesmos interagir com os espíritos e outros humanos. As práticas xamânicas têm marcado significativamente as vidas de vários jovens.

Palavras-chave: xamanismo, ayahuasca, Manchineri

Resumen

Este artículo discute chamanismo contemporáneo entre los jóvenes indígenas en la Amazonía Brasileña. El foca sobre el uso de ayahuasca entre los jóvenes Manchineri tanto en la reserva cuanto en el contexto urbano en el estado del Acre, Brasil. Se busca comprender lo significado de la práctica de chamanismo para

los jóvenes indígenas. La investigación etnográfica fue realizada entre los años de 2005 y 2007. Las prácticas chamánicas producen capital simbólico que posa traer prestigio en la propia comunidad y en las relaciones interétnicas. Conocimiento espiritual y tradicional, confianza, valores y instrucción para la vida producen capital cultural, capital social y capital étnico. A través del chamanismo, los jóvenes tiene un papel activo en la construcción de su agencia y persona, pues que deciden eles mismos interactuar con los espíritus y otros humanos. Las prácticas chamánicas tienen marcado significativamente las vidas de muchos jóvenes.

Palavras-chave: chamanismo, ayahuasca, Manchineri

INTRODUCTION

The article focuses on the ritualistic use of ayahuasca (*banisteriopsis caapi*) among the young Manchineri who live in the extreme western part of Brazilian Amazonia, state of Acre. The ayahuasca ceremony is their most important shamanic practice, and it will be explained using ethnographic data. In the study of Amazonian shamanism, techniques of shamans, the shaman figures, and shamanism in indigenous politics have already been addressed (e.g. Chaumeil 1983, Langdon 1992, 1996, Gow 1994, Weiss 1973), but the meaning of shamanic practices for the laymen and their experiences of it have been overlooked, as well as the participation of Amazonian indigenous young people in shamanic ceremonies.

In general, the shamanic practices of Amazonian young natives are still little known, although there are already some studies on Amazonian native children (e.g. Overing 1988, Nunes 1999, Cohn 2000, Lopes da Silva et al. 2002). Joanna Overing (1988:169) has already shown that learning shamanic practices is an essential part of growing up. Fundamental meaning of spirituality besides the state education for native youths was already noted by Peter Gow (1991:241): "School teaching defends native people against the civilized knowledge that threatens them with slavery, while shamanism defends native people against the wild knowledge which threatens them with death." However, although spirituality acknowledged and its promotion has been taken into account in multicultural education in indigenous school of Bra-

zil (e.g. Conselho Nacional de Educação 1999), a deeper perspective to the analysis of what shamanic practices offer for today's young Indians has been lacking. In this article I argue that ayahuasca ceremonies hold important meaning for the development and identities of native young people as their cultural, social and ethnic capital (resource). The active role of the youth is discussed from the perspective of the construction of their personhood and agency.

Fieldwork was carried out between 2003 and 2007, participating in the private and public life of the Manchineri: their day-to-day life, family meetings and rituals, training courses for indigenous teachers and environmental agents, cultural events, and political meetings. The Manchineri, an Arawakan-speaking group, number some 900 people in the indigenous territory, Mamoodate, and approximately 150 in Rio Branco, the Acre state capital (FUNAI 2005, GMI-UNI 2002). They are closely related to the Piro in Peru, also known as the Yine.

Since the end of the 19th century, many Manchineri families were forced to work in the rubber industry. In 1975, the FUNAI (the National Indian Foundation) opened a regional office in Acre, and reported that the Manchineri were working as rubber tappers (*seringueiros*) and clearing the forest for wealthy land owners on the Yaco River. Then FUNAI relocated the Manchineri and Yaminawa of the Yaco River area to the Extrema village, close to the Peruvian border. The Manchineri-Yaminawa reserve, Mamoodate, was



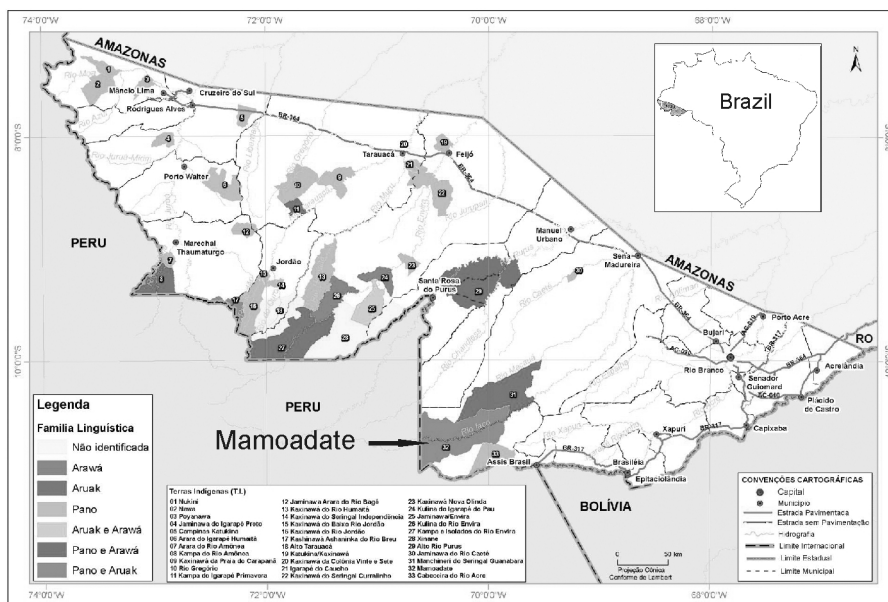


Figure 1 - Mamoadate and other indigenous reserves in the state of Acre, Brazil. Modified from Atlas FUNTAC 2008.

officially legalized in 1991. Today the Mamoadate reserve covers 313,647 hectares, making it the largest indigenous territory in Acre. In the Mamoadate reserve the Manchineri live divided in nine major villages. Besides hunting, fishing and gathering, they carry out small-scale agricultural activities, animal husbandry, and sale agricultural products, mainly rice and beans, in the nearby municipalities. Manchineris begun cultural recuperation through multicultural education, and implemented the first initiatives for cultural projects with the help of the state as well as national and international NGOs. In Rio Branco, Manchineri families live separated among several different neighbourhoods, and their younger generation usually either study at state schools or work for indigenous organizations,

security, healthcare or take receptionist positions. It shall be remembered that ayahuasca ceremony is a sacred ritual for the Manchineri, thus not widely shared. Here I have described simply information that helps to understand the importance of the shamanism for Amazonian native youth.

AYAHUASCA SHAMANISM

Among Western and Northern Amazonia ayahuasca concoction is used by Panoan and Arawakan speaking groups in collective ceremonies as a means of receiving spiritual guidance, protection and knowledge from the spirits, as well as to cure illness, because shamans see its cause in the hallucinogenic visions. For centuries, ayahuasca ceremonies have been the most important spiritual and healing ritual. They have offered

a place and time for encountering the power of timelessness and formlessness that tends to be excluded from everyday life where experience is normally categorized and controlled by a set script of events. In Arawakan languages ayahuasca is called *kamarampi* or *kamalampi* (meaning vomiting) and in the most Panoan languages *uni*. The hallucinogenic liquid ayahuasca is also commonly known as *gabpi*, *yagé*, *cipó* (“vine”), and, as *daimé*¹ as it is called and consumed today in the Santo Daime Churches mainly by non-natives. It has also been used by the Incas and especially by their priests (Weiss 1973, 1975, Gow 1991, 1994, 1995, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975, 1996, Luz 2002, Lagrou 1991, Luna 1986, Kampinen 1989, MacRae 1992)

In ayahuasca ceremonies the aim is to interact and dominate energies of the invisible non-human beings by the altered states of consciousness that in native shamanism have also been done through the use of other psychoactive plants, dreams, dances, and chants. In general, shamanism is a cosmological system in which consideration is given to the well-being of the community and the control of the vital forces of the universe. The universe is believed to have visible and invisible elements and energies that are related to all production and reproduction in life (Chaumeil 1983, Langdon 1992, 1996:26-28) The use of ayahuasca is strictly ritualized, but it is not a secret ceremony. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1975:199) also notes the strict ritualistic use of *yagé* among the Tukano. The Manchineri in the reserve

held the *kamalampi ceremony*² usually in a house, in the forest or on a riverbed. The ceremony starts at dusk when the village becomes quieter, and children and other people not participating in the ritual are already asleep. The ceremony has its own specially recognized rules concerning how it should proceed, as well as its own roles, sacred objects, and pace. People chat quietly when they come to the place and it takes some time to wait until the atmosphere has calmed down, and everyone has found a comfortable place in the circle, either sitting or lying outstretched on the floor or in a hammock. The concoction is placed in a pot in the middle, and usually the leader of the ceremony – who is the best singer, a shaman, or an elder person – serves a cup to those wishing to partake. Usually the men smoke a pipe while waiting for the effects of the ayahuasca.

When the ceremonial leader feels the first effects of ayahuasca, he starts singing the ayahuasca chants and thereby calls the spirit of ayahuasca, as well as certain plants and animal spirits. The singer controls the encounter with the spirit world through music, by singing chants that either invigorate or calm down the hallucinations. Whoever has permission to sing ayahuasca songs is clearly controlled, and this can be seen as an exercise of ritual power. The visions produced are also said to be dependent on the chant leader of the ceremony. The shamans are specialists of ayahuasca songs, since they know tens of different chants and how to use them, and have learned these songs directly “from the spirits” or from other people.

Music is a central aspect of the ceremony, as it is in other Amerindian rituals portrayed by Anthony Seeger (1987) and Jonathan Hill (1993) marking the ritualistic space and time. The ritual chants usually speak of natural spirits, such as the mother spirit of ayahuasca itself, which works through the sacred drink. Other typical spirits are the boa constrictor (*jibóia*), the jaguar (*onça*), the father of the forest, which have traditionally played a central role in Manchineri mythology. The songs facilitate the appearance of the spirits and encourage them to share their knowledge and protective powers. In general terms, as Seeger (1987:7) noted while studying the musicality of the Suyá: “Music transcends time, space, and existential levels of reality. It affects humans, spirits, animals and those hard-to-imagine beings in between.” According to young Manchineri people in the reserve, each animal and plant has its own song, so if a participant learns it under the effect of ayahuasca, he or she learns the animal’s or the plant’s secrets, such as protective medicines. “*All animals have their own secret.*” Therefore, one can suddenly “receive” a teaching from an animal or plant spirit, and thus use its power in one’s own life. Ayahuasca songs help the person to “see” a certain animal and consequently to receive its powers. They therefore work as spells and charms similar to those used by shamans in various parts of the world.

Ayahuasca allows the person consuming it to assume the point of view of others, such as animals, who actu-

ally see themselves as humans, and to learn from this metamorphosis and transcendence. It refers to a change of perspective, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1996:117-118) has argued: in the Amerindian context, shamans adopt the perspective of animals and see the world from the animal’s or spirit’s intentionality and animal’s normally invisible “human” viewpoint. For the Manchineri, in the ayahuasca ceremony any person can come into contact with the “invisible” beings of the world, especially those of the forest spirits, by taking a hallucinogenic substance into the body. Similarly for the Cashinahua, the use of ayahuasca induces an extraordinary state of perception that changes the human being’s point of view, allowing him or her to see the world of spirits. It is, therefore, a special state of being, both in terms of the quality of the perceiver and the context of perception as a corporeal experience (Lagrou 2001:121). The ayahuasca ceremony generates an intersubjective field in which things that are normally invisible (the spirit world) become visible. In shamanic practices this occurs in the imagination of certain places and spaces of human and non-human actors that may be distant both geographically (imagination related to nature and relatives living elsewhere) and temporally (related to the past or separated from secular, everyday life). In what follows I will explain the most important aspects of ayahuasca shamanism for young Manchineris: setting up moral values, answers to existential questions, demarking their own social spaces and political aspects.

MORALITY AND THE CONTROL OF ACTS

Ayahuasca ceremonies transmit moral values and codes for proper behaviour. In the reserve, young Manchineri take ayahuasca for the first time when they are between 11 and 19 years old, while in the urban areas when they are a little bit older, with most young people having already reached at least 18 before their first experience with the sacred drink. In the furthest village from the urban areas, Extrema, even younger boys know how to prepare ayahuasca: this process involves collecting vines (*banisteriopsis caapi*) and leaves (*spycotria viridis*), and the special herbs and roots used by the Manchineri, and then boiling the concoction for several hours. In the city, the difficulty lies in obtaining ayahuasca: usually the only way is via relatives coming from the reserve or from the so called Santo Daime Churches located in the city.

In both the reserve and the city, certain preparations are required to ensure that a positive effect is obtained from the ayahuasca. These include avoiding the consumption of salt, alcohol, and greasy food, or having sexual intercourse a few days before and after taking ayahuasca. Otherwise, the spirits that appear may be evil ones or they may not appear at all. The ayahuasca mother spirit only gives visions to whom she wants or she may even induce solely horrific visions (see Gow 1991:239). It shall be remembered that ayahuasca in Quechua means “vine of the dead”. According to Levy et al. (1996:16, 21), horrific encounters with spirits show the dangers of leaving the

human world. Failure to adhere to these regulations, or the purification rules required by the ceremony that decrease temporarily relatedness to some things and people, may lead to horrific visions and experiences or becoming queasy or sick. Nevertheless, during the ceremony, the participant has to concentrate and wait for the possible states of nausea and vomiting to pass, and only then can one discover what the female spirit of the ayahuasca plant has to teach.

In the reserve, people who had taken ayahuasca generally said that it was good to take it to “see better” or to “see everything,” meaning that one can see spirits, the future, distant relatives and, generally, that one has a better vision of things and of the world. According to Elsje Lagrou (2001:120-122), ayahuasca results in seeing *yuxin*, spiritual agents that lack solid bodies, but produce images that confuse and scare humans. In the Manchineri reserve, roughly half of the young people of both genders explained that they did not want to consume ayahuasca due to the change of consciousness and the visions of the spirit world. Ayahuasca therefore has an ambivalent character; it is at once fascinating, admired, and feared (see Gow 1991).

The control of food intake, as well as fasting, and sexual abstinence are typical techniques of sacrifice and purification (Eliade [1959] 2004, Paden 1988:154-155). They are a common means to achieving trance-like states in many spiritual ceremonies and practices throughout the world. Obeying the rules seems to be even harder in

the city, since there the person has to renounce many comforts and its difficult to decrease relatedness to other people. Manchineri youngsters regard this temporal renunciation as physically and psychologically difficult since it requires special willpower. On the other hand, this renunciation may mean an increase in traditional values. One of the young Manchineri men residing in the city told me that when he first took ayahuasca, it had no effect on him. He said that he could not see anything because he had lived like the non-Indian population. But then he began to have closer relations with his Manchineri cousin and started to know more about his culture, learning the Manchineri language and ritual chants, which he now regards as very beautiful. Learning Manchineri musicality involves an arduous search for the knowledge involved, as a boy in the reserve told me: it took a long time for him to learn two ayahuasca songs.

The numinous sphere of the ayahuasca rituals has a special relationship to morality and social control. As William E. Paden (1988:154-156) has noted, the requirements of controlling bodily behaviour, eating, and sexual intercourse are acts of purification and ways of dealing with impurity. In the ayahuasca ceremony, sexuality and desire are believed to cause feelings of guilt and to prompt confessions. On the other hand, vomiting during the ritual is accepted and ceremony participants seem to prefer to experience this form of purification. By controlling and limiting the use of the body, certain kinds of behaviour are shown to be bad for the community

(Turner 1984:180-181). Consequently, young people are habituated from an early age to understand that their acts are both controlled and punished. However, the Manchineri youngsters believe that not everybody is capable of experiencing visions. Especially the first time, adolescents rarely have any visions, which, they say, derives from possessing little knowledge of what such visions are about. Thus, some people have to take it more often and learn slowly what ayahuasca actually involves. Overall, the Manchineri adolescents in the city said that the experience of starting to take ayahuasca or take part in these meetings marked a turning point in their lives. It gave them a means to control their acts and relate to certain people.

Shamanic rituals should also be seen as “purifying” actions, since they often make the young people feel that “*we are all here,*” “*this is like it was before,*” and “*this is my community.*” In the rituals, the focus is on the ancestors and the jungle, and its ritualistic objects convey not only memories but also imagery of the past. Shamanic practices are gateways to different communication and code systems. Their ritualistic behaviour denotes things that involve important cultural values and thus display the things that divide cultural potentialities: those things to be valued and aimed for, and those to be avoided. Embodied different practices and representations are an essential basis of a world view and value system as well as maintain attitudes concerning what is worth aspiring that produces ethnic capital (see Borjas 1992; León 2005).

Thus, rituals are bearers of old values against new insecurities. They reflect the consolidation of social categories since they are techniques to deal with cultural boundaries that in other contexts may be difficult to define.

ETHNIC SOUNDSCAPES AND MANCHINERI IMAGERY

For the young people in Acre often made the difference between “our way” and “your/their way of doing things,” referring to certain social practices and ways of living. “Our way of doing” is a communal value, but also a continual individual negotiation of Indianness and differences. The visible human body as the carrier of values allows showing the difference maintained and reproduced by a certain social group. Currently, ayahuasca ceremonies are one of the most important ways of uniting, through the communication with the common non-human beings and through the sharing of similar cosmological beliefs. The ayahuasca songs are deeply rooted within the history of the Manchineri and singing them is an important way of creating and maintaining the Manchineri identity and ethnic boundaries. This echoes what Seeger (1987:136) wrote about the Suyá, namely that it is through their musical performances that they seem to say that they are Indians. Martin Stokes (1994:5-6) has also drawn a link between ethnicity and music. Thus, this shamanic practice sets limits for the people to recognize themselves as certain kinds of beings and separates them from others due to their possession of a certain kind of humanity and its corporality.

According to Hill, shamanic language evokes mythic beings, landscapes, and places, and connects them to both historical time and the present. Hill (1993:202) argues that native singing opens up two social places that are connected through music: the outer space of spirits, which comprises horizontal space; and the human world, which comprises vertical space. “Mystification, or transforming the powerful sounds of language music into mythic speech, is a miniaturizing process, an inscription of the macrocosmic creation of natural species into the microcosm of individual human bodies.” Ayahuasca chants in particular create special bonds between the participants, since they are about dead ancestors, spirits and other non-humans, each with its *own habitus*. Thus, they enable the embodiment of their “viewpoints.” For the Manchineri, this is how they as Manchineri encounter the past, just as the Guajá do through their dreaming and in ritual visitations of the past, as Loretta Cormier (2003:123) describes. In addition to linking nature, the past and the present, singing is an important way of expressing feelings, making it an eminently creative activity (Seeger 1987:65). Ethnicity and musical traditions are strongly linked for the Manchineri, since their style of singing is highly distinctive among the indigenous peoples of the region. This echoes what Seeger (1987:136) wrote about the Suyá, namely that it is through their musical performances that they seem to say that they are Indians.

The Manchineri chants have remained potent spiritual representations, like the



body paintings that represent various symbolically important animals for the urban Manchineri. In fact, ayahuasca visions are the origin of many Manchineri paintings and visual material traditions. In the Cashinahua art, *kênes*, different geographic patterns have the same origin (see e.g. Lagrou 1991). Manchineri paintings are mostly designs of the skins of different animals that are identified to be protective at certain social ages or to teach Manchineri. The use of the imagery on the human body in body paintings, made by the paint prepared from the *genipapo* fruit, facilitates interaction with the spirit world.

All family members can share musical experiences of ayahuasca ceremonies, since even those who do not consume ayahuasca can be present, even infants and children attending ceremonies. In the city, the ceremony offers a place for urban Manchineri families to encounter other Manchineris and to listen to their own language and ritual chants (see Virtanen 2006). As the ceremony is usually held on the occasion of an important visit from one of the villages, it also brings together Manchineri from both urban and rural areas. The event is important for the Manchineri who live in distant suburbs or far away from each other. Ayahuasca experiences help bind participants to the community and the cosmos as complementary integrated dimensions and, thus, produce social capital³. Particularly in urban areas, the experiences involved in just attending the event appeared to increase the feeling of community and trust among the

Manchineri. When native youth gather with their family members at the urban ayahuasca ceremonies, it provides the space to construct an acceptable identity, at least temporarily. In the case of native populations in urban areas, where a multitude of different social and ethnic groups resides, both these aspects become extremely important.

Young people especially seek ancient traditions and songs. Nevertheless, the musical repertoire has changed due to the influence of urban centres. Various ayahuasca songs performed today have been learned in the municipalities in interethnic ayahuasca ceremonies, for instance during courses run for indigenous teachers or cultural events. Previously the Manchineri used only the *tromba* (an instrument consisting of a bow and string, held in the mouth and played with the fingers), flute, and drums in the ceremony, but the younger generation have introduced some new instruments, such as the guitar. The new songs are often derived from other indigenous groups and the Santo Daime Churches, which are widespread in Acre, where the church was founded. Hence, it is not necessary for shamanic knowledge and songs originate from the forest and spirits. However, in the reserve, the Manchineri youngsters claimed that one can learn some shamanic skills from other people, but the really important knowledge comes only from the spirits.

Academic works studying authenticity and musical tastes (distinctions) argue that authenticity is constructed in relation to how it is perceived (Connell &

Gibson 2003:44); that is, the way in which artistic productions are consumed. Here, what matters is the experience of continuity between the community and the non-human beings that represent ancestors and the jungle, as well as construction of Manchineriness. Although new musical aspects have been increasingly incorporated into ayahuasca ceremonies as a new means of altering the state of consciousness that can be achieved by using new rhythms, sounds, prayers, and spells, the same methods are used in preparation for the ceremony. The prohibitions on conduct before, during, and after the ayahuasca ceremony mark this ritual space and time, and prepare the human body for its separation from the spirit. Ayahuasca therefore links the Manchineri to certain non-human beings and their places, which may bring danger if not adequately separated from daily routines.

Among the Manchineri, however, the ayahuasca ceremony has not been combined with non-indigenous religious practices to the same extent as, for instance, among the mestizo populations of urban Peru and Ecuador (see Luna 1986, Kamppinen 1989). The Daimistas may have popularized the use of ayahuasca, but the youth preferred to separate their spirituality from the Santo Daime churches or other types of activities that could be regarded as New Age shamanism. The ceremony practiced by the Indians remains very different from the ones performed by the Daimistas.

EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS AND AGENCY

For Manchineri youths both in the reserve and in the city, the ayahuasca cer-

emony provides an important source of knowledge for personal development. Jonathan Hill (2003:166) has argued that for Amazonian peoples of today, shamanism offers a feeling of continuity. Shamanism represents native cultures and traditions that protect a group's identity and dignity. It stimulates the sense that one's ethnic group should and can control their own trajectory of change. Moreover, according to the Manchineri youths, the ceremony helps to show the participant how he or she should proceed, and to foresee the future in general. For instance, whether the person is about to take up a position in the community, or whether one should dedicate oneself to a shamanic career, or to a political one and so forth. It helps in decision-making and in "learning things," as the youngsters put it. A Manchineri boy currently living in the city explained this apprenticeship as follows when we discussed how he took ayahuasca with his uncle:

"My uncle [from the reserve] always comes here (...). He always teaches us. We learn and maybe one day when we need it, you know. We are learning like that and it stays in our memory. Since we cannot go and spread out in the world".

The ayahuasca ceremony is an important event in learning about the spirit world producing cultural capital and its practice can help in the practice of everyday life. Overall, it has been pointed out that ayahuasca ceremonies help a person to receive solutions to personal conflicts, to interpret their current situation, and to find the right way of cop-

ing with future events (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996:168, 177, 186). A very small portion of the sacred liquid is even given to children, since it is believed to possess healing effects. As Kenneth Kensinger (1973:13) wrote concerning the Cashinahua use of ayahuasca: “The Cashinahua drink ayahuasca in order to learn about things, persons, and events, removed from them by time and/or space which could affect either the society as whole or its individual members.” According to Overing (1988:169), shamanic knowledge is part of transition to adulthood: “Thus, to achieve the maturity to accomplish any social deed, that is, to act morally, to be fertile, to garden, to hunt, to fish, to play music, or to do shamanic practices, the individual must take various and continuous ‘lessons in wizardry.’” For the Manchineri, animals may appear in the ayahuasca visions and tell them how to harm someone through the use of sorcery. Other animals may teach them how to protect life. The adolescents themselves declared that they were uninterested in learning sorcery techniques. I heard that one of the boys had seen a peccary in his hallucination, which could have taught its secret to him. The boy did not want to know, since he would have learned something bad: how to harm people with a spell.

Shamanic practices are no longer as important compared to the past in terms of actions such as conversing with animals or learning to curing ailments. In the reserve, the young generation still hunt, but they also have to think about new means of income, since the availability of game and fish has declined. In urban areas, the livelihoods of the Man-

chineri do not fundamentally depend on natural environment and thus, for instance, climatic and seasonal conditions. However, young native people’s bond between the non-human world and human beings is increasingly demarcated by ritual spheres. The relationship between the non-humans and human beings is meaningful for receiving inner wisdom and self-knowledge, even though native youth participate in many other social fields, such as youth cultures.

Generally, the hallucinatory experience may involve a metaphysical experience of self and individual, since the participant “meets” spirits alone, even when in the company of other members of the community (see McCallum 2001:57). As Anthony P. Cohen (1985:51) wrote concerning the experience of community during the peyote hunt of the Huichol Indians: “They experience a total fusion of man and nature and a perfect unity among all the elements of life.” Especially in the nocturnal periods of ayahuasca ceremonies, liminality is real and offers experiences of being beyond time as well as autonomous from the group. Ayahuasca experiences can give a triumphant feeling despite any drunkenness and discomfort the concoction may cause. This experience may also create self-confidence since after the experience of fear – common occurrence, especially for novices – the participant gains a sensation of strength. After this, the person has a triumphant feeling of “returning” to the community. Shamanic experience causes feelings of unity with something superior and enables the young person to organize thoughts, emotions,

and memories. In ayahuasca ceremonies, the hallucinogenic extract that is taken causes this feeling. It excludes, for instance, the categorization of society such as to occupations and social classes that is present in everyday life. As Roberto DaMatta (2000:13-19) has argued, this liminality has a positive and communal character, since the experience of individuality and isolation always ends with a return to society and the transformation of an individual into a member of a greater social network. In my view, ayahuasca causes a feeling of inner integrity, as well as a balance between community members and the spirit world, an equilibrium, which for the Manchineri is essential to health. Sharing similar corporeal experiences in the ritual and music produce trust between participants.

This is an important contribution to notice how through shamanism the young people as active agents contribute themselves to the construction of their personhood and agency. It has been argued that parents and the community “fabricate the body” of the children and adolescents by producing their human body and making it distinct from the spirit world by painting and restricting it, such as by isolation, diet, or physical efforts. Consequently, they constitute the personhood of their siblings by connecting them to other members of the community (Viveiros de Castro 1987, Seeger et al. 1987, Vilaça 2002). It has also been pointed out about indigenous children that their everyday corporeal experiences in various activities have a great impact on their development (Lopes

da Silva 2002). McCallum (2001:54-57) has presented how Cashinahua young men start to take ayahuasca (*nixi pae*) at the same time when they are learning to be hunters⁴, but also to learn a knowledge of other people, beings and places as a part of the construction of their male agency. The active agency of the individual youth in ayahuasca ceremonies is noteworthy.

Conversation about individual experiences is an essential part of the ritual. Young people were more active than other age groups in telling what they had experienced to the elders, who can offer explanations since the visions usually involve ancestors and mythical beings. Similarly, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996:162, 1975:199-200) suggests that, for the Tukano, the experiences induced by *caapi* (another name for ayahuasca) are collective experiences since the visions are later discussed. Greg Urban (1996:220) has written about the discourses relating to dreams found in Amerindian communities: telling about bad dreams amounts to sharing the fear with others, who respond by showing that the dreamer is not alone and isolated, but part of the group. “Sociability and fear are opposed because the fear is linked in part to isolation, disconnectedness.” This return to the shared everyday experience is equally apparent among the Manchineri. When the hallucinogenic effects have passed, in the middle of the ceremony when more ayahuasca is served, or at its end, the participants talk about private matters, and discuss new solutions. I see this as an important means of orga-

nizing Information collectively and creating relations between people, things, and events. The conversations certainly offer good tools for the youths to cope with the problems of their lived worlds as they acquire more knowledge of themselves, their traditions, and their place in the world. Moreover, during the ceremony, participants are required to act in accordance with their social roles, a fact which legitimates social order.

Today, the encounter with the spirit world attracts many indigenous young people wherever they live. Interaction with spirits may open new possibilities for youth to respond to the world. In the city, participation in ayahuasca ceremonies can be seen as a statement of the person's religiosity and cultural identity. Young Manchineris say that their religion is ayahuasca. They regard the ayahuasca ritual itself as something that is truly their own, a part of their culture, and thus they prefer to use Manchineri name *kamalampi* when referring to ayahuasca. They argued frequently that taking ayahuasca is an integral part of the religious practice of their people and that they therefore want to preserve this ancient ritual. During a workshop on racism at a Youth Forum held in Rio Branco, the coordinator asked the participants about their religious beliefs. One Manchineri boy responded clearly that his religion was ayahuasca, which was a very strong manifestation of his own values and principles. Two young men even declared their wish to construct a house in the reserve's village as a place to take ayahuasca and invite other people to take part.

When the world becomes more complicated, shamanic practices offers young indigenous people new mental models and places for legitimising feelings and relating to the world around them. For some Manchineri youngsters, shamanic practices are an important means of identifying and marking things with a difference. Two Manchineri men even expressed to me that they want to become shamans, and that they are committed to the long and intensive training involved, which means learning to deal with the shaman's behavioural negations in order to achieve spiritual knowledge. Certain things come to be avoided and renounced, whereas others are permitted for shamans (see Berger [1969]1990:54-55) who communicate with spirits. Shamans have to avoid everything that is the "other" from the viewpoint of the reserve, in other words commodities and non-Indians. In urban areas this is regarded as difficult, if not impossible. I see the will of becoming a shaman to be linked with the attempt to control the current world. For instance, a shaman trainee in the reserve said, "I shall tell my sons not to use the culture of whites." Many of those native youths in the reserve interested in spiritual things were usually critical about the influence of the urban centres. In contrast, the shaman is a kind of ascetic who sets new norms and rules for common behaviour. Through one's own actions and by controlling one's body in a specific way, certain things are made visible for both the individual and the group. Meantime, shamans – equivalent to monks and ascetics in their attempt to

renounce the material world – try to enter a situation in which all categorization ceases. This also offers a legitimized way of living for those who feel different from others. For some young Manchineri becoming a shaman may alter their difficult experiences, since it may make their cultural traditions appear more meaningful. Although there are many young people who take part in the ayahuasca ceremony, none of them has spent a long time in the forest alone, as shamanic apprentices did in the more distant past.

DEMARKING SOCIAL SPACES

In the city, the ayahuasca ceremony takes place in a very similar manner as in the reserve. The main difference is that the ceremony usually occurs in some Manchineri families on Friday or Saturday nights when the youngsters do not have to go to school or work the next day, whereas in the reserve there are no typical or specific days for the ceremony. In Rio Branco, few times I was invited to participate in a ceremony in one of the distant neighbourhoods where *fórró* (popular dance music) is played well into the night on weekends. Early in the night, *fórró* music entered the house from the nearby streets. Despite the noise, those taking part in the ayahuasca ritual were able to construct their own ritualistic space through acts of ritualization. The lights were switched off and participants dedicated themselves to the encounter with spirits. In this framework, the ayahuasca ceremony is related to power relations and making a difference to the surrounding physical and

social environment. According to Gupta and Ferguson ([1997]2001), this would be a production of cultural differences in relation to space and power. In the city, this is a production of differences and an acquisition of space for both the individual and the group. Importing ayahuasca ceremonies and its music into the urban context is easier than staging large ritual dances, for example, and symbolic designs in traditional songs offer a special sphere of communication and symbolic representation. Music negotiates and transforms hierarchies of place, as Stokes (1994:5) suggests: “I would argue therefore that music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them.”

Spatial distinction has to be understood in terms of relations of power by demarking some situations for areas of one’s own activity. In cities, the reproduction of indigenous cultures and traditions can be difficult due to their different physical, cultural and social environment from the reserve. One of the Manchineri male adolescents, who was doing military service in Rio Branco (but had previously lived only in the reserve), had taken ayahuasca in the city and stated that it was very different due to the noise of the radio, stereos, as well as the people themselves who constantly moved around. The young man said that taking ayahuasca in the village is different, since from eight o’clock at night onwards it is completely quiet with only the noise of a few animals. When I asked him to draw his ayahuas-



ca experience, he drew this latest one in the city, and only drew “noise.” In the drawing, the noise had clear borders and was thus also spiritualized as an element of the territoriality of the city. Some young Manchineri men living in the city responded along the same lines when I asked whether it is different taking ayahuasca in the city.

Interestingly, however, the content of the ayahuasca visions described by the youth living in the city shed light on the forest-related reality that is normally invisible in urban contexts. In contrast, the descriptions of the visions in the reserve showed urban influences. The content of ayahuasca visions can be related to wishes, desires, worries of the youth, but always somehow linked to the jungle and the non-human world. For instance, one girl in the reserve told me that when she took ayahuasca for the first time, she liked it a lot, since she saw a beautiful boy, a car, a jaguar, and a fish. When I asked whether I had heard right – a car – she said: “Yes, there are cars in the city.” Two other girls living in the reserve also told me, that ayahuasca is like television since it allows them to see all those animals that come to cure an ill person, as well as even their future boyfriends. Although Manchineri youths in the reserve compared the ayahuasca visions to the television images that young people had seen in the townships, “na rua” (the city), this is not considered entertainment.

But, it should be taken into account that the adolescents want to gain a variety of experiences. Today entertainment

has become increasingly materialized and related to consumption; hence, the limited financial resources of young indigenous people may prevent them from engaging in the activities they would really like to do. To some extent, therefore, the shamanic space allows native adolescents to experience even more things than they could elsewhere. Shamanic rituals can offer new feelings, even experiences of the non-human beings and the spirit world. However, they are not about diversion per se; rather, these ceremonies represent the domain of the transformation that involves a risk as previously described about horrific visions.

Furthermore, urban centres have been important locations in strengthening the practice of the ayahuasca ceremony because interethnic contacts have encouraged indigenous peoples to rethink and reflect upon their cultural traditions, including ayahuasca practices. Young Manchineri of the reserve meet other indigenous people in the indigenous health centre in Rio Branco, the *Casa do Índio*, in the other regional municipalities, in training courses, and in political and cultural events. In these places, people from other indigenous groups and non-Indians ask about traditional songs and stories, and ignorance provokes embarrassment and a feeling of inferiority. A boy from a village where ayahuasca is rarely consumed the reserve, for example, claimed that he had heard Manchineri chants only once, in the *Casa do Índio* in Rio Branco, where some Indians had taken ayahuasca one evening. The boy who had been in the

health centre had heard the Manchineri shaman of other village, also present in the centre to sing ayahuasca chants. Moreover, he had also seen that other native peoples practice ayahuasca ceremonies. His thoughts at the time were described to me by another boy:

“He was really happy since he thought that one day he will take *cipó* [vine used in preparing ayahuasca], if there was someone to take ayahuasca with him. He would take it together with a person who would take *cipó*. He hopes to learn [ayahuasca] chants one day – the ‘spirituality’ that other peoples also know. Because now when he took part on the course [of environmental agents], there were people looking for him [to ask about ayahuasca], but he didn’t know. Therefore, he was happy when he saw a relative taking it [ayahuasca]”.

A young Manchineri teacher also became interested in the shamanry of his own people after taking part in an educational course in Rio Branco. Two years later this teacher told me that “the Manchineri are powerful, they are a strong people and could eliminate all other people [through shamanism] if they so wished,” since some other ethnic groups had said that the Manchineri shamanic tradition had been lost. As Hill (2003:167) has stated about the Temedawí of Venezuela, these interethnic contacts have made the younger Manchineri generation poignantly aware that they have already lost, or are about to lose, many of their ritual chants, prompting them to try to recover this

tradition through written texts and by asking older people. The revitalization of certain cultural traditions is about related to boundary-making.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SHAMANISM IN POLITICS

Besides that ayahuasca ceremonies have strengthened the social values, it has also been important for the self-confidence and the identity of the Manchineri. Manchineri’s knowledge of natural medicine and shamanism has been reproduced even during the rubber slavery, contrary to many other their material cultural productions that had to be hidden due to restrictions of their rubber patrons. Shamanism is an activity that is very different from the Western medicine and dominant society’s perceptions of healthcare (see e.g. Langdon 1992, 1996, Turner 1993:54-55). Through shamanic practices, certain concepts, manners, speech, and avoidance related to it, young Indians may confirm that they have not acculturated to the dominant society, but, instead, that their traditions continue in the present (Virtanen 2007a, 2007b). This also produces what we can call ethnic capital, defined as the attitudes and values of an ethnic environment as to what is worth undertaking or makes sense in an individual’s life (see Moodood 2004, Borjas 1992, León 2005). For the youth itself, the ayahuasca ceremony is a representation of Indian style, their spirituality, traditions, and ritual practices. For Amazonian native youths, shamanic practices offer both non-materialistic and, through the shamanic objects used, materialistic ways



of continuing both the reproduction and production of their indigenous cultural traditions. These are symbolic capitals since they are perceived according to classifications, categories and divisions of perceptions (Bourdieu ([1972]1977, [1980]1990). Knowledge, skills, qualifications (cultural capital⁵), and a strong psychological feeling of reciprocity and interaction between people who understand, share a common interest and believe in the same non-human beings and phenomena (social capital), produced in shamanic practices can also be used as a resource in other contemporary indigenous social fields, some of which are increasingly political (Virtanen 2007a).

It has been pointed out previously how shamanism has enabled interethnic discourse and reacted domination (e.g. Taussig 1987, Turner 1993, Gow 1994.) However, for many indigenous youth in Acre, cultural traditions are sometimes difficult to show to the others, as the dominant society have many stereotyped expectations of the native traditions. Interestingly, even if the youth many times stated that their indigenous traditions were weak, this did not apply to the use of ayahuasca. It composes its own social space that is invisible to the others and involves secret knowledge (see Jackson 1995:315), and thus non-natives could not judge it.

Shamanic knowledge in particular can facilitate a person's promotion to important positions in their community (see Hill 2003, Santos Granero 1986), since as well as providing insight into the spirit world, shamanic knowledge

Includes key elements of "tradition" and oral history that produce cultural capital in interethnic relations. However, becoming a shaman requires long and severe training (see Jackson 1995). Some shamans have been leading figures in indigenous politics since as early as the 1980s, when environmentalists saw them as guardians of the rainforests that has been followed by the state's attempts to see them as guardians of the cultural patrimony and biodiversity of the country (Chaumeil 1992, Conklin & Graham 1995, Carneiro & Almeida 2000, Conklin 2002, Turner 1993:56-57). In intertribal relations shamans are both feared and respected for their power to transform the forces that give vitality to things (see Langdon 1992, 1996, Santos Granero 1986). In addition to the many powers of shamans (see Langdon 1992, 1996), the significant role played by Manchineri shamans in today's interethnic relations still involves identifying sorcery and placating non-human beings through the use of ayahuasca, an aspect of the work of shamans in intertribal relations already described in the literature (e.g. Santos Granero 1986).

The political aspect of shamanism is important also for Manchineri youths. In addition to identity questions, it explains why young people, also in the city, have assumed important roles in ayahuasca ceremonies, and are interested in strengthening Manchineri spirituality. Currently, some young men especially are actively learning new songs in the native language. Some of these youths are active in local indigenous politics or spokespeople of their group. Elders

occasionally act through shamanism to receive guidance and strength for the acts of these active youths, and thus to their community. Nevertheless, old people have also questioned the young people's direct interaction with the vital non-human forces spirits that may cause misfortune for the community and its members. They said that young people use the traditional songs incorrectly, since the younger generation do not know when and how they should be sang. But, the young participants generally seemed to ask the older ones for permission to sing a song. This is one of the means of exercising of ritual power (see Hill 1993:214-215). Each song has its specific meaning, and it is significant in which situation or order they are chanted. One young indigenous teacher had even to stop working on registration of the ayahuasca chants for educational purposes, because the elders had told him not to get involved with the things he had not enough knowledge nor experience.

The new question has been the involvement of women in shamanism. Traditionally Manchineri women take less ayahuasca since it is historically not their role to communicate with the spirit world, excluding menopausal women, who may become experts in ayahuasca songs. This can be explained by menstruation and the perceived dangerous effect of women on the spirit world. For instance, for Héritier (1996:225), post-menopausal women are no longer fully women. In general, restrictions regarding shamanic practices maintain the norms of a women's position in society. During the field-

work, I never heard young girls singing ayahuasca songs, but two girls, one living in the reserve and the other in Rio Branco, told me that they had once learned an ayahuasca chant during the ceremony. In the city, girls participate in the ceremony like their counterparts in the reserve, but in the city more girls actually consume ayahuasca. It is plausible that this is because the position of women is changing and women are taking a more active part in Indian associations and new roles such as health agents and teachers. Thus, they are also increasingly permitted to produce knowledge through shamanic practices. This kind of knowledge can help them to understand better the "traditional" knowledge of their own ethnic groups.

In general, women have posed the threat to networking with the spirit world. The spirits controlled the success of hunting and agriculture, but communities are no longer dependent solely on these practices. Both sexes are needed when it comes to transmitting "tradition" and ethnic identity. In Acre, even young females have turned into shamans through vigorous shaman training. For instance, two Yawanawá sisters completed a long period of shamanic training in 2006, including one year of isolation in the jungle taking ayahuasca and other sacred plants there. Now they are leading figures in identifying Yawanawá patterns used in paintings⁶ and transmitting knowledge of songs. These two young women were even invited to the Senate, along with four other women, to be the *Diploma Mulher-Cidadã Bertha Latsen* award on the international day

of women. In their community some people express the criticism that the sisters endanger the community's contact with the spirit domain, whereas other community members regard them as brave women, who contribute to the reproduction and continuation of traditions.

Shamanic practices relate to the unequal power relations between the dominant society and native peoples, as well as to historical events. These power relations are political, economic, and cultural environments, which influence where and how the space for identity, personhood, and agency is constructed. By power relations I do not refer only to dominant society, but also to other native groups and even to one's own native community. For those in the reserve the task is to create a balanced relationship with the usually unknown and invisible urban space, because the cities and their practices and knowledge are needed in order to assure well-being in terms of health, education projects and so forth. For the Indians in the city, respectively, the difficulty lies in producing relatedness to the members of one's own ethnic group due to the difficulties to reproduce their cultures in cities. In the both case cultural traditions have to be comprehended, as they have to be explained to the other (Virtanen 2007a; 2007b). Shamanism can also overcome set ethnic boundaries since the ceremonial group may sometimes be mixed involving natives from other ethnic groups and non-natives (see detailed discussion in Virtanen forthcoming). It is interethnic activity, as it about relating to the other, and the dominant society is increasingly reflected in shamanism.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have shown that among young Manchineris shamanic practices are not only about being linked to the non-human beings, and the invisible elements and energies that control life, but they are also about relating to other human beings. Shamanism must be understood in the context of social relations created and maintained between humans and contemporary interethnic relations. Through shamanic practices young natives negotiate cultural traditions, demarcate social spaces, and shamanism is sometimes even involved in indigenous politics. However, shamanic practices still offer a confidential space of communication and interaction mainly for ethnic community, because as it was pointed out, they are fundamentally linked to morality, personal development and health. For some indigenous groups, shamanism also allows crossing contemporary rural-urban and gender boundaries. The interaction created between community members and non-humans, as well as between the community members and other humans creates and maintains cultural capital in the form of shamanic and traditional knowledge, social capital by shared corporeal experiences, trust and beliefs in a similar cosmology; and ethnic capital because values, attitudes about certain ways and models of living and doing things, and instructions for life are transmitted.

Contemporary young Indians increasingly seek out traditions that act as instruments of distinction. The ayahuasca shamanism has become one

of the representations of native living traditions and strengthened the ethnic identity of young natives. The use of ayahuasca enables individuals to take a particular stance thereby representing what one is or is not, and with what and whom one wants to relate to oneself. By setting certain cultural boundaries in shamanic practices, the participant may feel something as truly his or her own practice and sharing it with certain people. As the practice of shamanism involves young people's own activity and decision to interact with certain beings, young people influence themselves how their personhood and agency is constructed and created. For young natives, the practice of shamanism displays their pride in their own indigenous traditions that are activated in the present and at the same time something completely fresh. Learning nature beliefs and knowledge related to shamanism guides the kind of well-being and health native peoples wish to acquire. Shamanic practices have an important meaning for a young person's transition into adulthood and help to answer existential questions that usually arise during adolescent years.

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NOTES

¹ As the term ayahuasca is more known and widely used, I will use it to refer to the ceremonies here addressed. Manchineris themselves do not use the word ceremony, but they say "to take" or "drink kamalam-pi/ vine/ayahuasca".

² "Daime" comes from the words of a prayer: "Dai-me força, dai-me amor, dai-me luz" (Give me strength, give me love, give me light). Irineu Serra founded a spiritual cult in Acre state in the 1930s in which banisteriopsis caapi was consumed. The ceremony is reminiscent of a Catholic liturgy. Today "Daimistas" form a remarkably dynamic religious group in Amazonia (see e.g. MacRae 1992).

³ Social capital refers here to social networks, trust, memberships, friendships, honour and respectability. Social capital has been measured for instance by association memberships, volunteering, and networks of obligations (see Coleman 1988, Putnam 2000). For Pierre Bourdieu (1986:248-249), social capital is actual or potential resource of a mutually recognized durable network. He focuses on social capital as an individual resource.

⁴ McCallum (2001:55) emphasized that the young hunters maintain their distinction from the spirit world that shamans cannot do, and, thus, are not good hunters.

⁵ Bourdieu (1986:243) has argued that cul-

tural capital has three forms: an embodied state (long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body), an objectified state (cultural goods: pictures, books, dictionaries) and an institutionalized state (educational qualifications).

⁶The Yawanawá have used their patterns in cloth design as they have created their own Yawanawá brand and a cloth collection available in special shops in Brazil.

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