



Myth, Cosmos, and Ceremony among the Shipibo

Ethnographic Sketch

My specific reference point is the mythology of the Shipibo, a populous, fairly acculturated Panoan-speaking new alluvial tribe of the Peruvian montaña. They number some 16,000-20,000 people spread out in villages of about 150 people each and in much smaller, isolated, multihouse matrilocal extended-family compounds up and down the middle Ucayali River, a major southern tributary of the Amazon. They occupy the banks and related oxbow lakes of that river from Cumaría in the north to the mouth of the Pachitea in the south, where a closely related people, the Conibo, begin their distribution. These people are “canoe Indians,” fully at home on Ucayali and adjacent waters. They practice slash-and-burn horticulture, raising sweet manioc and plantains for carbohydrates on the land near the river; they also hunt and fish the river for aquatic protein. They are, like more riverine tribes, not terribly familiar with the surrounding jungle and are ill at ease within it.

A complex oral tradition still persists among elements of the population. It reflects, as readers will see, the influences of the Arawakan- and Tupian-speaking Indians that surround them. It is surprising that only a few fragments of that tradition have found their way into the standard compendiums like Karsten (1964) and

Steward (1946,1947, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1950). None were used by Lévi-Strauss when he worked up his massive *Mythologiques* (1969, 1973, 1978). I hope that adding the rich Shipibo variants to the literature justifies this exercise. But before introducing the myths I should describe the region in which the Shipibo dwell-the Peruvian montaña- and the Shipibo themselves.¹

The Peruvian Montaña

The Peruvian montaña includes the highly variable terrain from the eastern slopes of the Andes, with their high, arid, cold, and rugged topography; through the *ceja de la montaña*, literally “eyebrows of the forest,” a cloud forest of low trees and bushes entwined in a mat of vines and festooned with many epiphytes; to the flat alluvial lowlands of the upper Amazon drainage system and its broad, muddy, meandering rivers like the Ucayali, rich with the silt of the Andes. The Ucayali is formed by the confluence of the Urubamba and the Tamboo rivers, which flow from the southern Peruvian highlands. It rapidly descends through gorges and boulder-strewn beaches until it reaches the mouth of the Pachitea River. Swelled in size and now more sluggish in movement, the Ucayali meanders northward until it joins the Marañón near Iquitos and forms the Amazon proper. Sauer sets the topographic scene surrounding the Ucayali and nearby rivers:

The broadly triangular basin of the Amazon, between the Madeira, Yapura, and Ucayali rivers, the latter following the foot of the Andes, is a vast network of convergent, heavily meandering, and heavily flooding and depositing streams. The interfluvial areas, however, are of markedly higher land, somewhat ridged by dissection of deeply weathered sediment, in part a gently rolling country of low hills. (1950:324)

This region is covered by a classical triple-tiered tropical rain forest, although it is distinguished from the *Hylea* (typical rain forest) proper by being slightly higher (around 170 m. above sea level near Pucallpa on the central Ucayali), cooler, and dryer than the humid forests of the central Amazon. A dry season of sorts occurs from April or May to August. At the end of August or early September, perhaps only 10% of the terrain around the Shipibo is water (Bergman 1974:210); travel by canoe is difficult through log-strewn and nearly empty *caños* (inlet-outlet streams) connecting the myriad channels and oxbow lakes of the region. In compen-

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sation, fishing is easiest during this time, for the fish are concentrated as the follow the retreat of the waters. Then the rainy season begins in the form of torrential cloudbursts “relieved” by demoralizingly steady showers. The rivers swell to ugly brown monsters that in a bad flood overflow even the tallest bluffs of old alluvium, where the Shipibo huts (i.e., those of the lucky ones who found space) are located. At that time Bergman (1974:210) estimates that as much as 99% of Shipibo terrain might be water, making fishing and agriculture difficult but vastly increasing the ease of canoe travel. Indeed the whole landscape appears as one gigantic waterway. It is a miserable time, with people squatting on their raised house platforms, swatting mosquitoes and feeling bored. In a bad season the waters lap around the floorboards, and anaconda swim by in the night and make off with tethered chickens in a confusion of sleepy shouts, flying feathers, and splashing water.

As one progresses further south, upriver, past the mouth of the Pachitea, one notes a change in topography as the flat stoneless alluvium gives way to smaller, more rapidly coursing rivers of higher elevation and stony beaches. The climate also becomes cooler, for one is approaching such low outliers of the Andes as the Cerros de Iparía.

Throughout this region the virgin forest itself belies one’s Tarzan images of a tangled riot of vegetation. Instead, the forest giants like the *lupuna* reach with their umbrellalike tops 50-70 m. above the forest floor. Above, on the upper side of the forest canopy, all is light and screeching animation, as troops of monkeys and flocks of parakeets and macaws feast on many different kinds of fruits. Below, in the gloom of the forest, all one sees are the mighty buttressed roots of the forest giants and the spine-covered trunks of the lesser palms disappearing upward into the darkness. Few flowers adorn the scene and less vegetation. Thus one can see for a surprising distance and move about fairly freely. It is only when the forest is cut down, as in a garden plot, or interrupted, as over a narrow stream, that the nightmare jungle of secondary growth explodes in the newfound light. It can take hours to cut a trail through this organic chaos, slashing ineffectually at a solid mat of hanging vegetation. It is here that the traveler becomes uncomfortably aware that everything in the forest is out to get a piece of him. All vines have thorns or nests of stinging ants. For good reason the Shipibo avoid the forest, sticking close to their

paths or to the lakes and rivers that give them free movement and vistas.

Aboriginally the area was not rich in large terrestrial game animals, and it is even worse now, thanks to the depredations of the international pelt market. Tapir, peccary, and agouti were present, and jaguar and ocelot could be found in the interior of the interfluves. As elsewhere in Amazonia, however, the arboreal fauna play a more important role as dependable, everyday food resources. Several species of monkey, including howler, capuchin, and spider, chatter through the upper canopy high above one's head, as do edible birds like *paucar*, toucan, and macaw. It is in the rivers and lakes, however, where the Shipibo and other riverine Indians of the region get the bulk of their protein. The fish range from the gigantic *paiche* and *zungaro* (monstrous teleost and catfish, respectively) to the smaller but more abundant *boca chica*, *paña* ("piranha"), and *bagre*. Aquatic mammals are also found. Some, like the manatee, are eaten; some, like the dolphin, prohibited.

The Shipibo

Traditionally, the Shipibo occupied the middle Ucalayi, from Cumaría in the north, where the closely related Setebo began to be distributed, to the mouth of the Pachitea in the south, where the equally closely related Conibo began their sway. The Setebo are now culturally extinct, having amalgamated with the Shipibo; the differences that once separated the Shipibo from the Conibo are also disappearing through intermarriage and the mutual pressure of acculturation from the surrounding mestizo populations. Formerly there were hostilities between all of these groups, but now relations are cordial and only minor dialectical differences remain to distinguish them.

Tessman (1928) visited the central Ucalayi in 1923 and 1925, after the devastation of the rubber boom that had swept the area at the turn of the century and had greatly reduced the riverine Panoan population. At that time he estimated the Shipibo population at 1,300; the Conibo, 1,200; and the rapidly dwindling Setebo, at only 360. Ever since the date, however, the Shipibo-Conibo population has been rising. This is contrary to the sad experience of many Amazonian tribes who have seen their populations drop below replacement level from warfare or disease and who are con-

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scious of themselves as doomed races, forced to make painful adjustments to a declining demography. The reasons the Shipibo do not share this history are various. Their pride and self-consciousness as a group both limits intermarriage and hence amalgamation with the surrounding mestizos and stimulated pronatalism despite their knowledge of herbal contraceptives (Hern 1976). The matriarchal tendencies of the Shipibo result in women playing a much greater public and economic role than they do in other Amazonian tribes; hence they have a greater say over the consequences of their own fertility. Unlike dwindling tribes like the Cashibo, who practice female infanticide, the Shipibo prize infants, particularly female ones (Wistrand-Robinson 1977:127). Girls, because of the sexual division of labor, can earn money by participating as craftswomen in the tourist market for textiles, beadwork, and pottery. This inducement to keep female infants is further strengthened for their mothers by the prevailing fact of matrilineal residence, which keeps that money in the matriarch's compound, available to a certain extent for mutual use.

This does not mean, however, that knowledge of contraception is limited. Indeed it is highly elaborated and effective (Hern 1976) as is generally the case when women have some say in their own fertility. Yet Hern's (1977:357) report on the Shipibo village of Paococha (Paucocha) indicates a thriving and increasing population. The 1940 census revealed 2,500 Shipibo, 3,000 Setebo (although by that time many of them had merged with the Shipibo), and 3,000 Conibo (Steward and Métraux 1948:559-563). At present a combined population (Shipibo-Conibo) of 16,000 has been estimated (Chirf and Mora 1977); I would place the numbers closer to 20,000. This makes the riverine Panoans a fairly numerous tribal system by South American standards. Certainly they are not to be ignored in the montaña, as is tacitly indicated by the government's program in bilingual education (Faust 1973).

Shipibo villages are linear affairs that sting out along the high ground on the natural levees and old alluvial bluffs that border the meandering Ucalayi. There they are close to water to which they descend by machete-cut clay steps to their moored canoes, to fish, bathe, and wash clothes. The Shipibo are clean; they bathe themselves several times a day to refresh themselves, for the climate is sticky and enervating. The "village" displays little cohesion and in reality consists of a series of linear "nodes," each node composed of a cluster of several rectangular houses with thatched, hipped roofs.

They are wall-less and have raised palmwood slat floors and are clustered around each other-together with small floorless ceramic worksheds, cooksheds, and chicken pens-in the center of a carefully swept plaza (Hern 1977:358). People sleep at night in cotton mosquito nets, which it is the women's task to roll up every morning and set up every night. There are few belongings on the slat floor; most valuable things like shotguns, machetes, and arrows are stuck in the thatch out of children's reach. Usually the only thing visible on the floor is an old wooden or cardboard suitcase used to "protect" the family valuables. Because it is unlocked and the children regularly paw through its contents in search of playthings, the longevity of any such valuable is usually very short.

Surrounding the swept plaza is the green wall of the banana and plantain house garden. Lathrap (1977: pls. 1-3) has discussed the sophisticated experimentation with plants that goes on in this garden, with its many fruit trees and bushes, at the conservative Conibo village of Painaco. Even in the comparatively acculturated village of San Francisco de Yarinacocha, I made the following inventory of useful plants growing around the houses of a single compound and in the house gardens associated with the plaza: *remoininte*, *mokura*, *nevois*, *piñon*, and *húastë* (all medicines); *masën* ("gourd"), *teošh* ("bead plant"), and cotton (industrial plants); and guava, lemons, oranges, breadfruit, pineapples, cashews, *shahuëviare* fruit, *cumasëna* fruit, *caimito* fruit, *obilla* fruit, aji peppers, sugar cane, and *mami* fruit. The *chacras*, or slash-and-burn sweet manioc, plantain, and maize gardens are as complexly intercropped as the house gardens and are often found a half hour's walk away from the compound. As is usual in the tropical forest, men clear the *chacras*, and women harvest them and bring in firewood.

The huts of the plaza actually form the separate remains of the aboriginal *maloca*, or communal hut. That hut may have broken up owing to acculturative pressures, but its respective parts have not moved far. They consist of the house of the matriarch and her husband (if resident) and the huts of her adult daughters and their in-married husbands and their children. Residence is thus matrilineal (Campos 1977:57; Roe 1980a:51).

As early as 1764 the Shipibo were noted as living in family groups (Amich 1854:239), thus demonstrating the antiquity of the pattern. Skinner (1805:409) mentions the same tendency toward a household community prior to 1800, a situation that even the

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periodic missionary resettlement programs failed to modify. These families were scattered in communal houses each of which contained an extended matrilineal family of perhaps 10 persons per hut. The mid- to late 19th century witnessed the disruptive effects of the rubber boom, which resulted in the abandonment of the communal house and the adoption of the present hut style from the rural Peruvians, one hut for each nuclear family. Tessman (1928:11-12) recorded this scattering of settlement pattern after many Shipibo workers had withdrawn from the plantations in the early 20th century. Today these smaller houses are the common Shipibo house type, although a few of the old dirt-floored pëshëwa (aboriginal huts) remain in every settlement.

Interaction is heavy within the compounds, as mother and daughters visit back and forth and frequently work together on the same house platform while their children play indiscriminately among the closely spaced huts. In stark contrast to this cozy intracompound atmosphere, adult visits to other compounds are fleeting, mostly walk-throughs, and the children are rarely found outside of their own compounds. Sometimes the residents of one compound will not even know the people of a compound several units over, particularly if they are new arrivals; and there is not infrequently a certain degree of friction or ill-feeling between members of different compounds. Connecting the circular compound nodes of the village is a narrow sinuous footpath, its openness or tangles and overgrown aspects forming an eloquent commentary on the state of social relations between the compounds it connects. A Shipibo village can go on for kilometers as one encounters first one hut, then another, then three, then another, and so forth. In such a situation village fissioning is very easy, a compound or compounds simply picking up and leaving for up or downriver, where they will either establish their own village or move in with relatives.

Although warfare may have caused villages in the past to be larger, more concentrated, or more cohesive, there is little not to keep them together. Today the Shipibo are hard put to keep their largest villages, like San Francisco de Yarinaochoa, together, the political scene being riven with factional squabbles, usually with religion as the pretext (Protestant versus Catholic) even though most Shipibo are only nominal believers at best. There is mention of Shipibo village chiefs in the remote past (Izaguirre 1922/1929, 1:271-273, 2:90-95), but the extent of their powers is hazy and

there was clearly no intervillage, much less overall, tribal political organization.

Descent was, and to a degree still is, matrilineal (Karsten 1964:185-186) "with some clan features" (Steward and Métraux 1948:556), but it is clear from an examination of the kinship terminology (Tschopik 1958:938) that the system has been gradually shifting from a unilineal to a more cognatic mode. The major form of the family found today among the Shipibo is the matrilineally extended family with its nuclear segments occupying separate but proximate houses. Most unions are monogamous today, although a comparatively wealthy man like a native school teacher is not above keeping two wives in separate villages. Traditionally only the chiefs practiced sororal polygny; ordinary men contented themselves with a single wife (Karsten 1964:186).

Early marriage was-and in the more conservative Pisqui group (Pisquibo) of a northern tributary of the central Ucayali still is (Campos 1977:56)-a Shipibo-Conibo characteristic. The proposing by a boy was often done through a male intermediary when the intended was but a small child (Karsten 1964:186). Giving the mother rather than the father of the girl the decisive voice in deciding a suitor's eligibility makes the Shipibo anomalous among tropical forest tribes. I can recall instances in which rebellious daughters tried for months to reject young swains their mothers have picked for them only to acquiesce in the end.

Childbirth traditionally took place in a small temporary hut made in the *chakra* near the huts of the compound. The mother was assisted by some older woman who cut the child's umbilicus with a sharp bamboo knife (*paca köntsö*) and assisted in smearing the newborn *genipa* (*nanë*). Today some women will have their babies in their houses but still adhere to the applications of the black dye. After the delivery the woman and her child were taken back the house, where for two or three days the mother had to abide by certain dietary restrictions (essentially abstention from eating salt and certain fish). The father also obeyed the food taboos and had to remain inactive about the house for the same length of time in a mild form of the *couvade*. He particularly had to refrain from handling a machete or other dangerous tool for fear he would harm the child (Karsten 1964:194).

From soon after birth until about three months of age the newborn had to wear two short balsa boards wrapped in cotton-filled cloth (*baquë vetánetti*) placed over its head to produce a mild

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form of frontal-occipital skull deformation. This is rarely done today on main-river village children because the mestizos make fun of the custom, but the practice still flourishes in isolated tributary populations like the Pisquibo (Campos 1977:56). The skull press produces what the Shipibo regard as an attractively broad forehead and an elegantly sloping profile. Ligatures, or *jonshë*, were also placed on the girls' ankles, and many adult women still wear them as an adornment.

Child rearing ranges from highly permissive and affective to neutral and withdrawn, punctuated by physical punishment when a mother's patience snaps. The punishment only occurs at the toddler stage, but the most common response to a difficult child is simply to ignore it. A particularly lusty child frequently bawls away for the better part of the day while its mother silently works on beadwork or assumes some other task nearby without paying the slightest attention. Another frequent image is the sight of an enraged and screaming child toddling after its mother on a jungle path while she walks unconcerned. Yet on other occasions mothers will dote on their children, particularly infants, and sing them soft lullabys. Slightly older children are often in the care of "child nurses," usually a mother's elder daughter, while young sons join a play pack or accompany their fathers fishing on the river.

Little marks the male transition to adulthood. Instead the culture's emphasis is clearly on the female, for the major aboriginal ceremony was the female puberty rite, the *ani Šhrëati* (literally, the "big drinking"), which took place on a girl's first menstruation about the age of 10 or 12 years. This was a major ceremony, which lasted for three days and involved much drinking of *masato* (lightly alcoholic manioc beer), dancing, singing, and fighting. The height of the ceremony was a radical clitoridectomy, performed on the inebriated girl by an older woman specialist with the same *paca köntsö* that was used to cut her umbilicus as an infant. This ceremony has largely passed out of currency on the main river, the last one in the San Francisco de Yarinaocha area having been held in the 1950s, because of the universal horror with which the local mestizos and missionaries regarded this "savage" custom. Yet in many ways it was the high point in a girl's life; thereafter she was ready for marriage.

After the girl had recovered, which could take several months depending on the skill of the surgeon, a new feast—a nupital

feast-was held for the girl, again to the accompaniment of much drinking and dancing. (Karsten (1964:192) maintains that after the bride was handed over to her groom all those assembled watched the consummation of the marriage, but I could get no confirmation on this from my informants. This ceremony is now much abbreviated. Now that raiding has ended, adult life passes uneventfully for males and females alike save for the constant diversion of amorous intrigues and the periodic manioc beer bashes (unfortunately much compressed these days owing to the availability of *aquardiente*-sugarcane whiskey) that serve both to allieviate boredom and to vent aggressions.

Dead infants traditionally were places in an urn and buried beneath the house floor, whereas adults were buried in canoes (Tessmann 1928:215), an obvious imitation of a Western coffin. When a woman died her pots were “killed” or broken (1928:215) and buried with her. Her cookshed, and presumably her pottery shed as well, were burned alongside her house. If a man died his effects was also burned, along with his clothes and other personal effects (Karsten 1964-206). Women keep up a ritual keening for the dead for at least a day and a night while a vine, *sachaho*, is burned as an incense, its pungent smoke keeping the ghost(s) away as people sit by the corpse during the night, Spanish-style white candles burning by its head and feet. Near relatives serve *aguardiente* or *masatos* to guests who drop by to pay their respects. By morning many men are roaring drunk and inevitable fights break out.

Sometimes old people who have perhaps lost their spouses and who are tired of life retire to their mosquito netting and refuse food or drink until they expire. In one case I witnessed, an old man systematically sold all his belongings to help defray the funeral expenses his sons would incur.

A widower can remarry after a suitable interval, but a widow cannot remarry right away. She must shave her long hair and abstain from wearing any ornaments like her labret, nosepiece (*rësho*), or white bead belt (*morochënëshëti*). “When her hair has regrown, a year to a year and a half later, she is dressed in a ceremony with her former accouterments and can remarry” (Karsten 1964:207).

This bare ethnographic sketch does not reflect the unique beauty of the Shipibo way of life, a product as it is of the pride of the women, almost as leonine in their presence. They are responsible for the visual art that graces nearly every aspect of Shipibo mate-

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rial culture and provides it with its unique ethnic stamp. The men too play a role in the peculiarly Shipibo elaboration of nearly all aspects of their culture by being largely responsible for the verbal art, from songs to myths and folktales. No sketch of Shipibo culture could therefore be complete without a résumé of their art.

The Shipibo and their close relatives the Conibo have what is probably one of the most elaborate and flourishing polychrome pottery traditions in the Amerindian world today (an outline of this tradition can be found in DeBoer and Lathrap 1979). The coil-built ware comes in a variety of size modes (often three) and is divided between the culinary ware for cooking (although metal pots have made inroads into this ware in the more acculturated villages) and a polychrome service, or fine ware, that has resisted replacement (Lathrap 1970:182-183). Indeed there is a flourishing dual market (Roe 1976L83, 1979:215) whereby the poorer specimens often get shunted into the tourist market (Lathrap 1976), whereas the better works serve the international market for private use or gifts and are not sold as in the external market. What is important about this pottery tradition is not only its beauty and cash value but that its manufacture requires only raw materials, from resins, clays, and tempers to the firewood for firing it and the little pebbles used to polish it that come from 400 km. away along the central and upper Ucayali (DeBoer 1975). The Shipibo-Conibo are required to control, or at least be free to travel along, hundreds of kilometers of riverway to make their elaborate pottery. Thus in the very fact of its existence Shipibo-Conibo pottery stands as a testament both to their traveling inclinations and their political-geographic importance in the region.

In addition to pottery, Shipibo women produce complex diagonal beadwork (see frontispiece) made of imported glass beads, and weave cotton textiles decorated with the same intricate geometric designs found on the ceramics (Roe 1980a:53). Traditionally, they also painted their faces, hands, and feet and the faces of their men with closely similar designs. The designs (*quënëa*) themselves are geometric and symmetrical and are based on a cross motif. Although now the designs are largely decorative, they may have once possessed an iconographic meaning (Girard 1958:240). The Piro Indian designs on the jacket of this book are demonstrably derivative from Shipibo-Conibo canons and show zoomorphs transforming into geometric designs, so that same could have happened with the Panoan systems. Each Shipibo woman is

under a powerful cultural “aesthetic imperative” (Roe 1976:81) to produce designs that are both technically competent and aesthetically interesting (Roe 1980a:57). Women do not repeat designs. Well-known artists are admired and visited, and their output is collected and saved (Lathrap 1976:203).

Shipibo men, in contrast, engage in wood carving, making *macanas*, sword-clubs (*huino*), canoe paddles (*huinti*), and pipes (*shinitapon*) in addition to a whole set of other utilitarian things such as dugout canoes, wooden mortars, two-tone signal gongs, and *chapo* (plantain drink) agitators. In all these crafts there is a strict sexual division of labor in which Shipibo culture assigns the men the role of technological specialists and the women the role of artists. Furthermore, the two are interdependent, a man handing the sword-club he has just carved to his wife, who draws the design he will then patiently incise into the wood to make a completed *huino*. The force of public opinion is against the transgressors of this system (chiefly a few male artists) and effectively circumvents them by directing their output into the tourist market only (Roe 1979). The women whose villages are accessible to tourists can make a tidy sum from their activities, but the men, outside of selling a few string-decorated fake lances and toy bow-and-arrow sets to the tourists, must make their cash by engaging in lumbering, field clearing, the selling of salted fish and sarsaparilla (Hoffman 1964:270, 275), plantains, or jute (Campos 1977). In general, however, the men’s participation in the cash economy is still limited; they remain subsistence fishers and horticulturalists.

The Shipibo maintain an extensive and flourishing oral tradition that is chiefly the creation of the men. Although some young people in the most acculturated villages like San Francisco de Yarinacocha near Pucallpa are losing touch with these traditions, many adults still know and recite these tales. Many versions of Shipibo texts have been published by the personnel of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which maintains a big base on the other end of Yarinacocha (the large oxbow lake the Shipibo village is situated on) but these have been collected mainly for descriptive linguistic analysis and have not yet entered the anthropological literature (see Davila and Bardales 1973; Eakin 1973, 1974a; Lorient 1975; Lorient and Davila 1974; Lorient and Hollenbach 1970; Ochavano and Davila 1976; Ramirez and Eakin 1973). Many of these contain mythic information, as do the works of Burga Freitas (1939, 1967), and Odicio Roman

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(1969). Yet based on my work with Shipibo lore it is safe to say that the surface has merely been scratched, and many more myths and mythic variants await recovery. Additional work needs to be done on relating Shipibo myth to Panoan cosmology in general (Levy 1979) and to that of the surrounding Arawak and Tupian groups (Weiss 1975:481-508).

The Shipibo-Conibo also have a highly developed and beautiful song style that runs the gamut from shamans' curing songs rich in the animal symbolism of *ayahuasca*-induced visions, to the lyrical love songs and soft lullabys (Eakin 1974b; Lucas 1970; Willis 1975). Both men and women adopt a curiously haunting falsetto mode, and there is nothing so eerily beautiful as listening to an inebriated couple singing a falsetto duet in the moonlit plaza late at night. It is sad to report that many young people, especially those in the more acculturated villages, are more drawn to the popular Peruvian national and highland tunes, which they get over a few functioning transistor radios, than they are to their native song style. The related Shipibo dance style has, so far as I can tell, degenerated into a shuffling parody of rural Peruvian *rondas* and similar forms.

The Myths

Because I have relied a good deal on secondary research in constructing the model's general applicability, I thought it wise to present here some of the firsthand data I obtained in the field and that initially set me to thinking about these problems. The texts of these eleven Shipibo myths will also serve to provide a richness of content to supplement the rather arid descriptions of the model. Rather than boring the readers with a detailed analysis of each myth in relation to the model, I leave that to the reader.

Each myth is actually a close paraphrase rather than a literal translation of the original rendering, thereby preserving the fluency and integrity of the original. The myths were tape-recorded in the field from trusted informants, then transcribed verbatim into a phonetically simplified version of written Shipibo developed by the SIL (Faust 1973). With the aid of a literate Shipibo field assistant, José Roque, a literal interlinear Spanish translation was then made. Next, I translated this literal Spanish translation into English, constantly cross-checking in Shipibo and Spanish to ver-

ify the results. Thanks to the translatability of myth (Levi-Strauss 1963:206) and the care with which the translations were done, I am confident that despite have gone through the filters of three languages these myths retain their essential substance and even a little bit of the flavor and candence of the original Shipibo version. In accordance with Dundes's (1971:297) strictures about obtaining "native exegesis" of the various points brought up in the bare text, I went back to the original informant in each case and asked him or her to clarify specific points.

I should also mention something about the performative context in which the myths were told and conditions that surrounded their recording. Generally the myths told by Eduardo and Lucio were more formally elicited than the others. These men came from a compound unrelated to the two other compounds used in this study. To record the myths they told, my field assistant and I walked down to their end of the long lineal village of San Fransisco and paid both men a small fee. The situation was formal no audience was present except for a few children and, in one case with Eduardo, a small and only partially attentive group consisting of his daughter and her husband. Both men grew up in the vicinity of Callería, a small east-bank tributary of the Ucayali about a day and a half boat ride downriver (north) from San Fransisco. These two men, like the other informant, heard their myths from either their father or maternal uncle. Lucio is a man in his 40s, vigorous if somewhat predatory of mind and articulate of speech. Eduardo is an old man around 60, and his renditions suffer the old man's problem of being rather prolix, repetitive, and syntagmatically confused.

The myths told by Manuel and his wife, Ibarista; José, my field assistant; and Juan, his father, were all recorded spontaneously and no fee was requested by them. I have lived and worked on and off for ten years among the two compounds this set of informants represents. They are all close friends of mine, and the conditions of myth elicitation were, accordingly, very natural. This involved sitting around the fire at night and talking of other things, during the course of which the topics of myths were raised. I would then ask for and get a recitation and tape-record it as it went no. In all cases the informants were relaxed and genuinely interested in the tale they were telling. In addition they were recounting the myth for an appreciative audience that included their children, their children's spouses and children, and the ethnog-

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rapher within the context of the matrilineal extended-family compound.

Manuel, whose version of the Cumancaya myth is cited in the text and who told the *Yanapuma* myth (myth 9), is highly intelligent but a trifle moody and does not like to recite myths. His myths therefore tend to be rather terse. He defers to his wife, Ibarista, whose knowledge of Shipibo oral traditions is encyclopedic. Moreover she is an excellent storyteller, and her versions usually are very long, internally consistent, and delivered with considerable skill intonation and phrasing. José, who limited stock of myths went into the general ethnographic background information I used for this study and who told the "How We Learned to Paddle" myth cited in the text, is rather young and acculturated. He is rightfully modest about his command of traditional lore, although he is keenly interested in learning about and preserving Shipibo knowledge. Both Manuel and Ibarista are in their 40s and are very traditional in their interests, although Manuel has had considerable experience with anthropologists, including Lathrap, his students, and Hoffman and Bodley. Juan, José's father, is a superb storyteller and glories in the copious sound effects that grace every Shipibo myth and which I have tried to reflect in my paraphrases. His myths too went into background information implicitly cited in the text. These myths represent just the tip of the iceberg in Shipibo oral literature, so, as research continues, some of my assertions may prove incorrect. What is presented here does at least reflect a cross-section of the Shipibo conceptual universe.

Being aware that the collection of variants of a single tale is crucial for structural analysis, I took care to collect different versions of the same myth, such as the two myths about the Pleiades, myths 7 and 8, which contain very similar tapir-World Tree episodes. The various animal seducer myths also repeat key episodes, such as the depressed woman seeking death in the jaws of the jaguar.

Collecting these myths I began to think about the acquisition of oral texts from informants in various states of acculturation. Perhaps the objectivity a certain amount of acculturation produces may be conducive to the collection of oral traditions rather than a hindrance as might be supposed. This of course is true only if acculturation has not gone so far as to produce people with only slight knowledge of and interest in their traditions. I experienced

little difficulty eliciting myths in San Francisco, the largest and most acculturated Shipibo village on the Ucayali. Naturally, the time I have worked in this village and my rapport with my informants helped, as did my obvious interest in such material.

In contrast, Campos and Ablove, who have worked with the most conservative Shipibo on the central Ucayali—the Pisquibo downriver from San Francisco—and then several days upriver on the Pisqui, a western tributary of the Ucayali, and who must have had similar rapport with their informants, experienced considerable difficulty getting Shipibo myths (personal communication 1976). I should add, however, that their specific research designs focused on other topics. Dumont (personal communication 1978) found it almost impossible to collect myths from the Panare-Indians who are more “aboriginal” in their contact situation than either Shipibo or the Pisquibo—despite a research design specifically geared to the collection and analysis of myths. In spite of his long residence among them, the Panare simply refused to impart any myths at all. These are merely a few incidents, but they show high to moderate to low acculturation paralleling high to moderate to low ease of securing mythic information. This suggests to me that truly uncontacted peoples either are unwilling to divulge to outsiders what they consider to be sacred information or have so internalized the myths that they cannot readily elucidate them to others outside their tradition. (2) Those who have at least some familiarity with others and their divergent traditions, on the other hand, bring a certain objectivity to their heritage, which results in both a greater desire to share those traditions with other and a greater care for translatability, which expresses itself in more schematic outlines, greater redundancy, and tighter syntagmatic structure.

Perhaps that is why the most coherent as well as the richest account of a native cosmology in South America, that of the Desana, results from Reichel-Dolmatoff's (1971) use at least initially of a single relatively acculturated informant, Antonio Guzmán. Clearly such is not a case of native models being translated by an anthropologist into his own model at a third degree of removal. Instead Guzmán, tidying up the “native model,” was as much an anthropologist as Reichel-Dolmatoff. By this time, of course, the model begins to look a little made up in its neatness and sense of closure, but to say that a model is something made up to account for nebulous data is not necessarily an admission of falsity. As

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Geertz points out, it has a function. But, despite being actor-oriented

anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot. (By definition, only a “native” makes first order ones: it’s *his* culture)... Anthropological works based on other anthropological works (Lévi-Strauss’, for example) may, of course, be fourth order or higher, and informants frequently, even habitually, make second order interpretations-what have come to be known as “native models.” They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are “something made,” “something fashioned”-the original meaning of *fictiô*-not that they are false. (1973:15 and note)

In this taxonomy, because of the marginality of Guzmán and his remarkable objectivity with regard to his own dimly remembered culture, *Amazonian Cosmos* is truly the work of *two* anthropologists, one interpreting the distillations of another, albeit amateur, one. Thus it is a fourth-order derivation. While this may explain its elegance and coherence, it does not consign it to illusion.

Some have used the methodological shortcomings of the Desana material to impugn its authenticity. Yet (a) my conversations with other who have worked among closely related groups (T. Langdon, personal communication 1977, on the Barasana) where, with some reservations (see Hugh-Jones 1974), Reichel-Dolmatoff’s and Guzmán’s account works fairly well; (b) the close congruence between these people’s accounts and that of Torres Laborde’s (1969) admittedly short fieldwork with the Barasana; and (c) Reichel-Dolmatoff’s (1975) work, which is based on actual field study-albeit limited in duration and focused in scope-with the Desana and other Tukano groups, all indicate to me that this full and compelling account is “real” enough to be confidently used as comparative material for my model and can provide specific keys to understanding the Shipibo material. It formed the prototype as well as the stimulus for my approach to the Shipibo date.

The following set of Shipibo myths represents merely a selected group of texts out of all those that I have recovered. In this set I have tried to include myths that relate to the concerns discussed in this book: ethnic interactions, relations of the sexes, and major supernatural figures. Both long mythical texts of a serious nature and short humorous folktales are presented here. I have

made no attempt to make this a completely representative cross-section of Shipibo mythology.

Myth 1. The Inca's Daughters

LUCIO: When our people went *barbasco* [a fish poison] fishing, one person did not go with them. He stayed in his house. When the fisherman applied the *barbasco* the fish did not flee. Neither were they able to find any large fish. One boy came to where they were fishing in a beautiful canoe. He was fishing with bow and arrow. As he caught fish and put them in his canoe the small fish turned into huge ones such as the *tucunari* fish. As the others continued poisoning, the boy by himself continued catching large fish. The others began to get very angry. Conversing among themselves, they said, "From where does he come, this boy who is fishing? Why does he catch so much while we catch nothing? Ayamarai! ["dammit!"] Let's kill him." They grabbed him and buried him in the mud. After they had buried him, they also buried his canoe and his paddle elsewhere. They buried everything in the mud mixed with leaves which the river had redeposited. Then they returned to their village.

They climbed back up to their village on the bluff. Meanwhile the one who had stayed behind now left the village with his wife to fish in the vicinity of the port as the others had done. When he got there he heard what sounded like a human crying. It was the cry of a child. "Where does that crying come from?" he asked his wife. "Listen!" he said in a surprised voice. He noticed that the earth moved a little, as if there was something in it. The child cried again. The couple ran to the source of the sound and began to dig. They saw that it was a child. After rescuing the child they washed him. The child began to speak. "There is my canoe; there is my paddle; and there," pointing elsewhere, "are my arrows. Please get them for me." The man then proceeded to excavate and get them. The child said to him as he was getting into his canoe, "After I leave, inside of three days there will be a huge rushing sound-*riririri!*-from where the sun rises and from where the sun sets. The noise will also come from the north and from the south. It will herald the arrival of a tempest. When that happens, climb up into the top of a *nanë* [genipa tree]." Saying that, he left.

The rest of the village was getting drunk in a fiesta. They were doing a *ronda* ["circular dance"] and singing. The couple went to warn them but the drunkards would not believe them. Then an earthquake came, followed by an eclipse of the sun. The couple climbed up into the *nanë* tree. There the wife, because of her distended belly, which indi-

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cated her pregnancy, turned into the bulbous hanging nest of the nacash termite [which typically adorns the genipa tree], giving birth to a male child in the process. In the darkness the man and his surviving son sat on the branches. To see if the flood waters that had come were receding, the man threw a *nanë* fruit below. But as he listened he heard its splash, thus indicating that the water was still there. Later, the water receded completely. The man saw that there was nothing left on earth. Huge crevasses existed where the village had been. All that was left was a large lake.

The man climbed down and said to his child, "Stay there, I'm going to find the others." He searched and searched. The son called to his father, "Carry me!" from the *nanë* tree. "Yes, I'm coming to get you," answered the man. But as the father was approaching the tree, the child turned into a *maëcahua* bird. Because of this, until today the *maëcahua* bird exists [this bird is an evil omen; when it flies near a settlement, the Shipibo get scared and try to kill it, for its call indicates that someone will soon die]. (3)

The man went walking and walking, looking for his compatriots. He walked along the banks of a huge lake. He kept walking but there wasn't anyone. There was nothing to eat. Finally, he found a *quënpö vacu* [a small beer mug] sitting under a tree. He picked it up and stared at it in bewilderment. "From where does this come?" he asked. It was full of *masato* ["manioc beer"] and he drank it. "I will get some more," he said. He wanted to fill his stomach. He reached the river and walked from one meander to the next. He stopped and sipped more *masato* from the *quënpö*. He was still hungry. Then he set out again and walked some meanders more. Another day dawned and he found himself back where he had started. There, awaiting him, was another *quënpö*, full as the one before. He sipped the liquid inside it and wondered again from where it had come since there was nobody about. Hidden, he listened and listened for one whole day. Nobody appeared. Then he said, "Now I will dig a hole in the earth." He dug and he dug until he could hide himself. He placed some leaves over his head. Then a parrot flew toward him and alighted, looked around, but did not see the man in his hole, and flew away.

Shortly afterward, two women came paddling by in a canoe, one in the bow and one behind, steering, in the stern. They arrived at the port and the one in the bow climbed the bluff, unaware that anyone was there. She then set on the ground a *quënpö vacu* full of *chapö*. The man then jumped out of his hole and grabbed her. The woman cried, "Let me go! Not me!" she said; "you can get the one who stayed behind in the stern because she is the one our father said you could have." But the man did not trust her and did not let her go. When he would not let her go, the woman said, "I am not really the Inca's daughter. He just raised me.

You can take the one in the stern. She is really his daughter.” Thus the woman spoke to the man. But when she said this the man still did not let her go. The woman in the stern of the canoe, seeing that he did not want her, paddled off. She said, “He doesn’t love me so I will go away.” Because she was the daughter of the Inca and the other was only an ordinary woman, we Indians have nothing today.

**Myth 2. Anciently, There Was a Woman
Who Was Always Being Molested by a Dolphin**

MANUEL: Anciently, there was a woman who was always being molested by a dolphin. Every morning early when she emerged from her mosquito netting the woman went down to the shore of the lake to perform her toilet. This included her painting her face with *nanë quënëa* [designs drawn with *genipa* juice]. When she would be pretty like that the dolphin would enter her. A little while after this happened the woman began to sleep all day and night.

Worried, her two nephew talked about it. “A dolphin is probably entering the vagina of our dear Aunt with his penis. That is why she sleeps all the time.” One said, “I heard the dolphin *pánsh* [a Shipibo onomatopoeic word meant to mimic the dolphin when it surfaces to expel air from its blowhole]! Thus he came and entered inside of her.” As he approached, the woman always began to sleep under the influence of the dolphin’s magic: *Hëén, hëén* [a Shipibo word for the heavy breathing indicating that she had fallen asleep]. The two nephews began to say among themselves, “Now let us spy on them.” A while later the dolphin came; and the nephews, who had arrows, grabbed them in their hands. One of them grabbed a *macana*.

They arrived at the bank, and when they were hidden-well hidden-the sound of the dolphin was heard. The dolphin came to the canoe landing. It was very quiet for a while as he approached. Some moments later the dolphin climbed out of the water. He emerged and began to approach the woman. When he was very, very close the woman began to sleep- *hëén*. When the dolphin reached her, he entered her. The two nephews then began to approach the copulating couple. The dolphin carried an *isohina* [an archaic form of Shipibo ceremonial costume whereby a man dressed in a *tari* (“cotton poncho”) dangled a bunch of four *isco* tail feathers attached to a glass-beaded necklace suspended over his back. The *isco*, or *paucar* in jungle Spanish, is a starling-sized bird, with a black body and brilliant yellow tail feathers] (4) around his dorsal fin. He wore it thus on his back as he entered the woman’s mosquito netting. When he was leaving it afterward, one of the two nephews began to shoot arrows at him with his bow. The dolphin fell

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to the ground impaled. He struggled to raise himself on his ventral fins and crawled with great difficulty toward the lake. The other nephew then shot him with an arrow when he was very near to the port. Then he gave the dolphin a blow with his *macana*. The wounded dolphin managed nonetheless to crawl into the water and escape.

Later, the morning of the following day, the two nephews talked among themselves: “What have we done to him; perhaps he is still alive?” Speaking thus, they went in search of him. They saw his body on the front shore of a lenticular island in the middle of the river. It lay amid the driftwood. The tails of the *isohina* were ruined, as the arrows had entered his back through them. Later, when they had returned, they asked their aunt if she had been dreaming of anybody. “Yes,” she replied, “I always dreamed of someone every night.” “Who you dreamed about every night was the dolphin and we have killed him,” replied the nephews. After this the woman stayed healthy.

Myth 3. The Boa and the Hunter

MANUEL: One day a man who was a very bad hunter set out once more to pursue the game of the forest with his blowgun. He had no luck, as usual, until he approached the shores of a lake. There he noticed a man wearing a *bëpota tari* [“decorated *cushma*” (Peruvian Spanish for a sleeveless tunic)]. This man greeted him and asked him if he would like to accompany him so that the strange man could show the hunter his “real *cushma*.” The hunter agreed and they set off, only to finally encounter a huge coiled “Mother of All Boas,” the anaconda. This, the man informed the hunter, was his *real cushma*.

The hunter was very frightened, but the man reassured him and said that he would show him how to be a good hunter. The anaconda man first blew through his blowgun, but out of it came only a horde of stinging, poisonous scorpions and spiders. When the stranger blew again, hosts of deadly vipers as well as all the other evil snakes of the jungle poured forth from the tip of his blowgun. He then handed his blowgun to the hunter, whom he instructed to do as he had done. The hunter blew through the instrument and immediately killed a monkey. From that day on the hunter, thanks to his friendship with the anaconda man, always enjoyed success in the hunt and soon became renowned as a great hunter.

Myth 4. The Woman, the Earthworm, and the Jaguar

IBARISTA: It is said that long ago there was a young woman who had a giant earthworm as a husband. Each morning after eating, as was her

custom, she went to sit in her little pottery shed, supposedly to begin making ceramic vessels. She would stay there all day long and only return in the late afternoon to the village. After this went on for some time her mother began to get suspicious and decide to find out what was going on. "Why does my daughter always go work in her pottery shed so diligently?" thought the mother. She wanted to find out what her daughter was really up to. So she went to the hut and saw her daughter squatting inside it. She demanded that her daughter get up and move to one side so she could see what she was doing. But her daughter did not want to move. Seeing her daughter's reluctance, the mother asked the girl why she was always sitting and why she did not want to get up. Again she commanded, "Ho! Move to the side. If you do not I'm going to lift you up myself."

Since her daughter obstinately refused to move, the old woman took hold of her arms and lifted her up with a tug. In that instant a prominent sucking sound was heard as the head of a giant earthworm was yanked out of the young girl's vagina. The earthworm spoke to the astonished mother saying, "I am your uncle." With those words he pulled his head back into his hole and retreated into the earth. Enraged, the old woman turned to her daughter, saying, "So! Now I know why you were always seated! You have a husband that is an earthworm!" With those words the mother hit the child on her buttocks with her ceramic-decorating brush.⁵ Then the mother poured boiling water down the earthworm's hole. From deep inside the hole the mother and the daughter could hear the earthworm dying. The young girl then said to her mother, "You have caused me great shame and I will leave the village for the heart of the jungle, where I know that the jaguar will end my suffering by eating me, for I have heard that jaguars eat raw meat."

Early the next morning the girl set out. It was still almost dark beneath the forest canopy. From the obscurity of the trees there came a handsome man dressed in a white *tari*. The man was the jaguar in his human guise. The man asked the girl, "Why are you here?" The girl answered, "My mother has caused me great shame and for that reason I have come to the center of the jungle to look for the jaguar, who will put an end to my suffering." The man replied, "It is I whom you are seeking. I am the jaguar." The girl was startled and inspected him more closely, admiring him. The jaguar then carried the girl off to his abode to rest. The jaguar wanted to copulate with the young girl right away, but he noticed that her vagina was full of baby earthworms. The earthworm had placed his offspring there.

Disgusted, the jaguar searched for a herbal medicine to put in her vagina. He wanted to kill the earthworm's brood so that he could have sex with her. Having obtained the medicine he inserted it into her vagina, and out spilled all kinds of noxious creatures: spiders, scorpions,

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vipers, rays, and poisonous lizards. All kinds of bad snakes poured from the girl's vagina. Thus freed, the girl became the jaguar's wife. Later, when he was eating *panguana* [a ground-dwelling bird], he sweetly asked his wife to get him some *chambira* vine [a bothersome species that carries formidable thorns], for he wanted to get rid of a bone that had gotten lodged between his teeth. The girl got the vine and, returning, said to her husband, "Open your mouth; I will get the bone out." The jaguar responded, "Not here; let's go out beneath the tree to do it." "Be careful," he said; "I may lose control of myself under all the pain of having the bone removed. I may revert to my animal self and eat you."

The girl gingerly set about performing the operation while poised ready for flight. She wrapped the vine around the bone and pulled on it several times. Finally, with a mighty yank, she pulled it out-*tisk!*-the sound of its being removed echoed into the forest. The jaguar shouted in pain, "*Ho!*" The girl jumped away just as the man turned into a big cat. Escaping, she hid around the other side of the tree. The girl was afraid of her husband now, but gradually she calmed down. Angered by her fear, the jaguar said, "Come here; don't fear; I won't eat you."

Relieved the girl approached her spouse and they went off happily together. She bore him two sons, one very large, and the other small. Meanwhile her relatives had been looking for her all this time. One day one of her brothers was searching through the forest and saw a column of smoke. He set off in its direction to find out who was there. Coming to a clearing, he saw her hut and cookshed from whence the smoke was rising. He found his sister alone because the jaguar was out in the forest hunting. The brother asked her, "Why are you here? You're alive. I thought you have been eaten by a jaguar." "Come," said the sister, "I have not been eaten. I'm alive. Your brother-in-law has gone hunting animals in the jungle. It is about time for him to come home now. Quickly, go ahead and eat what I have prepared. Then you must climb into the rafters and hide. If my husband finds you here he will become jealous and kill you." Saying that, she gave her brother something to eat and hustled him up into the rafters to rest.

Just as she had finished, her husband approached the hut from the jungle. He was carrying a heavy peccary on his back. When he entered the house he could smell that another human was there. The jaguar became enraged at this intrusion. Slowly, however, little by little he calmed himself down. He set the peccary near the fire. His wife told him, "Your brother-in-law has arrived for a visit; now don't do anything to him, for he is a real human being." The jaguar, now completely in control of himself, said, "Very well, cook this peccary that I have brought." By this time the jaguar had completely changed back into his human form to greet his guest.

The brother was still afraid and refused to climb down. The jaguar said, "Come brother-in-law, nothing will happen to you, for your sister is here. I will tell you, I am living here happily with her as my wife." The brother climbed down and waited for the food to be cooked. After the peccary was barely singed, the jaguar took his piece. The brother waited for his piece to be better done. The brother was curious to see whether the jaguar would tear at his very rare piece, which had been prepared, as was his preference, almost bleeding, or whether he would eat like a human being. But the jaguar told the human, "Do not watch me while I am eating, for I may lose my senses and revert to my animal self."

At first the brother obeyed the jaguar's wish and was careful to look off to the side, but curiosity soon overcame him as he listened to the noisy sounds of the jaguar eating. He carefully began to watch the jaguar out of the corner of his eye. As he saw the jaguar crouching on the ground slashing into the meat with his huge canines, the brother felt great terror. His sister called out to him then that his piece of peccary was ready. He ate and hastened back to the village.

There he told his mother that he had visited his sister, that she had not been killed by the jaguar but was instead living with him as his wife. The mother said, "You have met her; go and ask her if she is willing to leave him and come back to us tomorrow." The brother set off again that morning. This time he was accompanied by his younger brother. They arrived at their sister's house shortly thereafter. They had hurried to arrive during the early part of the day because they knew that the jaguar would be away hunting in the jungle.

The brothers addressed their sister, saying, "We have come to get you." Their sister replied, "Before you take me with you, you have better return to our mother's house and build four stout layers of wood to make its walls. Turn it into a strongly defended house. The relatives of your brother-in-law are very fierce, and you will not be able to fight against them when they come to bring me back except from the inside of the fortified hut."

The brothers returned with their sister's advice. Their mother agreed, and they set about closing in the communal hut by placing four layers of horizontal and vertical planks between the vertical house posts. After they have finished, the brothers set off with more relatives as reinforcements to recover their sister and her two sons. The girl agreed to go, and she left the jaguar's hut, taking her two sons with her, one at each breast. She also took all of her things.

That same afternoon, when the jaguar returned, he saw that his wife and children had left him. He began to sing. He chanted all night long. He was soon joined by his relatives, who sang with him. Safely inside their fortified hut, the humans awaited the arrival of the jaguar and

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his fierce relatives. But they did not come. After two nights of singing, the jaguars prepared to attack.

In the early morning, almost at daybreak, the jaguars arrived in great tumult. They surrounded the doorway and the walls of the hut. The people have left chinks in the walls through which they shot arrows to kill the jaguars. The jaguars tore at the walls with their teeth and claws. After a pitched battle, the jaguars appeared to have lost the day, for many of them lay on the ground dead, full of arrows. Two of the walls had already been ripped away, however, leaving only two layers between the humans and the jaguars. The jaguars, much reduced in number, still threatened to tear down the remaining walls.

Seeing the plight of his relatives, their leader, the jaguar-husband, said to the people, "Please send out my largest son. If you do, we will let you keep the smaller one and we will go away, back to the forest. If you refuse we will attack again, destroying the remaining walls, and eat you all." The people were afraid, and the girl sent her largest son out, crawling on all fours. The jaguars carried the boy away, and from that day on jaguars and people have been different creatures.

Myth 5. The Woman and the Anaconda

IBARISTA: Long ago, they say, there lived a spinster who was secretly married to an anaconda. Every morning after her bath she would paint herself with *nanë* [a blue-black plant prepared from the fruit of *Genipa americana*] and leave her village carrying a half-gourd bowl. Each morning she would leave with the bowl. One day her brother-in-law saw her depart and thought to himself, "Why does she always carry that gourd with her?" He decided to follow her so that he could find out where she was going and what she was doing.

The woman arrived at a lake not far from the village. Looking all around to make sure no one was watching, she overturned the gourd and placed it on the water. She then beat on it-*tón, tón, tón*. As the sound spread out into the lake, *Cincainal*, the anaconda, answered, "*Hian*." Such was his call. A little while later as he approached the land the water began to roil about and form waves.

From his hiding place, the man could see *Cincaina* approaching. The boa's head was sticking halfway out of the water. Behind it a broad *V* rippled out into the lake. The woman waded out into the water to meet him. She stopped when it came to up to her waist. When the *Cincaina* reached her he began to twine his body around hers in great coils, starting from her legs and soon encircling her whole body. As his forked tongue darted across her neck, *Cincaina*, began to make love to her, inserting the tip of his tail into her vagina.

In his hiding place the man thought, "So this is why she comes here every morning with her gourd bowl." After their lovemaking was over, the boa removed his tail from the woman's vagina, uncoiled her body, and returned to the depths of the lake. As the woman turned around to wade back to the shore, the man hurried away to tell her brother about the episode. When he arrived back at the village he approached the woman's brother and said, "Your sister goes out to meet a boa every morning by the lake shore. That is why she leaves with a half-gourd bowl. She uses it to call the boa, and afterward they make love. I have seen it with my own eyes.

Very early next morning the brother accompanied the man as they both set out for the lake. The brother also carried a bowl, only his was hidden under his *cushma*. When they arrived at the lake the brother took the gourd out and, like his sister had done, placed it upside down on the surface of the water and beat upon it- *tón, tón! Cincaina*, hearing the sound and mistaking it for the woman's signal, answered "*Hian*" and began to approach the shore. The two men awaited him, both wielding long poles, which they had sharpened at one end, thus fashioning them into spears. The water began to be disturbed, heralding the arrival of the boa.

As it got closer and raised its head out of the water to look for the woman, her brother thrust the pointed end of the pole into the middle of its body while the brother-in-law struck it over the head, killing it. The two men then pulled the *Cincaina* up onto the land. Then *nishvin*, a yellow wasp that likes to eat meat, snatched up a piece of the boa's skin and carried it to the village, where it placed the scrap next to the woman. She had not yet left for the lake.

She saw the piece of skin and immediately recognized it as being part of her lover's body. The woman, afraid of what might have happened, ran to get her bowl. She hurried to the lake, where she beat upon the water as she had done so many times before. She called out to the *Cincaina*, but he did not answer. She despaired, thinking, "Perhaps he is dead, for I saw the wasp bring a part of his skin. Maybe *nishvin* brought it to advise me of my lover's death." Filled with suffering and embarrassment, the woman turned into a *shihuango* [a small black bird often seen in the caños].

Myth 6. The Widow and the Tapir

IBARISTA: The first people and animals were capable of speech like we are. When it was thus a woman became a widow. She fled in grief from the scene of her husband's death and was lost in the heart of the forest for a very long time. She had her young boy with her. She lamented,

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“The jaguar, who eats raw meat, will eat me. I go in search of him.” She was looking for death. Saying this, she went. She left the scene of her husband’s death. The tapir was to be like her husband. It was a long time that she was left alone.

She found a tapir in animal form and spoke. “If only he was a man I would stay with him as my husband.” Thus she spoke. With her child she was in the middle of the jungle. Later, in the night, the tapir, now transformed into a human, came and touched her in her hammock to wake her up [it is Shipibo custom for a young suitor to gently touch a girl asleep in her hammock to wake her up for lovemaking]. “Who are you?” she said. “I am what you wished I were,” the man answered. She responded, “If you were really a person, I will be your wife.” “Yes,” he said, “I am what you spoke. You spoke to me thus and I have come to you.” “I didn’t say that to a tapir,” she countered, “I said that to an imaginary person.” “I am that person,” answered the tapir. The woman let him enter her hammock and they made love. He was as her husband. He made plantain *chacra* for her. He made manioc *chacra* for her and other *chacras* well.

Thus they lived together for a long time. After a while the brother of her dead husband, her brother-in-law, went searching for her. “Where is the wife of my brother?” he asked. “After my brother died where was my nephew carried?” He began searching the depths of the jungle. He followed various paths. Since there were no shotguns then, he carried bow and arrows. As he went he sniffed the air for the scent of the smoke of a cook fire. “Where am I going?” he wondered. Following along he passed a huge plantain *chacra*, an indication that people lived there. Continuing walking, he found a *pëshewa* [the aboriginal house type that lacked the cross-members and raised floor of the mestizo-influenced house type many Shipibo live in today] and another one to sleep in. The first one was used to store maize. Anciently, thus it was, a small second floor was used to store maize. On entering the bottom floor of the house he saw his nephew seated there.

When the youth heard *chaish!* [the sound of small canes being stepped on], he turned and saw his uncle. “Where is your mother?” asked the man. “It has been a long time that you have been here and I have looked and looked for you. Finally I have found you,” said the man to his nephew. “My mother is with my uncle,” replied the boy. “They have gone to a dried-up pool to gather the dead fish” [indicating that this episode happened at the end of the dry season], he continued. “Does your mother have a new husband?” asked the man. “Yes,” the youth answered, “she does.” “How long has your mother been gone?” the uncle asked. “She will be back any time now. Every time she comes back she always asks me if anybody has been here, even while nobody has ever come.” When the boy had said this his uncle saw

the huge round and flat tapir tick the youth wore as a *rësho* [a nose pendant in the form of a flattish, convex round piece of metal worn traditionally by both Shipibo men and women]. “Why do you have a tapir tick below your nose?” the man asked. “Come here!” he commanded, “and I will take it off and throw it away.” “No, you don’t have to throw it away,” the boy protested; “my mother stuck it on me as a child.” “It is not a real *rësho*,” replied the man; “it is a tapir tick.” Then he snatched it off the boy and flung it away. After it was thrown away, the boy was left very sad.

I will climb up to the second floor of the hut,” the man instructed the boy. “When your mother arrives and asks if anyone has come, you must tell her that no one has. That is what you must say.” With those words the brother-in-law climbed up to the storage floor with his arrows in his hands and remained there. From his vantage point he saw a woman coming; *pašca, pašca*, the sound of her very thick skirt swished as she approached. The skirt was so thick because there was a lot of tapir pubic hairs in it. The brother-in-law saw that she was carrying a *tasá* [a plaited burden basket with a hexagonal weave] full of fish. When she arrived she unloaded the basket on the ground and asked her son, “has anyone arrived here today?” “No,” he replied, “nobody has arrived.” Then she got a *quënti* [“cooking pot”] and began to prepare *masato* by kneading the mash with her hands. It was of this size [indicating about 50 cms. with her hands], a *quënti ani* [“large cooking pot”]. She was preparing it for the tapir to drink when he arrived. After kneading it she noticed that her son no longer had his *rësho* beneath his nose. “Where is your uncle’s *rësho*?” she asked her son. “I don’t know where I lost it” he answered. “Why have you thrown away the *rësho* your uncle gave you?” the woman asked. Then, with her brother-in-law looking on from his hidden position, the woman hit her son on the back of the neck.

The brother-in-law wanted to shoot her with an arrow right then and there but thought, with his bow drawn, that it would be better to wait for her husband and shoot him instead. Then the woman finished preparing the *masato*. The brother-in-law was above her looking in her direction. The *masato* being ready, the woman called to her tapir husband, “Nobody has come; come here *sincaïnaa!*” [an onomatopoeic attempt in Shipibo to depict her aping the tapir’s call]. This she said. The tapir replied, “*Chósh!*” A few moments later came the sound of his feet approaching—“*rique-rique*.” He came, not thinking anyone was there. He was a huge tapir with many wrinkles on his snout. He arrived with a *naviro* [twill-weave burden basket made out of palm leaves] and dumped it down to rest. The tapir was thirsty and drank the prepared *masato*. Then he sat down, broadside to the hunter. While he was drinking, his head was down. The woman went to cut plantain leaves to put the fish on.

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At the same moment that he was drinking, the brother-in-law was on his knees and let an arrow fly. The *paca pia* [a lanceolate-shaped bamboo hunting and war arrow] entered the middle of the tapir's ribcage- *tsois!* [the sound of the arrow point passing between the bones]. When this happened the tapir cried out, "*Chósh!*" and died. His wife was behind him and cried out in fright, "*Eë! A nawa* [the Shipibo pejorative term for an outsider, a savage] is killing my husband!" Yelling this, she went running away. Then the brother-in-law jumped down from the storage floor, grabbed his nephew, and ran away. He was approaching his house, accompanied by his nephew, and ran away. He was approaching his house, accompanied by his nephew, when the woman followed, yelling, "Brother-in-law, you are carrying my son." But he did not wait for her. The youth pleaded with his uncle, saying, "Wait for my mother!" He began to cry. Then the uncle waited, there on the plain, for her. The woman announced her arrival with "*Jo!*" calling, "Brother-in-law, wait for me; you are carrying your nephew." There he waited and acknowledged her arrival with "*Jeë.*" Her swishing dress-*pašhca*, *pašhca*-announced her arrival. "Brother-in-law, you are carrying your nephew"; saying this, she arrived. The brother-in-law replied, "Why, after the death of my brother, did you take a tapir as your husband and, in front of me, why did you place that ugly tick under my nephew's nose? And then, why did you hit him in the nape of the neck when it was missing?"

Then he added, "I had thought of shooting you with an arrow too, but I did not and changed my mind." Then he took the bowstring from his bow and began to whip her with it. Then he switched to using his bow and beat her with it until she nearly died. She cried and cried. When she was crying too much he left her there. He took off her *chitonte* [the Shipibo wrap-around tubular cotton skirt] and using the point of his bow, for he wished not to touch the offending garment with his hands, threw it underneath some *caña brava* [a weed with a razorlike leaf and therefore impenetrable]. He threw it away and continued on his way. The woman remained there, utterly humiliated, squatting without her skirt. She only had a blouse on. The brother-in-law took his nephew with him. After this had happened, the man and the young boy arrived at the man's grandmother's house {Shipibo residence is prevalingly matrilineal, and descent matrilineal, so this segment involves a four-generation matrilineally extended family living in a separate compound formed around a communal hut}.

When they arrived, the brother-in-law spoke of what had happened. His mother and sisters were there. So the man spoke, "After he, my elder brother, died, his wife remarried a tapir. She was hidden in the depths of the forest and she had brought my nephew with her." Thus, he spoke to his mother, brothers, and sisters. Then his sisters cried "*Eë!*" and came running to get their nephew, as did the boy's great-

grandmother. After she got him she said to her grandson, the man, “Where is his mother?” “I was angry,” said the man, “I beat her; I tore off her skirt and threw it away. I beat and beat her until she was almost dead. When her son was crying it made me sad. I was leaving her there. I dumped her. I don’t know how she is now,” he added.

Two of the beaten woman’s sisters-in-law, the man’s sisters, then went to get her at the instructions of the grandmother. “Look for her,” she said, “your younger brother has left her almost dead.” Then, speaking to him, she said, “You have beaten her too severely.” Then, the sisters-in-law went calling for her. When they saw her on her knees without any skirt on they felt sorry for her and brought a skirt to put on her. They brought her back to the grandmother’s house and bathed her. Then she was completely dressed by them and was given a roast plantain to eat. [Another informant added later that, after such an episode, having been readopted by the family, the woman would have eventually married her brother-in-law.]

Myth 7. An Ancient One and the Children

LUCIO: An old man was making a canoe under the shade of a guayaba tree. Some children were gathering the green fruit above him in the tree. They threw the fruits down on him in an effort to hit him. This they continued to do. The old man got angry. The old man was actually a tapir [*ahua*]. He got up, very angry, and kicked the tree, turning the guayaba tree [which never grows very large] into a tall lupuna tree [a huge tree of great mythical significance to the Shipibo; it houses a powerful, and unless propitiated, malevolent spirit] by the mighty blow from his hoofs.

The children were now stranded and could not get down. “How are we going to get down?” they asked each other. They tried to climb down from the branches of the lupuna, but the trunk was too thick for them to reach around and get a hold on it. The children remained there for some time. One of them then plucked a leaf and said, “I will convert myself into an ant and float down on this leaf.” Then they all changed themselves into ants and floated down on the leaf together. When they landed on the ground they turned back into people and saw in front of them a *nanë* tree.

The children then asked the tree, “Where is your owner?” [referring to the tapir]. The tree responded, “He has gone that way,” pointing in the direction of his departure. The children then set off in the direction indicated in search of him. Soon they encountered another, but smaller, genipa tree and asked it, “In which direction has your owner gone?” “In the same direction,” the tree answered. The children continued

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on their way until they found another *nanë* tree, only this time it was only half grown. They asked the sapling the same question and received the same answer as earlier.

They continued walking until they came to a tapir stool. A *genipa* seed was germinating, sending out its shoots, from the tapir's stool. They asked it the same question as they had asked the trees before, and it gave them the same answer. "Follow on in the same direction." That stool had just been deposited recently, only a day before they had found it. The children arrived at a great river. They continued walking along its banks until they came upon some just recently deposited stool. It was still steaming. The sun was at midday and they soon found the tapir sleeping under a tree. They said to each other, "How are we going to kill him?" They wanted to return the injury they had received from him. As they were looking at him in the distance, one of the children said, "I will turn myself into an ant again." Thus transformed, he set off across the savannah and entered the tapir's stomach through his anus. Once inside he cut off the tapir's heart and killed him.

The children then asked themselves, "How are we going to eat him?" One of the children converted himself into a cooking pot, and his fellows placed him on the fire to boil. But the pot-person was unable to stand the head of the fire, and his companions had to throw him in the river to cool him off. As soon as he hit the water the *quënti* turned back into a person. Another then said he would become an olla. But while the meat was still raw he could not stand the flames either. This was tried several times until the strongest, both physically and magically, was able to endure the heat long enough for the tapir meat to be cooked.⁶ The children then ate their fill. Afterward they remained on the river bank for a while, wishing to cross it but lacking a canoe with which to do so.

At that moment a person came by. The children asked him to carry them to the other side. He said, "I could carry you but my canoe is very small. It might not be able to hold you all." Then he added, "There is another one, much bigger, and I will call it here. With it you can reach the other side." Saying this, he left. The children called after him, "Don't delay long in returning." When the canoe came the children saw that it was a huge cayman. They said, "*Chiaconi* [spirits use this word to address a friend],⁷ we want to go to the other side of the river. We called the other spirit to come help us," they added, "but his canoe was too small. That is why we have called you." The cayman then said, "Come; get on me." They boarded in a file. The children and the cayman then set off for the other side. The children had an idea when they were on the voyage; "Now what shall we transform ourselves into?" they thought. One said, "I will convert myself into a bird." In that very instant he flew away. The others followed suit.

Still others asked themselves, “What shall we become?” One said, “I will change myself into a *picaflor* [Spanish for “a hummingbird”]. The last one said, “I will change into a *panguana*.” Saying this, the *panguana* flew off toward the land in an oscillating flight, alternately swooping low and high. He had nearly reached the land when he fell into the water. As soon as he hit the water the pursuing cayman bit off both his legs. Because of that we say of the *panguana* constellation [*quishioma* in Shipibo; part of Orion, it comes out at about 11 P.M. in August] that it lacks legs. All the children flew up to the sky to become stars in this constellation.⁸

Myth 8. The Cayman’s Mandible
(Variant of an Ancient One and the Children)

IBARISTA: A young man lived with his mother. Even though he was an adult, he did not have a wife. Therefore every night his mother had to arrange his mosquito netting. At first, when she arranged the mosquito netting, she did not find any fruit in it; she was an old woman. One morning, as she was putting the mosquito netting up for the morning, she noticed a *shopan* [a watermelon-like fruit] of this size [indicating about 35 cm. with her hands]. The man was sleeping with it, using it like a vagina. The mother from that time on always had to put the *shopan* aside when she put her son’s mosquito netting back in the morning. She set it up, the mother of this man, and put it away in the morning. She always saw that the *shopan* was there. After much time the Old Woman grew tired of this work. She said, “Why is my son always sleeping in this fashion?” Then she got the *shopan* and threw it away. *Po!* it sounded as it fell and broke open. As soon as it had split, two children appeared from inside. They cried. The Old Woman saw that they were two males and was startled.

She said, “They are my children, for I threw the fruit thus.” Then she ran to get clothing and dressed the two children. She carried them and placed them inside the mosquito netting. A little later she saw that they were already very large babies. Very rapidly the two children grew. Their aunt gave them lukewarm *chicha* [“maize beer”]. After a little bit they were already nearly adults. They asked her, “What has happened to our mother?” The aunt, afraid they would find out what she had done, replied, “I do not know. I don’t know what happened to her.” Unsatisfied, they asked her again, “Aunt, who killed our mother?” “I don’t know,” she answered. “I don’t know who could have done so,” she repeated. “We want to return the evil deed,” the children insisted. Finally the Old Woman was fed up and said that the lightning *yoshin* [“spirit”] did it. The brothers then went and killed the lightning *yoshin*. They went. First they made arrows and then they went and killed

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him. They returned from Mount Manaman, where the *yoshin* had lived, and where they had killed him.

They again asked their aunt, “Who has killed our mother?” “I don’t know,” responded the Old Woman. “Perhaps it was you who killed her,” they suggested. “If so,” they warned, “we will kill you too.” Then the frightened woman said, “The tapir killed your mother.” They said, “Then we will look for him and kill him.” The two children left.

Following the path they encountered tall plants, indicating that long ago tapir stool had fallen there. They continued following the path and soon saw plants that had only grown to a lesser height, indicating more recent deposition of tapir stool. Once again they resumed following their route. They continued and found tiny plants just beginning to grow from freshly deposited stool. Continuing on, they found tapir stool that was only half dry. It had been deposited only that morning. They walked further and encountered more tapir stool, only this time it was very fresh. They followed the trail some more until they saw the tapir asleep on the ground in the middle of an open grassland. “There is the killer of our mother,” they said. They were asking, “How are we going to kill him?” The younger one, because he had much experience, said, “I will convert myself into a *jee* [the Shipibo word for the ubiquitous tiny red house ant, called *pukakuro* in the Quechua-derived jungle Spanish of the area. Despite its small size, the Shipibo stress, and I can attest, the *jee* is the possessor of a formidable bite when aroused]. The two sons had *paca pia* [these Shipibo arrow points could also be provided with handles to function as knives] with them.

The younger one said, “I will cut out his heart with the sharp head of my arrow; I am the *jee*.” After conversion he entered the tapir through his anus. Once inside, he said, “I will cut off his heart with this.” When it was cut off the tapir gave a death jerk-*pënpën!* “When this happens,” the younger brother had originally told the older brother, “you must go very quickly and cut into the tapir’s stomach with your *paca pia*, when it gives its death jerk. Then I will be able to leave his stomach.” When the younger brother had arrived at the tapir and had entered it through its anus, the elder brother was still some distance off. After the moment of the death spasm-*pënpën!*-he came running to cut into the tapir’s stomach. Immediately the younger brother leaped out of the tapir’s stomach.⁹

Then they asked themselves, “In what area will we eat him?” They decided to eat him near a water-filled *quebrada*. “I will become a *quënti* and you can cook the meat in me,” said the younger brother. “We will eat,” said the elder brother. “You have to take me to the shore of the *quebrada*,” the younger brother told his elder brother. The two arrived and began putting logs on the

fire. The younger brother then transformed himself into a *quënti*. The fire was now ready. The pot was placed on the fire and began to crackle. When this happened the elder brother removed his pot-brother from the fire and put him in the water of the *quebrada* to cool. He took him out again and put him on the fire once more. Again, after it had become too hot for his younger brother-pot, the elder brother put him in the water. After a while of doing this the meat was done and the two ate. After eating they saw a sloth on the other side of the *quebrada*.

They asked the sloth to help them go over to the other side. It was very, very far away. The older brother said, "Can I get to the other side by using your lance so that when I thrust it into the water it will dry up and allow us to walk across?" The sloth said, "I will call my *jënenponpo* bird. He has a canoe so you can use it to reach the other side. Later, after calling him, the *jënenponpo* bird arrived with his huge canoe. He said to the brothers, "If you get into this canoe very gingerly it will take you to the other side. When it has reached the other side," he added, "do not jump too hard on its prow as you are leaving it. My canoe is bad and will eat you if you do." When after this was said and they beached on the other shore, the elder brother left the canoe with much care and, turning, said to his younger brother, "You must get out of the canoe in the same manner as I have, for that was what the owner said." But the younger one replied, "I will leave it in this matter!" Saying that, he jumped on the prow-*chorón!* Instantly the canoe became a cayman and bit off his leg and carried it away. The younger brother was left there, sitting on the landing minus one leg.

The older brother admonished him saying, "Just as I had told you, but you would not listen. Now, how are we going to get your leg back?" There, on the other side, the sloth was still sitting. The younger brother asked him, "Will you dry up the river with your magical long lance so we can kill the cayman and get my leg back?" The elder brother left his sibling's side and approached closer to the sloth, yelling, "Will you get your magic lance and come so that the water will be dried up?" The sloth complied. The elder brother then looked all over the exposed mud flats and finally found the big cayman. There he killed him. He brought the body up from the *quebrada* to dry land. He cut its belly open and retrieved his younger brother's leg. The he obtained the cayman's mandible.

"Now," he said, "what are we going to do?" Answering his own question he said, "Now we must ascend to the heavens, but before we do so we must go and ask our aunt again what happened to our mother. Let us go." When they arrived back at their putative mother's house they asked her, "Who was responsible for killing our mother? If you did it we will kill you." Still dissembling, the Old Woman said, "To find out once and for all you must

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ascend to the heavens and search there.” They replied, “Now then, we are going.” Saying this, they went, the elder brother and his younger brother without a leg. They reached the heavens by shooting their arrows, for at that time they sky was very low.

The elder brother shot an arrow and it stuck in the sky.¹⁰ Then he shot others so that they each hit in the middle of the nock of the previous shafts, thus forming a single file of arrows that reached the ground. The elder brother then shot again so that the first arrow landed right next to the first in the sky, and then, one after another, he shot them until the second file was complete and also reached the earth’s surface. A ladder was thus formed. Using it, the two brothers ascended into the sky. The elder brother carried with him in his hand the cayman’s mandible, thus forming the constellation *huishmavo* [the Hyades]. Thus our old uncles spoke.¹¹

Myth 9. The *Yanapuma* (*Ja Huiso Inon*)

MANUEL: In the past, some people, mostly mestizos, went to work gathering rubber [thus indicating that the “past” here refers to the turn of the century]. Once of them was a Campa Indian. He was also a *meraya*.¹²

All this was to come to pass; the *Yanapuma* [Quechua for “Black Jaguar”; *huiso* (“black”), *inon* (“jaguar”) in Shipibo] was to kill them all. When all the mestizos had left their camp in the jungle to go off and search for latex, the Campa stayed behind in his mosquito netting. The mestizos had already cooked their meal. It was spread out and ready, waiting for them to come back to camp after working. Then a White Man came by all dressed up in a fine black suit coat with a white vest covering his breast. Thus he came. One by one he tasted a little of each of the provisions. The Campa in his mosquito netting saw this; he saw him taste the food as if testing it. When the White Man had finished testing the food, he returned to the forest, passing through the center of the camp.

When the workers returned that evening, the Campa told them what had happened. He asked, “What kind of person could it have been who arrived here and ate a little of the food?” He was afraid. “Do not eat any of what he has left,” warned the Campa, but the mestizos paid no attention to him. These things happened. The Campa ate none of the food, while the hungry mestizos ate all of it. The Campa already knew that the White Man had really been the Black Jaguar in his human guise. He also knew that the *Yanapuma* would do harm to the men. The Camp knew what would happen. Thus these things occurred. When the mestizos retired for the night, the Campa remained awake, listening. When it was completely dark he heard a cry, “*Rique, rique, rique, rique.*”

At first it was so far away that he could hardly hear it. But gradually it was getting closer and closer. The cry came from the one who had tasted the provisions. "The Black Jaguar is coming," thought the Campa. "The thing that was like a person is coming."

All of the mestizos were snoring. They were sound asleep and did not hear the frightful sound. The Campa tried poking them with his finger to wake them up. It was no good; they continued to sleep soundly. Then, getting more desperate, he began hitting them, but still they did not wake. They were bewitched. When he could not wake them the Campa *meraya* took his small baby boy, whom he had brought along with him, and climbed to the top of a nearby tree. In an effort to escape he climbed and climbed until he had reached the tips of the uppermost branches and could go no further. Then he sat and waited, trembling. He now heard the deafening sound of the Black Jaguar as it arrived in the camp. One by one the animal snapped the nape of the neck of each man with its jaws. The Campa could hear the sound of the breaking bones very clearly. The *Yanapuma* killed them all. The jaguar then counted all of the bodies and began to carry them away one at a time. It took a lot of time to take them all away. The Campa put tobacco in his mouth as a magical aid. Then the *Yanapuma* noticed the Campa and his son in the tree. He came to the base of the tree and began to bite its buttresses with his strong teeth. As he broke them the tree began to shake violently. When it inclined at an angle, ready to fall down, the Campa *meraya* said to his child, "Close your eyes; don't look." He then placed his son on his shoulders and adjusted the boy's arms around his neck. The *meraya* then flew away, leaving the jaguar far behind.

They descended and landed in the left corner of the Campa's plantain *chakra*. They were already on the ground. In this manner the Campa escaped from the *Yanapuma*. He then arrived at his house and said to the neighboring mestizos, "The Black Jaguar has killed all your countrymen." But they did not believe him. "They ate the tainted food," explained the Campa.

Among the mestizos there was a wise Cocama Indian shaman. He was a powerful *brujo* [Spanish for "sorcerer"; *yove* in Shipibo]. He listened to what the Campa was saying and persuaded the others to follow him. They all went to the scene of the incident. There a Campa said, "Here was the terrible event," when they arrived at the encampment. The Cocama shaman was blowing a magical protection. "Here the *Yanapuma* destroyed them all," said the Campa. Then they all followed the wide path the Black Jaguar had made by dragging the bodies off. It was like a roadway, very straight and wide.

The Cocama shaman led the way blowing constantly. Finally they approached a cave inside of which the *Yanapuma* was sleeping. It was the magic of the Cocama's blowing that had put him to sleep. There the mestizos killed the *huiso inon* with shotguns. To make sure he was

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dead the Indians hit him with poles on the head. Then they looked around the cave and saw all the cadavers there. There were so many. Some they carried away. Others they were not able to carry away and so left them there.

Myth 10. *Yoashico, the Miserable One, Šhāno Inca*

EDUARDO: In ancient times the sun stood still in the east. It did not move. People had to put *boca chica* [*Prochilodus sp.*, a favorite fish of the Shipibo] they had caught in the sun on top of a leaf to warm it because they had no fire. Only the stingy one, *Šhāno Inca*, had fire. He also had the *paranta* [cognate the Spanish *planto*, “plantain”] and *atsa* [“manioc”]. But he had placed the *shänó* [*jergon* in Spanish—a very venomous viper] in the crotch of the manioc plant¹³. Another *shänó* he had placed around the stem of the manioc plant, while above the ground he had placed wasps in its leaves so that people could not harvest its tubers. It was too dangerous. They asked *Yoashico* for manioc, but he destroyed the eyes of the plant before he brought it to them [it propagates vegetatively]. They planted it in vain; it did not grow. They asked him for the *paranta* shoots [to grow plantain trees], but instead he cut the trunk in three parts and gave it to them. They planted these but they naturally did not grow.

Later, the daughter of the Bad Inca raised a green parakeet, the *věscón*. One day the daughter was cleaning the plaza around her hut with a broom. The *věscón* flew behind her and molested her with its cry -“*Shě, shí, shě, shí.*” It was looking to steal a coal from her fire. Then it stole a bit of her fire when she was at a distance. The *věscón* took it and flew away, low to the ground. She called after him saying, “He is carrying away a coal!” Saying this, she threw her brush at him but he escaped. He flew toward the corner of the *Šhāno Inca*’s *chacra* where there was a dead *cumán* tree. There he left the coal on one of its branches. The coal began to start a fire.

Seeing this, the *Šhāno Inca* sent a huge tempest with violent rain to put it out, but all classes of birds—the *poincosco* [“turkey vultures”] and *paujil* [the razorbilled curassow, *Mitu mitu*]¹⁴ and others—came to protect the fire with their outstretched wings. Before they had tried to protect the fire with their wings, these birds had white plumes. The smoke from the fire turned them black. They hovered over the fire to protect it. The fire was not completely lit. Then the coal fell below, and from there our ancestors took it. They divided little pieces of it among themselves. Then the sun began to rise where they had the fire.

The people asked themselves, “How are we going to get things to

plant in out gardens? Now that we have fire we can cook them. Let us kill *Yoashico* and get the cultigens from him.” Thus they spoke. They sent a lizard to work and excavate a hole in the ground. After it was finished, the lizard advised them that it was done. Then they called the miserable one to a sporting arrow match. It was the custom for the Shipibo to stand on one side of a field and shoot arrows at *Yoashico*. He would try to dodge them. Then he would shoot arrows at the Shipibo, who would try to dodge them in their return.

He was in his hut and left it, responding, “*Jejée*” [when a Shipibo man arrives at somebody’s house he must make his presence known; then the owner of the house says, “*Johuë*,” welcome, and the visitor must respond with “*Jejée*”] and whistling-*vis, vis*.

The miserable one grabbed his bow and arrows and carried them over his head [as was the custom], ready for the match. Jumping up and down-*chorón, chorón*-he came. He came to shoot with bow and arrows at ready. *Querón!* [the sound of him falling into the hole the lizard had prepared]. But when he fell into the hole it only reached up to his stomach and he could get out.¹⁵ The people could not kill him. They were discontented. Then the *jori* bird [a robin-sized bird, green in color with a blue head and a blue-green streak near the beak; it makes deep complex multi-chambered underground nests to hold its young] was called to excavate another hole. They asked him, “Can you make it?” He answered, “Yes, I can.” He dug it much deeper than the lizard had. After it was finished, the people called the *Yoashico* out again. As was their custom, they invited him for another arrow exchange. He responded-“*Jejée*”-and came out whistling-*vis, vis, vis*-with bow and arrows at the ready. He came jumping-*chorón, chorón!*

When he arrived the Shipibo were a little afraid that it would be like the last time. Above the tremendous hole there was a thin layer of dirt. Leaves had been placed on the ground to hide the pit. When he came the earth was very thin. *Nö!* [the sound of him falling] *Ba!* [the Shipibo exclamation of surprise]

He killed him with arrows. After killing him they dragged his body out of the hole, blood spurting from his wounds. All the birds, including the red macaw, the *pish-pish*, and the *shävan pish-pish*, came to bathe in his blood. Thus they obtained their brilliant colors. One bird, the *cainqui*, came by only later because he when went fishing it always took him along time to get back. When he arrived on the scene the blood was already dry. That is why his color is only a dusky orange.

The birds then placed themselves in a file. The daughter of the *Shäno Inca* then asked them all, “Who has the liver of my father?” They answered that none of them had it. The *jori* was the last bird in the file. The liver was still in its mouth. The daughter of the Bad Inca was going down the line, asking every one of them. Only the *jori* was left

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when she asked it, “Do you have my father’s liver?” The *jori* said, “I don’t have it.” But as its mouth was full at the moment, the liver was broken-*toísh!*- and the *jori* spit out the bile it contained. Streaks of the bile were left around its beak. That is why the *jori* has two greenish streaks descending from either side of its beak.¹⁶ Then the *shänë* bird bathed in the bile, and for that reason it is green.

After killing the *Šhāno Inca* the people had manioc and plantains. They obtained the food plants. Before killing *Yoashico* our ancestors ate raw fish and were therefore wasted and thin. But after killing him they ate cooked fish and were healthy.

Myth 11. The Giant Eagle

IBARISTA: Long ago our ancestors went to look for salt. The journey took a long time, almost a month, before they returned [the journey involved descending the Ucayali until they reached the mouth of the Huallaga in the north, ascending the Huallaga for two days, and then they return trip. Our ancestors used to go there looking for salt. There they passed a huge eagle that perched outside of a cave within the tall mountains [which flank the Huallaga].

When they arrived the person who was seated behind the first person in the prow of the canoe was the one the eagle would always get. It was a huge eagle. Afterward the people would cry. The young man [who was the sacrifice] had been painted with *nanë* all over his body, even to the toes of his feet. The huge eagle came to get him.

He had been painted the day before. That day there were in voyage. The party arrived at the river to look for salt. Continuing the voyage they finally arrived at the tall peaks. The huge eagle, whose thighs were as large as a person’s and whose talons were immense and long, came gliding silently and found the Shipibo. From the mountains-*chá, chá, chá, chá*-calling so, it came to carry its victim away.

Our people cried out in fear. The huge eagle came and carried off the one with the designs, the one with his whole body painted, the second person in the canoe.¹⁷ The rest were left crying in the canoe. They saw the giant eagle was carrying him off to bring him to his cave in the mountains. How many people had had a similar fate? The eagle would eat them.

Anciently, shortly after people were made, a Cocama [a Tupi-speaking Indian and the traditional main-river adversaries of the Shipibo] spoke to our tribesmen, “How is it possible that the huge eagle could eat so many? Let us think. Let us make a false person of clay. After making him like a person, let us dress him a *tari* for the eagle to take. Let us see what will happen. In such a manner we will be able to

kill it.” Thus they thought and agreed. The Cocama brought a *cushma* and placed it on the doll and also placed the handkerchief over his head [in photos of the 1980s Shipibo men frequently wore a handkerchief over their heads to protect them from the sun and sometimes do today].

This was done so that the eagle would come: The people shouted and hit their paddles on the sides of the canoe. They made such a tumult and cried out in high voices [when Shipibo want to communicate over great distances in the forest or over water they raise the pitch of their voices to a falsetto mode]. Before they had been quiet, but now, after making the doll, they cried out. They said to themselves, “Let us see if it comes.”

The eagle heard the commotion and, turning its head from side to side, looked for its source. The eagle came - *chá, chá, chá, chá*-with outstretched wings. When it arrived the mud person was seated in the canoe. *Toj!* [the sound of the eagle’s talons striking the mud]. It lifted the doll up, I don’t know how high. But the clay Indian weighed so much that, instead of ascending ever higher, the eagle flew lower and lower; it was falling out of the sky.

The talons of the eagle were the size of the *mani* vine [which bears beautiful, brilliant red and yellow, curiously solid flowers that are recurved in a way that suggests eagles talons]. They were as large as half-grown *mani* sprouts. Thus it was. With its talons the eagle would carry people away. The clay had been well prepared. The eagle’s talons sunk into the doll. The clay was soft and sticky. The eagle struggled to loosen its hold on the doll but could not let go. It gave its last life struggle. The mud weighed too much. It wanted to let go but could not.

The people cried out in exultation, “It is already falling”; thus they cried-our fellow tribesmen-out of happiness. The eagle came down-*tóncon!* [the sound of the splash as it hit the water]. The eagle sank below the waves. It stayed in the water and the people looked and looked for it. The water roiled. They remained scanning the water with their eyes. The eagle’s plumes, like *mani* petals, floated to the surface as huge piranha fish ate its body. Thanks to the Cocama, after that nevermore would our tribesmen live in danger. All was well and they lived in tranquility. Then they could go and get salt and no harm would befall them. Too many of our people the huge eagle had eaten.

The Sociologic Schema

Social Structure in Myth

The strongest social reflection in the myths is the exceptional role played by women. This, as many authors have pointed out (Farabee 1922:101; Karsten 1964:185-186), is a characteristic of

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the Shipibo and thus is not to be attributed to the fact that one of my most productive informants, Ibarista, was a woman.¹⁹ As I have mentioned, the very prominent role females play in Shipibo society is based on both their prosperity derived from the tourist trade and on the matrilineal-matrilocal basis of their social organization.

Women play many of the key roles in these myths that in other lowland societies would be played by men. For example, in myth 4, which normally sees a jealous husband killing the Dragon, the Shipibo version has the old mother of the seduced girl doing him in by pouring boiling water down his hole. Myth 5 is more normal in this regard in that two males, one the potential husband of the seduced woman, kill the dragon. Myth 4 is particularly clear in showing the matriarch ordering her son to go and fetch her daughter, his sister, back into human society from her marriage to the jaguar. The fact that the young male dutifully reports to her and that she makes all the decisions is a clear reflection of actual Shipibo social life. Myth 6 shows the working of a matriarch's power within the context of a four-generation, matrilineally extended family and the treatment of the seduced woman: her reincorporation into the compound and the solidarity among woman (even among affines), seen in the sympathy her sisters-in-law display and the aid they give her. In contrast, the matriarch's greatgrandson is berated for too severely punishing a woman who, because the Shipibo practice the levirate, would very probably become his bride.

Also, as is characteristic of myth, these Shipibo myths depict an archaic cultural landscape. The Shipibo of San Francisco are now fairly well acculturated and live in single nuclear-family dwellings, although these are still grouped into the traditional compounds. The males at least wear Western clothing and use modern weapons like the shotgun for hunting forest game, although they still fish with the traditional bow and arrow instead of hook and line or even, for the most part, instead of thrownets. In contrast, the Shipibo of the myths are shown with the men wearing *taris*, using blowguns, and living in the ancestral communal extended-family hut, the Shipibo version of the *maloca*.

Ethnicity and Political Relations

The Peruvian montaña today is an area of high cultural diversity with many groups living near each other and, to an extent,

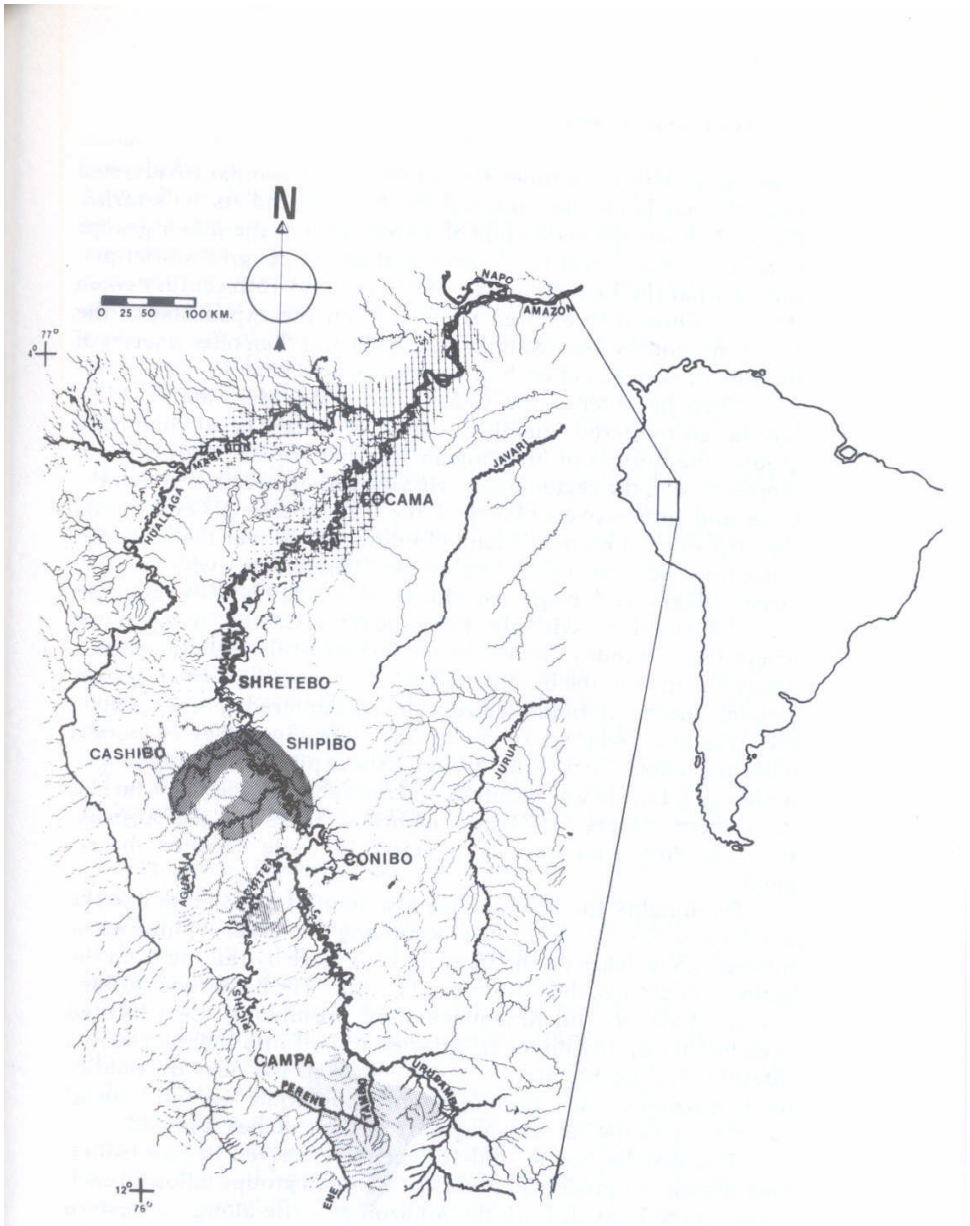


Figure 2. Map of the Peruvian Montaña Showing the Location of the Principal Groups (Some East-bank Groups Omitted)

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competing with each other for the access to the comparatively rich new alluvial lands surrounding the Ucayali and its tributaries. Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of the major groups in Shipibo oral narrative. To set the stage let me give a brief picture of what the Ucayali looked like in the mid-16th century when the first white men entered the region on the expedition of the Jesuit missionary Jean Salinas de Loyola and then offer a series of thumbnail sketches of each of the groups involved.

When he entered the Ucayali from the Marañon in 1557, Loyola encountered member tribes of three great linguistic groups: the Arawakan, the Panoan, and the Tupan. They are still represented in the region today. He voyaged upstream through the large and impressive villages of the Tupi-speaking Cocama. He then traversed a no-man's-land of uninhabited river for some distance until he came to the land of the "Pariarches," who also had large villages and respected chiefs. Myers (1974:140) identifies these "Pariarches" with the Pano-speaking Conibo, living much where they do today, above the confluence of the Pachitea River, where the mountains become visible. Then, again passing upriver through another uninhabited zone, he encountered another people, the "Ycatara," who spoke yet another language. They conversed with him about Cuzco, the former Inca capital in the highlands, with which Loyola was familiar, and brought him Indians who had been there. Myers (1974:143) identifies these as the Arawak-speaking Piro, who were later active in the trade between the regions.

Presumably the later groups also found in this area, like the Setebo and Shipibo, were then occupying the larger tributaries or the hidden oxbow lakes off the Ucayali, kept there by raising from the main-river groups, the Cocama and Conibo. The backwoods groups like the Cashibo and Amahuaca were presumably then located even farther up the minor tributaries and off into the intervening interfluvies, each population separated from the next by smaller no-man's-zones, each decreasing population in size and social complexity as the carrying capacity of their niches lessened.

This distribution at mid-16th century derived in turn from a long-drawn-out process in prehistory. Indian groups followed each other up the Ucayali from the Amazon to settle along the eastern flank of the Andes and, as the newer arrivals jostled the old, broke into the many-faceted distribution of ecological adaptations presently found there. The increasing impact of civilized peoples, beginning in the 16th century, is a new element in this aboriginal

mosaic. Tribals occupy both riverine and nonriverine niched in the area. In Barth's (1969:19-20) typology of ethnic-ecological interrelationships, they fall into two categories: (a) those who monopolize separate territories within the preferred riverine niche and therefore compete with each other and (b) those who, as a result of competition, occupy separated riverine and backwoods niches and, except for symmetrical trade relationships and the asymmetrical capture of women by the riverine groups, are largely independent of each other.

The oral traditions of the Shipibo, a riverine group, albeit in the comparatively recent past, stress differences between the Cashibo are despised and exploited, whereas those that are farther away like the Campa, have more favorable characteristics. Mestizos, who now compete with the Shipibo for the mainstream, are deprecated; but their ancestors, the Cocama Indians, who competed with the Shipibo in the past for the same niche, are culture heroes. Shipibo myth pictures the more remote but even more powerful Inca as godlike figures.

A brief history of the groups in the region will show how the Shipibo define themselves vis-à-vis the other groups, both aboriginal and modern, and also show the historical correlates of ethnicity. I discuss only the groups with the greatest impact on the Shipibo. With the exception of the Inca the groups are discussed in order of their presumed arrival in the region (Lathrap 1970).

The Inca. However early the Inca empire may have begun to consolidate out of the warring principalities of the southern highlands of Peru (Lumbreras 1974:215), by the region of Pachacuti Inca (1438-1471) it entered reconstructable history (Métraux 1969:42). When it was overthrown in 1532 and the years following, *Tawantīn-soyo*, or the empire of the Four Corners, embraced the coast and highlands of the Andean chain from the southern basins of Ecuador to the Río Maule in Chile. It was an impressive political achievement, centralized to a degree, and capable of marshaling vast resources and manpower. Being a highland polity, the Inca empire never really extended its hegemony very far into the forbidding tropical forest below the *ceja* ("cloud forest") zone of the eastern flanks of the Andes. The occasional military adventures of the Inca rulers into the lowlands (Rowe 1944:207) achieved no lasting success.²⁰

Nevertheless the empire's influence penetrated further than

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its power, for the jungle Indians were aware of its existence all the way down to the central Ucayali. This was probably due to rivers accessible to the east, like the Apurímac, that debouch out of steep highland valleys and flow without major impediment into the Ucayali (Raymond 1972:139), thus providing a major avenue of cultural exchange. The Apurímac, which has yielded a Late Prehistoric assemblage of obvious Ucayali affinities (Raymond, DeBoer, ad Roe 1975:139) also has a very old pattern of residence whereby highland Quechua, formerly subject to the Inca empire, live above, but in close proximity to, pioneer settlements of the lowland Campa (Raymond 1972:37). The nearly continuous string of trade relationships between these groups and their compatriots down the Urubamba and Ene and, in turn, between those lower groups and Ucayali tribes, would have made the Inca a real if somewhat mythologized entity for the montaña Indians well before the modern era.

The Campa. The Campa are a numerous Arawak-speaking group with a reputation for bellicosity (Varese 1968). Actually they form at least two separate tribal societies: the River Campa of the Apurímac, Ene, Perene, and Tambo river systems, who do some of fishing and are familiar with the water, and the Pajonal Campa, who are centered immediately to the north in the great triangle between the Pachitea and the Ucayali (Weiss 1975:230, 237). “The earliest mention of the Campas is in Sarmiento de Gamboa’s chronicle of 1572... Sporadic contacts and attempts by Jesuit missionaries to enter Campa territory occurred during the remainder of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th” (1975:235-236f.). The first significant contact with the Campas, however was made but the Franciscans in 1635. The missionaries were driven out in the early decades of the following century (Elick 1969:10-11). Missionary penetration resumed in the mid-1800s and reached the fables Cerro de la Sal in the Pajonal by 1876 (Bodley 1971:10). By the turn of the century the Campa, along with the Shipibo-Conibo further south, were subjected to the *patrón* system brought about by the rubber boom (Bodley 1975:32). Their marked recalcitrance with outside exploiters continues to this day, however, so that some groups were being napalmed by the Peruvian Air Force in the mid-1960s (1975:46) and a few Campa bands survive in the interior of the Gran Pajonal in only a modern state of acculturation.

Their prehistory is not well known. The Arawakan intrusion into the Peruvian montaña probably predates the Panoan migrations by millenia. The Campa, who are the largest block of Arawakan-speakers in the area, may have differentiated from the Amuesha by about A.D.1200 (Lathrap 1970:135).

The Campa have not been entirely isolated in their history, thanks to their intermediary position between the lowland tribes of the Ucayali and the highland Quechua, whose lower *ceja* settlements the Campa visited as part of the flourishing Urubamba salt trade (DeBoer 1975). On the upper Ucayali, Conibo-Campa interactions have occurred for many years, some of them friendly. DeBoer even mentions the possibility of a brief alliance. The Conibo journeyed up the Ucayali to exchange their painted pottery for Campa salt. I was in a mixed Conibo-Campa Adventist missionary village on the Shahuaya, a minor tributary of the upper Ucayali, in 1969; there I witnessed Campa exchanging their strong *kantiri* burden baskets for Conibo potter. In turn the Conibo trade the *kantiris* with the Shipibo.

Like the backwoods Panoans, the Campa have small communities, and they hunt and fish to supplement the yield of their horticultural plots (Devevan 1974). Unlike the backwoods Panoans, the Campa sometimes united under the leadership of certain "strong men" to repel invaders (Weiss 1975:239). Accordingly the Shipibo-Conibo attitude toward the Campa mixes condescension for their backward, unsophisticated ways with respect for their hunting, war making, and back-country survival skills.²¹ Because they occupy different ecological niches relatively isolated from each other, trade is preponderant over raiding in the relationships between the groups.

The Shipibo-Conibo. I see a pattern of Panoan migration into the montaña; the migration expands from the Amazon in the north against the resident Arawakan groups, like the Campa, driving them into the southern headwaters of the Ucayali. This may have happened by A.D. 400(Lathrap 1970:131). Then, around A.D. 800, similar but apparently better organized Panoans, who could have been the ancestors of the present-day riverine groups like the Conibo, arrived again from the north and displaced the earlier arrivals (who were perhaps the predecessors of the modern backwoods groups like the Cashibo and Amahuaca) up the surrounding tributaries.

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This led up to the distribution found at the mid-16th century. The peripheral locations to which groups like the Setebo (*Shretebo*) were driven by the Cocama and Conibo raiding, hinted at in the 16th century, were fixed by mid-17th century (Myers 1974:145). From this protected position the Setebo were able to reoccupy the mainstream after the Cocama warriors were decimated by European diseases. The Shipibo, in contrast, only occupies their present position with the decline of the Setebo in the 19th century. This would account for the negative description of the Shipibo by Galt in 1870 (1870-1872:183, 185) and for the similarities in appearance between them and the backwoods groups like the Campa in Safford's 1893 photographs. Although their art may have appeared in its face-painting mode by then, it clearly had not yet given the riverine Panoans their distinctive aspect by being found on their clothing.

Intermittent missionary activity continued throughout the late 17th century and into the late 18th century as the missionaries alternately provided steel tools to the riverine Panoans and were martyred when the supplies exceeded demand. In the 19th century and increasingly today North American Protestant sects like the Adventists and Evangelicals have been active. The Peruvian government is clearly trying to use these agents to coopt the Indians by having the missionaries extend literacy and health services to the area still under only nominal Peruvian control and beyond Peruvian national resources to incorporate.

Today, in spite of the current acculturative pressures of the missionaries and the literacy programs, the prior pressures of the rubber boom and the *patrón* system, Shipibo is still the language of the daily life. Most men know some Spanish, however, while women use only a few words as a trade language. Tribal endogamy is still rigidly adhered to. A complex art style provides a visible marker of ethnic identity, and a complex oral tradition flourishes among the older or less acculturated members of the society. Despite some technological accommodations with the expanding Peruvian frontier, such as the occasional appearance of a *peque-peque* ("a big wooden dugout canoe with raised gunwales that is powered by a pivot-mounted Briggs and Stratton 6-9 hp. engine"), shotguns, steel machetes, and a rare wristwatch and despite some deculturation represented by the loss of the major ceremonies, the Shipibo remain Indian in many ways important to them and to other members of the regional society.

The Cashibo. The Cashibo are a backwoods Panoan tribe of some 1,000 members who inhabit the upper Aguaytía, its affluents, and the Sungaruyacu and its affluents, on the western shore of the Ucayali above Pucallpa (Wistrand-Robinson 1977:117). Their prehistory and history is little known, although if Lathrap's population movement is correct, they represent the "losers" in competition with the main-river groups like the Shipibo. Indeed, the name "Cashibo" actually is a Shipibo word meaning "Vampire Bat People," a pejorative designation referring to their cannibalistic tendencies and their lowly position in the regional pecking order. The Cashibo themselves simply refer to each other as *uni* ("people"—a close cognate to the Shipibo *joni* = people). Therefore the Cashibo occupy their present interfluvial range because they have been pushed there and not because they prefer it. Lathrap (1970:187-188) cites linguistic evidence for their divergence from the riverine Panoans at no more than 1,000 years ago. He has isolated a simple style of incised pottery from the Aguaytía that probably pertains to the protohistoric Cashibo.

By the late 19th and early 10th centuries the Shipibo, armed with shotguns obtained in trade from their mestizo *patrónes*, raided the Cashibo for wives and slaves. The oral accounts I discuss pertain to those predatory times. Marcoy (1875, 2:162-163) observed the Shipibo contempt for these people and recounts the crucifixion of a Cashibo captive by way of illustration. Raiding did not, however, preclude active trade. The Shipibo still remember journeying up the Pisqui, the next major western tributary above the Aguaytía, to trade their pottery with the Cashibo for salt (DeBoer 1975).

Traditionally the Cashibo lived away from the tributaries (to avoid Shipibo raids) as nomadic hunters and gatherers in small, often single-family units. Those who were more sedentary practiced some agriculture, but they moved their huts and gardens frequently and Lathrap notes that "their agricultural practices were rudimentary and slipshod compared to those of the Shipibo-Conibo" (1970:186). That they procured most of their protein by hunting animals in the depths of the forest, went about nearly naked (Safford 1893), and developed a reputation for cannibalism, which Galt mentions as early as 1870 (1870-1872:196) all fit well with the Shipibo conceptions of a backwoods tribe. While mainstream groups like the Conibo practiced ritual

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endocannibalism to reincorporate deceased members of their society symbolically, the Cashibo apparently engaged in culinary, or gastronomic, cannibalism—the eating of human flesh for its protein (Dole 1962:570). Some Cashibo bands were still hostile in 1962 when an SIL member visited them to make a material cultural collection. Indeed there probably still are isolated bands of Cashibo out in the jungle, for the Shipibo report seeing lone columns of smoke rising from the interior of their former range. The rest of the Cashibo have now merged with the rural Peruvian population (Wistrand-Robinson 1977:117).

The Amahuaca. The Amahuaca are another small backwoods Panoan tribe and are scattered in tiny autonomous settlements along the eastern border between Peru and Brazil. They originally inhabited the eastern bank of the Ucayali, centered along the Chesea and Tahuania rivers. They too depend on hunting and slash-and-burn horticulture (Dole 1962:568) and possess a very simple material culture. They were very badly battered by both rubber gatherers and Conibo in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Because of the consequent social disruption there is only a hint today that they may have had some form of dual organization. They now live in a patrilocal, extended, often polygynous households (Dole 1979:28-29).

The Cocama. The Cocama were a powerful Tupi-speaking tribal confederacy closely related to the Omagua of the Amazon. They lived in large towns along the banks of the Huallaga and lower Ucayali. When they were first contacted in 1644 the Cocama had chiefs and could field thousands of warriors. By 1657 their power was ended by Western diseases (Myers 1974:147). Remnants of the tribe were resettled in missionary villages with other regional Indian groups, and they rapidly acculturated to form the backbone of the present rural mestizo population. By 1950 some Cocama women still wore their traditional skirt, and by 1970 a few still persisted in making their native painted pottery, but with European-derived floral designs (Lathrap 1970:185-186). Today there is little evidence of Cocama culture. Most of the descendants of the Cocama now aggressively identify themselves as Peruvians, *civilados*, and not as *Indios*.

Prehistory shows that the Cocama traveled into the Ucayali as the last major wave of migration from the north and the

mainstream of the Amazon before the coming of the white men, and by the same route. Lathrap (1970:145) has identified the Camito complex of Imariacocha, a lake formed on the Tamaya River, a tributary of the central Ucayali, with the protohistoric Cocama of the 14th century A.D. They apparently successfully competed with the prior arrivals, the ancestors of the Shipibo-Conibo, because of their superior organizational, if not technological, abilities (Weber 1975:441-444).

This forced the more fragmented Panoans to retreat upriver and along the lateral tributaries of the Ucayali onto less desirable land, where they underwent a period of forced cultural “devolution” until the Pandora’s box of European diseases decimated the more accessible Cocama. This allowed the more isolated, and therefore protected, Panoans to recapture large sections of the main channel while maintaining an Indian identity. This process took place gradually during the 17th to the 19th centuries as the Cocama acculturated.

Ironically, in renewed competition between the two historical antagonists, the now-Europeanized ex-Cocama, as rural mestizos, are aggrandizing their land holdings in the name of expanding civilization against the still visibly Indian Shipibo-Conibo (Lathrap 1970:17-19). The systematic pilfering and vituperation the mestizos heap on the Indians is one convenient way to force them to give up their prime agricultural land and productive fishing areas. In San Francisco de Yarinococha, the biggest Shipibo village near Pucallpa, the expensive Briggs and Stratton engines the Shipibo mount on the rear of their *peque-peques* are regularly stolen by the surrounding mestizos, who take advantage of the casual attitude the Shipibo have traditionally had for material things. Smaller personal items are even harder to protect in houses that have no walls. Another area of conflict is the ex-Cocama interest in cattle, which is greater than the Shipibo display. The free-ranging mestizo cattle form a major source of Shipibo-Conibo displacement, for they thrive on the Indians’ unfenced gardens (Weber 1975:24).

Outside of occasionally powering around a mestizo commercial fisherman in close circles to scare him with capsizing, there is little the Indians can do to discourage the overexploitation of their fishing grounds. The mestizos regard the Shipibo as dirty, drunken *salvajes* (“savages”), while the Shipibo look down on the mestizos as inferior creatures, scheming, competitive and dishonest.

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The Meshing of Myth and Ethnopolitical Relations

In Shipibo eyes the Campa and Cashibo make a good contrast because they are both backwoods groups, inhabitants of the same forest the Shipibo fear; yet one is close at hand while the other is far away and only accessible through intervening groups. Although both are warlike it is the Campa's bellicose reputation that has spread far and wide. The Shipibo compound their respect for the Campa with a distance factor. It has been pointed out that a given tribe will view remote peoples in a mythological light, exaggerating their martial or shamanistic powers (Whitten 1976:198, 1977:165). Tribals closer to home are enveloped in less mystery and are more likely to be exploited. Such was the unhappy fate of the Cashibo, while the remote Campa enjoyed the status of impressive and forbidding aliens.

Myth 9, the Yanapuma myth, portrays the Campa as wise forest Indians who hold impressive shamanistic powers but only use them for the benign purposes and who are formidable warriors but only respond in self-defense. Thus a Campa *meraya* disinterestedly warns a group of mestizo *caucheros* ("rubber gatherers"; also lumber workers) of their imminent death at the "paws" of the Black Jaguar—a malignant supernatural and a manifestation of negative forces like cannibalism and night-only to have his warning ignored. While the mestizos are killed, the Campa expertly escapes by using flight medicine. Later he assists in the destruction of the ogre in its cave in the mountains.

If the Campa are "noble savages" in such myths, the Cashibo are just plain "savages" or, at worst, subhuman beasts. In Shipibo mythology they function as minor variants of the Forest Ogre, a common jungle spirit who is deadly, but stupid, condensed symbol of unbridled, asocial, libidinous energy. Here the Cashibo reputation for incest and cannibalism becomes relevant. It is a commonplace in South Amerindian mythology that eating and sex are metaphorically linked (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971:216). Hence Forest Ogres (and Cashibo as minor Forest Ogres), as symbols of the excessive sexual energy, are characterized by extreme acultural ingestion-cannibalism—as they are associated with extreme asocial sex-incest. Because of his total absorption in the quest for sex, the Forest Ogre-Cashibo should be easily duped and—although dangerous—appear as stupid and mortal as a regular Forest Ogre does elsewhere (Wagley 1977:134).

There is a tenuous ethnographic basis for the incestuous = Cashibo equation that the Shipibo make. Braun (1975) reports that the similar and fugitive backwoods Iscobakebu, who are also Panoan-speakers, have been so reduced in demographic circumstances that to continue their society certain miniscule bands have had to suspend the incest taboo and permit brother-sister marriages. This situation was later repudiated when circumstances improved with resettlement, but it could as easily have happened to similarly situated Cashibo groups and thus provided a basis for the prejudicial Shipibo assessment.

The Shipibo indicate their opinion of the stupidity of the Cashibo as well as the valor of the Campa by relating a putatively historical incident:

MANUEL: A Campa man had traveled to the central Ucayayli and married a Shipibo woman,²² and they lived alone in the forest. Six Cashibo warriors raided their household one day, looking for women, but the Campa had presence of mind to challenge them to an arrow duel.²³ One by one the Cashibo shot their [famous and highly decorated and barbed war] arrows at the Campa, who artfully dodged them all. Then, their arrows exhausted, the Campa announced that it was his turn and, one after another, calmly shot the Cashibo who tried in vain to dodge his keen aim. The last two Cashibo succeeded in running away and dove into a nearby stream to escape to the other side and flee into the jungle. But the Campa picked off one as he swam in the water and shot the last one as he tried to climb up the riverbank on the opposite side. The Campa had killed them all.

The Shipibo's low estimation of the Cashibo is also expressed in their stories of raids in which they slaughtered Cashibo men and captured the young women and boys to use as wives and slaves. In these conflicts the Shipibo had the advantage because they possessed shotguns. As Lathrap points out:

There was a definite feeling of missionary zeal associated with these wars. The Shipibo regard themselves as "civilized" and the backwoods Panoan groups as "sub-standard" from the cultural point of view. The Cashibo and Amahuaca maidens captured by the Shipibo were being "saved" from a life of barbarism. (1970:182)

The following account of a raid, which probably occurred in the early 1920s, illustrated this rationalization:
Our ancestors went to fight against others. A great *curaka*²⁴ invited a large number of his men. They traveled by canoe for several days. Then they entered a jungle trail and began looking for signs of the enemy. Two men

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went ahead as scouts. When they found the Cashibo they returned to tell the rest of the party. In the early morning, when all the Cashibo were inside [their communal hut] sleeping, the Shipibo approached and surrounded it. One of the Shipibo then dashed into the hut to frighten the Cashibo.²⁵ They took fright and tried to escape out the door, leaving their bows and arrows behind.²⁶ Thus the battle began. As the Cashibo streamed out of the hut they were picked off with shotguns and arrows. When the adults, men and women, were killed, the Shipibo took the children and placed them in *racotes*.²⁷

Now, those who had escaped came back to fight for their children. Thus our ancestors fought with the Cashibo. Our fellow tribesmen thought that none of them would get close because it was too dangerous. But the Cashibo were valiant and approached the Shipibo war party. These things happened long ago.²⁸

When our fellow tribesmen returned to their villages they came sounding the *tiati*.²⁹ Those who remained behind called out to the party as it was approached asking who had been wounded or killed. The canoe beached at the port, and again the question was asked. The party replied, "One still has an arrow in his body; the Cashibo hit him. Some of us are dead. The Cashibo took one woman." They carried her off and when she was very old she was killed by them and eaten. Some Shipibo set off to rescue her. There was another fight and the Shipibo were defeated; still they tried. They tried and tried and tried.

The Shipibo arrived at the [communal hut] of another group of Cashibo. They again surrounded it.³⁰ They set the hut on fire. While the hut was burning, the Cashibo fled and our fellow tribesmen captured their children. Each one of the Shipibo had a child. One person entered the burning hut. The ancients were not timid. He entered through the leafy wall and broke the Cashibo arrows in two-*Chaish*³¹-so that none remained for them to use. The Shipibo shot off their guns over the heads of the Cashibo children to frighten them. The children squatted in terror; then the Shipibo grabbed them. The children screamed. Some of our tribesmen grabbed two, some three, some only one. Those that did not get any began to fight with those who had many. Therefore, he who had two gave one to he who had none.³²

When they got back to the village the "angry ones" prepared *masato* mixed with hot chili peppers. As soon as they drank it they vomited.³³ They then dressed the Cashibo captives.³⁴ They cut their hair a little above the eyebrows.³⁵ They shaved the beard of the Cashibo young men and cut off their long hair.³⁶ Thus they looked like ourselves. Even inside of one year they had learned a little of our language. One said, "I want to bring my child here, and my sister." Therefore our fellow tribesmen returned to Cashibo territory once more [there was another successful raid] . For that reason there were many Cashibo in every Shipibo village. But later they

were lost in a bad sickness [an epidemic], and for that reason until today there are none left.

In this tale the hazards of raiding the Cashibo turn out to be greater than one might have expected from the contemptible picture of their fighting prowess the Cashibo-Campa story portrayed. Nevertheless the Shipibo accounts of the linguistically and historically close related Cashibo characterize them as a form of humanity totally different from themselves.

Dole, who has done fieldwork among the equally raided Amahuaca—principally on the Sepahua and Chimichinia, an island on the upper Ucayali—shows how the other side views this situation. It is a curious picture of asymmetrical admiration and self-depreciation. The Amahuaca tacitly admit their subordinate status by being careful not to reveal their opinions of the Shipibo-Conibo. When these do surface, such opinions

are ambivalent and are usually hidden in ostensibly factual statements. The Amahuaca have been so traumatized and feel so powerless that they are in general extremely careful not to make any negative gestures or statements, even under the influence of *masato*, in order to maintain peace even with their enemies. As one woman put it, “I am not afraid. Even if they kill me I won’t fight—I am not afraid.” *Condiwo* and *Shipiwo* were included in the list of peoples who have formerly killed Amahuaca extensively and are now enemies of the Amahuaca for that reason. They are said to have taken Amahuaca children in these hostilities. On the other hand, one of the same informants who gave this information also said that the Conibo were “our people” and that the Amahuaca were originally with them, the Piro and the Campa. In keeping with this feeling of close ethnic relationship with the Conibo, there has been some intermarriage of the Amahuaca on Chumichinia with Conibo, and the Amahuaca of the island have adopted Conibo culture extensively in the past generation or two, as for example in clothing style, house pattern, hammocks, pot shape, settlement pattern, dugout canoes, reliance on fishing, strong *masato*, etc.... On the whole the Amahuaca see themselves as very vulnerable, victimized, but hard working, honorably, and independent. They are horrified at any show of imagined hostility, which they not infrequently have met by killing the supposed enemy before the latter could kill them (personal communication 1979).

Traveling Shipibo, on the other hand, will point out that many of the seemingly “Conibo” women of the upper Ucayali were originally Amahuaca. The latter name was mentioned in the con-

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text of depreciation, as if they were talking of savages masquerading as civilized people who, no matter how expertly they make Conibo pottery _the major index of their “civilized state” beyond adopting riverine Panoan dress and language), could never really redeem themselves in the eyes of “pure” Shipibo or Conibo.

If this is one way a victimized backwoods group feels about themselves and others, another similar group, but one which has taken a hand in the victimizing—the Campa—present themselves far differently. Secure in their autonomy, the Campa hold a high opinion of themselves. Only the Inca, whom they have a historical knowledge of are placed in an admired light. Many Inca gods figure, albeit remotely or just as names, in Campa theogony. The Campa view their *Ínka* (“Inca” much as the Shipibo do, as a technological genius who is captured downriver by the whites and is responsible for the latter’s technological superiority (Weiss 1975:419).

Unlike the Shipibo, who feel their loss of the Inca’s genius to be their own fault (in myth 1 the Shipibo ancestor makes a wrong choice of two potential brides, in his haste letting the true Inca’s daughter escape while grabbing merely his adopted one), the Campa have externalized it and projected it on their enemies. Similarly, whereas the Shipibo bring in other tribesmen to kill the bird ogre in myth 11, the Campa do it themselves.

At least the Shipibo and the Campa agree on their placement of the white men; they are cannibalistic demons, aspects of the Dragon. “The *virakócha* (caucasians) are hated and feared, virtually forming a category of demons” (Weiss 1975:247-248). Indeed in Campa mythology ogres live inside hills just as Caucasians do (1975:284) and emerge out of lakes, the doors of the hills and home of the Dragon-lakes that can “devour” the Campa by welling up into a drowning flood when they approach too closely (1975:248). In Campa eyes the Caucasians actually *caused* a world flood (1975:267), which swept life away. A particularly graphic cannibal origin myth of the Caucasians illustrated their ogre role in Campa myth:

Long ago a Campa... was fishing in [a] lake. He first used a papaya on his hook, but without success. He then used a chicken on his hook, but without success. Finally he baited his hook with another Camp’s child—and pulled up the Spaniards. The Spaniards pursued him to the house of the *Ínka*... there the Spaniards sliced up the Campa and *Ínka*. The Campa was killed, but the *Ínka* never dies. (Weiss 1975:415)

If the Caucasians are bloodthirsty ogres, the other Indian tribals fare little better, particularly the Panoans, both backwoods and riverine, to the north. “Campa ethnocentrism is thoroughgoing; the creation of humanity means the creation of the Campas. They take no interest, so far as I could discover, in the origins of neighboring tribes” (Weiss 1975:411) save for the Cashibo, whom they regard to be the cannibal descendants of a man-eating hawk and its human wife (Weiss 1975:411). The riverine Panoans also seem to be related to the cannibal moon because the moon uses to kill his victims their *huino* (“sword-club”), a weapon not used by the Campas (1975:369f).

Thus the Shipibo are not admired by the Campa even as they admire the Campa. This curiosity asymmetry is continued in the Shipibo view of their onetime competitors, the Cocama. Although the Cocama pushed the Shipibo-Setebo off the prime new alluvial lands in the past and kept them off by raiding, instead of reviling them as might be expected, the Shipibo elevate the Cocama to the role of cultural heroes. In two myths in this collection the Cocama are represented as shamans even more wise and powerful than those of the Campa. They outwit ogres who have left the untutored Shipibo helpless. In the Black Jaguar myth (myth 9), for example, it is the Cocama shaman who, once informed by the Campa *meraya* of the dreadful events at the lumbering camp, leads a mixed force of Indians and mestizos down the wide, roadlike path of the *huiso inon*. As the party advances the Cocama shaman blows magical protection in the direction of the Black Jaguar, making the ogre fall asleep so the force can kill it.

In myth 11, about a giant harpy eagle that is killing Shipibo as they pass through Cocama territory on the Huallaga in their search for salt, it is again the Cocama shaman who comes to the rescue. He innovatively models a human dummy out of clay and places it in the prow of the canoe. When the eagle swoops down on the dummy its talons become hopelessly stuck and, weighted down, the ogre crashes into the water, where it meets a grisly end, consumed by piranhas. Instead of the enmity the myths should mirror from the political competition between the Shipibo and the Cocama, one finds amity and asymmetrical aid. Just as the Amahuaca admired the Shipibo, so the Shipibo admire the Cocama as transitive self-alter image perception corresponds to ecological placement and resource competition. As elsewhere, those that get, get admired.

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Goldman (1963:25) shows among the Cubeo Indians of the northwest Amazon the close correspondence between the prestige and the locality along the continuum from the main river to the tributaries. Cubeo sibs located on the main river rank highest, whereas those on the tributaries rank lowest and are even reluctant to accept visitors (1963:34). Siskind (1970) also points out that backwoods groups like the Culina acknowledge the superiority of other groups, like the Sharanahua, who have succeeded in capturing more of the mainstream from them. This case also shows the asymmetrical ease with which backwoods groups, like the Saranahua, can reenter the main river in the absence of competition. As at Chumichinia with the Anahuaca, this ecological readjustment can take as little as one generation. On the other hand, because of the different kind of detailed forest knowledge required, it is much more difficult for groups to go in the opposite direction—from the river to the jungle. Indeed there is little incentive for groups to make that transition. As the myth makes plain, there is a deference for those in power and contempt for those who are weak. The relatively greater power of the Coama is no doubt made more palatable to the Shipibo by the fact that Cocama hegemony is now in the past.

If the Shipibo admire the Cocama, then they admire the more remote and much more powerful Inca even more. The Inca's normal function in Shipibo mythology is as culture hero. Despite the long distance separating them the Shipibo feel a surprising affinity for the Inca. "They say they are brothers of the Inca, and that there is a branch of their tribe called Inca," as Farabee (1922:80) notes for the Conibo. One receives the same frustrating response to many different questions about the origins of Shipibo practice: "Our Inca taught us how." This problem is not a new one, as Farabee noted from the 1920s: "Anything they see that is new, strange, or beyond understanding, then believe belongs to the Inca" (1922:96, on the Shipibo). These nonanswers to foolish questions are very much like the response many fieldworkers have gotten to similar bald questions: "Our ancestors invented it." The Shipibo believe that the Inca visited the central Ucayali where, *Viracocha*-like, he instructed the benighted Shipibo in the arts of civilization. Indeed the Shipibo have a myth wherein their ancestors tried to follow the Inca when he returned to his mountain realm, but their ascent was barred by impenetrable thickets and they had to turn back. This is

as clear a statement of environmental segregation, limiting each group to its ecologically adapted niche, as once could desire.

The Inca is good. He benevolently instructs Shipibo ancestors in even the simplest task. A charming short myth given elsewhere in this volume, on the origin of the correct method of paddling a dugout canoe, illustrates this view. Anciently, the myth asserts, the Shipibo attempted to paddle with the sharp edge of the paddle, slicing through the water rather than pushing it. Therefore they derived no force from their strokes. Thus, despite the Inca's thoughtfully having made the rivers flow in *two* directions simultaneously, downriver on one side and upriver on the other, it still took the Shipibo many weeks to get anywhere. A bird, acting on behalf of the Inca, rescued them by teaching them how to paddle with the flat of the paddle. All was now well and journeys took expert canoemen as little time as they do today. No wonder that there are periodic stirrings of a millenarian cult among the Shipibo about the return of the Inca and the Golden Age, when the presently powerful white man and mestizo will be overthrown and the Shipibo will recoup their losses.

Even in their present debased condition the highlands are regarded as a place of ritual strength among the Shipibo shamans. Interspersed among their regular Shipibo curing songs, a Shipibo shaman while under the influence of ayahuasca (*nishi*) will sing what he is convinced is a curing song in Quechua, the language of the Inca empire. Nevertheless, after carefully listening to tapes made of such songs, I am convinced that they are mostly gibberish, songs full of Quechua *sounding* words, but words that will be found in no Quechua dictionary. Nevertheless, because it is deeply felt that the power of a shaman's words can cure, this attempt of Shipibo shamans to sing in Quechua stands as a powerful testimonial to their belief in the magical efficacy of the Inca.

Yet perhaps because the Shipibo, as lowland Indians, were remotely aware that the Inca, as highlanders, regarded all lowlanders with contempt and viewed them as a source of infectious diseases (Bastien 1978:4) or perhaps more plausibly because of the profound dualism of tropical forest mythology in general and Shipibo mythology in particular, there is not one Inca, but two. There is a Good Inca, whom we have already met, and a Bad Inca, or *Shāno Inca*, who plays the local role of the major ogre in jungle myths: the dragon. The Dragon is a composite dual figure

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with snake, cayman, and piranha elements. It is, in its primary manifestation, an underworld, subaquatic manifestation of feminine-masculine seductiveness. The Dragon is the origin of disease, death, and putrefaction. At the same time, the Dragon is the withholder of cultural gifts from man, the jealous guardian of transforming fire. This dual role for the Inca may be an analogue of the kidnapped status of the Campa *Ínka*, who after all, was once good and helped the Campas by inventing things for them but now, as a prisoner, is made to provide the technological basis of the white man's supremacy. The Shipibo have to explain the same problem: How is it that the Inca could have ruled but then gone away and let the white man take over? The Campa make the solution to the problem a dual Inca who now does evil out of compulsion, whereas the Shipibo resort to an even more thoroughgoing Manichaeism, having the evil Inca exist alongside the good and do evil maliciously.

Like the Yanomamö Dragon (Chagnon 1976:46), *Yoashico*, or the "Stingy One" as he is also known in Shipibo, withholds fire from man because it is the cultural transformative agent that will give him freedom. The monstrous Bad Inca must be tricked into releasing it. The ancestral Shipibo, as one myth puts it, were wasting away, cultureless, warming uncooked food in the heat of a weak sun, until a parakeet stole fire in the form of a coal from *Shäno Inca's* daughter, Venus. As the Dragon, keeper of excessive waters, *Yoashico* sends a tempest to extinguish the fire and plunge man back into nature. But birds, always the friends and intermediaries of man, protest the fledgling fire with their outstretched wings. *Shäno Inca* then meets his death via an "arrow match" just as did the Cashibo, his minor manifestations. Appropriately, he is buried alive and then shot full of arrows, the bright red, solar-associated birds like the macaw bathing in the blood spurting from his myriad wounds.

Just as the Cashibo structurally occupy the side of Nature, so too does the Bad Inca. Just as his actions are counterbalanced by the cultural gifts of the Good Inca, so are the savage backwoods Cashibo complemented by the benevolent Cocama riverine shamans. In the equation, mainstream: backwoods : : Culture: Nature, the symmetry of the structural model corresponds to the dyadic oppositions manifested in the ecopolitics of competing regional peoples.

If the Shipibo view their ancient competitors for the main river in a much more positive light than might have been expected, their attitudes toward their modern competitors are completely predictable, even if they are the direct descendants of the Cocama culture heroes. The traditions picture the ex-Cocama mestizos as foolish, stubborn, and ignorant. They ignore the Campa *meraya's* warnings in the Black Jaguar myth and die in a magically induced sleep. Yet it is the mestizos who eventually kill the ogre with their shotguns, even if they had to be guided and protected to his lair by Cocama shaman. This reflects the Shipibo regard for the mestizos, which oscillated between contempt and distrust for their personalities and way of life and admiration of their mastery of modern technology.

Although disliked, the mestizos are familiar figures on the Ucayali. They regard themselves as *blancos*; the Shipibo do not agree with that equation. Because *blancos* ("whites") are rare, strange in appearance, and the possessors of exotic *high* technology, whereas the mestizos merely have some elements of modern technology, the Shipibo regard whites with great suspicion. Significantly, in the *Yanapuma* myth the ogre is identified as a white man in a fine suit and white vest. It is he who kills the mestizos by assuming the form of an animal. Thus the white man is clearly regarded as superior in power and evil to the mestizos. Such obvious Caucasian outsiders as tourists, anthropologists, and missionaries fit into this mythical category very nicely. Being hairy (many tourists and anthropologists are young men with a profusion of hair and sporting beards) and as prone to be about at night as during day, they may be responded to by the Shipibo as very real and frightful Forest Ogres. This identity sums up all the ambivalence they feel for the technologically more powerful and richer white men. This is why at the end of myth 1 the Shipibo felt compelled to explain why "we Indians have nothing." The Shipibo are not comparing themselves to the mestizos in that myth.

The Shipibo have borrowed the highland concept of the *pishtaka*, the hairy white men who roam about the selva in power launches killing Indians to render them for their oil. Indeed, a cruise boat operated by La Cabaña, a local tourist park, has had a few arrows shot at it in forays up the Ucayali because the Conibo regard it as a boatload of predatory *pishtaka*. This is a vivid con-

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cept for the Shipibo. One day in 1976 I was greeted by a breathless informant telling me that two bearded *pishtaka* just that morning had “zapped” a local Shipibo woman as she approached the water to bathe and wash clothes. The weapon they used was described to me like a hand-held laser (although my informant was ignorant of such things).

The *pishtaka* is widely believed in by Arawak groups like the Campa (Wiess 1975:292) and has recently become quite pervasive as a belief among the mestizos of the Department of Loreto, the Peruvian jungle province the Shipibo-Conibo occupy (1975:305f.). As such, the *pishtaka* is clearly derived from the highland *pishtaco*, a figure that has very real roots in history. Oliver-Smith (1969:363) notes that the conquering Spanish of the 16th and 17th centuries killed Indians for their body fat (*unto*) to use as a treatment for their wounds and sores, according to the chronicler Antonio Herrera. This gruesome bit of folk medicine may have been a rational response of the Castilians to the virulence of syphilis infection and its resultant pustules. As it was widely believed at the time, and still is debated, that syphilis was an Amerindian disease, it may have been felt that parts of their bodies would carry some immune bodies that would fight against it. In any event the practice died out, but is regularly used as a control device to keep them in their place by *cholos* (highland equivalent of mestizos) and others higher in the Andean power hierarchy than the Indians (Oliver-Smith 1969:367-368).

The highland *pishtaco* is a nocturnal murderer who carries a long knife, which he uses to behead, dismember, and cut fat from his Indian victims (Oliver-Smith 1969:363). He is also described as a raper of Indian women. This description so far corresponds well with the tropical forest Indian definition of a Forest Ogre. Yet whereas highland Indians view *pishtaco* as large, evil-looking white or mestizo males dressed in high boots, leather jacket, and a felt hat, emphasizing the exotic and sumptuous nature of his costume, the Shipibo stress his long hair and beard, the libidinous hairiness (Leach 1958; Rivière 1969a) of the *pishtaka*, in consonance with preexistent jungle ideas about all ogres. These entities are real for the Shipibo, and all the powers ascribed to malevolent aquatic or forest spirits in their traditional mythology are assigned to them. The model would not have it otherwise.

**Ceremony as Condensed Symbol:
The *Ani Šhrëati* or the *Bëstëti Šhrëati***

Some of the themes derived from Shipibo myths may be applied to the study of a famous Shipibo puberty rite, the *ani Šhrëati*. This rite has been of considerable interest to travelers and anthropologists alike for its unique elaboration and for its shocking (to Westerners) main episode: the radical clitoridectomy young Shipibo girls must undergo before they are marriageable. This rite-along with the closely similar hair-cutting rite, *Bëstëti Šhrëati* ("scissors cutting"), which is sometimes confused with it-is or was a central Shipibo institution. The complete disfavor with which this "barbaric" custom is viewed by neighboring mestizos, governmental officials, and missionaries alike has caused it to pass out of currency on the main river, although it may still occur in abbreviated form on the upper tributaries like the Pisqui.

Its disappearance means that much of my information on *ani Šhrëati* is derived not from direct observation but from transcribed taped interviews, in Shipibo, with numerous informants, both men who had witnessed it as boys and elderly women who took part in it. My accounts, though detailed and the product of much cross-examination, are contradictory-especially about the timing and sequence of events. Nevertheless it has been possible to recover a clear pattern of activities, spanning three days, that supplements the previous accounts of this rite by Farabee (1922:85), Girard (1958:244), Karsten (1964:186-191), and Tessman (1928:205-208), to name the major authors. Although these authorities sometimes differ over the meaning of the ceremony (chiefly Farabee versus the others), they do agree on the order of its stages and thus have been a help to me in the diachronic arrangement of my data. I use both Karsten's and Tessman's accounts the most because they are the fullest. Whereas all these authors have stressed the operation on the girls and the fighting among the men that usually accompanied the operation, they have largely ignored an episode that looms equally important in my native accounts, which I call "the killing of the pets." As my data I use the long paraphrases of two men who saw the rite as children, Manuel and Juan (the father of my assistant Josè, who was also a principal informant), and footnote these with both anthropologists' accounts and the detailed comments of some mature and elderly

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women who have undergone the rite and presided over many others. These women are: Segundina, Manuel's mother and the source of much of my information until her death at a very advanced age some years ago; Otelia, the aged wife of Manuel's brother José; Inesia, another woman of many years and now probably deceased; Teolinda, Juan's wife; and Ibarista, Manuel's wife. These last two women are the youngest-in their 40s. Most other women in their 30s, and some in their late 20s, have also undergone the rite; the younger women are all presently unmutilated.

Although female puberty or initiation rites are found among some other Panoan tribes, like the Cashinahua (Kensinger 1975:61), and although others, like the Cashibo, have fertility rites-fiestas that share some elements of the Shipibo *ani Šhrëati*, such as the killing of the pets (Wistrand-Robinson 1977:138), as a total configuration centering on the clitoridectomy the *ani Šhrëati* is unique. Thus it is important not just because it is a piece of ethnographic exotica but because material culture elements from it could serve as index fossils of the Panoan way of life in the archaeological record. As fate would have it, the key imperishable artifact that is associated with the rite, the *šhërvënantî*, a clay lozenge that serves to cover the vagina after the operation, has been found in secure stratigraphic context in a Cumacaya midden dating to about A.D. 800 (Roe 1973:172-173).³⁸ This find coheres with the other detailed similarities between the archaeological complex of the Cumacaya and modern riverine Panoan material culture, thus showing a millennium of riverine Panoan occupation of the main river. It also occurred at the legendary site of the ancestral village of the Shipibo-Conibo (see the *Niwëru* World Tree myth below), thus to an extent validating a historical kernel of truth in at least one Shipibo mythological account.

In this examination of the *ani Šhrëati*, I use *rite* as the general term for any cosmologic *action*. I contrast this with both myths and folktales, which are cosmologic *accounts*. The key distinction here is between what is done and what is said. As subcategories beneath *rite* I distinguish *ceremony* from *ritual*, *ceremony* being a set of cosmologic actions directed primarily to other human beings, who form the major intended audience, rather than to supernaturals (who may also be involved, but only peripherally). *Ritual* then becomes a set of cosmologic actions primarily addressed to supernatural, although other humans may be incidentally involved.³⁹ All such distinctions are of course somewhat artificial;

yet I think this one useful because Weiss (1975:513) has shown that cosmologic beliefs and mythical accounts of those beliefs may exist in the virtual absence of any systematic set of related actions (in the Campa case, rituals).

Perhaps the Campa situation is similar to that of the Shipibo, many of whose elaborate rites have passed away and who yet retain a flourishing set of accounts. Thus both groups' condition may be a product of deculturation or culture loss based on a difficult contact situation. After all, it is harder to get a group of people who know similar sets of culturally stereotyped acts together so that they can perform them as a unit than it is to have single individuals remember and relate fragmentary accounts that might have lain behind those group actions. This may explain the greater longevity of myths than rituals or ceremonies in many Amerindian communities.⁴⁰

Using these definitions the *ani Šhrëati*, although it may once have had some ritual connotations, was for much of the time that we have record of, primarily a public ceremony, part of the enduring "fiesta" pattern of many tropical forest societies. While agreeing with Goldman that "there is, of course, no single points from which to explain all of a ceremony" (1964: 115-116), I focus my attempts to interpret the *ani Šhrëati* on two related aspects of a single problem: the distinctions among nature, mediated between states, and culture. These two aspects are: the discrimination between "wild" and "tame" categories, and the agnostic yet complementary relationship between the sexes in Shipibo society.

Sequence of Events

Tessman serves as a useful introduction to these rites:

While the boys grow up without having to undergo any sort of initiation rituals or having their freedom restricted in any fashion for long or short periods of time, the girls must, when they are old enough, endure an awful encroachment on their bodies. This is the female circumcision rite [*die Beschneidung*, lit. "the cutting"], which is accompanied by feasting, celebration, and ceremony. (1928:205, trans. mine)

It goes by many names. Tessman called it *ani veate*, literally the "big drinking" (1928:205); Karsten named it the *wake honèti* (1964:186); and my informants used *ani Šhrëati*, "big drinking." Tessman recorded its distribution to include all the riverine Panoan groups:

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And despite the annexation of their land by civilization, they still continue this practice. This holds true for all the Tschama [Chama-a pejorative term liking all the riverine Panoans; not currently used], the Kunibo [Conibo] of the upper Ucayali River, the Ssipibo [Shipibo] of the Aguaytía and Pisqui. The Ssipibo [Shipibo] of the middle Ucayali, and the Ssetebo [Setebo] also still practice the ceremony. (1928:206, trans. mine)

The number of girls who underwent the ceremony seems to have been somewhat variable. My informants mentioned two or three girls going through at the same time, whereas Tessman (1928:206) states that there were three, four and sometimes six girls of the ages of eight to twelve being initiated together. Karsten's comments here are the most complete:

Formerly this feast seems to have been arranged for every young girl separately as soon as she was considered marriageable, especially if she was betrothed, but nowadays these initiations ceremonies are performed with several marriageable girls at once, some 3, 6, 8, or more taking part in them, and the feasts are only arranged at certain periods of the year when there are several girls ready for the feast. (1964:186)

Karsten (1964:186) also mentions a hut of seclusion, which was really a menstrual hut, but my informants seemed to believe that the girls were simply secluded in their opaque mosquito netting-if not in their own house then in one of the huts that might be temporarily unoccupied in the same compound. Karsten's remarks:

They begin when the girl has had her first menstruation, at an age of 10 to 12 years. The girl is then kept secluded in a small hut especially constructed for her outside the house, where she is attended to by her mother or by some other elderly woman. This hut is called a *pushuva*, a "house of silence," and while staying there she has to observe not only silence but also a strict diet. She is forbidden to eat meat, especially that of swine, and big fish like the *gamitana* and *paichi*, but she is allowed to eat small fish of the kind most frequently caught in the river or in Lake Yarina. She is also forbidden to eat Indian pepper, salt and sweet things, but is allowed to drink masato. (1964:186)

Given this background, here is Manuel's account of the *ani Śhrēati* and the *Bēstēti Śhrēati*, which I transcribed from a tape. He had seen both as a boy, and as he spoke his wife, Ibarista, added her comments where he seemed to falter in his recollection.

Our ancestors had the ceremony to cut the clitoris of the young girls. It took a lot of time to prepare for the fiesta, sometimes up to two or three

years. It was not just the father of one girl who was the “owner” of the fiesta; it was as many as five men. To have the *ani Šhrëati* they worked a lot. First they had to make *chacras* of sugar cane and manioc. After the owner of the ceremony called the other fathers of the girls who were going to be cut to help him. After making the house they began to make the *trapiche* [“sugarcane press”]. After making the *trapiche* they began to press the cane.

When the dresses and other clothing were ready, they squeezed the cane.⁴¹ They had to prepare the masato for those who would help them with the sugarcane press. They called the people to help them press the cane. Then they got drunk. They called the girls who were going to be cut to inform them [to get ready]. They brought the boiled cane juice to a *chomo* to ferment it. Afterward there were 12 to 15 *chomos* full of fermenting cane juice. Then they waited for it to ferment [usually about two weeks to obtain a really strong *guarapo*]. When the *guarapo* was fermented they prepared masato [which only takes about three days]. Then they called someone who knew to try the *guarapo* to see if it was adequately fermented. Then they began drinking.

When the ceremony was very near the men began to make the *quëñán* [a thigh-support, made of light balsa wood; made in sets of two from a single log, they are hollowed out to form two half-cylinders]. To make the *quëñán* they have to prepare *masato* once again for the helpers. The father makes two *quëñán*, two for each girl to use to sit with after the *ani Šhrëati*. When the *quëñán* are ready they bring them to their wives to paint [the *quëñán*-“designs”-on them].⁴² Those who are going to hold the girls are the ones who paint the *quëñán*. After they are painted and the *guarapo* is very strong they call the guests.⁴³ They call them to partake of the *guarapo*; they also call those who are going to hold the girl [during the actual operation].⁴⁴ They also call the husbands of the women who are going to do the cutting.⁴⁵ They carry the *guarapo* to go in search of those who know how to cut the clitoris. They go playing the *tiati*. They go in canoes. When their destination is far [at least one meander away] they carry their mosquito netting along with them. The owners of the fiesta help the visitors bring their things. When they have arrived back [at their vilage] the owner takes the girl by the hand.⁴⁶ That is, the girl whose clitoris will be cut, the victim. They do a *ronda* [a Spanish term the Shipibo have assimilated to mean any circular dance] and sing all night long.⁴⁷ When it is nearly dawn they make the girls who are going to be cut drink [*guarapo*] so that they will get drunk.⁴⁸ In the morning, or sometimes by the middle of the day [the second day], when the girls are really drunk, then begin the operation.

If the girl is not very drunk, her father ties her up so she will not struggle.⁴⁹ Before the cutting they put designs, *cháchá* all over [the girl’s] body and her face as well.⁵⁰ They place the *cháchá* on her for the next day [the

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third day].⁵¹ They place her on the *cajuin*. They put the girl on top of it.⁵² The women who have painted the girl with the *cháchá* sing. When that is over they make her drink again to make her drunk.⁵³ Meanwhile many people are drunk and dancing a *ronda*. When they have finished cutting it they put her away to rest.

When the actual cutting is going on it is prohibited for other people to see it., especially the young people. Only the father ought to be there, at guard to prevent others from seeing.⁵⁴ [Other women put the *shěrvī quēnti*, a special cooking vessel that, unlike normal ones, is painted and holds the water that will be used to wash the girl after the operation, on the fire to heat the water.] The fiesta will continue as long as there is beer left.⁵⁵ They put the hot water inside the vagina when it is bleeding.⁵⁶ Then they put the girl inside her mosquito netting.⁵⁷ When there still is *masato* they continue singing and dancing a *ronda*.⁵⁸

A few minutes after the cutting they put the *shěrvēnantī* on [the girl].⁵⁹ The *quēnán* are then placed [under the girl's thighs] so that her thighs can rest.⁶⁰ When the *masato* is finished the people begin to go, little by little, back to their houses.⁶¹

After the cutting of the clitoris they prepare another festival, this time to cut the hair [the *Běstěti Šhrěati*].⁶² Only the people who took part in the *ani Šhrěati* are called [to participate]. The same ones who held the girl's hands then do so now. The ceremony follows the same pattern [as the *ani Šhrěati*]. They make *cajuin*, *chitonte*, *racoti*, *tari* [all clothes]. They call people to help press the cane. As before, they bring the animals, which have now grown big, like the *jono* [“collared paccary”; *sajino* in Spanish].⁶³ The husbands of the women who held the girl down [at the *ani Šhrěati*] are the ones who kill the animals of the owner of the fiesta.

They would invite people from Pauiyan, the Pisqui, and the upper Ucayali until the Pachitea. People would come from that far away to attend the fiesta. There was much *guarapo*. When the guests arrived they did not go directly to the fiesta. They remained at the landing to await the owner of the fiesta, who would bring *guarapo*. Then there were a lot of guests they could easily finish up two *quēnpo ani*. When [the guests] are near they get the girls who are going to have their hair cut. They also get the men who will kill the animals. They carry a *chomo anitama* [“a middle to largish sized jar”] full of *guarapo* along with the *quēnpos* [to drink from, to induce them to come]. They go blowing their *paca* and *tiati*. Others wait at the landing for the arrival of more guests. When they arrive they offer drink to the invited ones. [As they arrive] some women cry out and beat the water with their *huinti* [“paddles”; the women are often in the sterns with paddles, steering, while their men, with other paddles, power the canoe forward]. The guests arrive [also] playing their *tiati*. Those who arrive first wait for those who are coming a little later to fight with them, to test their strength.

Some arrive in the late afternoon, some as late as midnight. Those

who want to can arrive early for the fight. The first to arrive wait at [their host's] house for those who come later, to test their strength.⁶⁴ The women fight with other women while the men fight with the men. Those who had fallen to the ground invited those who had not to drink. Those who are thrown to the ground are offered drink by those who had not fallen. Then they form a *ronda* and dance, the men with their *huinos* on their shoulders. Those who were too drunk began to get angry when they were beaten too badly in the fight. Then the owner of the fiesta had to come and calm them down. He carried *chomo of mosato* to give to the losers so they would drink. Then they sang in a *ronda* with their *huinos* on their shoulders. When all the guests were inside the [big] house, the fighting ended. Everyone then began singing and dancing *ronda* all night long.

The girl's hair cutting took place in the morning [of the second day]. Then after the hair cutting they killed the *jono*, *yahua* ["white-lipped paccary"; *huangana* in Spanish], or *jasin* [*pauhil*, "currasow"]. They killed them with arrows. They carried the [live] animals in front of a big cross [*caros*] of balsa. The guest is the one who will kill the animals, the first one to shoot with bow and arrow. The animal is tied up in front of the big balsa *caros*.⁶⁵ When the animal has been impaled the wives [of the men who did the shooting] go and kill them by hitting them on the head with their husband's *pacas*. The women go yelling with the *pacas*-*"jè!, jè!, jè!"* After they have brought the dead animals they wrap them up with *racotes*. They wrap them when the bristles or feathers are still on them. Then they put the animals on the *cajuin*. The wives of the men who had killed the animals prepared the food.... Then the girls whose hair will be cut are stood near the house postsso that they can see what the people are eating.⁶⁶ They are very well dressed with a hand-spun *chitonte*, *coriqui teoti* [necklace made of perforated old Peruvian soles, or money], and a *maiti* ["crown"] of *hosho manshán* ["white heron"; *huapahuapa* in Quechua and *garsa blanca* in Spanish] plumes.⁶⁷ The *quënëa* on her [face, hands and feet] are always first class, very well drawn. [Then her hair is cut, drinking continues, and the ceremony ends on the third day.]

Now the more personalized story of Juan:

Long ago when I was young, my aunts were having an *ani Šhrëati* to excise the clitoris of my nieces.⁶⁸ I had six nieces. They were young girls, the daughters of my sister. To cut them they had a big *ani Šhrëati* Their fathers prepared for the fiesta. This was a big fiesta when I was very young. To put it on, my aunts made 12 *chomo ani*. They began to make the drink. Then the old ones began to make the *trapiche*. They cut the cane to put in the press. They had to prepare *masato* [to give their helpers] in pressing the cane. Thus they worked up to the last minute. There was a lot of *masato*.

My father was the one who was going to kill the animals; the owner

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of the fiesta had given the task to him. An uncle [of mine, my father's brother] and another uncle were also there to help [kill the animals]. [In all] there were six people to kill the animals: one *jono*, one *yahua*, one *jasin*, and one steamer duck. The *ani Šhrëati* was in Conshamay [lower Ucayali, near Contamana]. In this *ani Šhrëati* they played the *paca*; the sound was very beautiful. When they played the *paca* people formed a file, first stepping to the front [in a dance], then stepping to the rear, while moving their bodies from side to side—first to the left then to the right. It was very beautiful; thus was the ancient custom. I saw it when I was a child.

The Pisquibo entered the fiesta [it was a one-day journey by canoe from the Pisqui to Contamana]. The Pisquibo entered [quiet aggressively] with their *huino* and their *huishati* in their hands—very dangerous. By the time the middle of the fiesta was reached, things were already pretty bad. The drunken ones were fighting among themselves, using their *huino* broadside.⁶⁹ They had *huino* with beautiful *quënëa* on them, and their women wore embroidered *chitonte*. Both the men and women were very well dressed.

When the fiesta was in full swing, as we say, they began the *tamaranti* music. The old women played their *tamaranti* ["overturned canoe trough"] like the men played their *ani tamera* ["two-toned signal gongs"]. The *tamaranti* was long like a *cusho* ["boat"] but very round, and the hollow opening was placed downward on the ground. The ancient ones were in a file to play it.⁷⁰ It was very pretty—*Támaran!*, *Támaran!*, *Támaran!*, *Támaran!* In the middle of this line of women was a very well dressed man who was standing, playing his *tamera* ["small double-headed drum"]. He had an embroidered *tari* [the best kind, one cut above the woven patterned and painted *bëpota tari*]. One can see the *quënëa* of this kind of *tari* from far away because it is black [this is rare; the common sort is white and only dyed brown with age]. Over his shoulder he had placed his *huino*. He wore a *maiti* of *hosho manshan* plumes. He was the owner of the fiesta. He played his *tamera-Ténten!*, *Ténten!*—shifting from side to side as he played.

Because I was a child and I saw it was dangerous, I hid beneath a raceme of plantains. The fiesta was beautiful, but at that moment it was very dangerous (*onsámëtsa*). People began to hit each other when it was morning; the sun stood [about 9:00 A.M.]. It was on the second day. When the contest was really on I saw my father in the middle of [of the fighting men]. I thought my father was going to do the same thing. Thinking that, I ran to the middle of the house garden. I went crying, thinking that my father would get hurt. But nothing happened to my father. Then they went to kill the animals with arrows. That was beautiful. My father impaled the *jasin*. The *jasin* was his; that is, it had been placed there for him to hit. The duck was my uncle's, while my other uncle had the *jono* and the other the *yhua*.

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When the *jono* was impaled it gnashed its teeth and jumped around. Then the women came running with their [husbands'] *pacas* to hit them. The *pacas* shattered. That ended the use of the *pacas*, for they would not be needed after the death of the animals. Other women came to take the *huinos* from their husbands. They went and hit the *jono* [and killed it]. Then the women picked up the animals, crying out. My aunt placed the *jono* on her shoulders and started jumping up and down. In that same moment the Pisquibo began to fight, cutting heads with their *huishatis* [not as a group against the others, but among themselves, seeking out their enemies]. Hitting and fighting with it [the *huishati*] in the hand was very dangerous. Therefore I thought it was very bad and wanted to run far away. If I had had wings I would have flown away.

After the death of the animals the women carried their dead bodies over and placed them on the *cajuin*. After they had carried them the women went off to put on a different kind of *chitonte*. At first it was a white *chitonte* [before they carried the animals]; after that it was a black embroidered *chitonte*. The *chitonte* they had previously worn they carried and used it to wrap the bodies of the dead animals. They also used the new *taris* for this purpose. After enveloping them they sang and began to fan the fire because the logs to roast them with were already there. They took the hides off the *jono* and the *yahua* and the feathers off the *jasin* and the duck. Then they butchered them and put a new *yahuaiti quënti* on the fire [to boil].

The food was ready in the afternoon [about 2:00 P.M.]. After the food was ready they called the guests. There was music from the *tiati* and the *tampora*. By that time I was hardly afraid at all. Those who had fought earlier were now quieting down and were just drinking *masato*. Those who had fought a lot were already absent. They had left the fiesta when [the main part, the clitoridectomy] was over. Women were helping their men get up. There were pools of blood beneath the leaves of the plantain trees. Blood was also spattered on the broad plantain leaves themselves. That was from the fighting during the night. I was eating *jono* meat and other meat as well because my mother was the one distributing the meat [and she gave me some extra]. After I got the meat I ran off beneath the plantain trees. I was still a little afraid and looked about constantly. Thus the *ani Šhrëati* was beautiful and dangerous. I attended that fiesta and have not seen another one to rival it to this day.

In both these accounts seen through the eyes of young boys screened from the actual clitoridectomy, that episode is hardly mentioned. Instead they stress what they could see: the fighting of the men and the killing of the pets. Nevertheless, coupled with the women's comments they give a much more intimate picture of this

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ceremony than is obtainable from the somewhat arid and condescending accounts of the anthropologists.

Interpretation

I found great difficulty in eliciting from people what the *ani Šhrëati* means. The closest I came to a speculative reason for the ceremony came from my young and relatively acculturated assistant, José. Perhaps because he was familiar with the general disapproval with which the ceremony is met, his reasoning took on a moralistic quality although it used “native” symbols. He explained that it was really the Bad Inca-*Šhäno Inca*-who had taught the ceremony to the Shipibo. One day, many years ago but within the life-span of some aged people recently dead, the Good Inca returned to live again with the Shipibo. He told them not to cut the clitoris any more, that it was a great sin and that if they did not stop a great damaging wind would arise along with some rain (but not a torrential outburst). It would be very cold and the wind would destroy the old houses and push over the plantain trees in the gardens. Thus people no longer hold the *ani Šhrëati*. I refer to this rationalization below, but I must add that most of what I say about the reason for the ceremony is based instead on implicit meanings derived from the way Shipibo manipulate symbols in their myths and not from anything people have overtly told me. On the other hand I have reason to believe that a few informants would agree with at least parts of my explanation.

The Clitoridectomy. Most anthropologists who have dealt with the *ani Šhrëati* have expressed difficulty in deciphering the reasons for the ceremony. Farabee offered an explanation of the *ani Šhrëati* as a sacrifice of the young girl’s virginity to the moon:

This custom of defloration is common among all the Panoan tribes. Its origin and import are impossible now to determine. Among some tribes an old man performs the operation. The Panoan worship the moon: as the performance takes place at the full of the moon, it is easy to imagine, as some of them do, that the ceremony is in the nature of a sacrifice of virginity to the moon. It is a common saying that the moon makes women of girls. When you ask a man why the operation is performed, he will either say that he does not know, or that it is a way of letting everybody know the girl is a virgin. Whatever the origin, this public performance

would have a powerful influence in stimulating virtue. When asked if a man would take a girl in case the women reported she was not a virgin, they reply that all girls are virtuous. (1922:85)

Tessman, on the other hand, directly contradicts Farabee:

The event takes place on the days of the full moon, but not because the moon has any ritual connection...but because the moon provides the necessary light for their dancing and feasting. Every Tschama [Chama] laughed at any imputation concerning their practice of this ritual. (1928:206, trans. mine)

Further, Tessman was very specific about the Shipibo lack of knowledge concerning the ceremony's meaning:

No Tschama [Chama] woman or man is clear about the meaning of the female puberty rite. That such an important ritual is called the "big drinking" clearly indicates that it has lost its original religious meaning. We have the same experience when we ask why only certain animals are eaten and not others and why only at certain times.

I asked a number of Ssipibo [Shipibo], Kunibo [Conibo], and Ssetebo [Setebo] acquaintances I made about the meaning of this ritual and the amputation. Nobody was able to tell me that the removed portion of the flesh was worthless or that its removal made the girl more attractive or better of than having it. That the women became more accessible for the men-in regard to the material explanation of this custom-is denied by the Indians, probably because the portion of flesh removed in no way hinders sexual intercourse. (1928:207-208, trans. mine)

Given Tessman's perjorative opinion of the Shipibo-Conibo and his mistaken view that they lacked a consciousness of the supernatural (his book is called *Men without God*), any assertions he makes about Shipibo ignorance are suspect. One thing he probably was correct about, however, was that the ceremony did not serve as a public demonstration of the girl's virginity:

That the circumcision is a "Sacrifice to the Moon" or an ascertainment that the girl is a virgin ... is incorrect. This is the interpretation of the settlers, who have naturally tried to explain the meaning of this striking custom. Every Tschama [Chama] knows that none of the girls were virgins before the circumcision because of the free sexual intercourse between children. (1928:211, trans. mine)

But if the girls were not virgins, then what of the curious episode with the *bushi* ("ceramic phallus") that Karsten mentions? Is it, too, a fevered reconstruction of the mestizos? He says:

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According to the statements of some traders, the old woman performing the operation not only rubs some medicinal herbs into the bleeding parts, but after a while introduces an artificial penis made of clay into the vagina, the thing being of exactly the same size as the penis of the man betrothed to her. The Indians I questioned about this detail denied the existence of such a practice. (1964:192)

I too was unable to elicit anything but giggles from women and confessions of ignorance from men when I inquired into the use of the *bushi*, which the Shipibo still make. It is possible that its continued manufacture may be an artifact of the tourist trade inasmuch as it would be an exotic item. Indeed some women related a story to me with great amusement about a German woman tourist who was so anxious to have one that she bought it before it was fired. It had been modeled and painted but was only sun dried. The comment to me was, "Wait until she tries to use it and it dissolves."

Phallic effigies are a traditional part of Shipibo material culture-witness the *hoboshco*-so why not the *bushi*? As to its use, judging from the above comments it is possible that some women might use it to masturbate while their husbands are away; yet the ease with which Shipibo women carry on extramarital affairs argues against this. Here another related function may be relevant. Ibarista told me that the *shërvënantî*, a similar object, is periodically inserted into the girl's vagina during the period she wears it as a covering, y her mother, who uses the heel of her foot to push it into the girl's vagina *to ready her for intercourse*. We know that girls are married early, and often to older and bigger males. Although a girl may have lost her virginity in sex play with other children at an early age, it may still have been felt that she needed to be "broken in" further before marriage takes place. Therefore one of the *ani Shërëati*'s meanings may simply have been to ready the girl for her new wifely role.

Having disposed of Farabee's notion that the *ani Shërëati* was an offering of virginity to the moon, what about his connecting the moon with the ceremony in a larger sense? Although it is true that in the Conibo situation Farabee had only one acculturated informant who had to work through the medium of another Indian language, he may have been drawing on the comments of multiple Shipibo informants (whom he said had the same custom) when he mentions that "it is a common saying that the moon makes women of the girls" (1922:85).

Using my data from the Shipibo and similar groups, I accept Farabee's original assertion that the moon as a feminine-associated spirit is involved in the *ani Šhrëati*. I identify *Šhãnto Inca*, the Bad Inca, with the moon and the moon's *avatara*, the Dragon. At the same time I identify the sun with the Bad Inca's enemy, the Good Inca. In this context José's statement that *Šhãnto Inca* "taught" the clitoridectomy to the Shipibo takes on added significance, as does the Good Inca's opposition to the practice. In some symbolic sense during the *ani Šhrëati* the moon does indeed make women of the girls who are operated on.

According to Shipibo belief women are exceptionally vulnerable to aquatic seducers when they have their periods (on this, more in succeeding chapters). These seducers include the anacondas and male dolphins, both of which are aspects of the Dragon as I later define him. Further, women are identified with the aqueous realm of these seducers; they turn into manatee and dolphins. The color associated with women is black, and their province is the night-or, by extension, the dark subaquatic-subteranean underworld. The underworld is, in turn, linked with pests, sickness, and death. Menstrual blood is likewise thought to be polluting and is related to the aquatic seducers as those seducers are related to the moon. Indeed a woman's period is called "the evil of the moon" in Shipibo. In nearby groups the moon can be either a younger, mortal, and therefore "feminine" male or a female who causes the initial menstruation of women. For example in the River Camps accounts of the moon I interpret him as the subaquatic boa. He sends his long and transparent penis into the ground when his niece fools with his fish trap set up in the Tambo River. It enters her vagina when she is in the water following the blood of her first menses and causes her to become pregnant (Weiss 1975:376-377). This myth from the same cultural region incorporates the central themes from both myths 4 and 5. Thus, although for the Shipibo the moon is female the sun is male, their myths are constructed in such a way that it is possible to like the moon in them with seductive male figures of excessive libido. These same figures are also like fire, just as the Dragon does elsewhere in South America. Moreover, as in the *Yoashico* myth, the Evil Inca, who is one of those figures, uses the Dragon's weapons-stinging wasps and snakes-to keep the cultural gifts (cultigens) from mankind.

In opposition to this unsavory crowd, men are linked in Shi-

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pibo culture with the colors red and yellow and the masculine sun. They can pass into the sun's celestial realm with birds or ascend to it in the form of tobacco smoke, a substance inimicable to the underwater powers. Men are symbolized by the Good Inca and are characterized by a concern for adherence to the same marriage rules the women circumvent in their amorous escapades.

One can also project this male-female opposition back to mythical times. Women originally had the penis in the form of a huge clitoris with which they ruled the men at the same time they consorted with animal ambulatory phalli. Men, aided by a bird intermediary, therefore captured the secret of the culture-fire-from one woman, the daughter of *Yoashico*. After the men killed him, the birds bathed in *Yoashico*'s blood in a local Shipibo rendition of the ubiquitous tropical forest mythical theme of "bathing in the serpents blood." To maintain their present uneasy posture of at least outward political dominance over women, Shipibo men must now control women whenever they slip back into excessive naturalism-when they menstruate, particularly for the first time-by symbolically castrating them. They do so in the form of a radical clitoridectomy performed on young girls at the time of the full moon to make them into domesticated, and therefore suitable, marriage partners.

There is only one fly in this interpretative ointment: that the operation is performed by women rather than men. Could false consciousness have developed so far among Shipibo women that they deny in ceremony what they have in reality: the real power in society? My answer to this paradox is that the *ani Šhrëati* may in fact represent a ceremonial denial of the sociologic conditions in which women hold power. It may be motivated by their realization that the technoeconomic system on which that power is based is a product of both sexes working on different but complementary tasks. What better way exists to express the complimentary and segregation of sex roles in Shipibo society than through the role reversal of the *ani Šhrëati* ceremony?

Women certainly derive from this situation many satisfactions not yet mentioned. Although the operation is painful, the girl hardly feels anything at the time because of her inebriation. Moreover the operation is part of the expected trajectory of her life and makes her suitable for the only role Shipibo culture really expects of women: that of wife and mother. In addition the girl

becomes the pivot of action for months preceding and succeeding the actual ceremony. At the height of the ceremony she is the cynosure of all eyes, dressed more beautifully than she will ever be again. Moreover her costume will include many items that are otherwise the exclusive property of men: the *maiti*, the *morošhëta*, and the highly valued and scarce *isošhëta*. Thus male and female elements and prerogatives weave through the complex warp-patterned fabric of the Shipibo *ani Šhrëati* just as through their beautiful textiles. The ceremony serves to validate nominal male symbolic domination of women while it leaves intact their sociologic importance.

The Fighting of the Men. The next episode of major importance in the *ani Šhrëati* is the fighting of the men. It in turn can be divided into two different aspects: the nonsanguinary wrestling of the hosts with the guests and the bloody slashing of hosts or guests among themselves with the *huishate*. The first aspect is how easily disposed of in view of the pantropical forest use of the fiesta as a trading and alliance mechanism, as the films on Yañamamö feasts quiet clearly sow. In the Shipibo version both men and women demonstrate, in a friendly way, to their guests that they are not to be trifled with. One remembers the host's statement to his awaiting party if the guests are few: "Don't worry, we can take them." Groups can visit each other, exchange wives in the process (many marriages have resulted from meetings that occurred at *ani Šhrëati* and other fiestas), and yet still demonstrate their sovereignty.

The second aspect, the cutting with the *huishate*, requires more subtlety. On one level it seems clear that the slashing is a form of revenge for adultery. Thus I disagree with Karsten, who says:

By the mestizos and other occasional onlookers the scarification has been explained as an act of revenge prompted by jealousy...This explanation however is mere supposition and is contradicted by other facts. The *wuisháte* knife-and even more the toucan beak formerly used-is a comparatively harmless miniature weapon. (1964:191)

A great deal of hostility is built up between couples as a result of the fairly continuous philandering of men and the receptivity of married women. I have been in many awkward positions by having some informants conducting affairs with the wives of other

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informants, who then find out and refuse to work near or with each other. Whereas women will search out the guilty women and engage in a violent hair-pulling fight, even when they are sober, the pattern of the men's behavior seems to be withdrawal; they will not cross each other's path. They bottle up the aggression they feel until it comes out in a *huishate* fight. There is an element of culturally expected acquiescence in these matters. A man who has seduced another's wife will often submit to the *huishate* without resistance. This apparently settles matters, for if no fight occurs grudges will be held for years. If the husband finds the couple *in flagrante delicto* and if he has his *huishate* handy (unlike former days a man does not carry his *huishate* with him but hides it in the thatch of his hut, there to lie as a kind of ultimate threat), he will cut the woman, and her lover will flee. This cutting is not done in the stereotyped crown-slashing manner men use among themselves. Instead the husband merely jabs at his wife wherever he can hit her until she runs away. Her lover will then hide in the jungle near a relative's house for several days but then will probably emerge and submit to the cutting once the husband's temper has cooled.

Nor is the *huishate* "a comparatively harmless weapon" as Karsten asserts, for he was apparently ignorant of the poison a man can put on his blade. One kind is a powerful poison, derived from an unidentified floating plant, that will cause a man to suffer excruciating pain for up to two months after being cut. Whereas a man cut with an unpoisoned blade would go on dancing, blood streaming down his neck until *húastë* (*piri-piri*) is applied, a man cut with this poison is immediately carried comatose to his mosquito netting by his friends. There he will bleed profusely, becoming pallid, and his mouth will be paralyzed. A man could even die from this poison, one informant asserted. Another plant with debilitating consequences is *mastën tocéro*; one's hair falls out if it is used. These drugs will only be used if there is great enmity between two men.

Like Karsten I do not, however, assert that all of the men's actions in the *huishate* fight are conditioned by simple jealousy. In particular, I find Karsten's report that one Shipibo "declared to me that while the girls are being operated on..., the men want to show their sympathy...by performing a similar sanguinary operation upon themselves" (1964:191) very interesting, because it reinforces the complementarity aspect of the costuming in the

fiesta. In addition these mutual cuttings would elegantly correspond to a structural principle evident in Shipibo cosmology in particular and lowland cosmology in general: the opposition of men = above : : women = below. It may be significant that a man only cuts another man on the top of his body, the head, or if the combatants are very drunk or if the man who is attacked ducks, on his upper shoulders; whereas women cut women *below*, on the genitals. Moreover as already pointed out, when a man does cut a woman it can be on any part of her fleeing body, not just her head as in the case of her lover.

As there may be a symbolic component to the cutting, there also may be something to the men's menacing each other with their *huinos*. Karsten notes that "during these critical days they [the girls] are looked upon as being exposed to the attacks of evil spirits and many of the rites mentioned have the object of protecting them against these invisible foes" (1964:189-190). These foes are the *yoshin* spirits of the dead and Forest Ogres, which abound in Shipibo mythology. Their mention brings up the intriguing possibility that, while the *shërvënantî* may serve the practical purpose of a postoperative ceramic bandage, it may also serve the magical function of keeping these *yoshin* from penetrating her body and thereby subverting the very purpose of the ceremony, when in the Lévi-Straussian sense she is "excessively open." When the men brandish the *macanasor huinos* at each other, they

are now being used as weapons, although not against natural but against supernatural enemies. In other words, the swords are brandished at the dance with a view to intimidating or keeping off the evil spirits, called *joshin*, which are believed to threaten the girls on this critical occasion. (Karsten 1964:190)

If, as I believe, the whole purpose of the *ani Shrëati* is to translate women from an excessively "natural" (i.e., phallic) state *superordinate* to men to the cultured state of marriage *subordinate* to men, then men have the duty and obligation, once the operation has been performed, to protect women from the intrusion of extremely "natural" spirits who would subvert their changed status by supernatural rape.

The Killing of the Pets. The killing of the pets restates this contrast between the domestic and the wild in another form. It is

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quite common for tropical forest tribes, and Panoans particularly (Braun 1975, on the Iskobakebu), to keep many “wild” animals as pets. These are frequently the young of females that have been killed as game. Often they are fed and kept nearby. Birds’ flight feathers are plucked, and monkeys tied to prevent escape; but almost invariably the animals do. This is usually through the casualness of their owners, who let the feathers grow or who leave the pets to wander about by themselves. These animals are petted, played with, fed, and generally treated like what they are—pets. They are never killed for food even though animal protein is scarce and highly prized.

Thus it has a special meaning when the hosts raise these animals as domesticated pets only to let their guests (primarily the husbands of the women helpers in the host’s girl’s clitoridectomy) kill the tethered creatures as if they were wild animals. This aspect of the *ani Šhrëati* corresponds to a Cashibo festival in which they sacrifice pet peccaries and another female-associated animal, a pet tapir. Because they have raised them from infancy the women wail when the animals are slaughtered. This festival occurs in September or October and is accompanied by dancing and drinking, but it is not stated to be a female puberty rite. It is a fertility rite.

There are also a prescribed assortment of animals to be killed in the *ani Šhrëati*, generally *jasin* (“razorbilled currasow”), *jono* (“white-lipped peccary”), and *yahua* (“collared peccary”)—all favored game animals noted for their tasty and abundant flesh. I have no specific data on the *jasin* other than myth 10, in which it is one of a class of black birds (like the feminine-associated vulture, *poincosco*) that protects the fire a bird has stolen for man from the Evil Inca (i.e., the Dragon), who wants to put it out with a tempest. Thus it is a Dragon-opposing bird, but a *black* one and therefore a bird anomalously associated with women like the little *shihuango* the saddened woman of myth 5 turned herself into after the death of her anaconda (Dragon) lover. Thus the balance of the *jasin*’s associations appear to be with females, making it an appropriate bird for sacrifice at the female puberty rite.

The peccary, the other kind of sacrificed creature, is even more transparently feminine in its associations. The Shipibo recognize the peccary as the customary prey of the jaguar, a male animal in its normal yellow configuration. Thus peccaries, here as elsewhere in the lowlands, are associated with women. The

Yanamamö, for example, have a woman nearly transformed into a peccary until she is rescued for culture by having her pursuing husband “deglove” her animal skin (Wilbert 1966:233). Several characteristics of the peccary seem to have singled it out for such an equation: its evil smell; the fact that like the armadillo (a womb symbol) it roots in the feminine earth (Lévi-Strauss 1973:343, on the Kogi); above all that it is noisy and, by extension, libidinous. Peccaries are promiscuous humans turned into animals (Lévi-Strauss 1969:85, on the Mundurucú) or are associated with the loudest antural noise, thunder (1969:208, on the Kayapó; 209-210, on the Tenetehara and Tarirapé). Thunder *yoshin* are, among the Shipibo, associated with feminine waters. Thus in the context of the ceremony the peccary is linked with the excessive libidinousness of women in their precultural state when they were the caretakers of cultural elements but not their generators, before men stole the power from them.

Even though the narrator of many of the myths cited was a woman herself, women are always depicted as being libidinous. They get involved with animal seducer figures quite frequently. In myth 2 a woman is seduced by a freshwater dolphin; in myth 4, by both a giant earthworm and a jaguar; and in myth 6, by a tapir. Such women constantly have to be rescued for culture and the marriage rules of human (but not animal) society by the very men they have previously spurned. Thus it seems fitting in a ceremony that “domesticates” women through an act of autocastration to kill the “wild” female-associated animals that stand for women’s animal past, even though they are really domesticated. The *ani Šhrëati* presents a symmetrical contrast, an inversion, women = wild → civilized (*ani Šhrëati*) versus animals = pets (domesticated) → wild (*ani Šhrëati*). On one level the pets are killed to feed the guests and thus show the host’s powers of consumptive display, while on another these particular animals reverse the ceremonial trajectory of the girls and, by their grisly fate, validate the girls’ passage from Nature to Culture via their mediating role as domesticated animal pets.

Seen as a presentation of complementary by antagonistic roles, the *ani Šhrëati* contrasts with more transparent ceremonies of sexual dependency and antagonism such as the *Oyne* rite of the Cubeo, wherein males menace females with a large bark cloth phalli, throw them to the ground, and finally engage in intercourse with

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each other's wives (Goldman 1964:117). In the *Oyne* the males dominate the females directly but end by losing the adherence to the marriage rules they symbolize as males, whereas in the *ani Śhrēati* the men symbolically dominate the females indirectly through the agency of females and so end by gaining the adherence to those same rules. Either the system starts with the same basic assumption, that males must control females for human society to function but that in the sexual act of control the female actually subjugates the male. Perhaps because women play a bigger role in Shipibo society than they do in Cubeo society, Shipibo women are able to limit their conquest to the symbolic domain, whereas among Cubeo the sexual combat takes place in actual behavior. The Shipibo ceremony starts with castration and ends in marriage, whereas the Cubeo ceremony begins in erection and ends in promiscuity. In the first case sexual aggression is turned inward on women by women; in the second it is projected outward by men on women.

The *ani Śhrēati* is an acting out of the mythical role reversal on ever succeeding generation of females. It starts with women in control publicly (the original women were Amazons) and men in control privately (they menstruated); it ends after the ceremony with men in public control and women in private control (i.e., men present the political front of domination and women privately make all the decisions). Through the states of the ceremony to the fighting of the males and the killing of the pets, we see the same interplay of contrastive but complimentary elements: Girls become women by losing a function of their femininity and by wearing male accoutrements; women subjugate themselves symbolically while being given center stage by men; men cut themselves to protect the women; and domesticated pets are killed as if they were wild animals. Ever since Bateson (1976) showed the stages through paradox and since Shieffelin (1976) showed the complexity of opposition scenarios in the equally paradoxical *Gisaro* ceremony of the Bosavis, we have known that although the actions of rite are often cryptic its messages need not be. I hope I have shown through analysis of the Shipibo *ani Śhrēati* ceremony and its mythical correlates that South Amerindian ceremonies are as capable of multilevel statements as are their Melanesian counterparts.

Shipibo Cosmology Reconstructed

The following reconstruction is just that. Missionary influence and acculturation have played havoc with any coherent Shipibo cosmologic vision that might have existed. What exists today are vague pieces of information embedded in myths or shaman's songs and whatever can be elicited from ordinary informants. The myths themselves have survived much better than the cosmologic system of which they are a part. Hence I have to use some of the currently available ethnographic data to supplement my information. Clearly this is an area where much work needs to be done, particularly with less acculturated informants in remote tributaries along the central and upper Ucayali. Nevertheless a schematic picture can be worked out that shows many correspondences with other South Amerindian lowland systems.

Two different but related cosmologic schemes have been reported for the Shipibo-Conibo. The most plausible one sees the earth as a flat, circular disc with rivers running down to its edge or around the edges (Tessman 1928:183, 197). Below and above the earth-disc are the other similarly organized worlds, but their order and number are in dispute. Farabee, speaking of Shipibo beliefs, mentions

Three heavens, all above, where the souls of the dead go. There were but two until white men came, when the lowest heaven was invented for them, the next higher for all the savages, and the highest for themselves, who are not savages but civilized men. (1922:104)

Note that the lowest heaven is related to the white men. Elsewhere (as among the River Campa) they are placed even lower, in the subaquatic underworld. Indeed Farabee's lowest heaven may be the underworld, inasmuch as my informants mentioned five worlds, two above (which correspond to Farabee's two original worlds) and two below, with earth in the middle. Also, as the *Yanapuma* myth (myth 9) points out, white men are associated with caves, the entryway into the underworld. What my informants did say was that there were people under the earth, and under the water, who live as we do. The heavens curve downward at the corners like a rainbow; that is, they are semicircular and are arched over the flat earth.

Anderson, abstracting from others, mentioned a competing quadrangle model:

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Heaven is a big Shipibo village inhabited by *Iba* [the sun?] and the spirits of the dead. The central points of Heaven and Earth are connected by a stairway, along which the spirits of the dead ascend. At the end of it, there is a gigantic cross. The universe is quadrangular. The cross and the quadrangle are the most common symbols in Shipibo art, thus attesting to its religious nature. (n.d.)

It is true that the *caros* (“cross”) is the seminal motif in Shipibo art and that it may well reflect Christian influence, but no artists I worked with considered it a religious symbol. The cross, again probably the Christian cross, is also mentioned in Manuel’s *ani Šhrëati* account as a place where the animals were tied for execution. As to the existence of the whole model Anderson describes, I could get little confirmation other than the bit of information that the most prominent Southern Hemisphere constellation, the Southern Cross, is called the “World Cross,” although when questioned people denied that the world itself was laid out that way. This does not mean that a direction quadrant is incompatible with the circular model, because the myths reflect a clear awareness of the cardinal points. As myth 1 states, “from where the sun rises and from where the sun sets. The noise will also come from the north and from the south.” That last phrase was added for my benefit by the informant, who had originally pointed up- and downriver with reference to the Ucayali, which flows from the south to the north. Together with the trajectory of the sun, the river orientation of the Shipibo gives them an awareness of the quadrants, but whether it also incorporates a quadrangular universe is a moot point.

In this universe there seems no doubt that a heaven for souls exists above the earth. Farabee presents a picture somewhat influenced by the missionaries:

The good and bad all go to the same place at death. Heaven, or the place of the dead, is much like the earth, except that there are no storms, and sunshine always. There are no enemies, or hardships, but plenty of game, fish, and women. All live above eternally, and there is no resurrection of return to earth. There is very little difference between the treatment of the good and bad, except that the bad may have more difficulty in getting food. (1922:104)

The concept of the soul itself is called “*kayá*.” “It is this shadow-like image of the body, the second-self of man, which

leaves the body at the moment of death, and is believed to follow the body to the grave” (Karsten 1964:201, on the Shipibo). My informants clearly indicated that the soul fled through the air, presumably to the heaven referred to above. They further believe that when one sleeps one’s soul leaves the body while playing a *Quena* (“highland”) flute, which the Shipibo call “*rëwa*” and with which the soul journeys afar, its high-pitched sound being heard especially when the soul is leaving and entering the body. The soul must play the flute constantly or it will be lost and fall down somewhere. When the soul is flying through the air a hunter may shoot it with a shotgun, but not with bow and arrow, and it will fall to the ground as a *mëshantiu* (Spanish, *toyuyo*, the jabiru stork, *Jabiru mycteria*), a big stork. In that case the sleeper will be left a corpse. The soul can also be easily lost, so one must take care not to wake a sleeper too rapidly.

Although the soul is linked to a bird and placed in a celestial heaven, there are some indications that the Shipibo also place souls in the subterranean realm. As is so frequently the case in the lowlands, things tend to come in twos. Thus there are often two places of residence for souls in South Amerindian cosmologies: One is in the celestial sphere, which harbors privileged souls; and one is in the underworld, where ordinary or disesteemed souls dwell.

One of the bits of evidence that the Shipibo place some kinds of souls in the underworld comes from archaeology. The Shipibo are one of the few aboriginal groups in the world who have a specific term for *potsherd*: *quënuësh*. The Shipibo visit archaeological sites to mine them for potsherds because vessel fragments exposed to thousands of years of weathering are much more friable than their own hard pottery and can with greater ease be ground up to form one category of ceramic temper.

Moreover, starting with Lathrap in the 1950s and going on through a number of his students in the following years, at least some Shipibo are familiar with archaeologists and their search for and collection of *quënuësh*. Those potsherds, particularly when they come from the Late Prehistoric styles such as Cumancaya that are recognizably like modern Shipibo-Conibo ware, are often identified as the work of the ancestors. The sherds, and sometimes whole vessels, naturally come from beneath the ground, so that all of the potentially malevolent powers attached to ghosts, spirits

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(*yoshin*), or similar underworld figures are also attached to the pottery. This generalized “power” of the pottery is therefore thought by the Shipibo who have worked for archaeologists to be dangerous, particularly for their youngest children—to the point that Shipibo workmen link any illness their children might suffer while they are away to the fact that they are working with *quēnquësh*. Indeed I have a case in which the death of a child was related to the proximity of a lot of *quēnquësh* in a house an archaeologist was working in. Shamans can attempt to cure such afflicted children by communicating directly, through the consumption of ayahuasca (*nishi*), a powerful hallucinogen, with the spirits of the ancestors embodied in the *quēnquësh*. In that sense ancestors are identified with the earth.

There is another link between ancestors, ghosts, and the subterranean world. Aboriginal Shipibo-Conibo buried both adults and children in a flexed or semifetal position in burial urns (actually *quēnti ani*), which, to judge from other lowland data, corresponds to a kind of ceramic womb. Thus the very act of burial also was an act of impregnation of the earth with the spirits of the dead, who were going to be born again. As frequently happened in the jungle, those subterranean spirits of the dead are viewed as dwarfs.

Karsten’s information on the newly instituted custom of burying the dead in cemeteries is pertinent here:

On the day after the death the corpse is taken out through the door and carried to the burial place. Ashes are profusely scattered on the ground in the wake of the procession. On the following day, I was told, the survivors can clearly trace in these ashes the footprints of the deceased as he left the house, and close behind his they can discern the small prints of the evil demon that killed him—prints like those of a small man—when the patient’s death had been caused by witchcraft. The ceremonies at the grave are further illustrations of the fear in which the survivors stand of the death spirit which carried off the deceased and which may be looking for more victims among the living. When the grave has been filled with earth, ashes are profusely strewn upon the tomb so that it is covered with a thick layer, and the women sitting at the tomb utter loud cries and wails and incessantly strew ashes upon their own hair. The ashes professedly serve as a protection for the women and other survivors against the evil death demon. (1964:206)

Here the death spirit is a dwarf. This association makes sense if underground dwellers are dwarfs and if the underworld is a place of death⁷¹ In the general model the underworld is equated with

the night, and the night with the center of the forest where the evil spirits upwell from the underworld to afflict mankind. There is evidence for this chain of associations in Shipibo cosmology as well.

The Shipibo strike one as ghost afflicted. The night swirls with an assortment of demons, narrow escapes from which are easily elicitable reminiscence from nearly any informant, particularly the males, who tend to venture abroad at early evening more than women do. It is particularly in their plethora of undifferentiated demons, or *yoshin*, that I am reminded of a similar description for the Dugum Dani of highland New Guinea (Heider 1970:135). In such tribal societies the dead merge with the demons of the night in a motley order. Burga Freitas (1939:61), for example, tried to identify the “*yushin*” with the night-flying bird of evil omen, the *chicua*; but that is only one kind of *yoshin*. There are many kinds. However they are differentiated, the *yoshin* were clearly “the souls of the dead Indians, especially the souls of dead medicine-men or sorcerer” (1939:196). They are mostly malevolent, invisible, and active at night. They play the local Shipibo role of Forest Ogre:

The Shipibo fancy that the *joshin* tries to entice the hunter to follow him, offering him a mysterious fruit called *pihuai* and promising to become his friend and assistant. If he accepts the offer and takes the fruit and follows the demon into the interior of the forest, he will go mad or fall ill and die. (1939:196)

The *yoshin* are also identified with thunder and lightning, which are also considered evil spirits. “The Shipibo of the Ucayali have the idea that thunder and lightning are caused by evil demons, *joshin*, running through the air” (Burga Freitas 1939:45). Myth 8 further identifies the lightning *yoshin* with the mountain where he dwells. Caves in mountains are as good an entryway into the underworld as are deep pools of water. Mountain caves are also homes of other ogres like the *huiso inon* of myth 9.

Thus the establishment of two domains for the dead would seem to answer a contradiction in Shipibo cosmology. Why, if the inhabitants of the celestial heaven are always pictured as happy and benevolent, are the Shipibo so afraid of ghosts and spirits of the dead? The answer might be that the malevolent dead, like the sorcerers mentioned earlier, never ascend into the sky but instead remain underground. Alternatively, the ascent may be a gradual process with the newly dead arising out of the ground at night to

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accost people on jungle paths or pelt their houses with clods of mud; then, as their tie to the living lessens, they ascend to the heavens either by the literal stairway already mentioned or by the figurative one discussed later, there to reside forever as benevolent but noninterfering spirits. The riverine Panoans once regarded the earth as having been very close to the heavens (Tessman 1928:199). It was only later that they occupied their present separated positions. I believe that the central pillar holding up the multiple worlds of the Shipibo cosmos is a gigantic World Tree. Myth 7 clearly shows the *lupuna* tree as a World Tree. In that myth an old man who is really a tapir, *ahua*, kicks a *guayaba* tree and it shoots up to turn into a giant *lupuna*. The tapir is the guardian of the World Tree in other lowland myths, so his association with the *lupuna* is understandable in the Shipibo context.

By a complicated train of associations the World Tree is usually associated with the devouring Dragon and its minor form, the frog, and then, via the powerful poisons certain species of tree frogs possess, with fish poison. Therefore it is significant that this specific version of the World Tree, the *lupuna*, exudes a powerful poison in its sap. To quote from Karsten, who gave an extended description of this tree in Shipibo culture:

Its scientific name is *Trichilla tocacheana* of the *Meliaceae* family. The Shipibo call it *shóno*, and all Ucayali tribes have much the same ideas about it. It is a tall, beautiful tree, 25 to 50 meters in height. Its crown is spreading and umbrella-like and forms its most characteristic feature.... The tree occurs on the lower Río Santiago and Huallaga, and on the Middle Ucayali... Its sap is said to be very poisonous. The soul of the *lupuna* tree is an evil demon or *joshin* which appears to the Indian narcotized by *ayahuasca* as an evil wizard smoking an enormous pipe (*shinitápo*). The sap of the tree (called *virote* in the Loreto dialect and *yovui* in ... Shipibo...) forms the mysterious poison which the wizard secretly sends against those whom he wants to harm... The wizard first prepares some tobacco medicine by crushing some tobacco leaves and thoroughly mixing them with saliva. This is put into the small ornamented clay pot called the *ronkon*, which, together with the ceremonial tobacco pipe, forms his most important equipment. Then, during the evening, he makes a deep cavity in the stem of the *lupuna* tree, so that the poisonous sap begins to flow. The clay pot containing tobacco juice is fastened in the cavity in the stem of the tree, covered with bark, and left for the night. During the night the demon of the tree will allow its poison to run down into the clay pot, and when the wizard arrives in the morning the poisonous medicine is ready. (1964:198-202)

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The *lapuna* tree is indeed treated with great reverence by the Shipibo, who will invariably point one out to the traveler when they are on the trail. One of the peculiarities of Shipibo mythology is its emphasis on the tree spirits, which control a wide range of specified plants (Girard 1958:198). In the words of Karsten:

Every particular tree and plant has its indwelling spirit, which forms the principle of its life and growth. When a tree is felled, this is regarded as an offense against its spirit. Every tree has what the Indians call its “mother” (and which he equates with “soul”). (1964:198)

Therefore the *lapuna* tree is not the only one to which the Shipibo give a mythological or shamanistic importance.

Another characteristic of the World Tree is that it is covered with spines to indicate its dangerous nature and to protect it against culture heroes like the Magical Twins who seek to cut it down to obtain its hidden fruits. The Shipibo single out another tree with precisely these characteristics:

...called the *anáh*... This tree is endowed with big spines and also has a soul which works evil. Its sap is said to be so poisonous that if a person consumes it he will die. Owing to its poisonous properties, the sap is used when fishing to stupefy the fish. (Karsten 1964:200)

With the *anáh* the symbolism has gone full circle, from the poisonous sap of the *shóno* to the spines of the *anáh* and then to its sap as a fish poison. In many parts of the lowlands the World Tree is hollow and contains fish, the waters of its interior communicating with the waters of the subaquatic region. Perhaps instead of a ladder the original Shipibo souls rose through the hollow trunk of the World Tree to reach the heavens. When the World Tree is cut down a gigantic World Flood issues from its severed trunk. The Shipibo have precisely that legend (Burga Freitas 1939:50-52), as is also evident in myth 1. Although I never witnessed any ritual of this kind, Anderson (n.d.) does relate the *lapuna* tree to rain-celestial waters:

During rain-making ceremonies, the shaman smokes a pipe called *shinitapo*. He crouches under the sacred *lapuna* tree, blows tobacco smoke to the ground and weeps. The smoke rises to the clouds and provokes rain. His tears symbolize the rain.

If true, this ritual would indicate that tobacco smoke stimulates celestial rain, whereas my data indicate it is inimical to subaquatic creatures, presumably because it rises upward. According to one informant, there are villages of people below the

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water, and the one substance they cannot stand is tobacco smoke.

This aquatic realm is identified with women, who go to it to make love with aquatic seducers, as in myth 5, or who have the seducers come to them, as in myth 2. The following short myth Inesia related shows this connection:

Anciently, a Man and His Wife Were Playing Like Otters

Anciently, a Shipibo man and his wife were down in the stream, playing like otters. He said to her, "You swim and I will play like a fisherman and try to stab you with my lance." She agreed, but when she was hit she changed into a manatee [*Manatus australis*]. She still has human feet, but slowly they disappeared to form the tail flipper manatee have today. Her *chitonte* and very black *racote* remained where she had left them on the canoe landing. The husband threw the *racote* into the water and it became transformed into the small black [gray] freshwater dolphin. For that reason the manatee and the dolphin swim together down to the present day.

There is a particular stress laid in Shipibo mythology on the relationship between menstrual blood and aquatic seducers, largely on the logic that menstruation is a blatant manifestation of woman's animality, of her excessive "openness," which aquatic seducers seek to fill-both literally and figuratively. The Shipibo parallel other Panoan groups, like the Cashinahua (Kensinger 1975:52), in prohibiting women from bathing in the lakes or rivers when they are menstruating. Instead they have to bring up water in a jar and bathe on dry land. The reason the Shipibo give for this practice is that during their periods women are particularly susceptible in the dolphin's domain.

Manuel narrated to me a short myth of the common "fish in the body of a snake" type wherein this connection between menstrual blood and the aquatic boa are reiterated:

The Mother of All Water Creatures

The huge boa is the "mother" of all water creatures, including the dolphin. At one time it contained all water creatures in its stomach. A boa formed a bridge over the water on which all the first people crossed from shore to shore. This happened until one day a woman crossed the boa-bridge while she was menstruating. Some of her menstrual

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blood fell on the boa's back. It reacted sharply by shaking all the people off its back attempting to wash off the blood. Thus it no longer forms a bridge for man.

The boa is commonly aligned with the rainbow, which is further viewed as the herald of disease, just as the boa produced all of the noxious insect and animal pests in myth 3. The Shipibo make this same association between the boa and the rainbow (Girard 1958:141, 196), as well as the subsidiary association (also shown in the myth, as in the myth 5 role of *nishvin*, the boa's wasp) among boas, rainbows, and noxious insect pests such as wasps and spiders in shamans' curing songs. For example, from the tape-recorded songs of Juan, José's father, when he was under the influence of *nishi* in a curing session come the following associations: He sang of the "evil-smelling" clouds swirling within the sick child's chest; he referred to the "venom" of the clouds, that they were cold and evil clouds of the "rainbow," and how they were dispersing under the efficacious influence of his curing songs. In a later song he referred to the "spider's web" of clouds within the child's body. In the tapes curing songs of another shaman, Olegario, we find the direct and expectable linkage made, "the web of the rainbow" and "the web of the [bad] air." Evil smell, coldness, noxious insect pests, and diseases are all common characteristics of the underworld and its subaquatic denizens like *ronin* ("the anaconda") or *huiso capë* ("the black cayman").

Because he is constructed out of these figures, the Dragon also shares these traits. The local form of the Dragon in Shipibo mythology is the Evil Inca, *Yoashico*. He places venomous snakes and stinging wasps on the original cultigens to keep them from mankind. Against him the greatest epithet a lowland Indian can imagine is hurled: the Stingy One. The things of culture, cultigens and fire, must be taken from him indirectly via his daughter, Venus, by helpful bird intermediaries.⁷² The continent-wide association of the moon with Venus, as well as the moon's similar role in lowland myth, argue for a moon-*Yoashico* linkage.

The birds play a key role in accompanying shamans in their curing role to the realm of the sun in the sky. Further, the sun is identified with the (Good) Inca (Girard 1958:263, 266; Izaquirre 1922-1929, 1:316-317). The lyricism of the association between the benevolent Inca, the sun, gold, and birds comes out in one of Olegario's curing chants in which he sings of going to see *non inca*

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riossen (“our Inca God”) by way of the “Great Light”: “We are the men of the light of gold with a great crowd of *pinón* [“hummingbirds”] in the air surrounding us. *Shähuan* [*guacamayo*] are our companions.”

In turn, both the sun and the moon are the children of an otiose creator god, *Habi* or *Otcipapa* (“grandfather”).⁷³ The Conibo are early recorded by Izaquirre (1922-1929, 1:316-317) as believing that the sun (*Bari*) is the son of *Habi* and the moon (*Use*) is his daughter. The sun got his brighter glow by smearing his sister-wife’s face with *nanë* in a direct inversion of the normal pattered wherein the sister marks her incestuous moon-brother with *genipa*. In this case the same structural relationships hold. The moon is *both* wife and sister of the son; the marking is inverted by being applied to the female. Although the sex of the moon changes, the fact this it, not the sun, is the one marked does not. The moon, *Öshë*, originally lived on earth but later ascended into the sky (Girard 1958:252, on the Shipibo),⁷⁴ as did her sons by the sun. They climbed into the heavens on a chain of arrows similar to the ladder of arrows used in myth 8 to become the Pleiades (Burga Freitas 1939:43-44, on the Conibo).

Shipibo cosmology shows an easygoing egalitarianism about the ways humans and animals can change their form, often by simply changing their clothes. For example, in myth 3 a boa changes his *tari* and becomes a man. In some myths, such as myth 6, this act of transformation becomes very subtle as animals alter their shapes in response to the unspoken thoughts of humans. There is no dividing line between human and nonhuman animals, particularly in myth. As myth 6 begins, “The first people and animals were capable of speech like we are.”

This does not mean that the Shipibo do not distinguish between kinds of people and kinds of animals and equate one with the other; they do. This becomes clear in the way that Shipibo distinguish between a good, or curing shaman, who is associated with light-colored celestial birds, and the evil, or bewitching, shaman, or witch doctor, who is linked with wasps, maggots, and thorns. These two specialists even use different hallucinogenic plants. The good shaman, or medicine man, cures with *nishi*, the jungle liana (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), which contains powerful alkaloids with LSD-like effects. I witnessed the preparation of *nishi* by several shamans. One of them, Antonio, preparing for a curing session that was to take place later that night, took the *nishi* vine

and cut it into sections about 12 cm. long and shredded each section a little—probably to make the sap come out quicker. He placed the contents in a small *quënti* along with some water and put it on a special fire in the plaza (not in the cook fire under the roof of the cookshed, the domain of women). He then added the *cawa* leaf.⁷⁵ He cooked the contents of the *quënti vacu* for about one hour and then expressed some liquid. He spilled some on the dirt of the plaza but carefully picked it up with the tip of his machete and flung the moist clod into the *chacra* surrounding the plaza. He put what was left in the pot on the fire again along with the original sections of *nishi*. This was probably to strengthen the solution. Later he added some more water. Every now and then he poked at it with a bamboo stick, stirring it. He removed it after 5 hours of cooking and took the *cawa* out. What remained was an opaque brown liquid, very bitter to the taste.

It is true that for the Shipibo narcotic plants play a less important role than they do for some other groups, like the Jívaro (Karsten 1964:200-201). Many Shipibo men have never tried *nishi* and are afraid to do so, fearing the bad visions that sometimes accompany the use of the drug. Also, unlike the Peruvian mestizo *ayahuasqueros* (Dobkin de Rios 1972), who sometimes use the drug recreatively, among the Shipibo only shamans use it and then only to call the spirits to cure with their aid.

The effects of the drug follow a well-documented pattern (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972a), with nausea and vomiting often accompanying the first infusion of the bitter liquid. Then a series of ill-organized phosphors fill the peripheries of one's vision, floating in the blackness of the night. They are followed by a brilliant kaleidoscope of shifting, multicolored geometric patterns that succeed themselves in a bewildering array, filling one's field of vision. Then, as the vision deepens, animal figures appear, large felines and large snakes taking pride of place. They can menace the novice celebrant, but the experienced shaman knows them well.⁷⁶ At the same time there is a feeling of the dissolution of one's body, or of flying. It is at this stage that the shaman ascends to heaven escorted by flocks of radiant birds. Then the visions taper off and gradually cease.

According to my informants, the good spirits of *nishi* look like long monocolored filaments that arch from their point of origin, to intermediate areas, and finally return to descend among the circle of the curing ritual. For example, in one rite held at the small

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village of Santa Clara near San Francisco de Yarinacocha on the middle of the Ucayali, the *nishi* spirits came from the sacred riverine Panoan site of Lake Cumancaya to the south, on the upper Ucayali above the mouth of the Pachitea River, passed over Yarinacocha and went to Canshahuaya, the mythically important site on the lower Ucayali below the Río Cushabatay to the north, where a huge *chomo* lies buried in the mountain. They finally reappeared at Santa Clara in the middle.

It is a peculiarity of *nishi* that a shaman will remain partially lucid while he is under its effects. He can carry on a conversation, albeit somewhat distantly, after he has drunk the potion. Yet, punctuated by a stereotyped long-drawn-out sigh, the shaman will abruptly drift off beyond the power of human conversation and begin his falsetto songs. Sometimes he will sing into his cupped hands to form a resonating chamber to alter even further the characteristics of his voice. He will occasionally sing in a kind of pseudo-Quechua, but for the most part his songs are in Shipibo leavened with a few Spanish words or phrases. The songs will rise and fall through three nights, beginning about 9:00 P.M. and continuing until the early hours of the morning. At times more than one shaman will sing at once, either in a duet or in an alternating pattern, with the more regarded, or powerful, shaman taking the lead while the junior shaman acts as his helper. The helper is content to supply a background hum.

Clustered around the shaman will be the concerned members of the afflicted family. If the patient is an infant, and it often is, the mother will hold it inside her mosquito netting while the shaman and others sit outside, the shaman occasionally blowing strong tobacco smoke over the child's body to aid the efficaciousness of his songs.⁷⁷

It is a powerful and moving spectacle as late at night a moon-bathed plaza resounds with the shaman's unearthly falsetto while bats flit past broad, swaying banana leaves and from the nearby lake the curiously human coughing of the freshwater dolphins expelling air from their blowholes drifts toward the huddled circle of people. At that moment, even for the anthropologist busy swatting mosquitoes, tape-recording the songs, and noting the actions and attitudes of the participants, the spirits live and the fragility of human society in its cleared and ordered little space within the vast black wall of the surrounding jungle becomes all too clear.

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If the good shaman uses *nishi* to cure his patients, the bad shaman uses *toé* to bewitch them. In the words of Karsten:

The Shipibo know another magical medicine comparable with...*nishi*..., although it is even stronger. This is the narcotic *toé*, prepared from a species of *Datura* and belonging to the poisonous family *Solanaceae*....Among the Shipibo it is used only by wizards who wish to put themselves into an ecstatic state for certain purposes. *Toé* as a narcotic is not prepared by boiling; a small quantity of the juice in the stem of the bush is squeezed out and put into a small gourd. Taken by the medicine-man it produces fantastic dreams and visions of the same kind as those produced by...*nishi*. (1964:205)

Whereas the good shaman consumes a “cooked,” and therefore cultured, hallucinogen, the evil shaman drinks a “raw” and bewitchingly natural brew. The wizard also drinks the natural poisonous sap of the *lupana* tree, *yovui*. Indeed, he is called “*yoshin yovui*,” literally, “poison demon,” thus showing his assimilation to the ogreous horde protecting the World Tree from human interference. *Yovui*

is regarded as a living demonical entity which the medicine-man keeps in his throat. When he wants to bewitch a person he expels it with a hawking motion and a certain conjuration. The demonical being returns to its master after it has executed his command. To impart the art of witchery to another Indian the older medicine-man squirts a little of the *virote* or poison into his mouth, together with some tobacco water. During the next six months the novice must carefully observe certain rules, especially in his diet.⁷⁸ He frequently takes tobacco juice, which he obtains by chewing the leaves and spitting them into a small clay vessel.⁷⁹ He also takes the narcotic *nishi* (*ayahuasca*)....He abstains from eating the fat of swine and other animals, salt, and big fish like the *gamitana* and *paiche*. He eats mainly small fish, roasted green plantain and *masato*.⁸⁰ After the six months have elapsed he is allowed to eat everything except swine’s flesh, which is always carefully avoided by him. (Karsten 1964:202)

In addition to consuming “raw” poisons the *yoshin yovui* shares other characteristics with the Dragon. He can mutate into a poisonous snake or an anaconda (Girard 1958: 71, 132-133). He uses wasps, maggots, and sharp *chonta* thorns as his “arrows,” which he lodges in his victims. He also sends the small black night bird, *charar*, to carry his poison to the house of one he wants to harm (Karsten 1964:202). It is no wonder that nearly every time I saw this bird fly by a Shipibo compounds at dusk the resident male would throw a stick at it to send it on its way.

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In keeping with the dualism of Shipibo cosmology, then, there are two shamans, one specializing in good and the other in evil. Each are responsible for the contrasting worlds of golden yellow celestial sun, birds, and curing, and the black night of raw poisons, stinging insects, snakes and thorns, devouring anacondas, disease, and cold waters. Between these two realms most Shipibo tread, and few of them reflect that out of these contrasting but interpenetrating spheres a world lies in ruins-the world of the complex aboriginal Shipibo cosmology that we see hidden behind its pitiful remnants-but which is reconstructable in outline using the comparative data of other lowland tribes.