

Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

ISSN: 2572-3626 (online)

Volume 12

Issue 1 *Amazonian Quichua*

Article 1

7-26-2014

From “Acculturated Indians” to “Dynamic Amazonian Quichua-Speaking Peoples

Michael Uzendoski

Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales-Ecuador

Norman E. Whitten Jr.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Uzendoski, Michael and Whitten, Norman E. Jr. (2014). "From “Acculturated Indians” to “Dynamic Amazonian Quichua-Speaking Peoples,” *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 1, 1-13.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol12/iss1/1>

This Special Topics is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact jcostanz@trinity.edu.

From “Acculturated Indians” to “Dynamic Amazonian Quichua-Speaking Peoples”

Michael Uzendoski

Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales-Ecuador

Norman E. Whitten, Jr.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

In the twenty-first century books such as Michael Uzendoski’s *The Napo Runa of Amazonian Ecuador* (2005), Norman Whitten and Dorothea Scott Whitten’s *Puyo Runa: Imagery and Power in Modern Amazonia* (2003), Uzendoski and Edith Calapucha-Tapuy’s *The Ecology of the Spoken Word: Amazonian Storytelling and Shamanism among the Napo Runa* (2012), Janis Nuckolls’ *Lessons from a Quechua Strongwoman: Ideophony, Dialogue, and Perspective* (2010), and Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (2013), it is made clear that Amazonian Quichua-Quechua-speaking people manifest central paradigms of power and dynamic cultural systems that serve both as axes of interculturality and templates for cultural continuity and transformation. To establish the contextual basis for this special topic, we turn now to a brief introduction to, and overview of, Amazonian Quichua-speaking people of Ecuador. This section is taken from a piece co-written by Uzendoski and Whitten, upon which we elaborate in the ensuing section.

The Amazonian Quichua-Speaking People of Ecuador ¹

The Amazonian Quichua (also Kichwa) are an indigenous South American people who live in eastern Ecuador (Amazonian Region, *el oriente*). They self-identify as “Runa,” fully human beings, and call their language “Runa *shimi*,” human speech. Their language, which in the Pastaza and lower Napo regions, seems to stem from Amazonian Peru (Whitten 2008, 2011), belongs to the Quechua language family, with approximately twelve million speakers in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. There are about 150,000 Amazonian Quichua speakers in Ecuador who speak dialects closely related to Amazonian Inga (Colombia) and Amazonian Quechua (Peru).

Cloaked in controversy though it is, it is likely that Amazonian Quichua was present in pre-Hispanic times as one of many languages of the Amazonian world, although it is doubtful that large populations of Quichua speakers existed (Steward 1948: 509; Steward and Métraux 1948: 535; Torero 1984: 375; Muysken 2011: 240, 242). Torero (1984: 380) writes, “Possibly from many centuries before the Hispanic conquest, Quechua speaking peoples had entered into contact with the Omagua-Cocama in the Ecuadorian northern Oriente, the Peruvian Northern Oriente, and with one or several peoples of Colombia, whose languages took over as those of long distance commerce” (Translation by Michael Uzendoski).

Quichua became a lingua franca after Spanish conquest linked to long-distance exchange relations (Muysken 2011). Bruce Mannheim (1991) classifies contemporary Amazonian Quichua as a “Peripheral” Quechua language, related to the Inca Quechua, in contrast to “Central” Andean Quechua of Peru. However, it is doubtful that either Amazonian Quichua or Inca Quechua derived from one another (Whitten 2008:14-15, 2011; Whitten and Whitten 2008, 2011).

Linguists have identified three main dialects in Amazonian Ecuador (Orr and Wrisley 1981): Tena, Loreto-Avila, and Bobonaza-Curaray-Puyo. The former two are often referred to as Napo Runa and the latter as Canelos Quichua. There are currently four major social groupings recognized in Ecuador, each by province and cultural features: Napo (Napo Runa or Quichuas de Napo), Orellana (also Napo Runa or Quichuas de Napo), Pastaza (Canelos Quichua, Pastaza Runa), and Sucumbíos (Aguarico, Lago Agrio).

During the colonial era Amazonian Runa culture expanded in the greater Pastaza and greater Napo region as warring peoples such as Shuar contra Andoa-Shimigae-Zápara in the Pastaza Region, and Zápara contra Waorani in both the Napo and Pastaza regions, used Quichua to disguise their antipodal identities and thereby suppress hostilities. The language spread as Quichua became the linguistic modus operandi of mediation and trade. Some ethnicities previously identified by language became embedded in historical memory of Quichua speakers. Many indigenous peoples, especially Achuar, Shiwiar, Zápara, Andoa-Shimigae, and Caninche in the Pastaza region and Quijos, Zápara, Omagua, and Cofán in the Napo region became incorporated into expanding, Quichua-speaking aggregates of Amazonian peoples of Ecuador (e.g. Reeve 1985, 1988a, 1988b; Whitten 1976, 1985; Whitten and Whitten 2008). Today, roughly twenty percent of the Canelos Quichua are bilingual in Achuar, and Napo Runa intermarry increasingly with Waorani. It is also common for Quichua-speakers from the different Amazonian groups to intermarry, as well as maintain exchange relations of shamanic knowledge, medicinal plants, game, and other forest products. The Amazonian Runa are intercultural in their historical heritage and in their contemporary lives.

Because they speak a language that is widely spoken in the Andes, it is often, and erroneously, assumed that Amazonian Quichua speakers are “in-migrants” from the Andes or “acculturated” Natives (Oberem 1970; Taylor 1999. Corr 2013 [Personal Communication 15 September, 2013], reports that these stereotypes are still prevalent in Ecuador). Both of these stereotypes are debilitating and detract attention from the distinctive characteristics of these dynamic Amazonian peoples. It is also widely believed that the Jesuits imposed Quichua on Native Amazonian peoples (Oberem and Hartman 1971); but Muysken (2009) has rejected this hypothesis. Linguistically, Amazonian Quichua grammar, semantics, and vocabulary are too complex and specialized to have been authored by non-native speaking missionaries (Muysken 2009: 84). Furthermore, the missionaries only worked in a specialized “Pastoral Quechua” (Durston 2007) that was socially and semantically limited. Since it is common among Ecuadorian and other intellectuals to insist that the Jesuits brought the Quichua (Quechua) language to Amazonian peoples, here is the region of the Audiencia de Lima where Pastoral Quechua prevailed and was studied:

...the coastal and highland areas of what is now central and southern Peru—the archdiocese of Lima and the dioceses of Cuzco, Huamanga (modern Ayacucho), and (to a lesser degree) Arequipa as they existed in the seventeenth century. *All of the known pastoral Quechua literature comes from this area* (Durston 2007:17; emphasis added).

Amazonian Runa are Native Amazonian peoples who have redefined themselves via an Amazonian Quichua complex that allowed them to adapt to the devastating effects of the European invasion. These processes of identity shift and transculturation are not unique to Amazonian Quichua speakers, and can be found among other Amazonian and Native American groups (Hornborg 2005; Hornborg and Hill 2011), as are carefully explicated and documented by Reeve in this issue. Instead of thinking of Amazonian Quichua dialects as “Andean,” scholars who work in this part of the world consider Amazonian Quichua to be an Amazonian language. To be a bit redundant, genesis of Amazonian Quichua languages and peoples is a result of social and linguistic processes occurring within the Amazonian world and among Native Amazonian peoples. In the first chapter to this issue, Mary-Elizabeth Reeve demonstrates the connection between the regional Amazonian system at the base of the Andes and other Amazonian systems to the southeast, east, and northeast.

In the late twentieth century and presently, Amazonian Runa of Ecuador are politically and socially organized by structures of plurinational-intercultural self-determination and actively participate in national political activities, often through *levantamientos* (uprisings), which

are strategic stoppages of work and commerce (Whitten 1996; Whitten, Whitten and Chango 1997; Whitten and Whitten 2011; Uzendoski and Calapucha 2012). There were Amazonian Runa on the panels that drafted important sections of the 2008 National Constitution of Ecuador. Some Amazonian Runa receive benefits from the state that include legalized communal land ownership, a modicum of health care, their own educational system, and a small subsistence wage for women. While they practice shifting agriculture, hunting, fishing, and gathering, many Amazonian Runa become professionals and work in institutions, most commonly those of education and the military. Ecotourism and community tourism are also popular supplementary economic activities. Like other groups of the Amazonian region, health is increasingly threatened by mining (especially copper and gold) and petroleum exploration and extraction (e.g. Whitten and Whitten 2011).

One salient characteristic of both the Napo Runa and Canelos Quichua indigenous people is shamanic prowess. Quichua-speaking people of Amazonian Ecuador, mostly men, are among the most powerful shamans in Ecuador and are recognized through Amazonian Ecuador and Andean Ecuador (Whitten 1976; Whitten and Whitten 2008; Corr 2008). The Napo Runa and the Canelos Quichua, similar though they are in many respects, and especially with regard to language and male shamanic prowess, each manifest striking features unique to their particular region.

The Napo Runa demonstrate core values and orientations to the world and universe through a complex and extended wedding ritual that unites not only the families of the spouses, but also large kin groups with extended ramifications (Uzendoski 2004). The wedding ritual involves three specific fiestas, the *tapuna* (asking of the hand), the *paktachina* (fulfilling the agreement) and the *bura* (wedding). Each fiesta integrates more kin with the *bura* being the final festival where two communities are said to “become one *ayllu*.” After this festival, the bride goes to live with the groom’s parents but the two families are now “*ayua*,” which means that they are allies for life. These “alliances” are often intensified by further marriages and *compadrazco* so that families are allied by multiple and analogous relationships, relationships that are sustained by the sharing and exchange of food, labor, and stories.

The conceptual model of “becoming kin” with Others and then intensifying those relationships is also the model for relationships with animals and the spirit world. Hunters and shamans contract marriage-like relationships with spirit women of the forest (*sacha warmiguna*) or the river (*yaku warmiguna*). These women help their men gain favors and gifts from their fathers and other relatives, who are the protectors of the animals and who are powerful and dangerous. Women, too, can become shamans and cultivate relations with male spirits. Mountains, whirlpools, caves, saltlicks, and large rocks with petroglyphs are places on the landscape where there exist “doors,” by which one can enter into the world of these beings in dreams or shamanic ritual.

Finally, the Napo Runa have collectively and purposely cultivated their memory and historical connection to the 1578 revolutionary leader Jumandy, who, alongside two other powerful shamans (Beto and Guami), led a massive revolt against various Spanish cities. Although Jumandy and his associates were Quijos (or Kijus), they lived in a multiethnic and multilingual system that connected the Andean peoples with Tupian Omaguas. Although the revolt was defeated and Jumandy and his collaborators executed, the Napo Runa consider the revolt a victory and “remember” Jumandy as “showing the path” towards liberation. After the revolt, the entire region fell into decline, and the Spanish were not able to prosper. Today, the population of Napo Province is over 75% indigenous, and the Napo Runa consider their ability to reproduce and thrive as directly linked to Jumandy’s spirit and actions of resistance.

The Canelos Quichua women are among the finest traditional (coiled pottery, no wheel used, all clay or rock dyes) ceramists in Amazonian South America (e.g. D. Whitten 1981; Whitten and Whitten 1988). They make a striking array of polychrome and black ceramics, which early twentieth century anthropologist Rafael Karsten (1935), referring to the polychrome drinking bowls and storage jars, said had reached “a remarkable degree of perfection.” Resemblances to Amazonian Tupi ceramics are strong (Whitten and Whitten 1988).

A parallel system of cultural transmission takes place among the Pastaza Runa whereby men transmit deep shamanic knowledge to men and women transmit profound cosmic imagery through ceramic manufacture and symbolism, and through song, to women.

Shamanic prowess and ceramic expertise represent a male-female mutuality that ramifies through kinship, politics, and intercultural relationships (Whitten 2008, 2011). Although most are nominally Christian, all Amazonian Runa subscribe to a cosmology that is similar to that held by other peoples of Amazonia. Runa mythology is rich and includes stories about floods, culture heroes, jaguars, anacondas, and the former “human” lives of many plants, birds, animals, and inanimate objects as well as accounts of the spirit protectors of the forests, rivers, and mountains (Uzendoski and Calapucha 2012).

Many Amazonian Runa are bilingual in Quichua and Spanish but in some areas, dialects of Quichua are threatened with many younger people becoming Spanish dominant or Spanish monolingual. Because of the current bilingual, intercultural educational system, Amazonian Quichua should not disappear and indeed is expanding in some regions. ²

We return now to one generalization made at the beginning of this introductory article: “Amazonian Quichua-Quechua-speaking people manifest central paradigms of power and dynamic cultural systems that serve both as axes of interculturality and templates for cultural continuity and transformation.” This is well illustrated in the papers by Mary-Elizabeth Reeve and Michael Uzendoski. Reeve demonstrates through analysis of oral history how Curaray Runa made long treks to trade with areas occupied by Tupi-speaking peoples while Uzendoski undertakes a dialogical, ethnopoetic analysis (derived from structuralism but moving beyond the limits of this perspective) of a Napo Runa key myth to show striking similarities with Mbyá myth. He suggests quite convincingly that Napo Runa mythology is not only a *montaña* transformation of Tupi-Guaraní tradition, but also part of a wide-flung Amazonian system of mythical ethnopoetics. These analyses resonate strongly with the Whittens’ arguments and demonstrations of such transformative similarities in Canelos Quichua and ancient Tupi pottery traditions and with the sketchy archaeological record of the Ecuadorian Oriente (D. Whitten 1981; Whitten and Whitten 1988).

The pieces by Janis Nuckolls and Tod Swanson, and by Francesca Mezzenzana, make necessary and strong adjustive contributions to Amazonian literature. Both of these articles demonstrate quite conclusively the decisive roles of women in culture. Mezzenzana demonstrates that the festival system (*jista*) in Wituk Sas (a pseudonym) draws on the stylized and enacted roles of women as much as men. Nuckolls and Swanson analyze the importance of concretely contextualized thinking and speaking among Amazonian Quichua people. Their work reveals that ethnographic literature dominated by the work of Viveiros de Castro on “perspectivism” needs to be balanced by data from women’s interactions with nature, which are not always drawn from predatory models of hunting. Their work reveals that ethnographic literature dominated by the work of Viveiros de Castro on “perspectivism” needs to be balanced by data from women’s interactions with nature, which are not always drawn from predatory models of hunting. Elements of this demonstration are also found in the Wituk Sas festival described and analyzed by Mezzenzana.

The richness of analysis in the papers published in this issue of *Tipiti* bear witness to how very effective intensive, first-hand ethnography and linguistic elicitation with Quichua-speaking people can lead to theoretical insights that unite ethnohistory, structural analysis, discourse analysis, ethnoaesthetic analysis, ethnopoetic analysis, and much more, to underscore the dual processes of interculturality and transformation.

As a transition to the next section, a bit of the Whittens’ biography is pertinent. In 1968, Sibby and Norman made a sojourn in Amazonian Ecuador to visit Canelos Quichua, Napo Runa, Shuar, Achuar, Siona, Secoya, and Cofán people, settling eventually on a preliminary project in the greater Puyo-Canelos area funded by the National Science Foundation and expanding by 1970 and 1971 to Pacayacu, Sarayacu, Montalvo, and Curaray, and to the Shuar of Ayuy and the Achuar of Capahuari. The preliminary study turned up such rich ethnographic data on Amazonian ecology and cosmology, not only in the rain-forest-riparian hinterland but also on the fringe of urban Puyo itself, that the NSF funded them for three more years, through 1975.

Epistemic Distortion: A False Paradigm of Acculturation and Migration

Early comments by some colleagues of the Whittens, however, were poignantly negative: "Why study *those* people?" (N. Whitten got the same reaction when he worked with black people in western Ecuador and Colombia, which is interesting for the fact that indeed, initially, the Whittens planned a comparative study of black and indigenous adaptive strategies in the face of nationalist hegemony). "The 'Lowland Quichua' are recent migrants from the Sierra, there is not much to study" (this was a very common response). "The Puyo Runa and their relatives are so acculturated that you are wasting your time." "Your use of 'Runa' as a proper noun is pejorative, because it often means 'dog' in the Sierra." (Parenthetically, this pejorative usage of "*runa*" is still in use in 2013; see Kohn 2013:139). "Your use of 'Sacha Runa' is worse, because this is a parodic figure in some Central Ecuadorian Andean festivals; you are making fun of and demeaning these people."

A colleague on the NSF panel, the late Morton Fried, told N. Whitten that their proposal "split the panel" because of its focus on "ethnicity," which was a "dead topic." This did seem strange since Frederick Barth published his definitive work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* in 1969, the very year that the Whittens submitted their first proposal. And finally, to get off the negatives, "This research has already been done." (Reference here was to an alleged survey done out of Lago Agrio by a group led by Charles Fugler in 1968 of Napo Runa households. The Whittens met him in August that very year in Lago Agrio and he said nothing of such a survey of indigenous households but talked about his research on colonization in the oil boom region).

We turn now to a brief review. Francois Pierre (1993 [1889]), the Dominican curate who visited Canelos in 1887, argued that this region was chosen for early Dominican exploration as a site from which to civilize heathen Caninche and other peoples, including Quichua speakers, Jivaroan speakers (Shuar and Achuar), and Zaparoan speakers (Zápara and Andoa-Shimigae). These Dominicans sought to nucleate one of the many sites known as "Canelos" in 1581 (e.g. Steward and Métraux 1948: 637), thirty-seven years after Francisco Pizarro's disastrous sojourn through Quijos territory to the Napo and thence Francisco de Orellana's journey down the Amazon and on up to French Guiana, and a mere three years after the rebellion of the Quijos in 1578 (Oberem 1970; Uzendoski 2005) and the revolt of the Shuar Jivaroans to the south a year later in 1579 (not 1599 as is so often claimed [Santos-Granero 1993: 215-220, "*El gran levantamiento Jíbaro:1579*"]). Significantly, as our research progressed, we found many similarities in the area of ritual performance, oral history, and mythology that resonated strongly with observations of this curate. His writings stressed continuity, although the Dominicans were working, very sporadically, to introduce change.

Karsten's (1935) research, beginning in 1917 and published in 1935, stressed in places the theme of "acculturation" of the "Canelos Indians" in contrast to the savage "Jívaro." He did so in spite of his statement that the Canelos Quichua ceramics had been developed "to a remarkable degree of perfection," and that he collected the bulk of his data on the "Jívaro" in Canelos Quichua territory, on a non-indigenous-owned hacienda south of Palora just across the Pastaza River from Puyo Runa territory, despite the fact that he had Canelos Quichua guides in his visit to the Achuar. Julian H. Steward and Alfred Métraux (1948: Plate 56), in their depiction of Canelos people, continued the deepening tradition of regarding them as "Acculturated Canelo Indians" while all other peoples (e.g. "Jívaro" and "Záparo") in this very region were treated as relatively pristine in the same ethnographic period.

Udo Oberem (1970), operating under the assumption that people in the Canelos Quichua region were migrants from the Quijos *montaña* region west of the Napo, continued this depiction (his end period for field and historical research was 1956), which perhaps reached its height with the publication in 1964 by Joseph B. Casagrande, Stephen Thompson, and Philip Young titled "Colonization as a Research Frontier: The Ecuadorian Case." To Oberem's credit, when the Whittens met him in Quito in 1973 at the Hotel Embajador and in the Museo del Banco Central, they discussed differences in perspective in the respective works and he readily agreed with the Whittens' assessment, then helped their research by providing a number of very valuable annotated photographs he took of people during his sojourn from Unión Base on the Comuna San Jacinto del Pindo southward down the Pindo River to what

is now Nuevo Mundo, and then eastward over the Sigüin mountain range, and on to Canelos and thence down the Bobonaza River to Pacayacu, Sarayacu and Montalvo with the late Severo (Acevedo) Vargas as his guide.

By 1968, when the Whittens first visited indigenous people in Amazonian Ecuador, a baseline of stereotypical views of Amazonian Quichua-speaking people as highly “acculturated” (read “assimilated,” “deculturated”), “in-migrants from the Sierra,” perhaps unworthy of further study, had emerged and became underscored, to some extent, when Oberem published his work of the 1950s in 1970, during the second year of their research. This paradigm and its embedded assumptions constitute epistemic distortion (N. Whitten 2008, 2011; Whitten and Whitten 2008, 2011). To use harsh terms, historical and ethnographic stereotyping along these lines could come to constitute what Clifford Geertz (2000, 2001) called an instrument of oppression. “To the degree that [ethnography] opens a flow of intercultural information it may empower, but to the degree that it hermetically seals off people’s lifeways from understanding, it constrains” (Whitten 2011; Whitten and Whitten 2008:255; see also Whitten and Whitten 2011).

With Amazonian Quichua speakers, anthropology got off on the wrong foot with models that denied them the full status of being part of a dynamic regional culture grounded in Amazonian history and territory. Historically, the voices of actual Amazonian Quichua peoples have been distorted rather than transmitted, and even today the legacy of these models continues to do harm to their reputation. We return to this point later.

Working Against Epistemic Distortion and Negativism

It is significant to note that linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliff Bible Translators, especially Carolyn Orr (see e.g. Orr and Wisley 1981; Kelley and Orr 1976) and Cathrine Peeke (see e.g. Peeke 1962) strongly encouraged the Whittens’ studies and did not see people in the ways the others mentioned above did. They saw Amazonian Quichua-speakers as dynamic Amazonian peoples, and noted the language transformations such as Zápara peoples adopting Quichua that was well underway during their early research. They saw such transformations for what they were—a specific cultural Zaparoan adaptation to infrastructural changes in Amazonia by the adoption of the Quichua language while at the same time embedding their Zápara identity within that spreading language—and not as a process of one-way “acculturation.”

An example of such a transformation embedded within the axes of interculturality is given by Maximilian Viatori (2009), in his book *One State, Many Nations: Indigenous Rights Struggles in Ecuador*. In 2001, it was publicly announced in Ecuador that “the United National Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had declared the Zápara ‘ethnicity’ part of the ‘Intangible and Oral Patrimony of Humankind’” (Viatori 2009: 1). As the movement to re-emerge and assert their identity gained momentum, one central lesson taught by the Zápara directors and bilingual educators (all of whom spoke Quichua as a first language, and worked in and through their office in Puyo, and later Shell) throughout Zápara regions is that Spanish and Quichua are essential to their contemporary identity as Ecuadorians, on one side, and as a distinct Zápara ethnicity on the other side. More recently, another ethnicity embedded in Quichua, Andoa, re-emerged and its adherents established an office in Puyo. Again, all directors speak Quichua and it is not clear that there are any remaining Andoa speakers, though there are people who know lists of nouns and verbs (e.g. Whitten and Whitten 2008: 248-250). Upper Napo is another salient example of the intercultural dynamics of Amazonian Quichua identities, as several communities between Archidona and Baeza have recently declared officially that they are no longer just “Quichua” but should be identified as Quijos (Kijus), a pre-Hispanic ethnicity that was assumed to be “extinct” (see Reeve in this issue).

Bit by bit, while the false imagery sketched above continued (and continues), other scholars, including, particularly, the contributors to this *Tipiti* issue, and Eduardo Kohn, who could not join us at the Nashville panel, slashed away at such a stereotypic academic and popular portrayal to present deep and systemic analyses based on extended ethnography and linguistic elicitation of what we can now regard as “dynamic Amazonian Quichua-speaking peoples.” To repeat, these dynamics are seen clearly in the axes of interculturality and

templates for cultural continuity and transformation. Uzendoski (2005: 253), drawing on the issue of voice, attempts to correct these stereotypic and false portrayals by writing near the end of *The Napo Runa of Amazonian Ecuador*, “The people of Napo... speak through the voice and poetics of *pachacutij*—destroying, *transforming*, and recuperating society and history.” By *pachacutij* here, he means “an epistemic transformation from one time-space to another” (Whitten 2003:165).

This Issue of *Tipiti* and the Special Topic of Amazonian Quichua

All of the papers in this special topics section of *Tipiti* focus on the subject of Amazonian Quichua work against the hermetic sealing off of Amazonian Runa from other Amazonian studies. Marshall Sahlins (2000) states that “culture, among other dynamics, may represent the organization of empowerment,” and Amazonian Quichua cultures are no exception. Power, which has several glosses in Amazonian Quichua, is a constant theme, a rooting metaphor, that is constantly and dynamically transmitted through the symbols and voices of the people with whom we work. These individuals have taught us that Amazonian Quichua “culture” is powerful. It provides them with the “power” to live, to create beauty, to live spiritually in contact with the land and others, and to resist domination. Each author in her or his own way presents an ethnography of empowerment, a way of “seeing” (*ricuna*) Amazonian cultural systems as actively contributing to the dynamics of human lifeways, especially emphasizing the complementarity of continuity and transformation. As Dorothea Scott Whitten and Norman Whitten have written elsewhere, “Power emanates from imagery. Imagery is central to all knowledge” (2008: vii). “Indigenous imagery”—in this case seen through the study of Amazonian Quichua-speaking peoples of Ecuador— “must be understood in its own cultural matrices, and not from the standpoints of Western ideology” (Whitten and Whitten 2008:257).

The section of this special topic opens with the article by Mary-Elizabeth Reeve entitled “Amazonian Quichua in the Western Amazon Regional Interaction Sphere.” Her first-hand ethnographic data for this paper come from Curaray and she draws ethnohistory from archives in the United States and Ecuador. She discusses Amazonian regional systems in such a way as to convincingly make the point that if we look at such systems during our ethnographies and historical work with local-level people, we must not assume that our data pertain to a bounded ethnic group, but rather to a wide-flung multicultural and intercultural region wherein there are significant cultural interchanges with people in other cognate regions.

By making use of recent integrations of ethnography, history, ethnohistory, and archaeology, as set out so persuasively by Hornberg and Hill in 2011, and prior to that the expositions by Heckenberger and Neves in 2009, we can see clearly just how Amazonian Quichua within the broad regional system that includes Shuar, Achuar, Zápara, Andoa, Waorani, and Quijos can articulate with other contemporary and past Amazonian peoples, and also subsume multiple identities within its own language. Reeve notes, *inter alia*, that “The decorated polychrome ceramics for which the Canelos Quichua of Ecuador are well known . . . were likely influenced by the polychrome ceramic tradition associated with Tupian peoples.”

Michael Uzendoski’s contribution, “Analogic Alterity: The Dialogics of Life of Amazonian Kichwa Mythology in Comparison with Tupi Guaraní (Mbyá) Creation Stories,” picks up where Reeve leaves off, so to speak. In his own words, “I provide evidence here that Amazonian Kichwa thought is dialogically intermeshed with the Tupi Guaraní twin hero mythological complex.” Where Reeve delves into this mythical complex ethnographically (focusing on Curaray) and ethnohistorically (branching throughout Amazonia), Uzendoski takes structuralism beyond its normal constraints to give us an ethnopoetic rendition of a Napo Runa myth of the older and younger brothers/twins and that of the Tupi-Guaraní myth. From this perspective “the storyteller’s art is that of creating images and complex meanings using words, sounds, pause, grammar, repetition, parallelism, and the voice.” The similarities between Amazonian Quichua and Mbayá mythical systems are so remarkable that the structural ties that bind them, and other cognate Amazonian systems, cry out for further research. This research must include ethnography, history, ethnohistory, archaeology, and linguistics as argued so cogently by Hornborg (2005) and Hornborg and Hill (2011) and their

contributors. The relationships that pertain between cultural continuity and axes of interculturality can be summed up by Uzendoski's statement: "The telling of the story, I argued, is a chronological as well as structural complex in which, through the story itself, structures are created, dissolved, and remade according to Amazonian philosophies of reproduction, life and death."

Janis Nuckolls and Tod Swanson in "Earthy Concreteness and Anti-Hypotheticalism among Amazonian Quichua People" continues to take us deeply into Runa thought and expression, with very strong implications for other Amazonian peoples, such as Jivaroan and Tupi speakers. By bringing to the forefront an understanding of language and culture, the sheer differences between a Western Euro-American proclivity toward simplicity and decontextualization and a Quichuan/Runa proclivity toward complexity and contextualization is revealed for example, when we ask hypothetical questions such as "What college do you think your daughter will attend?" This is what the authors mean by their trope, "hypothetical questioning."

Amazonian Runa, by contrast, as every ethnographer and linguist has learned, and as probably every Amazonianist encounters, express their answers to questions by evoking what Nuckolls and Swanson call "earthy concreteness"... "which privileges the contextualization of utterances, thoughts, and ideas to such an extent that statements about typical behaviors and generalizations are perceived to be both morally and aesthetically objectionable." To understand Runa answers to superficial and fundamental questions that pertain to life in their known, experienced, and even imagined environment, they turn to the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (e.g. 1998) who, working with Araweté Tupi-speakers of Amazonian Brazil (1992), developed the powerful idea and argument that came to be known as "perspectivism": the modalities by which Amazonian and other indigenous peoples "see" themselves as cultural beings within a nature that includes other cultural beings in a multiplicity of natures.

The authors, following Nuckolls (2010) ground-breaking work on ideophony, demonstrate that among Runa men and women, "To speak beautifully is to speak with skillful analogies to nature using the sounds and movements of forest species to evoke concrete memories for interlocutors, that in their turn, give rise to memories of key life experiences." They use linguistic and discourse analysis to convey their insights into Runa perspectives. Nuckolls' work has strongly influenced dimensions of the ethnography and semiotic analysis and theory construction of Eduardo Kohn (2013) who turns to Charles S. Peirce to construct an extensive model of semiotic analysis that demands a heavy lexicon of non-linguistic terminology and constructions bolstered by ethnography. Finally, the presentation by Nuckolls and Swanson underscores that which Kohn repeatedly emphasizes, that the discourses sprinkled with, and sometimes dominated by, ideophony and onomatopoeia "have implications for speakers' ecological skills, knowledge, and success in managing their complex biosphere. . . ." The video clips keyed to this article demonstrate how women converse with such forest beings as trees, and with such garden beings as manioc.

In the final paper of this issue, "Doing it Like Real Runa Woman and Men: A Runa Ceremonial Festival," Francesca Mezzenzana visits one of the sites of the Canelos Quichua *jista* (which Whitten calls the *ayllu jista*) of Wituk Sas (a pseudonym). Neither Whitten nor Reeve has seen, let alone participated in, the *jista* in this special location. Furthermore, neither of them has been an insider participant observer to the *lancero jista*, although both have written about it. Reeve witnessed the *lancero* festival in Canelos and Whitten in Pacayacu (e.g. Reeve 1985, 1988a; Whitten 1976, Whitten and Whitten 2008). Mezzenzana's is the first and only first-hand, participant-observation description and analysis of the *lancero jista* to come out of this important Amazonian region. And she demonstrates clearly its articulation and integration into the overall *jista*.

The continuities observed in this *jista* and the ones previously described for the 1970s and 1980s are simply remarkable. Among many important points made in this paper are the close, indeed isometric, association of pottery making, *asua* (fermented masticated manioc mash) and the female body, and their respective roles in quotidian and festival life. We need to stress here that this set of isometric associations, together with the festival structure and performance, is not found with adjacent Achuar people to the south or with the Napo Runa to the north. Where we have found comparative information on similarities in festival performance patterns and a similar isometricism is with the Tupi-speaking Tupinambá peoples of sixteenth-century

Brazil (Whitten and Whitten 2008:167-168, 195) as presented by Hans Staden (1944:1; see also Whitehead and Harbsmeier 2008).

Another key feature of this paper is the emphasis on an “economy of desire,” first introduced into the Amazonian literature by Peter Gow (1989). The roles of men and women in this economy are explicated and analyzed, and comparison made with the work of the Whittens and Reeve.

Not surprisingly, given the time and distance of the *jistas* previously described, and the different modes of interpretation that grew out of serious ethnography, differences in data presentation and interpretation emerge. We take these differences to be complementary; the three modes of explication and analysis dovetail very nicely, giving Amazonianists and others a good, strong look at ritual activity in this region. Indeed, taken together, these descriptions and interpretations of the *jista* expand some of the current emphases on “multi-locality” promulgated for Venezuelan festivals by David Guss (2000). In his book *Kings for Three Days*, Jean Muteba Rahier (2013) expands Guss’s concept to include the obvious (but often ignored) fact that festival activity always includes dimensions of what people experience in their daily lives—forces from inside the culture region and outside—including the nation, the power centers there, and the global forces that impinge on them. This raises the important point of the roles of “space” and “place” in festival performance, and leads Rahier to this conclusion: “one single festivity is *always performed differently in different places*. It is therefore absolutely necessary to pay careful attention to the always original local context that surrounds and supports a particular festivity, ritual, or play or any other cultural practice” (Rahier 2013: 174, emphasis added). This Mezzenzana does in some detail to the enlightenment of Amazonian scholarship.

Perspectives on Amazonian Quichua 2013

At the recent SALSA meetings in Nashville, Tennessee in March, 2013, Evan Killick, who attended our session and is familiar with our work, asked Uzendoski whether or not there was still a need to keep returning to the critique of stereotypes of “acculturation” and “in-migration from the Andes” when referring to Amazonian Quichua speakers. “You have won,” he said, “we Amazonianists have gotten the message.” We are thankful that our work is now being widely read and discussed by our Amazonianists colleagues, but there is still much work to be done, for the legacy of conquest continues to deny Amazonian Quichua speakers full cultural and linguistic rights.

For example, Amazonian Quichua speakers in the plurinational state of Ecuador are not recognized as a “nationality” but only as “*pueblo*” of the larger Andean Quichua nationality, which lumps them in with people who are culturally and socially distant. While lowland and highland Quichua are closely related by linguistic standards, they are socially and culturally divergent, and Amazonian Quichua-speaking peoples continue to face cooptation by Andeans and the Andean states in many arenas of culture and language. The linguistic policies of Ecuador, for example, still force Amazonian Quichua speaking children to learn a standardized Quichua in school that is based on the Andean, highland dialects. While linguistic policy goes beyond the scope of this introductory essay, the interrelation of cultural and linguistic forms to territory, as well as the specialized and complex ways of speaking Quichua that transmit Amazonian imagery, spirituality, and ecology have all been ignored or discounted by language planners and bureaucrats who see only pan-Quichua.

A more extreme example is how mining companies and land-hungry whites have historically used the in-migrant/acculturated hypothesis to deny Amazonian Quichua speakers rights to ancestral territories. As recently as 2010, there was such a case involving a community near the border of Napo and Pastaza where the mining company took out a full page advertisement in a newspaper denying that Amazonian Quichua speakers were “Amazonian” because they were actually Andean in-migrants. Therefore, the article stated, they had no right to the disputed territory.

But a new voice is now emerging, one in which Amazonian Quichua peoples, through and oftentimes in collaboration with anthropologists, are now asserting their Amazonianess in both cultural and linguistic terms. Their voices, testimonies, and ways of life are becoming

more visible, but more work is needed. Perhaps one day Amazonian Quichua speakers will be granted their own “nationality,” and their dialects will be accepted and recognized by scholars and language planners as a language, Amazonian Quichua, rather than constantly lumped in with the Andean dialects. While Amazonian Quichua speakers, to paraphrase Whitten and Whitten (2008), “know who they are,” they are still not fully understood by most outsiders and experts, but much progress has been made.

Acknowledgments

We thank the contributors to this issue devoted to this special topic, Mary-Elizabeth Reeve, Janis Nuckolls, Tod Swanson, and Francesca Mezzenzana for their sustained collaborative work in bringing these materials together, and for their collegiality over many years. Norman Whitten is grateful to his late wife, Dorothea (Sibby) Scott Whitten for 49 years of active and creative collaboration. Those who reviewed earlier drafts and made important comments to Whitten include Rachel Corr, Kathy Fine-Dare, Michelle Wibbelsman, and Julie Williams. Liz, Janis, Rachel, Francesca, and Michelle also commented on the penultimate draft. Michael Uzendoski thanks Norm Whitten for the idea to organize this panel and for this special volume of papers, and for his sustained editorial work, as well as critical comments. We want to heartily thank Beth Conklin and Carlos Londoño Sulkin for their support in organizing this panel for the VIII Sesquicentennial Conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America held in Nashville, Tennessee at Vanderbilt University in March, 2013, and Stephanie Alemán along with Peter Kahn for their excellent editing and communications in the final preparation of this issue.

Notes

¹This section was originally written by Uzendoski and Whitten at the request of Marc Becker for publication in *Native Peoples of the World: An Encyclopedia* (2013 Mesa Verde Publications). It was accepted by Becker and the general editor but pulled from publication by the publisher (not the editor) at the last minute because Marc Becker had an article there entitled “Ecuadorian Quichua.” The publisher decided that our piece pertained to the same “people group” and so omitted it without telling us. This dismissal of serious ethnography of Amazonian Quichua (kichwa)-speaking people based on extensive, long-term ethnographic research as though the people were “Andean” is illustrative of the kinds of stereotypes that exist in the world of letters in the twenty-first century. Here is part of the explanatory e-mail from the general editor to Becker, “I’ve looked into this [omission of the Uzendoski and Whitten piece] with our publisher, and found that (unfortunately) *we had two entries on the same people group* (included the entry list as Quichua and Kichwa). Apparently, this was only discovered by the production editors very late in the process, and they removed one of the two entries (deciding to keep the entry written by Marc, since he was the editor of the region).” Emphasis added. Again, “the region” to which Becker’s article referred was that of the Ecuadorian Andes, not the distinct area of Amazonian Ecuador about which we wrote and are writing.

² ends the section described in footnote 1.

³ Muysken (2011: 240) gives a table comparing Quechua dialects from Andes and Amazonia. Significant here for our purposes are the first four (of ten) conservative characteristics that are evidence of antiquity: 1. “no serial comparative with *yallí*”; 2. “*yki* as Isu/2ob marker”; 3. “benefactive *piu*”; and 4. “nominal agreement markers” (that he also calls “personal agreement markers”). The latter is apparently especially important. Significantly, Pastaza Quichua shares these four features with Amazonian San Martín Quechua of Peru but shares only the first two with Napo Quichua (and Colombian Inga), and none with Sierra Quichua of Ecuador.

References

- Barth, Frederick
1998 (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Corr, Rachel
2008 *The Tragedy of the Yumba Lover: Imagery and Transformation in Indigenous Expressive Culture*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. San Francisco, November 23.
- Durston, Alan
2007 *Pastoral Quechua: The History of Christian Translation in Colonial Peru, 1550-1650*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Geertz, Clifford
2000 *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2001 *Life Among the Anthros*. Review Essay of *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*, by Patrick Tierney. *New York Review of Books*, 8 February 2001.
- Gow, Peter
1989 *The Perverse Child: Desire in a Native Amazonian Subsistence Economy*. *Man* (n.s.) 24: 299-314).
- Guss, David
2000 *The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism as Cultural Performance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Heckenberger, Michael J. and Eduardo Góes Neves
2009 *Amazonian Archaeology: Annual Review of Anthropology* 38: 251-266.
- Hornborg, Alf
2005 *Ethnogenesis, Regional Integration and Ecology in Prehistoric Amazonia: Toward a System Perspective*. *Current Anthropology* 46 (4): 589-620.
- Hornborg, Alf and Jonathan D. Hill, editors
2011 *Ethnicity in Ancient Amazonia: Reconstructing Past Identities from Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.
- Kelly, Patricia and Carolyn Orr
1976 *Sarayacu Quichua Pottery*. Dallas: SIL Museum of Anthropology.
- Kohn, Eduardo
2013 *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Muysken, Pieter
2011 *Change, Contact, and Ethnogenesis in Northern Quechua: Structural Phylogenetic Approaches to Clause-Embedded Predicates*. In Alf Hornborg and Jonathan D. Hill, ed., *Ethnicity in Ancient Amazonia: Reconstructing Past Identities from Archaeology, Linguistics and Ethnohistory*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, pp. 225-236.
- Nuckolls, Janis
2010 *Lessons from a Quechua Strongwoman: Ideophony, Dialogue, and Perspective*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Oberem, Udo
1970 *Los Quijos: Historia de la transculturación de un grupo indígena en el oriente ecuatoriano (1538-1956)*. 2 vols. Madrid: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Madrid.
- Oberem, Udo and Hartmann, Rossman
1971. *Texte aus Ost-Ecuador*. *Anthropos* 44: 81-113.
- Orr, Carolyn and Betsey Wrisley
1981 [1965] *Vocabulario Quichua del Oriente del Ecuador*. Quito: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano and the Ministerio de Educación Pública.

- Peeke, Catherine
1962 Structural Summary of Záparo. In Benjamin Elson, editor, *Studies in Ecuadorian Indian Languages I*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Pierre, François
1983 (1889) *Viaje de exploración al oriente ecuatoriano, 1887-1888*. Quito: Abya-Yala.
- Rahier, Jean Muteba
2013 *Kings for Three Days: The Play of Race and Gender in an Afro-Ecuadorian Festival*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Reeve, Mary-Elizabeth
1985 *Identity as Process: The Meaning of "Runapura" for the Quichua Speakers of the Curaray River, Eastern Ecuador*. Ph.D. dissertation in Anthropology. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
1988a *Los Quichua de Curaray: El proceso de formación de la identidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala.
1988b *Cauchu Uras: Lowland Quichua Histories of the Amazon Rubber Boom*. In Jonathan D. Hill, ed., *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 19-34.
- Sahlins, Marshall
2000 *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays*. New York: Zone Books.
- Staden, Hans
1955 [1557] *Vera historia y descripción de un país de las salvajes desnudas feroces gentes devoradoras de hombre situado en el Nuevo Mundo América*. Edmundo Wernicke, Ed and transl. *Biblioteca de Fuentes*, Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, Museo Etnográfico.
- Steward, Julian H.
1948 *Tribes of the Montaña: An Introduction*. In Julian H. Steward, ed., *Handbook of South American Indians*, Vol 3: *The Tropical Forest Tribes*. Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 143. Pp. 507-533.
- Steward, Julian H. and Alfred Métraux
1948 *Tribes of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian Montaña*. In Julian H. Steward, ed., *Handbook of South American Indians*, vol 3: *The Tropical Forest Tribes*. Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 143. Pp. 535-656.
- Taylor, Anne-Christine
1999 *The Western Margins of Amazonia from the early Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, In Mark Swartz and Frank Salomon, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, Vol. 3: *South America, Part 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 188-256.
- Torero, Alfredo A.
1984 *El comercio y la difusión del quechua. El caso de Ecuador*. *Revista Andina* 2:367-389.
- Uzendoski, Michael
2005 *The Napo Runa of Amazonian Ecuador*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Uzendoski, Michael and Edith Felicia Calapucha-Tapuy
2012 *The Ecology of the Spoken Word: Amazonian Storytelling and Shamanism among the Napo Runa*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
1992 *From the Enemy's Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1998 *Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism*. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (3): 469-488.
- Viatori, Maximilian
2009 *One State, Many Nations: Indigenous Rights Struggles in Ecuador*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School for Advanced Research.
- Whitehead, Neil L. and Michael Harbsmeier, editors and Translators
2008 *Hans Staden's True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Whitten, Dorothea S.
1981 Ancient Tradition in a Contemporary Context: Canelos Quichua Ceramics and Symbolism. In, Norman E. Whitten, Jr., ed., Cultural Transformations and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Whitten, Dorothea Scott and Norman E. Whitten, Jr.
1988 From Myth to Creation: Art from Amazonian Ecuador. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. pp. 749-775.
- Whitten, Norman E., Jr.
1976 Sacha Runa: Ethnicity and Adaptation of Ecuadorian Jungle Quichua. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
1985 Sicuanga Runa: The Other Side of Development in Amazonian Ecuador. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
1996 The Ecuadorian Levantamiento Indígena of 1990 and the Epitomizing Symbol of 1992: Reflections on Nationalism, Ethnic-Bloc Formation and Racist Landscapes. In, Jonathan D. Hill, ed., History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas 1492-1992. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, pp. 193-217.
2008 Interculturality and the Indigenization of Modernity: A View from Amazonian Ecuador. *Tipiti: Journal of the Society of Lowland South America* 6 (2): 3-36, 47-48.
2011 Ethnogenesis and Interculturality in the "Forest of Canelos": The Wild and the Tame Revisited. In, Alf Hornborg and Jonathan D. Hill, eds., *Ethnicity in Ancient Amazonia: Reconstructing Past Identities from Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado. pp. 321-344.
- Whitten, Norman E., Jr. and Dorothea Scott Whitten
2008 Puyo Runa: Imagery and Power in Modern Amazonia. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
2011 Histories of the Present: People and Power in Ecuador. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.