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Becoming Tamed: The Meaning of “Becoming Civilized” among the Waorani of Amazonian Ecuador

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Abstract

In this paper I aim to discuss the way in which the Waorani, an indigenous group of the Ecuadorian Amazon, understand the process of becoming “civilized” since their first encounters with outsiders (*cowori*). Having passed from a situation of aggressive relations with the *cowori* to one of sustained and peaceful contact with missionaries, state agents and, today, oil companies, I argue that, in Waorani’s own terms, becoming civilized means becoming “tamed”. Similar to how they think of the process through which wild animals become pets in a Waorani longhouse, they pursue the establishment of what they understand as a benefiting relation of “adoptive filiation” with “powerful others” which implies a shift away from the perspective of a “predator”, even if – as it is argued – due to the very nature of Waorani personhood such shifts might be reversible in specific relational contexts. The paper also aims to contribute to the understanding of the role played by food and goods in the “civilization process” in Amazonia. Namely, I argue that if a generalized Amazonian “consumerism” exists, it should be related to the social relations that are built through it, and to the way in which the articulation with outsiders – namely, predation/appropriation or exchange – are established in pre-contact situations and are actualized in situations of contact.

Understanding Situations of Contact in Amazonia

The way in which Amazonian natives have responded to situations of contact, the rapid transformations of their bodily appearances, the spiraling “consumerism” of foreigner goods (see i.e. Hugh-Jones for the Barasana [1992], Chagnon for the Yanomami [1977], Bassi for the Kalapalo [1973], Fisher with the Kayapo [2002] among others) and their inclination to abruptly extend the sphere of their social relations towards the ones who were traditionally considered enemies or even non-humans (see i.e. Vilaca for the Wari [1999 and 2002] and Taylor for the Achuar [1996]), are fascinating and widely debated issues in anthropological literature on cultural change and situations of contact in Amazonia.

The Waorani of Amazonian Ecuador are no exception. They have been one of the most “famed” indigenous people in popular and missionary literature, while their reputation as “dangerous killers” has largely been used to construct an ideological imagery of an allegedly uncontrolled Waorani fierceness to justify the operation of forced contact and “pacification” carried on by the U.S based Summer Institute of Linguistics, between 1956 and 1970. On the other hand, the almost total majority¹ of the Waorani, not unlike other Amazonian peoples, were quickly “pacified” and a period of long lasting and peaceful relations with outsiders began. Ever since their contact with the SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) missionaries, the process of pacification and reduction into a mission village was implicated with both a missionary strategy of gifts and food distribution and a constant and spiraling demand for food, objects, clothes and so forth by the Waorani. Such “spiraling consumerism” is, even today, one of the most overwhelming Waorani traits to the ones who approach them as “foreigners”. I should put myself into the list of the ones who have fallen “prey” to such an inclination, since I must honestly admit that no field work would have ever been possible among the Waorani without my disposition to give gifts, pay my guides and field assistants, and often returning from the field feeling “despoiled” and worn out by the constant requests. Yet, one could be surprised to notice how quickly things and objects get lost or forgotten by the Waorani, who do not display any “fetishist attachment” to things, in the way we westerners do. I myself have been testimony of several occasions in which the Waorani made their best efforts to get something from foreigners – demanding clothes, foods or medicine – only to be immediately abandoned or lost somewhere. This question is puzzling.

What makes Waorani “consumerism” an interesting issue to investigate is that it is not indiscriminately manifested towards all kinds of former enemies and outsiders². Having started with the SIL missionaries, and today involving government posts, oil companies, NGOs (which are the favorite target of the spiraling Waorani desire for outside things and services), Waorani consumerism is implicated with a particular kind of foreigner; the association with whom is clearly pursued by the Waorani because of certain characteristics they possess.

This paper is concerned with nature of such association, which, I argue, should be explained by going back to the understanding of the nature of the “switch” that occurred when the Waorani stopped warring among clans and against outsiders to enter a period of relative³ peace.

Following the path of a number of lowland anthropologists who have contributed to a different way of understanding so-called “situations of contact” between native and outsiders, (see i.e. Vilaça 2010, Santos Granero 2009, Fausto 2002, Viveiros de Castro 1992 among others), I try to engage with Waorani cosmology and the way in which it is actualized according to different historical situations.

This discussion begins by interrogating how Waorani were “traditionally” implicated in the relation with Alterity, after which I will then try to depict – to use Fausto’s (2008) words – if and how such modality “inflects” in a situation of contact. As I will show, the analysis of the Waorani conception of the self and the Other will lead to the unfolding of a Waorani “perspectivism” which, in turn, is tied to a more encompassing general schemata of conceiving “what is outside” Waorani society. This might also shed light on the understanding of the inflation of Waorani consumerism in situations of contact. If, as Hugh-Jones (1992) has suggested, we should not accept the “straightforward story of forests Indians seduced by worthless trinkets, pressured to accept unwanted and unnecessary goods” (1992:43), we might find a more accurate explanation of indigenous consumerism

linking it to the concurrent changing ways of incorporating Alterity in situations of contact.

My proposal here is that if, as I suspect, the Waorani craving for westerner goods is not necessarily the sign of a loss of culture or corruption, we need to focus on what kind of social relations the Waorani seek to build through good transactions, rather than on the object itself. I hope to show that Waorani “pacification”, seemingly to those “situations of contact” between native and outsiders studied by i.e. Vilaça 2010, Santos Granero 2009, Fausto 2002, Viveiros de Castro 1992 (among others), is not only the consequence of external pressures or coercive socioeconomic structures, but also the result of a conscious indigenous attempt to incorporate the Other into the sphere of indigenous social relations, where “becoming civilized” can also be understood as a process of “other becoming”.

Waorani Warfare and the Waorani Idea of Otherness Before Contact

During one of my first visits to the Waorani village of Miwagono in my early fieldwork in the Amazonian Ecuador, Pego, an old Waorani man who lived through Operation of Forced Contact and is always pleased to recount old times, *durani bai*, despite his satisfaction with his peaceful life of the community, told me out of the blue:

If the *cowori* (foreigners) came to bother us, I will have the same intentions as the *Tagaeri* [uncontacted groups related to Pego’s family⁴], I’d kill too. Now I am old, but I think I could do whatever it takes if we have to confront the *cowori*. If they came to bother us, I could take up my spear again.

Pego is the parallel brother of Dabo who, in turn, is well known among the Waorani for his “warrior”⁵ temperament, his participation in many raids before contact, his unwillingness to be – literally – “tamed”⁶ by the missionaries and his participation in a spear killing raid against an isolated group that occurred some years ago (2003). I had heard Dabo speak about his will to take up spears again against the *cowori* several times, but when Pego who, in his own words, “lives content with what the company near to the village gave him”, spoke of spears, I was puzzled.

I did not further reflect upon the questions raised by such affirmation until I realized that Pego’s statement struck me because it triggers a core issue: Waorani understanding of what their enemies are might involve the unfolding of how Waorani personhood is constituted. Is the Waorani ability to hold multiple identities, as it has already been shown in other ethnographic works concerning the Lowlands (see Vilaça 1996, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2010, and Santos Granero 2009, Gow 2003 and 2007 among others) involved? As I will argue, I suspect there is.

Waorani Warfare and Foreigners

The Waorani maintained their ethnic frontier and their choice of interfluvial⁷ habitat by rejecting any kind of peaceful transactions with other groups and being imbedded in warfare against all kinds of outsiders (*cowori*). They were, in fact, engaged in aggressive relations with the lowland Kichwa settled at the margin of their territories, oil workers and colonists, and with inter-group cycles of vendettas against enemies (*warani*) until the second half of the 20th century (1958) when they underwent an abrupt process of “pacification”. While Waorani inter-group warfare (against *warani*) was predominantly characterized by hostility and cycles of revenge killings, from time to time exchange did take place, mainly through marriages when charismatic leaders were able to gather followers and organize *eeme* (manioc) drinking festivals. The *cowori* were instead considered a more radical Alterity that placed itself entirely “outside society” and with whom exchange was unthinkable.

Waorani warfare has been the object of different interpretations. The SIL missionaries who led forced contact with the Waorani and the anthropologists close to them (see i.e. the publications of Eliot 1956 and 1961, Wallis 1969 and 1971 the academic studies of Yost 1983, Booster, Yost, et al. 2003, and Beckerman, Erickson, Yost, et al. 2009) have put forth the idea of Waorani warfare inevitably spiraling into self-destruction if they had not been offered an alternative to violence through pacification. The “mythology” created

by evangelical missionaries has generated an ethnocentric misconception of Waorani warfare, contributing to the folklorization of the Waorani as the “last savage tribe of the Amazon” which, together with a more Rousseauian version of the story that views the Waorani as the last “primitive and uncorrupted tribe”, is still largely present in the national and international image of the Waorani and their related uncontacted groups. An alternative explanation of Waorani warfare comes from the Robarcheks (2005) who, from an ethnopsychological standpoint, have tried to make sense of the way in which the Waorani culturally construct their emotions and the “compelling rage” (*Pii*) that pushed them into retaliation.

The social significance of war among the Waorani has been analyzed by Rival (1996, 2002, 2005) whose understanding of ridings and killings has changed over time. In her early work, which focused mostly on intra-ethnic feuding, she saws Waorani warfare as based upon Lévi-Strauss’s “classical” notion of it, namely as the failure of exchange among affines Rival (1996), and argued that warfare makes kinship visible and produces the group identity. More recently, Rival (2002 and 2005) and High (2010) following her, have engaged with Waorani perspectivism, putting forward an idea of the Waorani thinking of themselves as the “prey” of powerful others and whose main strategy of social reproduction would consequently be isolationism and strategic fleeing. Rival (2002 and 2005) argues that Waorani perspectivism is tied to a “victim point of view”, where violence comes from outside society and where warrior-ship is based on a temporary madness that must be constantly put under the control of the uterine logic of extended family and womanhood. In her perspective, it is not the relation with Alterity that is productive among the Waorani. Instead, spheres of consanguinity and, particularly, the Waorani economy of food procurement based on their faith in natural abundance would represent the particular Waorani modality of producing social bodies which, again following Rival (2005), is an alternative to predation and fits with her idea of a Waorani society as self-sufficient and autarchic.

Addressing the idea that perspectivism is involved in Waorani warfare, I here try to outline a different understanding of it. My argument in the following is that if the Waorani do see themselves as prey of foreigners, shifts from the latter “point of view” to another exist, shifts where they see themselves as predators. Such a shift occurs depending on how the Waorani understand the social situations they are embedded in and the latter is linked –as I hope to clarify in the discussion – into a more encompassing schemata of contain-ing/containment that characterizes the Waorani’s way of relating with Alterity.

Becoming Jaguar

One of Rival’s arguments against Waorani “dependence” on vital qualities of the outside (2005) is that the “idiom” of subjective construction and the fabrication of bodies through destruction and consumption, seen by Fausto as a “necessary part of the same productive process” (Fausto 2000: 937), does not apply to the Waorani since they do not perform any ritual or symbolic cannibalism of enemies. My disagreement with Rival is that the Waorani do possess a degree of ritualization of spear riding, which is related to the construction of the predator body in a kind of “performative transformation” into another (a jaguar) and, in so doing, assumes the position of predator *vis a vis* foreigners and enemies. If Rival has argued that the Waorani think of themselves as prey fleeing external dangerous entities, I propose that the relation with outsiders (*cowori*) before contact is actually thought of as a chain of “reciprocal acts of predations”⁸. For the Waorani, *Cowori* are either dangerous cannibals or, alternatively, weaker people that Waorani warriors can easily kill. As much as Waorani oral memory speaks of deadly and destructive *cowori* raids and terrible massacres perpetuated by their shotguns, the Waorani also remember their own military victories thanks to which they pushed weaker and fearful *cowori* from their land. Since Rival has already discussed the Waorani’s prey point of view (2002 and 2005), my aim here is to shed light on his relational category, namely the predator position.

As It clearly emerges from myths and oral memory, for the Waorani, as elsewhere in Amazonia, bodies are “metamorphic clothes”, where transformations into animals, animated objects and astronomical bodies can occur all the time. Among such transformations, the metamorphosis into jaguars occupies a relevant part among the Waorani.

Spirit jaguars are usually seen as living in underground longhouses that are quite similar to Waorani longhouses. Often, such jaguar spirit families are made up of dead Waorani warriors or shamans. When asking about the relations between dead Waorani and spirits jaguars, my informants have explained that, in fact, three souls exist within the Waorani body. After death, the one located in the head goes to heaven. The second resides in the heart (*mimo ononque*) and transforms into a jaguar. The third remains attached to the body in the grave and, rotting with the body, it transforms into many animals. The ultimate outrage for a body is, in fact, to rot without a proper burial. Waorani accounts of malodorous corpses are vivid as, on the Other hand, a speared warrior prefers to be buried alive with the lances still inside, rather than risking rotting in the forest. Apparently, jaguariness is a part of the Waorani identity and physically resides in the *mimo ononque*. There are many stories of dead Waorani graves found empty and sightings of dead Waorani transformed into baby jaguars with half human and half animal bodies, before joining with their new jaguar spirit family, completing the metamorphosis through commensality, that is to say, by eating raw flesh.

Jaguar Warriors

If the transformation into jaguars can thus be permanent, like *post mortem* transformations, Jaguariness is also a perspective that can be performatively adopted in other spheres of Waorani social life. As discussed by Rival (1996), a form of shamanism among the Waorani which entails a special connection with Jaguars exists. Anyone can possibly become a shaman when he starts to feel “*mareado*” (fuzzy), and from his hammock he starts speaking with jaguars, and people can hear him roaring while he talks to his “jaguars sons”. Thus, in a typical Amazonian relation of adoption with animal spirits, the Waorani shaman adopts spirit jaguars who become the shaman’s adoptive children. Concomitantly, jaguars give him knowledge. They can tell him about future events, about distant relatives, the location of game and so forth. After his death, the shaman himself become a jaguar.

Warfare is the other realm where transformations into jaguars take place. If, as Vilaça points out, the act of killing in itself is enough to determine a predator position over enemy prey (Vilaça 2010) (even for the Warí, who occasionally ate the enemy, the most important act was killing, not the actual ingestion of the enemy), I argue that Waorani warfare entailed a predator position even without taking any bodily trophy (although, as I describe later on, they did take *cowori* clothes as trophies). In oral memories and in war chants, the Waorani vividly associate their warriors with jaguars. Similar to the case of the Muiname (Londoño Sulkin 2005:4), where particular “agitated” thoughts are attributed to particular animals, an angry person speaks like a jaguar. Waorani warrior are said to think as jaguars, which is often stated in the expression “before⁹, when we used to live thinking of killing, we thought as jaguars”.

The association with a predator position is strikingly straight forward in Waorani descriptions of their past killings of foreigners. Old Waorani warriors define themselves as ferocious and aggressive Jaguars that literally “ate the enemy alive”. This vivid image reoccurs in warriors’ oral memories. It is the case of Mencaye – one of the five warriors who killed the SIL missionaries in one of their attempts to force contact – whose testimony is direct: “I was a jaguar and an aggressive, fierce one. Whatever *cowori* I met, I ate him, without hesitation”.

In addition, when describing the bodily qualities of a warrior, the Waorani associate them with jaguar bodily prowess. Like a jaguar, the Waorani warrior is fearless, rapid, agile, astute, strong, courageous and possess tactical intelligence to hunt his prey. On the contrary, the *cowori* are straightforwardly associated with prey or “bait”. As Ghenwa, a “converted” Waorani of the village of Toñampari clearly explained to me:

“It is quite simple. Our thought was that *cowori* were bait. *Cowori* that we met, *cowori* that we killed. *Cowori* are weaker than we are, we can survive with two or three spear wounds, but the *cowori*, with just one well-placed spear, die faster than fish”.

Also, the *cowori* are said to be so fearful that are either compelled to run away at the mere sight of Waorani eyes or are totally unable to use their guns because “fear kills them

first". This again associates the warrior gaze to the jaguar gaze as, according to the Waorani, a jaguar never looks away first.

Becoming Angry – Piinte

When organizing an attack, a group of warriors would tirelessly trek towards *cowori* lands, determined to "hunt humans" and would not stop until the prey was killed. Old warrior accounts offer an interesting picture of the intense physical effort needed during cycles of warfare: training young males through harsh exercises aimed at physical strengthening, training in throwing spears from childhood, teenage male war games, life-sized human figures carved in balsa wood, learning to be courageous and to cause fear in enemies, long days of trekking in the forest while carrying heavy spears, crossing big rivers while holding spears without drowning in order to reach the enemy, sleeping outside in the forests for many days on the roots of big trees, and eating roots and wild fruits instead of eating meat and manioc. To fully understand such "unnatural" strength and fierceness, we need to describe the state of enagement and homicidal furor (*Pii*), that characterizes Waorani warriors. During warfare, this condition led to the state of *Piinte* (being full of rage) and to the readiness to kill.

My argument is that such condition triggers the full transformation into a predator, namely a jaguar warrior, so that the warrior acquires unusual strength and determination to kill. Such temporarily transformation takes over the body of the warrior and compels him to kill. The warriors, when *Piinte* becomes Others, can even be dangerous to their consanguine. If the *Pii* state is not calmed by the killing of the enemy or if killings were unsuccessful, women hid in the forest because they feared death, as if the only possible denouement of enagement is homicide. It is a furor whose outcome must be killing. In fact, in oral memories that I have collected, the only reference that I have found of any enraged Waorani warrior giving up on his killing purpose is one that speaks of the "oblivion" produced by a beverage that, secretly offered by a woman to the enraged man, makes him "forget the rage" and temporarily desist from his homicidal purpose.

Similar cases of anger as a transformational force that grows deep inside together with the desire to kill, have been analyzed by Belaunde regarding the Airo Pai. There, through anger, people change their way of seeing reality, so that Airo Pai warriors, when angry, are not people, have no hearth and become *wati spirits* (Belaunde 2000: 218). Among the Piaroa, the *rumwang*, great warriors and hunters that possess physical prowess, use the transformational force of the jaguar warrior *kuemoi* (Overing 1996:72). The necessity of transforming into predators to become good warriors has also been registered by Hugh Jones (1979:63) among the Barasana, who conduct various rituals in order to make their young men into fierce warriors who can see their victims as game animals, that is to say, adopt the point of view of a predator.

Among the Waorani, enagement is provoked in different way, i.e. thinking about the killing of their beloved ones and looking for enraged companions who wish to accompany them on raids. Contrary to the idea that Waorani women uterine logic only mitigates male furor (Rival 2005), women also actively participate in the ignition of this state, manifesting their suffering for the loss of their beloved. Similarly, to the Piaroa, whose revenge killing is an answer to co-resident suffering (Overing: 1986), *Piinte* is the appropriate response to a state of sadness and sorrow often manifested by co-residents.

Entering into a state of rage (*Pii*) triggers a chain of events. The warriors furiously cut down *chonta* wood trees and, while chanting war songs, carve their lances and decorate them with the feathers of the ultimate predator birds – the harpy eagle and the red *guacamayo* – which symbolize the enemy's blood. Like the jaguar body covered with the blood of his prey after he kills it, the Waorani warriors too decorate their legs and arms with red *achiote* symbolizing the blood of the enemy. In such a context of performative transformation into jaguar, the centrality of bodily qualities of the warrior suggests the need for the "fabrication" of a different body to experience the point view of a predator and to concretely embody the qualities of a predator.

Ritual chanting and dancing can also be performed with the aim of "filling with strength and *Pii*". An example is the "howler monkey" dance (*Alouatta palliata aequatorialis*), where warriors with spears and body paintings dance frenetically, banging their feet on the ground, jumping and screaming like howler monkeys, playing cane flutes and holding red macaw fathers. The screams intertwined with war chants and the dance are meant as

catalysts for transformation until a woman brings a trunk of a banana palm and the warriors stick spears in it until it is completely destroyed. Then children are also invited to lash the remaining pieces of the trunk. Contrary to others Amazonian rituals, this Waorani war ritual takes place before the attack, and not after, but it can be regarded as a rite that symbolizes the production of group subjectivity through killing enemies. The women’s role in the rite, which is to bring the symbolic body of the enemy to be destroyed by the warriors as well as the children’s role of being invited to take part in the destruction of the enemy’s body symbolize the productive articulation outside/inside through predation. The warriors will actually kill the enemy, but the entire group symbolically takes part in it.

The number of spears that the Waorani use in killings, normally more than ten, is also ritually significant because if only one or two spears fatally pierce the lever and the abdomen, far more spears are collectively lodged into the body. All the attackers pierce the body of the enemy, and every spear is decorated so that each participant will leave his unequivocal signature.

After killing expeditions, the prescription of living inside the house, alimentary restrictions such as prohibiting hunting and the consumption of meat that warriors must undergo after riding (Rival 1996:58) point to the need to re-acquire humanity and to stay away from those behaviors and situations that could trigger the metamorphosis into predators.

It seems thus that, not unlike jaguar warriors throughout the region, Waorani *Piï* (rage, anger) should be seen neither as a necessary but unwanted part of the violence characterizing Waorani interaction with the non-Waorani world that Waorani can only mitigate (Rival 2002), nor as a culturally constructed emotion (Robarcheks 2005). Rather, *Piï* should be regarded as a transformational force that permits the endowment of the predator point of view that is willingly managed to permit a shift in identity, as warriors must become *Piïnte*, to long to spear someone to death, to be endowed with courage, fearlessness, anger and force.

Jaguar Jaws as Spears

The association between warfare and predation, warriors and jaguars, is also clearly stated in a myth surrounding metamorphic jaguar jaws, received as gift by Waorani men familiarized with a jaguar family and transformed into a jaguar. According to the myth, the jaws transform into white spears once the Waorani jaguar warrior goes back to his family. This myth is part of a longer narration whose beginning explains the way in which the jaguar warrior becomes a jaguar in the first place:

“A young Waorani man is lost in the forest and is attacked by *Wene*¹⁰ spirits. Some jaguar spirits that were dead Waorani save him from the attack by throwing themselves against his body and slamming their chests against the man’s body, reducing it into a little ball. The man then becomes a little jaguar¹¹ and the spirits take him underground to live with their family. It takes a long time for the baby to grow, nourished only with tapir row lever and hearth until his jaws and fur are fully grown. He grows as a jaguar and lives for a long time with his jaguar father until, longing for his Waorani family, he returns home with four gifted jaguar canines that, when he again becomes a Waorani, are in fact four white spears. He warns his family to not to touch the spears, but one day one of his sons uses the spear (jaguar teeth) to kill a deer in the garden and the spear immediately kills the other son and his wife. Then the spears immediately returns to the man, sticking into the ground. The older the man becomes, the more similar to a jaguar he appears and when the transformation is completed, he dies as a human but lives as a jaguar and goes back to his jaguar family.”

The myth states the correspondence between the four white spears and the jaguar canines given to the Waorani man. This sheds light on Waorani perspectivism, as the connection between a warrior killing his enemy and a jaguar preying upon other animals is stated. It also means that Jaguars see themselves as people and their canines as spears. Moreover, the account clearly describes “jaguarness” as the result of a process that implies “becoming other”. This myth is also valuable because it tells us of metamorphosis taking

place through commensality¹² and, in particular, with the eating of jaguar food (raw flash), which in turn is unequivocally connected to the sphere of predation. Furthermore, the myth offers the best explanation of how the Waorani see the fractal containment of multiple identities which, I argue, is structurally identical to the relationship between the Waorani men in the myth and the four white spears. As a kind of animated object endowed with a soul and a will of its own, the spears are “fractal parts” of jaguar identity; they are owned but not totally controlled by their master. I argue that such a relation of fractal containment corresponds to the process in which the Waorani assumes a predator position through being controlled by the “other” perspective, namely, the Jaguar that always resides in the *mimo ononque* (heart soul).

In another interesting Waorani cosmological myth, it is thanks to *Nenkiwenga*, the son of the sun, that the first Waorani longhouse learn how to attack and kill the enemy. I will later describe how *Nenkiwenga* become part of a Waorani longhouse to then give knowledge to the Waorani. Here, I would like to dwell on the fact that, among *Nenkiwenga* teachings, there is the one of fabricating *chonta* spears and how to carry on an attack. Before this point, the Waorani could only use weaken *balsa* spears, wood sticks and rocks. He instead teaches them to build stronger and more efficient spears, to use many of them when killing, and he also teaches how to kill. Interestingly, *Nenkiwenga*, in the version of the myth that I have collected, transforms himself into a jaguar to give the Warriors courage and strength and when the killing has taken place, he dedicates to the most courageous warriors beautiful songs speaking about jaguars and harpy birds, which again points to the identification between warrior-hood and predator-ship. However, here the relation is clearly expressed through a cosmological dimension, as it is stated that the first time the Waorani become true warriors they needed the strength of the jaguar and this takes place again and again every time they kill.

At this point, Pego’s words I have reported above start making much more sense. If there is a jaguar in every heart/soul of Waorani men, then it can compel using its jaws, namely the very spears that every Waorani warrior keeps in their house or hidden in the forest, and speak about the contingent possibility of becoming-other when rage is teased out and takes over.

Goods and Trophies

Although the Waorani did not take any bodily part from their enemies, goods played a central role in spear ridings and are described as a motive to organize raids against *cowori*. Killings often were accompanied by the stealing of axes, machetes, knives, clothes and food. If goods such as metal axes and knives were valued for practical purposes since they substituted the Waorani’s less efficient stone axes in clearing the forest and making spears, other kinds of goods, like clothing, were taken and used as trophies in post-killing celebrations. As we have learned from the account of an abducted Kichwa woman, transcribed by a missionary at that time (Cipolletti 2002), after the attack, the warriors would come back home and engage in galvanizing songs that celebrated the victories, reaffirmed the warriors force and superiority and told of the motives for attack and the consequences. During such celebrations, similar to other ritual festivals such as the *eeme* (manioc) drinking ceremony and matrimonies, *cowori* clothes were ritually used and worn.

“These victories are celebrated by a great feast in which they have a dance. [...] At these feasts all put on clothes that they have captured, regardless of sex, thus the men may array themselves in trousers or with skirts. On their heads they put crowns of vertically placed long white feathers of the *garza*, and on the crown or back of the head, they put the dried skin and brilliant blue plumage[...]. These adornments are thrown away after the dance as they become damaged, but the clothing is guarded in *zaparos* until the next occasion” (Tidshman, in Cipolletti 2002: 15-16).

Similar observations of the use of outsider clothing in rituals have been registered by Ortiz (1980) and Labaka (2003), like when the Waorani came back from oil camps, taking everything they could from oil workers and then wearing it in celebration of their pillages. Cabodevilla (1998) has also collected an interesting testimony about Moipa, one of the

most remembered warriors among Waorani for his fierceness and Jaguariness, whose habit was to wear the speared enemies' clothes until they were totally consumed: “He used their clothes until they dropped into pieces, as he did not think to wash them”. (Cabodevilla 1999:308).

The latter adds another important piece to our discussion on Waorani perspectivism. If, as Fausto argues, feasting after the raid represents the “apex of bellicose action, the movement that leads from the destruction to the production of persons (Fausto 2000:945) then, in the celebration described in these testimonies, the men's ritual re-enacting of spearing and the women's dances to celebrate it, all while wearing their enemy's clothing, suggest a Waorani trophy hunting, ritual appropriation of enemies' “point of view” and the possibility of transforming into other by adopting his perspective. Such ritual uses of *cowori* goods in feasts and post-killing celebrations and the use of enemy clothing give us another important insight into the way in which the Waorani jaguar identity relates to its relational pole of their prey and the adoption of the Other-prey perspective. In particular, the ritualization of the appropriation of enemy qualities in which taking *cowori* clothes and objects suggests a symbolically cannibal act of incorporating the Other through predation.

Permeable Frontiers and the Wealthy Outside

The account of another captive Kichwa woman, Marujita Huatatoca, that I have recorded myself, speaks of the Waorani's great interest in *cowori* food and tools. She recalled the expeditions against Kichwa villages and colonizer settlements where they took rice, sugar, axes, shotguns and *chacra* products, most of which they would not know how to use and yet kept. Marujita recalls some very interesting details, such as the impressive amount of goods that the group had piled up in a special cabin that was built to conserve the stolen goods.

“There were things that they got: candles, matches, mirrors and other strange things that the community had *piled up*¹³. They were things that they had stolen from the *gringos* they had killed. They played with them, they did not use them, they kept them piled up, [...] they cooked in metal pots, they had all kind of cooking tools because next to the Curaray river there was a *gringo* who stored things in a big cabin and they had taken many things, everything: axes, pots, everything the white people had. They would bring it into a big house where they kept things and it was full of things. What they did was go out of the forest during the night, they smashed the doors and they took all the stuff and, after they had stolen the things, they left the door crossed with two spears. After that, they kept all this stuff at the community [...]. They used the candles to light the fire [...]. Every time they killed not only *gringos*, but also the Kichwa, in an ambush. They always took things, brought them to the community and used them. This is why they also had *machetes*.” (Marujita Huatatoca, author's interview, 2010).

This Kichwa woman's testimony also tells that the Waorani also used to steal also from other indigenous groups. They had, for example, a stolen canoe which they learnt to use but not to fabricate, as well as different *shigras* and coins taken from Kichwa raids.

In yet another interesting testimony from another Kichwa captive (Margarita), cited by Cipolletti (Cipolletti 2002:11), the Waorani of her group had moved closer to colonizer settlements to be able to more easily access tools and diminished their horticultural activity to concentrate on the appropriation of food and goods from the outside. The group Cipolletti is talking about is the Gikitairi, the first group to enter into a permanent contact with missionaries in 1958. From these testimonies and the pictures taken from missionary airplanes (in Cabodevilla1999), we can argue that this group displayed some material culture traits that are different from the Other Waorani. Their houses were constructed on the riverbank in forms similar to the ones the indigenous Curaray frontiersman population and they possessed a canoe. Some of the Guikitairi houses were very similar to Jibaroan housing, with rounded roofs, while others a mixture of Kichwa style and other, more “traditional” styles, with roof that touched the ground. Some clearings had small, square cabins (that might have been used to keep stolen goods in), some had defensive fences,

imitating the protection fences of oil camps and missionary settlements. As Cabodevilla also notes, citing a testimony from the headman of the Gikitairi group, they started constructing houses with different styles after observing *cowori*¹⁴ (Cabodevilla 1999: 320-325). Through the testimony of Joaquina Grefa, we furthermore learn that the group had settled near the Arajuno oil camp by choice, in order to be closer to the desired goods.

Waorani oral memory is also rich with stories about the organization of expeditions against *cowori* to take food and manufactured goods:

“They started to see that the *cowori* had axes, machetes; they cleaned and logged. They would have liked to do the same, so they asked the oldest ones: why do not we kill the *cowori* to be able to work with such instruments?” (Cabodevilla 1999:202, our translation).

Every possibility of exchange is denied in this oral account, which goes on to describe how the astute and fierce Waorani warriors invited a *cowori* chief and killed him. They also kill to take food from gardens, and even the shoots of plantain to be planted in their own (Cabodevilla 1999:202).

Interestingly, Waorani myths talk about powerful entities from whom useful things were taken. For example, the manioc plants – highly valued among the Waorani – were stolen from the tapir garden.

Finally, another sphere in which the Waorani would “incorporate” was the practice of the abduction and familiarization of *cowori* women. As far as we know from the account of Kichwa women, the abducted were immediately inserted into Waorani extended families (they were given their own hammock and fireplace inside the longhouse like other woman) and married to Waorani men. Their bodies were made to be similar to Waorani women, their ear lobes were pierced, their clothes were taken and their hair was cut in the characteristically Waorani way (Cipolletti 2002). The manner in which captive women were treated seems to correspond to the process that, according to Fausto, “articulates predation and familiarization, affinity and consanguinity, exterior and interior.” (Fausto 1993: 184-192), so that the *cowori* would become Waorani through commensality and bodily modification.

Assembling all these elements that speak about the ritual use of *cowori* clothing, intensive observations of foreigners, raiding, the abduction of Kichwa women and the stealing of goods, we can conclude that the Waorani were not only highly permeable to the “outside”, but actively engaged in its “cannibal incorporation”. It is very important to underline this fact since it contradicts the idea of the Waorani as a self-contained and isolated group. Instead, it highlights their “openness to the outside”, whose “qualities” (in this case actual objects and food) were appropriated through the vector of predation. This process also demonstrates the typical paradox entailed in the incorporation of the enemy: it is impossible to do it without transforming oneself and always implies becoming Other.

Potential Kin or Prey?

If the relation with *cowori* appears quite clearly defined above, what of the relation with *warani*, namely enemies who are potential affine? It is interesting that another “typical” situation of killing, as it emerges from the accounts that I have collected, is the one among *warani* groups during drinking festivals and celebrations, where either the guests are invited with the real intention of killing them, or the guests come with the intention of killing the hosts. Big celebrations were usually held among *warani*¹⁵ groups – namely with the waorani with are not part of the traditional endogamic area – to make matrimonial exchanges, under the auspice of a leader who, thanks to his generosity and capability of organizing the event, could offer great amounts of manioc beer. Yet, the ambiguous character of the relation between *warani* is clear in oral memories, where feasts can abruptly turn into killings and vendetta. I have registered many accounts of playing upon this ambiguity. In fact, traditionally the *warani* guests had to bring spears to the hosts as a gifts, as if to stress the renouncing of hostilities and to express the good intention of seeking alliance through, above all, marriages. Yet, often, the allegedly gifted spears become the arms of the killers, and it is frequent to hear of such ambiguity in oral memories, which means that while

circulation (of women) is admitted in particular occasions between *warani* groups, predation is always a possible outcome. Moreover, although Rival has argued that women are not usually taken in feuding, I have found many references to abduction after the killing of their longhouse in oral accounts.

Interestingly, it is in the very same myth of Nenkiwenga cited above that we can find the explanation of how feuding began, and it precisely refers to this ambiguous festival framework. In fact, the myth states that after the first killing all the other Waorani group learnt how to build spears. One day another group of Waorani invites the Son and the Sun and his adoptive father to a *chonta* drinking festival and, after a while, they are killed by the hosts, with the very same spears they were taught to build. Two jaguars emerged from their bodies that reaches their jaguar families underground, which again speaks of the postmortem warrior transformation into jaguars.

This ambiguity is also clearly posited in the story of the death of the cultural hero Moipa¹⁶ that I have recorded:

“Unmeko told Ñiwa that Moipa wanted to kill him. There were many who were angry with Moipa: the Piyemoiri, my father, Ñega, Kimontare and the followers of Umeko, Tare and Ñame. Piyemo said ‘Well guys, now I am going to tell you what I am going to do. Because they have the will to kill, someone has to die’. So Piyemo got angry (*Piinte*). ‘Let’s agree upon this, and let’s wait for the night to come’. Then Moipa came, entered the house and started to dance and sing saying: ‘the jaguar has come, together with sharp and well-prepared jaws, this is what the jaguar looks like’. When Kimontare heard that, he become suspicious, and gave the signal. Piyemo stood up and exited the door without being seen. At the same time, as Moipa was about to take his *chicha* cup to dissimulate his intentions, Piyemo hit him at the knees and as he fell down, and Niwa speared him. So he said: “as I have dreamt, they are killing me!” Crying, he said to Iteca¹⁷: “this is what I had told you, it would have been better to kill them before the party, but you did not agree and now they kill us”. Piyemo hit Iteca again and he fell to the ground. Ewentoca (a woman), who had a *machete* made of *chonta*, started to hit Iteca on the head while the Others killed Moipa with many spears. So Ñiwa said: “we killed the tiger, let’s dance and sing and party, because we have killed the jaguar”.

Beside the fact that this account is interesting as it shows precisely how “circulation” can shift towards predation, it also illustrates once again that the position of the killer is that of the jaguar. That is how Moipa defines himself and how the Waorani define him in the account. However, even more interestingly, it illustrates how fractal identities are involved in predation: the predators (Moipa) become prey and prey (the other Waorani) predators.

A sort of a rather peculiar Waorani irony on killing also emerges: in the account, Moipa is actually making jokes about the fact that he is going to kill and does so referring to himself as a jaguar. I am not sure yet why the Waorani make jokes in regards to these matters, but it is not unusual to hear them making fun of the way in which spears enter bodies, how people scream, or the tricks they played on the enemies and telling lies.

I am confident enough, at this point of the discussion, to suggest that, contrary to the argument that Waorani would express the point of view of the victims and that their only possible relationship with outsiders is “unilateral predation” (Rival 2002), Waorani understanding of the relation with enemies admits *mutual predation*, related to a very well-defined dual representation of *comori*. They are not only thought of as bloody cannibals (Rival 1996, Cabodevilla 1999), but also as “weaker prey”. Waorani warfare should be thought of as entailing the position of predator as much as prey in both inter-ethnic raiding and feuding. Moreover, as much as the relation established is seemingly one of mutual predation, I suggest that the latter points to a Waorani personhood constituted by a pair instead of an individuality. Such shifts entail transformations whose meaning is tied to Waorani perspectivism where Waorani thus are not victims, but predators and prey.

Masters-Parents and Pet-Children

In Waorani mythology and cosmology, valuable knowledge and useful things are not only stolen and taken. They are often gifts from supernatural and powerful entities. I contend that the latter is implicated with a Waorani notion of “mastery” that, as Fausto (2008) has argued, can also be found throughout Amazonia in a variety of asymmetrical relations that entail control, such as shamanism, pet familiarization, prisoner abduction, and one that designates a position “involving control and/or protection [...] engendering, and that applies to relations between persons (human or non-human) and between persons and things (tangible or intangible)” (Fausto 2008:2)

In Waorani origin myths, mastery is a relation of control and containment often between an owner/keeper and his animated objects, which are, in turn, the owner/controller of animals or knowledge. The Waorani notion of mastery entails a dose of ambiguity, as the influence between container and contained is often reversed.

I here present a Waorani myth about a little fire bee that controls game and which, in turn, is kept by a Waorani hunter. It highlights the Waorani notion of mastery and its implications in the idea of reciprocal influences and containment and it also illustrates “mastery” as a fundamental relation with Alterity among the Waorani.

“A Waorani man is a very good hunter, he can hunt a lot of birds and monkeys, and everyone is happy with him because he brings a lot of meat to the longhouse. He has a secret that makes him successful in hunting: a little fire bee that he keeps in a clay pot in the longhouse. Every time he ate he would let her lick his hand. The bee could attract game. However, because his envious brothers wanted to get rid of the bee, they sent their sister to clean the hunter’s longhouse and she inadvertently made the pot fall to the ground. When the bee escaped from the pot, it entered the girl’s body through her mouth. She then went back to her mother and prepared *genipa*¹⁸ for her hair, so her hands were stained. When the hunter came home from the hunting he realized that the bee was missing. He heard the buzz from inside his sister body and tried to take it out while she is asleep, but she wakes up and his face was stained with *genipa*. The young man, mortified and ashamed¹⁹, asked his younger brothers to send him to heaven with their blowpipe and become the moon. The younger brothers were chased away by the angry father and became two different kinds of birds. Finally, after the ingestion of the bee, the girl was also punished and she was drawn into the river by the angry father. Sometime later, a little boy appeared on the sandy river bank where the girl died. The bee, after entering the young Waorani girl’s body had given birth to a little baby, who was actually the Son of the Sun (*Nenkiwenga*). The bee-boy was adopted by the Waorani, and when he grew up *Nenkiwenga* thought to the Waorani how to build *chonta* spears and much much more. He also thought how to build a *chonta* blowgun, darts and *curare*”.

The myth, besides offering another version of the Pan-Amazonian myth of the birth of the moon – which is here presented with the variable of three instead of two brothers, one of which is incestuous with a parallel sister²⁰ – provides further proof of how the Waorani think of the variable nature of their bodies and shows the ambivalent nature of Waorani mastery. It perfectly depicts the reciprocal influences involved: the fire bee being the master of the game that is, in turn, controlled by his keeper (the hunter), being in turn the bee kept in a pot, contained in a house, which offers another vivid image of control and containment of animated objects in Amazonia. As the account goes on, the relations of containment and reciprocal influences become enormously complicated, as the bee proves to be one of the manifestations of the powerful Son of the Sun (*Nenkiwenga*), and his body changes again into that of a child. Here, we see a general idea of powerful others who are contained by someone else who then benefits from some knowledge or power, either in a keeper/animated object relation in the case of the relation between the hunter and the bee, in the case of women whose womb contains a metamorphic baby and then the Waorani longhouse that will contain/familiarize the adopted bee-children.

The latter shows that the Waorani notion of mastery highlights an important aspect of the Waorani social reliance on external wealth, and it is also linked to a way of becoming-other – namely familiarization – as the myth describes a succession of metamorphic conditions: animated objects that transform into babies, and even supernatural entities, becoming Waorani. More precisely, it seems that Waorani mastery is linked to the “adoptive filiation” that occurs through the familiarization of powerful entities.

There are other myths that speak about the familiarization of powerful entities who give knowledge away. Learning how to make fire also takes place, in another myth, through the adoption of *Nenkiwenga* by a Waorani family; the knowledge to give birth without killing the mother by opening her womb with a rock knife is learned from a forest rat who helps a Waorani man and his pregnant wife. If, in the myth of *Nenkiwenga*, the Waorani clearly contain and control the “familiarized” powerful Other who becomes the relational pet/children, another myth can help us elucidate the inverse relation of containment that the Waorani harbor with powerful entities. In the myth of the benevolent *Wegongi*, this cultural hero is depicted as the creator of all things, the one who made the Waorani and the other animals. Here, the Waorani are the ones who live in *Wegongi* longhouses, together with other animals when the animals were humans. This clearly points to a Waorani position as children, through which they obtain useful knowledge, since *Wegongi* “taught people how to live together and gave all the things the Waorani needed to live, including *Ome*, the forest”.

The Waorani notion of mastery thus highlights an important aspect of the Waorani social reliance on external wealth, itself linked to a way of becoming-other, namely familiarization. In this way, Waorani mastery unfolds a second pair of dual identity, one of master-parents/pet-children, that seems to constitute Waorani personhood. As this emerges, it seems to be linked to a general schemata either entailing a relation of incorporation and control or, on the contrary, “of being incorporated”.

We, the Group

We need now to engage with the another crucial question: if the predator position is warfare and the relation with outsiders (and enemies), what perspective (entailed with consanguinity) do the Waorani move away from when they become jaguars? As predation (in the divided identity of jaguar and pray) and mastery (in the divided identity master-parents/pet-children) – which both entail two positions of reciprocal containment – signify the Waorani relation with Alterity and affinity, what about the consanguineal relations of the longhouse? Extended family life is associated with arboreal herbivore animals and the relation with family life and birds are often described in Waorani chants and language. The physical Waorani house, the *onko*, is associated with a nest (*oye*), as the expression “my birth place” is “*boto oyene*”, literally “the place where my nest is”, or “*boto ekeboga*”, literally “the place of my egg”. Rival (1996, 2002, 2005) has vigorously argued that Waorani identification with birds is related to their consumptive economy as individuals who can autonomously access a “giving environment”, just as birds enjoy and consume forest fruits (Rival 1996, 2002). *Eeme* (manioc) festivals similarly symbolize the enjoyment of abundance with the “ritual association between guests and birds, and hosts and fruiting trees” (Rival 2005 : 300). While I agree with Rival that the association with birds corresponds to joyful consumption, I disagree with her about the fact that collective consumption and the sharing of a wealth from an environment regarded as abundant would be a kind of alternative mode that the Waorani put into place to construct persons as an alternative to predation/appropriation (Rival 2002, 2005). Instead, I would argue that social reliance on a consumption of the abundance residing outside society is seen as not created by the society – explaining their social choice to privilege foraging and gathering rather than gardening – and rather is consistent with the social schemata of predation/appropriation.

Although Rival insisted on the Waorani perception of the forest as a “naturally” giving environment, elsewhere she has also stated that they perceive this abundance as a gift from past generations. I would like to depart from this remark to argue that the Waorani, instead of naturalizing social relations with certain kind of Others, rather “personify the natural abundance”, in the sense that they prefer to see it as a gift from powerful entities and present and past activities. The world that the Waorani knew before contact, *ome*, the forest, is the gift from the powerful master *Wegongi*. During feasts “owned” by prominent

people, the Waorani ritualized the consumption of the abundance created and gifted by powerful masters. The owners, namely the hosts of the feast, are the image of the classical Amazonian master, characterized by ritual knowledge and control and are associated to growth and peace. Seeing themselves as feasting birds, they indicate a pet-children position where they consume the gifted abundance of *Ome*, created by powerful masters. I also argue that such schemata can likewise be found in the peculiar transactions that characterize Waorani commensality, through “demand sharing” instead of “sharing” based on exchange and reciprocal obligations. As Peterson notes in the case of Australian aboriginal culture, “much giving and sharing is in response to direct verbal or non-verbal demand” (Peterson 1997:172), much like the Waorani. Asking why recipients often have to demand generosity, Peterson goes on to suggest that it might be a “testing behavior to establish the state of a relationship in social systems where such relationship have to behaviors constantly produced and maintained by social action”. If we ask the same question about the Waorani, I would answer that the kind of relations that the Waorani are testing through demanding for food is one in which they see themselves, in the sharing relation of the longhouse, as accessing the abundance provided by others, similar to the way children are provided for by parents.

Such a concept is well expressed in a chant I collected called “*gorongame meñente keng?*”, or “let’s share our food”. The chant describes hunting, gathering, fishing and garden cultivation, but what is really valued in the chant is the *enjoyment of consuming* together in the longhouse, food attained through “cries of asking for food”. In this context, “crying for food” suggests two important things: the first is that, similarly to *drinking* festivals, the Waorani are ideologically oriented toward consumption and this consumption is ideally associated to one-way abundant streams, not unlike the way a child is generously given things by other members of the extended family. In this way, the Waorani ideal of living well is, in fact, to be given by co-resident’s abundant food in the *nanicabo* and enjoying abundant food created by powerful masters and past activities (like the *chonta* fruits harvested from their grandparent’s woods).

Jaguariness as a Cosmological Category

At this point in the discussion, it can be argued that the “traditional” Waorani idea of Alterity involved a square (we the group – the Other groups – *warani*, foreigners – *cowori* – powerful entities/masters). In such square, consanguinity implies suspension of predation -but is still linked to an idea of “incorporation” of abundant food provided by co-residents. Enmity with other Waorani groups entails predation or circulation and exchange. *Cowori* relations, being entirely “outside society”, are built upon reciprocal predation. Mastery is implicated with the idea of reciprocal containment and familiarization. Warfare also admits the familiarization of abducted women and children and I have also suggested that the “familiarization” of the enemy/prey and, from this point of view, can be observed in post-killing celebrations in which the Waorani wear *cowori* clothes as trophies. For these reasons, predation and familiarization and thus predation and master-like relationship can be thought of as structurally identical. Moreover, in such a square, consanguinity implies suspension of predation but is still linked to an idea of “incorporation” of abundant food provided by co-residents. Thus, what is important to underline here is that in all these relations we can envision a reoccurring cosmological logic: contingent relations of “containing” – the position of predator or master-parent and “containment” – the position of prey and pet- children; the latter depending upon the social relations (affinity-consanguinity) the Waorani are embedded in.

This indicates that, within the Waorani, the divided Waorani personhood of which I have described each pole corresponds to a reciprocal category that attains different spheres of Alterity that can function in both directions. In this way, foreigners and enemies are prey (and predators), while powerful entities are masters (and pet-children) but, in all cases, such dual perspectives correspond to a schema that does not allow exchange as a means to incorporate the outside (with exception for occasional exchanges outside endogamic areas between affines).

If this is true, the Waorani case shows that consanguineal relations rest on the vital incorporation of Alterity rather than on on some kind of autarchy. Thus, affinity would seem, once again, to prove to be fundamental in the creation of consanguinity. jaguariness,

as a “device of producing encompassment” (Fausto 2008:6) among the Waorani, is precisely this reversible relation of containing and of containment that enables Waorani social life.

The situation of contact we present in the following and the way the Waorani “associated” with previous enemies will provide a further interesting evidence of this provisional foundation. We will see how actualizing general categories of “containing” vs. “containment” will correspond to the emergence of new social transactions that are understood as “taking” vs. “receiving” and that characterize Waorani “consumerism”.

Pacification and Ambiguous *Cowori*

In the process of “pacification”, Waorani etiologies and classification systems were mobilized in order to make sense of the new situation, including the strange and non-identified “objects” used in contact operations, such as airplanes and loudspeakers and the new kind of foreigner, never seen before, flying on such unknown things. The Waorani system of classification was used and readjusted during the process of contact, as Waorani cosmologies inflected in contact situations to work out this unprecedented experience of the Other. Myths, oral memories, previous individual experiences and deductions from direct observation were re-elaborated and re-arranged as contact intensified.

Precedent experiences of intensifying relations with *cowori* are still vivid in the Waorani oral memory. That is, for example, the case of the oral memory about clashes and reciprocal violence between the *cowori* and the Waorani during the rubber boom (1890-1920) (see the accounts in Cabodevilla 1999). As oral memories recall, the Waorani were killed and captured and killed in turn. The rivers, highways of the rubber *patrones*, become dangerous places. The Waorani fled, but also attacked. As the rubber economy boomed and busted, likewise, can we think of the slower and faster rhythms of waves of colonization, to which the intensification and the lessening of the cycles of war between the Waorani and foreigners corresponded. Sometimes the Waorani fled and hid until the *cowori* would go away. However, the Waorani also recall how, after Waorani attacks and killings, the “*cowori* diminished”, “fled somewhere else” or “hid”. The latter is the case of how the Waorani see the phase of the rubber economy: the foreigners fled because the Waorani made them go away²¹. What is important to underline though, is that so far, according to the way in which the Waorani see their history, the *cowori* would always leave in the end. However, beginning in the 40’s, something in the Waorani perception must have changed, as the waves of colonization linked to oil exploitation entailed an unprecedented display of technological instruments and a higher capacity to intrude into the forest by air. In this period, a number of deadly attacks by Waorani warriors against exploration teams of the Shell oil company took place (Cabodevilla 1999). Such attacks can be, with certainty, attributed to the group led by Guikita in the upper Curaray river basin, that would be the first to be contacted a few years later. As Cabodevilla (1999) has been able to describe through his research in oil company archives, the Shell workers reports spoke of “*Auca*”²², deadly attacks, and were greatly concerned about delays in the operation. Waorani would make their presence known by leaving *chonta* spears on prospection paths as a warning not to venture any further, thus causing a situation of panic and fear among the oil workers. As already mentioned above, it is of paramount interests that the Waorani – and especially the Guikitairi group whose territory was most involved in prospection – vis a vis this new kind of border pressure, instead of fleeing, moved closer and closer to it. They intensified their raids, organized an incipient cargo cult with sympathetic magic, intensified visits to spy on the enemy and to abduct *Runa* women. Several women (*Runa peones*) had come to the *cowori* settlements along the Curaray, some fleeing internal feuds²³, but others aiming to find out what the *cowori* were like to then return to their group with new information about the foreigners. A similar intensification of the relation with the frontier was occurring in the northern part of the Napo River Bank where the group led by Piyemo and Niwa was engaged in fierce warfare against the new settlement of the incipient village of Coca and the Capuchinian mission. The raids, the abduction of women, killings and pillages that took place in this period are still vividly remembered by the Waorani warriors of this group.

“Biti miti punimupa”. Biti wiki pungu amupa. I want to be your relative, let’s get together.

Apparently, speculation about the nature of *cowori* intensified as the “Auca Operation”²⁴ promoted by U.S. evangelic missionaries started in 1955. It consisted in daily reconnaissance flights with small airplanes and an intense program of gift dropping accompanied by messages shouted from loudspeakers. The missionaries started the operation having gathered the information available on the Waorani from the Shell archives, from local *patrones*, from indigenous Runa and from Waorani girls that were living at a local hacienda, having escaped from their own group during an intense period of feuding. In retrospect, we can argue with certainty that the intentions of the missionaries promoting forced contact and the Waorani’s own intentions were reciprocally misunderstood. The message that was repeatedly shouted from the loudspeakers on the airplanes “*Biti miti punimupa. Biti wiki pungu amupa* (I want to be your relative, let’s get together!)” must have created much discussion among the group. The misunderstanding was caused by the mistranslation of the term *punimupa* as “friend”. The missionaries thought they were asking for friendship from the Waorani (Eliot 1956, Wallis 1969). Instead, they were actually stating that they were the Waorani’s “relatives”. This erred translation was probably due to the fact that the Waorani girl²⁵ who had helped the missionaries with the translation of simple sentences did not know a better way to translate the social relation of “friendship”, unknown to the Waorani. The missionaries, on their part, ignored that, for Amazonian societies and for the Waorani too, social relations can only pertain to the sphere of consanguinity (relation with relative), affinity (with potential relative) and enmity. Consequently, even though the borders between such spheres prove to be highly mobile in Amazonia, to the Waorani, claiming to be a relative from this strange *cowori* whose humanity was still under scrutiny, must have sounded, at best, problematic.

For over two months, the missionaries made regular visits to the four longhouses that constituted the Guikitairi group in their little airplane. The gifts – aluminum pots, axes, knives, machetes and chickens – were dropped in baskets lowered with a rope (Eliot 1956: 116). From the diary of one of the protagonists of the Auca operation, we are able to get an impression of the group’s reaction: “They would scramble helter skelter towards the lifted gift” (Eliot 1956: 116). Airplanes were indeed the subject of many discussions. During the entire process of contact and pacification (1956-1971) the groups gave different, alternative explanations of the “flying things”. Strange and magical *cowori* objects to which Waorani attributed “magical power” are registered in Waorani oral memory by Cabodevilla (Cabodevilla 1999). The “*caento*” was a magic box that ate and sucked the blood of the Waorani²⁶. In the circumstances of the “Auca Operation”, as we can deduce from the account of the captive Kichwa women and from the testimonies collected in missionary diaries, one of the first interpretations was that airplanes were “man-birds” or “spirit animals” (Cipolletti 2002, Eliot 1973) that could be killed or injured to obtain the goods inside their bellies and make them drop out. The Waorani constructed platforms on high trees (Eliot 1956) to reach them with their spears. According to the testimony of the Kichwa Joaquina, men tried to spear the airplane by throwing their laces against it. They also constructed a big *chonta* wood stick to get it down; the frustration was great when they realized that they could not reach it. Joaquina also reported that the Waorani interpreted the objects falling out of the big bird’s belly as proof that they had wounded the animal and of their capacity of controlling and predate these spirit animals (Joaquina Grefa, cited in Cipolletti 2002). Besides trying to spear the flying things, the Waorani constructed little model planes and placed them on the roofs of houses (Eliot 1956: 133). The missionaries interpreted this as a sign of friendship. They also constructed a bamboo platform six feet from the ground, and later another higher platform. Men would climb on it at each visit (Nate Saint’s diary, cited in Eliot 1956:124) and stood on the platform, presenting themselves dressed with the gifted clothes. Missionaries interpreted this as if the Waorani were showing appreciation for the gifts and as an unequivocal sign the Waorani would engage in a peaceful encounter with them. Such a behavior points rather to the fact that the Waorani were developing a form of sympathetic magic to attract the bird-man. This is confirmed by Kichwa Joaquina (Cipolletti 2002), who speaks of rituals to attract the big birds with chants and songs, and by the missionary diaries that speak of how the Waorani also started to open clearings next to the house to facilitate the dropping and made gestures in an attempt to make them land. If we relate such behavior to the ritual use of *cowori* goods in

post-riding and post-killing celebrations as we have described above, it can be argued that Waorani were developing a kind of cargo cult. In some Waorani areas, such cults were still present in the late 70's, where the Waorani performed rituals imitating oil camp activities and would sing chants in which the protagonists were helicopters (Yost 1981: 688). Ritual dancing accompanied the chants, aiming to attract planes and get axes, machetes, clothes and aluminum pots. A faraway group even autonomously constructed a landing strip so that airplanes could come and “give them presents” (Yost 1981: 688).

During the same years, a similar use of *comori* objects as trophies can also be found in the events that surrounded the spear killing of a Runa man during a deadly Waorani attack. Among the eighteen spears removed from his body, one was wrapped with the pages of a New Testament which the Waorani had probably stolen from the missionaries' hut, while another spear was decorated with the cloth used to make a scrapbook which missionaries had dropped from the airplane (Eliot 1961:26). Another example is Baiwa, the headman of Baiwairi, who, upon arrival at the Tiweno Mission, was wearing a parachute used to drop food draped over his body, while yet another man had devised a garment from the cloth that lined the electronic baskets (Wallis 93:1973). All these examples suggest that the wearing of *comori* clothes and objects during the Auca operation was in fact a symbolically cannibal act of incorporating the Other, not a display of “friendship”. Waorani understood the goods as trophies taken from the wounded flying animals, or as the result of their “attraction skills” through sympathetic magic; in both cases the appropriation/predation schemata dominated. The fact that in 1956 the missionaries who were the protagonists of the “Auca Operation” were killed by the Guikitari group does not contradict but is, in fact, quite consistent with the way the Waorani saw the situation insofar as the relation of incorporation of the Other had always functioned through actual predation, or through symbolic predation with sympathetic magic and cargo cult like rituals. If, considering this first moment of contact, we were to answer the question “who was incorporating whom?”, the answer would be, that at this stage, it was, without a doubt, the Waorani who were trying to incorporate Alterity.

Yet, we can also think of a process in which the Waorani system of classifications and etiologies transformed and adapted to different situations as the contact intensified. Such inflection indicates that, as the Waorani intensified contact through the mediation of their already “civilized” relatives and of more sophisticated technology that would facilitate communication, the idea of the *comori* started to inflect towards a kind of “benevolent and powerful master” capable of ensuring a stream of goods and food. The first signs of such inflections can be seen in this early phase as the Waorani started to show an interest in asking for and obtaining goods.

Downriver and Yasuni groups, contacted in a second phase, burned their huts and fled when the missionary planes started searching for their longhouses. Airplanes were interpreted as *Wene* (dangerous and evil spirits), souls of foreigners speared in the Napo river (Wallis 1973:3), dead Waorani, and other kinds of big insects/animals. They trashed the baskets dropped from the airplanes and everything else in them, so missionaries had to build special baskets with double bottoms to hide the transmitters used to eavesdrop on their conversations (Wallis 1973). The Tiwino River Baiwairi tossed their spears towards the plane, shouting and yelling, and several times burned their huts, fled and hid (Wallis 1956). Later, as reported in missionary diaries (Wallis 1973), they also started to build platforms and ask for axes, beads and machetes, as could be heard from the transmitters in the baskets, especially when they started to recognize their already contacted relatives speaking from the airplanes. Thanks to the transmitters hidden in the baskets, communication that was above all focused on obtaining manufactured goods ensued. They would ask for metal axes “Throw me an ax, some beads when they ripen on the bushes [glass beads]”, “Throw me a machete”, or “Take me for a ride”, “Throw me an ax and I will come” (Wallis 1973). The fulfillment of such requests by missionaries was decisive in establishing the first mission center, Tiweno. During the several-day trek itself, groups of people were followed by the constant dropping of food, tools and medicine from helicopters. One of the most reticent warriors was convinced to follow the group after a snake bit him and his life was saved by the medicine of the foreigners. The Baiwairi, after the first medical crisis in the mission due to the outburst of a polio epidemic and the consequent food shortage, fled, left the mission and hid. Yet they were finally persuaded to go back when given the possibility to be transported in the wondrous flying things like helicopters, which then took them to an oil camp where they received many gifts (each

woman an aluminum pot; the headman Baiwa, a machete and other gifts). As each Waorani group was reunited at Tiweno, they were welcomed by chants and offered food and drink, as was traditional in *eeme* (manioc) festivals. Conversations would grow around the marvelous baskets and calls from the planes. The Waorani headman of Yasuni, Wepe, and his son, Pirawa, were brought to the Tiweno mission and when they returned to their group they organized the work to construct an airstrip and receive visits, goods and food. Pirawa recalls the first days in Tiweno as days of feasts: “[...] There was a feast for nine days, there was a lot, a lot of food. We drank and ate a lot” (Interview of the Author 2009).

You are Not My Relative

After Operation Auca (1956) ended in the killing of the missionaries²⁷, a second attempt, made in 1958 by two missionary women, both relatives of the men killed in the first operation, proved successful. This strategy was completely different. It was based on the work that a missionary from SIL, Rachel Saint, had done with a young Waorani woman who had escaped the Guikita group as a consequence of internal conflicts and was working as *peona* in a *hacienda* of the Curaray. Contact with the Guikitairi group was in fact made by the Waorani girl, and when her relatives agreed on allowing the missionaries to settle, the first Waorani mission known as Tiweno was founded.

Missionary literature insisted that peaceful contact was made possible thanks to two factors. The first, they claimed, was that Dayuma presented Rachel Saint as her classificatory sister, Nimu. The second was the fact that Saint and Elisabeth Eliot were relatives (sister and wife) of the missionaries killed by the very same group and their display of forgiveness caused a breakthrough in Waorani *faida* logic, compelling them to conversion. I instead argue that the Waorani never considered the missionaries as relatives and the “end of spears” was not related to the embracement of Christian morality, but rather to an internal logic, already present in Waorani culture and that inflected in this new situation. Such long-term Waorani forms that entered into play during the contact were, respectively, the decision of entering a period of peace and abundance by becoming followers of “empowered people” and, on the Other hand, the categorization of the foreigners as “powerful Others” to enter in association with, under a particular type of mastery like relation.

While it is true that the first missionary village started as Guikitairi *manicabo* intensified their visits to the missionary settlement (Rival 1996:20), I argue that such visits were not understood as contact with close relatives. Whereas the treatment of abducted *cowori* women in Waorani society was one of familiarization through commensality and bodily transformations, the Waorani would not share their food with these particular *cowori* women, and would instead accept and demand *cowori* food and goods. The latter reveals that the Waorani did not try to include the missionary women into their social relations as relatives, “familiarizing” them as they had done with Kichwa captives. The Waorani were not even sure that *cowori* women were people at the beginning. Even though the missionary women’s accounts omit the topic, the Waorani today refer with amusement to how they were really insistent on observing and touching the *cowori*’s naked bodies. The Waorani’s insistence in ripping off the clothes of oil workers and missionaries, sniff and touch their bodies, is also well documented by Labaka (Labaka 2003). This behavior, rather than lack of morality, reveals that the Waorani were trying to determine what the foreigners were through the observation and manipulation of their bodies. The same kind of attitude has been found among the Parakana (Fausto 2002) the Warí (Vilaça 2010).

The problem with the lack of offering of food soon noted by the missionary Elliot in her account (1958) is revealing. While living in Kichwa territory “[...] it was a simple thing to ask for food – eggs, plantains, manioc – and pay for it in currency” instead, she argued, the Waorani would occasionally offer food – under the pressure of Dayuma – but not regularly, and they “[...] had no use for money or anything else which might have served as a trade item”. The missionaries could not be included in the demand sharing network not because, as Elliot speculated they “[...] could not give anything in return”, but because the missionaries were not considered relatives. Besides, the Waorani treatment of social relations with “Others” was not based on “exchange”. In this way, unlike the Runa, they could not include the *cowori* into their social relation with some kind of transaction like a “goods for food” exchange. As food sharing is only possible in parallel transactions among kin, the missionaries found themselves in a difficult position and it became evident that

they would have to find to a separate source of supplies for themselves and for the Waorani who, in turn, clearly expected the missionaries to give them food and manufactured goods. Soon the missionary women had to organize food drops, which would take place weekly – every Friday – together with mail and other supplies needed such as clothes and “gifts for the Waorani” (Eliot 1961).

While the *cowori* women were not at all relatives, they were capable of controlling flying things that could provide food and many goods, a capacity that, from a Waorani point of view, is the attribute of magnified persons. The ritual of the every-Friday-plane (wooden bee or beetle, called “*ibu*”) is described by Eliot (Eliot 1961) as a moment of great excitement and there were daily questions from the Waorani to know whether the plane would come or not. As the *ibu* showed up, everybody would gather to wait for it. Boys and younger women would rush to collect the bundles and everyone would crowd into the missionary hut to inspect the load. Eliot noted the Waorani’s great interest in trying to make sense of the origin of the manufactured goods that the missionaries controlled (Eliot E. 1961). Questions like “[...] Who made this? [...] Did your husband make it? [...] Did your father? [...] Did you? [...] Do you know how to do it?” were frequently asked. The answer “No” would leave the Waorani doubtful and, as a result, they asked “[...] Why it was given to you?”. Such questions reflect the Waorani attempt to understand and make sense of the process of production and circulation of *cowori* goods under native categories. For the Waorani, demand sharing is not admitted outside kin-kin relations, so the questions they were asking were, in fact, about the kind of inter-subjective relations and/or kin relatedness the *cowori* were obtaining these goods through and how. As already mentioned, for the Waorani, manufactured goods can either be created by an individual, be shared among close relatives, be taken without asking from enemies, or be obtained as gift from dead people (such as stone axes). If the *cowori* were neither stealing from others, nor obtaining them by demand sharing among relatives, then a form of “control” upon things or knowledge was implied.

As explained above, a Waorani master is generally a “keeper” who controls animated objects, an “owner” who control animals or a particular knowledge, or a shaman who controls his pets’ spirits. As elsewhere in Amazonia, among the Waorani a magnified person/entity controls a particular domain or “spaces of domesticity” (Descola 2005). If, in principle, everything has or may have a master/owner/keeper for the Waorani, why wouldn’t flying things, never before seen manufactured goods, powerful medicine and all kinds of knowledge associated to them also have one?

There are several elements suggesting that the Waorani started to see these foreigners as “powerful Others”, capable of healing, giving abundant food and controlling the flying *ibu* things. This understanding strengthened as communal life developed. As Wallis (Wallis 1973) notes in her memoirs, the missionary leader’s time, after other clans were brought into the mission, was more than monopolized “[...] by constant social, medical and spiritual crises, and in adverting conflict and in arranging provision for the ‘homeless’”. As enemy groups were reduced into the same space, the artificial flux of food and goods had to be intensified. Many of my Waorani informants have clearly underlined their perception of the arrival to Tiweno as a festive situation in which, to ease tensions, the distribution of food, clothes and manufactured goods was organized. Continuous requests for food and manufactured goods were especially made by people from groups that had joined the missionary village later and who found themselves in the territory of former enemy groups (*warani*). For this reason, they completely relied on missionary wealth and were constantly demanding food and goods in large quantities. When the first epidemics broke out (colds and then polio where sixteen died and sixteen become permanently crippled), the missionaries displayed the power of their medicines and cures, which reinforced the idea that foreigners were endowed with powerful healing skills. If some informants attributed the polio epidemics to the medicine that *cowori* gave them, such an explanation must be understood as part of the ambiguous attribution that usually corresponds to the double-sided qualities of Waorani shamans, who are at once healers and dangerous witchcraft doctors able to generate sickness and death. Yet, the idea of *cowori* as powerful healers prevailed since, on various occasions, missionaries cured deadly snakebites, flu and malaria. As a missionary noted in her account, a sick man she was visiting once told her “[...] Let me get a good look at you. Give me a drink of water, so I will drink from your hand and be revived!”. After holding water to his lips, the Waorani man said, “[...] Now I am revived! If you hadn’t come I would have died!” (Wallis 1973 120:197).

Not Killing and Living Well

Putting the killings to an end and accepting the rules of the mission was indeed a core question in the pacification process, but it would be wrong to think of the “no killing” rule as an exogenous imposition or as a cultural or moral code that the Waorani did not possess that, introduced by the missionaries, gave the Waorani the possibility to rid themselves of the violence that affected them (Yost 1983, Booster - Yost et al. 2003), or to react to anger in different ways (Robarcheks 2005). My argument is that the Waorani notion of “mastery”, made of reciprocal influences and based on the notion of containment, has played a role in conceptualizing and controlling the asymmetries brought about by the encounters between Waorani and foreigners. The mission worked when the Waorani started to see the *cowori* as powerful masters and empowered persons with special control over ritual knowledge and objects and able to give to the Waorani without anything in return. If communal life became possible, it was because the Waorani consciously chose to abandon predation as they opted towards an association with foreigners.

Contrary to the thesis of an unusual and escalating state of internal violence that affected groups in the pre-contact situation, for the Waorani, periods of intensified vendettas are normal parts of their cyclical history. Often, at the end of a cycle of war and destruction, a figure capable of restoring peace appears. This figure is accepted because it enforces marriages, numerical growth and a new cycle of expansion; it teaches them how to live without fighting, organizes feasts and festivals where the manioc beverage is generously offered in a relation guest-host, father-children, without anything in return. For the Waorani, “living well” is traditionally linked to a period of peace and expansion when groups grow. These periods are usually tied either to a mythical time, where everyone lived together in *Wegongi* maloka, or to cyclical periods of unity that occur under certain headmen who are able to ensure peace, who are generous with the followers and who quell internal feuds that risk bringing the Waorani to the brink of extinction.

If, on one hand, missionary women fulfilled this ideal and were likened to benevolent and powerful masters who guaranteed an abundant stream of wealth, cure and Waorani wellbeing, on the other hand, Waorani figures like headmen also played an important role in the assimilation of “pacification” with a period of peace and growth. This takes the analysis of how the notion of mastery functioned one step further, displaying a chain of reciprocal influences where “we can never know who adopted whom and who controls whom” (Fausto 2010). In fact, if missionary woman acquired positions as “powerful Others”, Dayuma and the Other Waorani girls who had experienced hacienda life and had “become Kichwa”, in turn acquired prominence thanks to their influence upon the missionaries and acted as headwomen. Among the Waorani, asymmetrical relations and empowered people are referred to as *nangi inga*, “he is superior”, or with the label *ne keka*, “he is skilled, he knows what to do”. Generally, a position of prominence is associated to a particular knowledge or capacity which, again, fits with the concept of “mastery” spread throughout Amazonia (see Fausto 2010). Leadership among Waorani is built around men or women who are able to secure abundance and the proliferation of the group in times of peace. He/she is also capable of great generosity, guaranteeing abundance, organizing many ritual manioc feasts and working large gardens. The Waorani *Awene*, “the owner of the manioc festival” is, in fact, the image of the classical Amazonian master, characterized by ritual knowledge (like knowing how to transform manioc into the sweetest beverage during the *eeme* manioc drinking festivals). He/she is capable of maintaining large groups united and avoiding feuds, he/she is charismatic, a savior and a good orator. The *Awene* secures abundant provisioning for followers and guests and ensures peace. Generous sharers, excelling at creating abundance, they are leaders who attract many followers. As Rival explains: “awene” is an expression that literally means “of the tree”, and is normally used to refer to the big solitary trees that are admired, but it also means “great person”, “leader”, or “chief” (Rival 1993: 647). In the ritual of the sweet manioc feasts, the host of the feast (awene) is likened to a tree, generously bearing fruits (fermented sweet manioc) to joyful birds (Waorani guests).

Such idea of social prominence and leadership was associated, in the situation of contact, with Kichwized Waorani woman and Dayuma in particular. When Dayuma first met her group, she blamed people for the killings and told them that the *cowori* would not kill them and that they would bring a lot of presents. Thus convinced, the group cleared the

forest to facilitate the dropping of gifts and food (Wallis 1973). These are undeniable characteristics of what the Waorani see as headmen who have been capable, throughout Waorani history, starting periods of peace, influencing a large number of followers and who are capable of organizing work. In the first mission village, Tiweno, Dayuma started organizing weekly meetings where she taught the “rules of the missionaries” to ensure peace among the groups. She soon established a relation of leader-follower with her people, spurring the creation of a landing field, one year of “brutally hard work chopping jungle trees with hand axes, dug great roots, tow them away, but Dayuma encouraged them, men, women and children” (Wallis 1973:17). Many marriages were organized by Dayuma and Saint in order to create a link of consanguinity between enemy groups, which is also associated to festivals, periods of peace and inter-group alliances in Waorani culture. Dayuma compelled people to peace and growth, while in return being capable of securing abundance, goods and protection thanks to her influence upon the benevolent masters. The figure of Dayuma in such a situation of contact resonates with the Parakana shamans that become “masters of the whites” as described by Fausto (Fausto 2002). In both cases, social prominence was tied to the capacity of influencing the Whites and their goods.

The case of the Waorani well displays how the chain of reciprocal influence makes forms of control “fractal” and ambiguous in Amazonia. In fact, we can see how both whites become magnified persons, givers, masters of goods, as well as how native chiefs in turn become masters over whites. The first guarantee cures, medicines, food, goods, technology, protection. The latter have the knowledge to guarantee influence over the former and make them release goods. This chain of mastery/owner influence goes to another level if we take into consideration the fact that missionaries chose to translate the term God with *Wegongi*, the cultural hero, creator of things, who made the Waorani and other animals. He is, in fact, another prototypical master figure. Missionary “rules” were explained with the formula “Wegongi says”, so that the rule against killing sounded like “Wegongi’s says not to kill” and, as Yost noted (Yost 1981), it soon became clear that Waorani started to use the formula as a way to exercise not a religious sanction, but a social influence. Pointing to Wegongi rules, the Waorani were making clear to each other that they were living as followers of an *awene* which entails a period of peace, growth and abundance. This reciprocal and ambiguous notion of mastery shows that, in the case of the Waorani, the association with foreigners cannot be thought of as simple domination. Magnified persons are constituted precisely by incorporating relations with alien-subjects endowed with other-wills, imposing their perspective, although under the constant risk of losing it and thus need to be generous and giving.

Interestingly, another example of similar roles played by “magnified persons” in the contact with Whites in the Ecuadorian Amazon exists. Taylor points out that among the Ecuadorian Achuar, the decision to engage in a permanent relation with foreigners and to nucleate around a mission came from the *Uunts* (big man) Santiak, who established commercial relations between missionaries and his group, organized the construction of an airstrip, and controlled the relation with manufactured goods for all Achuar. Apparently, among the Shuar, the association with Others was controlled by the *amigri* or *amike* (trade partner, from the Spanish “amigo”) which became one of the most prominent positions to which a Jivaro man could aspire since it was considered as important as the one of great man (*kakaram*, *Juunt*) and shaman (Steel 1999:752). His growing power regarded, above all, the access goods. Waorani, Parakana, Shuar, Achuar and many others seem to display a pattern in which, in a situation of contact, the one who controls a particular knowledge is also the one who enacts the relation with outsiders, whereas Whites are seen as powerful and empowered in the same terms with other kind of spirit-beings that shamans normally relate with. However, this similarity can be deceptive, as the Jibaroan relation with Alterity admitted exchange, and trade circuits were already established with “foreigners” long before their “pacification”. On the contrary, the Waorani never admitted a commercial/trade/exchange with the Other. Thus, the Waorani have chosen another modality to extend their social relations to the Whites.

Becoming Tamed

My argument is that, whereas before contact, the Waorani experienced *cowori* Alterity as something to be incorporated through actual or symbolic predation, their pacification instead entailed the idea of being incorporated by powerful Masters. The motto “converted” Waorani still use to describe the meaning of their being civilized that is often expressed in the synthetic notion “Stop the killings and live well, without problems, taking the food and medicines that Nimu (R. Saint) gives”, can be useful to discuss a final, central aspect of Waorani pacification. It refers to the question of how the long-standing schemata of incorporating Alterity, namely predation, inflected in the new situation of “association” with powerful others. It would seem that the Waorani understand their becoming “civilized” as a process of other becoming and, more precisely, as “becoming tamed”, as being adopted and abundantly nourished. The testimony of an informant of what becoming civilized means is revealing:

“civilized means taking a little parrot and, over time, giving it salt, sugar, and plantain to see how it tames so that it does not bite anymore; to civilize is the same. It is like taking a pet, giving him food, bite after bite, and then he tames” (Author’s Interview, 2009).

Here, as in many different ethnographical studies, food is important in the process of taming because it creates commensality and the construction of a different body and thus a different perspective. In this process, the body of the civilized is quickly transformed. The Waorani were, at the beginning, less interested in food than in goods. The first reactions toward food were in fact of caution or disgust: “[...] It stinks! Are you going to eat that?” (Eliot 1961:96). Such an attitude resonates with other ethnographies (see Oakdale [2008] with the Barasana, Muratorio [1987] with the Napo Runa²⁸) and with the fact that it is linked to the possibility of becoming-other in Amazonia as it constructs the body and identity.

The outspoken Waorani disgust towards *cowori* food was a way to highlight the difference between proper food – the people’s food (Waorani food) – and the Others’ food, since the Waorani knew the metamorphic quality of bodies and the importance of food in its construction. Thus, they started to accept it as a conscious act of other-becoming. Women would start taking frozen beef along with aluminum pots, clothes, matches and candles. Instead, younger boys were more open to try almost anything, and they waited for candy, sugar and oranges. The fact that men were the most reluctant to accept food is perhaps linked to the gendered character of Waorani warfare, manhood being more constructed by predation than is womanhood and childhood (see Rival 2000 and 2005). The use of salt and foreign carbohydrates like rice is, even today, seen as particularly implicated in the construction of a tamed body; salt is even said to make people weaker while rice is thought to make the body tender and fatter. Weaker and tenderer bodies are opposite to the qualities of the predator body, which is strong, muscled and nervy. The qualities of a fatty, tender and weak “tamed body” are similar to the way the Waorani describe the unmolded and tender body of children and of everything growing (See Rival 1993 and 2000). Such a relation suggests that the tamed Waorani body is seen as similar to children’s bodies, as bodies of the adoptive children of a powerful master.

This incorporation and bodily transformation corresponds to a shift in perspective, key in understanding civilized Waorani identity. To civilize entails a metamorphosis that means abandoning the predator/prey position that regulated relations with foreigners before contact, as discussed above. Namely, in the Waorani’s own words, to be civilized is “to no longer think as jaguars”. A predator position is, on the contrary, still attributed to the uncontacted and related Waorani groups: “At the moment the Taromenane are as angry as wasps, they can kill for any reasons. That is why we want to tame them (*amansarles*)”.

This idea also fits other recent ethnographies of situations of contact in Amazonia. Vilaça makes this point by exploring the central dimension of Warí corporality and its unstable and transformational character (Vilaça 1999, 2002). She shows how, in a contact situation, the Warí have managed to live together with former enemy indigenous groups through a process of consubstantialization and mutual care, while preferring to maintain Whites as “enemies”, although not affines or consubstantials like they do with other enemies. Like the Warí, the Waorani included former indigenous enemies by transforming them into affines²⁹ (see High for an analysis of Waorani-inter-marriages with Kichwa). Yet,

unlike the Warí, who “want to continue to be Warí being whites, want[ing] the two things at the same time” and experiencing the position of the enemy in their own bodies (Vilaca 2007: 188), the Waorani included the Whites into their social relations under a general relation of mastery and, more precisely, a more specific relation of “adoptive filiation”. In the case of the Warí “civilization” process, Vilaça explains their conversion into Christianity as a process of adopting the enemy’s perspective, related to the ritual knowledge of their *xamas*, (shamans). Whereas the idea of commensality with the Other for the Warí is based on transforming enemies to affine, and affine into consanguine, for the Waorani, the fabrication of consubstantiality with this particular kind of Other takes place through a process of adoptive filiation in which they become the adoptive children of powerful foreigners. The Waorani thus do not incorporate the Whites but are themselves incorporated and contained and they receive a unilateral and abundant flux of benefits from Whites, who are then seen as benevolent Masters.

Such an association implies a familiarization structurally identical to the ones we have found in Waorani myths, in a shamanic context, or in the familiarization of wild animals into a Waorani family (usually monkeys and parrots). In these contexts, metamorphic pet-animal-spirits are adopted in a Waorani longhouse or, alternatively, the Waorani are familiarized by spirits-animal families.

If the mastery category presumes a relationship, then it demands a reciprocal category: in the Waorani case this seems to oscillate between ‘child’ and ‘pet animal,’ both implying an underlying idea of adoptive filiation and metamorphosis, where it is possible to incorporate the Other perspective by being incorporated.

Goods and Tamelessness

The discussion on the way the Waorani “civilize” might also shed light on the role played by the incorporation of goods and Waorani consumerism.

Acquiring particular kinds of foreigner goods, namely clothes, was implicated in the Waorani desire to transform their bodily appearances according to the new identity that adoptive filiation implied. The earplugs that were the distinctive sign of Waoraniness are removed and drooping lobes became a sign of “tamelessness”. Sometimes perforated lobes were even hidden under hair in the same way the use of dresses, skirts, t-shirts, and rubber boots become a sign of being civilized and tamed. It is important to underline the shift of the understanding in how these objects are acquired and the social meaning attached to this shift. Whereas in pre-contact situations clothes *taken* in the pillages were used in performative rituals of post-killing celebrations that exalted the “cannibal act”, here *gifted* foreign clothes become important to the Waorani in the construction of a civilized body and the acquisition of the “tamed” perspective of incorporated pet/children. Yet, this does not explain why the Waorani desire for goods began to spiral.

As already mentioned, since the first encounters with missionaries, every contact entailed a unilateral flux of food; varieties of goods and the Waorani desire to acquire foreign goods grew as contact intensified. Waorani dependence on food, goods, medicine and services provided by the missionaries become a concern for the SIL itself. Under counsel of their own anthropologist J.Yost who, after 10 years of contact and communal life in the Tiweno village detected an inflation of the Waorani desire for goods, a growing dependence on Rachel Saint and a “headlong rush to obtain foreign goods”, forced the leading missionary to reduce the supply of goods and to encourage the Waorani to disperse again.

It should now be clear that we cannot accept the interpretation of Waorani consumerism that Yost proposed: “[...] the [Waorani] relative position of deprivation, of which they become aware observing the Quichua, missionaries and anthropologists belonging, that come from the Westerner civilization, [...] is so overwhelming that they found themselves in headlong rush to imitate the Quichua” (Yost 1979:14, our translation). Such understanding of Waorani consumerism is trapped in a narrowly materialistic and pragmatic explanation that hardly hides a evolutionist matrix according to which “primitive” society is condemned to desire more developed goods in the contact with more civilized people in a natural desire to fulfill an objective technological gap. I instead argue, as Fisher (2000) did in the case of the Xikrin, that the Waorani did not distinguish between necessities and luxuries at this stage of contact, thus “the intrinsic attractiveness or the innate superiority

of Western manufactured products can explain neither the relatively restricted list of desired goods nor the quantities of goods considered satisfactory" (2000:2). Alternatively, Rubinstein (2004), focusing on "desire" rather than on things, maintains that spiraling native desire for goods is the result of a process of un-coding goods, brought about by market relations and capitalism. Even if Rubenstein argues that "what appears to be either human nature [...] [is] actually the effects of a particular field of power that is neither universal nor [culturally] specific", this approach seems unsatisfactory too, because, as a last resort, it understands the inflationary need for goods as the result of the influence of capitalism on indigenous culture, thus reducing native consumerism to the outcome of a general notion of human desire molded by capitalist productivity. However, if what matters the most in the study of native consumerism is, again following Fisher, "how such goods are acquired and incorporated into the lives and societies of indigenous peoples operating within different regimes of value and social structure" (2000:2), I would add that the Waorani case proves that it is not the meaning of the objects in themselves that should be studied, but the goods as objects of a particular kind of social relation which is, in this case, a relation of influence and incorporation.

As already discussed, goods possess an important meaning in the process of assuming a tamed identity for the Waorani. The similarities with the Kayabi of Upper Xingu are striking. As Oaklalde (2008) notes, the Kayabi think of their civilization process in terms of "wild", "uncontacted" (*bravo*) groups coming into contact with Brazilian society and becoming pacified or "tamed" (*manço*) after the SPI or FUNAI teams give them manufactured goods and they settle down in proximity to outposts. The Kayabi were 'crazy' for the Whites' manufactured goods. In the account of her informants' life at outposts, she quotes many Kayabi men greeting non-Kayabi with the words, "We have come. We want a knife". However, unlike the Waorani, here, the outposts began to function more like commercial rubber-tapping centers (*seringais*) and indigenous people were able to receive goods on credit that they would then pay off by tapping rubber. In other words, the Kayabi incorporated foreign goods through an exchange transaction. This is not the case of the Waorani who, as we have discussed, did not exchange with foreigners. In the Waorani case, if the ingestion of the "masters" food entails a shift from the predator perspective to a tamed pet perspective, the inflation of Waorani consumerism is to be understood as a manifestation of the Waorani ideal of the parents/master-children/guests relation which, as explained, is based on a "demand generosity" and a unilateral abundant flux. Inflating consumerism is thus modulated by the Waorani's ideological orientation towards consumption, social reliance on exogenous wealth and the faith for exogenous abundance. There seems thus to exist a Waorani "ideological voracity" (Viveiros de Castro E. 1993), that rather than being understood as the result of acculturative forces is, in fact, the result of a long-standing Waorani openness to the Other. Thus, from a Waorani point of view, becoming tamed is not only the consequence of external pressures or coercive socio-economic structures, but rather the result of a conscious indigenous attempt to incorporate the Other into the sphere of indigenous social relations.

If tameness, for the Kayaby, the Achuar and the Shuar among others, involved making powerful others commercial partners, the Waorani accepted civilization under a relation of adoptive filiation that, on its part, is understood by the Waorani as unilateral and abundant giving from parent to children involving food and goods. Thus, in my opinion, the Waorani do not naturalize the Other as argued by Rival (2002), but rather they subjectify them into parent-like Master figures and it is precisely because of this that they expect an abundant flow of demand generosity.

Several authors have pointed out that native Amazonians conceive of their efforts to acquire a White perspective as a means of "pacifying" or "taming" the White man's aggressiveness. In the case of Western Parakanã (Fausto 2001), shamans were compared to a kind of "masters of Whites", equating Whites to powerful dream enemies who, in turn, are conceived as the dreamer's wild pets since they cure and give songs without demanding anything in return. Parakanã say that they learned how to extract industrial goods from the Whites peacefully and adopted the Whites' dreams. If they see state agents as fathers-givers it is because they are subject to indigenous control (Fausto 2001a:469-531). Instead, the Waorani see themselves as being "tamed" and thus adopted and that is why they accept food and being fed as it occurs in the relation master-pets or father-children. The inflation of the Waorani desire for goods is thus to be understood as a "testing behavior" (Peterson 1997:190), as the establishment of a relationship of adoptive filiation. If such a relationship

has to be constantly produced and maintained by social action, the Waorani do it through the inflation of their consumerism.

While in other cases (like the Jibaro; see Taylor. 1996 and Rubenstein 2001) the way others were incorporated inflected from predation towards “exchange” and goods became significant in the trade network established with foreigners, the Waorani did not admit any form of reciprocity with powerful others and found a way to associate that guaranteed a non-reciprocal relation. Therefore, I argue that the way goods and pacification are differently implicated in different situations of contact depends on the two ways goods alternatively acquire meaning among natives, namely appropriation or exchange. The Waorani have actualized their most significant scheme of relating with Alterity, i.e. appropriation, through filiation, allowing the Waorani to incorporate exteriority, deny exchange and maintain their social reliance on exogenous abundance and anti-productivism.

Finally, I hope with these reflections to contribute to the general debate on the process of “other-becoming” and on “consumerism” in Amazonia, as the particular Waorani choice of taming themselves on the condition that “the Others” give while they do not retain any obligation of giving back can shed new light on the understanding of “the ideological voracity” of those social constellations that “traditionally” refused exchange and reciprocity.

The Instability of the Waorani Body

If the Waorani way of becoming civilized is an identity based upon an idea of adopting the point of view of a tamed animal, what is the dividual pair upon which Waorani personhood is build? What is their ability to hold multiple identities?

What is the jaguar that resides in the Waorani man heart soul? This is not the place³⁰ to fully answer to this question as it involves a reconstruction and understanding of the Waorani history after their period of missional concentration when many Waorani settled down in the vicinity of the numerous oil companies that operate within the their territory. Currently, not only is an important part of Waorani communities located close to oil facilities (16 out of the 32), but also, their daily relations with “the company” have become an important part of their social and political life. The analysis of this socially pursued yet nuanced and often conflictual relationship, united with the analysis of the recent deadly clashes between “civilized” Waorani and Waorani isolated groups, would merit a full engagement to answer this question which we leave for another occasion.

For the time being, let me just mention that even going through ethnographic data and missionaries’ diaries of the missionary concentration times we are concerned with, we can argue that, although the Waorani saw themselves as having entered a long period of peace and assumed a tamed point of view, anger and predation could always be adopted and again inflect the relation with Others towards predation. If the Waorani ideal of living well was tied to a feeling of joy for the arrival of generous foreigners, even becoming a theme in Waorani chants that celebrate their coming with gifts and the joy of receiving them, when this ideal was not fulfilled, the Waorani could be very “aggressive” in their requests (Yost J. 1981). The threat of spearing, and actual spearing did occur during the period of concentration in the protectorate, and, when food was not considered abundant enough, they would take without asking from *the Other’s* garden “[...] Half developed vegetables [...] (when) entire crops are harvested in the owner’s absence” (Wallis E. 1973: 72). This shows that, among the Waorani, the ideal relation of adoptive filiation and thus the permanence on the position of tamed animals must entail a stream of goods and benefits without anything in return and such a stream must be abundant and generous. In any case, the Waorani see this process as reversible and a jaguar identity can be regained through rage.

Perhaps the figure that best characterizes the “civilized” Waorani is the Harpy Eagle that the Waorani adopt in their maloka. Such majestic birds may become pets, but they still posses an ambivalent identity, manifested by the string that ties the Eagle’s foot to the Waorani house. If broken, the Eagle can go back home and feed on live pray. The same occurs to the Waorani. There is perhaps no better way to explain the fractal dimension of the jaguar identity than the explanation given to me by a Waorani friend and informant who, in trying to describe the current state of his father, a former Waorani jaguar warrior “the Waorani jaws and claws may have become weaker and dull, but they are still there”. No consideration is given to giving up “anger”. Rather, when the Waorani reflect on it,

they react with preoccupation and disgust: “We would become like *bueiri* – worker ants – following the *cowori*, living off them”. The meaning of this statement, I argue, is precisely that the Waoraniness cannot subsist outside this duality, as being like *bueiri* indicates that a social relation totally deprived of anger/influence/capacity of containment is also deprived of joy and this means to not being a Waorani anymore. This echoes the words of Dabo, one of the “angriest” Waorani warriors – who today lives by a oil company camp – who told me: “[...] It is not too late, some day when I get angry, I will go back to the forest, join my relatives (uncontacted Waorani) who are angrier, and we will attack, and we will kill until the end”.

Notes

¹ Except a split group, which until today has maintained a “no contact” condition with outside society.

² After pacification, the Waorani did establish of new relations with other native groups which occurred in a different way from the relation with the white *cowori* that is the object of this paper. See the attempt of High (2010) to find an explanation for the modality to include the Runa into Waorani social relations.

³ Episodes of killings and outbursts of rage against unrelated waorani and/or foreigners have occurred ever since pacification, the reason of which will be clarified throughout the paper.

⁴ There were various deadly confrontations between Tagaeri, *colonos* and illegal logger between 2003 and 2009 (See Colleoni and Proaño 2010).

⁵ This is a label given to Dabo by his family and this is famed among all Waorani.

⁶ The term “tamed” is the translation of the Spanish word “*amansado*” which is often used by my Waorani informants when speaking of what “to civilize” means. This is a crucial point I will later address.

⁷ The traditional territory of the Waorani groups was situated among the Napo and the Curaray River of Amazonia Ecuador.

⁸ The Waorani distinguish between two kind of Alterity involved into relations of hostility and war. The Warani, the affines, literarily the “others”, are non consanguineal Waorani groups, with whom it is possible to enter into cycle of peace and peaceful transactions based on marriages. On the contrary, the *cowori* are non-people. If the social relation with the former is based alternatively upon mutual predation and/or exchange, with the *cowori* the only possible social relation is mutual predation.

⁹ Before is meant as “before civilization”.

¹⁰ Wene spirits are evil and dangerous spirits.

¹¹ In this respect, it is interesting to highlight the fact that such little objects, often shaped as little balls, ashes and so on, are often mentioned in Waorani myths that entail physical metamorphosis and/or the possession of magical objects that too gives the owners special knowledge and abilities. This perfectly fits with other ethnographies (see i.e. Fausto) and a general way to think of the relation of “mastery” as a relation of containment, according to Fausto.

¹² The transformations and metamorphosis from a human who forms into a jaguar referred to in the myth are inversely identical to the way in which the Waorani think of the relations between shaman and animal spirits. If, after his death, the shaman becomes a spirit jaguar himself, a Waorani shaman adopts spirit jaguars, who become their children. In both cases, the adoption of the Other perspective is made possible through commensality that follows an incorporation through adoptive filiation.

¹³ The emphasis is ours. The semantic of the word is worth noting, as it speaks of the informant’s astonishment regarding the huge quantity of things taken by the Waorani without any other apparent purpose than being piled up.

¹⁴ “We had houses with leaf roofs that touched the ground. But after seeing how the *cowori* construct their houses, we thought ‘this is the way it should be done. Now we construct our houses with the roof above the ground’”.

¹⁵ Other Waorani extended families

¹⁶ Moipa is depicted as a ferocious warrior and there are many account of his killings, lack of fear and strength.

¹⁷ His brother and companion in many killings.

¹⁸ A black dye used to color Waorani hair and for a kind of body painting. Once someone is painted with *genipa*, the color cannot be washed away for several days.

¹⁹ There is an allusion to the possibility of having had a sexual intercourse with the sister, which is taboo.

²⁰ Rival has collected a fragment of the same myth, but her version only focuses on the incestuous sexual intercourse and on the birth of the moon (see Rival 1996).

²¹ The Waorani side of the story is corroborated by historical events as they have been reconstructed by Cabodevilla (1996). Although there are not unequivocal testimonies of Waorani presence in the Tiputini area since the end of the 19th century, and even if we assume that some of their apparition must also have been confused by the observers with the groups of aggressive Saparo, during and after the rubber boom between 1900-1940, the Waorani made their unequivocal appearance in the cryonics. The territory occupied by the Waorani groups was, from an ethnic and economical point of view, in great transformation. Different Zaparo groups were increasingly integrating into the *peonadas* of the numerous *hacienda* and rubber posts in the Napo and the Curaray River. The oral memory of Waorani that speaks of *cowori* entering into their territory, hunting their game, wearing clothes, using horses, pursuing them with shotguns, corresponds to several events that speak about harsh confrontation between "Aucas" and *patrones* who sent their own Runa and Saparo *peones* into punitive expeditions against the Waorani. Waorani killed on several occasions, attacking the *peones* at the *haciendas* located in the areas of the Shiripuno, the Nushiño and the Yasuni rivers. The Waorani never accepted to work with a patron, apart from a few cases of captives that had been taken after killing the group (see Cabodevilla 176-173 1998). Dozens of *haciendas* existed, especially in the Napo and Curaray river, and survived until the 40's, even after the rubber boom, until finally falling into disuse. Waorani raids against the rubber hacienda El Capricho, in the core of the territory of the Waorani group of the Curaray river, occurred in 1914, 1919 (when fifteen Indians were killed at the hacienda), and twice in 1925 in the Nushiño river. In 1934, after one last fierce attack, the *patron* moved the hacienda out of the territory. There were several *Runa* attacks against their *patrones*, working in their *chachras* in Curaray, Arajuno and Oglan.

²² *Auca* in Kichwa language means savage, uncivilized. The term is to be understood in its contrastive meaning with *Runa*, which means Person, Human, in Quichua. The term *Auca* was attributed, through history to all indigenous groups that were considered "uncivilized", and ended up as being the popular ethnonym attributed to the Waorani, as they were the last group to be pacified in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Such an opposition maintains an extremely important ethnic frontier that still structures and signifies the inter-ethnic relations in contemporary Ecuadorian Amazon.

²³ Among the three girls that become *peonas* among the Kichwa of the hacienda Ila, and who would play so important role in the pacification process.

²⁴ After several weeks of flights, gift dropping and eye contacts with the Waorani, the missionaries decided to land at a sandy beach of the Curaray river, but after a first peaceful encounter the missionary were spear killed by the Waorani.

²⁵ The girl, Dayuma, who had run off from the Guikitairi group in the mid 40's, had learnt the Kichwa language, married a *Runa* man and had largely embraced a new identity as a "civilized indigenous".

²⁶ It is possible that such a thing was one of the instruments used or seen at rubber haciendas or, one of the motor canoes that transported captives Indians (Cabodevilla 1999, Wallis 1973: 3)

²⁷ After several weeks of flights, gift dropping and visual contact with the Waorani, the missionaries decided to land on the beach, but after a first peaceful encounter the four missionary were speared by the Waorani.

²⁸ The myth of origins of the Ecuadorian Napo Runa show in an extraordinarily clear way ethnic identity as the consequence of the acceptance of foreigners food and their separation from the uncivilized. "callari tiempo había varios muntuns bastante numerosos que vivían peleando y matandose entre sí. Un día, uno de esos muntuns decidió aceptar el bautismo y comer sal y así convertirse en "Runas"; un segundo mutun que se negó a comer sal se convirtió en Aucas y se escondió en el monte" (Muratorio 1987: 80).

²⁹ I am not discussing here the way in which the Waorani, after pacification, started to intermarry with the Kichwa, once considered enemies. It seems though that the Waorani admit marriage with Kichwa as they incorporate Kichwa Woman into their extended family, as they already did through abduction before the contact. There is no space here to

delve into this question, but let's say for the time being that a clear cut between two different ways of acquiring the perspective of the Other exists. The first one, with Whites is by being incorporated; the second one, with other indigenous groups, through incorporation. They are both strategies for other-becoming and being civilized, but sustained upon different ontological positions. The first one is the position of a tamed pet, the second is that of a predator that incorporates the point of view of a already "tamed" other. The first one implies an understanding of the Whites as a powerful other, a master; the second one seems to point to an understanding of the Kichwa as a "more civilized" other, as a tamed other, the incorporation of which is valuable in becoming civilized.

³⁰ I fully engage with this theme in my PhD Dissertation thesis.

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