

Change as continuity, continuity through change

*An anthropological study on the Asháninka of the
Peruvian highland Amazonía*

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Master thesis

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anthropological study on the Asháninka of the Peruvian
highland Amazonía**

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Photo: El fundador and el jefe playing instruments on the day of the community jubilee, with the husband of the local Asháninka teacher in the background.

Abstract

This thesis is about change among the Asháninka in the highland Amazonía in Peru. It is based on a six months' fieldwork in two indigenous communities. In 2011, the community of San Miguel received a money donation by a foreign contribution that has been used to implement infrastructural projects and educational investments within the community. The main infrastructural projects have been spent on the introduction of electricity, a new school building and Western-styled bathrooms. They have also put aside money for educational scholarships for the indigenous youth. At the same time as changes are implemented in San Miguel, the community has gone into an alliance with the Yanasha community of Alto Purus. The purpose for the community of San Miguel is to acquire more land. While land in San Miguel is scarce, and therefore inaccessible for future generations of Asháninka, Alto Purus has abundance of land. The alliance includes the cooperation and help from the Asháninka to secure the entitlement rights to Alto Purus. However, as they interact with the bureaucratic system, they must also relate to conflict of interests that dominates and complicates the entitlement process. In the encounter with external factors and the Peruvian national society that causes the Asháninka to face change, they are limited, given new opportunities and challenged. At the same time, through change, the Asháninka have shown that they are able to adapt to the circumstances by taking control of the implementation of change within their own communities. I argue that they are able to adapt because they are flexible and find solutions on their own initiative. Change is a way to maintain the continuity of their worldview as indigenous people in relation to their land, and at the same time, continuity is the reason that change becomes important. In this way, *seguir adelante* is to continue forward in being indigenous people in relation to their land.

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Margrethe

Acronyms

AIDSESEP – Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana

CECONSEC – Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central

DANIDA – Danish government's development agency

ILO – International Labour Organization

INEI – Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática

NGO – Non-governmental organization

OPIYAT – Organización Indígena de Pueblos Yaneshas Asháninkas Tenomar

SENARP - Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado

SIMSA – San Ignacio de Morococha S.A.A

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“We just want to live in peace”, said Shintsiri to me. I was sitting at the kitchen table of my Asháninka hostess and her son had finally sat down to talk to me. During the few days that I had been there, he had been avoiding me. He would eat his dinner with his back facing me, and leave when I arrived. I understood him as being shy, but quickly learned that his trust was only achieved through patience. I was visiting his childhood community of San Miguel to know more about the recent changes introduced through the implementation of infrastructural projects. The Asháninka had introduced me to customary food and late-night dancing in *cushma* (traditional dress) around the bonfire. But I had not seen Shintsiri there. He was a lone wolf; preferred to eat alone, stayed out all night to hunt, or to work in his father’s *chakra* (agricultural plot) – mostly by himself. He was then only twenty-five years old, but had already taken on the responsibility as leader for another community called Alto Purus in the neighboring region. His long, dark hair and well-worn brown *cushma*, with the apparent bulk on the side of his cheek characteristic for coca-chewing people, made him stand out from other youths in the community who preferred wearing Western-styled clothes. As we were sitting there around his mother’s kitchen table, Shintsiri explained to me that he wanted to live as a pure and true Asháninka who did not opt out of being Asháninka. He didn’t like computers or cellphones, or the increasing urbanization, which he meant forces the Asháninka to forget the importance of living in contact with their land. At the end of our conversation, he advised me that if I returned to Peru, I should visit him in Alto Purus, to see for myself his new community and to learn the Asháninka ways.

Thesis background and research question

In 2011, the Asháninka community, San Miguel, in the highland Amazonia received a large donation from a foreign contributor. The money has been spent on infrastructure and educational investments within their own community. At the same time, due to a growing population and the lack of land they have entered into an alliance with the Yanesha community of Alto Purus. While the Yanesha promise to give the Asháninka land in their community, the Asháninka must offer their help to achieve the legal entitlement papers to Alto Purus, and thus help to legalize their rights to live on the land. In this context, I wish to show how the Asháninka relate to change within their community and in relation to Alto Purus, and in which way they see this as necessary to continue forward as indigenous. They refer to this as *seguir adelante* (continue forward). To achieve this, it is understood that they must adapt and change in relation to external factors they face within their community. At the same time, the implemented changes have been improve living conditions and ensured increased access to land for the future generation of Asháninka. The introduction of change has also been an attempt to maintain control of the continuity of their worldview, which they refer to as *cosmovision Asháninka* (Asháninka worldview). These two communities, San Miguel and Alto Purus, sheds light on the highland Amazonian indigenous peoples' understanding of the importance of land, and the challenges and impacts they face as they struggle to regain control of the changes determining their path forward as indigenous in Peru. Therefore, I ask the following research questions:

- 1) How do the Asháninka of the Peruvian highland Amazonía respond and relate to changes caused by external factors?
- 2) How can we understand the importance of land and ownership in the Peruvian highland Amazonía in relation to change?

I will show how they relate to change caused by external factors, but also implement change in their communities. I will argue that it is based on the ability of the Asháninka to be flexible and to navigate well in relation to external factors that explains how infrastructure, educational investments and the alliance with Alto Purus are not contradictory in maintaining *Cosmovision Asháninka*, but rather, enriching. I suggest that they relate to change as the continuity of being indigenous in relation to their land, and that they believe that this continuity can only be maintained through change.

Theoretical framework and definitions

Beyond acculturation and tradition

There is a vast literature on Amazonian indigenous people in South America. Alf Hornborg and Jonathan Hill's (2011) contribution on ethnicity in the Amazonas remarks that Amazonian literature should move away from an essential anthropology which understands groups as bounded, and start seeing indigenous groups as constantly in transformative relation to external factors and influences (2011, p. 2). Peter Gow (1991) argues that indigenous groups do not see themselves as either "acculturated", by becoming assimilated into a dominant culture, or "traditional", but may rather define themselves in relation to other factors, like history. He argues that the dichotomous relation between "acculturation" and "tradition" is often present in the ethnographer and not necessarily in the indigenous people themselves (1991, p. 3). Within ethno-linguistic anthropological approaches, Fernando Santos-Granero (2002) has argued for a common ethos among indigenous groups of Asháninka, Ashéninka, Yanésa, Matsiguenga and Nomatsiguenga, placing them historically within an "Arawakan ethos". According to him, they share similar traits transformed through increased contact and endo-warfare (2002, p. 29). Amazonian literature has discussed for some time how indigenous people see themselves through concepts of personhood and the understanding of being indigenous (Santos-Granero, 2012; Viveiros de Castro, 1998), and in relation to others, including spiritual beings (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2010; Rosengren, 2015; Santos-Granero, 2007; Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2011). Contributions have also looked into the power of local leaders and the role of leadership among indigenous people (Cepek, 2008; Killick, 2007; Rosengren, 1987).

Besides Hierro and Surrallés (2009) and Steinert (2003), mentioned above, there seems to be little anthropological research on indigenous peoples from the highland Amazonía in Peru, and therefore many of my references have been in comparison with lowland encounters (Gow, 1991; Rosengren, 1987; Santos-Granero, 2007, 2012). Within anthropological work, Asháninka are often mentioned as being Campa, an autodenomination they find derogatory (Gow, 2013), or has only been shortly mentioned in books or edited work about other indigenous groups (Gow, 1991, 2002; Santos & Barclay, 2005). However, there has been interest in the Asháninka, usually lowland groups, within older classical work (Bodley, 1973; Weiss, 1975), but also newer (Barletti, 2011; Varese, 2002). Although, there

is a vast literature on how groups take control through collective political organizing and thus promoting change by their initiative (Cepek, 2008; Steinert, 2003; Veber, 1998), studies have also shown how indigenous groups reinterpret state imposed laws and regulation relating to land rights (García Hierro, Hvalkof, & Gray, 1998). Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998) have argued that the economic change through road construction and the introduction of an urban market has led to the organizing of indigenous communities through law regulations of land rights in Peru (1998, p. 301). However, while Penelope Harvey (2012) has shown how road construction in Peru can create new relations to land through a state-making perspective, Brian Larkin (2013) has argued that infrastructure is a network connecting people through movement.

However, it remains to understand how we are to understand the indigenous groups, such as the Asháninka of this thesis, who see change as an attempt to maintain what they have, and not change as becoming something else. The assumption that groups no longer maintain continuity as indigenous due to influences by external factors, might explain the disinterest in many of the Peruvian highland indigenous groups, and the anthropologists' tendency to opt out research among lowland groups instead.

At the core: land and *territorio*

Land has been important for anthropologists to explain how people interact with each other in different parts of world. Max Gluckman (1965) introduced hierarchy in relation to land to talk about the internal complexity of a group, which Caroline Humphrey (1983) later on applied to explain how land also become important within communal farming. Moving the focus of land to property as social relations, anthropologists has acknowledged that right to land by ownership must also be viewed as rights between people. Chris Hann (1998) have argued for such a perspective within an economic anthropology, followed by several authors who have shown how property may be understood (Strang & Busse, 2011; Verdery & Humphrey, 2004). Land has also been time understood as landscape, describing how land is not passive but an active part of people's engagement with their own perceptions. Much of the anthropological literature has talked about place and space as important to understand how physical land includes social relations. The phenomenological perspectives of Tilley (1994) and Ingold (2000) has been important here to elaborate on how people directly experience their surrounding environment. Although, I believe that Amazonian literature on land issues have been inspired by both juridical, economic and phenomenological views of

land, I have rather tried to talk about land as the Asháninka refer to it, especially by referring to emic terms. Although, they view land as physically defined by the Peruvian law, the work of Andrea Brighenti (2010) see land as important as long as it is the outcome of effects of social relation. I have combined this view on land with Henrik Vigh's (2009) view on change and how people find ways to navigate within moving environments.

At the core of this thesis, I will be referring to land as the recurring theme. Land will be understood as physical, processual and relational. I will not be confined to one understanding as the Asháninka have many ways of thinking about their relation to land. However, I propose that *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas* (Law of Native Communities), implemented by the Peruvian state in the 1970s defines land as physical and demarcated area of trees, plants, flowers, animals and people's housing settlements. Indigenous groups in Selva Central have been confined to this definition. However, taking their understanding of land as a starting point, I include a processual relation to land.

Explaining land as important for social relations will be done through Barth's (1969) concept of boundary-making and how groups exercise dynamics of inclusion and exclusion with people they view as same and others. They regulate these relations through access to land. However, boundary-making based on only kinship and affinity is not enough to comprehend how the Asháninka base their view of sameness and otherness. So through Santos-Granero (2007), I emphasize the importance of friendships with others as much as kinship and affinity. I also add that friendships do not only have to be others they view as dangerous, but also people who are seen as useful. In this context, I will also use McCallum's (2001) concept of scale to show how people viewed as others may become same, and thus expanding Guzmán-Gallegos' (2010) work among the Runa where same become others. I also use her work to show how the Asháninka relate to spiritual beings as dangerous others.

The importance of land is argued by Hierro and Surrallés' (2009) concept of "indigenous territorial governance" to show how the Asháninka relate to their own territory and to the national society in acts of internal control. Indigenous territorial governance also show how the Asháninka have had opportunity to reinterpret external influences in their communities. In this way, they relate to land physically by the borders of the community. In this way, property becomes land obtained though legally through the process of entitlement given by the bureaucratic system (2009, pp. 44-45). By seeing land as property, I use Hann (1998) to forward the argument that social relations are also important in relation to land. From there on, I turn to Brighenti (2010) arguments to explain how territory is the outcome of the social relations, distanced from the physical manifestation of land, and shedding light

on how power influences how people interaction. Territory is a social process managed by inclusion and exclusion of relations, where of land may or may not be important. However, among the Asháninka it sheds light on the many interpretations of land and how ownership is created.

Change through infrastructure, education and alliance

The way the Asháninka see land, as outlined above, shows that they are in control of the way the interpret imposed regulations and also how they see internal rules of practice. In this way, and because of the foreign donation, they are free to implement change, as they desire. As we will see, the implemented changes manifests in infrastructure, educational scholarships and the alliance with the Yanasha. I define infrastructure through Brian Larkin (2013) who recognizes that anthropology has rarely seen infrastructure as important in their analysis. However, Penelope Harvey (2012) has shown how road construction in Peru has been used to constitute the state's relation the society and state's power exertions on land. I will build on these arguments to show how road construction and infrastructure has been used among the Asháninka as a mean to impose change in their community. At the same time, I will refer to the educational scholarships, also implemented through the donation, as investments for the same purpose.

I argue that the Asháninka face what Bateson (1972) calls the “double bind”, where they are forced to interact with external factors through the bureaucratic system and the local market economy to maintain control of land, and that they are then incorporated into a system where the state defines rules and regulations. At the same time, opting out of the interaction gives even fewer options for the protection of land they inhabit as communities. I also use his description of flexibility to show that the Asháninka are able to avoid the double bind within their community by reinterpreting land and implement change through these infrastructural projects and investments in the harvesting of knowledge.

***Seguir adelante* and social navigation**

When the Asháninka talk about change, they say it is necessary to have change to *seguir adelante* (continue forward). To *seguir adelante* is the outcome of having imposed change through infrastructure and education. It is life as life continues with change while maintaining continuity. The Danish anthropologist Henrik Vigh (2009 & 2010) explains how adaption to change is an act of movement within what he calls “social navigation”. Social navigation is to

know how to relate to change and navigate with the environment. However, you relate to change as “motion within motion”, meaning that they relate to an environment that is unsettled but which they are continuously engaging with (2009, p. 420). I believe that the implementations of change in the community and relating to external factors may be understood as motion within motion for the Asháninka.

Methodology

Access

The first time I visited the community of San Miguel was in December of 2012. I was on my way home from an exchange stay in La Paz in Bolivia through my studies in social anthropology at the University of Oslo. The outcome of the first visit was a bachelor essay in the spring of 2013 (Dahll Steinert, 2013), and an invitation by the community to return as a part of master study. I had known about the community through my father, Ole Steinert, who had lived there for six months in 2001 as part of his doctorate thesis in sociology from the University of Texas. I went back in the spring of 2014 for six months of fieldwork. I lived in the community of San Miguel from January until mid-May, and mid-June to July, spending one month in between in the community of Alto Purus.

In San Miguel, I regained access in communication with the community and with the local Norwegian missionary, Liv Haug. I also got formal written consent to work in the area from the local indigenous organization, CECONSEC. Access to Alto Purus was obtained from the community leader who obtained final formal acceptance from the Yanasha. I believe that if choosing to live in the nearest town, it would have been seen as lacking interest for the way of life, and by living in the community with the families, I gained their trust more easily. It extended also my invitation to other communities in the area, like Bajo Marankiari, Churingaveni and Kimiriki, which I would visit a few times.

In the first community of San Miguel, I stayed interchangeably three weeks in each of the houses in the community center in the seven families willing to take me in. After some months, people who were not accustomed to foreign visitors also offered me accommodation, which meant that I was able to live with *comuneros* (community members) in the center as well as in the periphery. I would also occasionally stay with a young, local Norwegian Pentecostal missionary, Anne Marte Aasebø, in town, if I had to go for an early interview, for Internet access or if in need of privacy or a hot shower. These necessary “fieldbreaks” (Fangen, 2010, p. 124), like Fangen describes it, and consequently the conversations with

Anne Marte, gave me a better understanding of the differences between the town people in Perené and the Asháninka through her work as a missionary with the non-indigenous town youth.

In Alto Purus, I was given access to live in the houses of Yanesha for a short period. After the Asháninka who were with me left, it was a privilege that was neither extended nor offered. I believe this is because the Yanesha are shy towards strangers and that they are not used to unaccompanied visitors. One of the Yanesha admitted that they usually hid themselves when Asháninka brought visiting foreigners. Most of the time, I stayed with the Asháninka leader, Shintsiri and his family nearby the road. On occasion, I would go to Villa Rica to follow Shintsiri to meetings or for interviews with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Municipality.

Trust

“They don’t trust you yet, how can you expect them to tell you the truth?” said my informant and close friend, Ari, to me after I told him I had difficulties getting people to answer my questions. Trust is important for social relations for the Asháninka, where “having trust” or “not having trust” guides what is shared. I would hear them say, “no hay confianza” (there exists no trust) to explain the lack of closeness in a relationship. Having obtained trust will on the other hand give access to long conversations where asking questions is seen an act of curiosity and not an act of probing. However, I learned in my meeting with Shintsiri that trust could be lost as easily as it was gained. I once asked him to explain to me the preparation of the root of a plant, as he had pointed it out to me and I thus assumed that it meant he was willing to explain. However, he became to my surprise, visibly offended, laughing and shaking his head in the direction of the other visitors, and exclaiming with a high voice in discontent that this was something he would never tell me. “You ask too many questions, señorita Margaret”, he said to me and walked away. My probing questions and curiosity and his discontent with many of my habits, like taking too many (malaria) pills and adding purification pills to the water, provoked him. His patience came to a standstill when he demanded that I copy and translate all my field notes into Spanish. I knew that my pages reflected the level of internal disagreement between the Asháninka and Yanesha concerning the entitlement, and the impatience from *comuneros* of San Miguel. I worried that sharing them would intensify the underlying disagreements in the community, which made me decide to refuse the request by explaining the importance of confidentiality in relation to my

informants. Shintsiri did not look upon the decision well and thereby refused to share with me any information concerning the status of the entitlement process in Alto Purus. I had been in the community almost a month, only lacking a couple days before my return to San Miguel. Looking back on the incident, I believe that I made the right decision. Shintsiri worked hard against a difficult bureaucracy to obtain entitlement papers for his community, but I knew that statements from Asháninka and Yanasha did not reflect the same comprehension of the social context. Understandably, they lacked the practical knowledge Shintsiri had.

I believe that access and trust was given and regained more easily because of two underlying factors. One, that I spoke fluently Spanish, which made it easy for them to talk to me and tell me their concerns, and two, that I had the status as the daughter of Ole, the contributor of recent changes in the community, which I will reflect upon below. I did not accomplish to speak or learn Asháninka well, even though I attempted, but found myself confused by grammatical inconsistencies, especially since Asháninka is not a written language. Either way, the Asháninka mostly communicated to me and to each other in Spanish.

Research methods

“Because we cannot see what happened in Amazonian history, we are forced into the painstaking tasks of analyzing the documentary evidence and into ethnographic enquiry. Like learning a strange language, such a task means accepting the depths of our ignorance at the same time as we use to the full our limited knowledge” (Gow, 1991, pp. 297-298)

The quote above reminds us that there are always limitations to the work of a fieldworker, and that a full overview of all details in the past as much as in the present is impossible. This thesis is based upon my experience and viewpoint of the Asháninka I studied based on the time frame and opportunities I was given. Anthropologist Bob Simpson (2006) acknowledges that data can be difficult to access due to the manner of how, when and to whom knowledge is presented. He experienced this in fieldwork among the indigenous Berava in Sri Lanka where he asked one of the comuneros to recite some verses from a ritual he had observed. The man laughed at him, “pointing out that he had not yet even taught the verses to his own son” (Simpson 2006: 130). I had difficulties accessing more extensively knowledge concerning stories of origin of the community, healing abilities of plants and spiritual belief,

as they were careful to share this with visitors. I understood it as their fear of the misuse of their worldview. I refer to this as “protected knowledge” in chapter 4. However, I also believe that due to my unique status and longtime visit, knowledge was shared with me in a greater extent than with other visitors.

My fieldwork was executed through what the sociologist Katrine Fangen (2010) calls fulltime participant observation (2010, p. 118), meaning that I lived continuously with the people I was studying. Most data would reveal itself to me from the moment I stepped out of my room in the early mornings. I would follow the women to do agricultural work, or sit and chat in the patio in front of the house. I hung out with the men in community gatherings or official meetings with state representatives. Younger Asháninka men would take me hunting with bow and arrow, or to carry bananas or fetch avocados in the chakra. The children would pull me along to take walks on the many trails. Other times I could go with *comuneros* to sell products downtown, sit in on a school lesson or do collective community work. Participant observation in the communities was just as much active participation and play, as slow time; waiting for the rain to stop or dinner to be served. Some of my data depended upon time and place, like when the older generation of *comuneros* shared stories at the bonfire parties they would usually not tell on other occasions (see chapter 5). I also did more formal interviewing with people from local organizations, companies, and government institutions that were working directly or indirectly with the communities, and where I had in advance prepared questions and topics of conversation. I would also record on several occasions. Reading national, regional and local newspapers, respectively *El Comercio*, *La República*, *Gestión* and *Correo*, also constantly updated me on relevant issues. I must add that there was a surprisingly little presence of NGOs and other organizations working with the two communities, and therefore the formal interviews I did in La Merced and Villa Rica was rather to enhance my understanding of the region, than to understand the communities of my fieldwork.

My gender also affected my ability to be successful in data collection. I tried to make sure that I spent time with people from all age groups, and both genders in the communities, although it was easier to access male sphere through political activities (mostly meetings and conventions) than through agricultural activities, since the latter required a degree of physical strength. Some of my Asháninka male peers would tell me that I was too slow and lacked the strength to be sufficiently useful in the chakra. Women would laugh at my inability to wash my clothes properly, remarking that I would have better luck using chlorine. The majority of the youth were boys and as they are virilocal, many of the young girls from the communities

were married and had consequently moved to the community of their husbands. The most accessible comuneros were therefore the women and young boys in the informal sphere and the men in formal settings; thus people who I related to and could relate themselves to me due to my gender and age. The two exceptions were respectively the two community leaders, who would converse with me on political and economical matters. Most of my data is from San Miguel, as I spent most time there, but also among the Asháninka in Alto Purus. Access to the Yanasha was difficult, both due to the placement of their settlement, and the lack of time to achieve trust. Taking notes openly was almost impossible and became restricting in establishing increased trust. I did what the Norwegian social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (1984) remarks as crucial for establishing relations of trust and create friendships during her work among Norwegian women in urban areas; I intentionally left my notebook behind (1984, p. 42).

I also got in contact with colonos of non-indigenous background living further up in the valley or in the city of La Merced. The understanding of how local authorities work is mainly described through secondary sources, either historical or through the opinions of the Asháninka. I did have interviews with government officials during my stay in the community of Alto Purus, which gave me an overview of the conflict in question. I don't have much data on the mining and oil companies mentioned in chapter 3, as access was difficult to obtain. I did however perform an interview with SIMSA, the local mining company in San Ramón.

Because of the importance of trust for the Asháninka, I have anonymized most of the names and situations of conversation unless it is of specific importance for the overall context. I have changed the name to fit the person based on their normal use of a Spanish or an Asháninka name. My reasoning here is the same as mentioned above about confidential conversations; I wanted to avoid consequences of an increased level of conflict. However, the names of the communities are the correct ones, since the *comuneros* apparent openness to technology¹ and tourism, including several appearances on national and international news (Magnus, Nilsson, & Sørbo, 2012; NRK, 2013; Zimmerman, 2013), has made them known. They are also the only communities in the area that have received such an extensive private donation from a foreign visitor, which I will explain in the coming section.

¹ Many of the Asháninka are also active on social medias, like Facebook.

Ethical challenges: juggling roles as daughter of Ole, tourist and fieldworker

In 2011, the community of San Miguel received an extensive money donation from my father Ole Steinert. It was revealed in his will after his death in 2009. He had done the fieldwork of his doctorate thesis at the University of Texas on ethno-political mobilization among Latin American indigenous groups². During his time there, he attached a close relationship to the comuneros, who never forgot the first visitor that inspired them to go into tourism.

I knew from my first visit to the community in 2012 that they valued my father, remembering him not only as a generous economic contributor but also as caring man who had aided them in times of need. They would share stories on how he had helped a pregnant woman to the hospital to give birth, or bought them cloth to make *cushma* (traditional dress) when they didn't have clothes. The children he used to play football with were now my age. My main concern was that they would expect me to manage or intervene in the use of the donation. I wanted to respect my father's wishes that it was the locally settled Norwegian missionary Liv Haug who would help the community manage the donation. Therefore, I made it clear from the start that I would not be intruding on the decision-makings. I believe this to have been a good choice, because it distanced myself from my role as the daughter of Ole and at the same time assured that I didn't come between comuneros, the board and Liv Haug.

There were obvious advantages and disadvantages of being the daughter of Ole. Most importantly, it gave direct access to the community, not only formal consent but also trust. I would be invited to follow the community board to political gatherings in other communities or with government officials, or participate in community meetings usually only for comuneros. I had the honor of being constantly updated by the community leaders on matters concerning the community without requests on my part. Comuneros would talk to me about the use of the money because I was the daughter of Ole, which also gave me insight into their thoughts and ideas about the implementation of changes.

On the downside, there were higher expectations to my stay. I was expected to accept the honor of being what they saw me to be. I was placed next to the community leader at the head table in all meetings, and asked to give speeches according to the occasion. I admit to feeling a discomfort to this attention, as I saw it as disrupting to my attempts to make them

² See Steinert, Ole 2003 "Ethnic Communities and Ethno-Political Strategies – the Struggle for Ethnic Rights: A Comparison of Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala. Austin: University of Texas. Included in references.

see me as a fieldworker. I accepted because I worried they would find it offensive if I declined.

Because Ole was considered to be “part of the family”, as the community leader said to me in his welcome speech, I was automatically considered to be the same. Of course, I was not considered to be Asháninka, but rather that it expressed a deep affection for my father and thus through the kinship link; for me as well. I would again and again be thanked for my contribution to the community, even though I felt no ownership to my father’s donation. I was kept an eye on with special concern and consideration. The most serious consequence was that some Asháninka living in the cities expressed discontent about my decision to stay neutral regarding the donation. I didn’t get access to them as easily as I did the others, and a few would be willing to converse with me even with several attempts on my part. The most difficult part about being the daughter of Ole was choosing not to take sides in these family conflicts about the right way to spend the money. Thus, I often felt in line with Jean Briggs’ (1970) difficulties when living with the Eskimos. She explains how her adoptive status as a daughter gave her access, but which also presented expectations and challenges as she gradually becomes more intertwined in cross-cultural misunderstandings.

The day I realized that I was also was constantly moving in-between roles of Ole’s daughter, foreign visitor and fieldworker, was the day they presented me with the rules for appropriate behavior of comuneros. I had heard that there were visitors’ rules and quickly started to ask around for them to avoid misunderstandings during my first weeks in field. Having no luck in finding any comuneros with an available copy, I turned to the community leader who assured me he would include them in the next gathering. Feeling rather smart about it, it went into the community meeting hoping to avoid all cross-cultural misunderstandings the next six months. The first two hours, *el jefe* (community leader), went through the rules for expected behavior of community members. In the beginning I thought they had included community rules for the occasion, but it took me a while to understand that they would never really go through rules for visitors.

The constant “thankyou’s” and honorary placements defined me as Ole’s daughter. Gossip about my lack of work affords was the critique of my abilities as a fieldworker. Expectations to help the community to teach English and computers, defined me as a foreign visitor. However, I was neither nor. There were no singular rules for my positioning. I was the anomaly, as Mary Douglas (1957) terms it, the odd one out.

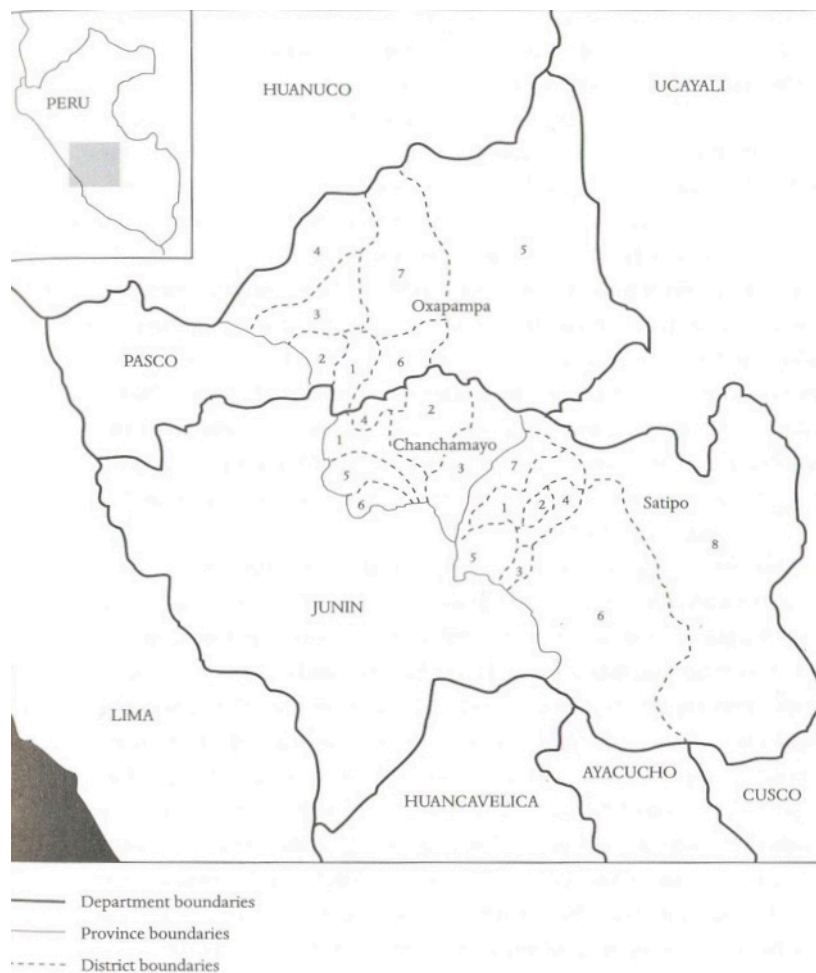
Structure of thesis: presentation of chapter

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one gives an overview of theoretical framework, and addresses the methodological approaches and ethical considerations in the field. Chapter two gives an overview of the historical background of Selva Central, and presents the two communities in question, taking into consideration the explanation of their circumstances as communities experiencing and relating to change. It presents the idea that change is limiting as well as providing new opportunities for the Asháninka as they struggle to maintain control over their lands. In chapter three, I will explain how the Asháninka relate to others and people they view as the same, and argue its relevance in the exclusion and inclusion of people in relation to land. At the same time, I emphasize that these relations are fluid. Chapter four addresses the Asháninka's understanding of territory and ownership. It also presents the limitations they face by the Peruvian law system which challenges the Asháninka to constantly reinterpret imposed external influences. Chapter five will emphasize that the Asháninka view knowledge as complementary, and that they include knowledge as a mean to protect their own worldview. Chapter six will make the necessary and comprehensive overview of the arguments as concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2. TWO COMMUNITIES FACING CHANGE

In this chapter, I will start by mapping out the historical context of Selva Central by explaining how communities have been formed and in what political and judicial context. I will also give a short overview of the Asháninka of the Peruvian highland Amazonía. Thereafter, I will first present the community of San Miguel and the changes made through infrastructural projects and investment in knowledge, through the foreign donation. Then, I will present the community of Alto Purus. I will explain the alliance the Asháninka have with the Yanéscha, and the community of Alto Purus' continuous struggle to obtain entitlement papers. I will argue that these changes create new ways of internal and external interaction.

Historical background of Selva Central



Map 1. Selva Central (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, p. 3)

Traveling from the busy, noisy and polluted capital in the direction of the Amazonía is not a bad first introduction to Peru. There is only one road from Lima to Selva Central, and it will take you through the three geographical parts, from the coast to the Andes and eventually to the highland Amazonía. This road is not only an important transport route for agricultural products to the capital and abroad, but it the only road that links the Peruvian coast to the Amazonian regions.

*Selva Central*³ constitutes the two regions of Jύνin and Pasco, where the provinces of Oxapampa, Chanchamayo and Satipo, and their districts are situated⁴. The two communities are both situated in Selva Central; San Miguel Centro Marankiari⁵ in the region of Jύνin, in the province of Chanchamayo and in the district of Perené and Alto Purus in the region of Pasco, in the province of Oxapampa and in the district of Villa Rica⁶. It is considered a part of the Amazonía, that is the Amazon basin, which covers great parts of Peru in the east. More than 50 registered indigenous groups have their permanent settlements here (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, p. 3). Selva Central is considered to be highland Amazonía or *selva alta* as opposed to the lowlands, *selva baja*, and is reached through from the capital of Lima through La Merced, until crossing to the lowlands in the direction of Puerto Bermudez. The two groups of the Asháninka and Yanesha inhabit Selva Central, mostly living in small communities.

The anthropologists Fernando Santos-Granero and Frederica Barclay (1998) explain the expansion of the area as an economic and political process within different historical periods, marking especially the increasing exposure to the outside through mass immigration of settlers from highland and the cities from the middle of the 20th-century. This area had been of little interest to the colonizing Spanish until the arrival of the missionaries in 1635 but gained gradual interest through the extraction of minerals in the Amazonía. In the beginning, it was the missionaries that exercised control over the indigenous population as they continued the

³ Translates as central jungle in English, although I will refer to the Spanish term as the word jungle may give misleading connotations. I use this term to separate it from the Amazonía, which is considered as the Amazon basin covering the countries of Brazil, Bolivia, Guyana, Surinam, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and French Guiana.

⁴ As defined by Santos-Granero and Barclay (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, pp. 301-308). See especially map page 3. The common understanding of how people in these regions talked about the area during my fieldwork also confirms this.

⁵ The official name of the community stating its presence in-between two other communities, Bajo Marankiari and Alto Marankiari. I will continue referring to the community as San Miguel.

⁶ For the sake of order, I will hereby refer always to the area where the community in question is situated by the naming the district, respectively Perené and Villa Rica.

Spanish colonization through the spread of the catholic faith and the extension of the Spanish domain through controlling Amazonian land (1998, p. 17). Such strategies included gathering indigenous people within mission towns and controlling the site of Cerro del Sal, a salt mine that had functioned as a cross-cultural meeting point for indigenous peoples in the area⁷. Indigenous rebellion in 1742 led by Juan Santos, who had proclaimed himself “true Inca, descendent of Atahualpa” (1998, p. 26), regained control of Selva Central and it would not be until the re-conquest in 1847 until the Spaniards regained access. The massive occupation of Selva Central after this would concern the distribution of land through the ownership of larger areas by sugarcane *haciendas* and colonies. “Selva Central shifted from being a regional endeavor to being a national enterprise for ensuring the ‘future of the Republic’” (1998, p. 31). Migrants were legally sold land through an agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Peruvian Corporation, a company established to handle the Peruvians state’s debt to the British Crown. From the beginning of the 20th-century, they had a monopoly of the land through the Perené Colony (1998, pp. 45, 54). This accelerated the arrival of Andean migrants to Chanchamayo who were looking for cultivable land in the 1940s. Land reserved for the indigenous population was only given through land use rights and not ownership rights, and thus concentrated them within areas where they were an easily accessible work force, especially for periods of coffee harvest. During Peru’s military government, general Velasco Alvarado pushed forward Ley de las Comunidades Nativas (Law of Native Communities) in 1974. This law encouraged indigenous to entitle land as reserves within collective settlements. This law was the most progressive land for indigenous people, and gave the final right to entitlement. Land in Marankiari, Pichanaki, Pumpuriani, Ubiriki, Sutziki, and Pucharini sold years earlier where now entitled under the new law (1998, p. 45). CCNN⁸ San Miguel Centro Marankiari received the official title as a community during these years. Although road construction in the 1920s connected cities within an interregional network, it was more extensive road building from the 1970s that connected greater part of highland Selva Central. President Terry Belaúnde attempts to increase integration of the Amazonia through Special Projects opened up the Amazonía to aggressive migration that has continued until this day (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, p. 160; Hvalkof, 1998, p. 101; Sjøholt, 1988, p. 139). Alan García’s government from 1985 to 1990 showed willingness to continue the process of the

⁷ The Asháninka would tell me about Cerro de Sal as the time when the Asháninka had control of vital food sources, although having lost it, was one of the reasons for today’s increasing dependency on town merchandises as well as the increased power of the local settlers (*colonos*).

⁸ CCNN is an abbreviation for *comunidades nativas*. In english; native communities.

inclusion of indigenous people, but fell short in the economic crisis. The uprising of the guerrilla groups of the Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement which roamed the area in the 1980s and 1990s (1998, pp. 235-238), made it difficult to maintain control of Selva Central during the years of President Alberto Fujimori. Although he seemed less interested in land entitlement than previous presidents. According to Gray (1998), it was the cooperation between the national indigenous organization, AIDSESEP, and the Danish NGO, DANIDA, who were successful in achieving improved rights to land for Amazonian indigenous during these years (Gray, 1998, p. 166). Neoliberalistic attempts to integrate Peru into the world economy was presented by Alberto Fujimori during 1990s through increased liberal market reforms referred to as Fujishock. Among the Asháninka, he was known and loved for his success in sending the army to defeat the Maoist guerrilla group, the Shining Path, finally giving indigenous people access to land which had otherwise for years been occupied through threats of death and violence (Klarén, 2000). In recent years, focus has been on the state's increase in extraction activities through the mining, and oil and gas companies which has been given international attention due to global climate issues.

The Asháninka of Peruvian highland Amazonía

The Asháninka is the second biggest indigenous group in the Peruvian Amazonía with respectively 26 % of the approximately 330 000 inhabitants of the Peruvian Amazonian indigenous population (INEI, 2007a). Asháninka means “our kinspeople” (Gow, 2013, p. 48). They refer to themselves as either by their group name, Asháninka, but also as *nativos* (natives) or *indígenas* (indigenous). They also speak of themselves as *comuneros* (community members) in relation to their community. To be Asháninka is connected to clothing, language, customs and relation to land. The basis of knowledge, which I will elaborate on in chapter 4, they refer to as *cosmovisión Asháninka* (Asháninka worldview).

The Asháninka wear *cushma*, the traditionally styled dressed draping the body from the shoulders to the ankles, and which is usually quite colorful for women and mostly brown, although occasionally striped, for men. The men have an adjoining *corona* (crown) placed on the top of the head decorated with thread and beads, and used on special occasions. Beads and pearl necklaces are ornamental assets for men and women. Very few use *cushma* on a daily basis, blaming it on impracticalities and prefer to change into pants and shirts, when they leave the community to go to the city. They say it's due to racism and unwanted attention experienced when using *cushma*. Language is also important to the Asháninka, and is an

inherited knowledge through home education, that is now also offered in the community's school. All community members speak Asháninka, depending upon age, although with various ease. Asháninka customs are practiced on a daily basis, and especially through bonfire parties and story telling. Many of the young are skilled in playing instruments and in dancing. *Masato* (alcoholic beverage made of fermented yucca), made by women and men, is their most popular drink on these gatherings. The Asháninka view themselves as poor, often comparing themselves to the local population. According to Steinert their inability to advance economy is because of the lack of land and constant low prices on agricultural products (2003, p. 51).

Santos-Granero (2002) explains that the Asháninka and Yanasha are a part of the Arawakan ethos, tied together through similarities in language and cultural features. In the area of Selva Central, this would include the groups of Asháninka, Ashéninka, Yanasha, Matsiguenga, Nomatsiguenga and Piro. The Asháninka would talk about these groups as a part of the *Nación Asháninka* (Asháninka nation; see chapter 3)⁹. However, the national statistic agency, INEI, also formally includes other smaller groups (INEI, 2007b). The characteristic of the Asháninka to make alliances with other groups may, according to Hill and Santos-Granero (Santos-Granero, 2002), be understood as a part of their openness and inclusiveness, which are more prominent features of the Arawakan groups than other indigenous peoples of South America (2002, p. 17). Santos-Granero confirms this, showing how Arawakan groups may adopt features from other groups through inclusion (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, pp. 289-290). While the Asháninka view themselves as interlinked with other Arawakan groups, they see themselves as completely different from other groups in Peru and the region that are not seen as the same. They live in the exterior as opposed to comuneros and other Amazonian groups within the Arawakan ethos who live in communities. I will show this in chapter 4 how they talk about the physical difference between their communities and other places, and use this in the relations with them.

⁹ The Asháninka would see Piro as distinctively different and not included into Nación Asháninka. Peter Gow (1998) mentioned how he experienced the Asháninka of Bajo Urubamba as critical towards the Piro “for their ignorance of the forest and for having too much contact with other peoples” (1991, p. 6). Among the Asháninka of my acquaintance I can only assume that it is because the other groups live in closer proximity of Selva Central than the Piro.

Embracing change: CCNN San Miguel



San Miguel is located on the side of a hill. The community owns land all the way to the top to a viewpoint where the landscape opens up the view of the community, the closest city of Santa Ana and the adjoining valleys. The community owns 170 hectares of land that can be understood as divided into a community center and *chakras* (agricultural plots), where small roads give access to the different parts. Land is understood as the physical existence of the soil, trees and plants inhabited not only by animals but also by spiritual beings (which will be elaborated on in chapter 3 and 5). Housing settlements placed in a circle around the stadium, as well as two schools and two administrative buildings mark the community center. There is also an Adventist church, but the *comuneros* do not view themselves as religious so the church is almost never in use.

The Asháninka live in what they call *casas rusticas*, which are wooden houses with thatched roofs of palm leaves. The walls are made of slim bamboo poles making it perfectly drafty in the months of hot temperature, although quite unpractical in the months of cold. The kitchen with the adjoining dining area is made on natural soil ground, while the sleeping

quarters are often raised 5-10 meters to avoid snakes and water during the rain season. Some homes also have additional houses for visiting tourists. The Asháninka are proud of these houses, built by themselves; their construction is considered a principal task passed on from father to son. Many of the young male teenagers would brag to me about their ability and knowledge about building a house. It is also their main contribution to the household, besides the daily fetching of firewood. Each house has many thin, round wooden poles as walls, which leaves small gaps in between each pole. This is perfectly drafty in the hot months of the dry season, although quite unpractical in the rainy month of the wet season. Most comuneros live in the community center, although some also have settlements in the community periphery to be closer to their chakra.

The community has also changed quite significantly in infrastructural implementations due to the donation. A new addition is a two-storey school that has been built only recently. Where once there were only residential houses and an adjoining patio; each residence has now an additional concrete, green-painted Western-styled bathroom¹⁰ in front of the main building. The small building contains two separated bathrooms with its own water closet, sink and mirror. Each house has an electrical gear connected to the house through a utility pole. At night, it lights up the main road of the community.

The community has about 40 families and 350 registered *comuneros* (community members), although only about seventy permanent residents, where about thirty *comuneros* would see each other on a regular basis. Others would come and go, staying in the community parts of the week due to work or studies in the closest cities. The Asháninka living further away, such as in the capital of Lima, will come once or twice a year for the long vacations from December to March to visit family.

The respected, although long-time deceased, Miguel Samaniego, founded the community in 1957, and the community received property ownership in the 1970s under *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas* (Law of Native Communities). Miguel is the closest ancestor of which the older generation of Asháninka in the community would talk about. They would brag about his five wives; two of which constitutes the kinship relation in the community today. Supposedly, two of the wives fled back to their own communities because they thought

¹⁰ I use "bathroom" as an emic word, directly translated from the Spanish word "baño", which is the word the Asháninka use. We could presume they would say toilets or in Spanish "inodoro", but that would be only referred to as the water closet itself and not to the small building containing the two separate rooms.

themselves too young for marriage¹¹, and the third wife was infertile and is therefore rarely mentioned. The largest family in the community is direct descendants of the two remaining wives; the descendants of the Asháninka wife living on the right side as you enter the community, and the Yanasha descendants on the left side. They have intermarried with other families that were invited by Miguel to join. Today, the family can be traced all the way down to Miguel's great grandchildren, who are now young adults.

Each family in the community has been distributed *chakras* (agricultural plots) of five to ten hectares. Most of them have two *chakras* where they grow different types of bananas, maize, avocados, starfruit, yucca, mandarins, mango and coffee. Knowledge concerning agriculture practices is visible in the arrangements of the plants. Some coffee plants will for example be planted below avocado trees for more shade, while others will dedicate part of their *chakra* only to coffee plants, free from tall trees, so as to make most use of the direct sun. It may seem like it is a chaos at first, but paying close attention to alignment of the trees and plants, you can follow the individual patterns decided by the owner. He or she will easily tell you why the plants are arranged as they are in his or her *chakra*. Each product has its season, besides bananas which grow all year around and is the most important product for regular income.

All of the family members contribute in the *chakra* and as the children grow up they are expected to contribute. Many of my young informants would admit that they wanted another life than agriculture, and mentioned the liability of the unstable market and recurring exposure of plant diseases¹². The families depend on the market economy of Santa Ana and La Merced to pay for necessities of food, clothing and education. Many of them struggle financially. The local abundance of fruits in certain periods of the season control the market in such a manner that the local vendors impose limits to purchase. Therefore, piles of rotten fruit may be observed when walking community grounds. Food is also obtained through hunting activities exercised by both men and women. Some hunt with bow and arrow,

¹¹ Most marriages at that time were formally arranged, often forced upon by the father to make suitable alliances with other families. Often their new husbands would be a cousin or another close relative either within the community or from neighboring community. Today the community prefers the young to marry outside their group, which most of them do. I encountered only a couple of incidents where somebody from the younger generation had married their *primo* or *prima* (male and female cousin). These marriages were cross-family intermarriage, meaning one descendent of the Yanasha wife married with a descendent of the Asháninka wife making them half-cousins by blood. This was tolerated, but not encouraged. Having many children was common among the Asháninka in earlier times. Nevertheless, today they have fewer than before, the reason being expensive educational fees.

¹² Especially *la roya*; a fungus that attacks the leaves with leave yellow spots until they fall off.

although most of the men have become accustomed to rifle. Prey could be traded among them to secure an extra income¹³. Fish is a rare treat, because of the contamination from the sewage emissions from urban areas, and from the local mining company, SIMSA¹⁴.

The political organization of the community is partly emanating from Ley de las Comunidades article 22 (see DL 22175), which states that a community must have a *Junta Directiva* (board) with *el jefe* as the community leader. He must rule alongside a *tesorero* (treasurer), a *secretario* (secretary) and a *secretario de Producción y Comercialización* (Secretary for production and commercialization). However, the law is not specific on enactment of these roles, and therefore the community has decided certain rules for the community. *El jefe* is chosen for three years period, and both men and women may become *el jefe* or *la jefa*. Voting is done in a community meeting through the suggestions of possible candidates and then by a show of hands in public where the result is judged on the majority vote. There are requirements for right to vote. *Comuneros* must be Asháninka from the community either through kinship or marriage, have turned eighteen, shown loyalty to the community by regular participation and have had no problems of previous unwanted behavior. There exist no system of internal taxation or other obligations, besides communal work such as *faena* (voluntary community work).

The community has also introduced the title of *subjefe* (vice chief), *Presidente de Turismo* (Tourist Manager), *Presidente de Café* (Coffee Manager)¹⁵ and small committees securing the welfare of education, mothers and handicraft. However, in San Miguel, *subjefe* and the tourist manager was one and the same. There are also informal leaders in the community, which will be elaborated on in chapter 5. They are respectively *el Fundador* (the Founder), the protector and keeper of Asháninka customs and traditions, and the Yanasha and Asháninka teachers. The community also has regular meetings concerning community issues following the same rules concerning the right to speak as mentioned above¹⁶.

¹³ I will not further elaborate on the reciprocity between *comuneros*. However, I do believe that it is closer to “balanced reciprocity” than a “generalized reciprocity”, the way Sahlins (1972) explains, meaning that the reciprocity is rather an direct exchange than a relation of altruism and assistance.

¹⁴ San Ignacio de Marococha S.A.A based in San Ramón.

¹⁵ Presumably emanating from article 22 of *Ley de las Comunidades* stating that the community must have a secretary for production and commercialization.

¹⁶ Community meetings would always start with a formal agenda, and as long as there were no visiting guests, gradually move to become informal open-floor discussions on recent problems or concerns in the community. They would then address issues concerning problems of *comuneros*. This would be prevalent in the first months of my visits and after a while they were accustomed to my presence and I therefore also witness the informal ending of a community meeting.

Infrastructural project; electricity, school and bathrooms

“But as is common in Peru as soon as one gets a short distance away from the urban centers, San Miguel is one more place forgotten by God and ignored by man. Here is no electricity, no phones, no sewer, actually, no public services at all except a school. People live communally off the land and water is taken from nearby streams” (Steinert, 2003, p. 42)

The community has experienced several changes since Ole Steinert’s observations of San Miguel in 2001. Infrastructure is now visible as physical constructions in the community center. It was decided in the will that the money donation should be administered with the help of Liv Haug, a local Norwegian Pentecostal missionary, whom he had met in field when she was working as mayor of Perené. The donation would be retained within an established association called the Asociación de Ole Steinert of which Liv Haug is currently president. “We love *hermana* Liv”, *el jefe* told me. *Comuneros* accepted that she helped them manage money. Liv Haug agreed on the decisions of infrastructure, and said to me once that “we don’t want them to be a living museum” (Haug, pers.conv)¹⁷.

It was decided that the donation should be spent on the welfare of the community as a whole, and therefore not on individual families. Decisions on new projects were executed by an open-floor suggestion initiated by Liv Haug, and eventually voted upon.

According to the constituting charter of the Asociación de Ole Steinert, the donation had the intentions of “contribute to the development and the wellbeing of the families that belongs to the CCNN San Miguel Marankiari” (“Acta de Constitución 2011”; pers.papers, my translation). The preliminary plan of 2012, “Aids for the development of CCNN San Miguel Marankiari from Ole Steinert” (pers.papers), mentions fourteen points of importance; general improvements on the community of issues of water, kindergarten, sewage and installation of septic tanks and roads, purchase of a Nissan car for transportation of agricultural products, purchase of a chainsaw and brush cutter, improvement of the communal kitchen, construction of a school, amplification and leveling of the stadium, scholarships for the youth, capitation for driving license, purchase of laptops and printers and the transformer of the radio. Entitlement of the community of Alto Purus was also mentioned as additional costs. In the initial rapport from the general assembly meeting, it is pointed out that the engineer is informed to install the

¹⁷ I will not elaborate further on this relation because as much as she was influential in managing the money, the final decision on expenditure was done by comuneros. By own observations and conversations with the Asháninka confirmed that she did not decide how the donation was spent. More on Liv Haug, see Møller, Arvid (1987) and Den Gode Viljen (The Good Will) (NRK, 2013), where the donation was also mentioned.

water pipes in a manner that doesn't contaminate the surrounding environment ("Asamblea Extraordinaria de la Asociación: 'Ole Steinert', 2012; pers.papers). Rules concerning the use of the car and the receiving of educational scholarships were also established to control the assets of the community ("Apoyos para el Desarrollo en la CCNN San Miguel de Marankiari de Ole Steinert'; pers.papers). Larger projects had also been carried out.

Electricity was introduced early in 2012, and was installed to all houses in the community center. Even though they had the lights on during the night, comuneros still had the tendency of going to bed according to the rising and setting of the sun. However, the parents expressed a relief that it also offered their children more hours at night to study. It also gave better view of unwanted visitors on their grounds, which especially was especially a worry for Isha, the mother of the community leader. She had experienced before that people would enter their house to rob them. Her three dogs on watch at night outside the house used wake us up at night, giving attention to all those coming and going. Most significant was how the introduction of electricity became a protective measures against spiritual beings of the forest, which I will elaborate on in chapter 5.

From time to time, it became obvious that paying the electricity bill was difficult for certain families. This would be evident when Electrocentro shut off the light from the utility pole leaving parts of the housing settlement in the dark. Of course, this made it easy to spot which family was not able to pay the bill. These families would excuse themselves by saying that they had forgot to pay or didn't yet have the time. I imagine it to be a vulnerable and degrading exposure of the lack of means, and more often than not the light were swiftly back a day or so later. For *el jefe* it was a constant worry. "I pay the bill because education should come first", said *el jefe* to me admitting that he would pay the electricity bill of the new school.

The new school was finished in 2012 and would serve introduce *segundaria* (junior/senior high school) into the community. This was the passionate cause of *el jefe*, who was an educated teacher and the most enthusiastic supporter of education for the community young. He expressed to me two reasons for this engagement. He hoped that the students would not have to walk the long distance down to the city, which was especially troublesome during the rain season; and that fewer people felt the need to move due to their children's attendance in *segundaria* in the cities. At the same time, it obviously encouraged more families to maintain permanent residence in the community, and thus prevented population decrease. Such a worry would be expressed in conversation about the future survival of the community as more and more young people left for the cities. It also ensures that the continuation of classes of Asháninka language and customs which is not offered in *segundaria* in the cities.

The Western-styled bathrooms were finished during my fieldwork in the spring of 2014. The choice of bathroom was the outcome of a common concern about the wellbeing of the visiting tourists. They had gotten feedback from visitors that they didn't like going to the outdoor bathroom; a concrete hole in the ground with improvised cover around.

Each concrete, perfectly square-shaped bathroom with the two toilets side by side had only been offered to the residences housing tourists. As the idea had come into shape, other families wanted one of their own. Isha was fascinated by the idea and exclaimed the first time I visited the community before the construction had started; "it would be nice to rest my feet while going to the bathroom". Ari, who is the designated guides for tourists and the only one with a driver's license, saw it as an option, especially for the visitors: "Now they can choose if they want to use our bathroom or the new bathroom. There are more opportunities". However, many *comuneros* struggled with the placement of these bathrooms in front of the houses on the courtyard. One of the men described it as shameful: "Now everybody in the community can see at what time I go to the bathroom". At the same time, more and more families found new ways of creating ownership to the bathrooms, making rules on how the bathrooms should be used. At the house of the subjefe and tourist manager, Camilo, one of the bathrooms was specifically for the family, while the other was reserved for the visiting guest. Another family divided the bathrooms by gender, and another by age. As I was changing houses every third week, I was not always aware of the new household rules. Sometimes I would go in one door, but with a knock on the door by the children, I was made aware of that I had gone into the wrong one. Such incidents made me feel embarrassed of using another bathroom than the one assigned to me. It also created a discussion in certain families about the proper way to be Asháninka. In the household of Shintsiri's parents, they were reluctant to using the bathroom at all. His mother would often give me a small comment if she saw me choose the new bathroom instead of the old; "Oh, so you are using the new bathroom", raising her eyebrows and laugh. Shintsiri once remarked on the same thing, reminding me that I had now stopped learning the ways of the Asháninka after I started using the new bathrooms. The family of Ari became creative and built a shower with handle sticking out of the side of the bathroom wall. Some said they were thinking about adding a thatched roof above the flat concrete top so that the bathroom would more easily fit in.

At the same time, the bathrooms also became yet another household task for the women in the family, who would clean the bathrooms on a weekly basis. There was also the initial worry for how the bathrooms would be used during the dry season. Even though the

community had bought extra water containers to meet the demand, the community members I lived with in the periphery of the community would often lack access to water for days.

Educational investments: scholarships for the young

Part of the donation had been put aside to secure scholarships for university education for the community youth. There were certain pre-requirements stated in the Rules for Scholarships (“Reglamento de Fondos de Becas (Apoyo Economico) para Estudios de Educación Superior, 2012; pers.papers). The young Asháninka must be a member of the community with a finished *secundaria* educational degree. He or she must be the oldest child in the family, unless the oldest is already educated or wishes to pass on the scholarship to younger sibling. Parents are obliged to help out the students with their homework. The students must also be willing to share their knowledge with the community after finished studies. The receiving of a scholarship presupposes an obligatory repayment of half of the borrowed money, which means that these young Asháninka have a responsibility to help, share and keep in contact with their community even during and after finished degrees. The receiving of scholarships therefore imposed expectations on student and parents, as well as the community. At the moment, the community has seven young Asháninka studying different professions in different cities.

Some families saw it has difficult that only the oldest in each family received a scholarship. Therefore, one of the families had decided to split the scholarship between the two oldest siblings. Liv Haug expressed that it was up to each family how they decided to manage the scholarship within the frameworks of the rules.

An emerging community: CCNN Alto Purus



Photo: Bajo Purus in the community of Alto Purus.

“There was a conference on indigenous rights”, *el jefe* of Alto Purus, Shintsiri, said to me. He was explaining how the community had gone into the alliance with the Yanasha. “There we met the Yanasha who were looking for someone to help them with the entitlement and we needed more land”. Since 2009, he had permanently moved to Alto Purus and become the primary proponent for entitlement rights to Alto Purus. Many of the members from San Miguel had inscribed their name as community members in Alto Purus to secure the necessary number of registered members. However, only 25 people live in Alto Purus on a permanent basis, although as much as 80 persons are formally registered. Although the Yanasha have encouraged the Asháninka to move to Alto Purus as community members, few in the older generation are willing. Most of the younger of Asháninka explained their unwillingness because of their studies or work, although many of them also admitted to enjoy being close to the city. I asked my designated Asháninka guide, Ari, why he had decided to register in Alto Purus as a community member, when had admitted to me that he couldn’t imagine living that far away from the city. He told me; “if my children thinks differently than me, it’s good for

them to have the option to live here. Then I will probably go along with them. But I like the city too much”, he admitted.

The community of Alto Purus is a two-hours ride outside of the city of Villa Rica, which is only reached from the city of La Merced. The accessible part of the community is reached by car through an uncomfortable and bumpy ride on the badly maintained road, where for two hours you pass several green pastoral areas and communities by slowly climbing upwards until reaching the residential houses of el jefe, *La Resistencia* (the Resistance). A small tin plate with blue capital letters poorly written says *Bienvenido CCN Alto Purus prohibido la imbacion* welcoming your arrival and warning against unwanted visitors. In La Resistencia, Shintsiri live with his two older sisters. He is Asháninka from the community of San Miguel, and was the first Asháninka to travel from his community to Alto Purus when the agreement between the Asháninka and Yanesha was made. The region of Pasco, also part of Selva Central, is where most of the Yanesha of Selva Central live. Since the merger with the Asháninka, they have shared the land collectively and lived together on the same land, although with rather large distances between the house settlements. The land claimed by Yanesha and Asháninka as theirs covers about 6500 hectares. Their understanding of ownership is connected to an historical backdrop of Yanesha wandering these areas as nomads before foreigners invaded the area. “Our ancestors walked across these areas and crossed what they now call the national park in the north”, the Yanesha teacher explained to me.

The community can be understood as divided in three. *Los abuelos* (the grandparents) live in what they call Alto Purus, on top of one of the hills, with a beautiful view of the mountains passes where the water carves them in two. The lower part of the valley, where the young Yanesha population of five families have settled, can be reach within an hour walk from los abuelos and is placed by the riverbank. This part of the community goes by many names. The most accepted name is Bajo Purus (Lower Purus)¹⁸. However, the Asháninka humorously call it *La Chanchería* (The Pig Farm), although the Yanesha prefer the name *Los Trés Rios* (The Three Rivers), finding the former name offending, and thus renamed it by its geographical considerations of the three rivers flowing through the area and meeting nearby the grounds. The name La Chanchería reflects the funny outlook of the settlements; the Yanesha have built their wooden houses among the ruins of the troughs and within the framework of the old cement housing foundations. One of the Yanesha inhabitants living here with his daughter is the teacher. He is recognized as the most knowledgeable person on

¹⁸ For the sake of neutral name-calling, I will call it Bajo Purus.

community history, and told me the story of the community as far back as he could remember growing up there. He explained that foreigners¹⁹ had arrived from Oxapampa in the north in the 19th-century. It used to be a *hacienda*, he said, naming these foreigners as *gringos*, a word Latin Americans generally use for European and North American foreigners. They invaded the area and made the Yanésa into their slaves to work the land. He had grown up here with his parents working as slaves, and remembered that the *gringos* offered them education, although through a school further down in the valley. According to him, the *gringos* stayed until 1975²⁰. Many Yanésa had fled the area, and didn't return to their land until the 1990s. At that point, colonos had already settled here. According to him the Yanésa drove them off, claiming their lands and consequently started the process of entitling the area of land that hadn't been claimed by the state through preservation entitlements. He remarked that there was a tendency for the Yanésa to gradually move to lower parts of the valley, because of the lack of water, especially in the summer time. According to Ari many invaders had tried to claim Alto Purus as their lands; even today it was still going on, which made the entitlement crucial for the community.

From Bajo Purus, La Resistencia is reached by a three-hours walk across two valley passes, where splendid views of the area can be observed and the beginning of the community's *chakras* can be detected among the immense vegetation of virgin forest. In line with Shintsiri's view on maintaining tradition, two houses in the distinctive Asháninka architectural style of wooden beams and thatched roofs serves as the families sleeping quarters and community building. I was told by Shintsiri that he had built his housing settlement by the road so that he could more easily prevent the access and invasion of illegal colono logger . However, I imagine that it must also be much more convenient for *el jefe* to live by the road and have more access to transportation to Villa Rica, where most of the work on entitlement in relation to the Ministry of Agriculture and the local authorities occurs. Once walking with Shintsiri and some visiting tourists, he showed us the spot he wanted to build his house when he finished as *el jefe*. The house would face a part of the land he said he once walked when he first arrived at the community to visit the forefathers of the forest, which was now living like spirits in a valley he pointed at in the horizon.

The community of Alto Purus also has visiting tourist once a year by Norwegians through the travel operator Coex Amazon. They walk the three-days route from los abuelos

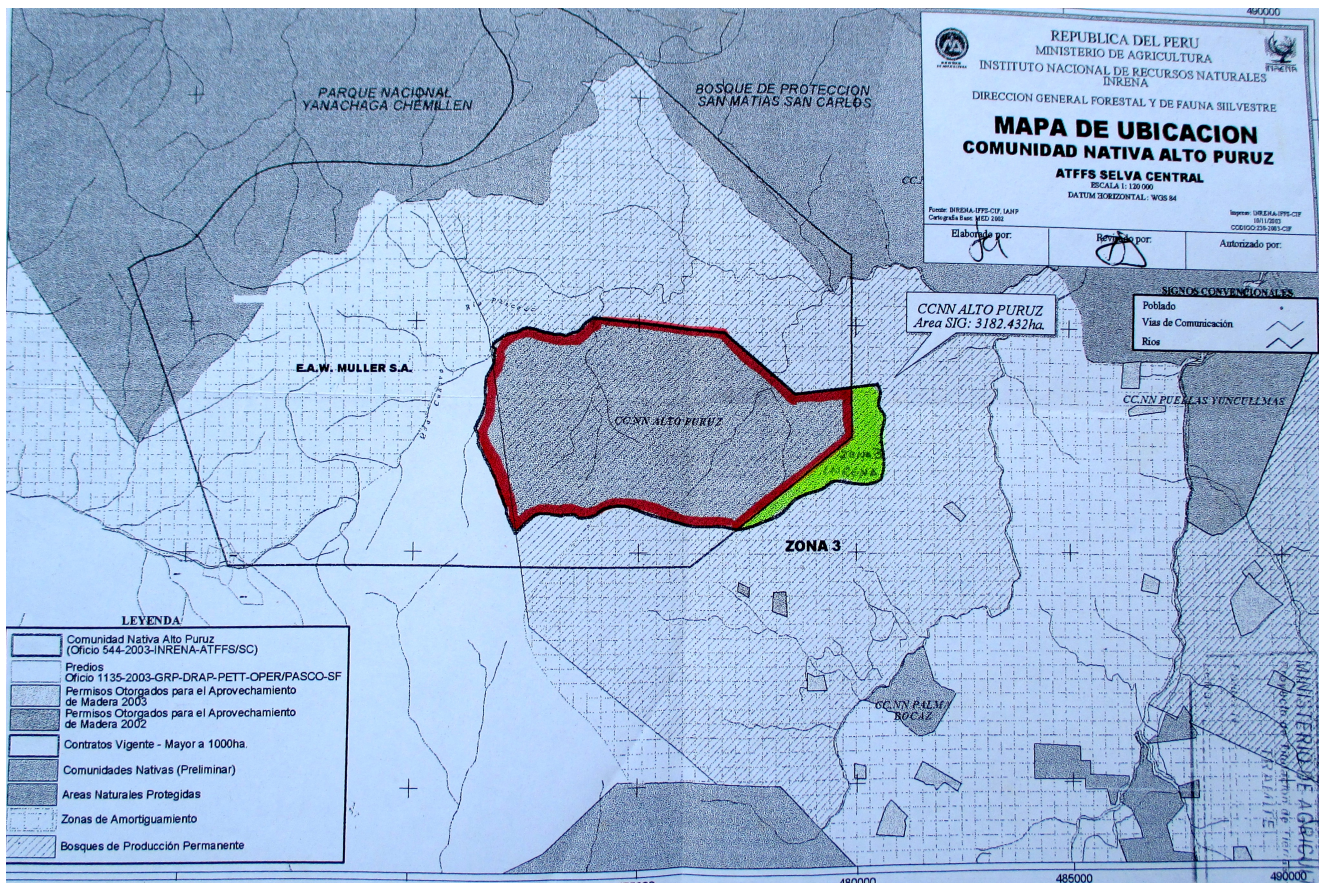
¹⁹ There were also rumors that they were Nazis fleeing from Europe after the Second World War ended, although nobody could confirm that with certainty.

²⁰ Although unconfirmed as the reason for their movement, it is striking that this was around the time when the Law of Native Communities was established.

and to La Resistencia. Therefore, the Yaneshas I lived with were used to having visitors from time to time. None of the Yaneshas were very eager about expanding the possibility of tourism, and rather talked energetically about making a road so that transport could retrieve products to be sold in Villa Rica. During my stay in La Resistencia, I decided I would take some of my food that I had bought in Villa Rica to offer to the Yaneshas, in hopes that they would be willing to talk to me. I had been unsuccessful the last time, when I arrived from los abuelos and no Yaneshas were to be seen in Bajo Purus. “We are very poor”, one of the Yaneshas, Demetrio, told me. “We only cultivate food so as to have enough to eat. But look at the products that we cultivate”. He went to the kitchen and came back with a *pituca* (pink and white root vegetable). I was three times the size of the ones I had seen in Villa Rica. He explained to me that being able to sell the products would improve their living standards. The next morning, I had breakfast at house of Adora. Her husband had just left to fetch the coffee harvest to sell in Villa Rica in the afternoon. Demetrio had come over as we were making rice and offered me two fish he had caught the same morning in the river. I offered them tea that I had brought with me. They declined, telling me that tea didn’t taste the same without sugar.

The province of Villa Rica is known to be a coffee growing area, stated publically by the large coffee percolator statue in the main park of the city. Shintsiri’s sister, Ariana, is the most eager and was active in a local organization for coffee production, often attending meetings in Villa Rica. There was no doubt in her mind that the coffee had to be grown organically, and it was her idea that starting an agricultural project was the most beneficial way of showing how the Asháninka and Yaneshas were interested in using the land.

The struggle for entitlement



Map 2. CCNN Alto Puruz. Area circled in red is what the state acknowledges. According to the Yanesha/Asháninka it also includes the white area bordering state protected areas in the north.

The Yanesha claim their land through ancestral ownership rights. This means that land is claimed because they claim their forefathers walked as nomads across the area. There doesn't exist any Peruvian law that supports claims through ancestral belonging to land, so the only way for the Yanesha to achieve ownership rights is through Ley de las Comunidades Nativas. The Yanesha claim that have struggled for entitlement of Alto Puruz since they returned in the 1990s, but according to the Asháninka, results came after Shintsiri was instated as el jefe. The land they claim should be entitled has not yet undergone formal surveying of community boarders²¹, but the community members could clearly point out the boarders on a map (see

²¹ Although at the end of my fieldwork, I participated in a meeting where the date was set to do just this in accordance with the government agency, SENARP (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado), who control the two forest conservations areas north of Alto Puruz and who were also present. Such an arrangement of surveying is not executed without difficulties, as much of the land in the north is virgin forest without access through roads. It would mean weeks of walking. The *comuneros* were eager to close of the formal registration and asked the representative from

map above). According to them, community boarders a national park, *Parque Nacional Yanachaga Chemillen*, and a state protected area, *Bosque de Protección San Mathias San Carlos*, in the north and northeast. Both of these areas have been state protected areas since the 1980s (2002, p. 17). Both of these areas are state controlled for reasons of forest conservation. In the east, they are in agreement with the communities of San Miguel de Bocaz²² and Villa Palma of aligning boarders. In the south and west, the community boarders recognized the colono owned land. Shintsiri told me that colonos had settled in the north, continuing with their illegal logging, and that they had asked them to leave without results. He believed that the final papers would give them the legal justification to throw them out.

The entitlement of land in Peru is reached through a complicated and difficult process through bureaucratic institutions. The anthropologists Alberto Chirif and Pedro García Hierro (2007) explain how entitlement is obtained as evaluated by the Law of Native communities and how it is executed through the Ministry of Agriculture. First, one needs to send a formal application, where one claims the pre-existing ownership of the land. If granted, one will receive *reconocimiento* (recognition). *Reconocimiento* seems thus to be the closest to the acceptance of land as owned through ancestral belonging. From there on, *etapo de campo* must be executed through the formal registration of the land through practical activities like surveying, marking typographic fixation points for the map and the measurement of soil quality. It is done through the cooperation with local organizations and NGOs, and each step has its order of execution. After formal registering these data, the final papers of entitlement can be expedited and registered. Such an entitlement will thus given the legal ownership right to the land based on the measurements delimiting the land. On a later stage, if seen necessary, a community can also apply for *ampliación*, which is extension of land to include surrounding areas (2007, p. 182). However, as we will see, problems along this process of entitlement may occur if there is a conflict about pre-existing ownership, which will further complicate the matter and slow down the process of obtaining the final entitlement papers.

Conflicts of interests

“There are people with different interest”, Shintsiri said to me when explaining to me core of the conflict, “that is why they are not willing to respect our rights”. For the last three weeks,

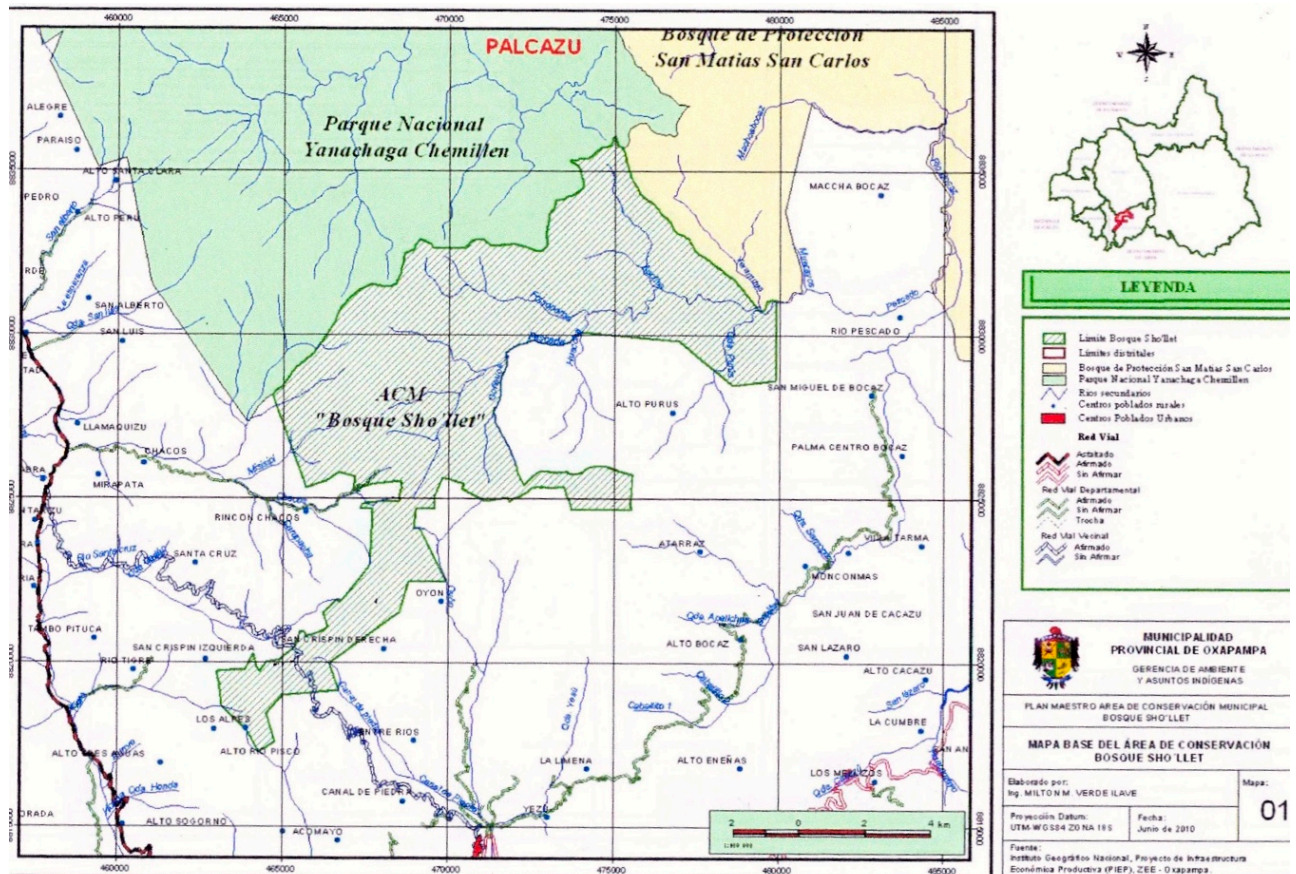
SENARP during the meeting when “acta de colindancia” (final approval of community borders) could be issued. He reminded them that this would be done when the surveying was finalized.

²² I emphasize that there is a difference between San Miguel (Centro Marankiari) and San Miguel de Bocaz, and that it is a coincidence that they happen to have the same name. I will refer to the latter community by adding as San Miguel de Bocaz to avoid confusion.

he had taken me to meetings with local and regional authorities. I had participated in meetings between the three communities of Alto Purus, San Miguel de Bocaz and Villa Palma on how to solve the mutually shared problem of achieving the final entitlement papers to their lands. He knew that without legal entitlement papers, Alto Purus was in fact open to those who sought the same claim as the community. Their strength was that they a group of Asháninka and Yanasha occupying the land. Shintsiri faced oppositions on several sides, but especially represented by three dominant threats.

The closest and most dangerous were the illegal colono loggers who were entered the land in less accessible areas outside of community supervision. Shintsiri knew that there were settlements by such people in the north, having given them warnings to leave without any success. After ending my stay in Alto Purus, Shintsiri's sister, Ariana told me about the forty colono men had shown up with machetes threatening to invade. Shintsiri had been warned in advance, and was waiting for them with a group of Yanasha and men from neighboring communities, armed with bows and arrows. They had successfully threatened the colono men and they had turned around. However, it wasn't only the illegal loggers that threatened to take land from them, but also colonos who claimed ownership by previously issued entitlements. For a time during my stay, such a colono had over years become an increased problem for Shintsiri who strongly believed his entitlement papers to be false. Violent encounters were not uncommon with these colonos, and Shintsiri would proudly tell me the time he had put an area in the man's shoulders for running towards him with a machete.

Another threat was the Municipality of Villa Rica. They claimed large parts of the area in the north and in the east as a protected forest area called *Bosque Sho'llet*. As map 3 shows, local authorities do accept on the other hand that the *comuneros* of Alto Purus own the 3500 hectares in the south (see map 3.)



Map 3. Bosque T'Shollet. Source *Plan Maestro del area de conservación municipal el Bosque T'Shollet 2010*.

On several maps on the walls of government offices in Villa Rica, *Bosque T'Shollet's* existence was made immortal. I found the same in the 2010 Annual rapport (*Plan Maestro del Area de Conservación Municipal el Bosque de T'Shollet*; priv. papers) retrieved from the Municipality, and the same in the Development plans for the Province of Oxapampa (*Plan de Desarrollo Concertado de la Provincia de Oxapampa 2009-2021*; priv. papers).

According to them, the large areas in the north bordering the national park and the protected forest as a part of *Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas por el Estado* (state protected areas) was controlled and protected *Bosque Sho'llet*²³. According to the Municipality, it has been a conserved area since 2004. State protected areas, such as *Bosque T'Shollet*, *Parque Nacional Yanachaga Chemillen* and *Bosque de Protección San Matías San Carlos* (see map 3) are by Peruvian law not recognized as property, but may give land-use

²³ Bosque T'Shollet translates "The Queen of the Colored Snails" (Reina de los Caracoles de Colores) based on a Yanesha story from the area (Café Amargo 2013).

rights for those indigenous or other people living inside the area (Chirif & Hierro, 2007, p. 158). Julio, the local representative from the Municipality, claimed that the community of Alto Purus was applying for an extension of more than the 3500 hectares they already owned (see map 2, area circled red), of which they had not claimed. According to him, they refused to understand that the Municipality protected this area. As he saw it, he believed it just as likely that el jefe of Alto Purus was interested in the land for illegal logging than other colonos invading the area.

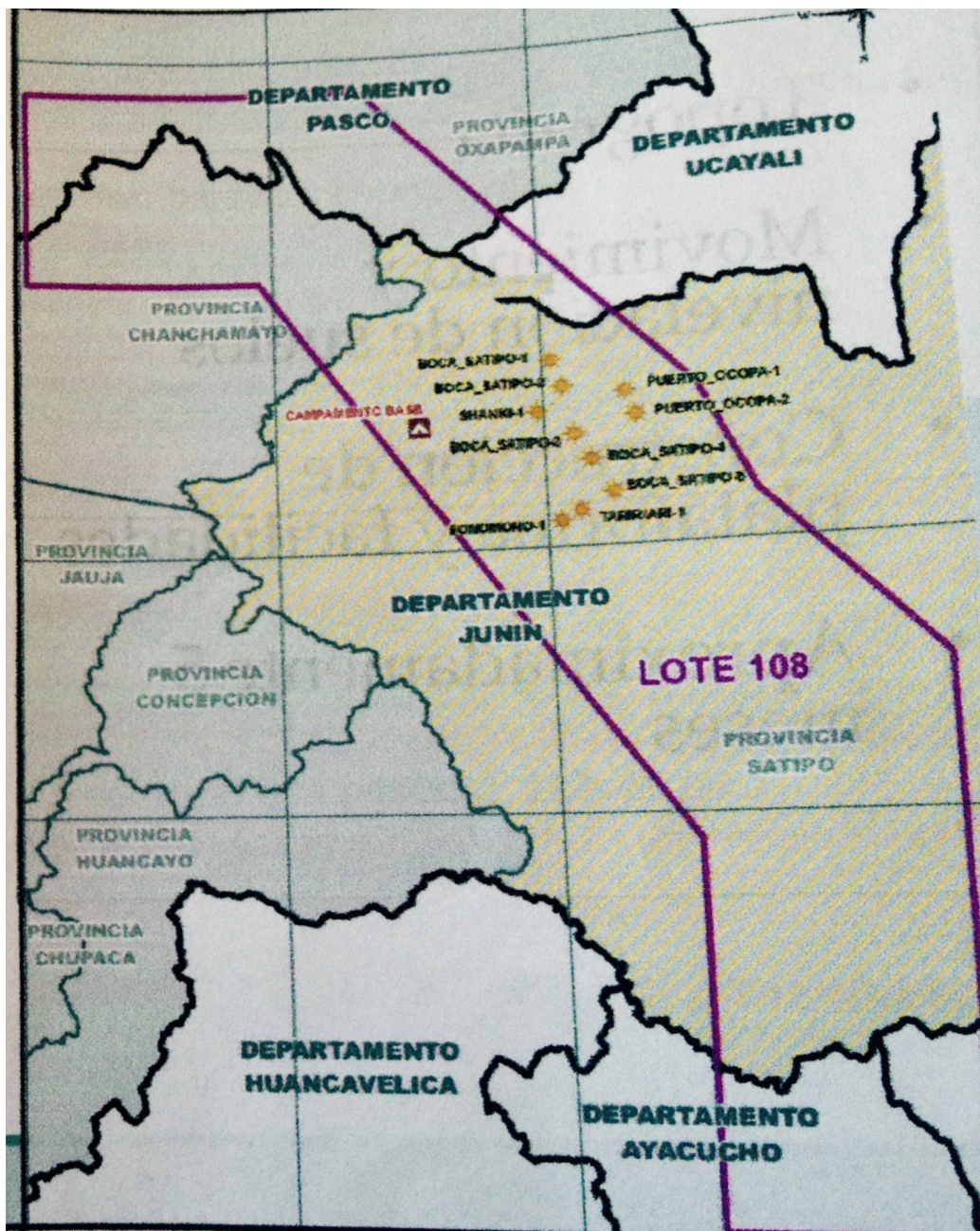
However, this is complex and contested. The documents from 2004 that proved the legalized demarcation of Bosque T'Shollet and which were shown to me were written by the Municipality themselves. The Ministry of Agriculture on the other hand did not agree with the Municipality, and claimed that the Asháninka and Yanasha had legal claim to 6000 hectares as Shintisiri argued. Julio, who didn't think much of the work of the Ministry of Agriculture, passing small comments of gossip about the employees; "They don't know anything, if they did, they would know that the chances of Purus getting property rights is impossible without our consent."

Having to relate to the Ministry of Agriculture was another great frustration for Shintisiri. He blamed the engineer working the case to be slow in the finalizing of the entitlement papers due to corrupt behavior. He believed the engineer working the case was accepting bribes to slow down the process. He knew that to obtain legal entitlement all paper work has to be done first on the local level through their office. Alberto, the engineer working the case of Alto Purus, commented that they had during the 1990s issued much of the land to colonos, and therefore that some of their claims were valid. It was not that he was slow, but that he had to look into any claim of ownership. He assured that if there were no opposition against the Yanasha and Asháninka regarding the claim of the 6000 hectares, entitlement papers would be issued through the legal bureaucratic instances.

Another looming threat is the mine and oil companies. National and international companies are given legally affirmed permits by the state to do increasingly more extraction of natural resources in the Amazonía. Chirif and Hierro (2007) argue that several Peruvian laws²⁴ grant foreign companies the right to apply to the communities to retrieve natural resources in the Amazonía and that many communities are tempted by offers from these companies (Chirif & Hierro, 2007, p. 177; see also Law of Native Communities article 11).

²⁴ They mention Ley de las Comunidades Nativas DL 22175, see especially article 11; Ley Orgánica para el Aprovechamiento Sostenible de los Recursos Naturales 26821; and Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre 27308, see article 148 (Chirif & Hierro 2007: 113).

In the last month of my stay, comuneros were worried about the local interest the Argentinian oil and gas company Pluspetrol, had with exploration of oil within indigenous community land in the J n n and Pasco regions. Although the company had been granted permissions since 2005, they were now closing up on areas nearby San Miguel and Alto Purus. However, according to the map of exploration sites (Mapa de Area de influencia Pluspetrol 2012; pers. papers) San Miguel is left out, while large parts of the land of Alto Purus is within the project plan (see map 4).



Map 4. Lote 108. Source: Presentation Pluspetrol’s Lote 108 for CECONSEC, Nov 2013.

Since Alto Purus have no legal ownership to their community, hence making the land open for intervention, Shintsiri worried that Pluspetrol would one day enter their land unannounced. Comuneros from San Miguel was not reassured that they were completely safe from oil and mining companies' exploration projects in the area. "It doesn't really matter if they enter here or not; they will ask permission through our colono neighbor and then extract the oil through his land and underneath to ours". Camilo raised his hand and showed in a L-shape movement how they would enter from below ground.

Change to maintain control

Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998) explains how Asháninka and Yanesha have related to change in the past. They refer to it as the dependency indigenous had to iron tools introduced by the Spaniards in the 1850s, which at the same time created a new economic center for rebuilding old trade relations that had once been important for the relations between many of the Arawakan groups in the area. Lauriston Sharp's (1960) argues through his observations among the Australian Yir Yoront, that stone axes were replaced by steel axes, and thus assimilating the group into the Australian national society. However, the opposite happened among the Asháninka, Yanesha and Nomatsiguengua. The religious missions strengthened the training of blacksmiths in the area and thus created an economic center for the trading of iron tools. The Asháninka, Yanesha and Nomatsiguengua would now come to trade salt and tools within the local missions. Indeed, they write "far from rejecting European material contributions outright, the indigenous economy strengthened itself through the adoption and development of some of these technologies" (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, p. 35). It is remarkable how the introduction of iron tools were not based only on necessity of tools, but also the continuity of networks reuniting again many of the Arawakan groups that were separated during the colonizing period (1998, pp. 35-37).

The Asháninka maintain control of how and what kind of changes is introduced into their communities. In San Miguel, change is introduced as infrastructure through electricity, a school and bathrooms. Electricity offers security against unwanted being, human or spiritual, education advances higher educational levels for students, and bathrooms creates new forms of interactions and creates habits between *comuneros* and in relation to visiting tourists. At the same time, by investing in community youth, the older generation of Asháninka accesses new knowledge offered by the Peruvian national society through the students, and at the same time regulates an access to knowledge by community laws. The community has less control

as they send them to educate in the cities, but at the same time it creates a relation of economic and social dependency through the scholarship and its obligations. But change is also limiting the economic mobility of Asháninka by establishing new economic dependencies to local companies and the social mobility of new work tasks and privacy within the community. Similar for all three infrastructural projects is the focus on the future of the community through investment in education of the youth.

As the community and its population changes and the younger population are expected to remain in contact to the community, the alliance with Alto Purus is to secure chakra to future generations. This is made possible through relations to other indigenous groups, as we will see in the coming chapter. The alliance between the Asháninka and Yanesha has been supported by money donation so that Alto Purus can gain entitlements papers of the land. The responsibility for achieve this has been placed on one of the young Asháninka from San Miguel. However, the bureaucratic process for entitlement papers is difficult and threats from outsiders are always close by. In the next chapter, I will show how the Asháninka regulate and handle their relations to other people and beings, and how it is maintained through the inclusion and exclusion of land.

CHAPTER 3. SAMENESS AND OTHERNESS THROUGH LAND

In this chapter, I will show how the Asháninka include and exclude people based on access or exclusion of land. The Asháninka manage social relations with other groups within a dynamic of sameness and otherness. I will argue by using Barth (1969) that indigenous groups create boundaries to include and exclude others, but point out that this is not enough to explain how indigenous Amazonian groups define and create relations to other groups. Here I will use McCallum (2001) to show how they relate to sameness and otherness based on the concept of a scale, and Guzmán-Gallegos' (2010) work to show how Runa may become others, human and spiritual beings. I argue against such a notion among the Asháninka as they do not as easily become others. However they do include other groups they see as belonging to the same Arawakan ethos, as Santos-Granero (2002) terms it, but that people viewed as other may also partly or fully become same. This is however handled differently by the two communities. I also point out by using Santos-Granero (2007) that the Asháninka also create relations to others beyond kinship and affinity, but also through friendships. These friendships are based on trust, but that it does not necessarily mean they must be viewed potentially threatening, but may include people with whom they built beneficial and lasting relations to.

Identifying sameness and otherness

It has been difficult to use general concepts of genealogical heritage to explain kinship relations among indigenous groups in the Amazonía. Several authors within Amazonian literature have therefore explained how indigenous people understand themselves as persons constituted relationally (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2010; Rosengren, 1987; Santos-Granero, 2007). In the introduction of "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" (1969), Barth confronts the assumption of his time that groups are supposedly live and evolve in mutual isolation. However, he argues that groups are rather sustained by their ability to exercise actions of inclusion and exclusion within social processes of interaction, and therefore that relations among groups are regulated across such boundaries. He writes that "...interaction in such a social system does not lead to its liquidation through change and acculturation; cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence" (Barth 1969, p. 10). Santos-Granero (2007) remarks that

to view Amazonian sociality as based only on kinship and affinity, like in Barth's (1969) boundary-making processes, where groups operate only within boundaries of interactions, will not explain how Amazonian groups relate to those viewed as outside the kinship group. He argues that indigenous groups go beyond kinship and affinity creating friendship based on mutual willingness to help, by trust and generosity. He problematizes the interest for Amazonian groups to establish relations to others who may be understood as possibly dangerous (Santos-Granero, 2007, pp. 2-3). I will argue that San Miguel and Alto Purus relate to people viewed as same and others through kinship, affinity and friendships. I also propose that they relate to people who are not seen as dangerous through friendship, but rather welcomed as useful friendships.

To understand how the Asháninka relate to people they view as same and others, I draw on the work of Cecilia McCallum (2001) among the Cashinahua and Maria Guzmán-Gallegos' (2010) work on the Runa population of the Ecuadorian Amazonian lowland. McCallum describes the Cashinahua's understanding of sameness and otherness by the visual description of a scale. On one side are those Cashinahua see as same, and on the other, those they see as others. According to her, relationships among the Cashinahua may move from one side to the other, reaffirming otherness and at the same time, otherness may move to become sameness. Maria Guzmán-Gallegos (2010) builds upon this scale in her description of the Runa. She argues that the Runa, who are considered to be the same, may move on the scale to become others, like the non-indigenous or highlanders, or non-human others; spiritual beings. This distinction is important, argues Guzmán-Gallegos, to understand how the Runa create spaces of interaction and eventually a notion of a good life (2010, pp. 31-35).

The Asháninka also operate relationships of sameness and otherness along a scale such as described above. However, I will expand the scale to include those understood as same and also add those viewed as others. Some relations of sameness and otherness are regulated by kinship and affinity, while others by friendship with those viewed only as others. However, the Asháninka do not transform to become others as the Runa, but rather have strict community rules to determine how others are allowed to become part of the same. It may include partial or complete inclusion depending upon who have access to land within the community borders. I will argue that in San Miguel, only those understood as same may enjoy the same rights as comuneros, and that only colonos through marriage and under special circumstances may have rights to live within the community, but never fully have the same rights. On the other hand, in Alto Purus, colonos may become comuneros through marriage within the group and thus be given the same rights.

I divide Asháninkas understanding of same as the following three; *comuneros* are Asháninka emanating from the same community, *Nación Asháninka* as all Asháninka from the Peruvian and Brazilian highland and lowland Amazonía, and *nuestros hermanos* as the indigenous groups within the Arawakan ethos, as Santos-Granero (2002) terms it. Others are *colonos*, highland and city settlers in Selva Central; *touristas*, visitors for short or longer periods; international and national mining, oil and gas companies; and finally spirituals beings.

I am inspired by Santos–Granero’s (2007) terms familial others, others within and others without in his view on Amazonian sociality, and Guzmán Gallegos’ (2010) modification of these terms, to explain how sameness and otherness may be gradual. Santos-Granero describes “familial others” to be people connected through “consanguinity and affinity of varying degrees of closeness” (2007, p. 2). Guzmán-Gallegos modifies to include people who live together (2010, p. 31). First of all, I will refer to *comuneros*, *Nación Asháninka* and *nuestros hermanos* as “familial same”, that is the term Santos-Granero and Guzmán-Gallegos use as familial others, to describe Asháninka and other Arawakan groups who are connected through kinship and marriage. I will define “familial others” as those *colonos* who are connected to *comuneros* as marriage partners, although keeping in mind that they are also liable to switch to become dangerous as invaders. I will add “welcomed others” to define ecotourism and *turistas* (tourists) working as volunteers in the community. “Powerful others” include *colonos* seen as invaders, mining, oil and gas companies threatening to exploit natural resources on indigenous land, and lastly “spiritual others” as the spiritual beings who are believed to live and share land with the Asháninka, but which will be elaborated on in chapter 4. I wish to make clear within this chapter that it is not the land that facilitates the internal relational dynamics in the community and to relations to other groups, but rather that land is the starting point for regulating the inclusion and exclusion of people they see as same and different

***Comuneros* – living together as a community**

The community is the point of departure of the experience as an indigenous person. Steinert (2003) describes it in San Miguel as a person who is indigenous because “he or she grew up in San Miguel, lives in San Miguel, does what people in San Miguel are doing, and shares in the myths and symbols of San Miguel” (2003, p. 65). *Comuneros* are a community members who are born, raised and connected to the community to mutual experiences, as Steinert describes it, but also who relate to each other and others through kinship and affinity. They are formally

registered as comuneros and are given the same rights to speak in community gatherings and participate in community activities. Most importantly, they are persons who have access to land in the community, and who may be distributed *parcela* (land plots) to cultivate chakra. They are all considered to be “familial same”, even though they are ordered into different statuses as permanent residents, “de permiso”, previous comuneros or even non-comuneros but connected through an Asháninka kinship link, is regulated by the internal inclusion and exclusion of land.

Some comuneros are permanent residents, most often the older generation of Asháninka who depend on agriculture for economic survival. They have been distributed chakra and own their house in the community center or in the periphery of community grounds. Comuneros who come and go, usually live parts of the week in the cities due to work. Many of them are parents who work to secure an extra income to pay for school education for their children. Many of these children study in *segundaria* (junior/senior high school) in Santa Ana or La Merced. Some of the young comuneros have received scholarships through the donation and are therefore living outside of the community. They are “de permiso” (on leave), which is a status regulated by el jefe and Junta Directiva as special allowances through having applied and been accepting to live outside of the community for a certain period of time. To leave the community as comunero without having achieved the acceptance to be “de permiso” is seen as an attempt to follow individual success and may result in trial periods upon return or in the worst case eviction, although the former is usually the most common as the latter requires more serious cases. To be “de permiso” is usually given for a year but also more if so required, such as in the case of the educational scholarships for the youth. During my first visit to the community in 2012, I met Ariana, the sister of Shintsiri. She told me she had just gotten back to the community after a year working in the city. She had two children, and her mother, one of the permanent resident in the community, had accepted to help her out while she earned money to secure them. After having worked a year outside, Ariana came back to the community, but found herself restricted by community rules. As her children were attending the local school, they had not accepted her departure. She was given one year trial period to show her loyalty as comunero. Ariana exclaimed to me in frustration: “There is no work here, so to pay for my children I found work in the city. Now I am not allowed to participate in the community meetings, since the community counsel told me I have one-year trial period. I am born a member of this community. How can they tell me I have no right to be heard?”²⁵. Upon

²⁵ Quote from my bachelor essay spring 2013.

my return to the community, Ariana had moved to Alto Purus, claiming that her father did not want give her land to cultivate, and had given the inheritance of his chakras to her brothers.

Some previous comuneros also keep in touch with the community due to family, and visit from time to time. These Asháninka have moved out permanently, usually due to marriage. As the Asháninka are virilocal, most of them are women who have either married other Asháninka, thus living with their husbands in their communities and having become registered comuneros there, or they are no longer allowed to live in the community having married a colono. In San Miguel, they do not allow comuneros who have married colono to live in the community. Cashiri told me that communities accepting mixed settlements of Asháninka and colonos more frequently struggle with internal conflicts. “Colonos think differently than us, therefore there are conflicts”, he explained. El jefe of San Miguel said that the reason behind the exclusion of colonos in the community was because they believed they had a different mindset not aligned with Asháninka cosmovisión (Asháninka worldvision). Despite this, some comuneros have married colonos. I met several former comuneros who now lived in the closest cities, in other mixed communities or in Lima. As to be expected, this decision was difficult for them to understand. One of the daughters of Isha who was married to a man from Lima told me unhappy about the situation: “We can’t decide who we fall in love with”. They were also not beneficiaries of the donation, since the money had been given directly to the community, and therefore many of them worked in the cities to earn enough to pay for university opportunities for their children. However, even though they were no longer comuneros, they would never describe themselves as becoming colono or no longer being Asháninka, and they would refer to the community of their childhood as the community they belonged to as Asháninka.

There are nevertheless exceptions to the rule about excepting colonos into the community. In San Miguel, the local Asháninka teacher is married to a colono but has been granted permission to live in the house of her father because of work in the local school. They are not allowed their own land, and therefore participate in the cultivation of her parent’s chakra. Although she keeps her rights to speak in community gatherings, the colono husband has neither right to speak nor no to vote. I also encountered other incidents where colonos were given temporary allowances to help out in the chakra and at home if there was illness in the family. These special permissions would be made based on what proved to be more beneficial for the community. El jefe saw it as an advantage to have a comunero as a teacher in the school. “We have to use the knowledge we have among the young”, he said and admitted that

this was the reason her husband was allowed to stay as well. Some comuneros admitted that they thought that the community would change over time to become more inclusive.

The Asháninka made no distinction on a second-generation child of an Asháninka and a colono, and is thus not necessarily limited by the rules that apply for their parents. “You know”, Ari said to me, “el jefe has a colono father. Everybody here knows that”. I had been surprised, thinking that such a distinction was made important through the rules for colono. But rightly, I had never heard anyone question the authority of el jefe based on this information. The same went for the teenage granddaughter of Isha’s daughter in Lima. The granddaughter would come for visits during her school holiday in the beginning of my fieldwork and wear cushma. It was a given that she was like the other children and youth of permanent residence in the community, and no one ever questioned or commented her participation in community activities and gatherings. It wouldn’t be unlikely to assume that she could be offered chakra in San Miguel when she grew up if there were land to distribute.

Nación Asháninka – beyond community borders

The Asháninka will tell you that all Asháninka people are the same, and part of the same group with the same background manifested in customs, language and connection to land. To be a part of the “Nación Asháninka” (Asháninka nation) is to be part of a larger invisible network of Asháninka across geographical areas. Consequently, this includes Asháninka in the lowlands of Peru to the Asháninka across the border of the Brazilian Amazonía. The Asháninka refer to Nación Asháninka to all people who see themselves as part of the Asháninka groups even if they have never met them all personally, or have traveled areas of the Amazonía where they live. Benedict Anderson (1983) has coined the term “imagined community” to describe how nationality reaches all those who see themselves as part of a nation despite never having met. “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. He stresses the point that even if it is imagined, it does not mean that it is less real. Indeed, they should not be judged upon the difference of falsity and genuineness, but rather “by the style in which they are imagined” (1983, p. 15). All Asháninka are therefore viewed as part of the familiar same and may become *comuneros*. Ari’s stepfather was from the Peruvian lowland Amazonía, lived with Ari’s mother, and own land. He is also the community *tesorero* (treasurer) and a comunero of San Miguel.

***Nuestros hermanos* – “they are like us”**

The Asháninka view other indigenous groups of the Peruvian Amazonía that share similar customs and language as similar to themselves. They would refer to them as *nuestros hermanos* (our brothers). During a conversation with Shintsiri about the alliance between the Asháninka and Yanasha, Shintsiri explained it to me: “You know, Margaret, Yanasha are not fighters like the Asháninka, but they share our way of thinking. They are like us”. In Alto Purus, they had started accepting new members who were Yanasha or Asháninka, and distribute land although in the beginning only 10 hectare, “to see how they fit in and work the land”, Shintsiri explained.

In conversation with comuneros, they would on different occasions refer to other Amazonian groups of Yanasha, Ashéninka, Matsiguengua and Nomatsiguengua as similar to the Asháninka, although they made more references to the Yanasha and Matsiguengua than the others. They are “como nosotros” (like us) or *nuestros hermanos*, they would say. On the other hand, Piro and Shipibo- Conibo would be mentioned as very different in language and customs, and therefore not considered as *nuestros hermanos*. Santos-Granero (2002) acknowledges this division linguistically through the Spanish colonial classification of Campa as Asháninka, Ashéninka, Matsiguengua, and Nomatsiguengua (2002, p. 29). Renard-Casevitz (2002) refers them as the Pre-Andine Arawak or Campa Cluster, originating in a myth of the union of two gods and two goddesses and their four children as constituents of these groups, each of them as the story goes, distributed their own land in the Amazonía (2002, p. 125)

Nuestros hermanos are also seen as within the familiar same as possible marriage partners. “Maybe I will find myself an Asháninka or a Yanasha like abuelo Miguel”, Ari said jokingly to me when I asked him about settling down with a family. Although there was made a distinction between Miguel’s wives as Asháninka and Yanasha, and commented upon the difference of indigenous group, no one ever viewed the Yanasha wife as less of a comunero than the Asháninka wife. “His Asháninka wife had her house on one side of the community and the Asháninka wife on this side”, said el Fundador (the Founder) indicating that he was living on the side of the Asháninka wife as her descendent. “Yes, and then he would sleep some nights in one house and other night in the other”, chuckled el Camilo.

Nuestros hermanos may also be connected through agreements of alliance as we have seen in chapter 2 between San Miguel and Alto Purus, in relation to the search for more land for future generations and the assistance with the entitlement papers of the latter community. I

suggest that this alliance is possible because the Asháninka and Yanesha see themselves as similar and also within the same Arawakan ethos, as Santos-Granero (2002) shows.

Colonos – invaders and marriage partners

The Asháninka use the term *colono* to describe people who are of non-Amazonian indigenous background. I refer to them as “familiar others”, but I also place them with the “powerful others”, due to the double perception of how Asháninka view them. Not only are they viewed as others because they are seen as different, and possibly dangerous as invaders, but they are also seen as possible marriage partners.

Colonos are from other parts of Peru, respectively the cities, the coast or the highland Andes. This includes also those of indigenous Quetchua origin, because they are seen as invaders. The resentment against *colono* is historical and reaches back to the time land was distributed freely by the state to migrant settlers. Thus, people who benefited from land the Asháninka and other indigenous groups in the Amazonía once viewed as theirs. As Steinert also experienced (Steinert 2003: 47), the Asháninka view them as self-centered, exploiting and money-oriented, while colonos describe indigenous as lazy. I did hear them occasionally use the word *salvaje* (savage), meaning those indigenous people who live in isolation and are not included into the national society. A taxi driver from the highland who told me he had settled in Selva Central to cultivate and make more money, once said to me after I explained that I worked in a Asháninka community: “you know, now they are a part of the society, they are no longer *salvajes*”. Conceptions about indigenous as backwards and primitive are common in many South American countries (Steinert 2003: 54)²⁶. This term was so ingrained in everyday speech that even those who the Asháninka classified as *colono*, used the same term to describe themselves. The son-in-law of Isha in Lima told me he disapproved that comuneros called him *colono*, finding the name stigmatizing, and preferred the term *limeño*, the name used for a person from Lima. The couple wanted to resettle in Selva Central, but limited by the rules of San Miguel, had applied for land in Churingaveni, a community of mixed population. Colonos that I spoke to living in Perené would refer to Selva Central as their home²⁷. People who had recently bought cultivable land in the area described it as a land

²⁶ However, I did see a shift in the young Asháninka population in San Miguel to have friends who are *colono*, most probably due to the community’s increasing contact with the national society through education.

²⁷ Some of them I met when visiting *colono* friends of Asháninka in Alto Marankiari, and others I met when chatting with taxi drivers, who were often *colono*, and referred to themselves as *colono*, as an extra income next to their agricultural activities.

of opportunities for agricultural investments, which reminds us that also many of these settlers seek to improve their own living conditions.

There are few communities that have such strict rules as San Miguel about accepting colonos into the community. Most of the other communities in Perené had Asháninka and colonos living together. Previous comuneros in San Miguel are not refused land in Alto Purus as they accept mixed marriages. Therefore, new community members are accepted as long as one of them is either Yanasha or Asháninka. Shintsiri explained to me that they didn't want colonos who only thought about the land as something to cultivate for profit. His words resonated what Shintsiri's brother, Cashiri, had said about attributes of colonos as distinctively different than Asháninka.

Colonos are also possible business partners. San Miguel has an ongoing agricultural agreement with a colono owner of a coffee company, Chanchamayo Highland Coffee, although with various success. The company had entered into an agreement with the community on a brand they had called "Café Nativo", selling coffee beans from comuneros at higher prices than was offered at the local market. During a visit by the technical team to teach methods for making organic fertilizers, I noticed that only three families were interested. My host family explained that due to several unfortunate incidents with the company²⁸, most families didn't trust the owner and therefore did not want to work with him. Santos-Graneros (2007) explains that trading partnerships between others and indigenous groups are often between individuals and are "to acquire friends", and not necessarily because of a profit motive. Trust and "keeping one's word" becomes crucial in such relations (2007, pp. 3, 11), which might explain why families were hesitant about continuing with the agreement.

As we also saw in chapter 2, colonos are not only settlers having historically taken their lands, but they are also invaders in contemporary time, which is especially acute for comuneros in Alto Purus. At the same time, colonos are possible marriage and business partners and have therefore obtained a double perception.

²⁸ One of these problems was the presumption of the Asháninka that the company was selling coffee that was not originating from the communities' chakras despite of the fact it carried the brand of Café Nativo from San Miguel. Another problem was the encounter set up by the owner with a Chanel 5 journalist and the channel's exoticisation of their customs as primitive, see link: <http://www.panamericana.pe/alsextodia/nacionales/137378-matrimonio-ashaninka-amor-comunal-selva-peruana>).

Ecotourism and *turistas* as volunteers

The communities of San Miguel and Alto Purus have agreements with two travel operators. One is Ecomundo, initiated by one of the young Asháninka from San Miguel, Frank Dieter, studying tourism and languages in Lima, and the other is the Norwegian travel operators, CoexAmazon, owned by a Norwegian-Peruvian couple. These two share an agreement on how to do what they call “ecotourism” in San Miguel and Alto Purus. CoexAmazon define their ecotourism as “sustainable and responsible tourism” of “travel/holiday that has the least possible negative influence on the earth’s fragile resources, which provides giving back a fair and just income to a larger chain of people who live in the local communities you visit and contributing to protect local culture and nature” (pers. corresp. Øyvind Wesseltoft, travel operator CoexAmazon; my translation). In conversation with Frank Dieter about Ecomundo’s vision on ecotourism, it was expected that *turistas* (tourists) would learn from the host families through their daily activities and that they would contribute by teaching English or computer classes. *Turistas* are usually international tourists, but may also occasionally include national visitors. Ecomundo has two foreign agreements for voluntary work in the community and another agreement for Norwegian visitors through CoexAmazon. The first agreement is with the French organization Solidaille²⁹, who during my stay sent over three French girls to work on the project of a medicinal plant hospital in the community of Kimiriki over a period of three months. The other one was launched through Goshen College in Indiana where young American high school students could do voluntary work teaching English for five weeks.

Turistas were welcomed others by most comuneros; families could choose to have tourists. Such an interest was economical, but more residences also showed a curiosity of housing *turistas* as part of knowledge exchange. “In this way, I earn a little extra”, Isha said who was one of the residents that had regularly housed *turistas* from the beginning. Ari, who was the community’s designated tourist guide, said “we learn from people from other places”.

Comuneros would refer to tourism in San Miguel as *turismo vivencial* (experiential tourism), a term they probably had from Ecomundo who defined it as “to live...and integrate with the population, help them with their development as personally enriching” and “as a direct and experiential way of getting to know the indigenous world” (Ecomundo - 1 Fam Trip Viaje de Familiarizacion – turismo vivencial Ashaninka, pers.papers; my translation). Frank Dieter saw ecotourism as an opportunity to “promote the importance of *cosmovision Asháninka* to

²⁹ Solidaires des initiatives locales à l’étranger (Solidarity from foreign local initiative). See web page: <http://solidaile.org>.

foreign visitors” (pers.convs. Frank Dieter)³⁰. Turismo vivencial was seen as different from *turismo comercial* (commercial tourism), and they criticized the two other communities of Pampa Michi and Bajo Marankiari for doing this kind of tourism. They mean that turismo comercial was to promote tourism based on profit and therefore exotifying Asháninka customs. “Some of the dancers aren’t even Asháninka”, said Ari to me, explaining how Pampa Michi would arrange bonfires in the middle of the day to show off Asháninka dance and music. “They don’t even speak Asháninka anymore”, el jefe also commented. Pampa Michi had no arable agricultural land to cultivate and was now completely relying on tourism to secure an income. In the center of the community of Pampa Michi, there were tables filled with souvenirs of bead jewelry and other small objects for sale. Tourists would arrive in busses arranged through travel agencies and would be dressed up in cushma, led from table to table and to do dances around the bonfire with young Asháninka playing instruments³¹. El jefe of San Miguel commented that he believed this was “selling culture”.

For the comuneros in San Miguel, it was a difficult balance in relation to the expectations of tourism and the introduction of new infrastructural projects. Once we were standing on Camilo’s patio in front of his house looking out on the community center towards the newly constructed school building. Subjefe and tourist manager, Camilo, said, “Do you think tourists would be willing to come even though we have a concrete school?” When baffled by his answer, since I had heard no doubts about the decisions to do infrastructural projects, I asked why he would think that they wouldn’t. “You know”, he said and looked at me seemingly worried, “because it is so clearly a contrast to our *rustica* houses”. Such worries were always directed to opinions of turistas, but never on other matters. I believed this showed that such a worry was not directed towards the intention of the infrastructural projects, since they never showed any doubt on decisions they had made concerning the donation, but rather a concern that the tourists wouldn’t understand the intentions of these changes.

The threatening counterpart: mining and oil and gas companies

“This is black gold”. Bruno was pointing at the black puddle of what looked like oil, on top of a muddy bank. We were up the hill of the community’s chakras, to have a look at the damage the water had done to the pipes of the new bathrooms. During the night, water had erupted from the mountainside, aggressively on its way taking parts of the chakras. Isha explained, “we

³⁰ The cosmovision is the worldview of the Asháninka, which I will elaborate on in chapter 5.

³¹ I have visited the community of Pampa Michi myself on two occasions, in 2012 and 2014. I noticed that they had increased the number of stalls and the area dedicated to tourist activities.

hear a loud roar, and we were ready to flee, even half-naked, thinking that the water would wash away the houses”. Fortunately, it had been about five meters off the closest house. Many of the black puddles were spread in the gashes surrounding the deeply carved slide reaching from the top of the mountain and down, as far the eye would take you. “This is what they want from our lands”, said Ari, looking at the “black gold” before he continued his adventurous climb up the side of the slide, his bare feet black and muddy.

Colono invaders, mining, and oil and gas companies are seen as a threatening counterpart. They are “powerful others” viewed as stronger than themselves and with the intention to steal their land. The Asháninka are aware that the state legalizes the extraction of natural resources in the Amazonía, and continue seeing this as a violation against indigenous peoples’ rights. The state is present on two levels; the local municipality, who they interact with concerning local issues, and national authorities in Lima, this is too far away to be recognized as influential except as the extended hand through foreign and national mining, and oil and gas companies. The most aggravating presence of what the Asháninka would see as national state intervention in the area nearby San Miguel, was the presence of the mine called San Vicente placed by the river in San Ramón. The Peruvian mining company SIMSA runs San Vicente. “They contaminate our river so that we cannot fish or swim in it”, explained el jefe to me. It was locally known that eating fish from the river was dangerous and caused illness. Liv Haug explained to me that the river had been contaminated for years, partly due to the mine, but also because of bad sewage system within La Merced and Santa Ana. She remarked that Santa Ana had just installed a new cleansing system, and that it would now be possible to prove accurately if the contamination actually came from the mine. A representative of SIMSA, on the other hand, explained to me that the company followed strict rules of contamination and that the municipality had annual checks of the mine to make sure that the rules were followed. However, an Asháninka, who was previous employee in the mine, informed me that the company had ways of covering up emissions in the river when the municipality came to inspect. “You know, they just remove the pipe leading to the river when it is time for the inspection. I have seen it myself”, he told me.

As mentioned before, Pluspetrol’s project Lote 108, was not a direct threat to San Miguel, but rather concern for Alto Purus. Pluspetrol had already been granted permission by other communities in the area to do exploration samples. El jefe of the community of Churingaveni, told me that Pluspetrol had offered work to eight of their *comuneros* (including the husband of an Asháninka girl originally from San Miguel), and promised them a new community assembly house. The local indigenous organization, CECONSEC, was supportive

in the process. “We can only guide them in the process”, the President of the organization said, “but we will not make the decision for them if they accept or not for Pluspetrol to do explorations on their lands”³².

Spiritual others

The Asháninka have historically been exposed to many missionary churches over time. In the community of San Miguel, they admit that the community had in the past been divided in religious opinion about the Catholic Church and the Adventist Church, the latter church having been the last to lose foothold in the community after the priest left. Even though the memory of its existence is still visible in the Adventist Church building still standing in the community today, the church is rarely in use. Although the Asháninka in San Miguel have been exposed to missionary churches in the past trying to establish residence in their community, they have in recent years been uninterested the last years in following these requests.

The Asháninka believe that there is only one God, but will see no distinction between the God of the religious missionaries, and the God they call Madre Tierra (Mother Nature) in Spanish or *Pawa* in Asháninka. The Asháninka also believe that they share the land with spiritual beings. Spiritual beings are seen as dangerous to them, especially after dark (see chapter 4). Stories are told in the community of San Miguel to watch out for spiritual beings at night that may make you sick or kidnap you. Spiritual beings may be inhabitants of certain areas of the land, living in rocks or trees. Some appear in different forms, as half men and half animal or as small men and beautiful women. Some are facilitators between the human world and the non-human world. Stefano Varese (2002) describes it among the Asháninka of the Gran Pajonal as spirits controlling the “openings into these extrasensory worlds” (2002, p. 32). Narratives about these spiritual others would be told in stories, usually by el fundador (the founder), but also by children and young who had learned these stories at home³³. The Asháninka also believe in *brujería* (witchcraft) and that people who practice *brujería* have the power to do spells that can cause illnesses that might lead to death. Warnings were given to

³² After departure from fieldwork, local riots against river contaminations by Pluspetrol in the explorations in Satipo area, blocked the Pichanaki bridge for weeks in protest against the contract breach (RPP, 2014). This action led to the dismissal of five ministers in the Peruvian government (EiComercio, 2015).

³³ They believe that shamans are communicators between humans and spirits. I will not elaborate on the position of the shamans, except to say that they possess vast knowledge on the use of plants and can read the future and cure illnesses. Neither the community of San Miguel or Alto Purus had comuneros who were shaman, although shamans from other communities did visit from time to time.

avoid places where a *brujo* or *bruja* lived, because they believed spiritual beings lived nearby their house. I will elaborate on the importance of this in connection to recent infrastructure in San Miguel in chapter 4. According to Guzmán-Gallegos (2010), the Runa can also become spiritual others, which might be the case among the Asháninka, but which was never shared with me as an outsider. In chapter 5, I argue that such knowledge, as well as knowledge concerning medicinal plants, is seen as protected knowledge and not shared easily with outsiders.

Exclusion and inclusion of people in relation to land

The Asháninka relate to people as same and others in the inclusion and exclusion of land. Sameness and otherness is regulated based on a scale, put forward by McCallum (2007). However, as opposed to what McCallum and Guzmán-Gallegos (2010) argue, the Asháninka do not become others. Even if Asháninka are no longer comuneros or de permiso, they will never refer to themselves as becoming someone else. They are always Asháninka and will refer to their community to their indigenous groups and the community to define who they are. Those within familial same, respectively those viewed as comuneros, Nación Asháninka and nuestros hermanos, are possible marriage partners for each other and thus have access to land. They are all familial same, and are given the same rights to land even though they may be understood as being partly different as either Yanesha or Asháninka. They may therefore become comuneros. Within this understanding of familial same, they may also have alliances not based on affinity that strengthens their relations across physical borders, as we have seen between the Asháninka of San Miguel and Yanesha in Alto Purus. I have not encountered literature where different groups form a community based on the fear of imposed external factors, possibly indicating a necessity for indigenous groups to find new solutions when facing change.

Familial others, those understood as colonos, may become part or partly included in the familial same, as we have seen in mixed marriages between comuneros and colonos, and the second-generation of children of mixed marriages. How they are included and excluded is based on if they have access to land. In San Miguel, familial others are only partly included by given permits to live in the community if the community believes this to be beneficial, but not given land to cultivate. This means that they remain familial others even if they live within the community, such as the husband of the local teacher. However, second-generation of children of mixed marriage are viewed as part of the familial same, and thus given access

to land. However, in Alto Purus familial others may become familial same through the inclusion of the comuneros, which is based on the distribution of new land and affinity with either Asháninka or Yanesha.

While welcomed others, powerful others and spiritual others are maintained by their otherness, and cannot become part of the familial same, they are still included within relations of friendship, as Santos-Granero (2007) argues. He explains that friendships maintained with others is based on “fear that endows native Amazonian intertribal friendships with their peculiar character and explains the great importance attributed to trust in such relationships (2007, p. 11). This explains why they enter into agreements with powerful others. This might also explain why the Asháninka do not as easily share what I call protected knowledge without significantly established trust. However, it does not seem like they invite turistas into their homes because they are afraid, but rather because they are useful and can be persons of knowledge exchange through volunteering and shared experiences.

McCallum (2001) rightly points out that “for indigenous Amazonians, persons are made, not born” (2001, p. 5) . To include and exclude, make alliances and enter into friendships with people viewed as others, and especially including others to become the same, is beyond how Barth (1969) talked about boundary-making and more suited to explain how Amazonian indigenous groups practice relations to same and others. So then, how are we at understanding the importance of the Asháninka to change through infrastructure and the value of education, as explained in the previous chapter, while they at the same time remain loyal to rules of inclusion and exclusion of people who are evaluated as same and different?

Gow (1991) argues that anthropologists have a tendency to see Amazonian groups in South America in a historical context as victims of European colonization, and therefore often as either “traditional” or “acculturated”. Gow (1991) points out that the Piro of the Peruvian Amazonian see themselves as “of mixed blood”. This description is the result of an understanding that they have changed historically. He argues that it is difficult to conceptualize that changes over time means that groups are becoming assimilated to the dominant national society. Indeed, the Piro evoke the school and the entitlement as community (emanating from Ley de las Comunidades Nativas) as an important difference between themselves and their ancestors. They look back at historical factors where their ancestors were working slaves for powerful people and see living in a community as the evidence of having overcome this past. Therefore, as Gow emphasizes, to live in a community and thus view themselves as mixed blood is not acculturation as opposed to being

traditional but rather as a description of the way it should be to “live well, as they say” (1991, p. 2). Gow emphasizes that kinship is vital to understand how the Piro operate within relations, and that kinship is tied to the centrality of the community as “a place in which kinship is created and sustained” (1991, p. 203). Like the Piro, the community is central to the Asháninka’s understanding of same and others. Within the community, the Asháninka use land as a mean to include and exclude people based on relations of kinship, affinity and friendship. Like the Piro, the right to ownership of community land and by infrastructure, they are in control over their own change.

There are some interesting points to be made here. Firstly, Gow remarks that ethnographers’ tendency to see paradoxes if conceptions based on historical change do not align with an idea of groups being either “acculturated” or “traditional”. As I mentioned before, such thinking might also be the reason why even today so many anthropologists have avoided studying highland groups in the Amazonía living in closer proximity and contact to urbanized areas. Secondly, the Piro’s understanding of themselves shows how the state’s historical grouping of indigenous Amazonian groups regulated by Ley de las Comunidades Nativas has been reinterpreted. Indeed, the Piro do not see themselves defined by land rights but rather by conviviality and how to achieve a good life. Neither does the Asháninka believe that “‘being civilized’ is not opposed to an idyllic ‘traditional’ culture which has been lost” (Gow 1991: 2), but that they incorporate external factors into their community because they view this as complementary to their own internal dynamic. Although they would never describe themselves as anything else than Asháninka, like the Piro, they show how change does not necessarily mean to reject the past, but rather to adapt to the circumstances. Here I am building upon the argument that change among the Asháninka through the implementation of infrastructure, incorporation of knowledge and new alliances with other indigenous groups does not mean that they are becoming acculturated. The introduction of external factors such as infrastructure and education means to relate to change in such a way that the continuity of being an indigenous people is maintained.

CHAPTER 4. CREATING OWNERSHIP: LAND AND *TERRITORIO*

In this chapter, I will explain the importance of territory for the Asháninka. I will refer to land to explain the physical borders of the community that the Asháninka inhabit. I will argue that the state has defined and still define communities based on physical interpretation of land within *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas* and its attached guidelines of rules. State definition of land creates limitations understood as a “double bind”, which I will show by referring to Bateson (1974). The double bind is a choice of alternatives with equally bad outcomes. However, the Asháninka are able to avoid the double bind imposed by the state, and retake control of their relation to land because they are flexible when relating to change. In this way, they adapt to alternatives imposed by external factors and take control by introducing changes within their community. I call this continuity through change, and at the same time change as continuity. Land is the starting point of the inclusion and exclusion of same and others, and therefore a part of interaction within relations. Land is thus not only physical, but also connected to kinship, affinity and friendship. However, when the Asháninka refer to the land they inhabit, they call it *territorio*. Here I will use Brighenti’s (2007) theory of territorialology to explain how *territorio* is a processual relation that defines how the Asháninka understand ownership. By recognizing that a territory is viewed as processual through the concept of *bosque*, *chakra* and *monte*, this urges the recognition that land should be understood based on the terms of the Asháninka. At the same time, ownership is not restricted only to comuneros, but is also shared with spiritual beings of *bosque*. The protection from dangerous spiritual others is also connected to the introduced changes of infrastructure, especially electricity. To see territory as processual, and more than just a physical presence as land, is a common notion among the Asháninka, which aligns with the understanding of their worldview.

“The forest will take its preys”

It was a hot and sunny day in San Miguel. Four young Asháninka, Alvaro, Diego and Jack, had decided to take me walking to the top of the hill to see the panoramic view of the community and the associated valleys. Bruno, the youngest child of Camilo, was eagerly running ahead. The mosquitos were overly aggressive this morning, attacking all available

spots of uncovered skin. The sweat was pouring off our bodies having walked upwards through the chakras the last hour. The black knee boots, worn for protection against snakes and slippery parts of the trail, had only added to the warmth. Bruno, the youngest in the group, had walked barefooted, while his three cousins were wearing their worn-out slippers, hardly suitable for long-distance walking. Alvaro and Diego had eagerly been teaching me about plants along the way, and how some of them they had curing potentials women would use to treat illnesses.

We sat down on the cliff, looking down at the community settlements recognizable below us as small wooden houses. The large school building with the red roof stood out from the thatched roofs of the sleeping quarters and kitchens. From above, the lush and green vegetation of trees and plants surrounding the community center seemed to hide what I knew to be an ordered arrangement of chakras. We enjoyed the silence, only listening to the sound of the birds and the occasional loud shouts in the community from people saluting each other from opposite sides of the stadium. Jack moved closer to me. “You know, señorita Margaret, there are stories about the community and its origin”. “Yes?” I said, interesting in knowing more. He turned his head in the direction of the valleys leading to the lowlands, and pointed towards the horizon. “From there, our ancestors came and walked all the valleys until they settled here. Before they used to have settlements by the river and on the mountaintops, and then walked between these places depending on the seasons. But before that, there were two tigers which came from that valley and lived here on these grounds”³⁴. Again he pointed in the same direction towards the closest of the valley passes, leading his finger on a straight line until reaching the community. The trees had once covered this area when there was an abundance of animals, he explained. He told me the story of the rivalry between the two animals and how they ended up killing each other. Afterwards, his ancestors had come. “But the tigers will return”, he said, “in this generation or the next”. Jack had just shared with me one of the original stories about the creation of his community. Now it was different. As Camilo had told me before, frustrated by the loss of game on community grounds, “all the animals have run into the lowlands now; they don’t like people and noise. With the chakras, there are also fewer places to hide”. Both Jack and Camilo had indicated a time the Asháninka had become agricultural cultivators and made the land into chakras.

On our way back to the community, we crossed a small brook leading from the carved gap in the mountainside. We rinsed our faces in the cooling and soothing water. Bruno

³⁴ The Asháninka use the word “tiger” for jaguar.

climbed the slippery rocks further into the carved mountainside to reach the small waterfall. The older boys kept an eye on him, keeping a hand close in case he slipped, as to say that he had yet to learn to become a skillful and knowledgeable Asháninka. “Do you see the snake, señorita Margaret?” he said to me and pointed towards the rocky mountainside. I turned my head in the direction of his finger and saw nothing than the mountainside’s rugged exterior. He climbed further in to the small gap in between the chakras, placing his bare feet on the slippery rocks with careless ease. “Do you see it now?” I squinted and shook my head. He climbed further in and touched a pointy part sticking out. “Here it is! Here are the eyes and the nose and mouth”. His small hand moved across the rock showing the locations of the snake’s facial aspects. Indeed, it looked like a snake reaching out towards us about to attack, although frozen in its position. “This used to be a snake”, Jack explained to me. “Once my sister bathed here, and a boa jumped on her from above. But before it attacked her, it was captured and the snake became rock”. Diego added, “it does that sometimes. The forest will take its preys”. It wasn’t the first time I had heard such stories and had been warned against walking in the dark where spiritual beings could appear and trick me to cross into their world. The forest is something to be feared and respected. “The forest might strike back”, Isha told me once, explaining why I should never walk alone in the dark and why these forces needed to be respected, “It can result in illness or harm. They are dangerous”.

Ley de las Comunidades Nativas and state control

Indigenous people in the Amazonía are arranged in collective groups within communities. A community consists usually of people who see themselves as belonging to the same indigenous group. As a community, they have collective ownership rights to a demarked area of land. The Peruvian state have the sole authority of granting entitlements of communal land (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2010, p. 27). This right was first given to indigenous people in 1974 through *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas y de Desarrollo Agrario de las Regiones de Selva y Ceja de Selva* (Law of Native Communities and the Agricultural Development of the Regions of Selva and Ceja de Selva) and is the only law that supports collective ownership as an indigenous community. *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas* encourages indigenous people to live within a collective. Through the ownership of property, the state encourage indigenous to do agricultural activities. This is established as early as in article 1 in the law, where it states that the laws intentions is to “establish an agrarian structure to contribute to the integral development of Selva and Ceja de Selva” (Congreso de la Republica, 1975, DL 22175 artículo

1; my translation). This law is still the only one in use to define land and grant entitlement for indigenous people in the Amazonía (Chirif & Hierro, 2007, p. 103; Hierro & Surrallés, 2009, p. 34). While San Miguel received entitlement papers in the 1970s, for Alto Purus it may be their location in the periphery of the valley of Villa Rica, and the difficult access due to the mountainous terrain, that has made the entitlement process linger. As a result, Alto Purus lacked the same opportunities as communities located closer to urbanized areas (Chirif & Hierro, 2007, p. 181). Hierro & Surrallés (2009) argues that in the past, the state has justified involvement on indigenous land by claiming indigenous people as “enemies of development” because they have resisted intervention on their lands. Land has been a political and judicial attempt to maintain control of the Amazonía region (2009, p. 25). By defining land as property, placing Amazonian people within certain areas, other areas become open for purchase to bidders interested to invest in agricultural expansion (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, p. 25). Despite this, land rights for the Asháninka through Ley de las Comunidades Nativas has been important to maintain kinship, affinity and friendships in relation to land, as argued in the previous chapter, and to maintain control of land perceived as historically owned, like in Alto Purus. In chapter 5, we will also see that rules eventuated by this law has also created new local leaderships within the communities.

Managing community land

Comuneros are well aware of where their land begins and where it ends, limiting their chakras from those of their neighbors which they can easily point out. This means that they are aware that land also has boarders which constitute the entitlement of the community. In San Miguel, they refer to the closest urban cities of Santa Ana and La Merced as “el pueblo” (the town) and as situated “abajo” (below), indicating their lower geographic location and separating them from the understanding of the community’s placement on the mountain ridge. In the same manner, if they were below and going back to the community, they were going “arriba” (up). This is the same way the Asháninka and the Yanasha refer to in Alto Purus. Alto Purus (upper Purus) is situated on the mountain ridge, while Bajo Purus (lower Purus) is by the river in the gorge. This is the same way they talk about the difference between the highlands and lowlands as “selva alta” and “selva baja”. I never heard anybody refer to the area as “selva central”, unless I was talking to government officials, even if that is the official title of the areas of Perené, Villa Rica, Chanchamayo, Oxapampa and Satipo, used by several authors (Chirif & Hierro, 2007, p. 148; Hierro & Surrallés, 2009, p. 33). The

Asháninka understanding land in relation to each other. Arriba makes no sense without abajo, nor does selva alta without the understanding that there exist a selva baja.

Both of the two communities of San Miguel and Alto Purus do agricultural cultivation, and land is distributed based on access to chakras. Residential families are distributed *parcelas* (land plots). As a collective, the community gives rights to land use of *parcelas* to cultivate. Individual attempts to advance on your own are viewed upon as destructive. Steinert (2003) mentions that during his fieldwork in San Miguel, a comunero's attempt to build houses for tourists was unpopular among other comuneros.

“Entrepreneurship, which is a ‘hurray’ word...in another culture, may easily be a threat in this kind of society” concludes Steinert (2003, p. 45).

While *parcelas* in San Miguel have already been distributed by Miguel, the founding father, when he came in the 1950s, Alto Purus is still accepting new members and are therefore still distributing chakras. Thus, comuneros who are given full access to the community by distributed *parcelas*, must obey community law and participate in community activities. However, there were rarely consequences to the negligence of the rules of participation, even if persons of unwanted behavior were verbally reprimanded in community meetings. Inheriting land is complicated, Steinert remarked, especially when the family has two sons or more (Steinert, 2003, p. 211). Land is usually distributed by the parents to their son, as the Asháninka practice virilocal residence, where the daughters move away and thus own land in the husband's community. Shintsiri's sister, Ariana, whom I presented in the previous chapter, expressed to me her anger and discontent towards her father on my first visit in 2012. He was not willing to distribute *chakra* to her since she was a daughter. She was still unmarried and therefore had no access to land. Her father had decided to divide the land between her brothers. On my return in 2014, she had moved to Alto Purus and was now the most active forerunners for an agricultural project of coffee in the community. The scarcity of land in San Miguel makes few available *parcelas* for the Asháninka now coming of age, even for the sons. The necessity for more land for coming generations is, as mentioned, the main reason the Asháninka have the alliance with the Yanasha of Alto Purus. In Alto Purus, land is abundant. New comuneros are still accepted, and as mentioned in chapter 2, they are given small *parcelas* in the beginning so that the community can follow their progress of agricultural cultivation and adaption into the community as new members.

Land and *territorio* to the Asháninka

We have to presume that people have different ideas of what land means to them. Hierro and Surrallés (Hierro & Surrallés, 2009) argue that indigenous people separate between two views on ownership to land. They call this “indigenous territorial governance”. First, land is judicially owned through entitlement and prevailing laws, and second, the internal relation to land manage how they relate to it in accordance with their worldview. However, focusing only on entitlement papers as the act of ownership produces a contradiction, they argue, because ownership for indigenous people may mean to not only include comuneros, but may also incorporate spiritual beings with whom they share their land with. Indigenous may also see land as extending beyond a physically boarded area, but may also include non-humans worlds, like mentioned in the previous chapter, or circumstances where land is no longer seen as physical in static terms, but as we will see, as viewed upon as processual. Indigenous people see land as intimately connected to their interpretation of the world they live in³⁵ (2009, pp. 26-27). However, the law rarely includes or recognizes these variations, hence making the law system inapt to comprehend how indigenous people relate to land. “Indigenous territorial governance” is the ability of each community to control the acts of change within their own communities. Within such governance, they relate to their own indigenous leaders and with a relation to their land that is different from other local inhabitants of non-indigenous origin. Land is governed internally, relating to local and external matters simultaneously (2009, pp. 26, 27). In the eyes of these authors, land is thus seen as a physical entity, upon where indigenous people manage their relations to each other and to the external factors outside their community.

Anthropologist Chris Hann (1998) refers to the ownership of land and other ‘things’ people see as in their possession, as property. He recognizes that “At the layer of institutional regulation and legislation, property law follows the prevailing ideology of the state...” (1998, p. 27). However, within anthropology, we must try to comprehend the magnitude of ways that property is symbolically as well as culturally important within different contexts, and the ways it becomes important for the people we study. Therefore, he argues for a more inclusive understanding of property as relations as a defining term. Indeed, land is less about people’s relation to a physical entity, and more often about how people relate to each other (Hann, 1998, p. 5). In this understanding of property, land is present as an indicator of these relations, but not the focus of how people interact with each other. However, Hann’s

³⁵ ”Pueblo y Territorio son dos caras de una misma cosa. El Pueblo Indígena es entonces el titular natural de su territorio dentro de la visión indígena” (Hierro & Surrallés, 2009, p. 28)

economic focus where property is liable for exploitation and much as to be exploited, does not recognize social relations where formation and transformation is important.

The sociologist Andrea Brighenti (2006 & 2010) has argued for the need to talk about territory as relational and processual, and thus again make territorialology useful as an operational tool. He defines territory as “the effect of a specific social relation which includes power relations” (2010, p. 57). He does not put emphasis on the necessity of land as physically present, like Hierro and Surrallés (2009), or property as a prerequisite for these relations, like Hann (1998). The material and the immaterial may however become visible within the interaction of social relations. It should be recognized “as an act or practice rather than an object or physical space” (Brighenti, 2010, p. 53). Since territory is a social endeavor, it means that “there can be more than one territory in the same place” (Brighenti, 2006, p. 80). He exemplifies with the city as having many territories, such as offices where different activities play out. He remarks that the nation-state is the most obvious territory there is. Foucault (2004) says that the state is the provider of “disciplinary knowledge”, which Brighenti has termed as the ability to “territorialize a given population within its own framework of sovereignty” (Brighenti, 2010, p. 55). He refers to recent research where territory as an assemblage constituted by authority and rights, is promising in understanding how disciplines of law and social theory might be connected. In this way, he recognizes that the interaction in the encounters between people also includes a dimension of power precluding these social relations. They are managed through boundary-making, he argues, where “Selective inclusion and exclusion combine into series to form an ordering mechanism that becomes the basis for the formation of social groups” (2010, p. 58)

I believe that it can be useful to see the Asháninka’ relation to land as Brighenti (2010) explains the concept of territory. The access to land within the community shows that comuneros relate to each other and to land use within the distribution of parcelas (land plots). As we will see, parcelas that are no longer in use, still remain important to understand how land is still made crucial within the interaction between comuneros, their relation to the land and especially how spiritual beings dominate when land become undifferentiated. Thus, another important aspect is that territory as a practice always includes seeing others in relation to one’s own territory, but as either an intruder or insider. I described this act in the previous chapter through the inclusion and exclusion of same and others, and remarked that this was done through land. However, “territory is not a land but an ensemble of people” (2006: 84). In this chapter, I show how it is also relevant for the Asháninka in relation to land within the context of the community, but especially concerning spirits of monte.

Territorio as parcela, chakra, monte and bosque

The land in San Miguel is divided into personal *parcelas* (land plots) divided among the community members, although still owned collectively. A *parcela* gives land-use right for the purpose of agriculture or housing settlements, and is a specific demarcated area. Each family in the community owns a *parcela* usually for housing settlements in the community center or near the *chakra* where they live, and one or two *parcelas* for the purpose of *chakra*. *Parcela* is not the same as property, since *parcelas* are owned collectively by the community and distributed based upon land-use rights, nor is it land, since land is what I term the complete area of physical borders. However, within a distributed *parcela* the Asháninka have a processual relation to its status as *bosque* and its changes into *chakra* and *monte*.

Parcelas (land plots) are in use when vegetation is removed and the *parcela* is replanted to become *chakra*, at times using the agricultural technique of slash-and-burn to increase the fertility of the soil. In San Miguel, almost all community land, apart from the housing settlements, is made into *chakra*. Before *parcelas* are distributed, the area is understood as being *bosque*³⁶. *Bosque*, as opposed to *parcelas*, have no determined physical borders. *Bosque* indicates an undifferentiated area where trees, animals, flora and fauna grow wild without human intervention. San Miguel is no longer seen as *bosque*, as most of the area is now made into *chakra* or settlements. If the *chakra* is left behind uncultivated and maintained, it will turn into *monte*³⁷. However, the Asháninka speak of it as the process where *chakra* slowly grows back to being undifferentiated.

Lucho, one of the Asháninka who had moved out due to work in the city many years before, had been allowed to maintain ownership of his *parcelas*³⁸. One day, he decided that he would cultivate his *chakra*. “Pero ya está monte mi *chakra*” (“but now my *chakra* is in the condition of *monte*”), he commented. Two weeks later he had arranged paid work to make his *parcela* into *chakra* again. I remarked this to el jefe, who exclaimed to me that “tío Lucho wants to make *chakra* de su *parcela*” (“uncle Lucho wants to make *chakra* of his *parcela*”). When *chakra* turns into *monte*, it is an in-between process of *chakra* becoming slowly undifferentiated again. However, as long as it is considered to be the *parcela* of someone with the intention of agricultural cultivation, it will never go back to be *bosque*. Because when

³⁶ Translates to forest from Spanish.

³⁷ In Spanish, it means the elevation of the natural terrain or a small mountain See also Steinert (2003) page 51 for similar observation.

³⁸ He was also the son of the founding father Miguel, and had once been el jefe. Most of his brother still lived in the community as well. Kinship ties was certainly one of the reasons for being allowed to maintain ownership, but probably also due to his former position as el jefe of the community.

bosque becomes divided into parcelas, it loses its definition as bosque and thus remains monte until it is again cut down and cultivated. The reason for this is that while parcela is understood through personal ownership, bosque, chakra and monte are understood as the status of the parcela in a certain condition.

When I asked one of the younger Asháninka to explain these concepts to me, he said: “When chakra hasn’t been cultivated for a while, we say it has become monte. It wouldn’t make sense to say that the chakra is bosque”. So you can own a parcela as chakra and monte, but since bosque is understood as the condition before it is made into chakra, parcela can never again be bosque. As long as a comunero is not excluded from the community are taken away their parcelas, the owner, like Lucho, will maintain land-use rights. On the other hand, the land in Alto Purus that has not yet been distributed and divided among community members is still considered to be bosque and not parcelas. Thus, in many areas in Alto Purus, it is dangerous to walk. Not only due to wild animals, but also because bosque is seen as inhabited by spiritual others, as we will see below.

When the Asháninka speak their relation to land, they refer to it as *territorio*. Territorio must therefore not be confused with land as physical boarders, but refers to the effect of having access to land and being distributed parcela. Territorio includes the understanding that land is processual and changing into chakra, monte and bosque depending upon if it’s cultivated or left to grow. When the Asháninka say: “we are fighting for our territorio”, it does not only include the land in itself an the right to inhabit land, but rather the right to interact with each other and others in relation to that land. Others also include the spiritual beings with whom they share that land.

Spiritual beings of *monte*

Diego, the son of Lucho, used to tell me that he was afraid to stay in his father’s abandoned house. “I don’t like to sleep alone. Spirits visit me at night. They appear like children and want to play. Sometimes it’s *el Tunchi*. He appears as a small man with a beard, but he is like a child, and will trick you to go to monte with him”. The vegetation around the house of Lucho used to be cultivated, and even though Diego had cut down large parts around the house of the kitchen and the sleeping quarter, he felt uncomfortable to stay alone at night. Sometimes his cousin, Alvaro, would stay with him, or he would stay in the house of his aunt. As the area was secluded, I would sometimes go there to write field notes. However, when my hostess, Isha, found out, she exclaimed frightened; “you should not go there, its not

cultivated. At night its dangerous, there are spirits living nearby”. She concluded that any illness I felt must have been because of time spent there. “You should be careful”, she said, “spirits can make you ill”.

Gow also experienced this among the Piro of the Peruvian lowland Amazonía, where spiritual others may bring humans “sickness and death” (Hierro & Surrallés, 2009, p. 45). Guzmán-Gallegos made the same observation among the Runa in Ecuadorian lowland Amazonía (2010: 46). When I was living in La Resistencia in Alto Purus at the housing settlement of el jefe Shintsiri, I was warned against going outside were vegetation was not cleared properly. “You don’t now what you could encounter”, Ariana would tell me. She was especially worried when I insisted on going to the toilet after dark as the toilet facilities were placed a bit off the housing settlements and included walking through an uncultivated area. She always protested and shook her head in disagreement. Only those skilled men and women who knew the land would venture to hunt and walk at night. Shintsiri was one of the men who used to stay out all night, and come home early in the mornings. I once asked Shintsiri why he did not fear walking in the dark at night for his hunting activities. “They know who I am by now”, he said, referring to the spiritual beings. “They know I am there, but as long as I don’t bother them, they leave me alone”. One evening when I was jokingly assimilating the sounds of what I thought was a late night bird coming from the dark around us, Shintsiri’s other sister cried out to stop me. “You shouldn’t repeat them. They are spirits. They are mocking you, because you are not known to them”, she said to me. The sound continued from the trees all night until morning, which I was told had confirmed their suspicion that the spirits were playing tricks with me to lure me out.

When the sun has set in San Miguel and Alto Purus, the spirits of monte dominate. Therefore most warnings against venturing outside unlit areas are in the evening. When there is no light, it’s hard to separate differentiated area from undifferentiated area. Thus, it turns into the unmanaged and disorderly concept of monte, even if the area during the day is seen as safe. Even trails or chakra or any parts of the community where comuneros will walk during the day will at night be included into peoples’ warnings as monte. Gow describes how Amazonian vegetation often obscures the sight and makes it difficult to see long distances. “The land does not recede away from a point of observation to the distant horizon, for everywhere vegetation occludes the view. In the forest, sight penetrates only a short distance into the mass of trees” (Gow, 1995, p. 55). Unless you are seeing land from above, land is always experienced as close-by and near. In the dark, sight will only be good for very short distances and therefore the dark will seem vaster. It is noticeable that spirits reside in monte.

All places that cannot be seen within a short distance will at night turn into monte. As chakra can never become bosque after cultivation, spirits will not be explained as living in bosque, but rather in monte. Confused by the differences, I asked one of the Asháninka to explain to the concept of spirits in bosque. “Do you mean the spirits of monte?” he asked me. The reason spirits reside in monte may be the same as with chakra not turning back into to bosque. Spirits are defined by the existence of people’s interaction and intervention on land. At the same time, the way chakra becomes monte when there is no human cultivation, spirits will reside in monte when the dark appears. This process of change from chakra to monte and light to dark, where human intervention is withheld, shows that monte is never constant. However, areas where electricity was installed would be safe areas to walk in. People would therefore not mind if I made visits to houses in the community center after nighfall, since each house had a utility pole outside the main building.

Thus, much like the bathrooms created new rules of interaction within each family, electricity influenced the closeness of spiritual beings to the community center. Areas where it would be safe to walk would now be lit with the electricity introduced in the community, while areas in the periphery of the community were still seen as dangerous to walk at night. Areas where other comuneros have let chakra become monte because it has not been cultivated, influence the opinion of other comunero as they will be afraid of approaching areas where spiritual others of monte dominates.

Avoiding the double bind: flexibility as a required mean for change

Ley de las Comunidades Nativas is the only law where indigenous groups can obtain the legal ownership of land distributed by the state. For the state, ownership is not connected to agricultural profit, as the state intended with Ley de las Comunidades Nativas when it was approved in 1974. The law emphasizes the importance of agricultural activities, and thus the incorporation of these groups into the market economy. Such a law continues the historical attempt of the state to incorporate the Amazonía with the rest of country’s economic endeavors (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998), which as mentioned in chapter 2 started with road constructions (Harvey, 2012). In light of Brighenti’s (2010) view on territory, the law is an outcome of territory; hence the effect of a social interaction between indigenous people and the national society. Ley de las Comunidades Nativas may be understood as exercising such disciplinary knowledge to govern a population (2010, p. 54), which I will explain further in the following chapter. However, it is also then worthwhile to consider that the

outcome of social relations is not only the law constituting the framework for the communities, but also how *chakra*, *monte* and *bosque* is the outcome of how land has been distributed through *parcelas* and rules of inheritance, and therefore are also effects of social relations.

The Asháninka see land as connected to relations with same and others, as we saw in the previous chapter, and their relations to *territorio* and spiritual others as we have seen in this chapter. It begs the questions; why is it necessary to obtain legal ownership through the state, like Alto Purus struggle to achieve? Why is it not enough for indigenous groups to accept the attachment to land by their view on ownership to the land they inhabit? This is of course connected to the powerful others; the invaders of colonos and threats of mining, and oil and gas companies that have an interest in the natural resources on indigenous land. As we have seen in chapter 2 and chapter 3, the constant worry for Shintsiri and the most important reason for pursuing entitlement of Alto Purus is the possibility of invasion by colonos, Pluspetrol's Lote 108 and the state's claim of Bosque Sho'llet. The Asháninka and Yanasha face no protection against external invaders in the meeting of these conflicts of interest without the entitlement papers. The state imposes the necessity of entitlement for indigenous people to live together in groups and in relation to the land they claim.

External factors, such as the agricultural endeavors in the relation to the economic market of the cities, powerful others as a threatening counterparts and Ley de las Comunidades Nativas as the legal framework for entitlement, are present as they relate to the national society. It imposes on them what Bateson (1972) calls the "double bind". The term "double bind" has been used to explain situations where people are faced with paradoxical alternatives, where, whatever the outcome, the person is forced to choose between the better of two unsatisfactory choices. It requires that the person involved receive contradicting messages, however choosing to leave the paradox is not optional. A person is forced to choose a certain outcome, but at the same time, forced to choose between the alternatives regulating the wanted outcome (1972, p. 206). The alternatives the Asháninka face as they relate to the national society may be viewed upon as a double bind situation. On the one hand, they are forced to relate to the national society through land. Entitlement processes determines the access to land, while the historical closeness to urbanized areas determine the dependency to the cities by agricultural activities. Participation in relation to the national society is necessary to obtain control of land, but means to subjugate to the rules imposed by the external factors. If they choose not to participate in the obtaining of legal papers or relate

to the society at large, thus choosing the alternative of increased isolation, they will face powerful others invading their territory.

However, as we have seen, despite facing a double bind situation, the Asháninka reinterpret land as a physical entity based on their own conceptions. By adapting to the circumstances, the Asháninka exercise a degree of flexibility. Bateson (1972) defines flexibility as “uncommitted potentiality for change” (1972, p. 505). The balance of maintaining flexibility may be imagined as an acrobat on a wire. Step by step the acrobat is challenged to maintain stability, but at the same time movement of the body, feet and arms requires flexibility. If the acrobat is to freeze his position, he will be unable to uphold the balance and eventually fall. The action of movement may be understood as the potentiality for change, while every step is a new challenge to avoid instability. The continuity of his status is that he is an acrobat on a wire, but at the same time he exerts change through continuous movement forward by carefully placing one step in front of the other (1972, p. 506). We can imagine that no movement will be the same, as each step requires a new challenge to maintain the balance. The acrobat upholds the continuity of his status as an acrobat on the wire through continuous movements of change, and at the same by changing the continuity of his status is upheld through the movement forward. One defines the other; continuity remains through acts of change, and change is dependent upon continuity to move forward. At the same time, change is dependent upon “feedback loops” where trial and errors calibrate the habits of rights and wrongs. According to the author, such learning is always depended upon the context, since “all biological systems (organisms and social or ecological organizations of organisms) are capable of adaptive change. But adaptive changes take many forms, such as response, learning, ecological succession, biological evolution, cultural evolution etc., according to the size and complexity of the system which we choose to consider” (1972, p. 273-274). Bateson remarks that in a civilization where healthy ecology, i.e the environment, shall match the growth of progress through technological means and population increase, it demands a high degree of flexibility. Healthy ecology includes the ability to combine “the necessary wisdom in the human population” and at the same time take into consideration “computers and complex communication devices” (1972, p. 503). Thus, Bateson acknowledges that an adaptive understanding of change by being flexible is a requisite to move forward in time.

In the next chapter, I will continue this argument by explaining how the Asháninka understand knowledge produced within their community and the knowledge learned from the interaction with the national society, as complementary forms of knowledge. They invite

other forms of knowledge to enhance the ability to be flexible in relation to external factors and to continue a process of change. This explains how infrastructure and educational scholarships through the donation is not seen as destructive to the continuity of the Asháninka in relation to their land, but rather as an asset. Knowledge manifests in local leadership and is upheld through them. This act of inclusion shows the ability of the Asháninka to navigate within circumstances of change, and refines the argument that change is not necessarily seen as the opposite of continuity, but that they are interdependent upon each other.

CHAPTER 5 HARVESTING KNOWLEDGE AND BUILDING NETWORKS

The Asháninka make use of knowledge to navigate in the relation to their community and the Peruvian national society. In this chapter, I will start by discussing the educational investments that the Asháninka have decided to spend to educate the community youth through scholarships. I will explain how they view knowledge obtained through education in school and universities as fundamentally different than the knowledge they obtain growing up as Asháninka in their community. However, they are interconnected, since including knowledge from the external becomes a mean to maintain *Cosmovisión Asháninka* (Asháninka worldview). The persons responsible to be in control and transmitting knowledge are anchored in local leadership through el jefe, el Fundador and the Teacher. These positions are trusted positions, given based on vote, historic background and previous education. For the sake of order, I will refer to educational knowledge as the knowledge procured through schooling in the community, and in the cities. Young Asháninka may obtain educational knowledge through scholarships supported by the donation. I refer to *Cosmovisión Asháninka* as the specific kind of knowledge learned through childhood by parents in the household. Such knowledge means to learn how to be a comunero and how to become an Asháninka. I will also refer to knowledge as leadership by those who have secured privileged positions as local leaders.

Knowledge as a concept

Barth (1995) encourages showing more humility in grasping the knowledge presented by the people we study. He argues for a more specific description of cultural phenomena within anthropology, and turns to the concept of knowledge to better explain how people interact with each other. He defines knowledge as “what people employ to interpret and act on the world: feeling as well as thoughts, embodied skills as well as taxonomies and other verbal models” (Barth, 1995, p. 66). Knowledge should be described as the act of engagement, and thus make it less abstract in its description. He makes the point that knowledge should not be

viewed as different, but rather as similar or the same, since knowledge is constantly reinterpreted in new settings (1995, p. 67). Arce and Long (1992) defines knowledge as “constituted by the ways in which people categorize, code, process and impute meaning to their experiences” (1992, p. 211). They agree that knowledge may be integrated in such a way that it can acquire another importance than what it had initially. Knowledge is produced and reproduced within what they refer to as life-worlds, that are context dependent and experienced by groups or individuals as a reality they assume to be true without the need question it (1992, p. 212) The purpose is, Long (1992) argues, to understand how knowledge is transmitted and negotiated (1992, p. 5)³⁹.

Educational knowledge learned at school and university

In the communities of San Miguel and Alto Purus, knowledge is transmitted and learned through the education at home and through the public or private school system. While education at home is knowledge specifically on the customs of the Asháninka and Yanasha, the school system follow the national educational plan. The Asháninka view the knowledge transmitted at home as different than the one transmitted in school, and as serving a different function. However, there is a general concern much debated in the newspapers during my stay, about the low national level of education in Peru, especially in the rural areas (Semizo, 2014). That the teachers themselves lack the necessary skills to teach well, finds their low level of their own education by their educators (Chirif & Hierro 2007: 163). Steinert mentions that the “the low quality of rural teachers was a topic, which should often be mentioned by my informants, but not easily talked about in San Miguel” (Steinert, 2003, p. 225). In my experience, even though teachers would often come late, people would rarely speak badly about them.

As mentioned in chapter 2, to introduce *segundaria* in the community was a topic *el jefe* eagerly promoted in the beginning of the school year after the new school building was finished. To have *segundaria* is a prerequisite to study at the university in Peru, but it is not infrequent to come across youth who had dropped out. This is often because of the lack of

³⁹ Norman Long has writes about his work in highland Peru that “...my Peruvian research experience buttressed my belief that no sociological or historical study of change could be complete without (1) a concern for the ways in which different social actors manage and interpret new elements in their life-worlds; without (2) an analysis of how particular groups or individuals attempt to create space for themselves in order to carry out their own ‘projects’ that may run parallel to, or perhaps challenge, government programs or the interests of other intervening parties; and without (3) an attempt to show how these organizational, strategic and interpretive processes can influence (and themselves be influenced by) the broader context of power and social action” (Long 1992: 33).

money in the families to pay for education and the need for the children's participation at home. The parents would boast about the accomplishment of finishing secondary schooling, and celebrate by expensive *promociones* (graduate parties) at the end of the final school year. These *promociones* would be expensive and families would put themselves in debt to be able to carry them through⁴⁰. During my stay, all the children in the community went to school. The school educators have started to allow *cushma* in school and classes in Asháninka and Yanasha. On Monday and Friday, the children are encouraged to use uniform or *cushma* for the morning assemblies in the schoolyard. Before the children were not allowed to wear *cushma* in San Miguel and the teachers did not follow the educational guidelines by teaching Asháninka. Most of the curriculum then was educational curriculum from Lima, and he emphasizes the low quality of educational skills among the teachers (Steinert, 2003, p. 225). Today, two of the three teachers in San Miguel are of either Yanasha or Asháninka origin, and the language Asháninka has become a regular subject in school. In both elementary school and secondary school, the children of colonos attend from neighboring locations. There was never made any negative remark that colono children attended the school, and *el jefe* explained to me that it was in the nature of the Asháninka to be inclusive. I suspect that they were probably also accepted with deliberate intent so as to reach the necessary number of required registered students, which is what qualifies them to receive a professional teacher administered by the local authorities.

Besides the school as one of the infrastructural projects implemented by the community through the donation, *comuneros* has also decided that money should be put aside to secure university or college degrees for the community youth. The seven young Asháninka who had or were doing their education through the donation during my stay, were professions of agronomy and agro- and aquacultural production, automotive mechanics, business administration and executive secretary. Most of the young studying were male, since as mentioned, many of the young women had moved out due to marriage or *segundaria* in the cities. One of the young male wanted to use his education in agronomy to teach *comuneros* in San Miguel to improve their techniques of agricultural practices. Ari, who had been the first to get a driver's license and a year's education in car mechanics, was the community's only driver and secured that *comuneros* would get their agricultural products to be sold in the city of

⁴⁰ It's a struggle for most parents to find suitable "madrinas" or "padrinas" (godparent) to pay for either the whole or parts of the cost of the graduate party. They would have the habit of asking visiting tourists, even though they knew that the tourist would probably not be able to participate in the graduation party, as is the custom for a godparent.

Santa Ana. However, knowledge learned in school and at home is viewed as equally valuable and also as complementary among the Asháninka. Parents do not contest the children's opportunity to go to school to learn; indeed educational knowledge is in all its aspects seen as a strength.

Cosmovisión Asháninka

"First I'm Asháninka and then I'm Peruvian", explained Ari to me when I asked him how he described himself. The cosmovision Asháninka is communal universe of the Asháninka and a way of thinking about their surroundings. They obtain knowledge from childhood through the interaction between a child and the parent. The parents and the community are their most important sources as they grow up to become comuneros and indigenos. The first years are experienced through eyes of the mother, as Steinert (2003) remarks, where they will be introduced to behavior within the community and to the customs. "The kind of practices and environment children are faced with in a community like San Miguel, supplement and enhance the teaching their mothers give them. The children experience one harmonious, all inclusive, social world where everyone is known and easily accessible" (2003, p. 67). With age, they will have more responsibility and help out in the house. Although, it makes them well equipped on how to live in a community, it makes them unknowledgeable on how to face the "expectations of individual preferences, goal-orientedness, and utility-maximizing behavior" (2003, p. 68) of the cities. Some of the young Asháninka who had experience from living and working in the cities would tell me how they experienced their first meeting with urbanized areas. "I wasn't prepared on what Lima actually was", explained Diego, "you know, we are just Asháninka, we grow up with a different kind of knowledge".

The Asháninka refer to their knowledge as *Cosmovisión Asháninka* (Asháninka worldview). It is much like how Santos-Granero talks about the Piaroa relation to environment, namely "a single cosmos composed of multiple worlds in which plants and animals, gods and spirits interact between themselves and with human in very much the same way as humans interact among themselves" (Santos-Granero, 1986). Besides being an ideological construct, it pertains also in practical knowledge of stories, songs, skill in playing instruments, spiritual belief and skills acquired through the interaction with nature by hunting and agriculture. From a young age children learn to have an independent relation to the land. They obtain knowledge about agricultural work, medicinal uses of plants, skills in hunting animals, collecting fruits and reading trails. They learn to respect nature's abundances and boundaries. When San

Miguel has visiting tourists, they children enjoy accompanying them and the designated guide. They will often educate visitors on the function of different plants, or teach about animal footprints. Their knowledge bases widen with age and become progressively refined through experience and maturity, which become obvious to me as I got to know different age groups. With time, they walk alone without their parent's supervision. Both young Asháninka girls and boys will learn this knowledge, although boys are more often taken along to work in *chakra* with their fathers, while the girls are more easily expected to learn house chores by the mothers. However, as they reach adolescence, girls also occasionally help out in the *chakra* and the boys help out in the house with heavier workloads like the fetching firewood.

Protected knowledge: stories and plants

Knowledge concerning spiritual beings and medicinal plants is less talked about than other knowledge within the Cosmovisión Asháninka. I refer to it as protected knowledge, as it is rarely shared with outsiders. Having little trust in outsiders goes back to mistrust and lost promises by colonos, local politicians and other leaders. I mentioned how mistrust had been created with the owner of Chanchamayo Highland Coffee in chapter 3 due to the way the community had been imaged on a TV-show in Lima.

Storytelling and medicinal plants is knowledge that individual comuneros may possess. Stories will on occasion be told by walking on their land or in certain gathering, but rarely retold in other settings. In chapter 4, I explained the moment on the viewpoint where Jack told the story about the tigers that had met where San Miguel was founded. I came to learn that the story had been shared in that exact moment, never to be shared with me again. When I asked Jack the following day if he could retell the story about the tigers, he shook his head and walked away. Protected knowledge concerns especially these stories of community's origin and relation to spiritual others.

Shamans are also important carriers of this knowledge. In the community, no one consider themselves to be a shaman. "We don't possess that kind of knowledge here", said el fundador (the founder) to me. Some comuneros would use a shaman they knew from another community. However, the shaman would not work without a cost. This made him a topic of much skepticism. Diego explained that some people believe that "a true shaman would never reveal his shaman abilities by working outside his house". According to him, people believed that the power of the shaman was connected to the home, and that knowledge as a shaman was an inherited privilege, obliging them to refuse pay. The shaman competes with *brujería*

(witchcraft). A *brujo* or *bruja* (witch) are seen as dangerous because they are able to place curses on other comuneros that might make them sick or “tener mala suerte” (to have bad luck). If a curse has been placed on a person, it may be cured by extensive treatments by a shaman, which will be the first person they turn to for treatment. However, for the Asháninka there is no contradiction in seeing a city doctor if the shaman’s treatment doesn’t work. “Some illnesses can only to be treated with operations”, el jefe explained to me. According to him, treatment would depend upon the seriousness of the illness. A curse could grow to become cancer. During my stay, the community of San Miguel had a death in the family; one of the elderly comuneros and daughter of Miguel. When I asked people what she had suffered from, some believed it to have been cancer, while other meant that it was brujería. One Asháninka woman explained to me in a low voice on our way to the funeral. She was looking around to make sure no one was listening. “They say it was only cancer, but I think it was brujería”. Thus, cancer may originate by itself or progressively through a curse. The one doesn’t necessarily obscure the other, just like the choice of treatments depend on the seriousness of the illness. However, the Asháninka will still seek the shaman first to make sure. “If the treatment of the shaman doesn’t work, then we know that it needs to be treated by a doctor in the city”, el jefe said. Since Asháninka would not see the city doctors unless they thought they need operations, its liable to believe that the shaman was also considered a cheaper option. However, the Asháninka believe that plants may cure most illnesses.

Knowledge concerning plants is maintained especially with the women in knowing how to cure illnesses, however Shintsiri was also proud in possessing this knowledge. Knowledge about plant is kept as secrets within the closest circle of family, and is inherited through the parents. It is passed the same way as knowledge on how to become Asháninka. However, it might seem that their relation to this knowledge as protected is changing. For a period of time, I followed a project aided by three French volunteers living in San Miguel and financed by the French organization Solidaire in the community of Bajo Kimiriki. The project was the construction of a new hospital that would practice only with medicinal plants by the supervision of local shamans and *sabios* (translates as those who knows). Both female and male comuneros signed up to work as sabios in this hospital, depending upon the knowledge on treatment they believed to possess. Many of whom I talked to seem skeptical to such a project, claiming that some were frauds.

Knowledge placed: three forms of leadership

Local leaders have the delegated power by comuneros to make decisions concerning the community's welfare. The Asháninka trust three forms of leaders to administer the community's relation to the national society, to maintain the Cosmovisión Asháninka and to teach the necessary skills to be able to manage the community and imposed external factors. Cepek (2008) shows similar aspect among how Cofán people of the Ecuadorian Amazon on how they relate to people outside their community through dependency and necessity to commodities. To be dependent upon Western commodities is not a choice that contradicts the "opa" ideal, the value system of the group. To fulfill opa is to seek a better life, and does not refer to a long-lost past, but rather embraces the political and social circumstances of the life they lead in relation to other groups, and as Cepek writes, "create a space for Cofán life in the contemporary world order" (2008, pp. 349, 343). At the same time, local leaders, such as shamans, become the way in which "Cofán people explain their choice to progress on the shamanic path as the desire to see, to know, and to cure" (2008, p. 344). Shamans are mediators between Cofán community and the Ecuadorian society (2008, p. 347). Shamans gaining power as local leaders has also been described by Santos-Granero (1986), who points out that ideological constructs, that is "the ways in which people represent their social (power) relations and how they explain them and give them content" (1986, p. 660), is established through acts of production and reproduction among the Amazonian Piaroa . He talks about two sets of processes; firstly the relations between people, and secondly, relations between people interacting with the environment, become evident. The Ruwang, the Piaroa shaman leaders, carry out activities where they relate to the environment on the one hand, and the society on the other. It is the responsibility of the ruwang to ensure the well-being of the individuals and the group (1986, p. 662).

Evan Killick (2007) acknowledges that we can no longer talk about only one type of Amazonian leadership, but that we must understand Amazonian groups based on their notion of leadership. In his work among the lowland Peruvian Ashéninka, he shows how an egalitarian relation to other comuneros still encourages informal leadership among its population. He argues that the reason people are willing to follow leaders who are seen as outsiders, is to maintain the egalitarian relations within the group (2007, p. 472).

Anthropologist Dan Rosengren (2015) has shown how different leadership can be as he separates between those leaders "who have been appointed according to systems alien to the Matsigenka, and those who have achieved their position in accordance with the Matsigenka

system” (1987, p. 176); thus distinguishing formal leaders, *curacas* and *presidentes*, from informal leaders, the heirs of the *tinkamintsi* among the Matsiguengua of Peruvian lowland Amazonía. Curacas held an imposed position by missionaries as mediators between missionaries and the Matsiguengua population, although some of them often enjoyed leadership positions within the community as well. The Presidente is the official leader appointed through Ley de las Comunidades Nativas, thus also imposed externally, and holds the representative position of the community (1987, pp. 177-185). In the Asháninka communities, he is legally recognized as *el jefe*, which I will explain below. The informal leaders are not recognized by the law and have no formal political position, but “respect shown him is, thus, also a sign of submission and an acknowledgment of the members’ dependence upon him” (1987, p. 186).

The Asháninka see knowledge from the Peruvian national society as an asset, which is better included than excluded from the community. Indeed, knowledge obtained from the Peruvian national society also strengthens local leadership within the community. As Cepek (2008) points out, although there is an awareness of the difference in comparison with the exterior society, interaction and incorporation of commodities, is not seen as threatening (2008, p. 335). I suggest that in the case of San Miguel, incorporation of services, like infrastructure and education, must be seen in the same manner. Thus, infrastructure and education is a way of harvesting knowledge from the Peruvian national society to achieve greater insight of knowledge, such as explained by the shamans. In this way, as pointed out by Santos-Granero (1986), the Asháninka produce and reproduce themselves continuously. This is because the Asháninka accept, like the Cofán and Piaroa, that they relate to the land within their community, and the national society at the same time.

Inspired by the distinctions of leadership made by Rosengren (1986), I will put forward leadership as understood from the two communities of my field. In San Miguel and Alto Purus, the power to relate to internal and external affairs, as well as how knowledge concerning the internal and external is transmitted through three leaders; *el jefe*, *el fundador* and the teacher. In the two communities, these three leadership positions are viewed upon by comuneros as leaders who obtain a higher level of knowledge.

El jefe

El jefe of San Miguel was a quiet and rather shy man, and although comuneros would comment that he wasn’t the most prominent leadership figure, he praised him for his work on

education and management of the donation in the community. Shintsiri, el jefe of Alto Purus, has been elected as the first Asháninka of the community. He was chosen because the Yanesha saw him as the most capable person to secure the entitlement of the community. To me, he seemed to have the stubbornness to accomplish such a job, and is a patient person in even confrontations with Yanesha who at times doubted his intentions, but impatient in his dealings with the bureaucratic system. His stubbornness was his goal minded attitude and his convictions, especially since he was the Asháninka who really expressed a desire to live more isolated in Alto Purus. Due to the vast distance between Bajo Purus, where the young population of Yanesha had settled, and La Resistencia, where Shintsiri lived, few Yanesha felt that Shintsiri was available enough as el jefe. So in Bajo Purus, they relied more on the local Yanesha teacher, as explained below.

The position of el jefe is historically an imposed position through the regulations of Ley de las Comunidades Nativas (see Reglamento de DL22175 artículo 22), as described in chapter 2, and serves the same function as Rosengren's description of the Presidente among the Matsiguengua. Like he suggests, leadership may often depend more on the characteristics of a person than their ability of leadership (1987, p. 161), which is probably why most comuneros would describe el jefe of San Miguel as a kind and patient man, rather than a good leader. The position is chosen for a three-years period at a time until he is re-elected or another member takes his place. There is a written community rule that el jefe shall not maintain his position more than two terms, meaning six years all together, although in San Miguel they have not sustained this rule in practice. In December 2014, they re-elected el jefe for a third term. The reasons, el jefe told me, is that there are few that are willing to do the extensive workload without the possibility to work in the chakra, but although people talked about the election of the new el jefe during my stay, people expressed the desire to keep him on.

Like described above, el jefe, like the presidente of the Matsiguengua, has an in-between position as mediator between the community and the local authorities (Rosengren, 1987, p. 184), as the community's contact to local authorities through registration and maintenance of community records on the number of comuneros and schoolchildren. Besides maintaining this relation externally, is also responsible for solving internal problems that threatens the community's wellbeing and security. This includes ensuring education for the children and youth, which in the case of el jefe of San Miguel, was strengthening by his interest in the topic as an educated teacher. This is of course known among comuneros, and although he does not teach do this his position as el jefe, his advices about investment on education was highly valued. He is thus one of the leading figures in promoting the changes

of infrastructure, especially the school building, and the investments in educational scholarships. His legitimacy is based on acceptance by comuneros, and remains in power throughout his term as long as he is seen as able to fulfill these capabilities requested by his position. The power of el jefe is extensive, as his signature is final and therefore may give access to invasion by powerful other. It is not uncommon in communities in the area that internal conflicts erupt where el jefe had decided to put aside collective interest in preference of his own. On my departure from Peru, I heard that this was what had happened in Bajo Kimiriki where the hospital was in construction, where el jefe had signed off papers accepting exploration of oil by Pluspetrol in the community.

El fundador

In San Miguel, although not in Alto Purus, el jefe is supported by, although do not formally rule next to el fundador (the founder). He is the symbolic representative of the community. He is not elected but as been chosen among the son's of the founder Miguel. According to him, he was the only son that was interested in the position. El Fundador is a complaisant man, but never receives any critiques of this like el jefe, most likely because he does to have a political function. His responsibilities are to transmit knowledge concerning the history and stories of the community. He is seen as the most knowledgeable on storytelling, and would always rise to the occasion with stories in communal gatherings. He keeps in close contact with el jefe about decisions concerning the community, and is therefore always placed alongside el jefe at the desk of the Junta Directiva (community board, see chapter 2). He is usually asked to speak, a privilege only given to those of status, while other comuneros must officially ask el jefe to speak.

The teacher

Due to the low educational level in Peru where few Peruvians, especially in the Amazonía, will have the possibility to continue to do a university degree, higher level of education is seen as an achievement. Teachers are therefore also seen as obtaining more knowledge than other community members, specifically because of these university degrees. On the day we celebrated Dia de los Profesores (Teachers' Day), people were bringing food and gifts to celebrations that lasted for four days. When I asked my hostess to explain to me what we were celebrating, she said: "We parents are celebrating the wonderful job the teachers do. They are educated and smart people".

The Yanesha teacher in Alto Purus was a serious man who the Yanesha in the community respected. He was the most knowledgeable person in the community on the history of their territory, and thus obtained a similar position as *el fundador*, although they never made the distinction. His physical appearance also separated him from the crowd; he was much taller than most Yanesha and people jokingly called him four-eyes because he was the only one in the community wearing glasses. In community meetings, he would often seem to talk the role of the representative leader of the Yanesha. At one point during my stay, I even heard people talking about him replacing *el jefe* of Alto Purus, because they were unsatisfied about the slow progress of obtaining the entitlement. However, among the Asháninka living in *la Resistencia*, his constant absence was seen as a loss for the education of the Yanesha children in Bajo Purus. According to the teacher, he was doing paperwork and attending meetings as the president of the newly formed local organization OPIYAT in the city of Villa Rica. This lack of participation on the part of teacher would leave the children without classes for days. Some community members thought it necessary to find a new teacher to carry on with the lessons, although they found this difficult to do due to his respected persona. It was far more often suggested that he should step down on his other responsibilities than as a teacher. At the same time, Shintsiri expressed that finding teacher willing to work in such an isolated rural area and with a Yanesha background, might be difficult.

Infrastructure and knowledge as change

Hierro & Surrallés (2009) remarks that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the ILO 169 Convention confirms the recognition of indigenous' rights to determine how and if they want to change their community (2009, pp. 18-19). However, as we saw in chapter 2, this right has often been contested in Peru through *Ley de las Comunidades* weakening their legitimacy, and the continuous struggle for many indigenous groups in the Amazonía to obtain legal ownership to their land. At the same time, the threatening counterpart of powerful others, where state legalizes concessions to mining, oil and gas companies to do exploration in the Amazonía, makes it increasingly difficult.

James Scott (1998) has shown how implementing large state projects in a society without taking into consideration local knowledge may cause disastrous results. Penelope Harvey (2012) on the other hand has shown that the road construction in Peru was a much wanted project by locals and the state alike. These were infrastructural projects with the intention to control land as a part of state-making. Roads were built to connect people and

places, like it did in Chanchamayo where the road from the capital to Selva Central became important for the economic activity of the region (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998). Harvey shows that it became the site for interaction between people, and in their relation to the state. However, that it was the effects of the road building that made people protest and not necessarily the road itself. She also makes the point that even though places are connected, it doesn't necessarily mean that places become integrated. She exemplifies this with the road block in Bagua in 2009, where Amazonian people protested against President Alan García after granting laws that increased extraction of mining and oil by international companies on Amazonian indigenous territories (2012, p. 84). The anthropologist Hanne Veber (1998) remarks that it has become a tendency to see change among indigenous peoples within a process of homogenization to the exterior national society, and that "indigenous populations are seldom recognized as subjects engaged in innovative projects of their own making" (1998, p. 382). Thus, social analysis and development discourse have imagined indigenous peoples as adaptive to change mainly introduced by the non-indigenous migrant population. In her empirical example of the Pajonal Ashéninka, Veber shows that throughout history, the Ashéninka has, on the other hand, welcomed "foreign knowledge" (1998, p. 396), which was offered by missionaries through education and has not been seen upon as contradictory. I have referred to this as educational knowledge to explain these external factors among the Asháninka.

As mentioned before, Brian Larkin (2013) defines infrastructure as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space" (2013, p. 328). He makes the point that "infrastructure are matter that enable the movement of other matter" (2013, p. 329). In this way, infrastructure becomes part of a larger network, where each connection defines the other. Light could thus be seen as electricity and connecting people beyond community borders; bathrooms as pipes where water connects the different parts of the community internally; and the school building as a site for learning for children and young. The donation has facilitated this infrastructure through electricity, a school building and bathrooms.

When Larkin describes infrastructure as "the flow of goods", it might suggest the transmission of electricity and light, and material equipment to build a school and bathrooms in San Miguel. At the same time, it is also "the flow of...people". The community is connected to other people working in Electrocentro and in the cities through increased dependency. The school and the introduction of *segundaria* has also increased the number of people coming to the community, especially children of *colono* who attend the school, as

well as increased contact with the local missionary Liv Haug. The intentions have also been to increase future increase of satisfied turistas to improve their wellbeing when visiting the community, by the introduction of the bathrooms. It has been shown how these infrastructural projects have created new habits relating to these bathroom, and in relating to light and dark as spiritual beings of monte become dangerous. Infrastructure has also been a “flow of ideas” by investing in education through the new school building, and by introduction of secundaria. Scholarships, on the other hand, have been introduced to harvest complementary aspects of knowledge for the community. In this way, comuneros have been in control of how change has been implemented through infrastructural projects and educational investments by the use of the donation. It is a part of an intertwined network where “infrastructure in this sense is a kind of mentality and way of living in the world” (Larkin, 2013, p. 331).

***Seguir adelante*⁴¹ through social navigation**

When the Asháninka talk about change, they say it’s a necessity. “We have to change to *seguir adelante* (continue forward)”, said el jefe to me. “Infrastructures bring about change, and through change they enact progress, and through progress we gain freedom” (Larkin, 2013, p. 332). However, I would add that through progress the Asháninka believe they gain continuity. The idea of progress has often been connected with improvements through infrastructure “to define civilization itself” and thus execute projects like road building and electricity the focus of change (2013, p. 332). Historically in Peru, progress has been issued by the state through road construction and implementations of laws like Ley de las Comunidades Nativas (Chirif & Hierro, 2007; Gray, 1998), as argued in chapter 2 and 3. Progress for the Asháninka does not mean to change to become something better or different, and is not compared to something that was or something that should become. Indeed, it means to continue forward as the same, that is; *seguir adelante*. Such an idea becomes evident in what el fundador said to me concerning the change within the community; “Even though we change, we will always be Asháninka”. How do you change, but remain the same? Remaining the same is anchored in their relations to other Arawakan groups and others, as explained in chapter 3, and the *comosvisión* Asháninka, in chapter 4. While infrastructural projects and educational investments are understood as changing to obtain progress, it is connected the idea of *seguir adelante* or rather continue forward with the continuity of being

⁴¹ Astrid Stensrud (2004) has used the term “salir adelante” (to get ahead) to explain how poor women in Peru make use of individual and collective strategies to improve their living conditions. The Asháninka talk about change in a similar term, however as “*seguir adelante*” (continue forward).

Asháninka in the connection with their land. To have progress by changing, means that to seguir adelante.

Henrik Vigh (2009) has cornered the term “social navigation” to define “how people act in difficult or uncertain circumstances and in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions” (2009, p. 419). He agrees with Bateson that people adjust according to the experiences and expectations through what Bateson referred to as “feedback loops” (1972, pp. 273-274). Like the acrobat on the wire, social navigation acquires the ability to have balance and be flexible (Bateson 1972; Vigh 2009 & 2010). Education might be seen as such a possibility to create possibilities for social navigation (Vigh, 2010, p. 146), he remarks, just as the scholarships introduced by the community of San Miguel. However the degree of flexibility is always controlled by a degree of power. Vigh explains it as social forces from which “we move in relation to the push and pulls, influence and imperatives” (2009, p. 432). Such “push and pulls” is what I have referred to as external forces. The donation in itself might be viewed upon as such. However, Vigh also points to a third dimension of social navigation, namely that it is “motion within motion”, meaning that the person move within settings which are themselves moving. People exercise adaption by relating to change in relation to the context, and therefore two actions happening simultaneously. He argues that it becomes necessary to consider the people we relate to, and that it is here that flexibility and the ability to adapt to the circumstances becomes important. To exercise social navigation may become even more important as we continue to feel the impacts of globalization and economic instability, he remarks (2009, pp. 422, 425)

The Asháninka relate to change like Vigh explains “social navigation”. First, it demands a degree of flexibility to constantly change and adapt. As I have shown before, just like the Asháninka were historically able to adapt to steel axes (Barclay & Santos-Granero, 1998, pp. 35-37), they are now able to adapt to new external factors influencing their community to change. However, this time they are in control of their own change through navigating and finding new solutions. At the same time, they know that are in a “motion within motion” as the Peruvian state legalizes laws and regulation which impacts them, but which feels external to their own lives within the community.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis has taken as a starting point the understanding of what change means to the Asháninka, and how it's understood as maintaining control of their continuity as indigenous in relation to their land. It tries to explain why the Asháninka implement change which transforms the community through infrastructure and sends the young population to be educated in the cities away from the community; and despite this, procure more land through an alliance with the Yanasha. It has argued against the idea that change for the Asháninka means to be either “acculturated” or “traditional”, just because they relate to external factors. I claim that “double bind” posed by the Peruvian state and external factors are for example the entitlement process within the bureaucratic system for Alto Purus, and Ley de las Comunidades Nativas and the dependency on the city markets for San Miguel. They avoid a situation of “double bind” because they uphold continuity through change. Thus, despite I Peruvian state's attempt to include Selva Central into the country's economic endeavors of road construction, infrastructure and laws to regulate property, the Asháninka exercise adaption and flexibility in the relation to change, and that they are therefore able to be in control of change imposed by external factors. Change is embraced because the Asháninka believe that to maintain continuity as indigenous in relation to their land, they must seguir adelante. This is term they use to explain how continuity and change means to continue forward. Indeed, to continue refers to the continuity of being indigenous Asháninka, while forward is a movement that implies change.

Change is infrastructural projects, educational investments and the alliance with the Yanasha of Alto Purus. I have emphasized throughout the thesis the importance of land in relation to this change. In chapter 2, land is described as access. In San Miguel, access means to invest in infrastructural projects on the land, while Alto Purus struggle and is limited in obtaining the rights and legal access to land. Although the Asháninka imagine a time when the Amazonía was not divided into property through collective ownership, they have also here shown the ability to be adaptive to rules and regulations through the state's law system. This becomes obvious as they use land to include and exclude people based on sameness and otherness. Here land becomes the outset for restrictions and opportunities in relations to other people. Those who are the same are viewed as belonging to an imagined community where despite physical distances, the indigenous groups who see themselves as similar in language and customs connect. They intermarry and enter into alliances with those they view as the

same. I emphasized that they are familial same, understood by the Asháninka as comuneros, Nación Asháninka and nuestros hermanos. On the other hand, you have the people who the Asháninka view as different and powerful. While powerful others, represented through the extension of state through mining, and oil and gas companies and dangerous others, that is to say the spiritual being, are always kept at a distance. Colonos, on the other hand, are seen as familial others with a their double perception as invaders of indigenous land and possible marriage partners. How they are accepted, depends completely on the community's decision on who has access to land. I also argued that turistas are understood as welcomed others, who are not seen as neither dangerous nor powerful, but rather as useful in improving the economic condition of the household and to expand their own knowledge. At the same time, because they are not invaders and do not stay on a permanent basis, they are welcomed rather than feared.

Chapter 3 has shown that the Asháninka constantly include and reinterpret relations within same and others, and it is therefore also a testimony of the ability of the Asháninka to relate to changing circumstances. I continued in chapter 4 to argue for how Asháninka see land and territorio as conceptually different, but still closely intertwined through the processual relation to parcela, bosque, chakra and monte. They call this relation to land for *terrotorio*. Through this concept, and not through Ley de las Comundiades Nativas, the Asháninka create ownership to land. Concurrently, they share this ownership with spiritual beings of monte. This implies that receiving entitlement, as Alto Purus struggle to obtain, is only one way of achieving ownership, and does not include the Asháninkas own term on how ownership is created. Besides social relations and land, the Asháninka also view knowledge as important to change. Knowledge is seen as complementary, which means that procuring educational scholarships for young Asháninka, is viewed as an advantage to the community. Knowledge produced through upbringing in relation to parents is seen as learning the Cosmovisión Asháninka. Cosmovisión Asháninka is difficult to access for outsiders, especially because they regulate how they share certain parts of the knowledge. I have termed this knowledge as protected knowledge, pointing specifically to stories connecting the community to its origin and the coexisting relation to spiritual others. Knowledge concerning the preparation of medicinal plants is also protected. The reason for this is the worry that it might be misused. Knowledge in the community is represented, protected and transmitted through leadership positions. I mention specifically el jefe, el fundador and the teacher as important formal and informal leaders, although I also recognize that the shaman and brujería remain important to the Asháninka, even if they are not present in the community at all times.

Knowledge is connected through infrastructural projects to create networks and dependencies beyond community borders. I suggest that the Asháninka practice flexibility within the idea of social navigation, where they constantly find new solutions to seguir adelante.

Thus, by being flexible and adaptable in relation to others, to land and to the implementation of knowledge, the Asháninka are able to preserve their continuity. I have suggested, and consequently titled this thesis, with the argument that change is seen as a way to maintain continuity as indigenous Asháninka, and at the same time continuity is maintained through actions of change. In this way they are able to seguir adelante. It insinuates the idea that continuity and change are not separate from each other, but instead dependent upon each other. It is a paradox that for the Asháninka the continuity of customs is upheld through the practices of change, and thus that change is made important through the need to maintain continuity.

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