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# Emberá Indigenous Tourism and the Trap of Authenticity: Beyond Inauthenticity and Invention

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## ABSTRACT

*Prompted by tourist commentary that describes an Emberá community in Panama as “inauthentic” or “invented,” I examine the limitations of these concepts when used to refer to cultural practices of indigenous communities. To escape from a limiting, singular vision of authenticity, I argue, attention should be paid to the multiple and overlapping meanings of the authentic as these are negotiated in particular contexts. In the case of Emberá indigenous tourism, the tourists’ search for an authenticity uncorrupted by modernity inspires indigenous articulations of the authentic related to diverse sets of cultural practices not only in the past, but also in the present. Acknowledging this complexity can set us free from the trap of a singularly conceived authenticity. [Keywords: Authenticity, invention of tradition, culture revitalization, indigenous tourism, Emberá]*

## Introduction

Parara Puru is an Emberá community in the Chagres National Park, a short driving distance from the Panama Canal, which receives and entertains tourists on a full-time basis. Work invested in indigenous tourism is the main occupation of its inhabitants, who have learned how to introduce

their visitors to various aspects of their culture. Through their daily engagement in presentations for tourists, they have enhanced their knowledge and skill in carrying out certain cultural practices—such as Emberá dance, music, and the use of traditional attire—which were in decline in the 30-year period that preceded the introduction of tourism.

Since the early stages of my acquaintance with Parara Puru, I have been preoccupied with the notion of authenticity. In fact, on several occasions during fieldwork, and to some extent in writing,<sup>1</sup> I found myself defending the authenticity of the community (and the cultural practices enacted by its inhabitants) against some tourists and tourist guides who criticized the community as “touristy,” and its constitution as contrived and inauthentic. In this respect, I have fallen victim to what I describe in the introduction of this special collection as “the trap of authenticity,” the tendency of some academic analysts to refute the essentialism of the authenticity-inauthenticity divide, only to further reproduce it in their subsequent analysis.

In this article, I will confront this trap by engaging with the contradictions inherent in a singular vision of authenticity. My approach relies on the recognition of several emerging, parallel manifestations of authenticity that participate in the negotiation of the authentic in any given context (see also Bruner 1994, Wang 1999, Field 2009). In Emberá indigenous tourism, I identify the articulation of more than one authenticity in tension: 1) that sought by tourists who visit indigenous communities (to which I refer as “primordialist authenticity,” due to the underlining presupposition that an imagined original Emberá culture exists), and 2) authenticity as discussed by the local community (which emerges in response to the presupposition of inauthenticity by tourists, but relies on more than one local view of representativeness related to past and present-day practices).

I am also concerned here with two additional concepts: “inauthenticity” and “invention of tradition” and their application in evaluating the cultural practices of indigenous groups that experiment with and develop new avenues of cultural representation. “Inauthenticity” and “invention” are used by a few critically predisposed tourists and some off-the-beaten-track travelers to question the authenticity of Parara Puru and suggest that the cultural practices presented have been invented for the benefit of tourism. I argue that such non-academic uses of inauthenticity and invention are founded on a static view of authenticity and seriously underestimate the complexity and transformative potential of indigenous appearances and

realities. Such an underconstructed use of authenticity can lead to opinionated commentary that undermines the cultural practices of politically vulnerable minority groups (Linnekin 1991).

In the sections that follow, I explore some parallel manifestations of authenticity in Emberá indigenous tourism as these emerged in the negotiation of the authentic between tourists—who often act as “authenticators” (Warren and Jackson 2002) privileging a certain type of authenticity with their ideas (Conklin 1997)—and the indigenous hosts—who respond by explaining the representativeness of their performances and community life. Unlike most tourists who pursue authenticity in a static conceptualization of the past, the inhabitants of Parara Puru trace the authentic in both past and present practices and in more than one set of indigenous experiences. In this respect, the emerging articulation of authenticity in Parara Puru reflects the transforming orientation of Emberá social life—and as such, relates more closely to a processual vision of authenticity (Bruner 2005).

In the last part of this article, I further explore the transformative orientation of Emberá cultural practices in the example of Emberá dress. The traditional Emberá attire exposes to view a great part of the body, and includes body painting and beaded belts and necklaces, which directly convey a sense of exotic authenticity to Western audiences. In Parara Puru, the use of the full attire is part of everyday life, but is also complemented, outside the presentations for tourists, with use of mass-manufactured “modern” clothes and mixed modern-and-indigenous dress combinations. The resulting complexity in the dress choices of the Emberá can help us appreciate that the fluid adaptations of indigenous dress cannot be confined to a singular and prescriptive authenticity (see also Kúchler and Miller 2005, Conklin 2007, Gow 2007, Ewart 2007, Santos-Granero 2009, Theodossopoulos 2012a, Margiotti n.d.).

The ethnographic data and reflections presented in this article are based on 17 months of anthropological fieldwork, spread over a period of six years, during which I returned to Parara Puru every year, paying particular attention to changes that occurred in the intervening time. I have also traveled among other Emberá communities that have not developed tourism and discussed with their residents the topics examined in this article. My research took place in a period when several Emberá communities (especially those located closer to Panama City and the Canal) had been developing indigenous—or alternative (Stronza 2001)—tourism (see Theodossopoulos 2007, 2010, 2011), following the footsteps of other

ethnic groups in Panama, such as the Kuna (Salvador 1976, Swain 1989, Tice 1995, Howe 2009, Pereiro Pérez et al. 2010, Martínez Mauri 2012) or the Afro-Antilleans (Guerrón Montero 2006a, 2006b).<sup>2</sup>

### **Problems with the Conceptualization of Authenticity and Invention**

The concept of authenticity developed in post-feudal Western society in response to a generalized anxiety about sincerity and true social identity. It then attracted the interest of philosophers concerned with truthfulness and the inner Self (Trilling 1972; Handler 1986; Bendix 1997; Lindholm 2008, this issue). Over the passage of time, the meaning of authenticity diversified to account for the genuineness of objects, traditions, and social groups. Its importance in tourism received serious attention by MacCannell (1976), who highlighted its value for tourists pursuing authenticity behind the facade of the tourist encounter. The essentialist connotations of this touristy type of preoccupation with authenticity—especially as this becomes apparent in juxtaposition with inauthenticity—have been subsequently identified by anthropologists studying tourism (see, among many, Selwyn 1996, Abram and Waldren 1997, Stronza 2001, Coleman and Crang 2002, Franklin 2003, Bruner 2005, Leite and Graburn 2009, Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011) and scholars focusing on the particular intersection of tourism and authenticity (Cohen 1988, Wang 1999, Taylor 2001, West and Carrier 2004). The anthropology of tourism developed an appreciation for the misleading nature of the authenticity/inauthenticity divide, and promoted instead a view of cultural presentations for tourists as parts of dynamic, evolving cultural processes (Bruner 1993, 2005; Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011).

Sometimes, however, such as in the case discussed in this article, the problematic authenticity/inauthenticity distinction, which is introduced by tourists, becomes a criterion for passing judgment on the indigenous society. In these cases, the meaning of authenticity, as this is understood or misunderstood in particular contexts, requires careful analysis and attention. In-depth anthropological investigation can provide an antidote to the hasty evaluations of tourists, as it highlights the complexity of social change in local society, not in terms of a presupposed original culture, but in terms of everyday practices and their continuous transformations. As Bruner (2001, 2005) persuasively argues, cultures change

continually, and “there are no originals” (2005:93). Cultural traditions, such as those presented to tourists by the Emberá, involve “continual recreation” (Handler and Linnekin 1984:287), a process in which both locals and tourists participate.

Unlike authenticity, the notion of invention of tradition is an academic construct. The most well known treatment is by Hobsbawm (1983) who applied the term to discuss primarily institutionalized and ritualistic practices endorsed by the nation state. However, “invention of tradition” was already in use by anthropologists discussing selective cultural reformulations constructed to pursue political objectives (see Hanson 1989). This use stemmed from the anthropological deconstruction of an older, essentialist understanding of tradition, which was “built upon a naturalistic metaphor” (Handler and Linnekin 1984:286). In this respect, “invention of tradition” was a concept that inspired penetrative analyses of ideologies and practices that sought to legitimize themselves as traditional and therefore authentic.

Following a similar analytical predisposition, but based on circumstantial evidence, sophisticated tourists and travelers describe as “invented” the cultural practices of ethnic minority groups that attempt to articulate their identity—often for the first time—in terms of current or pre-existing traditions. While I recognize, as many anthropologists before me, that human beings invent their own realities—and are thus, to a greater or lesser degree, inventors of culture (Wagner 1975)—I am seriously concerned with the uncritical use of invention as a synonym of “fake,” “inauthentic,” or “disconnected” from pre-existing practices. This popularized use of the term “invention” can have a denigrating potential in commentary regarding indigenous traditions—“an unintended consequence of the cultural invention argument, but one that anthropologists must confront nonetheless” (Linnekin 1991:446).

In the case I examine here, the unintended consequence of the popularized use of “invention” is that it is applied to judge the authenticity of the Emberá. As Conklin (1997) has suggested, contemporary indigenous groups have benefited from the strategic representation of their indigeneity—which is now received positively by Western audiences. This benefit, however, has generated new contradictions. Most evident among them is that some indigenous people, who now receive the admiration of Western audiences, do not directly control the criteria that define their own authenticity. This becomes increasingly apparent in the case of Emberá cultural tourism, where tourists (in their overwhelming majority) valorize

indigeneity, but (sometimes) question the authenticity of the communities that they visit. They are captivated by the appearance of the Emberá, dressed in traditional attire, which complies with Western images of the exotic, but wonder if the communities dressed in traditional attire are in fact “real” Emberá communities (cf. Conklin 1997).

### **More than One Authenticity in the Emberá Past and Present**

The first step for avoiding the essentialist trap of authenticity necessitates a departure from a singular vision of the authentic. In the case of Emberá indigenous tourism, singular conceptualizations of authenticity—as these become articulated in the tourist encounter—refer to an ancient, “original” state of indigenous culture that sets the standards for comparisons (or judgmental evaluations) with contemporary cultural manifestations (see also Taylor 2001:9, West and Carrier 2004:485). Tourists and off-the-beaten-track travelers who visit indigenous communities are the most likely upholders of this approach. Their quest for pre-modern authenticities uncontaminated by Western civilization—a nostalgic orientation in Western projections of otherness in the past (Clifford 1986, Rosaldo 1989, Herzfeld 1997, Howe 2009:249-251)—informs the imagination of a primordial state of indigenous existence, which is used in the present to appraise the performances and practices of contemporary indigenous communities.

As a response to this primordialist approach to authenticity, the Emberá in Parara Puru often—but not exclusively—defend their practices by referring to the past, that is, to the practices of their grandfathers. Their defensive approach develops in response to the position of the tourists, but derives inspiration from more than one local-authentic past, which I will shortly outline. With a dispersed geographical distribution that ranges from Eastern Panama to Colombia and through Western Colombia to the northern border of Ecuador (Torres de Araúz 1966, Herlihy 1986, Pineda and Gutiérrez de Pineda 1999), it is not difficult to appreciate that the people we now call the Emberá had many and diverse “authentic” histories. Ethno-linguists recognize several sub-groups in Colombia, with up to six dialects (Mortensen 1999) or nine dialect areas (Loewen 1963). They have all been referred to collectively as “the Chocó,” a generic term<sup>3</sup> which also includes the Wounaan, a separate ethnic group with a related but distinct language (Velásquez Runk 2001, 2009). In Panama, and in Parara Puru, the Emberá speak the Northern Emberá dialect.

The colonial history of the Chocó inspires narratives of resistance, independence, and avoidance of Western hegemony. The systematic avoidance of colonial agents by the Chocó was based on an adaptive strategy of retreat to inaccessible rainforest locations across the extensive river systems of Western Colombia, and, from the 18th century, Southeastern Darién (Williams 2004; see also Isacson 1993, Kane 1994). This distant past—or “ancient” time, according to the Emberá—is discussed by the contemporary residents of Parara Puru in terms of a rhetoric of independence and resistance. Themes about the conquest that are taught in Panamanian national education shape the imagination of the inhabitants of Parara Puru, some of whom maintain that the Emberá were once “millions,” but were decimated by the (hungry for gold) Spanish. From this local point of view, the collective fate of the many distinct Amerindian groups becomes indispensably linked with the past of the Emberá, where the term Emberá is often used in local narratives to describe all indigenous people in South America.<sup>4</sup>

The tourists, in their search for authenticity, draw directly, and to a greater extent than the Emberá, from this distant historical past. Their nostalgic expectation of a primordial indigeneity, isolated by time and modernity in the frontiers of natural wilderness (West and Carrier 2004:485), represents an apotheosis of stasis as a vision of social life: the expectation is that the Emberá should ideally represent life in pre-Colombian, or at least colonial, times. The appearance of the Emberá dressed in traditional attire—“naked” (as seen by Westerners) in the “wilderness” (as understood by Westerners)—encourages the tourists to draw connections with this imagined past, when Indians allegedly resisted the outside world from within their impregnable rainforest isolation. It is for this reason that I refer to the pursuit of this type of authenticity by the tourists—echoing the anthropological deconstruction of ethnicity paradigms (see Banks 1996, Jenkins 1997)—as primordialist authenticity.

The Emberá often trace—with nostalgia—their own referents of traditional Emberá culture to a more recent past. This is the time before the Emberá formed concentrated communities, the time when the Emberá lived, as they say, dispersed. Dispersed settlement along river sectors allowed the Emberá to access more easily their cultivations, which spread as extensions of their domestic space, with orchard gardens around the domestic compound, and plantain, maize, or rice fields further away, but close to the house and the river (cf. Herlihy 1986, Kane 1994). Lack of



available land for cultivation or depletion of game and fish in one sector—but also the encroachment of Emberá lands by black populations (Vargas 1993, Williams 2004)—led to migration to new riverine locations (upriver or to different rivers (cf. Faron 1962, Torres de Araúz 1966, Herlihy 1986, Tayler 1996, Velásquez Runk 2009)).<sup>5</sup> This flexible pattern of settlement informed Emberá movement northwards (from Chocó in Colombia to Darién in Panama) and westwards, within Panama (from the Darién Province to the Panamá Province) (cf. Caballero and Araúz 1962).

This is how Antonio Zarco, the apical ancestor of Parara Puru and other communities in the Canal area, arrived at the Chagres river, the westernmost point of Emberá geographical distribution. He first settled on the Chagres river in the years following World War II, in a time when all Emberá lived in dispersed settlement. During the course of his lifetime, he moved his residence to several other forested locations in the Canal area, each time inviting different groups of consanguineal and affinal relatives from Darién to live with him. They, in turn, invited their own relatives, a movement that resulted in the first wave of Emberá migration in the 1950s and 1960s to the lands that now comprise the Chagres National Park. Caballero and Araúz (1962), who studied the movement of the Emberá to Chagres in the early 1960s, trace the migration histories of particular families to particular rivers in Darién, such as the rivers Chico, Balsa, and Sambu, and further corroborate the dispersed pattern of Emberá settlement in Chagres.

From the perspective of the local Emberá, however, the early period of their settlement in Chagres was a time of traditional-cum-authentic life. Game and fish were abundant—which are important considerations for explaining the decision to migrate from one river sector to another (cf. Faron 1962, Herlihy 1986, Colin 2010)—and the Emberá of Chagres maintained their independent lifestyle further away, although not very far, from non-indigenous settlements. The older inhabitants of Parara Puru, who were children at the time, trace their view of authentic Emberá life to this relatively happy early period of dispersed settlement in Chagres, which they remember with nostalgia. They also explain that this relatively good time came to an end with the establishment of the Chagres National Park in 1985, which imposed regulations on hunting, cultivation, lumber cutting, settlement in new locations, and the in-migration of new Emberá from Darién.<sup>6</sup> During that period, several Emberá families moved closer to Latino settlements on the outskirts of the park, seeking employment

outside the park boundaries—usually on farms or in construction and factories closer to the capital.

In the meantime, and while the parents of the contemporary inhabitants of Parara Puru enjoyed an initial period of dispersed settlement in Chagres, the Emberá in Darién started considering the possibility of founding concentrated settlements around schools or evangelical churches. The desire of the Emberá to provide their children with primary school education was a motivating factor, but settlement in concentrated communities also enabled the Emberá to organize themselves politically, in an attempt to secure rights over parts of their territory (Herlihy 1986, Kane 1994, Colin 2010). Herlihy (1986) describes in detail how the first few communities were founded in the 1950s, and how they multiplied in the 1960s and 1970s, while in the 1980s, the majority of the Emberá adopted concentrated settlement. This general process of Emberá resettlement in villages changed the relationship of the Emberá with their cultivated land (Herlihy 1986) and the position of women in Emberá family and society (Kane 1994). It was also associated with an enhancement of political representation, which resulted in the creation of a semi-autonomous reservation, the *Comarca Emberá-Wounaan*, in Darién Province.

The emerging pattern of political organization in concentrated Emberá communities provided the Emberá in Chagres with new standards of comparison regarding what constitutes a representative Emberá community. In Chagres, the benefits of settling in concentrated communities were also economic, related to the development of tourism. Under the prohibition of unrestricted hunting and cash-crop cultivation imposed by the Chagres National Park, tourism was, for the local Emberá, the only available option for securing a reliable income while remaining in the park. In 1998, a group of Chagres-born Emberá founded Parara Puru, with the explicit intention to develop tourism. During the same period, two other pre-existing communities in Chagres started engaging systematically with tourism, while two more were founded.<sup>7</sup>

The Emberá communities in Chagres prospered from the very start. Parara Puru in particular receives groups of tourists on an almost daily basis for the greater part of the year, while work invested in tourism is the primary economic activity of its inhabitants. “Now we work with the tourists” or “with Emberá culture,” they say, a job that they consider more pleasant than cultivation or working as wage laborers for outsiders. This has been an important change in the life of the Emberá in Chagres, who

were brought up on the fringes of the Emberá society, in close proximity to Latino neighbors who undervalued and stereotyped indigenous culture. The Emberá of Chagres now entertain foreign tourists, mostly individuals from economically powerful nations, who openly compliment and express their admiration for Emberá traditions. As I have argued elsewhere (Theodossopoulos 2010, 2011), this transformation has enhanced the visibility of Emberá cultural representation more broadly.

The development of tourism and the foundation of concentrated communities by the Emberá in Chagres—as well as the proximity to Panama City (cf. Caballero and Araúz 1962)—have accelerated social change within the local communities. Some changes—such as the enhancement of political representation and school education (which resulted, among many consequences, in greater reliance on Spanish among the younger members of the community)—they share with most other Emberá who live in communities within or outside the Comarca.<sup>8</sup> In the economic field, however, tourism has signaled a significant departure from the widespread levels of poverty within the Comarca (cf. Colin 2010). Cash earned in tourism is divided by the families in Parara Puru according to the degree of participation in cultural presentations. Women and younger individuals participate too, which strengthens their position in the family and the community. While women, during the early stages of concentrated settlement, lost control over particular land plots to their husbands (who bypassed women's rights by assuming patriarchal authority) (Kane 1994:170-171), contemporary Emberá women in Chagres, but also in communities in Darién, can earn cash on a regular basis through the construction and sale of cultural artifacts (cf. Velásquez Runk 2001, Colin 2010; and among the Kuna, cf. Salvador 1976, Swain 1989, Tice 1995, Margiotti n.d).

The transformations described so far have complicated the issue of what constitutes a representative example of Emberá authentic life. This has repercussions for the discussion on authenticity that follows in the next section. Settlement in concentrated communities has altered Emberá lifestyle in all communities—those within and outside the Comarca, and those that do or do not entertain tourists. Some of these changes—such as the development of political representation by Emberá communities and the attendance of primary school by Emberá children—are now treated by the Emberá of Parara Puru as indisputable features of contemporary Emberá life. Knowledge acquired in school is gradually affecting the Emberá's perception of their own distant past (and their place in the nation).

In this general context of change, more than one parallel set of narratives or experiences can offer the Emberá insights about what constitutes authentic Emberá tradition: a) the resistance of the Emberá in colonial times, b) the practices of the grandfathers in the times of dispersed settlement, and c) the contemporary expectations from life in concentrated communities, all inspire, to a greater or lesser extent, new, emerging adaptations of Emberá representation in the present.

### **Emberá Authenticities in Negotiation**

The word authenticity does not exist in Emberá language, but the Emberá of Parara Puru are familiar with the Spanish adjective *auténtico* (authentic). It is used infrequently, for example, in conversations with tourist agents or between the Emberá, usually in the context of evaluating a tourist performance or cultural practice. Most Emberá with whom I have discussed the term understand “authentic” as a synonym of “traditional,” rather than “truthful” or “sincere,” which is the most frequent use by tourists. Thus for the Emberá, the practices of their less-modernized grandparents are authentic, practices which include wearing traditional attire, dancing Emberá dances, or living in Emberá-style houses on stilts with thatched roofs. The residents of Parara Puru explained to me that they practice “all those authentic things” and therefore they see their community as authentic.

Examples of non-authentic practices, from the perspective of the Emberá in Parara Puru, consist of dancing to mainstream Panamanian music, living in cement houses, and, in the case of women, not wearing a *paruma* (a single piece of cloth wrapped around one’s hips like a skirt). All of the above, say my respondents wittily, can make an Emberá look like a *campesino*<sup>S</sup> (farmer) or a *kampuniá*<sup>E</sup> (non-Emberá person) (cf. Kane 1994).<sup>9</sup> Yet, in most cases, the Emberá identity of those who are involved in such practices is not questioned or severely compromised. “Everybody can dance *tipico* (popular Panamanian music) at a birthday party,” an Emberá friend explained, “all Emberá do so, sometimes...I listen to *tipico* too, but I prefer our own music.” However, “in the presentations for tourists,” an Emberá leader emphatically underlined, “everything [that we present] is authentic. The tourists want to see the traditions of the Emberá, not the traditions of the farmers!”

Nevertheless, the picture of authentic-cum-traditional life that the Emberá have in their minds is complicated by the recent history of

resettlement in concentrated communities. Although in most respects the Emberá identify tradition with practices associated with the dispersed period of settlement, there are a few features of social organization in concentrated communities that have become established traditions in their own right. For example, in the short speech that the leaders of Parara Puru deliver to tourists, the idea of political representation, which involves the periodic election of a community leader (*nokóE*)—a feature of concentrated community life—is often presented as another Emberá tradition. This, as well as other features of concentrated community life, is used to defend the authenticity of the community against those tourists who suspect that Parara Puru is not a “real” (inhabited) community, but “a tourist enclave” (Edensor 1998) designed specifically for tourism. Nowadays, my respondents in Parara Puru explain, most Panamanian Emberá live in communities with a school, political leaders, a small shop (that sells food supplies), access to electricity (usually by petrol generator), a communal building for community meetings, a community office, and even some sheltered space for accommodating visitors. The Emberá demonstrate that Parara Puru has all the above and is “like most other Emberá communities” (that do not entertain tourists). “We live here all the time,” I heard the Emberá explaining many times, “and stay here when the tourists leave.”

As it has become apparent so far, authenticity as it is discussed in Parara Puru is articulated as a defensive discourse, developed in response to critical (or opinionated) evaluations and comparisons by outsiders. It is, in fact, the presence of outsiders interested in Emberá authenticity that has introduced this concern for the lives of the Emberá. As Kane has argued, “indigenous people have negotiated these images, partially internalizing them or...accepting the reality of the foreign imaginaries that are in their best interest to meet partway, and doing their best to subvert or ignore the rest” (1994:25-26; see also Conklin 1997).

In the context of this complex “negotiation of expectations” (Theodosopoulos 2011), the tourists bring with them their own diverse expectations of authenticity, which are influenced by their personal experience of travel, and a more widespread anticipation that local performances can be, and often are commodified simplifications of everyday life, and are therefore liable to inauthenticity. For example, the tourists’ suspicion of inauthenticity is often fuelled by previous experiences of indigenous performances, in which the indigenous performers visit designated locations—dressed in traditional costume—to dance or sell artifacts to an exclusively tourist audience (see

Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004). Such experiences lead many tourists to ask if the Emberá indeed live in the particular location, if they inhabit their traditional houses, and if Parara Puru is really their village.

In response to these concerns raised by the tourists, the Emberá introduce, in their defense, arguments not only related to past practices (e.g., life in dispersed settlement), but also comparisons addressing the representativeness of life in concentrated communities. They highlight, for example, the facts that the community has a school (which the tourists are welcome to visit) and elected representatives (with whom the tourists interact). In this general sense, recent transformations in Emberá society—associated with life in concentrated communities—are used as manifestations of authenticity, which is understood here as what most Emberá nowadays do in other, non-touristy, homogenous Emberá communities in Panama.

In this respect, even the idea of living in a village—which for the Emberá is a more recent experience, an “authentic discontinuity” in Kane’s (1994:40) words—becomes understood as representative of an authentically indigenous, and politically emancipated, orientation in life. Those few Emberá of Chagres who do not live in homogeneously Emberá communities, and therefore are not politically organized, are seen by the residents of Parara Puru as being vulnerable to the influences of their Latino neighbors and liable to a less authentic life. From a political perspective, therefore, residence in a concentrated community with a school, a shop, a communal house, and leaders, is indicative not only of representativeness—that is, what most other Emberá do—but also a desire to identify with a distinctive Emberá way of life.

Tourists are often invited to walk around Parara Puru to see and feel that the community is inhabited and alive. This opportunity is welcomed by many tourists, who share the predisposition of seeking the authentic at the back stages of social life (MacCannell 1976), “as lurking in secret precincts ‘off the beaten track’ where it could be discovered only by the sensitive ‘traveller,’ not the vulgar tourist” (Buzard 1993:6). While walking in the community, some tourists search for traces of modernity: the occasional television antenna, the school clothes drying next to the colourful, exotic paruma skirts, the gringo anthropologists having a meal with an Emberá family in a heavily inhabited Emberá house. And while the position of the Western anthropologist in an indigenous community is received as reinforcing the authenticity of the community—this is what most anthropologists do, according to a familiar, but old-fashioned, Western

narrative—the discovery of indigenous children holding cellular phones elicits pessimistic statements about the inevitability of culture loss, mixed with nostalgia about what is imagined as being lost (Rosaldo 1989, Herzfeld 1997, Sahlins 2000). Authentic indigeneity, even for non-vulgar tourists, is often trapped in a thick primordial rainforest, unchanged and unaffected by the evils of Western society and technology.

### **Indigenous and Mixed Combinations of Authentic Emberá Clothes**

The image of Emberá men and women fully decorated in traditional attire is familiar in Panamanian tourism promotion campaigns and on the Internet. Apart from contributing to the desire of tourists to meet the Emberá in the first place, or their satisfaction with having met them, Emberá attire is treated by most visitors as an indicator of authenticity or inauthenticity. For the overwhelming majority of tourists, the traditional Emberá code of dressing fully conforms to their expectation of Amerindian rainforest dwellers, imagined, like many other South American indigenous groups, in exotic colors and without Western clothes (cf. Turner 1992, 2006; Conklin 1997, 2007; Gow 2007; Ewart 2007; Santos-Granero 2009). These expectations comply with stereotypical images of American Indians that proliferate in Western imagination (Berkhofer 1978, Ramos 1998). The Emberá's use of minimal clothing in particular—perceived by Westerners as nudity—has brought to the surface the exoticized predispositions of early 20th century Western explorers, such as Richard Marsh (Howe 1998:215). Even Nordenskiöld, an early 20th century anthropologist, in his search for authentic Indians, compared unfavorably, at least in the beginning, the heavily dressed Kuna with the lightly dressed Emberá—the latter being referred to as “real indians” (Howe 2009:120).

This trend towards the exoticization of Emberá nudity and attire can be identified among contemporary tourists, although sometimes tourists' arguments about indigenous authenticity can be more nuanced: Emberá in full attire can be seen as too exotic to be true, while a handful of travelers and non-indigenous Panamanians who have visited communities in Darién argue that the inhabitants of these non-touristy communities are in fact “the real,” authentic Emberá, despite (or because of) the fact that they are not dressed in traditional garb. From this alternative point of view, greater reliance on Western clothes is an indicator of authenticity,

while traditional attire is associated with tourist performances and the consumption of the exotic. This interesting reversal of expectations inspired me to study in detail the use of Western clothes and traditional attire among the Emberá in Parara Puru and compare it with the code of dress in more inaccessible communities (see Theodossopoulos 2012a). Here, I will focus on those aspects of this investigation that relate more closely to my discussion of authenticity.

All residents of Parara Puru who work for tourism decorate themselves in full traditional attire each morning when they expect tourists.<sup>10</sup> They do so, as they explain, out of respect for their visitors, and also because they wish to show them “what is Emberá culture.” In the old days, they further explain, full attire was worn to indicate respect of an important visitor, or for participation in a celebration or a special occasion. Despite their frequent occurrence, the presentations for tourists are enacted as celebrations (with music and traditional dances) honoring important visitors (who often travel some distance to see the Emberá). The Emberá present these as good reasons for wearing traditional attire. All members of the community that appear in public during the presence of tourists are expected to be dressed in traditional attire, even those who are not officially working for tourism on a particular day.<sup>11</sup> In Parara Puru, this is a collective decision taken at the community level, as all resident families depend on tourism financially and have one or more members participating in the tourist presentations.

The men decorate themselves with long beaded strings (*kotiábari*<sup>E</sup>), arm cuffs<sup>12</sup> (*maniyia*<sup>E</sup>, *pulseras*<sup>S</sup>), and necklaces of beads and small silver pendants. They wear a loincloth (*andíá*<sup>E</sup>, *guayuco*<sup>S</sup>) from bright colored plain cotton cloth (usually, red, green, blue, or yellow), and often, on the top of the loincloth, a belt—or broad “girdle” (Wassén 1935:70, Stout 1963:270)—made of glass beads (*chaquira*<sup>S</sup>) woven in geometric patterns. This belt is the *amburá*<sup>E</sup>, which is now approximately five centimeters longer than previously, and can be described as a short skirt. This small adaptation conceals the men’s bottoms, which are not covered by the loincloth, and reflects an Emberá consideration of the tourists’ aesthetics, who desire to see the Emberá in traditional attire, but not completely or too naked.<sup>13</sup>

The women also adorn their bodies with beaded strings, arm cuffs, and necklaces with silver pendants similar to those worn by men. They meticulously comb their long hair (*budá*<sup>E</sup>)—which is itself an ornament—and wear flowers, primarily hibiscus, in their hair. One particular type of beaded necklace with layers of coins, the *ubarí*<sup>E</sup> (*pulsera de plata*<sup>S</sup>), partly



covers their breasts. Today, it is more extensive in size—like the *amburá*—to minimize the relative nakedness of the Emberá body. Around their hips, the women wrap a rectangular piece of brightly patterned cloth, the *paruma*<sup>S</sup> (*wa*<sup>E</sup>). In the last 15 years, the *parumas* have been made especially for the Emberá and the Wounaan in Asia, mostly in Japan,<sup>14</sup> and have evolved to become an item of fashion: many women eagerly anticipate the “latest” *paruma* to be released every two or three months. Certain *paruma* designs are more popular than others and become fads, similar to the way particular *mola*-themes become popular among the Kuna (Salvador 1976).

The children who attend school dress every morning—like all children in Panama—in their school uniform. For many of my adult respondents, the school uniform was their first experience with the Western dress code. In this respect, national education does not only educate Emberá children on the basics of Panamanian national identity, but also cultivates a particular aesthetic for the formal presentation of Self in clean shirts, trousers or skirts, and also shoes. When the children of Parara Puru return from school, they throw off their uniform and shoes, don more traditional clothing, and join in the tourist presentations, where they dance with their parents, interact with the tourists, or play with each other (and occasionally with child-tourists) in the central area of the village. Emberá boys under four years of age remain completely naked for the greater part of the day. Older boys wear a loincloth, while Emberá girls wear mini-*parumas*, and sometimes necklaces and strings of beads.

Emberá men, women, and children often paint themselves with the juice of the *jagua*<sup>S</sup> fruit (*kipará*<sup>E</sup>, *Genipa americana*<sup>L</sup>) in elaborate geometric designs, or sometimes simply by covering their whole body (cf. Wassén 1935, Torres de Araúz 1966, Isacson 1993, Tayler 1996, Pineda and Gutiérrez de Pineda 1999, Ulloa 1992, Reverte Coma 2002). The black (or in fact, very dark blue) color of *jagua*<sup>15</sup> stays on the skin for eight to 12 days, and provides opportunities for diverse applications. In Parara Puru, local men and women make themselves available to paint small *jagua* tattoos for the tourists in return for a small payment. This is an opportunity for some tourists to temporarily embody, as they say, “a little bit of Emberá culture.” The Emberá explain to the tourists the medicinal and other uses of *jagua*—which works as a sunscreen, an insect repellent, a medicine for skin problems, and a medium for body decoration. As I described in detail elsewhere (Theodossopoulos 2012a), body painting has been used in shamanic ceremonies, while particular designs are preferred

by individual shamans (*jaibanás*). Shamanic ceremonies, however, are not the only context of jagua-painting, which is applied in many contexts of everyday life (see Ulloa 1992:134, 298-302; cf. Pineda and Gutiérrez de Pineda 1999:114-115), and is seen by many Emberá as another type of dress (*como un vestido*) (cf. Isacsson 1993:32).

I have described so far the full Emberá attire, which is an ideal dress code usually reserved for special occasions, festivals, or the entertainment of tourists and important guests. Until the early 1960s—and despite the occasional use of Western clothes when visiting non-indigenous towns (cf. Torres de Araúz 1966, Reverte Coma 2002)—the Emberá carried out their everyday activities dressed only in loincloths, parumas, and jagua-painting. At the present time, the inhabitants of Parara Puru, when returning home from work, that is, after their work with the tourists, take off their formal adornments. The men carefully put their beaded strings, arm cuffs, and *amburás* aside, and replace their loincloths with shorts. They also wear t-shirts, unless they are planning to engage in certain types of manual work for which it is better to wear more clothes (such as a long-sleeved shirt, long trousers, and rubber boots to cut wood or palm leaves, and repair roofs or houses) or less clothes (such as just a pair of shorts, but no t-shirt, to repair a canoe on the riverside). In a similar way, the women put aside their beaded strings, arm cuffs, and beaded necklaces, but they keep their parumas on for the remainder of the day. They also wear t-shirts—or vest-tops, tank-tops, and cropped-tops—which they combine with their multicolored parumas.

The combination of parumas with tops bought from the market provides an opportunity to combine the aesthetics and modesty codes of the wider society—which does not encourage toplessness—with the parumas, a garment that is perceived as quintessentially Emberá and Wounaan. This adaptability of the parumas, coupled with their recent evolution into a fashion item, has contributed to their widespread use and popularity among the Emberá. Not only have they survived the gradual decline of the old Emberá code of dress that took place in the late 20th century, but they have emerged in recent years as a type of dress that proudly signifies the ethnic identity of its wearer.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the parumas are used by the women of Parara Puru throughout the day, and very often—although, as I will specify below, not always—outside the community.

The rising significance of the paruma as a type of dress with its own fashion does not represent a consumerist indulgence of the relatively

more affluent communities in Chagres. It is a widespread phenomenon among the Emberá and the Wounaan in Panama, including impoverished communities in Darién; the price of a three-yard paruma cloth ranged at the time of writing from US\$12 to US\$19. Colin (2010), who has recently conducted fieldwork in the Sambu district of the Comarca, explains how the parumas have evolved to signify social status and economic differentiation. While in the past each woman used a few parumas only, nowadays women feel the need to be seen wearing another (and ideally new) paruma on different occasions. “Periodic gifts of parumas exemplify a husband’s consideration for his wife and his desire to please her,” Colin reports (2010:238), which is also true in Chagres. In Darién, parumas are sometimes traded in direct exchange with the artifacts that the women produce, which is for some women a strategy to ensure that they are rewarded for their labor and the money does not end up in their husbands’ pockets (Colin 2010:238-242).

In Chagres, another recent development concerns the partial application of a more widespread dressing practice. A few women in Parara Puru have grown so accustomed to using the traditional attire that they remain topless even after the tourists depart, carrying out domestic chores in and around the house. Sometimes they put their t-shirts on much later in the day after finishing their jobs, while at other times they remain topless until dusk and in the presence of their husbands and children as they eat dinner. Although this practice is very common in Darién and has been widespread throughout the Chocó world in the past, several women in Parara Puru explained they were unaccustomed to it, due to spending several years—prior to the introduction of tourism and before the foundation of the community—living close to *kampunia* (non-Emberá) neighbors. The increasing reintroduction of this dressing habit in Chagres is, the women say, a result of their frequent use of the Emberá attire in tourism.<sup>17</sup>

Yet as the day progresses, usually after a late afternoon shower under the cold water pipe—or, in the case of the children, after a swim in the river—the majority of the residents of Parara Puru put on clean t-shirts or other types of mass-produced clothes. Those men or women who plan to “go out” of the community, for a walk or fast-food meal in one of the neighboring Latino towns, prepare more carefully: the men put on their newest t-shirts, cropped shorts, and shiny white sport shoes, while the women wear their parumas and a matching top, or are sometimes fully dressed in Western clothes, with a skirt or shorts and a top. Thus,

dressed in their newest Western clothes, married couples with or without their children, or groups of adolescents—with inexpensive but fashionable clothes—share a canoe ride to the world outside Parara Paru and an opportunity to mix with Emberá from other communities and non-indigenous friends or acquaintances.

In all of these respects, the dress practices of the Emberá in the communities that entertain tourists, and more generally, show a remarkable ability to adapt to new circumstances, incorporating new elements, such as Western clothes, and combinations of Western clothes with indigenous items of dress, such as the parumas and the jagua-painting. As I have argued elsewhere (Theodossopoulos 2012a), the changes in the Emberá dress code can be understood as transformations based on previous transformations (Gow 2001a:127), instilled with local meaning (Veber 1996:156), and accommodating the exoticized expectations of others (Conklin 1997, Theodossopoulos 2011), but also considerations stemming from everyday social relations (Margiotti n.d.). The various dress codes of the Emberá—indigenous, Western, or mixed—represent the choices of the Emberá, who decide what is appropriate to wear at home, in the forest, in the city, and in the presence of Latinos (who tend to stereotype indigeneity) or tourists (who tend to idealize the exotic).

Furthermore, as with other cultural practices, the meaningfulness of Emberá clothing choices, and its emerging authenticity, is context specific. In the early 1980s, Emberá women danced bare-breasted for Panamanian officials, while Emberá men negotiated politics in factory-made clothes (Kane 1994:167). Nowadays, several Emberá men would consider putting on the loincloth—a garment heavily stereotyped by non-indigenous Panamanians—and joining the women in performances for tourists. Tourism has enhanced the overall visibility of Emberá culture, providing new avenues for self-representation (Theodossopoulos 2011): the older tradition of honoring important guests (the tourists) is merging with new arguments about the pride of honoring one's own culture (a result of the visibility achieved through tourism), and the nostalgic memories of (the now dead) grandfathers who once walked proudly wearing loincloths. Such mixed narratives about past and present practices make possible the creative articulation of new Emberá ideas about what is traditional, authentic, and representative. They constitute part of bottom up processes that “challenge, subvert, or negotiate culture and identity” (Hill and Wilson 2003:2), and can be seen as part of contemporary Emberá politics of identity.

## Conclusion

In the last 15 years, Parara Puru and a few other Emberá communities in Panama located closer to the Canal and the flow of tourists have developed indigenous tourism. The overall visibility of Emberá culture achieved through tourism—a rapidly expanding dimension of the Panamanian economy—has resulted in a positive transformation of status for the Emberá, who have been (and, in some contexts, still are) stereotyped as “uncivilized Indians” by the national majority (cf. Theodossopoulos 2010, 2011). Nowadays, the Emberá see tourists from economically developed countries as being interested in indigenous culture. Those who live in communities that receive tourists are becoming exposed to the Western idealizing aesthetics towards indigeneity, which contrast with the denigrating attitudes expressed by some non-indigenous Panamanians. In their attempt to strike a balance between those opposing stereotypes—the noble and the primitive Indian (Ramos 1998)—the Emberá confront the paradoxes of authenticity, an authenticity indexed by Western audiences (Conklin 1997). The latter are positively predisposed towards indigenous people, but unclear about their expectations of the authentic (Theodossopoulos 2011).

The tourist audience enthusiastically consumes the indigenous culture on display at Parara Puru. Nevertheless, a few sociologically inclined tourists are left wondering if the community is really too indigenous-looking to be true. Their suspicion of inauthenticity is representative of generations of Western tourists who prefer to dissociate themselves from the identity of the tourist and search for the authentic in the back stage, away from the touristic (MacCannell 1976, Buzard 1993). It is also indicative of the divided consciousness of contemporary Western audiences, who oscillate in their approach towards cultural heritage, between a critical constructivism and the old fashioned expectation of “the really real” (Gable and Handler 1996:576). In many tourists’ narratives, “real” indigenous authenticity is located away from the touristic in some temporal distance (antiquity) or some spatial isolation (in nature or the wilderness) (Taylor 2001, West and Carrier 2004).

This touristic and primordialist attitude towards authenticity, which is based on the presupposition that (indigenous) cultures come in self-contained packages, is unpopular in contemporary anthropology. As I highlighted earlier, the anthropology of tourism has denounced the opposition of the authentic and the inauthentic and the singular vision of culture on which this relies (Selwyn 1996, Abram et al. 1997, Stronza 2001,

Coleman and Crang 2002, Franklin 2003, Leite and Craburn 2009, Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011). Emberá cultural practices, past and present, even Emberá tourist presentations, are authentic in themselves, true to what they really are: authentic Emberá “tourist performances” (see Bruner 2005). In light of this argument, the tourist suspicion of inauthenticity sounds judgmental and politically incorrect, while the overall pursuit of authenticity on their part, as MacCannell (1976) perceptively observed, is destined to remain elusive, unrealized, and self-perpetuating (Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011).

The same considerations can be applied to the notion of “invention of tradition.” The non-academic use of the term, as I recorded it in discussions with tourists about Parara Puru, is used to indicate inauthenticity, lack of originality, and lack of continuity with the past. It sharply contrasts with the academic application of “invention,” which is value free and does not rely on the presupposition of original cultural prototypes (Handler and Linnekin 1984, Hanson 1989, Linnekin 1991). It has been developed by scholars interested in deconstructing the naturalizations of selective political or national ideologies (see Hobsbawm 1983, Hanson 1989), and its application for the social analysis of such phenomena provides a subtle irony that facilitates the deconstruction of the static and timeless conception of culture. In other words, its intention, and epistemological orientation, is the very opposite of the popular use of “invention”—as lack of originality—described above. The recent Emberá revalorization of their indigeneity, with selective attention to certain parts of traditional culture—for example, traditional costume—can be understood as invention of tradition in this academic, value free sense of the term.

The pointed irony of the term invention, however, which so successfully reveals the artificiality of nationalist ideologies, seems, when applied to the Emberá, disproportionately harsh, especially if we consider that the Emberá are taking their first steps towards articulating their cultural representation, without institutional support or under the influence of a separatist ethno-nationalist narrative. Several examples of cultural revitalization in Emberá society—the revalorization of the traditional attire and dance (Theodossopoulos 2012a, 2012b), and the increased production of cultural artifacts (Velásquez Runk 2001, Colin 2010)—have occurred without an explicit plan or political purpose. Surely, their driving force has been the tourist market, which has motivated impoverished performers or producers to benefit economically. Commodification, however, is not

necessarily “the death of authentic culture,” as Sahlins argued (1999:409), putting the idea of invented traditions and its focus on instrumentality under a critical lens.

Sahlins (1999) suggested another term, “inventiveness,” as more appropriate than “invention” to describe the vitality and adaptability of living traditions. Overall, terms such as inventiveness, revalorization, and revitalization capture more accurately the adaptations of certain Emberá cultural practice—for example, the transformations in the Emberá code of dress—and convey more directly the vitality of Emberá culture, and the agency of its authors. In everyday life in Parara Puru, the women combine their paruma skirts—made in Japan, but locally perceived as quintessentially indigenous—with Western tops, making visible their Emberá identity, but in a way that does not confront the sensitivity of the non-indigenous society towards toplessness. Similarly, the men, when dressed in traditional attire, wear traditional belts—the *amburás*—slightly extended to cover their nakedness. The inventiveness of the Emberá in these examples—and the hybridity of their shifting dress codes (Santos-Granero 2009)—does not intend to deceive outsiders or make a strong political statement, but rather to restructure traditional—and therefore, from the point of the Emberá, authentic—practices in a way that makes Emberá culture visible, without unnecessarily provoking non-indigenous audiences and neighbors.

Time adds its own flavor of authenticity in cultural transformations, which are in turn, transformations of previous transformations (Gow 2001a). What was once new soon becomes representative and traditional. In the mid-20th century, the neighbors of the Emberá, the Kuna, formed dance societies (Holloman 1969:480, Smith 1984:191-194) and developed a variety of secular dancing (from traditional roots) which was made available to visiting foreigners, and later, tourists (Smith 1984:257-258, Howe 2009:181). Nowadays, these dances are considered to be part of the Kuna tradition, and like other similar indigenous performances can be seen as creative practices “embodying indigenous cultural meaning” (Citro 2010:365). From this point of view, the dynamic transformations of Emberá culture—such as dance or use of traditional attire in cultural presentations for tourists—do not represent a rupture with a supposedly original past. Kane (1994) very aptly uses the expression “authentic discontinuities” to refer to social change in Emberá society, an expression that can help us appreciate that changes are enabled by previous culturally meaningful practices. The movement to concentrated villages, for example, “is a variant of Emberá

survival strategies keyed to the particular constellation of forces that have come together at [a certain] point in time” (1994:40).

In the narratives of the inhabitants of Parara Puru, the authentic constitution of their community is defended by reference to practices that relate to Emberá life in both dispersed settlement and concentrated communities. Thus, the authenticity of the grandfathers who lived up the stream and wore loincloths merges with the authenticity of politically organized cousins in other contemporary concentrated communities who discuss indigenous rights in Western clothes (but strongly identify with Emberá culture). The authenticity of the Emberá women who carry out their household chores topless (like their grandmothers) remains uncompromised by their combination of new tank tops (of the latest non-indigenous fashion) with new paruma skirts (of the latest indigenous fashion).

It is this complexity that emerges from the dynamic nature of Emberá society that complicates the search of those who look for Emberá identity in a primordial past. Tourists, the Emberá, and this ethnographer have all struggled at some point in time with the constraints posed by a self-contained notion of culture, and have fallen into the trap of authenticity (conceived as a static singularity). The very same complexity, however, provides the antidote for escaping the trap: this involves the acknowledgment of parallel, plural, and multifaceted authenticities in tension. More than one vision of the authentic in Emberá indigenous tourism—seen as originality, representativeness, political identification with an indigenous identity (on the part of the Emberá), or as cultural purity uncontaminated by modernity (on the part of the tourists)—is negotiated and being tangled and untangled at the very moment of writing this article. The acknowledgment that such (plural and parallel) visions of authenticity inspire new economic and cultural practices bears witness to the vitality and dynamism of contemporary Emberá culture. ■

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**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>See Theodossopoulos 2007, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>Since the early 1990s, the Panamanian authorities have encouraged the development of tourism, a process that has resulted in the discursive acceptance of multiculturalism by the government (Guerrón Montero 2006a) and the revival of cultural practices among certain ethnic groups, such as the Afro-Antilleans (Guerrón Montero 2006b) and the Emberá (Theodossopoulos 2010, 2011). The Kuna have a longer history of engagement with tourism, as they started receiving cruise ship visitors during the early 20th century, while further contact with tourists increased from the 1950s (Howe 2009:99, 199; Pereiro Pérez et al. 2010:69-75; Martínez Mauri 2012).

<sup>3</sup>The term Chocó was used extensively in earlier ethnographic accounts, mostly in work based on field-work conducted from the 1920s to the 1960s in Panama and Colombia (see, for example, Nordenskiöld 1927; Wassén 1935; Loewen 1963; Torres de Araúz 1966, 1980; Kennedy 1972; Tayler 1996; Pineda and Gutiérrez de Pineda 1999; Reverte Coma 2002).

<sup>4</sup>The term “Emberá” is used by the Emberá to denote a human being, an indigenous person, any other speaker of Emberá, or more specifically a speaker of one’s Emberá dialect.

<sup>5</sup>This pattern involved dispersed settlement in ethno-endogamous family clusters, “a non-permanent type of bilocality” often culminating (after temporary uxorilocality) to virilocal neolocality (Faron 1962:33-34). Slightly diverging from this ideal norm, Emberá patterns of post-marital residence have always been flexible enough to allow new couples to 1) settle bilaterally, close to those relatives whose river sector provides the best available opportunities, or 2) move to a completely new river system if land or other opportunities are not available locally.

Beyond such obvious demographic advantages, in the period before concentrated settlement, movement to new locations represented an established strategy associated with increased social status. Even nowadays, founders of new communities—who are often the first settlers of new river sectors—are highly esteemed.

<sup>6</sup>From the point of view of those involved in environmental conservation, these restrictions aim at preserving biodiversity and serve numerous environmental objectives (see Candanedo, Ponce, and Riquelme 2003). The local Emberá, however, blame the park authorities for interfering with their culturally established way of life (by seriously restricting lumber cutting—even for domestic use—or limiting the days of the year that they are allowed to hunt) and economic activity (by prohibiting the clearance of forest land for cash-crop cultivation).

<sup>7</sup>The community of “Emberá Drua” on the Chagres river pre-existed the foundation of Parara Puru. It was founded by Emberá who moved from Darién as a group in the 1970s. “They were not native (*nativos*) to Chagres like us,” my respondents in Parara Puru explained. Another community, “Tusipono,” was founded after Parara Puru by Chagres-born Emberá. The community of Emberá Puru on the San Juan de Pequeñi river was founded by Chagres-born Emberá from the community of La Bonga located on the same river. In the beginning, Emberá Puru was a tourist outpost of La Bonga (enabling the transportation of tourists to a more approachable location), but gradually Emberá Puru emerged as an independent community. All five communities mentioned here are within the boundaries of the Chagres National Park. Additional communities, in Gamboa and Gatun, are located in the general Canal area, less than an hour driving distance from Chagres.

<sup>8</sup>There are almost as many Emberá in Panama living in communities outside the comarcas as those living in communities inside the comarcas. Colin (2010:106) highlights that, in official discourse about indigeneity, indigenous regions outside the comarcas remain invisible.

<sup>9</sup>I use superscript to represent the language of the word. The S is for Spanish; the E for Emberá; and the L for Latin.

<sup>10</sup>This is almost every day in the high tourist season (from December to April), and two or three days a week during the low season (from May to November).

<sup>11</sup>Other Emberá communities that entertain tourists—in Panama Province or in Darién Province—have similar rules.

<sup>12</sup>In the past, these were made from silver. Nowadays, they are made from stainless steel.

<sup>13</sup>As I discuss elsewhere (Theodossopoulos 2012a), the men in some other Emberá communities do not like this new “skirt-like” type of *amburá*, and prefer to wear a loincloth without the *amburá*.

<sup>14</sup>Before that, and throughout the 20th century, the Emberá women used cotton cloth—ideally with designs—produced in Panama or Latin America. *Parumas* made from cotton replaced fabric made from

bark-cloth, which was also painted in diverse designs (cf. Krieger 1926:105, Torres de Araúz 1966:59, Reverte Coma 2002:233).

<sup>15</sup>Body painting with jagua is widespread among other lowland South American groups, such as the Kaipó (cf. Turner 1980, 1992; Vidal and Verswijver 1992) and the Piro (Gow 2001b). Apart from jagua-black, the Emberá, like other groups, also body-paint with *achiote*-red (*canyí*<sup>E</sup>, *Bixa orellana*<sup>A</sup>), a practice which is less frequent than before.

<sup>16</sup>Note that the women of other Panamanian groups, such as the Kuna and the Ngáwbe, similarly embody and make visible (in public) their indigenous identity through their dress (Young 1971, Salvador 1976, Tice 1995, Howe 1998, Margiotti n.d.), while their husbands conform to the national, non-indigenous clothing etiquette.

<sup>17</sup>For more detailed narratives on this change, see Theodossopoulos 2012a.

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#### Foreign language translations:

Emberá Indigenous Tourism and the Trap of Authenticity: Beyond Inauthenticity and Invention

[**Keywords:** Authenticity, invention of tradition, culture revitalization, indigenous tourism, Emberá]

Turismo Indígena Emberá y la trampa de la autenticidad: más allá de la inautenticidad y la invención cultural

[**Palabras clave:** autenticidad, invención de la tradición, revitalización de la cultura, turismo indígena, Emberá]

安贝拉自治区原住民旅游业与真实性的陷阱：在失真性与发明之外的一些思考

[**关键词：**真实性，被发明的传统，文化振兴，原住民旅游业，安贝拉自治区]

Туризм среди коренного населения территории Эмбера и превратности аутентичности:

За пределами неаутентичности и выдумки.

[**Ключевые слова:** Аутентичность, выдумка традиции, культурное возобновление, туризм среди коренного населения, Эмбера, Emberá]

Turismo Indígena Emberá e a Armadilha da Autenticidade: Para Além da Inautenticidade e da Invenção

[**Palavras-chave:** Autenticidade, invenção da tradição, revitalização da cultura, turismo indígena, Emberá]

سياحة إمبرا الأهلية وفخ الأصالة: ما وراء الزيف والاختراع

الكلمات الجامعة: الأصالة، اختراع العادات، تنشيط الثقافة، السياحة الأهلية، إمبرا

