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Contested Identities:
Urbanisation and Indigenous Identity
in the Ecuadorian Amazon

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Prologue: The Dawn Raid

Lorena[1] always awoke before dawn. She couldn't say whether she had acquired this habit as a result of the Catholic mission school's strictly-imposed routine, or early memories of her own mother's insistence upon rising with the birds. Perhaps the importance of making an early start on the household chores had been instilled at a later date by her mother-in-law, that perennial source of wisdom on how to be a good Shuar woman. To me, all this zeal for the witching hour seemed unnecessary now that Lorena lived in an urban area, where there was no manioc beer to make and breakfast – a simple meal of bread and sweetened *guayusa* – was normally consumed at the inconceivably late hour of 7am. Yet she persisted with her early morning routine, and indeed there was something soothing about being brought gradually to consciousness by the regular swish-swoosh of Lorena's broom across the dark kitchen floor.

One morning I awoke to a different sound. Outside my bedroom door, muffled voices were conspiring in the assemblage of what sounded like a fantastically complex array of cargo. I checked the time: it was 3:30am, early even for Lorena. As I debated whether or not to emerge in my pyjamas and assess the situation, I heard the front door open and shut, followed by the squeak of the gate. I got up and ran to the window in time to see Lorena's tiny silhouette disappear into the night, struggling to keep pace with the vanishing form of an unknown man. Both were laden down with the unidentified cargo.

I got back into bed and tried to make sense of what I had just seen. Where was Lorena going, and with whom? She often welcomed her brothers and nephews into her home when they needed a place to stay in the city; yet nobody had arrived the night before as far as I was aware. My bedroom was next to the front door, so it was normally my responsibility to

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[1] All names have been changed.

respond to the low, repetitive cries of 'Lorena…. Lorena…. Lorenaaa…' that announced a relative's unanticipated midnight arrival. Then a sudden realisation dawned on me: was this man a relation at all? Lorena's husband Luis had been in the United States for nearly 17 years, and rumours abounded among local Shuar to the effect that she had not remained entirely faithful to him.[2] Yet what kind of lovers' tryst could possibly require so much equipment?

Three hours later I was sitting on the porch with a cup of tea, watching the sun rise and fending off curious chickens, when the two silhouettes reappeared at the end of the street. As the taller figure approached it gradually assumed the shape and features of a young man; both he and Lorena were carrying large, clear buckets filled with some kind of black substance. They reached the gate and Lorena, noting my curious gaze, introduced me to her nephew, Wilson.

'He's just left the army,' she explained, 'and now he's living in Sucúa. Well, actually, he's not my *real* nephew – Luis and I adopted him for a little while when his parents, who live in the countryside, didn't have the money to take care of him. Oh,' she added, indicating the buckets: 'we caught loads!'

Loads of *what?*

We repaired to the kitchen, where Lorena and Wilson tore the lids from their buckets and left them on the table. The smell, though not unpleasant, was like nothing I had ever encountered before, and even from a distance I could see that the contents were moving. I approached one of the buckets and gingerly peered over the rim. Inside were dozens – maybe hundreds – of fat, sleepy ants. Each was about an inch long, with large silvery wings that for

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[2] These rumours tended to circulate about any woman whose husband had left for the United States.

some reason weren't fit for the purpose of escaping from the bucket. Lorena, now thoroughly de-cargoed, approached the table with a frying pan in her hand and a glint in her eye.

'Have you ever tried *añango*?' she asked, indicating the writhing buckets. I admitted that I had not. She scooped a handful of dozy brown bodies into her pan. '*Mestizo*[3]s think that you have to eat them alive, but we [Shuar] prefer to toast them.'

That day I tried toasted *añango* for the first time. It's an experience that is hard to describe. The flavour is overwhelmingly that of salted popcorn, while the texture reminds you more of a tiny, ant-shaped macaroon: crunchy on the outside with a buttery filling. I only managed to force down two at my first sitting, a fact that greatly amused Lorena and Wilson, who ate three heaped portions each before dividing up the remainder into small bags to be shared among their relatives.

Later the same day, Lorena and I left Sucúa and wandered into the surrounding woodland in search of termites for her chickens. I asked her about the ants: where did she find them, and how did she catch so many?

'You have to know how to recognise a nest that's ready to fly,' she explained cryptically. 'Normally, they fly a day or two after a thunderstorm. Look at this' – she pulled me away from the path towards a large, bare patch of earth – 'this is an *añango* nest.'

Dotted here and there on the ground were wide, deep holes. Lorena began to beat the ground around these holes with the stick she had brought to shake down termite nests. Eventually, a few large ants emerged. Lorena picked one up; its enormous scarlet head, which to my mind looked rather like a pair of swollen red buttocks, bore great violent pincers that

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[3] Ecuadorians of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry, who do not identify as indigenous.

snapped menacingly at her finger, drawing blood. 'These are the mothers,' she told me. 'The edible ones are their daughters. The ants spend all year taking care of their daughters [*cuidando las hijas*] so that they can fly away and form new nests, which is what they're doing now. When the daughters are ready to fly, the mothers are very busy all over the nest. We can see them and that's how we know when to catch them.' And how did they catch the *añango*? 'You have to get up very early in the morning and go into the forest.' Could I maybe go next time? 'Of course not!' laughed Lorena. 'It's far too dangerous for *you*!'

Miffed, I watched sadly a few days later as Lorena again left the house with Wilson in search of ants. This foray, and subsequent ones, brought mixed results that failed to match the success of the first endeavour. While I was officially banned from participating in the ant dawn raids, Lorena's son Alvaro refused to take part, despite his mother's consistent pleas.

'I'm not that interested,' he told me when I asked him about it one day. 'I have to go to work in the mornings. If I want to eat ants, I can buy them in the market.'

Meanwhile, I noticed that edible ants were everywhere in Sucúa: in the Shuar Federation's market (where they sold for \$2 a bag), in my Shuar friends' houses, even in the classroom of the bilingual school where I worked. I asked my Shuar teacher colleagues if they ate ants and, if so, how they prepared them.

'Oh, we eat them raw!' insisted one of the teachers. 'That's how Shuar eat *añango*. Only *mestizos* cook them!'

My chance to experience an *añango* expedition finally came with the arrival of Lorena's adult children Roberto and Gabriela, who lived and worked in Quito. Both had completed their studies at prestigious universities and stayed on in the capital, where they

found jobs and arguably became part of what is occasionally referred to in the literature as the indigenous 'elite'. Their enthusiasm for 'life in the countryside' [*la vida en el campo*] was apparent whenever they visited their mother, who made manioc beer in anticipation of their arrival. When they came to Sucúa, Gabriela and Roberto insisted on eating 'Shuar food' [*comida shuar*] and on helping Lorena with her daily chores.

This time, Lorena was particularly excited about the arrival of her two youngest children as they were coming for a whole fortnight.

'They can help me to look for *añango* now that Wilson is busy,' she told me.

'What about me?' I asked.

'I told you, Enmita, it's far too dangerous. You'd have to walk in the forest, in the dark!'

A thought occurred to me.

'Have Gabriela and Roberto ever been to look for ants before?' I asked.

'Never.'

'Then why is it more dangerous for me than for them?'

Lorena gave me an exasperated look. It was a look which told me that she knew I wasn't as strong as Gabriela and Roberto – I wasn't Shuar, after all. Everyone knew that *gringos* were soft. But she also realised that I wasn't going to give up.

'*Está bien*,' she sighed. 'You can come with us. But you have to get up very early.' She paused. 'And… wear *repelente*. There are lots of mosquitos.'

We left the house at around 4am. A thunderstorm had ravaged the town on Friday evening, and Lorena had spent the weekend examining the various nests in the surrounding forest to see if the *añango* were 'ready to fly'. In the end she had identified one nest that was 'probable' and another nearby that was merely 'possible'. Amply kitted out in gumboots and long, mosquito-proof sleeves, we marched along the track into the forest and listened carefully as Lorena explained the proceedings to us.

'You have to be completely silent. When we get to the nest, we'll find a stick, wrap it in these rags, soak it in *gasolina* and stick it in the ground next to the hole.'

'What hole?' asked Gabriela.

'The hole that I dug yesterday near to the nest. When the ants start flying, we'll light the rags with the candle – do you have the candle, Roberto?'

'Yes.'

'Good. The ants will fly towards the flame and when they fall into the hole we can scoop them into the bucket. Enmita: are you wearing your gloves?'

I waved my gloved hands in the torchlight that had spun round to illuminate me.

'Good. Now remember: *silencio total*.'

The path began to ascend, as the trees and noises of the forest closed in around us. Before long we had reached the first of our *añango* nests. Lorena examined the nest carefully with her torch.

'Well,' she concluded, 'it looks like they're probably going to fly… but someone else got here before us.' She indicated a shallow hole, around a foot square and three inches deep,

that had been carpeted with palm leaves. Next to the hole, a thick branch wrapped in rags had been embedded in the ground. The air smelt strongly of paraffin. Lorena beckoned to us and we continued on up the path.

'Our' nest was waiting for us at the top of the hill. Fortunately, Lorena had marked it with her own shallow hole, as well as with a full bottle of paraffin. Squatting to examine the ants, she concluded that they would almost certainly fly that morning. Gabriela and Roberto set up the equipment following Lorena's instructions, while I switched on the camera for which I had rather begrudgingly been granted permission.

'No Roberto, the rags are too loose, you have to wrap them like this!' came a hoarse whisper from the corner of the clearing. 'Otherwise they'll fall off. Gabriela! Have you put the leaves in the hole? Good. Now light the candle and place it in the ground next to the hole. And where did you put the *gasolina*?'

Finally, everything was ready, and we sat down on a log to await the arrival of the ants.

'When will they fly?' I whispered.

'Around 5:30.'

We all checked the glowing faces of our phones. It was 5:35. For ten minutes nothing happened. The roosters in distant Sucúa began to crow, sending up a deafening sound that contrasted emphatically with our enforced silence. At 5:45, Lorena said 'I suppose they're not going to fly today.'

We all looked at her, devastated – so much work, for nothing! Just as we were debating whether or not to wait a few minutes longer, a strange humming, like the sound of a malfunctioning generator, rose in the air around us. Lorena leapt to her feet.

'Roberto! Where's the candle? Light the fire!' Roberto grabbed the candle and set fire to the rags. A brilliant flame leapt up from the makeshift torch and cast a flickering light across the clearing. The air was full of sleepy, confused flying ants; the ground was thick with them. We grabbed our bucket and began to scoop them up in great sloppy handfuls, ants crawling down our arms and trapping themselves in our hair.

'*¡Cuidado con las mamás!*' cried Lorena. I looked around and realised that the large red ants with the unfortunately-shaped heads were leaping to the defence of their flying 'daughters', snapping their pincers at us and getting caught up in the scooping process. I silently blessed Lorena for her insistence that I wear gloves.

Our bucket was filling up; Gabriela and I were scooping as though our lives depended on it; Roberto was taking pictures with my camera. Suddenly, Lorena screamed.

'*Enmita! ¡Se está quemando tu pantalón!*'

I spun round. Sure enough, in my desperation to collect as many ants as possible, I had strayed too close to the fire and the seat of my trousers was now smoking. As I patted frantically at the area I imagined the smoke to be coming from, I managed to take a step backwards and, in doing so, knocked over the entire bucket of ants. Gabriela and Roberto dashed forward in desperation to scoop them up; having assured myself that I was not in fact on fire, I looked sheepishly over at Lorena who stood with her arms folded, surveying the devastation. Her expression said it all: *gringos* are just no good at being Shuar.

The majority of the ant harvest saved, we began to clear up our equipment. Gabriela picked up the empty bottle of paraffin.

'Leave that there,' said Lorena. 'We don't need it anymore.'

'But it's bad for the environment!' cried Roberto and Gabriela in unison.

'*Los paisanos* always leave *gasolina* behind, it's normal,' muttered Lorena, but she didn't complain when Gabriela put the bottle into the bag with the other equipment.

We headed back down the hill towards town. The sun was just beginning to rise.

'*Mamá*,' said Gabriela, 'when did you learn how to catch ants?'

'What do you mean? I've always known.'

'But this is the first year that you've done it.' Gabriela turned to me. 'When we were little, none of the Shuar in Sucúa ate ants. The *mestizos* said it was disgusting, that only savages ate insects. There were ants flying round all the street lights, and no-one ate them – can you imagine?'

 I shook my head. Lorena snorted.

'*Pues, ya no es así*', she said. 'It's not like that anymore. Even *mestizos* eat ants now. And they drink manioc beer – they like it. Wilson showed me how to collect ants,' she admitted to Gabriela. 'I knew how to do it, more or less, but I grew up in the Catholic mission and the nuns didn't teach us these things. But now I know, and so do you.'

We arrived at the house just as the sun was rising over the Kutukú mountains. Alvaro was adjusting his tie to go to work.

'Next time, you have to go as well,' said Lorena in an admonishing tone.

'Emma can go with you next time,' he replied, as he picked up his keys to leave the house.

'Yes,' said Lorena, looking from me to the bucket, and back again, 'I suppose she can.'

1. Introduction

In this thesis I intend to accomplish two main objectives. Firstly, I hope to shed light upon the under-researched phenomenon of indigenous rural-urban migration and urbanisation in the Amazon region of South America. Secondly, I will endeavour to engage with the long-running debate in social anthropology over what it means to be 'indigenous', and particularly the usefulness of indigeneity as a concept, both in the Amazonian context and more broadly. The specific aim of my research is to address the following question: how does Amazonian indigenous urbanisation influence urban indigenous residents' construction, negotiation and performance of their identity as indigenous people?

In the Latin American context, a considerable body of scholarship already exists which explores indigeneity as a political identity (with particular emphasis upon the pan-continental indigenous rights movement). It is therefore my intention in this thesis to focus instead upon everyday lived experiences of indigeneity, the 'small spaces of [indigenous people's] lives' (Canessa 2012a), which are influenced by but not necessarily dependent upon political activities. I argue that 'being indigenous' is not merely a political identity; it also carries a far broader meaning within so-called 'indigenous' populations. This is perhaps particularly the case among Amazonian groups, arguably the 'archetypal' indigenous peoples in the Euro-American 'National Geographic' imagination (Li 2000).

Drawing on eighteen months' ethnographic research among urban Shuar residents of the rainforest city Sucúa, in the southern Ecuadorian Amazon, I argue that 'indigeneity' behaves and is treated like an ethnic category in an urban context (Wade 2010), and as such becomes more relevant to indigenous people's lives in the multi-ethnic environment of rainforest cities (A. Cohen 1974). Shuar tend to be more aware – and, in a sense, prouder – of

their indigenous identity in an urban context. At the same time, exposure to diverse and contradictory discourses on what it means to be 'indigenous', whether from indigenous politicians, environmental and human rights activists, or tourism agencies, leads many urban Shuar residents to feel that they are not fully or 'authentically' indigenous because they are unable to live up to these stereotypical images of indigeneity. In this thesis I will attempt to elucidate this apparent contradiction and examine its impact upon the lived experiences of Shuar urban residents. I will conclude by demonstrating that, with rising incomes and education levels, many young Shuar adults are increasingly in a position to creatively redefine what 'indigeneity' means for them.

Throughout the thesis I will argue that if we want to understand the reality of indigenous Amazonians' lifeworlds from an emic perspective, then we need to take what they say seriously. They are not a 'people without history' (Wolf 1982); they have and continue to engage with concepts and ideas that were originally developed in a Euro-American philosophical tradition but that have since become so-called 'global forms' (Collier and Ong 2006), in large part through the work of anthropologists. Furthermore, they are connected to 'global flows' of information via electronic media, including television and Internet (Appadurai 1996), as well as through contact with migrants who circulate between countries, linking the 'global' and the 'local' (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). As a result, terms such as 'culture', 'identity', 'tradition' and 'ethnicity' *mean* something to indigenous peoples and shape the way that they view their world. If we dismiss these ideas as outmoded anthropological concepts, we risk at best misunderstanding and at worst wilfully misrepresenting the perspectives and assertions of our informants.

Amazonia exists in the popular imagination (and arguably also in academia) as a place of isolated 'forest peoples' (Peluso and Alexiades 2005: 1). However, this conception is outdated: most Amazonians – including an increasing number of indigenous peoples – now live in 'urban or peri-urban environments' (ibid; see also Alexiades 2009, McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Anthropological interest in indigenous Amazonian urbanisation is growing (see for example Virtanen 2006, de Rivero 2009, Eloy and Lasmar 2012, Espinosa 2012, Peluso 2014, Chernela 2014) but has yet to match the more extensive research undertaken among urban indigenous peoples in the Andean region (e.g. Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998, 2003; Torre 1999; Miles 2000; Albro 2006). Nevertheless, as McSweeney and Jokisch (2007) observe, this process of so-called 'de-territorialisation' in the Amazon region (ibid: 121) is significant for several reasons. On the one hand, critics may call into question efforts on the part of indigenous advocates and their supporters who have lobbied long and hard for territorial rights in the region. On the other, studies have suggested that Amazonian indigenous urbanisation is often a stepping-stone to international migration, with destinations including the United States, Spain and Italy (McSweeney and Jokisch ibid).

In the introduction to this thesis I will briefly delineate the ethnographic context within which this work is taking place. I will then outline the key research questions guiding my work, before moving on to an overview of the main arguments that I intend to put forward. I will highlight the significance of the research in question not only for Amazonian ethnography, but also for wider debates in the field of social anthropology and beyond. I will conclude by providing an outline of the structure of this thesis, and a brief description of each of the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Ethnographic context

1.1.1 Field site

The majority of my fieldwork for this project took place in two locations: in Sucúa, a 'rainforest city' with a population of around 10,000; and in a Shuar *centro* [community] that I refer to in this thesis as Taant[4]. The latter is situated around 30 kilometres from Sucúa in the Upano Valley. In addition to this, I spent a period of time conducting fieldwork among Shuar residents in Puyo, in the province of Pastaza, and among Shuar living and working in the Ecuadorian capital, Quito. Finally, I was fortunate enough to be able to interview several Shuar migrants from Sucúa who were living in the United States, largely via Skype. This latter opportunity enabled me to understand better the role of urbanisation in facilitating international migration for Shuar; the influence of international migration upon Shuar sense of self and construction of their ethnic identity; and the relationships between Shuar residents in Sucúa and their relatives and friends abroad.

My key informants in Sucúa were for the most part 'middle class', by which I mean financially comfortable, with at least a high school education and often with professional jobs. Elder informants (aged 40+) were mostly first generation rural-urban migrants, some from nearby *centros* and others from Catholic mission schools in the region; the younger generation had all lived in Sucúa (or nearby urban areas) for their entire lives. In Taant, informants were mostly subsistence farmers who traded surplus produce within the community and in nearby markets.

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[4] This is not the real name of the *centro*. Efforts have also been made to disguise the location so as to protect the privacy of the community and its residents.

When identifying my key informants, I endeavoured in particular to work mainly with people who were not professionally involved either in politics (as elected politicians at the regional or national level, or *dirigentes* [leaders] of the Shuar Federation) or tourism (as guides or operators of tourism agencies). Although many urban Shuar residents are involved in either politics or tourism to a certain extent, I wanted to avoid focusing on the 'official' rhetoric surrounding indigenous identity espoused by those who represent Shuar identity in a professional capacity – who 'speak the international language of indigenous rights' (Canessa 2006: 242-3). Instead, I hoped to understand how these and other discourses affect the self-identification process for 'ordinary' urban Shuar residents in their everyday lives.

1.1.2 Indigenous peoples in Ecuador

The UN estimates that there are more than four million indigenous people in Ecuador, amounting to 43% of the population (UNPFI 2009). Although the National Census and Statistics Institute (INEC) puts the number considerably lower[5], their own data shows the indigenous population to have doubled between 1990 and 2006 (ibid). One reason for this change may be the fact that INEC now takes self-identification into account, whereas previously language was the only determining factor (ibid). Nevertheless, a recent study suggests that these figures may also be part of a region-wide indigenous population boom, spurred on by rising fertility rates and low levels of infant mortality (McSweeney and Arps 2005).

The Ecuadorian government recognises thirteen indigenous 'nations' (to use the term preferred by the indigenous population), the majority of which are located in the *oriente* [Amazon] region (the Quichua nation, which is by far the largest, is situated largely in the

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[5] According to the latest census, indigenous people account for 7% of the Ecuadorian population (INEC 2011).

sierra or Andean region, while three groups, the Awa, Chachi and Epera, live mostly in the coastal or *costa* region) (INEC 2006). In anthropological literature, a distinction is usually drawn between lowland and Andean societies, and history has on the whole treated these groups differently. While Amazonian societies were largely left to their own devices until the twentieth-century discovery of oil in the rainforest, Andean peoples experienced the full force of colonialism. Many were forced to work on Spanish *haciendas* or large farms, originally as serfs and later as peasant farmers who worked in exchange for access to resources such as water (Sánchez-Parga 2007). These different historical trajectories appear to have resulted in distinct priorities on the part of Andean and Amazonian indigenous rights activists, although for the most part this has not affected their ability or desire to cooperate on a national level (Andolina 2003).

1.1.3 Shuar

Shuar are an Amerindian people who have historically lived in a region of Western Amazonia that straddles the border between Ecuador and Peru, in the foothills of the Andes. In Ecuador, they live for the most part in the province of Morona Santiago in the south-central *oriente* [Amazon] region, with smaller populations in Pastaza to the north and Zamora-Chinchipe to the south. According to the 2010 census, nearly 80,000 Ecuadorians identify as Shuar, meaning that they constitute the largest ethnic group in the *oriente* and one of the largest in Ecuador (INEC 2011). The majority of those that identify as Shuar live in the south-east of Ecuador; nevertheless, as this thesis will discuss, they are increasingly migrating to large Ecuadorian cities such as Quito and Cuenca, and an unknown number have become part of international migration trends to the United States and Europe, as well as to other Latin

American nations such as Venezuela and Mexico (McSweeney and Jokisch ibid; Rubenstein 2004).

Although anthropologists had been working with Shuar since at least 1908 (Karsten 1935), a definitive ethnography was arguably not produced until the publication of Michael Harner's *Jivaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls* in 1972. This meticulous and detailed monograph remains invaluable for scholars working with Shuar – and indeed, for Shuar themselves, many of whom are keen to learn about the practices and customs of their antecedents. The other prominent anthropologist to work with Shuar, Steven Rubenstein, admits in his 2002 volume *Alejandro Tsakimp: A Shuar Healer on the Margins of History* (2002) that he took Harner's monograph to the field with him and read out extracts of it to his informants in order to discover whether the practices were still taking place. As a result he was able to demonstrate that Harner's work was extremely accurate and thorough: all the customs referred to were either still in practice or had been abandoned within the lifetime of Rubenstein's informants (ibid).

Shuar have a certain notoriety in the popular travel literature of the region, not least for the (now abandoned) practice of shrinking the heads of their defeated enemies (Harner 1972). These trophies, known as *tsantsas* (ibid), became popular 'exotic artefacts' among Euro-American explorers from around the mid- to late-nineteenth century, eventually finding their way into museums across the world (Rubenstein 2004, 2007). While establishing for Shuar their reputation as a 'fierce people', this trade in shrunken heads unwittingly exacerbated violence and warfare in the region, as machetes, guns and axes – useful tools for hunting, gardening, and constructing homes, as well as potent weapons in warfare – were offered in exchange for the fetishised *tsantsas* (Rubenstein 2007).

The twentieth century brought dramatic changes to the Shuar way of life. While contact with the Spanish *conquistadores* had been established as far back as the fifteenth century, successive attempts on the part of the Colonial and Ecuadorian governments had failed to maintain any lasting influence in the region. Missionaries generally met with equally limited success until around the 1930s, when the Salesian Catholic mission, backed by the national government, managed to infiltrate the previously unreceptive Shuar population. Their influence gradually spread until by the 1950s they had established mission boarding schools across Morona Santiago and neighbouring provinces, 'educating' almost an entire generation of Shuar children (Rubenstein 2001).

With the imminent expiry of the Salesian Mission's mandate in the 1960s and the government's open intention to encourage colonisers to settle in the region, the missionaries' tactics changed. Ostensibly in an effort to protect the interests of their Shuar wards (but also, presumably, to maintain their own influence in the region), the Salesians encouraged the semi-nomadic Shuar to abandon their isolated dwellings in favour of *centros*: small, village-like communities run by an elected *síndico* with the assistance of a Salesian priest. These *centros* eventually came together to form the Shuar Federation, today known as the *Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar* (FISCH), one of the earliest established indigenous political organisations in South America[6] (Rubenstein 2002).

One result of missionisation was that many newly-educated Shuar students were unwilling or unable to return to the horticultural and hunting lifestyles of their parents. Instead, they sought employment, often as teachers or nurses, in towns across the region. Many also took up positions within the newly formed Shuar Federation in Sucúa, the small town in the Upano Valley in western Morona Santiago that forms the focus of this thesis. This

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[6] Established in 1964

incipient urbanisation was initially a trickle rather than a flood; nevertheless, Shuar are highlighted in the 2007 paper by McSweeney and Jokisch that examines the growing trend of Amazonian urbanisation, rural-urban and international migration.

1.1.4 Sucúa

Sucúa is a rainforest city in the province of Morona Santiago, located 25km to the south of the provincial capital Macas. The population of the city is around 10,000[7], about a quarter of whom self-identify as Shuar. The rest of the population is made up mainly of *mestizos*, with a small number of highland indigenous Quichua, and a growing population of Afro-Ecuadorians from the coastal province Esmeraldas (INEC 2011). The *mestizos* are for the most part descendants of colonisers (in Spanish *colonos*) from the highland provinces of Cañar and Azuay.

Sucúa's history is very interesting from the perspective of this project, as it could be argued that indigenous urbanisation has been taking place here since the town was first formed, around a hundred years ago. Certainly, Shuar families have lived in this part of the Upano valley as far back as records can tell, and were incorporated into the nascent town from the very beginning. Indeed, even the name 'Sucúa' is derived from the Shuar term for a kind of nettle [*suku*] that grows nearby. The identity of the first Sucúan [*sucuense*] is debated, but it is generally agreed that the American Evangelical missionaries Charles and Mary Olson were among the earliest arrivals, setting up their mission school near what is today the air strip[8]. They recruited Shuar children for the school and Shuar adults to work as labourers on

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[7] For a more detailed description of Sucúa, including population data, see Chapter 3

[8] The air strip was closed in the intervening period between my first and second field trips.

the adjacent ranch. Other colonisers followed suit, employing local Shuar families in manual labour and paying them in kind with food and other items (Gonzalez 1981).

The arrival of the Catholic Salesians consolidated the Shuar presence in the city, as the missionaries set up a boarding school in what is now the centre of the town, as well as a seminary on the outskirts which trained Shuar priests and nuns. Some of the earliest *centros* were founded in the region surrounding Sucúa as Shuar families relocated to be near to their children, who were enrolled at the mission school. These may have formed a template for the Salesians' latter efforts to organise the Shuar population in the face of increasing incursions from *colonos*. With the decision to locate the headquarters of the Shuar Federation in Sucúa, the town became a key focal point for Shuar and other indigenous political activity in the region, with members of the Federation travelling from far and wide to resolve conflicts, attend meetings and apply for jobs. A radio station was set up in the headquarters with assistance from the missionaries (Shutka 2012, personal communication), and this allowed messages to be broadcast from Sucúa to some of the most isolated locations in the province. The radio-based education system that accompanied this initiative was abolished in 2010, and was replaced in Sucúa by a bilingual school, the *Escuela Fiscomisional Padre Alfredo Germani*, that has increased in popularity year on year. Currently, Shuar families from across the region send their children to be educated at this school, with many staying in the homes of urban extended kin in order to benefit from the perceived higher level of education on offer.[9]

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[9] Although all students are welcome at the school regardless of ethnicity, at present only Shuar children attend.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions for this thesis centre around the experiences of Shuar urban residents and examine what these experiences can tell us about indigeneity in twenty-first century Latin America. For this reason I address both specific and more general questions.

The overarching research question of my thesis is the following: What does it mean to be indigenous, and how (and by whom) is this decided? (To what extent) is this influenced by rural-urban migration? The first part of this question has been extensively addressed by many theorists, both within Amazonia and more generally (a full discussion of the literature concerning indigeneity and how it is defined can be found in Chapter 4). My particular contribution to this ongoing debate comes in the second part of the research question. To date there have been very few studies of the way that urbanisation in the Amazon region influences the way that urban indigenous residents understand, construct and articulate their identity as indigenous people (but see e.g. Bernal 2003). This is partly because, until recently, indigenous urbanisation has constituted a trickle rather than a flood. However, it is perhaps also due to the avoidance on the part of many Amazonianists of research that addresses multiethnic (including urban) contexts.

A discussion of indigeneity is necessarily a discussion of (ethnic) identity, and the latter will feature prominently in this thesis. I shall explain elsewhere what I mean by 'identity'; here I would like to focus on identity as it pertains to the research questions of this thesis. Specifically, I address the following question: what does it mean, in theory and in practice, to identify as 'Shuar', or as 'indigenous' and how does urbanisation affect this? How do urban Shuar perceive themselves, and how are they perceived by non-indigenous people (both Ecuadorian and non-Ecuadorian)? Addressing the issue of indigeneity more

broadly, does urbanisation influence Shuar understandings of what it means to be 'indigenous'? How does urbanisation affect the way that urban Shuar perceive themselves as 'indigenous people'? How do the opinions and observations of non-Shuar urban residents influence Shuar people's understanding of what it means to be indigenous?

In order to address these broad questions, I look at specific incidents and encounters in which ethnicity may be operationalised. In particular, and following the work of scholars exploring ethnicity and ethnic relations (including Barth 1969, Cohen 1974, and Eriksen 2010) I look closely at interactions at the 'boundary' of the Shuar 'ethnic group', between Shuar and non-Shuar. These include experiences of racism and their influence upon Shuar self-image and self-awareness as indigenous people. I examine in particular the kinds of racism that Shuar people experience, how they respond to these incidents, how they understand them in retrospect and how this understanding informs their future decisions, as well as the way they feel about their identity. I also look at encounters between Shuar and other indigenous Ecuadorians, as well as those between Shuar and non-Ecuadorians, as these have a considerable impact (for different – although often related – reasons) upon Shuar awareness and understanding of their identity as Shuar and as indigenous people. These encounters include interactions with political lobbying groups and NGOs, both indigenous and international, although as I have already explained, I attempt to steer clear of more overt expressions of political identity in order to understand how indigenous identity operates for Shuar in their daily lives, rather than in the political arena.

Finally, I examine how the day-to-day necessities and experiences of living in an urban area influence Shuar understandings of what it means to be Shuar and indigenous. These include insertion into the national economy and a more involved relationship with the

state. Urban Shuar attend school (and sometimes university), undertake paid labour, open bank accounts and request bank loans, pay rent and purchase property, shop in supermarkets, and are regularly involved in a thousand different kinds of interaction that their rural counterparts experience but rarely, if at all. These experiences are for the most part unique to urban indigenous Amazonians, and I hope to understand the extent to which they shape their identity as indigenous people.

1.3 A note on terminology

Throughout this thesis I will employ a number of terms that will either be unfamiliar to the reader, or else be so familiar that they have essentially become meaningless in the eyes of many theorists. A full glossary of the former, including common Shuar terms, can be found in Appendix I. As for the latter (which I will discuss in detail below), I defend my use of these terms for several reasons. Firstly, having established clear definitions for the terms from the outset, I found them to be useful and convenient as theoretical tools for understanding and interpreting the insights I gleaned as a result of my fieldwork. Secondly, while perhaps unfashionable and arguably problematic within social scientific discourse, many of these concepts enjoy a highly active life both in 'Western' media and among indigenous peoples (although these two groups tend to define the terms differently, both from each other and from 'anthropological' understandings of what the terms mean). In order to understand and take seriously the perspectives of my informants, I need to take the words they use seriously, and this includes apparently outmoded anthropological terms and ideas. A more detailed discussion of the various terms and concepts adopted in this thesis will follow in Chapter 4, but for now let me just present briefly the key concepts that I will employ and what I understand them to mean for the purposes of this project.

My argument in the first part of this thesis draws a considerable amount from theories of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic identity'. I follow Epstein in asserting that 'identity' is not a fixed, immutable entity but 'the process by which the person seeks to integrate his various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self' (Epstein 1978: 101). 'Ethnicity' is perhaps more difficult to define satisfactorily: as with identity, it involves a discussion of ('cultural') difference and sameness, but this time with special emphasis upon location (Wade 2010). The 'cultural' differences between ethnic groups need not necessarily be significant; what is important is that the members of those groups identify *with* their group and *against* the other(s) on the basis of purported cultural difference and sameness, usually combined with an assumption of shared origins and history (ibid).

'Indigeneity' is another problematic concept (see e.g. Kuper 2003, Canessa 2012b), and one that will be discussed at length in Chapter 4. For the purposes of this thesis, I understand the term 'indigenous' to refer to populations whose existence in a region significantly predates that of (normally European) colonisers. I also follow Saugestad (2001: 43) in emphasising the relational and processual aspect of indigeneity, drawing analogies with Barth's understanding of ethnicity. I argue therefore, perhaps contentiously, that 'being Shuar' and 'being indigenous' can *both* be seen as ethnic categories, in the same way that 'being Welsh' and 'being British' are not (necessarily) mutually incompatible identities, but rather situational, contextual and occasionally overlapping (see Wade 2010). Indigeneity may not be an ethnic identity *per se* (Niezen 2000, 2003) but in certain contexts it behaves and is treated as one (Wade ibid).

I speak of both 'urbanisation' and 'rural-urban migration' in this thesis, and take these to be interrelated concepts. Rural-urban migration (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4)

refers to relocation, whether temporary, seasonal, or permanent. 'Urbanisation', on the other hand, describes the increased tendency of (in this case) indigenous peoples to live in urban areas (see Peluso 2014). In this sense it is broader in its scope than rural-urban migration, as it also encompasses the experiences of my younger informants, the vast majority of whom had lived in an urban area their whole lives. Urbanisation is a particularly apt term for many Shuar residents of Sucúa, as the city lies at the heart of what has long been (and still is) a region heavily populated by Shuar households.

As for terms such as 'culture', 'customs', and 'tradition', these were regularly used by my informants and so I try in this thesis to understand and use them as they would. While they occasionally offer (from an anthropological perspective at least) a rather static vision of what it means to be 'Shuar' or 'indigenous' – premised as it is on notions of 'authenticity' and 'cultural preservation' – they do provide a useful insight into the way urban Shuar residents perceive and understand their history, and the changes that are affecting their lifeworlds.

1.4 Being Shuar, being 'indigenous'

It is my hope and intention that the material in this thesis will contribute to wider debates on indigeneity and urbanisation in the Amazon region and beyond. Nevertheless, I am aware that my research focuses upon a particular indigenous group residing in a specific location, and that it is not always straightforward to distinguish that which is specific to Shuar and/or to Sucúa from that which has broader relevance. As I mentioned previously, 'Shuar' and 'indigenous' are arguably overlapping identities, depending on the relationship in question. For example, vis-à-vis the *mestizo* population in Morona Santiago, or the Ecuadorian government, it often makes little difference whether a person is Shuar or Achuar: rather, it is the fact that she is indigenous (i.e. not *mestizo*) that counts. Moreover, and more importantly

for the purposes of this thesis, much of what urban Shuar learn and understand about 'being Shuar' comes from or is heavily influenced by wider discourses on what it means to be indigenous (as I shall discuss in Chapter 6).

As a result, it is very easy to conflate 'Shuarness' with indigeneity – that is, to conflate attitudes and experiences that are particular to Shuar, or to being Shuar, with broader notions of indigeneity or 'Indianness' in Latin America. This is particularly challenging in Sucúa, where Shuar constitute the vast majority of the indigenous population (along with much smaller populations of Achuar and highland Quichua). 'Indigeneity' is of course a concept that is constructed with a specific purpose, which often elides or ignores ethnic difference within the indigenous population, creating instead a 'generic Indianness' (Ribeiro 1970; Jackson 1991) that may even contribute to the elision of this internal ethnic diversity. Certainly, many indigenous people themselves are of this opinion. Marcelino Chumpi probably speaks for many Shuar, for example, when he observes:

> 'What happens is that they have made us believe that we are Indians [*indígenas*] ... How do you configure an Indian? How do you draw it? ... The Indian does not exist, instead, it is the Shuar, Quichuas, Sionas, Secoyas, like that ... the Indian exists as an ideology, it is a construction from other people and the anthropologists have made us a huge favor with that. I tell them [anthropologists], show me, where is the Indian? One thing is to imagine it, to have constructed Indians, but the Indian does not exist. It is a theory...' (quoted in Valdivia 2009).

While I think it is misleading to translate '*indígena*' as 'Indian'[10], Chumpi's broader point – that indigeneity is an externally-constructed category which does not reflect the ethnically diverse reality – is a very valid one. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that all categories are

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[10] These terms, while referring broadly to the same population, have different connotations. '*Indígena*' is arguably the more politically correct term – in Spanish at least – and refers to a political identity, a struggle for particular rights, and an identification with an international movement supported by bodies such at the United Nations. 'Indian' on the other hand, is more closely related to an ethnically-based class system, and has its roots in the unequal relationship between '*los indios*' and the dominant white-*mestizo* population (see Canessa 2014).

constructed, and all communities imagined (Anderson 1983) – indeed, I maintain in this thesis that the Shuar ethnic group itself was originally an externally-constructed category that has since been taken on and internalised by Shuar themselves (Jenkins 2008; see Chapter 6).

In this thesis I am principally concerned with discourses surrounding indigeneity and how these influence urban Shuar subjectivities. While certain historical and cultural factors are of course specific to Shuar, I feel confident in arguing that much of what informs urban Shuar identity construction and sense of self comes from broader narratives as to the nature of indigeneity and what it means to be an indigenous person, whether in the Amazonian, Ecuadorian, Latin American or international context. I therefore see the construction of Shuar and indigenous identity as so overlapping and interconnected as to be virtually indistinguishable in the urban context. This is reflected in the way that I use 'indigenous' and 'Shuar' largely interchangeably throughout much of the text.

1.5 Argument

I will argue in this thesis that the experience of living in an urban environment influences indigenous Amazonians' construction and awareness of their ethnic identity in a number of ways. Living in a multi-ethnic environment such as a city contributes towards a heightened awareness of their ethnic identity, in the case in question as Shuar, but also as indigenous people vis-à-vis non-indigenous Ecuadorians and non-Ecuadorians. On the one hand, this experience can provide Shuar and other indigenous Amazonians with a sense of pride in their indigenous identity, inspired by the success of the indigenous rights movement, the rhetoric of the environmentalist and human rights campaigns, and the somewhat 'romanticised' 'Western' image of indigenous peoples more generally (as evoked for example in tourism brochures). On the other hand, these same images and discourses can create something of a

'hyperreal Indian' (Ramos 1994), an idealised, generic stereotype that indigenous Amazonians, and particularly those living in urban areas, feel incapable of emulating. Local experiences of racism can also negatively affect indigenous peoples' self image and encourage them to downplay their indigenous identity, although this is apparently becoming less common and is less of a concern among Amazonian indigenous people than in highland regions, which have a much longer history of indigenous-*mestizo* integration and oppression (Urban and Sherzer 1991).

To many, 'indigenous urbanisation' may seem like a contradiction in terms. Indigenous peoples in general, and Amazonian 'Indians' in particular, are often considered to be the very epitome of the isolated, rural community living in the rainforest 'as nature intended'. This image, which has existed since the time of Columbus, has been sharpened over the years, first by Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau (1979 [1755]) and Hobbes (1928 [1651]), then by a generation of explorers and anthropologists, and more recently by a variety of stakeholders in the interests of indigenous peoples. These latter include environmental activists lauding the intimate relationship between indigenous peoples and the natural environment (Conklin and Graham 1995); human rights advocates campaigning for the protection of indigenous peoples (Barnard 2006) and the 'preservation' of their 'culture' (see e.g. United Nations 2009); tourism agencies promoting 'authentic' rainforest experiences (Peluso and Alexiades 2005); successive national governments, for whom indigenous peoples' isolation from the national economy is problematic (Stutzman 1981); anthropologists searching for the authentic, isolated Other (Field 1994); and finally, indigenous political leaders, who perceive that the successful defence of their rights and interests depends in part upon a certain embodiment of the 'noble savage' (Lescarbot 1609,

cited in Ellingson 2001) stereotype so beloved by Euro-Americans (Conklin and Graham ibid).

In the Latin American context, indigeneity and urbanisation have tended conceptually to stand at opposite ends of a spectrum that sees rural, indigenous peoples gradually transformed into urban *mestizos* via a process of *blanqueamiento*, or 'whitening'. This process was originally conceived mainly in terms of biological changes: 'white blood' was deemed to be stronger than 'indigenous blood', and so it was assumed that through interracial 'mixing' [*mestizaje*], *indios* would eventually become *mestizo*, and *mestizos* would become gradually whiter (Mallon 1996). However, *blanqueamiento* increasingly came to refer to socio-cultural change – the adoption of customs, clothing, economic activities and behaviour more typical of *mestizos* or the white elite. The two meanings of *blanqueamiento* were thus conflated (Roitman 2007) in what de la Cadena (2005) refers to as a 'conceptual hybridity'. While such ideas had effectively existed since colonial times, they became more influential in the early twentieth century as Latin American nation-building intensified and efforts increased to form a national identity around the concept of *mestizaje* (Stutzman 1981). As 'urban' was generally associated with whites and *mestizos*, and 'rural' with indigenous peoples, the result was that an indigenous person who relocated to an urban area was often considered to have left her indigenous identity behind, and became to all intents and purposes *mestizo*. Thus the processes of urbanisation and miscegenation became intimately entwined, giving birth to the modern Ecuadorian nation (ibid).

Latin American assumptions about the inevitability of socio-cultural *mestizaje* echoed the contemporaneous work of sociologists and anthropologists in the United States, who focused on the extent to which ethnic groups remained distinctive in American cities. These

endeavours were pioneered by the Chicago School theorists, most prominent among whom was Robert Park (1950). Following research among multi-ethnic Chicago residents (many of whom were first generation immigrants) in the 1920s and 1930s, Park came to the conclusion that an urban environment is essentially 'a more or less successful melting-pot where diverse populations are merged, acculturated and eventually assimilated' (Eriksen 2010b: 20). This argument in favour of inevitable acculturation was quickly discredited by the work of the Manchester School on the Copperbelt in North Rhodesia (now Zambia). J. Clyde Mitchell, among others, demonstrated that in multi-ethnic urban areas ethnicity became more relevant, and the differences between ethnic groups more apparent, compared with rural areas (Mitchell 1956). This idea was followed up by Fredrik Barth in 1969 in his seminal paper *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, in which he suggested that ethnic groups have no meaning in isolation; they only come into being when an encounter takes place with another, different ethnic group. As Eriksen (2010a) observes, 'it is through contact with others that we discover who we are'. Urban areas, Cohen argues, therefore provide the perfect context for the emergence of ethnicity, characterised as they are by the coming together of different peoples from diverse backgrounds (Cohen 1974).

I follow Barth and Cohen in asserting that ethnic identity becomes more relevant to people's lives in a multi-ethnic urban context than in a (comparatively) mono-ethnic rural environment. I suggest therefore that living in an urban environment such as Sucúa has the effect of increasing Shuar residents' awareness both of their particular ethnicity as Shuar, and also of the fact that they are indigenous, a fact that distinguishes them from *mestizos*, whites and foreigners in Sucúa but means at the same time that they have something in common with other indigenous ethnic groups in the region such as the Quichua and the Huaorani. On the one hand, their ethnicity – as Shuar, and as indigenous – is 'operationalised', in that they

turn to fellow Shuar, or fellow indigenous people, when in need of money, food, a job or a useful contact. Their ethnic group effectively becomes a surrogate (or extended) kin network. On the other hand, aspects such as physical appearance, dress, body language, behaviour and accent, differentiate urban Shuar residents from *mestizos* and also to a certain extent from other indigenous people.

Living in an urban area such as Sucúa not only increases Shuar awareness of their identity as indigenous people, it also increases their pride in that identity, or at the very least their awareness of its 'value'. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, various stakeholders have shown an interest in defining 'what it means to be indigenous', and many of these stakeholders make their presence felt in one way or another in Ecuador's rainforest cities. Sucúa and nearby cities have tourism offices and agencies, and these are frequented by Euro-American tourists and backpackers; environmental and human rights activists regularly visit the region and often prefer to work with urban Shuar as the latter tend to be literate, educated Spanish speakers; moreover, as the seat of the Shuar Federation, Sucúa is a hub for indigenous political activity in the region, with government delegates and indigenous leaders travelling from across the country to stage debates, resolve issues and reach agreements. The combined effect of these various perspectives is a reified image of indigenous identity, which Ramos refers to as the 'hyperreal Indian' (1994).

This heavily romanticised image of Shuar and indigenous identities encourages urban Shuar residents to 'value' these identities, either in terms of a political, symbolic or (particularly in the case of tourism) economic value, or 'capital' (Bourdieu 1977), or simply a sense of pride in the fact that others recognise and appreciate the 'value' of Shuar 'culture' and 'traditions'. A notion inherent to ethnic identity – that members of an ethnic group share

a common ancestry – becomes important here, as Shuar language, myths, dress, food, dance, music, and handicrafts, become a sort of collective heritage of which each Shuar can feel proud, even if s/he no longer practices these 'customs' or speaks the Shuar language. Nevertheless, this reified image of generic 'Indianness' (Jackson 1995), impossible as it is for any Shuar – but particularly urban Shuar residents – to attain, leaves urban Shuar with a constant reminder that, because they are unable to live up to this unachievable standard of 'Shuarness', they are not quite 'Shuar' enough. This phenomenon is an example of what I describe, following Olwig (1999), as 'the burden of heritage': an idea of the past (and, in this case, also of the present) created within specific global discourses about 'heritage' that reflect the interests and power relations of different stakeholders.

I conclude this thesis with a closer examination of the experiences and perspectives of my principal informants: middle-classed, urban Shuar residents in Sucúa. This newly-emerging class has risen to the top of what is now effectively a social hierarchy within the formerly 'egalitarian' Shuar population, whether through acquiring high-profile jobs with the Shuar Federation (Rubenstein 2007), or (as is increasingly the case) benefitting from remittances sent by relatives who have migrated to the United States and Europe (see McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). These families generally own their houses and often have considerable plots of privately owned land in or near their 'communities'. Their children are for the most part privately educated, and many go on to university, including the prestigious San Francisco University in Quito. Although their wealth lies mainly in property (the remittances have tended to dry up in recent years as the European and United States economies were affected by the financial crisis), they are financially comfortable, own refrigerators, televisions and computers, work in professional jobs and spend their free time in recreational activities. Crucially, this section of the Shuar population is one of the most

enthusiastic about Shuar and indigenous identity, and among the most proud to identify themselves as Shuar. Nevertheless, this identification with their ethnicity does not stand in the way of pursuing ambitions that many may deem to be incongruous with an indigenous identity – on the contrary, they feel motivated by a desire to show non-indigenous Ecuadorians what indigenous people are capable of. By wearing their identity with pride as they acquire influence and prestige, they are in a position to challenge prevailing norms as to 'how indigenous people should be' and creatively redefine indigeneity on their own terms.

Throughout this thesis, I endeavour to challenge the notion, latent in much Amazonian ethnography, that Amazonian indigenous peoples are 'people without history' (Wolf 1982). Although Amazonian peoples' conceptualisation of history has been much discussed since the publication of Wolf's influential text, particularly in the collected works *Rethinking History and Myth* (Hill 1988) and *Time and Memory in indigenous Amazonia* (Fausto and Heckenberger 2007), there has been a move away from understanding Amazonian histories as 'Europe's history', and towards more emic visions of the past. While this tendency is of course laudable, it risks ignoring or trivialising the influence of the Euro-American philosophical tradition upon indigenous understandings of their past and their lifeworlds. Many Shuar – and particularly the urban middle classes that this thesis focuses on – attend high school and university, watch television, follow the news, and engage with ideas and concepts that, though 'Western', arguably mean as much to them as they might to an American or a European. To say, for example, that Shuar have 'no sense of identity'[11], because the concept of identity does not exist in Amerindian cosmology, is to ignore centuries of interaction between Amerindian peoples and Euro-Americans, not to mention ignoring what many indigenous people themselves are saying. Arguably, concepts such as 'identity',

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[11] This observation was made by a colleague about a paper that I presented at the *Primer Encuentro Internacional de Antropología de la Amazonía ecuatoriana* at FLACSO in Quito.

'ethnicity', 'indigeneity' and even 'culture' are examples of what Collier and Ong (2005, 2006) refer to as 'global forms' – ideas and practices that have a 'distinctive capacity for decontextualization and recontextualization, abstractability and movement, across diverse social and cultural situations' (Collier and Ong 2006: 400). Their appropriation by urban Shuar is therefore a case of a 'global assemblage' (ibid), or the local recontextualisation and articulation of a global form.

1.6 Significance of research

Amazonian urbanisation is a growing phenomenon. While it would be excessive to say that all or even most indigenous Amazonians are now living in cities, studies suggest that the majority of Amazonian residents now live in urban areas and that indigenous peoples are increasingly becoming part of these trends (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Nevertheless, while there is a wide array of literature addressing indigenous urbanisation in highland regions (see e.g. Colloredo-Mansfeld 2003), to date, Amazonian indigenous urbanisation has received little attention. Notable exceptions to this include Bernal 2003, Peluso and Alexiades 2005, McSweeney and Jokisch 2007, Virtanen 2006, and de Rivero 2009.

It is important to examine this new trend for several reasons. Firstly, as I elaborated in the previous section, urbanisation challenges preconceived notions about what it means to be 'indigenous', particularly in the case of Amazonian peoples, arguably the archetypal 'Indians' of the popular imagination. There is a risk, therefore, that urban indigenous residents will be deemed somehow 'inauthentic' by virtue of their abandonment of a 'traditional' way of life (Bernal 2003). This could have serious implications for the efforts of indigenous rights movements in the Amazon region, whose successful territorial claims have been made in part on the basis that their 'culture' is intricately intertwined and thus

inseparable from the land upon which they have historically settled. If nothing else, there is an inherent danger in allowing these stereotypical visions of indigenous identity to persist, as while the power to define what it means to be indigenous rests in the hands of non-indigenous groups (however well-meaning) the latter remain the arbitrators of authenticity, subject to the whims of academic or activist fashions.

I argue that one reason for the avoidance of urban-based research on the part of European-trained ethnographers of Amazonia in particular, lies in the origins and development of the anthropological traditions in, respectively, North America and Europe (particularly the United Kingdom). The clue to this distinction can perhaps be found in the name adopted by each tradition: 'social' anthropology in Europe, and 'cultural' anthropology in North America. The former, in the spirit of Durkheim and with the functionalist zeal of Malinowski, focused initially upon synchronic studies of self-contained social structures and institutions, whereas the latter took 'culture', by which they meant 'a set of attributes and products of human societies, and therewith of mankind' (Kroeber and Kluckhorn 1952: 145), as their object of study (Murdock 1951), considering the symbol to be 'the origin and basis of human behaviour' (White 1949, cited in Sahlins, 1999). As a result, American anthropologists of the Boasian tradition were more inclined to embrace 'acculturation' as a phenomenon worthy of anthropological study; European anthropologists, on the other hand, preferred to find, describe and analyse 'coherent systems of social relations' (Gow 2007) that arguably never really existed (Wolf 1982). According to Gow, the result is that European-trained Amazonianists are often wary of taking on the challenge of so-called 'acculturated' peoples as they do not have the analytical 'toolbox' (ibid: 195). This certainly appears to be the case from a brief survey of the literature: those Amazonianist scholars that have endeavoured to engage diachronically with complex and challenging issues such as cultural hybridity,

globalisation, transnationalism, migration, cosmopolitanism and urbanisation, tend overwhelmingly to be American-trained, including Jean Jackson, Beth Conklin, Laura Graham, Daniela Peluso, Miguel Alexiades and Steven Rubenstein (exceptions include Laura Rival's 1997 paper, *Modernity and the Politics of Identity in an Amazonian Society*). European ethnography, on the other hand, tends to focus more upon seemingly isolated small-scale societies, and to be written in the ethnographic present (for a criticism of which, see Rubenstein 2002). In this thesis I hope to defy this trend by demonstrating that European-trained anthropologists not only can but need to address the complex issues raised by processes such as acculturation and hybridity. The world in which Amazonianists work is changing rapidly and we must embrace these changes if we are to understand the perspectives, priorities and lived experiences of the people we work with.

The arguments laid down in this thesis can also contribute to the significant debate surrounding 'globalisation' – 'the manifold, multisided ways in which the world is interconnected' (Eriksen 2003: 1) – not least because the idea persists in many sectors that globalisation leads to an increased homogenisation of ethnicity and culture with the concomitant obliteration of indigenous peoples, and that indigenous urbanisation is merely evidence of this process. Globalisation, as well as the apparent dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity', are concepts that have been much debated and critiqued by anthropologists over the course of the last two decades (see e.g. Moore 2011, Appadurai 1996). Originally, these debates were effectively exercises in what Sahlins refers to as 'despondency theory' (1999: 401), which 'envisioned the inevitable collapse of indigenous cultures under the shattering impact of global capitalism' (ibid: 401-2). Nevertheless, as Sahlins goes on to observe, 'just when the forms of life around the world are becoming homogeneous, the people are asserting their cultural distinctiveness' (ibid: 410). Or to put it

another way, in the words of Marilyn Strathern: 'An increasing homogenisation of social and cultural forms seems to be accompanied by a proliferation of claims to specific authenticities and identities' (1995: 3). Appadurai (1996) argues that this phenomenon is part of a domino effect: nations respond to increased globalisation by reasserting a (doomed) sense of nationalism (in the case of India, via 'national' sports such as cricket); this then prompts a backlash on the part of minority groups who endeavour to assert their ethnic identities in the face of overwhelming nationalistic fervour.

In this thesis I would like to follow Marshall Sahlins (ibid) and Henrietta Moore (2011) in taking anthropologists to task for their dismissiveness in the face of indigenous cultural resurgence. While it is true that all traditions are to some extent 'invented' (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983), to dismiss the re-energising of indigenous ethnic identities as 'serviceable humbuggery', or as 'self-serving inversions of colonisers' traditions' (Sahlins ibid: 402) amounts to nothing more than a morally and politically judgmental form of functionalism (ibid). As Moore (2011: 4) observes:

> 'Social theorists are part of the world they study, and their passions and fears are often very similar to those of the people they study and write about. Successful social theory must stay close to the theories, concerns and experiences of the people being studied.'

Therefore, instead of criticising indigenous peoples for apparently cynical motives in 'rediscovering' their 'diversity' in the face of globalisation, we would do better to try and understand what these categories mean for them. According to Moore, rather than striving for marketable authenticity, these efforts of rediscovery are an exercise in hope, an attempt to imagine the present 'otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it, but by grasping in it what it is' (Foucault 1998: 311; cf Moore 2011).

1.7 Organisation of the text

This thesis will be split into two parts, with eight chapters in total. The first half of the thesis (Chapters 2 – 4) provides the ethnographic context and theoretical framework of the project: this will include Methodology and Ethical Considerations (Chapter 2); Ethnographic Context (Chapter 3) and Theoretical Framework (Chapter 4). In the second half I will present my main arguments in detail, drawing upon the ethnographic material gathered over the course of my fieldwork. This part will be divided into three separate chapters: Chapter 5 will look at urban Shuar residents' increased awareness of their identity as Shuar and as indigenous peoples, and the pride that they take in this identity. Chapter 6 will explore Ramos's notion of the 'hyperreal Indian' as it relates to urban Shuar residents, their self-perception, and their fears of not quite living up to the impossible standards of indigeneity apparently expected of them. In this chapter I will use Novaes's (1997) concept of the 'play of mirrors' as a means of exploring the various perspectives on the question of 'authentic' indigeneity that interact in rainforest cities like Sucúa. Chapter 7 will look more closely at the experiences of middle class urban Shuar residents and the ways in which they increasingly engage critically with concepts and ideas born in the Euro-American philosophical tradition. In this final ethnographic chapter, I will draw upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu to demonstrate that although many urban Shuar are plagued by contradictory attitudes towards their ethnic identity, one section of the population at least has acquired the economic and social capital necessary to determine for themselves what it means to be Shuar or indigenous, and to defy the edicts of the various 'mirrors'. Finally, in the Conclusion (Chapter 8) I will summarise the findings of this thesis and the contributions it makes towards anthropological scholarship, as well as suggesting possible areas for further research.

2. Methodology and Ethical Considerations

'How do city dwellers go about meeting the exigencies of their everyday lives; what is their interpretation and "definition of the situation"; and how ultimately do they make sense of their social worlds?' (Anderson 2009: 372)

2.1 Choosing a field site

As a study of urban indigenous identities, and correspondingly (to a certain extent) a comparative study, this project was conducted in two principal field sites, one predominantly 'urban' and the other more 'rural'[12]. The urban field site, where the majority of my research took place, was the city of Sucúa in the province of Morona Santiago. I also carried out extensive research in the rural Shuar *centro* which I refer to in this thesis as 'Taant', located to the south of Sucúa, in the county of Logroño. A third field site, Puyo, is a larger city in the province of Pastaza, where I spent the early part of my fieldwork and later made periodic visits. A full description of these field sites can be found in Chapter 3. I was also able to gather a certain amount of comparative data on my regular trips to Quito, where I spent time with Shuar who were originally from Sucúa but were now working or studying in the capital city. Finally, I was able to interview, via Skype, several migrants who were living and working in the United States (Connecticut and Philadelphia).

My eventual choice of field site reflected the crystallisation of my research objectives in the early months of my fieldwork. I initially intended for my project to focus upon internal indigenous rural-urban migration, rather than urbanisation *per se* (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of the distinction); for this reason, I chose as my field site the rainforest city of Puyo in the province of Pastaza, which is situated at some distance from the region in

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[12] I appreciate that the distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' is not a clear-cut dichotomy; the relationship between them is more complex and involved than these reductive labels would suggest. For a fuller discussion see Chapter 4.

Morona Santiago where Shuar are predominantly based. I spent two months in Puyo where, thanks to contacts generously provided by Dr Steven Rubenstein and by my supervisor, Dr Daniela Peluso, I was able to establish a network of informants and to commence study of the Shuar language. Ultimately, however, I came to realise that my research interests lay more in the way of urbanisation rather than more long-distance internal migrations and relocations. Following several trips to Morona Santiago to visit contacts and conduct initial interviews, I concluded that Sucúa was a more appropriate location for the needs of my project. Nevertheless, the time that I spent in Puyo was very fruitful in its own way; I kept in touch with many of the people that I met there, and their experiences and perspectives have also contributed to the conclusions that I have drawn in this thesis.

My first step upon arriving permanently in Sucúa was to find a place to live. This was achieved within two weeks thanks to the efforts and generosity of the contacts I had made in the region over the previous weeks. My new host family was Shuar, and lived in a large new wooden house, built with remittances sent by the eldest daughter, who was working illegally in the United States.

I was aware from the very beginning of my fieldwork that if I wanted to fully understand Shuar urban identity I would need to draw comparisons with the experiences and perspectives of 'rural' Shuar. I therefore endeavoured to locate an appropriate 'rural' field site in which to conduct research. This task was not as simple as it seemed: the Shuar Federation was initially unwilling to grant me permission to travel in rural areas outside of Sucúa, and the communities themselves were for the most part unwilling to receive 'foreign' travellers. Rumours circulated that '*americanos*' were responsible for a trade in shrunken heads that had

apparently led to the deaths of several Shuar, and my urban Shuar friends warned me that if I attempted to travel to rural areas I risked being accused of headhunting.

As it turned out, I was very fortunate in that early on in my fieldwork, I was invited to visit the Shuar *centro* Taant. My closest friend in the field, Clara Antich, and her family, owned a smallholding on the edge of this *centro*, about 30 km to the south of Sucúa in the Upano valley. The farm was occupied and maintained by Clara's paternal grandmother, and several of her aunts, uncles and cousins lived in the community itself. Clara was keen for me to visit Taant with her, and the *centro*'s residents accepted and welcomed me on the basis of my friendship with her family.

Taant lay on the western side of the Kutuku cordillera, within around a forty-five minute walk of the highway. It was therefore not as isolated as Shuar communities to the east of the mountains. This was both a benefit and a disadvantage to my project. On the one hand, Taant was easy and convenient for me to reach: I could leave my home in Sucúa and arrive at the community within three hours. This meant that I could spend a considerable amount of time in both communities, and travel from one to the other on the spur of the moment, rather than needing to plan trips several days or weeks in advance. On the other hand, the close proximity of Taant to 'urban' life may not have provided as much of a contrast to the experiences of urban Sucúans as, perhaps, a more isolated community might.

Nevertheless, on balance, I feel that the location of Taant was beneficial to my project. Firstly, it was in the same valley as Utunkus, Steven Rubenstein's field site (2002), and was in many ways a similar community. I am therefore hopeful that researchers will be able to draw parallels or comparisons between our respective findings. Furthermore, it is probable that life in Taant is more reflective of the situation for an increasing number of rural

Shuar, and more indicative of their future trajectory, than more isolated communities to the east, which perhaps exhibit a more 'traditional' way of life that is fast disappearing[13] . I was also able to explore to a certain extent the relationships between my 'urban' informants and their 'rural' kin, and the way that, as many commentators have observed (e.g. Alexiades 2009), information, goods and skills are shared and circulated between urban and rural areas by these 'cosmopolitan' (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003) figures. Finally, the close proximity of Taant to Sucúa makes the often stark differences in the attitudes, experiences and ways of life of the respective Shuar communities all the more fascinating and relevant.

2.2 Methods used

During my fieldwork I used a combination of different methods, varying the emphasis according to factors such as the specific research question, phase of research and my developing relationship with my informants. I also made use of particular IT tools to assist in the organisation, management and analysis of my data. This was beneficial for several reasons: firstly, it facilitated data organisation (Fischer 1994); secondly, it allowed for more innovative and creative forms of data analysis (Gilbert 2008); thirdly, it provided a clear and comprehensive bank of data for the benefit of future researchers (Fischer 1994; Lyon 2004).

2.2.1 Observation: participant and direct

My primary, and most effective, 'method' in the field was participant observation, described (fairly accurately, if perhaps slightly frivolously) by Russell Bernard in the following extract: 'Spend lots and lots of time in studying a culture, learn the language, hang out, do all the everyday things that everyone else does, become inconspicuous by sheer tenaciousness [*sic*],

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[13] A proposed road to the city of Taisha, at present only reachable by plane or boat, is likely to significantly change the way of life in the region.

and stay aware of what's really going on' (Bernard 2011: 259). I agree with Henig (2011) among others that participant observation is less a method, more a 'framework for living in the field' (Crane and Angrosino 1974: 64). In the early stages of my fieldwork I thus focused upon building rapport with my informants, earning their trust to the extent that they would welcome me into the intimate spaces of their lives.

During my time in Sucúa I lived with two Shuar families, and built up an intimate friendship with two more. Although I conducted interviews more widely, I spent much of my time with these four families and participated as often as possible in their daily lives: helping to cook and clean, taking care of small children, making trips to the market and to the Shuar Federation, visiting friends and relatives, attending church, going for walks in the town centre, or going for long drives around Sucúa and the surrounding areas. Furthermore, I joined my Shuar informants on trips that they made out of town, for example, to attend a political rally in Zamora, an eco-tourism fair in Puyo, and a handicrafts festival in Quito. I kept a meticulous field diary, and also brought a small notepad with me wherever I went in order to note down conversations and other immediate observations. Some of my informants were originally from Sucúa but either worked or studied in Quito; I was able to visit them in their homes in the capital and travel back and forth with them, which helped me to understand better their relationship with their place of origin.

Aside from the time spent with these families, I volunteered as a teacher of English as a foreign language at the (Spanish-Shuar) bilingual 'Padre Alfredo Germani' primary school in Sucúa, located opposite the former premises of SERBISH (Sistema de Educación Radiofónica Bilingüe Intercultural Shuar). I gave classes to all age groups (5 – 15 years) during the school terms, and was able to audit relevant lessons such as Shuar language and

culture, handicrafts, and dancing. Furthermore, the students made periodic trips to government-organised cultural events, designed to raise awareness of and pride in Ecuador's ethnic diversity. I was able to accompany the students on these trips and thus gain an awareness of how the government's 'plurinational' agenda is influencing the construction of Shuar youths' ethnic identity.

Although initially I offered my services to the school as a way of 'giving something back' to the Shuar community, I learnt just as much from my experiences with Shuar pupils and teachers in this school as I did from my other informants. My role as a teacher also improved my relationship with Sucúa's Shuar community, many of whose children attended the school. Not only were they grateful that I was, as they saw it, giving up my time and energy in order to help their children, but they came to view me as a member of the community, as someone who was involved in their lives, rather than as a foreign researcher who was only interested in her own project.

Of course, participation in all activities was not always necessary or indeed possible in order to gather data. I found direct observation to be the perfect complement to the information provided in interviews and informal conversations – the best way to compare what people think they do with what they actually do (Bernard 2012). It was also the best way to access the 'what goes without saying' (Bloch 1998) element of life in an urban Shuar household. I was careful to document in my field diary as much of what I observed as possible, and to ask questions and clarify anything that I did not understand with my informants. In this way, my informants were aware that I was observing their day-to-day activities for the purposes of my project. While this may have consciously influenced their behaviour in the short term, it is very unlikely to have had a long term effect, and I was able

for the most part to overcome the ethical issues involved with unobtrusive direct observation (see Bernard ibid).

2.2.2 Unstructured interviews

The most useful information that I gathered came from what I describe here, following Russell Bernard, as 'unstructured' or 'informal' interviews – essentially, conversations that took place with informants over the course of my fieldwork. Not only is it true that 'conversations create intimacy and intimacy is the key to successful ethnography' (Herzfeld 2004: 221), but I found that my friends felt far happier and freer to discuss their ideas in an informal setting, rather than in the more pressurised context of a recorded interview. Crucially, many of the most illuminative conversations were not instigated by me; rather, they took place in my presence and drew my attention to factors that had not previously occurred to me. I was then able to investigate these new elements in detail with follow-up questions and interviews. This approach, in my opinion, is the greatest advantage of the ethnographic method and meant that my research was informant-led: the questions and leads that I pursued were generated for the most part by what my informants considered to be important or relevant. The difference, as I see it, between ethnography and other means of gathering data in the social sciences, is that the ethnographer is always there, building up a relationship over a long period of time, and is ideally present for those moments that might seem insignificant at the time, but take on more relevance as fieldwork progresses and as the ethnographer acquires a more comprehensive picture of the situation. These moments are always more difficult to document, as they are part of the ebb and flow of everyday life; fortunately, one of the most helpful pieces of advice I received (from a colleague) as I left for the field was 'everything is (potentially) data'. I therefore took care, from the first moments of my

fieldwork, to document every interaction and every conversation that appeared relevant or illuminating, in as much detail as I could manage in my fieldnotes. Some of these moments turned out not to have much significance; others proved more telling than I could possibly have imagined at the time.

2.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

I conducted extensive semi-structured interviews, which Russell Bernard describes as open-ended interviews that nevertheless follow a general script and cover a list of topics (2011: 156). These interviews took place both with my principal informants and with many others, Shuar and non-Shuar, that I met in my field sites. Over the course of my time in the field I interviewed urban and rural Shuar; white-*mestizo* urban residents of Sucúa, Macas and Puyo; non-Ecuadorian tourists (mostly Euro-American) travelling in the region; and Shuar migrants living in the United States, Spain and Italy (the latter via Skype). I also interviewed several foreign missionaries: two (one Italian and one Slovakian) from the Salesian Mission who had been in the region since the 1960s, and two (both American) from the evangelical *Centro Cristiano* which was established around seven or eight years ago and has since managed to attract many Shuar converts. In total I recorded a little over fifty hours' worth of interview material. While I found interviewing to be a useful technique for those informants whom I knew less well, I soon realised that the most interesting and relevant information often came from more informal conversations. In fact, my three closest and most helpful informants were also the most difficult people to 'interview', as they found the formalised nature of the conversation artificial and disconcerting.

2.2.4 Structured interviews

I supplemented the information gleaned from participant observation and semi-structured interviews with data gathered via structured interviews, or surveys (Bernard 2011). My ability to conduct surveys in the field was somewhat limited as many people, both Shuar and *mestizos*, were suspicious of the formal appearance of the paperwork and thus unwilling to share information. However, I did find surveys useful in ascertaining the awareness levels of my older pupils at the Alfredo Germani School, who were happy to answer questions about, for example, their subjective opinion of their ability to speak Shuar, the activities they carried out at home and during the holidays, and how they felt about their Shuar identity and the future of Shuar people. An example of a survey used can be found in Appendix III.

2.2.5 Focus groups

While structured surveys were met with distrust and reticence on the part of many of my informants, I received a much more positive response to my efforts to organise focus groups. I arranged an informal meeting around once a fortnight in a café in Sucúa, and invited Shuar friends and acquaintances to take part in exchange for a coke or a fruit juice and some snacks. Each week we would address a different theme, ranging from 'Who are the Shuar?'[14] to 'What is the future of the Shuar?', and 'Should all Shuar be able to speak Shuar?'. Although the invitation was initially open, I soon realised that the majority of the people that came were between the ages of 14 and 35, with older people tending to excuse themselves on the basis of prior responsibilities. I also found that the conversations were often dominated by the men and/or the more highly educated members of the group. While I did not want to turn these people away, I was keen to hear everyone's perspective, and so I endeavoured to

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[14] These questions were posed in Spanish, in which the direct article is used much more commonly than in English and does not carry the same pejorative connotations when preceding the name of a nationality or ethnic group.

moderate the conversations so as to give everyone a chance to speak. I also invited the more reticent participants to a separate, smaller and more informal meeting, where they felt more confident and able to express their opinions.

2.2.6 Elicitation

Throughout my fieldwork, I made use of elicitation devices, both photographs and texts. Following Steven Rubenstein's example (Rubenstein 2002), I brought both his and Michael Harner's monographs to the field with me and read out passages of these works to my informants, asking whether they agreed with the presentations (O'Driscoll 2012). I also made use of my digital camera to take photographs which I would later put on to my computer and show to my informants. This also worked well for videos: one of the most interesting conversations I had came after I showed some of my informants a short clip on YouTube of the (Jamaican-accented) 'shrunken head' that hangs from the rear view mirror of the magical double-decker bus in the film *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

2.3 Learning the language

As there were no resources available to learn Shuar outside of Ecuador, I spent my initial time in the field endeavouring to acquire proficiency in the Shuar language. Although I took private classes, initially from a Shuar teacher in Puyo and later from one of my colleagues at the bilingual primary school in Sucúa, in the end complete fluency in Shuar eluded me. I attribute this partly to the fact that such fluency requires complete immersion, and almost everyone around me spoke Spanish as their first or main language, and partly to the high level of difficulty involved in learning the Shuar language for speakers of Indo-European languages. Evangelical missionaries in the Shuar town of Makuma on the eastern side of the Kutuku mountains, who have extensive training in field linguistics, can take as many as

twelve years to achieve fluency in Shuar (Buitrón-Arias, personal communication); for a native English speaker, nine months would be insufficient even to learn a more closely-related language such as German or Dutch to the level required to conduct in-depth fieldwork.

Fortunately, I speak Spanish fluently, having learnt the language while living in Ecuador between 2006 and 2008. Moreover, over the course of my fieldwork I was able to acquire a passive understanding of Shuar sufficient to identify the most essential points in speeches, radio broadcasts and conversations. An interpreter was needed on only one occasion, when interviewing the elderly mother of a local shaman, who did not understand any Spanish and for whom all the questions needed to be translated into Shuar. In this case, I was fortunate enough to understand enough of these translations and the lady's responses to ascertain whether the translations were accurate.

I feel that my lack of fluency in Shuar may well have detracted from my ability to understand certain aspects of my fieldwork experience, particularly with regards to encounters with older informants. On the other hand, it could be argued that I was better able to understand the subjective experiences of my younger informants. By the end of my time in the field, my level of Shuar was roughly equivalent to that of my young, urban Shuar friends, and thus my understanding of Shuar-language encounters between older Shuar was arguably comparable to theirs, at least linguistically. I therefore felt better able to see these encounters through the eyes of my (younger) Shuar informants, and could discuss and sympathise with them over the difficulties and challenges of learning the language.

2.4 Social media

One factor that has fundamentally influenced my research is the use of social media, and particularly Facebook, on the part of my Shuar informants. All of my younger informants (those aged under forty) had at least one Facebook account, and some had as many as three or four, which they would use to communicate with different groups of people. I discovered that people would be quick to add me as a friend on Facebook, almost as soon as we had met; furthermore, I would receive many friendship requests from Shuar people I had yet to meet. It was via Facebook, for example, that I became acquainted with several Shuar who were living and working in the United States, and who saw that I was friends with members of their family or friendship group. This proved to be an excellent way to meet potential informants, if one that needed to be approached with a certain amount of caution.

The use of Facebook influenced my fieldwork in three important ways. Firstly, much of the social lives of my younger Shuar friends – and particularly the young women – took place on Facebook. My friends were not overly concerned by the public nature of Facebook timelines, and would often have lengthy written conversations, send each other photographs and links, start (and end) romantic relationships, or share good (and bad) news, all via their Facebook accounts. For young women whose parents prohibited them from being in a relationship until they finished their studies, this was often the only way for them to meet men, and I noticed that several of my friends' relationships began and ended entirely online, without the couple ever meeting in person.

A second element was that, as I mentioned above, Facebook allowed me to get to know people who were connected with my social world in Sucúa but who lived elsewhere, in Quito or Cuenca, but especially in the United States and Spain. I received many friendship

requests from Shuar I had never met and, while I was careful only to accept those who had strong connections with my informants in Sucúa (for example, the sister of one of my friends, who lived in Quito, and the son-in-law of another, who was in Connecticut), I nevertheless managed to build up a significant group of contacts among those Shuar who had emigrated to other places. I would often have conversations with whoever was online when I opened my Facebook account, and over time was able to build up relationships that later enabled me to interview them, via Skype and Facebook, about their experiences as migrants.

Thirdly, I soon discovered upon my return to the United Kingdom that, as long as I still had a Facebook account, my fieldwork would effectively never really end. My closest friends in the field all used Facebook and were perpetually online, via their phones or computers. We would chat periodically about life in Sucúa and nearly every conversation revealed something relevant to my thesis. While this had its benefits – I was, for example, able to fill any small holes in my data simply by logging on and sending one of my informants a message – I soon realised that if I continued in this vein, my thesis would never be written! On the other hand, I did not want to lose the close friendships that I had developed with my informants and that I was keen to maintain for their own sake regardless of my research. I therefore endeavoured to draw a line under the data I had gathered and to keep any relevant information shared by my friends on Facebook as material for a potential future project.

2.5 Conducting urban ethnography

Sadly, urban ethnography is still relatively marginal in anthropology, defying as it does the convention of the small, self-contained, isolated community which has traditionally been the ethnographer's object of study. Setha Low lamented fifteen year ago that, 'the city has been

undertheorised within anthropology'; likewise that 'an anthropological voice is not often heard in the urban studies discourse' (Low 1999: 1), and the same is arguably true today. Amazonianists, it seems, are particularly averse to urban ethnography, judging by the (to date) relatively small amount of material produced on this topic. A fuller review of urban anthropology will follow in Chapter 4; here I will explore the particular challenges presented by urban research and how I set about overcoming these.

My principal challenge was the lack of a distinct 'community'. Although I knew that I wanted to work with 'urban' Shuar, I soon discovered that the Shuar population of Sucúa is numerous, economically and socially diverse, and scattered across the city and surrounding countryside. Working in Taant, on the other hand, was by comparison fairly straightforward: by my third visit, I had been introduced to nearly everyone in the community, which was largely self-contained with clearly defined boundaries and solid notions of who was a 'member' of that community and who was not.

Following a suggestion from my supervisor, and having used it to good effect during my research for my MSc dissertation, I employed the 'snowball sampling' method of contacting potential informants (Bernard 2011). I asked every Shuar that I met whether she could introduce me to other Shuar with whom she was acquainted, and thus built up a network of contacts and potential research participants. This method was by no means foolproof: many Shuar people in Sucúa were understandably suspicious of researchers, and often I needed to earn their trust as a friend before I could broach the subject of my PhD. My synonymous role as an English teacher was beneficial in this endeavour, as it allowed people to 'place' me – that is, to understand my role within the community. Moreover, the people

with whom I built up a positive relationship were endlessly helpful, and their network of friends and relatives became my urban 'village'.

Having built up a network of Shuar contacts, I then needed to establish where the Shuar community of Sucúa lived. I thus procured a map from the City Council and asked my informants and their friends to indicate on the map the location of their Shuar friends' and acquaintances' houses. As a result, I built up a picture of Sucúa's Shuar population, and realised that, unlike in larger Amazonian cities or those with a more recent history of urbanisation (see Peluso 2014) Shuar were generally scattered across Sucúa, with no definite patterns of residence, beyond a *centro* on the border that officially did not form part of Sucúa, being 'federated land'[15].

The major disadvantage that I anticipated to urban research was that it would make participant observation rather challenging. Although, as Russell Bernard points out (2011), participant observation has long been used in urban sociology, all the monographs I had read had led me to imagine the participant observer as an individual who is completely immersed in the life of a small rural community: hunting, fishing, cooking or getting involved in other activities as the opportunity arises. It is far more difficult to immerse oneself in the life of a community that is scattered across an urban area, often working in an office, attending school or making trips to nearby towns. Whereas in a small community I would be continually surrounded by interesting and relevant activity (as was the case in Taant), in Sucúa my informants' houses were dispersed, and occasionally I would traipse from one to the other only to find that nobody was home. On the other hand, one major advantage was that I had the opportunity to experience a much broader range of activities, such as attending different

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[15] Federated [*federado*] land is land that belongs to Shuar communities and as such can only be sold to other Shuar. *Mestizos* and foreigners would not normally be allowed to purchase this land.

churches, shadowing people at work, visiting nearby communities, going to restaurants and internet cafés, and attending political rallies, among others.

2.6 Reflexivity

The writers of the seminal 1986 volume *Writing Culture* endeavoured to encourage anthropologists to be reflexive about their own positionality vis-à-vis their field site, taking into consideration factors such as (post) colonialism, disparities of wealth and power, and elements of their identity such as class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. While the ensuing debate promised much, it failed to deliver the seismic shift in the anthropological consciousness that had been hoped for. It has become the norm in anthropology PhD theses to include a paragraph on 'reflexivity' so as to tick the 'writing culture' box; conversely, some ethnographers write so extensively and in such great depth about their personal experiences that the result reads less like an academic thesis and more like a personal memoir. In this section I will endeavour to avoid both of these polar extremes.

My journey to Sucúa began in 2003, when I was studying in France as part of my undergraduate degree. The university that I attended was popular with international students, including a large cohort from Latin America (particularly Venezuela and Colombia). I spent a lot of time with these students and was keen to visit South America and discover it for myself. After finishing my degree, I was accepted onto an American volunteering programme, which placed native English-speaking university graduates in teaching roles across Ecuador. I spent a year living and working in the southern Ecuadorian Andes; my experiences here prompted a career change, and upon my return to the United Kingdom I began studying for a master's degree in anthropology and development studies. For my dissertation, I returned to the Ecuadorian city of Loja and conducted fieldwork among female

migrants who had travelled to Spain following the economic crisis of the late 1990s. This interest in Andean ethnography, gender and migration stayed with me; nevertheless, for my PhD I was keen to broaden my (intellectual and geographical) horizons. It was in 2009, while studying for a master's degree in anthropological research methods, that I came across Peluso and Alexiades' 2005 paper '*Urban ethnogenesis begins at home: The making of self and place amidst Amazonia's environmental economy*' and began to develop an interest in urbanisation and migration in the Amazon region.

Different facets of my identity became more or less important during different moments of my fieldwork, but they were always relevant. My position as a white English-speaker with a European passport meant that certain assumptions were made as to the wealth and power I might possess. While these assumptions were often incorrect or wildly exaggerated, nevertheless they affected the way potential informants related to me, particularly in the early stages of my research. My perceived wealth was a significant factor, initially. It is very understandable that Shuar that I met assumed that I had a lot of money: in the past, and especially when the Ecuadorian currency was the *sucre*, Amazonianist ethnographers were comparatively rich, relative to their informants. I would argue that this is not the case for 21st century PhD students; furthermore, I did not want my relationship with my informants to be based on financial motives. I became used to deflecting questions about my income, the amount I paid in rent, or the cost of an aeroplane ticket from the United Kingdom to Ecuador, all designed, I later learnt, to determine my 'worth' and whether it would be possible to ask me for money. Friends who worked with Shuar would often be unwilling to introduce me to them, for fear that I would be asked for money. This affected my ability to make contacts via the 'snowball' method detailed above, although as I became better known in Sucúa this became less of an issue.

Aside from my perceived wealth, the reality is that I had very little power or influence relative to my informants. It became clear from very early on that the delegates at the Shuar Federation were not going to give me permission to travel in the region unless I either paid for the privilege or provided a service in kind. I was refused permission to travel to certain *centros*, which *mestizo* Ecuadorians would have been able to visit, on the basis that it was 'too dangerous', or that they did not want tourists there. On the other hand, as another PhD student working in the region observed, being a 'white' foreigner did have its benefits: many Shuar saw me as a sympathetic person who was genuinely interested in their culture, as opposed to *mestizos* who were considered to be racist.[16]

My gender was another relevant facet of my identity. I was initially concerned that it would be a hindrance to my investigation, as people were especially keen to 'protect' me from the 'dangers' of the rainforest and its inhabitants. Fortunately, in the end the opposite turned out largely to be the case. For example, being female often made visiting my informants a lot easier: it was quite rare, for instance, for a man to be home alone, but very common for one or more women to be at home, with or without children. I could therefore stop by, hang out at people's houses and chat without necessarily breaking any taboos. As for my male informants, I could either visit them at work, meet them in a public place such as a café or a park, or wait with their wives or sisters until they came home. Rumours of course circulated as to which of my male informants was (or would become) my 'boyfriend', but these were for the most part light-hearted, and my closer friends had seen and heard enough about my fiancé to realise that I was not interested in a relationship in Sucúa! Finally, as a foreign woman I was often afforded the rights and freedom of movement of an 'honorary man'. My friendship with Clara therefore provided her with increased mobility, as long as she

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[16] On the other hand, many *mestizo* Ecuadorians assumed that I was racist, as they or their relatives had experienced racism in Europe or the United States.

was travelling with me, and our journeys together – to Puyo, Cuenca, and Riobamba, among other places – provided me with invaluable insights as well as wonderful memories.

2.7 Ethical considerations

I am aware that my research with Shuar carries ethical implications and have taken steps to ensure that I am compliant with all relevant ethical guidelines.

A possible effect of my research is the delegitimisation of the indigenous rights movement in Ecuador. National governments, oil companies, loggers and other parties, for whom indigenous rights are potentially a nuisance, are constantly on the look out for 'evidence' that could negate indigenous peoples' claims to territory and rights. I have therefore taken great care in my research and in the wording of my thesis not to cast doubt upon the legitimacy or 'authenticity' of Shuar or other indigenous groups in Ecuador.

I endeavoured to abide by the ethical code of the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and obtained informed consent from all participants. One issue I occasionally faced in this regard was the problem of illiteracy. Although many Shuar attend school and go on to university-level studies, not all of my informants were literate. I therefore considered it unfair to expect all my informants to read and sign consent forms. Furthermore, in a country where indigenous people still face racism and discrimination from government and other officials, written consent forms and other documents detailing the nature of my research may have been viewed with suspicion and could seriously have affected my chances of earning the trust of potential informants. I therefore verbally informed all potential informants of the nature and purposes of my research from the very beginning, acquired verbal confirmation of their consent to participate, and provided official consent forms to literate informants towards the

end of my research, once I had earned their trust and was sure of their willingness to be involved in my project. All names have changed in the final version of the thesis, and names of locations etc were changed or distorted as necessary to protect those that have provided sensitive information.

3. Ethnographic Context

This chapter is intended to provide the reader with the ethnographic underpinnings of the project. I will begin with a brief introduction to Ecuador and the region, before exploring the historical and contemporary position of indigenous peoples within Ecuadorian society. I will then provide a summary of the available anthropological literature pertaining to Shuar, and to the principal field site, Sucúa.

3.1 Ecuador

3.1.1 Geography

Ecuador is a nation in the north-west of South America, bordering Colombia to the north, Peru to the south and east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Although it boasts an area of 283,561 km^2 (CIA World Factbook 2013), slightly larger than that of the United Kingdom, its population is considerably smaller at around 15,500,000 (INEC 2011). As its name suggests, Ecuador straddles the equator, which is approximately 25 kilometres north of the capital city, Quito.

Fig 1: Map of South America showing location of Ecuador. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Ecuador is generally divided into four regions: the tropical coastal area [*la costa*], the Andes [*la sierra*], the Amazon region [*el oriente*] and the Galapagos Islands (Middleton 1976). These regions vary considerably in terms of climactic as well as economic conditions, and each has its own regional identity. It is common for Ecuadorians, both indigenous and *mestizo*, to identify strongly with the region where they grew up and to speak dismissively of the neighbouring region's poor weather, restrictive conservatism (or overly permissive libertarianism), or inferior cultural traditions.

3.1.2 History

Ecuador's history has followed a similar trajectory to that of many other South American nations. Prior to the Spanish conquest in 1533, Ecuador formed part of the northern Inca Empire (CIA World Factbook 2013). The Spanish went on to rule the territory that would eventually become known as Ecuador for nearly three hundred years. In 1563 the colonial city of Quito was named as a seat of the Spanish colonial government, and in 1717 formed part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (CIA World Factbook ibid). The territories of this Viceroyalty gradually declared independence between 1819 and 1822, forming the independent republic of Gran Colombia under President and revolutionary leader Simón Bolívar. Quito later ceded from this problem-stricken state and became the independent 'Republic of the Equator' in 1830 (Gran Colombia dissolved entirely into separate nation-states in the same year).

Despite decades of political turbulence, this diminutive (relative to the rest of South America) nation survived into the 1900s. Between 1904 and the Rio Protocol in 1942, Ecuador lost a considerable portion of her territory, mostly to Peru. The twentieth century was largely dominated by the somewhat ineffectual leadership of José María Velasco Ibarra

(who only managed to complete one of his five presidential terms) and the military dictatorship of the army (1960-79), which is looked back upon fondly by many Ecuadorians as a time of relative stability and prosperity.

The 1970s ushered in a period of economic growth and improved standards of living, bolstered by newfound oil wealth and by preferential trading conditions afforded by the Andean Common Market. This brief period of success was countered by the end of the oil boom in the 1980s as well as by the damaging effects of the El Niño weather phenomenon, and the latest in a series of border disputes with Peru (BBC 2013; CIA World Factbook 2013). The cumulative effect of these episodes of misfortune was the Ecuadorian economic crisis of the late 1990s, as a result of which around 2 million people emigrated (Gratton 2007) and the national currency was changed from the *sucre* to the US dollar.

Politically, the late twentieth century was a crucial period for indigenous peoples in Ecuador. 'The 1979 restoration of a democratic regime in Ecuador … granted all indigenous peoples effective voting rights for the first time…' (Andolina 2003: 726); nevertheless, the 'integrationist agendas that subordinated and excluded indigenous peoples' (ibid) persisted, despite increasing demands on the part of indigenous organisations for an end to discriminatory policies. The indigenous response to this state of affairs came in 1986 with the formation of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). CONAIE succeeded in uniting highland and lowland indigenous groups and provided a platform for material and cultural claims (ibid). The indigenous political movement gathered momentum in the early 1990s with two major uprisings, one in the highlands in 1990 and another in the lowlands two years later. The latter took the form of a march [*caminata*] which led to direct

negotiations between indigenous representatives and the state. These events will be discussed in further detail in section 3.2.

In 2006, a period of instability characterised by six presidents in ten years ended with the election of the left-wing Alianza País candidate Rafael Correa. President Correa introduced a new constitution (Ecuador's twentieth since the country gained independence), in which the principle of plurinationality (see section 3.2) was enshrined for the first time; he was re-elected in 2009 and again in 2013. Although initially welcomed by indigenous groups such as CONAIE and ECUARUNARI (Becker 2011), Correa's presidency has proved increasingly problematic for Ecuador's indigenous population, and has been characterised by police and military persecution of indigenous political leaders, violation of indigenous people's constitutional rights, and the prioritisation of resource extraction over indigenous livelihoods in the Amazon region (ibid; Caselli 2011; Greenslade 2013); (see section 3.2.2).

3.1.3 Society

According to the 2010 census, 71.9% of the Ecuadorian population identifies as *mestizo* (of mixed Amerindian and Spanish heritage) 7.4% as Montubio (a rural, coastal *mestizaje*: see Roitman 2008), 7.2% as Afroecuadorian, 7% as Amerindian and 6.1% as white (INEC 2011). Studies have cast doubt on these figures, particularly the small proportion of indigenous people; a United Nations study has put the figure at nearer 40% (UN 2006). Ecuador has fourteen official languages: Spanish, and thirteen indigenous languages, the most widely spoken of which is Quichua.

Like many Latin American countries (Gootenberg and Reygadas 2010) Ecuador is characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty. The minority white population tends to dominate business and politics, including the once-lucrative oil industry; at the opposite end

of the spectrum are the indigenous and Afroecuadorian populations who often have more limited access to education and career opportunities and tend to work in low-paid menial jobs (Wade 2010; Radcliffe 1999). The class structure is rigid with low levels of social mobility, although efforts on the part of the incumbent government have gone some way towards addressing this (see Chapter 7).

The Ecuadorian population has been shaped in recent years by increased levels both of immigration and emigration, the former mainly from Ecuador's troubled neighbour Colombia, the latter – largely as a result of the many economic and political crises by which the country has been plagued – to the United States and certain European countries, particularly Spain and Italy. This has had a large impact upon the economy as will be seen in the next subsection.

3.1.4 Economy

Ecuador's economy relies principally on exports of petroleum and bananas, on the one hand, and remittances sent by expatriate Ecuadorians in Europe and the United States, on the other. The latter has proven problematic for the Ecuadorian government as remittances are often sent directly to families in Ecuador, thus bypassing national taxes. The resource extraction industry, which accounts for more than 50% of Ecuador's exports (CIA World Factbook 2013), has often been involved in clashes with indigenous groups in the *oriente* who are opposed to environmental destruction in their region and the forced relocation that this often involves (Sawyer 2004).

Like many developing nations, Ecuador borrowed considerable sums in the 1970s and has since struggled to pay off the debts. To this day, sovereign debt accounts for 30% of the nation's public debt (CIA World Factbook 2013). Ecuador defaulted on its public debt in

2008 and has since had trouble finding foreign investors. President Rafael Correa caused controversy and discouraged private investment further by breaking off more than a dozen trading agreements with countries such as the United States; on the other hand, the Ecuadorian government has recently borrowed a sum of several billions from China (Gill 2013).

3.2 Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Rights in Ecuador

The indigenous movement of Ecuador has been recognised as the strongest indigenous movement in Latin America (Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2007; Martinez-Novo 2013). As Macdonald notes, it is 'the most organised and institutionalised of any in Latin America' (2002: 176) and is arguably 'one of Latin America's most powerful indigenous movements' (Andolina 2003: 721). It has been argued that one reason for the movement's strength is its ability to 'unify organisations from the community to the national level' (Martinez-Novo 2013), with mass uprisings that significantly affected government policy (Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2007). The indigenous peoples of Ecuador have achieved a national presence and influence that rivals even that of their more numerous and 'revolutionary' contemporaries in Bolivia and Peru (Sánchez-Parga 2007). Today their 'alphabet soup' of indigenous organisations (Beck and Mijeski 2000: 121) exceeds 2,500 grassroots movements (Uquillas and Nieuwkoop 2003), with a further 250 'second-tier' associations affiliated with provincial, regional and national organisations. Ecuador's largest indigenous organisation, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), formed in 1986, has an impressive list of achievements to its name, including uprisings and demonstrations, successful claims for indigenous territory in the Amazon, and

the introduction of bilingual education projects (Martínez Novo 2013) (see section x.y below).

The achievements of the Ecuadorian indigenous rights movement are all the more surprising when we consider that for much of the post-colonial era, it was assumed that Amerindian peoples in Ecuador were a 'dying breed', who would either be assimilated into the mainstream or perish with their culture. The newly-formed nation-states of the region were intent upon uniting their respective populations under the banner of equality, in contradistinction to their former Iberian overlords (Gros 2000). Such equality, inspired by the French and American models, required full participation in a common, homogeneous national culture, language and religion. There was no room in the new Latin American nation for cultural plurality. Efforts to assimilate indigenous people intensified in the twentieth-century push for economic development and modernisation, the rhetoric of which branded Amerindians as 'primitive' peoples that were holding the nation back (Muratorio 1998). Stutzman goes so far as to suggest that, as indigenous people did not appear to accept the goals of national culture, they were not deemed Ecuadorian (Stutzman 1981).

3.2.1 History of the Ecuadorian Indigenous Movement

Lucas (2000) cites the earliest proponent of the Ecuadorian indigenous rights movement as Rumiñahui, an Inca warrior who resisted the Spanish invasion of 1535. This is perhaps ironic given that the Incas had arrived in Ecuador only a few years prior to the arrival of the Spanish and were therefore arguably no less immigrants than their *conquistador* successors (Becker 2008). However, bar a few sporadic acts of resistance (Lucas 2000) the indigenous population was consigned to the bottom rung of Ecuadorian society, and remained oppressed and marginalised throughout much of its history. A notable exception was Tránsito

Amaguaña, a Quichua woman who in the early twentieth century created the first agricultural trade union, led the first ever indigenous peasant strike, founded the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians and set up schools that provided teaching in the Quechua language, despite being persecuted and imprisoned for her efforts (ibid). Hers was part of the influential and sadly under-studied contribution of women to the indigenous cause (ibid).

Commentators disagree as to the catalyst for the creation of the modern indigenous movement in Ecuador. Bebbington argues that the movement can be traced back to the 1970s, with the introduction of national laws authorising the formation of community organisations (including indigenous organisations) that were eligible for state funding for development projects (Bebbington, Carrasco et al. 1993). This was also the time when the Catholic Church, following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) which prompted a shift towards inculturation theologies, began to work more closely with indigenous movements (Martinez-Novo 2013). Sánchez-Parga, however, sets the date back as far as the 1937 Ley de Comunas, a law that deemed Andean indigenous communities (at least, those not subject to the patronage of *haciendas*) to belong to legally recognised 'free communities' or *comunas*. These *comunas* provided an important organisational template for later indigenous organisations.

Becker contends that the seeds of subsequent indigenous mobilisations were sown as a result of indigenous involvement in left-wing political movements in the 1920s (Becker 2007). Certainly, the 1964 Agrarian Laws, which extended land rights to some indigenous highlanders but also enabled highland peasants to claim 'unoccupied' indigenous lands in the Amazon region, proved a crucial motivation for indigenous self-determination (for their influence on Shuar, see section 3.3 below). Yet perhaps the most important developments

occurred from the late 1970s onwards, with the extension of suffrage to non-literate people (of whom many were indigenous) in 1979 (Andolina 2003) and the spread of globalisation, a process that undermined the identity of the nation-state (Turner 2003) and thus allowed indigenous groups to challenge the dominance of their oppressors (Kenrick and Lewis 2004). In 1973   the Andean indigenous organisation Ecuador Runacunapac Richarimui ('the Ecuadorian Indian Awakens'), known as ECUARUNARI, was formed in Chimborazo (Pallares 2002; Bauer 2010). Supported by both the Catholic Church and the incumbent military government, ECUARUNARI was one of the first political organisations in Ecuador to focus specifically on indigenous struggles and indigenous identity (Bauer ibid). It was soon followed in 1980 by its Amazonian counterpart, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENAIE) (Yashar, 2005). These groups acted as umbrella organisations for their respective regions, mobilising disparate ethnicities under a common banner (Bauer ibid).

Globalisation also provided access to ideas that were becoming popular in the 'West', including environmentalism and human and collective rights. In the 1980s, falling oil prices and the resulting inability for Ecuador to pay her foreign debts, resulted in the implementation of neoliberal structural adjustment policies mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Corbo 1992). On the one hand, the Ecuadorian government was required to 'open the economy' to the international market; on the other, they needed to cut public spending by 'rolling back the state' (Gwynne and Kay, 1999; Valdivia 2005). Valdivia somewhat controversially argues that the introduction of these neo-liberal policies in Ecuador as an alternative to state-led capitalism was beneficial for indigenous people, as it allowed them to 'use socially recognised difference as a strategy to better their individual lives and communities within the framework of liberal democracy, self-improvement, and the

circulation of capital' (Valdivia 2005: 290). As she observes, '[u]nder neoliberalism the individual, rather than the state, is responsible for his or her own betterment' (ibid: 289). Neoliberalism therefore creates 'social spaces for the endorsement of indigenous rights as a means to resolve [indigenous peoples'] own needs and wants and to advance their own political agendas as rational citizens' (ibid).

It was with the formation of CONAIE in 1986, established 'after years of strategic planning by the leaders of ECUARUNARI and CONFENAIE' (Bauer 2010: 176), that the disparate elements of the Ecuadorian indigenous rights movement began to come together and establish a common agenda. Interestingly, the impetus for this umbrella organisation, and for much of its policy, came from Amazonian groups united under CONFENIAE (Beck and Mijeski 2000) who despite only constituting about five per cent of Ecuador's indigenous population have provided half of CONAIE's leaders (Macdonald 2002). The reason for this is unclear, although perhaps the centrality of territorial claims (which are primarily an Amazonian concern) to CONAIE's agenda accounts for this disparity. Moreover, one of the first organisations to represent indigenous rights, the Shuar Federation, was founded in the Amazon region (Rubenstein 2002). CONAIE has been at the centre of some of the most dramatic challenges to the Ecuadorian government in recent years.

Tensions between indigenous groups and the state reached their climax in the early 1990s, beginning in 1990 with a week-long national demonstration organised by CONAIE and involving both highland and lowland indigenous activists, which paralysed the nation via road blocks, mobilisations and land seizures (Sawyer 1997). The uprising was sparked by protests against the Ecuadorian government's decision to grant oil concessions in indigenous territories to foreign companies (Lucas 2000). Although it ultimately failed to achieve its

leaders' demands for territorial rights and self-determination, it demonstrated the power and influence that indigenous groups were able to wield on a national scale (Sawyer ibid).

Two years later, on the anniversary of Columbus's 'discovery' of the Americas, lowland indigenous political groups under CONFENIAE organised a march to the capital, Quito, to repeat their demands. Bearing the slogan 'we will not dance on our grandparents' tombs' (Lucas 2000), the protesters demanded territory in the Amazon as well as increased national autonomy. This march was markedly more successful than previous uprisings, and prompted unprecedented support on the part of non-indigenous Ecuadorians. Under mounting public pressure, President Borja was forced to meet with the leaders of the march and to provide them with a platform to state their aims (Sawyer 1997). He eventually conceded to many of the protestors' demands, including territorial claims. These rights were soon threatened again as a result of neoliberal reforms which would potentially deprive indigenous groups of territorial sovereignty and access to natural resources (Zamosc 2004). Indigenous people thus protested again in 1994, in an uprising dubbed a 'Mobilisation for Life'. These three major indigenous uprisings 'played a fundamental role in shaping the contemporary cultural landscape of Ecuador' (Bauer 2010: 175) and placed Ecuadorian indigenous groups firmly on the map as a potent political force in the region. They were followed in 1996 by the success of the indigenous political party Pachacutik, first in local and later in national elections (Lucas 2000). A few years later, the indigenous movement under CONAIE was 'instrumental in removing two Ecuadorian presidents (in 1997 and 2000) and as a result occupied key ministries in the Lucio Gutiérrez administration (2003–2005)' (Jameson 2011: 63). This alliance with Gutiérrez unfortunately turned sour when the president implemented neoliberal policies and began negotiations with the United States for a free trade agreement (Martinez-Novo 2013).

3.2.2 Indigenous Rights under President Rafael Correa

The election of President Rafael Correa in 2006 initially appeared to bode well for indigenous groups in Ecuador. Like Evo Morales in Bolivia (Canessa 2014), Correa was inaugurated into office via an indigenous ceremony (Caselli 2011); one of his first actions as president was to revise the constitution to include plurinationality as one of the fundamental tenets of the Ecuadorian nation, a crucial symbolic claim on the part of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement (Becker 2011). A fluent Quichua speaker, Correa gaves speeches in the Quichua language (Martinez-Novo 2013), and promised to protect indigenous lands in the Amazon region, including the fragile ecosystem of the Yasuni National Park (see e.g. Hill 2013).

However, relations soon turned sour, beginning in 2009, when CONAIE protested against the government's new water and mining laws. In a general assembly held in 2010, it was decided that CONAIE would begin an uprising against Rafael Correa and collaborate with other Ecuadorian social movements against the government's policies. Perhaps in retaliation for this, in June 2010, CONAIE's leaders were not invited to the meeting of ALBA in Otavalo, Ecuador.[17] This snub was particularly significant, as the meeting was held in order to discuss how to implement plurinational states and interculturalism at a continental level, and was attended by representatives including presidents Rafael Correa, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, and Evo Morales of Bolivia. CONAIE staged a demonstration outside the meeting and appealed to President Morales to let them in. This protest fell on deaf ears, and the demonstration was suppressed by the police. These events were swiftly followed by an accusation on the part of the provincial prosecutor, who claimed that Marlon Santi, president

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[17] 'Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America' (ALBA), an organization that imitates and opposes free-trade agreements with the United States (see Martinez-Novo 2013).

of CONAIE, and Delfin Tenesaca, president of Ecuarunari, were terrorists (Martinez-Novo 2013).

Correa has proved increasingly hostile to indigenous people's interests. Despite the promises made in the 2008 constitution to defend indigenous rights (Martinez-Novo 2013), his aggressive pursuit of resource extraction in the Amazon (including in Yasuni) has threatened the livelihoods of many indigenous communities (Hill ibid). Correa has stated explicitly that the rights of indigenous peoples will not stand in the way of progress for Ecuador (COHA 2013) and he has alternately attempted to buy off or silence indigenous rights organisations that protested against his government's actions. In 2013, for example, arrest warrants were served for eight indigenous leaders following a protest against expansion of oil extraction in the Amazon region (El Pais 2014). Most recently, a bus carrying indigenous protestors who were due to denounce Correa at an environmental conference in Lima was confiscated by authorities, and a Shuar leader who was planning to attend the same conference was found murdered (Watts and Collins 2014). Correa has also attempted to shut down the CONAIE office in Quito (Byrne 2015), revoking a loan agreement granted by the Borja administration in 1991.

Nevertheless, as shall be explored at length in Chapter 7 of this thesis, Correa's Alianza Pais government has also provided considerable benefits to certain indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation was enshrined in the 2008 Constitution, and further developed by means of Presidential Decree 60 (2009), which asserts that 'the state will try to achieve [*procurará*] the hiring of Afro-Ecuadorians, Indigenous, and *montubios* [*mestizo* peasants from the coast] in all its institutions in a proportion that will not be less than their participation in the total population' (cited in

Martinez-Novo 2013). In practice these policies have led to initiatives such as scholarships for indigenous students at Ecuadorian universities, and affirmative action to promote the recruitment of indigenous candidates to government posts. Such initiatives appeal to many indigenous people who are increasingly disillusioned by the lack of progress being made by indigenous political leaders. As a result, many have been drawn toward President Correa's post-2007 project (Martinez-Novo ibid) and are increasingly distancing themselves from the endeavours of the indigenous rights movement. If Correa is deliberately pursuing an integrationist policy of 'divide and conquer' among the indigenous population of Ecuador, it appears to be working.

3.3 Shuar

'Only one tribe of American Indians [sic] is known ever to have successfully revolted against the empire of Spain and to have thwarted all subsequent attempts by the Spaniards to reconquer them' (Harner 1984: 1). This image of 'indomitable warriors' (Bottasso 1982) pervades much of the literature about Shuar, ethnographic or otherwise. Like the Yanomami in Venezuela and Brazil, Shuar have long been portrayed as a 'fierce people', constantly at war with neighbouring groups (Hendricks 1993a). Shuar are particularly notorious for their practice of shrinking the heads of their enemies – as Heckler observed, enter 'Shuar' into any search engine and the likelihood is that the most popular links will be to websites about 'head hunters' (Heckler 2008). Nevertheless, Shuar are also famous, both in Ecuador and abroad, as the founders of one of the earliest and most successful indigenous rights organisations in South America, the *Federación de Centros Shuar* or Shuar Federation (Hendricks 1993b).

Shuar have historically been referred to as *'jívaro'* (Hendricks 1993a). This is assumed to be a Spanish corruption of 'Shuar' (Bottasso 1982) and first appears in 1550 in an

account by Benavente of his encounter with Shuar (Hendricks ibid). '*Jívaro*' gradually acquired derogatory connotations and is not often used today (ibid), although the languages spoken by Shuar and neighbouring groups such as Achuar and Aguaruna are very similar and are referred to by anthropologists as 'Jivaroan' languages. Shuar share many other features with their Jivaroan neighbours: the division of labour by sex, for example, has typically been very similar across all groups (Seymour-Smith 1991). However, deeply-felt rivalries have long existed between Achuar and Shuar, and the latter consistently deny that either their language or their cultural practices bear any relation to those of Achuar. Incidentally, the word 'shuar' in the Shuar language, as with many other Amazonian indigenous groups (Conklin 2001) literally means 'people' (Hendricks 1993a).
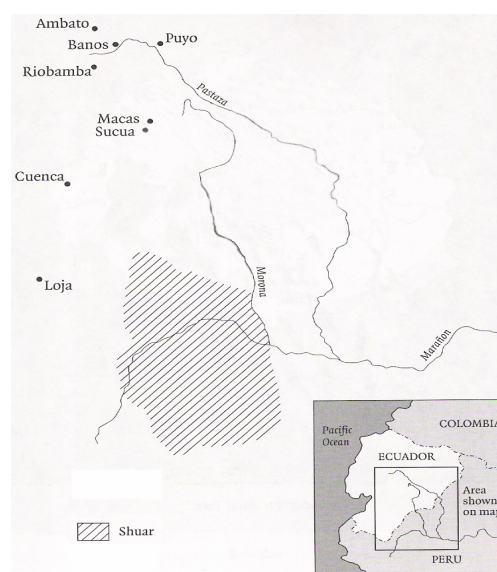
Fig. 2: Distribution of Shuar population. Source: Ethnology.com

Contemporary Shuar inhabit for the most part the southern lowlands and *montaña* of eastern Ecuador. Historically, their living was largely derived from horticulture and hunting. Production was organised along gender lines, with men carrying out most of the hunting and women working in the gardens. This pattern generally persists, although as we shall see in this thesis, many men and women increasingly seek paid employment in local urban areas

(Rubenstein 2001). Households were traditionally dispersed and semi-nomadic (Harner 1972); however, families now tend to live in clusters based around political structures known as '*centros*'. These *centros* were established as a result of missionary influence and provided the foundations for the creation of the Shuar Federation, as shall be discussed in detail below.

The pre-Federation political system was based upon kinship alliances (discussed below) and the individual accumulation of power. Shuar society was largely egalitarian, in that every person of the same gender and age had equal access to power. Although there were no formal political institutions as such, Shuar men could aspire to one or more specialised roles that afforded considerable power and influence: *uunt* [big man], *wea* [ceremonial leader], *kakáram* [strong man], *amik* [trader] and *uwíshin* [shaman]. *Kakarám* can also be translated as 'power' and is 'a vital force necessary for survival' (Hendricks 1988: 219). A man is considered to be *kakarám* if he has many children, is a good hunter and warrior, and 'speaks well' – that is, 'directly and forcefully', using the correct words [*chichám*] and without joking or lying (Hendricks 1988). Verbal ability is particularly important, as the ability to speak well is associated with 'living well'. Shuar therefore place great emphasis upon oratory and verbal duelling as indications of verbal competence. Hendricks' detailed account of a Shuar warrior's narrative is an excellent example of the correlation between perceived strength and the ability to speak well (1993a).

Shuar men have traditionally acquired power by ingesting *maikiúa* [thorn apple]. *Maikiúa* is fed to newborn children and is later ingested at various moments throughout a man's life as determined by the life cycle. In particular, men take *maikiúa* in order to acquire *arutám wakaní* or warrior power. Boys usually accompany their father or uncle on a trek to a waterfall, at which point they take *maikiúa*. If they are lucky, their *arutám* will appear to

them in a dream, initially as an animal and then in the form of an old man. This *arutám* then enters the boy's soul and gives him strength (Rubenstein 2002; Hendricks 1993b; Harner 1972). A similar ritual performed by Achuar is described in rich detail by Anne Christine Taylor (Taylor 1993). The ingestion of *maikiúa* justifies the pre-eminence of older men over younger men, as Shuar elders claim to have acquired more power and strength over their lifetimes as a result of ingesting and accumulating *maikiúa*. That which is foreign is also considered to be a crucial source of power, one that has influenced Shuar relations both with non-indigenous Ecuadorians and with other indigenous groups. Shuar who have travelled are generally considered to be more powerful than those who have not, and Shuar shamans often train with Quichua or Cofán shamans (Hendricks 1988).

Power is by no means restricted to men, although the power available to women is of a different kind. As women's responsibilities pertain largely to the garden, they need to maintain their relationship with Nunkui, the 'ideal woman' and creator of all plants and animals, who makes crops flourish by dancing in gardens at night. Shuar women attempt to please Nunkui by placing magical stones in the garden, singing certain songs and clearing the garden of weeds. The myths about Nunkui emphasise the complementarity of men's and women's roles, in that Nunkui is deemed to be responsible for everything growing in the forest. If the women do not appease Nunkui, there will be no forest, and the men will not be able to hunt. However, this crucial role has not historically prevented women from being relegated to an inferior and marginal position in Shuar society (Hendricks 1993b).

Shuar tend to distinguish between two kinds of knowledge: visionary and practical. While practical knowledge resides in the brain, visionary knowledge is located in the heart. This distinction is predicated on the division between the equally powerful realms of the

natural and the supernatural. A Shuar man can learn 'facts', such as those taught in school, but he can only 'see' the true cause of events in the 'natural' world by entering the realm of the 'supernatural'. He does this by taking hallucinogenic drugs such as *maikiúa*, although knowledge can also be obtained through dreams. Although treated as distinct, practical and visionary knowledge are considered to be interrelated and interdependent, 'part of a single technology necessary for the successful accomplishment of goals' (Hendricks 1993b: 6).

A Shuar man's reputation as a warrior has also traditionally determined his power and influence within the community. 'Killing in the context of warfare and feuding is the dominant theme expressed in nearly every aspect of Shuar culture' (Hendricks 1993a: 15). The pre-federation political system was based on 'a balance of power among autonomous groups engaged in constant warfare, feuding [and] shifting alliances' (Hendricks 1993a: 6). The shrunken heads, or '*tsantsas*', acquired as a result of raids on rival groups (usually Achuar but occasionally distantly related Shuar groups) were considered 'the ultimate expression of male power' (Rubenstein 2002: 37). *Tsantsas* were made by cutting the head from the body of a dead enemy, removing the skin from the skull, boiling the skin to the point where it shrinks by about half, and then sewing up the eyes and mouth. A successful raid and resulting accumulation of *tsantsas* was a cause for celebration, and a feast lasting several days would usually be prepared upon the warriors' return (ibid).

Prior to the establishment of the Shuar Federation, men tended to create political alliances via kinship. Shuar kinship is based upon bilateral cross-cousin marriage, although in practice only around half of all marriages follow this rule. More important than this is the principle of uxorilocality. It is said that when Shuar men acquire a wife, they are in fact acquiring a father-in-law. The alliances created between older and younger warriors as a

result of marriage formed the basis of the pre-Federation political system. Polygyny was also an important element: Shuar men usually aspired to take more than one wife, preferring the sisters of their current wife (and, on occasion, their wife's daughters, if these are from a previous liaison). These alliances took place almost exclusively within a narrow range of kin. Only 'big men' with a considerable amount of influence would attempt to create an alliance with an unrelated or distantly related family. Such an alliance would deny another man his right to marry the woman in question (as her cross-cousin); therefore only powerful men could get away with such a bold move (Hendricks 1993a). However, marriage practices among Shuar are currently in a state of flux as a result of increased contact with Ecuadorian society, as shall be discussed below.

Shuar have a long history of contact with non-Shuar peoples. Aside from interaction with other 'Jivaroan' peoples, Shuar have successfully resisted attempts to colonise them on the part of both Inca and Spanish invaders. Although the Spanish initially managed to establish a system of tributes (in the form of gold dust) payable by Shuar as a tax to the local governor, this form of contact came to an abrupt end in 1598 when (legend has it) a group of Shuar warriors invaded the governor's home and poured molten gold into his mouth until his bowels burst (Harner 1972). This attack led to the cessation of Shuar contact with the non-indigenous population of Ecuador for some 250 years (Rubenstein 2002). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterised by 'sporadic attempts to convert the Shuar' on the part of Jesuit and Dominican missionaries, leading to the consecutive expulsions of the respective groups from Shuar territory following 'native uprisings' (Rubenstein 2001).

All this changed in the twentieth century as the discovery of oil in the Amazon region, Peruvian claims on Ecuador's Amazonian territory, and land shortages in the highlands, all

sparked renewed interest in Shuar land. It suddenly became necessary to 'pacify' the 'indomitable' Shuar. Conversion to Catholicism was the Ecuadorian government's preferred method, and as a result the region was assigned to the Salesian Order, a Catholic mission with its origins in Italy. This was followed in 1935 by the creation of a Shuar reserve under the jurisdiction of the Salesians. The reserve acquired strategic importance in 1942 when Peru captured 200,000 km² of Ecuadorian territory (Rubenstein ibid). Shuar and Salesians suddenly found themselves on the border with Peru and thus on some of the most vulnerable and contested land in South America.

Colonisation of the Amazon region of Ecuador, including Shuar territory, intensified in the 1950s and 1960s. This was partly as a result of the perceived threat from Peru: in order to lay claim to territory lying on or near the border, the Ecuadorian government encouraged 'colonisers' [*colonos*] from the highlands to occupy the region on the condition that they make the land 'productive' (and thus demonstrate their presence in and claim upon the territory). This provision was enshrined in law in the 1970s and proved contentious for Shuar, who were in danger of losing their land to *colonos*. Other aggravating factors included the collapse of the Panama hat industry in Cañar and Azuay, leading to high levels of unemployment in the highlands, and the agrarian reforms of the 1960s that left many highland peasants without land. Those affected by these developments were encouraged by the government to see the 'uninhabited' lands of the *oriente* as an attractive destination (Rubenstein ibid; Hendricks 1993a).

The Salesian missionaries were concerned by the threats that Shuar faced, not least because they risked losing converts and thus influence in the region (Salazar 1977). Beginning with the establishment of schools for Shuar children, the Salesians gradually drew

the dispersed Shuar households out of the forest and encouraged them to settle in and around the missions. This led to the establishment of *centros*, a means of gathering Shuar together in one place and thus rendering them less vulnerable to territorial encroachment (as well as integrating them more fully into the market economy) (Rubenstein 2002). The missionaries working with the *centros* encouraged Shuar to imitate the colonists' modes of production in order to protect them from losing their land. However, it soon became clear that more needed to be done. A training course for Shuar leaders held in 1961 led to the establishment of the *Centros de Sucúa*, an embryonic political organisation that set the ball rolling for the establishment of similar organs in other *centros* in the region. These in turn became the inspiration for a single, unified organisation representing all Shuar people. The *Federación de Centros Shuar*, or Shuar Federation, was formed in 1964 (Hendricks 1993a).

Although established with the assistance of the Salesian missionaries, the Shuar Federation quickly took control of its own affairs. The mission's jurisdiction over Shuar territory was terminated in 1969, and the new directorate set about encouraging Federation members to make their land more 'productive' by raising cattle. Twenty-five head of cattle in 1969 became an entire cattle cooperative by the turn of the century. Although Shuar have been criticised heavily for the environmental degradation that has resulted from their raising cattle (Rudel, Bates and Machinguiashi 2002), particularly as the rhetoric of the indigenous rights movement casts them as among the 'ecologically noble savages' (Redford 1993), it is difficult to see what else they could have done in the circumstances. If they did not make their land productive, then *colonos* had the legal right to claim it, and traditional Shuar subsistence activities such as the cultivation of manioc were not considered to be 'productive' as, according to the government, they did not carry a wider economic benefit (Rubenstein 2002).

The Shuar Federation is generally portrayed in the literature as a resistance group that has successfully challenged the sovereignty of the Ecuadorian state, one that has become a model for other organisations to emulate (Hendricks 1993b). While it is true that the Federation has been the principal instrument in limiting colonisation of Shuar territory, as well as providing the foundations for CONAIE, Rubenstein argues that the Shuar Federation is little more than an instrument of state policies and in fact allows for the *extension* of the state into Shuar territory (2001). He observes that 'colonisation hinges on the endless reproduction and multiplication of nested… boundaries' and that these create hierarchies, as well as degrees of exclusion and inclusion (ibid 264-5). The Shuar Federation emulates the organisation of the state, while at the same time creating a boundary between Shuar and the state, meaning that Shuar are excluded from and hierarchically inferior to the state. On a more practical level, the concentration of previously dispersed households into *centros* allows for greater access, supervision and control on the part of the government.

It is often said that Amazonian cosmologies are very adaptable and open to change, and Shuar appear to be no exception in this respect. Hendricks argues that encounters with the non-indigenous population have been largely successful for Shuar precisely because they are able and willing to accept certain elements of the national culture without becoming subservient to the dominant group (1988). Belzner concurs: 'the Shuar [*sic*] are able to clearly differentiate the values and behaviours appropriate to *blanco* culture from their traditional conceptual and behavioural system' as they have learned to act out 'new sets of roles while never losing their traditional values' (1981: 743). Nevertheless, increased integration into non-indigenous society has not been an entirely smooth process. For example, the emphasis on the ability to 'speak well' has led less 'acculturated' Shuar to become suspicious of Spanish-speakers, leading some Federation representatives to deny that

they speak Spanish at all (Hendricks 1993b). Furthermore, the importance of individualism has made cooperation within *centros* difficult. Finally, increased contact with non-indigenous Ecuadorian society has led to an upheaval of the political system, with young, educated Shuar men taking precedence over their elder, monolingual compatriots (Hendricks ibid).

One important change as a result of increased contact and acculturation has been a sharp divergence in marriage practices, mirroring and paralleling changes in gender roles and relations. Michael Harner argued that in societies like the Shuar community, where land is abundant, disputes and struggles tend to take place over the control of labour. As women's labour in the gardens is vital to the survival of any household, men fight with each other for control of this productive capacity. However, with population density rising as a result of colonisation and the increased concentration of Shuar households in and around urban areas (where access to services and paid employment is more readily available), land has become more important than labour. Women who are in a position to inherit land from their fathers have the ability to renegotiate the balance of power with their husbands. As a result, Shuar men and women have begun, according to Rubenstein, to view marriage less as a political alliance and more as 'a working relationship between a man and a woman… People get married, I was told, because they work well together' (1993: 5). Finally, the decline in land availability has led to a corresponding decline in polygyny, as men feel unable to support more than one wife on so little land (ibid).

Fig. 3: Map of Ecuador showing location of Sucúa. Source: Wikipedia Commons

3.4 Fieldsites

3.4.1 Sucúa

The History of Sucúa

The Upano valley, today the location of Sucúa, has probably been inhabited by nomadic Shuar families for centuries. Spanish *conquistadores* travelling between the colonial towns of Macas and Mendez would follow the Upano River southwards into the valley, and reported passing Shuar households en route. The history of the town itself, however, begins in the early twentieth century, with the arrival of 'Pastor' Benedicto Bernal.

Bernal is an ambiguous figure in the history of Sucúa. Originally from Azuay, he arrived in Mendez, to the south of the Upano valley, in around 1909 (Biblioteca de Sucúa ND). At the time, Mendez was little more than a huddled collection of shacks on the banks of the Paute river, formed by a small but steady stream of settlers from the Andes who had come to the rainforest in search of a better life. Bernal managed to ingratiate himself with the local Shuar community, marrying a Shuar woman. However, he was soon forced to flee Mendez owing to 'legal troubles' (Gonzalez 2000) and instead travelled northwards up the Upano river towards the 'immense valley' (Biblioteca de Sucúa ibid.) which would become his new home. Bernal set about getting to know the local 'Suku' Shuar (named after the Shuar term for a nettle indigenous to the region; it is unclear whether they used this name to refer to themselves or whether it was a label applied by settlers) (Gonzalez 1981). He laid claim to a large plot of land in the valley (Pellizaro 2012, personal communication) and eventually married another Shuar woman, whose name was Sicuta (Gonzalez 2000). It has been alleged that Bernal's arrival in the valley prompted many Shuar families to leave the area so as to avoid getting into difficulties with him (Pellizaro ibid), a fact that, if true, contradicts many travellers' tales of Shuar as 'indomitable savages'.

Bernal was soon joined in the Upano valley by a family of equally eccentric settlers. Charles and Mary Olson, evangelical missionaries from the United States, came to Sucúa with their children in around 1916. The family had originally settled in Macas but had grown disgruntled at the high number of Salesian Catholic missionaries who were working there. They thus moved downriver and set up residence in the location of what is today the *Centro Cristiano*, next to the recently decommissioned air strip (Gonzalez 1981, 2000). The Olsons recruited local Shuar to help them build and maintain a *hacienda*, and founded a mission boarding school for Shuar children (Municipio de Sucúa 2004). Although their motivation

was ostensibly missionization, some Salesians have suggested that Shuar 'pupils' attending this school were in fact little more than slaves (Pellizaro 2012, personal communication).

Bernal initially kept his distance from the Olsons and lived 'incognito' among the Shuar population. In 1920 he changed his mind, made contact and eventually converted to the evangelical faith (presumably this is how he acquired the title 'Pastor' by which he is known in the available literature). At around this time, the number of settlers in the region began to increase, and by 1922 there were at least six settler families living in Sucúa. A pattern began to emerge whereby local Shuar were 'employed' as labourers in exchange for food, and this relationship of dependency continued for many years. In 1926, the settlers decided to change the name of their new home from 'Suku' (as it had come to be called) to 'Sucúa'. At the same time, a rift began to develop between the Catholic Ecuadorians and the evangelical American missionaries. In 1927, the former signed a petition along with the nearby settlement of Huambi, requesting the presence of a Salesian mission in the region (Gonzalez 1981, 2000).

In 1930 the Ecuadorian settlers' prayers for a Catholic presence in the region were apparently answered with the arrival of Father Michael Stahl, who came to found a Salesian mission in Sucúa (Gonzalez 1981). However, this was only the beginning of tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the town. The Salesians set about constructing a church and a rival mission boarding school, in which Shuar children and the children of settlers were to be taught separately (Shutka 2012, personal communication). In 1932 Sucúa officially became a parish town (Gonzalez 1981), and acquired a local governor, a man who happened to be a close friend of the Olsons. Under his protection, the American evangelicals continued to reside in Sucúa despite the growth in influence of the Salesians and the increasing animosity of the Ecuadorian settlers.

In around 1935 the first of many tragedies struck Sucúa. The new governor was shot dead behind the house of Benedicto Bernal. The handgun used turned out to be that of Father Stahl; as a result he was suspected of murder, a charge he vehemently denied. Nevertheless, in the absence of the governor, Sucúa was beyond the reach of the law, and it was the Olsons, suddenly friendless, who feared reprisals. They abandoned their hacienda, disappearing into the forest and eventually making their way back to the United States. Only one representative of the protestant mission remained in the region: Michael Ficke, an American who was fortunately on reasonably good terms with his Salesian counterparts (Pellizaro 2012, personal communication).

A crucial date for Shuar in Sucúa and the surrounding region was 1935 (Rubenstein 2002). This was the year when the government, keen to establish a visible presence in the borderlands with Peru, granted the Salesians tutelage of the Ecuadorian Shuar population, rendering the latter legal minors. This mandate would last for twenty years and included the creation of a Shuar 'reserve' on which non-indigenous Ecuadorians were not permitted to settle. The Salesians thus consolidated their presence in the region and, with the support of the government, became the most influential religious group in Sucúa. Ironically, despite the creation of the reserve, the Salesians' tutelage of Shuar actually encouraged more settlers to arrive from the Andes: it was thought that the missionaries would protect *mestizos* from the 'savage' indigenous population (Pellizaro 2012, personal communication).

Thus the presence of the Salesian mission in Sucúa encouraged the arrival of Andean settlers. It also contributed to a steady increase in the Shuar population of the town, as the establishment of the boarding school and later the hospital Pio XII were decisive in coaxing Shuar families into the region. Precise figures for the proportion of Shuar residents in Sucúa

over the period of its expansion are unavailable, but the figure appears to have remained more or less constant at around 25-30% (Municipio de Sucúa 2004).

As Sucúa expanded, the pressure was on to find a faster route between the Upano Valley and the Andean regions of Cañar, Azuay and Chimborazo, the provinces from which the majority of settlers originated. At the time, aspiring *sucuenses* had to walk for between six and twelve days, depending on the season and their point of departure, in order to reach Sucúa (Gonzalez 2000). The path was adapted for mules in later years but was still an arduous and at times hazardous journey. In 1937 Father Conrado Dordé led the first expedition to find a faster route between Sucúa and Cuenca. Unfortunately, his team got lost in the forest and ended up in Mendez (Gonzalez 1981). A second expedition set out in 1945 under the leadership of Arcesio Gonzalez Velez. This intrepid explorer persisted in his endeavour even as his companions grew tired, fell ill and, one by one, returned home defeated. Arcesio's remains were eventually discovered a mere three days' walk from his destination; he had been killed and eaten by wild animals (Biblioteca de Sucúa ibid, Gonzalez 2000).

Following this tragedy, it would be many years before another attempt was made to establish a route between Sucúa and Cuenca. In the meantime, the evangelical missionary Michael Ficke decided to clear an airstrip so that his mission's planes would be able to land in Sucúa safely. He purchased terrain that had originally belonged to the Olsons and was now in the possession of a local settler; she charged him 'as much money as he was able to pay'. The runway was completed in 1946 and the first plane, 'El Evangelista', arrived that same year, piloted by an American missionary called Bob Hart (Gonzalez 1981, 2000).

The influence of the Salesians in Sucúa became more apparent in the 1960s with two important developments. Firstly, on 8th December 1962, the region surrounding Sucúa became a county, with Sucúa itself as the capital. This required a great deal of administration involving specific skills that were apparently lacking among the settler population; as a result, several missionaries took on prominent roles in the new municipal council. Father Siro Pellizaro was among these: he was named treasurer for the first few years of the county's existence. Two Salesian Fathers, Juan Shutka and Valentin Aparicio, were also made managers of a new banking cooperative, Sucúa Limited, which lent money to individuals and small businesses in the area (Pellizaro 2012, personal communication; Shutka 2012, personal communication).

A second development, more crucial for the purposes of this thesis, was the expiration of the Salesians' tutelage of Shuar in 1969 (Rubenstein 2002). This brought with it not only full legal citizenship for the Ecuadorian Shuar, but also the end of the Shuar Reserve. From this point forward, settlers would be able to claim land that once was restricted to Shuar possession. Fearful of losing their influence in the region as well as for the rights of their indigenous wards, the Salesians were instrumental in the creation of what would become the Shuar Federation, the headquarters of which were in Sucúa. Although accounts of the relative involvement of Shuar and Salesians in the founding of the Federation vary (Shutka 2012, personal communication; Tankamash 2012, personal communication; Pellizaro 2012, personal communication), it is clear that the Salesians played a prominent role in establishing and consolidating the position of the Federation, as well as in developing the related '*radio telefonica*' project, which transmitted classes to Shuar children across the region via the radio. Crucially, the Salesians also encouraged Shuar to raise cattle in order to protect their

rights to the land they occupied, and this was to provoke further tragic consequences in Sucúa.

In 1969 a fire started in the Salesian mission, which at the time was in the location of the current Rio Upano School. The origins of the fire are shrouded in mystery and the event does not appear in official descriptions of the history of Sucúa. The missionaries with whom I spoke, Father Juan Shutka and Father Siri Pellizzaro, claim that the fire was started by settlers, who were angry with Shutka. In encouraging Shuar to raise their own cattle, Shutka had apparently deprived these settlers of a source of cheap labour on their farms. However, *mestizo* residents of Sucúa who are old enough to remember the events of 1969 claim that the fire was started by Shuar men who were angry with Shutka for allegedly engaging in sexual relations with their wives. The truth will perhaps never be known; the only thing we can be sure of is that the fire destroyed not only the boys' boarding school but also all the records of the Salesian missionaries up to that date, which is surely a sore blow for scholarship of the region.

In 1965 a third expedition to find the route to Cuenca had finally met with success, and in 1966 a Hercules airplane arrived with machinery and materials to build the road, which was financed by the *Centro de Reconversión Económica del Azuay* (CREA). This project took seven years and the road was finally opened in 1973 (Gonzalez 1981). The result was dramatically easier access between the Amazon and the Andes, coinciding with the government's policies encouraging Andean peasants to migrate to the Amazon region. As a result, the population of Sucúa increased exponentially in the succeeding years, both in terms of Shuar and settlers (INEC 2011). The subsequent asphalting of stretches of the road between Sucúa, Mendez, Limon and Cuenca (a project that is nearing completion) has

decreased travelling times and increased mobility for Shuar travelling to and from communities in the Upano valley and beyond, and the development of a route between Macas and Quito has opened up the northern Andes as another potential source and destination for both *mestizo* and Shuar migrants.

Sucúa today

Fig. 4: Sucúa city centre. Photograph taken by the author

Contemporary Sucúa is a rainforest city with a population of 12619 (INEC 2011), the capital of the county (*cantón*) that bears the same name. Approximately one third (34.8%) of the county's population is indigenous; the proportion of the urban population is not recorded but is likely to be slightly less, as much of the rural population consists of Shuar *centros*. According to INEC, the indigenous population of Sucúa has risen by 24% since 2001 (INEC ibid).

Residents report that Sucúa has undergone something of a facelift in recent years. This is due to several factors. Firstly, although Sucúa used to be relatively isolated (see previous section), the new, asphalted highway to Macas has changed the face of the city in

recent years, as people, goods, and building materials can be transported more easily. Another relevant factor is the continued effort of the town's mayor, Saúl Cárdenas, to make Sucúa the cleanest and most attractive city in the region. Certainly, it is often commented that Sucúa is cleaner and more pleasant to live in than neighbouring Macas, and benefitted during my stay from innovations such as the opening of a new, modern hospital (although one returning Shuar migrant observed that the city's beauty was only skin deep: 'the park is beautiful, sure, but why do they spend money on this and not on more important things?').

The crucial ingredient in Sucúa's recent success, nevertheless, has to be the high levels of emigration to the United States and Europe. Unlike smaller Andean villages which often appeared deserted following outmigration (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002), Sucúa appears to have benefitted materially from migration trends without visibly losing much in the way of population. Large, American-style houses, with elegant lawns, have appeared on the edges of the town, and new, bustling businesses line the streets of the city centre. Often these are run by returned migrants, who bring with them funds, a (professed) 'American' work ethic, and a love for United States products: Sucúa boasts at least five American-themes restaurants, selling everything from pizza to hot dogs, and several clothes shops promise 'American' brands. By the time of my third visit to the region, a selection of coffee shops, juice bars, and an ice cream parlour had been added to the list, some of which had been set up by returned migrants. This influx of returnees suggests that a change may be imminent in the fortunes of Sucúa. Several families in my acquaintance have welcomed home migrant relatives over the last year, sometimes because of trouble with the immigration police, but mostly because they could no longer find work in the aftermath of the recession.

While remittances form a considerable part of Sucúa's income, the local economy is also supported by agriculture (plantain and sugar cane), cattle farming, and tourism. The resource extraction industry had yet to make a significant mark in the region at the time of my fieldwork (unlike the oil fields to the north and copper mines to the south); however, this was set to change, with negotiations taking place between the government and local Shuar communities that would allow extraction industries to operate in the region in exchange for concessions. Taant was offered just such a deal, whereby a mining company would have use of the nearby river in exchange for money and educational resources. To the best of my knowledge this deal has yet to take effect.

In terms of local businesses, the city centre is mainly dominated by clothes shops, restaurants, and small grocery stores, with several hardware stores, pharmacies and private clinics. There is one private high school, the Río Upano, which boasts very good results, and one state-run high school, the Nacional, as well as several primary schools. The Shuar bilingual school, Escuela Fiscomisional Padre Alfredo Germani, for pupils aged 5 – 15, is considered by the government to be a private, mission-run school. It accepts non-Shuar pupils, but at the time I was working there all enrolled students were Shuar.

3.4.2 Taant

The Shuar *centro* that I refer to in this thesis as 'Taant' is situated in the foothills of the Kutuku mountains, around 30km from Sucúa, in the Upano valley, close to the town of Maqueda[18]. It consists of approximately 27 households, living in wooden buildings that are for the most part single-storey. The houses are mostly arranged around the primary school

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[18] Name and some details have been changed.

and football pitch which form the focus of the town. Further households line the track that continues north of the village towards nearby settlements.

Taant was founded in the 1970s by the Salesian missionary Father Juan Shutka, and a small, wooden catholic church, built around that time, sits to the east of the football pitch. There is no longer a missionary priest resident in Taant; the local residents instead visit the church in nearby Maqueda, and use their own church building as a meeting place. Next to the church is a sort of one-room village hall, which boasts a sound system and loud speaker with which to communicate with the rest of the community (and play music on festive occasions). From this building you can look out across the village and beyond it to the distant foothills of the Andes, which on a fine day can clearly be seen.

The households of Taant mainly make their living from subsistence agriculture, selling the surplus at local markets. Other sources of income include handicrafts, particularly baskets and other items woven from '*fibra*' a fine but strong, brown, grass-like substance. These are also sold in nearby venues such as markets, as well as at the Shuar Federation. An increasingly popular activity, one that involves many members of the community, is panning for gold in the Upano river; people can regularly be seen on the rocks below the bridge that connects Taant to the western bank of the Upano river.

3.4.3 Puyo

Puyo (derived from the Quichua word *puyu*, meaning 'fog') is the capital city of Pastaza, a province in the Ecuadorian Amazon that is larger than the Republic of Haiti (Whitten 2008). Although one of the least populated provinces in Ecuador, Pastaza is home to seven indigenous nations: Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, Canelos Quichua, Zaparo, Andoa and Huaorani, of which the Quichua constitute the largest population (ibid).

According to the history books, Puyo was officially founded as a Dominican Mission 12 May 1899. This was the date when Friar Alvaro Valladares allegedly led a party of 'half-civilised Indians' to Puyo from Canelos (Whitten and Whitten 2008). However, a community made up of indigenous families had established itself in the area long before the arrival of the Dominicans. Friar Valladares was greeted by at least fourteen native families, and many more might have been there to welcome him were it not for an attack by the neighbouring Chirapa that had decimated the local population in 1870.

Over the years Puyo grew in fits and spurts, 'from indigenous hamlet to colonist settlement to village and later to town' (Whitten ibid: 107). The arrival of colonists from the Andes began as a light trickle that flowed down the old foot and mule trail used by the missionaries (ibid). This trickle became a flood from the 1920s onwards when the oil company Leonard Exploration commenced construction of a road from the Sierra town of Baños in order to facilitate their (eventually unsuccessful) search for oil in the region (Ryder and Brown 2000). Leonard Exploration were replaced by Shell, who completed the road to Puyo in 1947. By this stage development of the Amazon region had become a significant priority for the Ecuadorian government. Peru had invaded Ecuador in 1941 and had walked away with a vast tranche of Amazonian territory (which still appears on many national maps as belonging to Ecuador). The vulnerability of the Oriente became painfully apparent, and initiatives were taken to establish a strong presence in the region that would deter further invasions. As a result, money was invested in Puyo and the surrounding area, and colonists were encouraged to settle there (Ryder and Brown 2000).

The indigenous reaction to the arrival of colonists was muted. As in other parts of the Ecuadorian Amazon, indigenous people were often duped into giving up their land (or land

they had expected to use in the future) in exchange for 'gifts' (Whitten 2008). Many indigenous people responded by moving several miles south to the newly-created Comuna San Jacinto del Pindo, where they established swidden farms. However, this process was reversed in the late 80s as land in the comuna grew short and indigenous migrants returned to Puyo in order to participate in the burgeoning ethnic-tourist art trade. Here they maintained households that stretched across the two locations, living in the city but sustaining their families on food provided by the swidden farm. Most families built houses on land loaned by the Dominican Mission, situated on the edge of Puyo. By 2005 there were around 700 indigenous people living in this area.

Perhaps as a result of the large, diverse urban indigenous population, Puyo has played a major role in the rise of the indigenous movement in Ecuador. The *Federación de centros indígenas de Pastaza* (FECIP) was founded in Puyo in 1978; in 1982 it was renamed the Organisation of Indigenous people of Pastaza Province (OPIP) and has since become one of the most influential indigenous rights groups in Ecuador (Whitten and Whitten 2008). Crucially, Puyo was the launching pad for the 1992 indigenous caminata (march) to Quito, when the indigenous nations of Pastaza successfully demanded rights to ancestral territories. This newfound confidence in indigenous identity has prompted people in Pastaza to declare May 11th (the day that precedes Puyo's 'foundation day') the day of the 'nationalities' or indigenous peoples (ibid).

Puyo has been described as 'the most dynamic town in eastern Ecuador' (Whitten 1976). Its strategic location as a 'gateway' from the Andes to the Amazon, as well as the seat of local government and the source of many basic services, such as education and healthcare, mean it is now arguably the most significant city in the Oriente (Ryder and Brown 2000). The

population has risen dramatically in recent years and as of 2006 was estimated at 45,000 (Whitten and Whitten 2008). However, this has led to problems of unemployment and poor delivery of services such as water and sanitation (Ryder and Brown ibid).

4. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will lay out the theoretical framework that has informed this thesis. Beginning with the broader concepts of identity, ethnicity, and indigeneity that I discussed briefly in the introduction, as the chapter progresses I will shift my focus towards the more specific regional and ethnographic literature pertaining to questions of Amazonian indigenous identity, urbanisation, and rural-urban migration in Latin America. While in Chapters 5-7 of this thesis I will endeavour continually to relate my ethnographic material to the relevant scholarship, the present chapter allows me to provide the reader with the foundations of my theoretical approach in order to contextualise my arguments within the broader framework of the literature.

4.1 The concept of identity

'Identity' is one of the most hotly-debated topics of our time. In the mid 1990s, the social historian Lutz Niethammer observed that more than 500 books in the New York Public Library carried the word 'identity' in their title (Carrithers 2008). Michael Carrithers carried out a similar survey in the Durham University Library in 2008 and turned up more than seven hundred titles (ibid). The profligacy and cross-disciplinary appeal of identity as a concept have inevitably resulted in a certain amount of confusion as to what identity really means. Many commentators protest that identity is an unhelpful term, overused to the point of becoming meaningless (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). '[Identity] . . . is too ambiguous, too torn between 'hard' and 'soft' meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to be of any further use' (ibid: 2). Yet as Jenkins observes, the very fact that identity is a commonly-used concept with cross-disciplinary appeal is an argument in itself for its sustained use in social theory (Jenkins 2008).

Anthropology's understanding of 'identity' has borrowed ideas (not always successfully) from several other disciplines, most notably philosophy, literary criticism and cultural studies (Gingrich 2004). Psychology and sociology have also had a significant part to play. These ideas have evolved considerably over the years. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the root of 'identity' as the Latin '*identitas*', from '*idem*' meaning 'the same' (Jenkins ibid). Indeed, 'sameness' lay at the heart of identity as it was originally understood. The Aristotlean tradition emphasised identity – in the sense of individual 'sameness' – as one of the fundamental principles of being: you are always identical with yourself (Larrain 2000). Later, the Enlightenment produced the notion of the centred, unified individual who possessed an 'inner core' that remained the same throughout his or her life (Hall 1992). This notion was taken up and made popular by the psychologist Erikson (Erikson 1956), who saw personal identity as 'a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self' (Byron 2010). He expanded the concept to mean not only selfsameness but also sameness with others: 'The term "identity" expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself... and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with others' (ibid: 109).

This emphasis on the selfsame, whole, unified subject was overturned by a new body of literature highlighting both the relational and processual aspects of identity and the importance of difference (Sokefeld 1999). Sociologists such as Mead and Cooley stressed that the so-called 'inner core' was formed through interaction with other subjects, during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others. Echoing the work of Georg Simmel (Simmel and Wolff 1964) they developed an understanding of identity as an ongoing, 'simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others' (Jenkins 2008: 40). Goffman contributed to this debate by drawing

attention to the importance of 'the presentation of self' during interaction. Although we can control the signals that we send to other people to a certain extent, we cannot be sure of their reception. Therefore 'impression management strategies' are crucial to the formation of identity, as well as highlighting the 'performative' nature of identity (Goffman 1956). Psychoanalysis also played an important role in the conceptualisation of identity. Freud's assertion that a subject's self-image as whole and unified is learnt gradually and partially (Lacan and Sheridan 1977) led sociologists to conclude that identity is always incomplete, always in the process of formation. As Stuart Hall observes, we should speak not of 'identity' as such, rather of 'identification' (Hall 1992).

Difference began to play a crucial role in social theorists' understanding of identity for several reasons. The influence of Heidegger, whose philosophy often amounted to an extreme form of cultural relativism (Gingrich 2004) and Marx, who emphasised the role that the social expectations of others play in identification (Larrain 2000) coincided with Derrida's insistence upon the importance of *différance* (Derrida 1963), and postmodernism's rejection of grand narratives (Jenkins 2008). Another factor was the rise of identity politics, by which diverse groups including women, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples campaigned for rights and recognition on the basis of difference (ibid). Globalisation has if anything exacerbated this process, with its commodification of cultural difference (K. Robins 1991). These developments greatly influenced anthropology, leading to the emergence of two divergent themes: a Heidegger-inspired essentialised difference, and a Lacanian overemphasis on identity at the expense of alterity (Gingrich 2004). Hall championed this notion of identity as being purely defined by difference: '[identities] emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity' (Hall 1996:

4). Recently, however, there have been calls for an approach that recognises the interrelatedness of similarity and difference (Gingrich ibid; Jenkins 2008).

There has also been an increase in the visibility and perceived importance of 'collective' identities. These are identities formed through membership of a group, be it on the basis of nationality, gender, ethnicity, sexuality or class (among others) (Larrain 2000). These 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983) have a very real influence upon the individuals of which they are composed. Although detractors such as Brubaker refute the existence of groups (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) and thus of collective identities, Jenkins argues that a group is real if it exists in the minds of those that consider themselves members: 'in local everyday experience, there is a three-dimensional experiential materiality to ... groups. They can be grasped and "seen" without having to make any effort of the imagination. They are, in other words, "real"...' (Jenkins 2008: 11). Furthermore, membership of groups, however 'imaginary', often carries very real consequences. For example, if having a nationality can seem as essential to a person as having a nose and eyes (Gellner 1983) it is difficult to describe nations (the archetypal group) as imaginary. Imagined, yes, but not imaginary.

Although they are often treated as separate and distinct entities (Jenkins 2008) individual and collective identities are 'mutually necessary and interrelated' (Larrain 2008: 30). On the one hand, individuals are defined through their social relations; on the other, society reproduces itself and changes through individual action. Personal identities are shaped by culturally defined collective identities (or 'cultural identities'; see Hall 1992) and vice versa (Larrain ibid). As Giddens observes, collective identities are continually recreated

by individuals via the same means by which they express themselves as actors with an identity, but at the same time they make such activities possible (Giddens 1990).

4.2 Ethnicity and ethnic identity

4.2.1 A short history of ethnicity in anthropology

> '…a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject' (Banks 1996).

This is how Marcus Banks described ethnicity in his 1996 critique of anthropology's use of the term. To a certain extent he is right, in that 'ethnicity' as a concept has been used relatively uncritically and unreflexively by anthropologists ever since it first became popular in the late 1960s.

The term 'ethnicity' has a short but influential history. 'Ethnic' from which it derives, is a much older word, and has its roots in the Greek ἔθνος ['*ethnos*'], meaning 'people' (Jenkins 2008), 'nation' (Wade 2010), or 'heathen' (Williams 1976). The latter has a curious ring to it when we acknowledge that 'ethnic' group came to replace 'tribe' as a term by which (usually western) anthropologists referred to 'non-western' societies (R. Cohen 1968). The first appearance of the term in the sense (more or less) that we understand it today is in Warner and Lunt (1942: 73). However, 'ethnicity' only became popular in the late 1960s, following publications by key theorists including Fredrik Barth, Abner Cohen and the members of the Manchester School.

The origins of ethnicity: The Chicago School

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, social theorists were largely unconcerned with ethnic minorities. With the exception of Max Weber, the 'founding fathers' of the social sciences didn't address the question of ethnic diversity at all. Weber's contribution to the literature was itself brief and rather fatalistic, assuming as he did that ethnic groups would be consumed by the rampant homogenisation of modernisation and industrialisation (Weber 1980 [1921]), foreshadowing later, similar assumptions about the impact of globalisation. Both death-knells proved to be premature.

Crucially for the purposes of this thesis, theories of ethnicity developed hand in hand with the growing interest in and study of urbanisation, particularly in the context of post-colonialism and migration. The first serious studies into what would later come to be known as ethnicity were the product of the so-called Chicago School, the members of which were active from the 1920s until the 1950s. This loosely assembled collection of urban sociologists shared a common interest in the way that immigrants of different ethnic origins coexisted in (principally U.S.) cities. Specifically, they wanted to address the question of why immigrant identities persisted in urban America, and whether they could be expected to maintain their relevance over time.

The most prominent figure among these scholars was Robert Park, to whom we owe the popularity (if not the actual coining) of concepts such as 'acculturation' and especially 'the melting pot' (Eriksen 2010). By the latter, Park meant the merging of diverse ethnic groups to form one assimilated 'American' culture. While he accepted that different ethnic groups would 'assimilate' at different rates depending on their cultural background and their socio-economic and political status within the wider society, Park, like Weber before him,

remained convinced that acculturation and homogenisation were inevitable results of the (urban) interaction of peoples from different backgrounds (Park 1950). He identified a series of stages through which 'race relations' would necessarily pass: isolation, followed by competition, then conflict, accommodation and finally assimilation. Only the black population were to be excluded from this gradual adaptation to the norms of white Anglo-Saxon culture (ibid; cf Hannerz 1980).

The Manchester School

While sociologists were indulging in cultural pessimism, anthropologists were adopting a different perspective on the future of ethnic diversity. Gregory Bateson, writing at the same time as Park, drew a radically different conclusion to that of his contemporary, arguing that group differences are just as likely to be accentuated as diminished in situations of cultural contact (Bateson 1972). In the 1950s, Edmund Leach's seminal text *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) revealed that, far from being immutable, ethnic identities could be negotiated and even changed under certain circumstances, an observation that would later influence the contributors to the volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969), most notably its editor Fredrik Barth.

However, the most significant contributions of the era to the body of work on ethnicity came from the Manchester School. Named for their association with the University of Manchester, and particularly with Max Gluckman, a number of anthropologists carried out fieldwork in urban areas along the so-called 'Copperbelt' of Northern Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia). The demand for cheap labour in the copper mines of this region attracted large numbers of migrant workers from far and wide, who resided in the swelling, multi-ethnic cities that sprang up to accommodate them.

The Manchester School anthropologists, based in the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Lusaka, studied this incipient urbanisation and drew some startling conclusions. The findings of J. Clyde Mitchell (1956) were of particular relevance to later studies of ethnicity. Mitchell noted that among the dozens of different 'tribes' represented in the Copperbelt towns, a process of 'retribalisation' was taking place. Although 'tribal' membership was relatively unimportant in economic terms, ethnicity was highly visible in urban areas, to the point of being 'shown off' in public rituals and interaction. Furthermore, these representations were taking forms different to those found in rural areas. A case in point was the Kalela dance, a dance performed by a particular 'tribe' (the Bisa) that bore no resemblance to dances performed in their local villages. This dance was nevertheless considered to be an important part of the 'tribe's' identity (ibid).

For the purposes of the present study, the three most important conclusions that can be drawn from the work of the Manchester School are the following. Firstly, the observation that ethnicity (or 'tribalism') does not disappear in multi-ethnic, urban environments; on the contrary, it becomes if anything even more relevant. Secondly, that while the above is true, the nature of 'tribalism' and, in particular, representations of tribal identity, are considerably altered in an urban setting. This is related to, if not the result of, the third point: that 'tribes' in the Copperbelt cities acted as the basis for social organisation among rural-urban migrant workers in the absence of established kinship affiliations. As Mitchell observed, knowing a person's ethnic identity meant that you would know how to behave towards that person:

> Town-dwellers display their ethnic origin by the language they speak and their way of life generally. This enables members of other tribal groups immediately to fit their neighbours and acquaintances into categories which determine the mode of behaviour towards them. For

> Africans in the Copperbelt 'tribe' is the primary category of social interaction, i.e. the first significant characteristic to which any African reacts in another. (Mitchell, 1956: 32)

As Elizabeth Colson observed (1996), ethnic groups acted as surrogate kin groups, supporting each other in the search for jobs and accommodation.

A crucial insight revealed in the work of both the Chicago School and the Copperbelt studies was the fact that ethnic identities – indeed, social identities in general (Eriksen 2010) – are contextual. This means, on the one hand, that they can become more or less important or relevant depending on the context. To take an example from the Copperbelt studies, a man might emphasise his tribal affiliations more in certain circumstances, whereas in others, his status as a 'town-dweller' may take precedence. This is a crucial insight if we want to understand Shuar urban identity, as I will discuss in due course. On the other hand, the situational character of ethnic identities means that the category 'we' can expand and contract according to the context, excluding some people in certain situations and incorporating them in others. Again, this can be see in in the case of Shuar, whereby the pronoun 'we' might, according to the circumstances, refer only to Shuar, to other Amazonian indigenous peoples, or to Amerindian peoples in general. Peter Wade makes this point more explicitly when he argues that ethnicity is like a 'Russian doll' in that there are different levels depending on the context: one can, for example, identify with the southern English against northerners; with England against, say, Italy, or with Europe against the United States (Wade 2010).

Ethnic Groups and Boundaries

By the late 1960s, the term 'ethnic group' was beginning to replace 'tribe' as the terminology of choice for social anthropologists. Nevertheless, as Fredrik Barth pointed out, the category in question remained essentially the same. In what would become something of a founding

charter for later students of ethnicity, Barth (1969) identified four assumptions about ethnic groups that existed in anthropological literature at the time and that were misleading at best:

1. That ethnic groups are biologically self-perpetuating;

2. That they share fundamental cultural values and demonstrate 'overt unity in cultural forms' (1969: 11);

3. That they make up a 'field of communication and interaction' (ibid);

4. That their members consider themselves, and are considered by others, to form a distinct category.

While Barth agreed that many ethnic groups appeared to possess some of these qualities, he argued that studies of ethnicity would benefit from a change of emphasis. The above assumptions, he reasoned, gave ethnic groups something of a timeless, frozen quality, as well as falling into the same traps of traditional (and by then outdated) theories that 'a race = a culture = a language' (ibid: 11). Crucially, he criticised the assumption that ethnic groups maintained their distinct character and customs through relative, if not total, isolation from other cultural groups. Following the work of the Manchester School, Barth insisted that the contrary was true: ethnic identity became more relevant in situations where there was prolonged contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds.

This argument reflected, and to a certain extent helped to foster, a profound change in approach in European social anthropology, away from the study of seemingly isolated 'tribes' and towards a better understanding of how different groups of people interacted with each other and yet maintained their cultural distinctiveness. Barth suggested a means of addressing this issue that has remained relevant to this day. He pointed out that while the 'culture' – the customs, dress, cuisine, behaviour and even language – of a group may change

over time, the group's ethnic identity often persists. Barth concluded that in order to understand ethnic distinctiveness it was necessary not to look at the 'cultural markers' of an ethnic group but at its boundaries, and in particular to observe how these are maintained over time. While he did not dismiss 'culture' entirely, he emphasised that it was only relevant insofar as particular cultural traits were deemed important from an emic perspective, in order to distinguish one group from another.

<u>Political ethnicity</u>

Barth's volume spawned a keen interest in studies of 'ethnicity', which was seen by many anthropologists as an ideal alternative to traditional studies of apparently isolated 'tribes' (Eriksen 2010). Among these was Abner Cohen, a prominent figure of the Manchester School's 'middle era' (Banks 1996) who focused upon the politics of ethnicity. Cohen's argument, later described as 'instrumentalist' (Wade 2010), was that ethnicity was effectively a tool in the competition between different groups for control of valuable or scarce resources. In this respect, according to Cohen, ethnicity was always political: always a means of establishing power and hierarchy. He argued that this would explain why some ethnicities persisted while others vanished: ethnicity could not be merely symbolic, it had to serve some practical purpose. Those ethnic identities that proved ineffectual in the competition for resources were eventually discarded (A. Cohen 1974b). Although Cohen's approach can be described as somewhat cynical, not to mention limited and overtly functionalist, one can see his point to a certain extent when observing the strategic use of 'ethnic symbols' in indigenous struggles for control over land and other resources in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Another aspect of ethnicity that Cohen was particularly interested in was urban ethnicity. He edited a volume of the same name in which he argued, following Barth and the

Manchester School, that ethnicity achieves its highest relevance in multi-ethnic environments, a city being (generally) a multi-ethnic environment *par excellence*. He therefore felt that in order fully to understand ethnicity, it was necessary to carry out urban studies. As we shall see, both of these observations are relevant for the purposes of this thesis.

Another relevant factor, particularly with regards to indigenous peoples, was the rise in popularity of dependency theory, which went some way towards explaining the perpetuation of hierarchical differences between groups (and thus of ethnicity). Therefore, by the end of the 1970s, studies of ethnicity had:

> […] moved away from the emphasis on 'isolated' communities in functionalist anthropology and located ethnic groups more in the context of the nation and in history, and more in terms of economic inequality and processes of the social construction of identity. Ethnic identities were also understood as phenomena that were not necessarily destined to fade away with 'modernisation' and 'acculturation'; being flexible and being connected to inequality, there was no inherent drive for their disappearance (Wade 2010: 61).

The rise (and fall?) of ethnicity in anthropology

Interest in ethnicity gathered pace through the 1970s and 1980s. 'Quite suddenly, with little comment or ceremony, ethnicity is an ubiquitous presence' wrote Ronald Cohen in 1978. Publication of works on the subject continued to rise in the 1980s. Since then, despite a steady stream of books, journals and conference papers (Eriksen 2010), ethnicity as a subject appears to have fallen foul of academic fashion (Banks 1996). Part of the reason for this shift is perhaps the very popularity of ethnicity: like 'identity' more generally, it has been used and misused to the point of becoming meaningless. Banks, in his scathing critique of the concept of ethnicity, describes it as a 'tool' rendered 'blunt' through 'overuse', or perhaps because it had not been 'very well fashioned in the first place' (Banks 1993: 25).

4.2.2 Ethnicity in contemporary anthropological theory

As I mentioned in the introduction to this section, while I agree to a certain extent with the arguments of those theorists who assert that concepts such as 'identity' and 'ethnicity' ought to be discarded as 'blunt' and misleading ethnographic 'tools', I feel that, as with any concept, they remain useful and beneficial to social theorists as long as what is meant by them is clearly defined; as long as the 'tool' is sharpened, to use Banks's metaphor. Ethnicity in particular, with its focus on interaction and interrelationship, is increasingly useful for understanding the diverse, complex world we live in today. I found this to be especially the case in the context of Shuar/non-Shuar urban relations, in which the emphasis was often placed heavily upon ethnic identity by the persons involved. Before I continue, in that case, let me take a moment to define precisely what I mean by 'ethnicity', drawing upon the authors whose work has proven most useful and relevant to my understanding of Shuar urban experiences. In particular, I want to focus not only on what ethnicity 'is' but on what it *does*: how ethnic identity impacts upon people's lives, and why it remains relevant.

Ethnicity as cultural difference

As Barth (1969) observed, and as theorists including Eriksen (2010), Maybury-Lewis (1997) and Jenkins (2008) have later emphasised, ethnicity is not merely 'cultural difference' per se. Rather, it is putative difference 'made relevant through interaction' (Eriksen 2010: 251). In the words of Maybury-Lewis:

> 'Ethnic groups do not form therefore because people are of the same race, or share the same language or the same culture. They form because people who share such characteristics decide they are members of a distinct group, or because people who share such characteristics

are lumped together and treated by outsiders as members of a distinct group' (Maybury-Lewis 1997: 61).

The boundaries between ethnic groups may be presented (whether by the members of the group or by outsiders) as rigid and insurmountable, but they are porous and in certain circumstances can be crossed (Barth 1969).

'Cultural difference', whether real or perceived, is not therefore the decisive factor in the identification of an ethnic group. Flemish residents of Brussels, for example, report feeling more 'Flemish' than their counterparts in West Flanders, despite speaking French on a regular basis (Eriksen 2010). Of course, this does not mean that perceived cultural differences are entirely irrelevant to the identification of an ethnic group. They may not even be sufficient. Abner Cohen, for example, has argued that bankers can be seen as an ethnic group, in that they are an interest group which possesses a shared culture (that of the upper class urban elite) and effectively reproduces endogamously (in that they tend to marry others of the same social class) (A. Cohen 1974a, 1974b). Yet I would be very much surprised if an individual were to identify her ethnicity as 'banker'; furthermore, I doubt she would be taken seriously if she did. It is clear, therefore, that there is more to ethnicity than shared 'interests' or even 'culture'. How, then, to differentiate ethnicity from other socially constructed identities?

Peter Wade has suggested an equation along the lines of 'ethnicity = culture + place' (2010: 16-17). This is a fairly neat appraisal, in that ethnicity usually refers not just to shared culture but to 'roots' in a particular 'place'. As Wade observes, '"Where are you from?" is thus the ethnic question par excellence' (2010: 17). This question also implies that the addressee has moved away from her geographical (and therefore 'cultural') origins, thus

emphasising further her ethnicity as a central facet of her identity. Nevertheless, I feel that there is something further lacking in this definition, something that becomes clearer when we take into account the fact that, as Wade observes, commentators in Latin America tend to differentiate between ascriptions of 'ethnicity' and 'race'. The former is used to refer to cultural difference (and therefore to indigenous peoples), whereas the latter has more to do with perceived phenotypical variation. Let us therefore examine the relationship between ethnicity and race in the next section.

Ethnicity and Race

Ethnicity and 'race' are so thoroughly intertwined in the history of academic and popular thought that it is difficult to pull them apart. Both are social constructs rather than biological facts, and ought to be treated as such by serious academics. 'Race' fell out of favour with the scientific community in the early twentieth century, as scholars gradually came to realise that perceived biological differences between so-called 'races' were in fact negligible compared to the wide variation found within these same 'races' (Stocking 1994). Yet people continued to categorise their fellow human beings according to phenotypical features such as skin colour. Social scientists, needing a way to talk about this categorisation, increasingly used ethnicity as an alternative for 'race' (ibid), although the category was obviously a good deal broader than merely perceived physical differences.

This aspect of the heritage of the term 'ethnicity' needs to be taken into account if we want to understand fully what ethnicity means and how it operates. For while 'culture' and 'place' are obviously important elements in people's understanding of their ethnic identity, they are clearly not the only factors involved. Manning Nash (1989) came up with a more comprehensive 'recipe' for ethnicity, which he referred to as 'bed, blood and cult', the

implication being that ethnic groups are perceived to be biologically self-perpetuating (and therefore endogamous), with a shared ancestry and religion (Eriksen 2010). Biology, culture and place are therefore intimately entwined in the conceptualisation of ethnic identity, and the racial connotations of ethnicity become more apparent.

Wade observes that although in Latin America 'indigenous' tends to be treated as an ethnic category and 'black' as a racial ascription, in reality the situation is more complex (2010). '*Indio*' was long considered to be a racial category in the Spanish colonies, despite the assumption that an '*indio*' could in theory leave behind his indigenous identity merely by leaving his indigenous community, wearing 'white' clothing and/or speaking Spanish (ibid). Judgements about ethnicity that are based on phenotype persist to this day in Ecuador, and both indigenous and *mestizo* Ecuadorians will ascribe identities on the basis of appearances. For while ethnic identity is necessarily broader than mere variations in physical appearance (it would most likely be impossible, for example, to tell an 'ethnic' Bosnian from an 'ethnic' Serb by phenotype alone), we cannot deny that physical appearance plays a part not only in our own ethnic identification but also in the identities we ascribe to others. The Youtube video 'What kind of Asian are you?' which was promoted by the Huffington Post (Almendrala 2013) is only a slightly exaggerated example of the way that phenotype can mark a person out as 'ethnically other' regardless of their birthplace, cultural background, the language they speak or their own ethnic identification.

Although, as we have seen in the case of Ecuador, phenotype does not necessarily set a person's ethnic identity in stone, it is still a regularly used marker of cultural identity. One question that I used often in informal and semi-structured interviews with Shuar and non-Shuar informants was along the lines of: 'If you passed a Shuar person in the street, how

would you know that they were Shuar?' The response was often 'because of their eyes', or '*porque son más morenitos*' [because they're darker], often with references to the commonly-held belief that Shuar are descended from Japanese or Koreans.[19] This supports Valdivia's assertion that phenotype is often used as a way of identifying indigenous people in Ecuador (2009). Valdivia goes on to observe that, despite the historic emphasis upon '*blanqueamiento*' in Ecuador, indigenous Amazonians cannot necessarily escape their indigenous identity simply by changing their clothes and behaving like 'whites'. She notes that although Cofán women list certain food, behaviour and clothing as markers of Cofán identity, they are quick to emphasise that even if a Cofán woman wears high heels or a skirt, 'she will always be Cofán' (ibid: 540).

<u>Groups and categories</u>

In thinking about the way that ethnicity influences the day-to-day lives of urban Shuar, I have found it useful to rephrase my initial question, 'what is ethnicity?' and instead to ask 'what does ethnicity *do*?' As with all forms of identification, ethnicity is not a 'thing' per se but a process, one of identification with or distancing from the apparent distinguishing characteristics of a certain collectivity. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction to this section, ethnicity is both a process of self-identification and of ascription by others, and often the latter precedes and even initiates the former.

Jenkins has made this point most clearly in *Rethinking Ethnicity* (2008b), in which he distinguishes between 'groups' and 'categories'. A 'group' identity is one held or subscribed to by a group of people; a 'category' is an identity externally applied (usually) by social theorists, for the purposes of analysis. Over the years, many 'categories' which initially

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[19] Other responses referred to the length of women's hair, to pronunciation of certain Spanish letters and to certain aspects of dress and appearance.

existed only in the minds and for the analytical benefit of social anthropologists, have become group identities with considerable political and emotional potency. Myriad examples of this phenomenon can be cited, not least that of Shuar, who went from being an amorphous population of nomadic families, loosely tied together by kinship and localised political alliances, to a coherent political body with a clear ethnic identity and agenda. Arguably this was not only or even mostly as a result of social theorists' ascriptions of a collective identity; as I highlighted in the previous chapter, the ethnogenesis of Shuar really came about through missionisation, with anthropologists playing a comparatively minor role. Parallels can be drawn with the case of 'West Indians' in Britain cited by Eriksen (2010), which clearly demonstrates that non-academic categorical ascriptions can influence and even create an internal group identity. I therefore propose that we expand Jenkins's distinction between 'groups' and 'categories', taking into account all those individuals and collectives that might have influenced the external ascription of a categorical identity.

The crucial point for the purposes of this thesis is that ethnic identity is created via multiple processes of identification: identification with a specific 'ethnic group', whether through shared 'cultural' elements such as language, dress, or perceived common ancestry; identification against those not of that group, or clearly of a different group; identification by the members of the group themselves; ascription of a perceived identity by those not of that group. One could argue that these processes both necessitate and are an inevitable outcome of any interaction between two people or groups of people.

<u>Ethnicity as a modern phenomenon</u>

One criticism that is often levelled against conceptualisations of 'ethnicity' is that while they profess to pertain to ancestral origins and ancient practices, they are essentially products of

the modern era. I do not dispute this assertion. While I suspect that permeable Barthian boundaries have existed between different groups of people throughout history, the way that ethnic groups understand and represent their ethnic identity, and the way that identity is perceived and interpreted by others, is fundamentally modern. This is perhaps ironic given that, as noted above, many social scientists expected ethnicity to become less relevant and eventually disappear as a result of modernisation.

Following Appadurai (1996), I would like to argue the opposite: that contemporary representations of ethnic identity are for the most part a reaction to processes of modernisation, and for that very reason, ethnicity is a useful tool for understanding the fast-changing, complex world that we live in, implying as it does an interrelationship between people from different backgrounds (Eriksen 2010). The increased popularity of ethnicity as a theoretical tool in the 1970s, for example, reflected a move in social anthropology away from viewing societies and cultures as isolated static and homogeneous units. Ethnicity is therefore a 'highly useful concept, since it suggests a dynamic situation of variable contact and mutual accommodation between groups' (Eriksen ibid: 10). For several reasons, this move away from the study of 'static', isolated societies has not gathered much momentum in Amazonianist ethnography, and it is perhaps for this reason that Amazonianists – and particularly those trained in Europe – have been hesitant to grapple with the effects of modernisation and concomitant processes such as urbanisation and migration in the Amazon region.

What does it mean to say that ethnicity is a modern phenomenon? As Eriksen observes:

'…although ethnicity is not confined to modern societies, there are aspects of many interethnic processes which are less likely to come about in non-modern than in modern contexts. In particular, this could be true of reflexive self-identity and that reification of culture which seems to presuppose widespread literacy. The contemporary phenomena of nationalism and minority issues are clearly confined to the modern world or at least, in the case of indigenous peoples, the interface between modernity and a traditional way of life. It could be argued that pre-colonial notions of cultural differences refer to different kinds of phenomena altogether from those engendered by capitalism and the state' (Eriksen 2010: 95).

In order words, as discussed above, ethnicity is a product of the modern era and in many ways a reaction to processes of modernisation. Moreover, one could argue that many representations of ethnicity – of common 'culture' and ancestral practices – are fundamentally modern in their inception and representation. Furthermore, notions of a common ethnic identity are often instilled and reinforced through modern processes. Two interrelated examples that illustrate this point succinctly are, firstly, uniform systems of education, and secondly, modern technology, particularly communications technology such as radios and (increasingly) the Internet. It is these phenomena that went a long way towards transforming Shuar from a population of nomadic groups based on kinship and temporarily alliances into a self-aware, politicised body of people, conscious of its own ethnic identity and of its relationship to the state and to other ethnic groups, a point I shall elaborate upon further in Chapter 6.

4.3 Understanding indigeneity

'...generically modern difference constructed on the model – and in the mirror – of generically modern sameness' (Greene 2009: 15)

Indigeneity is a concept that, from the point of view of the anthropologist, appears to lead a double life. On the one hand it is dismissed by academics as merely a politically correct synonym for 'primitive' or 'tribal', an outdated concept that relies upon 'obsolete anthropological notions and on a romantic and false ethnographic vision' (Kuper 2003). On the other, it is a term the symbolic power of which, if harnessed successfully, can be used to defend livelihoods, claim territory, overcome oppression and resist cultural annihilation. An indigenous identity is, in certain circumstances, a battle cry that can call forth an army of international organisations, NGOs, activists, lawyers, politicians and 'fellow' oppressed peoples from across the globe (Niezen 2000, 2003; Canessa 2014).

How, in that case, are anthropologists to deal with indigeneity? Should they even bother? It is true that the essentialised, 'authentic' social identities that politicised indigeneity tends to produce often leave a bad taste in the mouths of many anthropologists. Those scholars that call for it to be discarded as a misleading, unhelpful term, best left to lawyers and activists, probably have a strong case. As Barnard observes, 'whether a people are or are not an "indigenous people" is no more an anthropological question than who is or is not a "refugee" in British law or a "coloured" person under the apartheid classification system' (Barnard 2006). And as Canessa points out, 'there is an arbitrariness in distinguishing between one set of marginal peasants and another on the basis of some putative condition of indigeneity or marginal lifestyle in the past' (2014: 154). Nevertheless, when Jenkins stakes his claim for the continued use of the term 'identity' in social scientific discourse, his words

could probably equally apply to 'indigeneity': 'If we want to talk to the world outside academia, denying ourselves one of its words of power is not a good communications policy' (Jenkins 2008; see also Giddens 1987).

For a concept that purports to embrace some of the world's most 'ancient' cultures, the arrival of 'indigeneity' as a staple of mainstream legal and political discourse is surprisingly recent. As Niezen observes, any search for the term in publications that predate the 1980s will reveal only a smattering of botanical texts (Niezen 2003). Nevertheless, indigenous peoples have arguably existed, at least conceptually, since the Spanish and Portuguese carved up the spoils of the New World back in the fifteenth century (McIntosh 2002). This was the moment when the term *indígena* was first coined (Bowen 2000) to refer to the 'original' inhabitants of this new promised land. It is perhaps pertinent to remind ourselves, in an era of increasingly romanticised depictions of indigeneity as the realm of the 'ecologically noble savage' (Redford 1993) that prior to the colonisation of the Americas, 'there were no indigenous peoples… there were only peoples' (McIntosh ibid: 23).

Despite its long history, indigeneity as a concept remains stubbornly difficult to define. This is especially true in the modern era, when promises of collective rights to territory, sovereignty and cultural integrity have seemingly opened the floodgates to claims of indigenous status. It had previously been assumed that only peoples from the Americas and Australasia, whose presence significantly preceded the arrival of the European colonisers, could be considered indigenous. In recent years, however, the concept has spread across Africa and Asia, with many aspiring 'indigenous' populations not fitting the established mould (Bowen 2000). In the spirit of embracing these new claimants, attempts on the part of international organisations and NGOs to define what it means to be 'indigenous' have

increasingly favoured flexibility, hinting at general tendencies rather than insisting upon the satisfaction of prescribed criteria (Niezen 2003, Brown 2003).

While the United Nations (UN) and other bodies eschew formal definitions, many have tacitly accepted a 'working definition', originally drafted on behalf of the UN by Martínez Cobo (UNPFI 2009) that outlines four principles (Saugestad 2004): priority in time regarding occupation of a territory; voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness; self-identification and recognition by other groups or state authorities; and experience of subjugation, dispossession, exclusion, or discrimination. The emphasis placed upon these principles varies according to the commentator, region or indigenous group in question. While some favour so-called 'blood and soil' notions that prioritise a continuous line of descent stretching back to the original occupiers of a territory, such arguments have been criticised by detractors, most famously Adam Kuper. In his paper *The Return of the Native* (2003), Kuper draws parallels between indigenous claims and those made by the Nazi regime and other fascist, nationalist groups (a recent example being the British National Party). However, as Ramos (2003), Kenrick and Lewis (2004) and others demonstrate, Kuper fails to take into account the fact that indigenous groups are claiming rights from which they have historically been excluded; he ignores the distinction between oppressor and oppressed (Lee 2006).

While understandings of what it means to be indigenous are for the most part deliberately flexible, several common themes do occur. Firstly, indigeneity is generally accepted to be first and foremost a political identity, in that indigenous peoples are usually defined as such with reference to their relationship with the state (Canessa 2014); they make claims upon the state for rights or protection on the basis of their status as 'indigenous'.

Secondly, indigeneity is a fundamentally place-based identity (Clifford 2007), indicating a relationship with a particular region (vis-à-vis its antithesis, colonisation or colonialism, which connotes 'recent' arrival from a different place). On the other hand, indigenous identities are in a way 'global', in that indigenous groups express solidarity with fellow victims of colonialism – fellow 'fourth world peoples', or 'forest peoples' – across the world, on the basis of shared historical experiences (Canessa 2012b, Clifford 2007). As Niezen (2003) observes, many ethnic groups have suffered discrimination and marginalisation, but groups that make claims to indigenous status have managed to turn that historical experience of oppression into an international, mutually supportive political movement. History is therefore an essential element to any expression of indigenous identity (Canessa 2012b). Finally, commentators increasingly agree that despite its atavistic appearance, indigeneity is a fundamentally modern condition (Greene 2009), and should be treated as such by serious scholars.

Of course, one serious concern with most definitions of indigeneity, however open and flexible, is that they have been created in a 'Western' context and are thus potentially laden with distorting cultural assumptions. These vary from binary notions of 'primitive' versus 'modern' to romanticised ideas of how an 'ecologically noble savage' (Redford 1993) ought to speak (Graham 2002), dress (Conklin 1997) and behave (S. Robins 2003). Failure to satisfy these implicit criteria of 'authenticity' can penalise indigenous groups (Thomas 1994): 'constructions of indigenous identities almost inevitably privilege particular fractions of the indigenous population who correspond best with whatever is idealised' (ibid: 89). On the other hand, those groups that successfully embody the elements of 'authentic' indigenous culture acquire potent 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1977) that gives them considerable leverage in negotiations with the state (Conklin and Graham 1995).

It is perhaps telling that so many aspects of what is taken by many Europeans to be an 'authentic' indigenous existence resonate strongly with certain desires and perceived absences in the 'West' (Sahlins 1999). This is symptomatic of what McIntosh refers to as the search for the 'indigenous' in ourselves, the 'primitive' human living 'as nature intended' (McIntosh 2002). Such evolutionary assumptions permeate indigenous rights discourse and are often influenced by now outmoded anthropological theory (Kuper 2003). Carefully selected elements of 'indigenous culture' such as body paint, tattoos, feathers, rituals and chants appeal to the current craze for the exotic (Conklin and Graham ibid), while small-scale, subsistence societies speak of non-capitalist values (Lee 2006). Finally, the apparent 'rootedness in place' of indigenous communities seems to provide a sense of belonging that urban Westerners, constantly on the move, feel is sorely lacking in their lives (ibid).

These assumptions and impressions feed into the Western 'National Geographic' (Li 2000) image of indigenous peoples as 'timeless' and 'exotic' (Dove 2006) societies whose culture and way of life are extremely vulnerable and precious. One example is the recent description in The Guardian newspaper of the Inughuit of Greenland as 'a tiny community whose members manage to live a similar hunting and gathering life to their ancestors', whose 'language is regarded as something of a linguistic "fossil" and one of the oldest and most "pure" Inuit dialects' (Brown 2010). Another can be found in rising sympathies for indigenous causes following the release of the film 'Avatar', which perhaps reach their apotheosis in recent protests against Vedanta Resource's planned aluminium mine in Orissa, for which activists dressed as the blue-skinned 'indigenous population' from the film and carried banners imploring people to 'save the real Avatar tribe'.

Fig. 5: Save the real Avatar. Source: http://www.survivalfrance.org/

Nevertheless, with increased emphasis upon the principle of self-identification as a means of determining whether an individual or group can be considered indigenous (Colchester 2002), indigenous peoples have the opportunity to creatively redefine the concept of indigeneity. As Li observes, the adoption of an indigenous identity is not inevitable; it is a 'positioning' that 'draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle' (2000:151). One such example is Li's own ethnography of the Lindu in Indonesia (ibid); another is Omura's study of 'Inuitness' as defined by the Inuit people themselves, in which new phenomena such as tea drinking and snowmobiles can be combined with existing practices without appearing contradictory (Omura 2002). Greene's work with the Aguaruna in the Peruvian Amazon demonstrates that indigenous groups are able to 'customise' indigeneity so as to suit their own needs and political agendas (2009). This capacity to define what it means to be indigenous is crucial for societies claiming to be so, because while the control rests in the hands of non-indigenous groups (however well-meaning) the latter remain the arbitrators of authenticity. A change in academic or activist fashions might be all that was needed to lay waste to an estimated 300 million people's hopes for self-determination (Niezen 2000).

4.4 The construction of indigenous identity in Ecuador

4.4.1 Indigenous peoples in Latin America

> *'Indians are special because they are the original owners of the land. They continue to represent and embody the preconquest past of the region. Moreover, they actually and symbolically provide much of the unique nature of Latin America.' (Urban and Sherzer 1991)*

When compared with the definitional dilemmas faced by scholars and indigenous rights activists in Africa and Asia, defining indigeneity in Latin America seems relatively straightforward. It has been asserted that 'concern with indigenous peoples began in relation to Latin America' (Sanders 1989) and indigenous peoples in this region are arguably the archetypal 'natives': societies that were established before, and profoundly disadvantaged by, European settlement (Kenrick and Lewis 2004). Amazonian groups in particular are often presumed to evoke the stereotypical image of the 'indigenous' person, lampooned in Kuper's 2003 paper: nomadic hunter-gatherers that represent a sort of pan-human *Urkultur* (Canessa 2007). Of course, this image – and the pan-continental indigenous movement that employs it to great effect – belies staggering linguistic and cultural diversity, divergent agendas, emerging indigenous modernities and a variety of strategies for self-determination.

Indigenous peoples in Latin America: a brief history

A full appraisal of the history of indigenous peoples in Latin America is beyond the scope of this thesis; nevertheless, I will attempt a brief overview. As Urban (1991) observes, the 'Indian' in Latin America is a European invention: prior to the arrival of Spanish colonists in 1492, there were only peoples – Shuar, Quichua, Huaorani, and so forth. The concept of the 'Indian' has therefore emerged, developed and changed over time, and is arguably still doing so (Urban and Sherzer 1991).

When the Spanish and Portuguese first arrived in South America in the 15th and 16th centuries, they were initially unsure of how to conceptualise the peoples they found there (Wade 2010). Did they represent humanity before The Fall? Were they even human at all? Alternately depicted as 'noble savages' and 'cannibals', they were eventually enslaved in order to be 'protected as well as exploited' (Wade ibid: 26). *Indio* became a specific administrative category – in many ways, a fiscal category, since the typical indigenous person was one who lived in an indigenous community and paid tribute, in labour or goods (Harris, 1995b: 354). It was also a census category, as it was important to enumerate indigenous people as a working and tributary population. In Brazil, where there was less in the way of a dense, sedentary indigenous population that could be easily exploited through existing systems of political stratification, authorities were less concerned with maintaining strict barriers, but indigenous people still had a specific administrative status. In short, *indio* was an institutionalised identity.

In the early twentieth century, a new discourse on indigeneity emerged in countries such as Brazil and Mexico. Known as *indigenismo*, this approach lauded and romanticised indigenous peoples as the ancestors of Latin American nation-states, yet at the same time predicted their 'inevitable' decline and assimilation into national society and culture (Souza Lima 1991). Based upon Comtean notions of progress and unilinear evolution (Urban and Sherzer 1991), *indigenismo* echoed similar acculturation studies in North America, such as the work of the Chicago School (see this chapter, section 4.2.1). Examples included Caso (1958) and later Ribeiro's 'continuum' from isolation to 'extinction' (1970).

However, by the mid-1970s Brazilian scholars began to realise that indigenous peoples were not disappearing as predicted (Urban and Sherzer ibid). On the contrary, they

were increasingly resisting attempts on the part of the Brazilian government to assimilate them into mainstream society. Elsewhere in Latin America, observers were far slower to catch on to these developments. Warren and Jackson (2003) note that 'many social scientists, in fact, missed the dramatic shifts in activism that began in the 1960s and 1970s' (ibid: 1). Nevertheless, indigenous peoples in Latin America, along with their contemporaries across the globe, were making the most of the new political climate and opportunities presented by the post-war human rights era, beginning a wave of political activism and self-determination that continues to this day (ibid). Latin American nations are arguably experiencing something of an 'indigenous awakening' (Canessa 2007: 198) as evidenced by, for example, Evo Morales becoming Bolivia's first 'indigenous' president in 2005, or the description of Ecuador as a 'plurinational' state in the 2008 constitution. Indeed, many scholars relate the new 'multicultural order' in Latin America directly to the efforts and achievements of indigenous rights activists over the latter part of the twentieth century (Wroblewski 2014).

Indigenous peoples and the nation-state

Although they are spread across one of the world's largest land masses, and represent greater linguistic diversity (in terms of language families) than Europe and Asia combined (Campbell 1997), indigenous peoples of Latin America arguably have three key things in common. Firstly, as mentioned above, their existence in Latin America predates the arrival of European colonisers. Secondly, they have historically occupied a marginal position within modern Latin American nation-states (Urban and Sherzer 1991). Thirdly, these states have, over the decades, attempted to force and/or encourage indigenous groups to assimilate and become undifferentiated citizens of the nation-state, whether through a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Maybury-Lewis 1991), or via coercion (e.g. missionisation) (Urban and Sherzer

ibid). It is first and foremost this relationship with the state, therefore, that defines Latin American indigenous peoples as indigenous (Canessa 2014).

Latin American nation-states have a complex relationship with indigenous groups. On the one hand, these marginal, self-sufficient and economically 'inactive' populations have long been seen as holding the nation back in terms of economic development (see this chapter). This is as much the case today as it was in the era of *indigenismo*, with politicians and national newspapers lamenting the resistance of indigenous groups to development projects such as dams, mining and oil drilling in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples (see e.g. Turner 1991, La Hora 2013). The assimilationist rhetoric of *indigenismo* and assumptions about the inevitable *blanqueamiento* [whitening] of the indigenous population persist (see this chapter, section 4.4.3) despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. On the other hand, indigenous peoples play an important role in the folklore of many Latin American nation-states, and arguably form the basis, at least in part, of the national identity of most Latin American countries (see section 4.4.3). Urban refers to this as the 'folklorisation' of indigenous cultures (1991). Furthermore, Latin American governments are increasingly aware that 'exotic' indigenous cultures attract tourists to the region, and tourism is a key source of revenue for many states. 'Exoticisation' of indigenous peoples therefore couples with 'folklorisation' to encourage the defence and preservation of indigenous cultures as part of the national 'heritage'.

This latter consideration has arguably resulted in state-led ethnogenesis, and an emphasis on indigenous identity on the part of Latin American governments, even where so-called indigenous peoples themselves would rather not identify as such. In Mexico, for example, Martínez Novo discovered that indigenous ethnogenesis in the Baja California

region was largely driven by state officials who anticipated increased tourism revenues and good international publicity. It was however presented as a grassroots movement in much of the academic literature, despite the fact that the 'indigenous' people in question rejected the label as they felt that it restricted their ability to pursue alternative life plans and reduced them permanently to the status of *campesinos* (Martínez Novo 2006). Rubenstein has also observed that the Shuar Federation, which ostensibly defends the interests of the Shuar vis-à-vis the Ecuadorian state, is in fact little more than a government organ itself, facilitating the penetration of the state into the Shuar region (2001).

4.4.2 Indigenous identity in Ecuador

How are indigenous identities in Ecuador formed? As with other identities, indigenous identity is not 'innate' (Epstein 1978); rather, indigeneity is 'an articulated identity imposed and inhabited, contested and negotiated' (Valvidia 2005: 285). As I discussed previously, theorists such as Stuart Hall subscribe to the idea that identity is wholly defined by difference (Hall 1996). One might argue that this is true of indigenous identity, as such identities only came into existence with the arrival of colonisers, and can only continue to exist while there are non-indigenous populations against which to define indigeneity. Yet Jenkins' dissatisfaction with this overwhelming emphasis on difference (Jenkins 2008) also holds true for indigenous identity, and can be seen in the distinction drawn by Niezen between the indigenous movement and those of ethnic minorities that do not claim to be 'indigenous': while the latter tend to be 'insular' and 'isolationist', indigenous peoples have developed a worldwide network based on assumed common experiences, goals and even some sort of common 'ancient culture' (Niezen 2003). As many commentators in Latin America have observed, this concept of a 'common' indigenous identity, combined with the efforts at

authenticity touched upon in the last section, can lead indigenous peoples in Ecuador and elsewhere to aspire to an 'Indian' culture that may differ from or even contradict the beliefs and practices embodied in their own, diverse ethnic identities. Jackson, for example, discovered that Tukanoans in the Vaupés region of Colombia were 'learning' how to 'become Indian' from their more politically active contemporaries in other parts of the country (Jackson 1995).

The conceptualization and articulation of indigenous identity in Ecuador can therefore not fail to have been affected by the efforts of the country's highly politicized indigenous movement. Particular attention has been paid in recent years to cultural reproduction within indigenous communities, in which emphasis is increasingly placed upon those cultural elements that carry significant symbolic capital. These include stressing the importance of 'ancestral territory' (Valdivia 2009); the promotion of environmentally sustainable practices (Valdivia 2005); 'Orientalising' images of how an indigenous person should dress and behave (ibid); and the perpetuation and transmission of indigenous languages.

Language in particular is often seen as crucial to an 'authentic' indigenous identity, as it ties in so neatly with Western beliefs about the link between mother tongue and cultural identity (Graham 2002). Indigenous representatives can be branded as somehow illegitimate if they use a language other than their native dialect, as was the case with Davi Yanomami in his controversial encounter with the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon (ibid). The loss of such a potent symbol as language can also be experienced as a 'silencing' of the 'cultural voice' (Cohen 1993). It is perhaps for this reason that emphasis has traditionally been placed by the Ecuadorian indigenous movement on the importance of bilingual education as a means of ensuring that indigenous cultural practices survive and are reproduced (Lucas 2000).

Yet, as Rival (1997) argues, this is not necessarily the best means of transmitting indigenous culture and may even be counterproductive. Rival undertook fieldwork with the Huaorani of the northwest Ecuadorian Amazon. She observed that while Huaorani identity was learned (as opposed to being innate), this transmission of knowledge took place informally on a day-to-day basis without the learner being aware of the learning process – what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as 'situated learning'. Formal education as provided by the bilingual schools, while emphasizing 'the necessary link between language maintenance and cultural continuity' (Rival ibid:139) had the adverse effect of depriving Huaorani children of the core element of their cultural identity: forced to stay in school, the children were robbed of their relationship with the forest. Rival concludes that 'formal education, aimed at reinforcing Indian identity where it is on the wane, has more to do with motivating political action and transforming social reality, than with knowing reality' (ibid: 148).

The emphasis on collective rights, characteristic of the international indigenous movement (Bowen 2000), has also affected the way indigenous identities are constructed in Ecuador. Collective rights and 'bounded' indigenous communities (Li 2000) require collective cultural representation, yet this often glosses over internal inconsistencies and variations within communities in favour of images and ideas that conform to the 'essentialist' (Warren and Jackson 2002) stereotypes favoured by a Western and indigenous intellectual discourse of 'generic Indianness' (Muratorio 1994). Collective representation also encourages further endeavours towards 'authenticity' given that indigenous leaders often need to be recognised by their peers and the state as such (Valdivia 2005). The fact that indigenous communities are overwhelmingly represented by men, and increasingly those educated, intellectual men that have learnt to use this rhetoric of authenticity, means that alternative voices, particularly those of women, often remain unheard (Muratorio ibid).

Yet the construction and articulation of indigenous identity in Ecuador is affected by factors other than these politicised, 'strategically essentialised' (Warren and Jackson ibid) representations. Despite their potent symbolic capital abroad (Bourdieu 1977; see also Chapter 7, this thesis), indigenous people still face racism and discrimination from the non-indigenous population at home. They are often seen or depicted as 'dirty Indians' by *mestizos* (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998, 1999). The fact that indigenous people have long been relegated to the bottom rung of the social ladder means that discrimination is often seen as a class, rather than a cultural or racial issue (Becker 2008). This may have actually benefitted the indigenous rights movement in Ecuador: it has been argued by some (e.g. Becker ibid, Sánchez-Parga 2007) that the success of the movement is due in part to their links with the political left and their resulting ability to mobilise the numerous non-indigenous *campesinos*, ('peasants'). Nevertheless, the implication for Ecuadorian '*indios*', as has been observed by de la Cadena in neighbouring Peru (2000), is that their low status in society is a direct result of those aspects of their identity considered 'indigenous' by outsiders. Indigenous children in mixed schools, for example, are often discriminated against by their *mestizo* peers for not being perfectly fluent in Spanish (Valdivia 2009). Despite the recent resurgence of *mestizo* pride in the nation's indigenous roots (Stutzman 1981; see also O'Driscoll 2010b) indigenous peoples are still portrayed as 'backwards' (Muratorio 1994), 'lazy' (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998) and as standing in the way of national development and progress.

Like Western audiences, non-indigenous Ecuadorians have opinions as to how an 'authentic' indigenous person ought to speak, dress and behave. As Valdivia (ibid) observes, 'performativity and materialization produce the effect of the indigenous subject' through 'repeated acts that signify "Indianness"' (ibid: 538-9) such as consuming certain food, wearing certain clothing and even walking in a particular way. As indigenous people

increasingly acquire rights, privileges and benefits, both from the Ecuadorian government and the international community, it can be assumed that non-indigenous Ecuadorians will become increasingly concerned with what constitutes a 'real' *indio*. With the increase in indigenous mobilisation and migration to urban areas (discussed in more detail below; see also McSweeney and Jokisch 2007), the influence of *mestizo* perspectives on indigenous identity may become more pervasive.

Indigenous identities in Ecuador are therefore arguably constructed via a 'play of mirrors' (Novaes 1997; see also Taussig 1986) by which indigenous societies transform the different groups they encounter – foreign NGOs, international organisations, indigenous intellectuals, and non-indigenous Ecuadorians, among others – into 'mirrors', distorted in different ways, through which to view themselves and form their own self-image. Yet arguably the most crucial process for the formation of an indigenous person's ethnic identity comes from the lived experience of that ethnic identity: of being Huaorani, Shuar or Quichua on a daily basis, interacting with others that identify themselves as such.[20] Valdivia (2009) has studied the way that dress and behaviour are used as indicators of indigenous identity among the Cofán people of the Ecuadorian Amazon. She notes that although Cofán women list certain food, behaviour and clothing as markers of Cofán identity, they are quick to emphasise that even if a Cofán woman wears high heels or a skirt, 'she will always be Cofán since she will not be able to change her background and experiences growing up as a Cofán' (ibid: 540).

As decades of ethnographic research have demonstrated, the indigenous inhabitants of Latin America represent an incredibly diverse body of practices, beliefs and languages. To

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[20] I will explore the concept of the 'play of mirrors' as it relates to the construction of urban Shuar identity in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

know one indigenous ethnic group is not to know them all – far from it! Nevertheless, the emphasis placed upon indigeneity as the chief – perhaps the only – identity available to native Ecuadorians implies that this globalised indigenous identity can become easily conflated with local ethnic identities, to the point where it threatens to overwhelm the latter. This has already been noted above in the case of the Tukanoans (Jackson 1995) and can be witnessed in much of the ethnographic literature available on Ecuadorian ethnic groups. As has already been observed, bilingual education projects among the Huaorani may actually be interfering with the transmission of Huaorani culture to the next generation. Rival argues that 'cultural transmission is a complex and active process rooted in everyday activity' (Rival 1997:141) and that 'Huaoraniness is fundamentally a way of life' (ibid: 146, emphasis in original). She laments the politically-motivated imposition of a generic 'Indian' identity.

4.4.3 *Indigeneity and* mestizaje *in Ecuador*

While in Africa and Asia the boundary between those who are able to claim indigenous status and those who are not is at the very least somewhat fuzzy, in Latin America it is assumed to be far clearer. 'Indigenous peoples' are those whose ancestors predate the arrival of the European colonisers, who maintain the culture and (ideally) occupy the 'ancestral territory' (Valdivia 2005) of their Pre-Columbian predecessors. If an Ecuadorian is not indigenous, the likelihood is that she is *mestizo*: her ancestry consists of a mixture of white and indigenous heritage. It is therefore impossible to understand what it means to be indigenous in Ecuador without addressing the question of what it means to be *mestizo*. In this section, I will examine the cultural and social construction of *mestizaje* as it relates to the construction of indigenous identities. In particular I will address the question of boundaries

between indigenous and *mestizo* populations: can an indigenous person ever identify as *mestizo* and, if so, is it possible for a *mestizo* to identify as indigenous?

Just as indigeneity is always constructed in relation to that which is not indigenous, *mestizaje* in Latin America has traditionally been defined in opposition, not merely to indigeneity, but to 'a peripheral, marginalized, dehumanized Indian "Other" who is often "disappeared" in the process' (Mallon 1996: 171-2). In Andean nations such as Peru and Ecuador, *mestizaje* originally referred to 'racial' mixing (or 'blending') between male Spanish invaders and Indian women, although the term very quickly came to apply equally to social or cultural '*blanqueamiento*' ('whitening') by which indigenous people adopted the dress and habits of the white elite (Wade 2010). These two meanings were soon conflated (Roitman 2007) in what de la Cadena refers to as a 'conceptual hybridity' (de la Cadena 2005).

While these processes of both biological and cultural *mestizaje* began almost immediately after conquest, it was arguably not until Latin American states declared independence that *mestizaje* developed as an ideology. Those responsible for conceptualising the new Latin American nation-states (in the case of Ecuador, the revolutionary figure Simón Bolívar) felt a strong compulsion to go against the old colonial order (Gros 2000). The reasons for this stemmed for the most part from a desire to define these new states in 'Latin American' terms – to draw a line under the colonial past and start afresh (ibid). Furthermore, the existing model of the liberal nation-state afforded by the West was overwhelmingly white, as the non-white populations of these nations were either small or (in the case of the United States) carefully segregated (Wade 2010). As the populations of the newly independent Latin American nations were largely *mestizo*, a new national ideology needed to be formed.

The *mestizo* thus went from being an ambiguous figure, lying somewhere between Spanish *criollos* and indigenous people, to embodying the 'ideal' Latin American citizen: a blend of the best elements of the European race and the 'biological genius' of the 'pure' indigenous race (Stutzman 1981). *Mestizaje* acquired a new meaning, one that persists to this day: 'the blending of a national social body' (Whitten 2003: 53). This idealisation of *mestizaje* was evident in Ecuador in the years following independence, as can be seen in this extract from the Ecuadorian writer Juan Montalvo's classic text, Siete Tratados:

> '...*de las razas que se van atravesando resultan estos mestizos de elevado entendimiento y fuerte corazon que forman la aristocracia de la America del Sud; ...esta casta cruzada..., provista de buen entendimiento, valor y audacia, se levanta a los primeros peldanos de la graderia social*'.[21] (Montalvo 1882-3, cited in Rosenblat 1954: 81)

In the early twentieth century this idealisation of *mestizaje* picked up pace, as Ecuador and other Latin American nations endeavoured to modernise and develop, socially and economically. History was viewed through a prism that glorified the *mestizo* as the 'true' Ecuadorian. It was argued that the seeds of the modern Ecuadorian nation were sown when the Spanish began to build cities. Yet these cities could not survive and flourish without women – in this case, indigenous women (as, unlike the British and the Dutch, Spanish *conquistadores* did not tend to bring women with them). Thus the processes of urbanisation and miscegenation became intimately entwined, giving birth to the modern Ecuadorian nation (Stutzman 1981).

The modern Ecuadorian, therefore, was *mestizo* and thus urban. This placed him squarely on the beating pulse of national life, the Ecuadorian city. As *mestizaje* was defined

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[21] ("...from the crossing of races result these mestizos of elevated understanding and strong heart that form the aristocracy of South America; ...this hybrid caste..., endowed with great intelligence, valour and courage, raises itself to the highest rungs of the social ladder.") (Montalvo 1882-3, cited in Rosenblat 1954:81; my translation).

in contradistinction to indigeneity, the *indígena* was necessarily rural, peripheral and backward, taking no part in national life (Stutzman ibid). The indigenous cultural heritage, though glorified as also being that of the *mestizo* nation, was deemed primitive and thus inferior to modern *mestizo* culture. Indigeneity was the past, *mestizaje* the future. It seemed inevitable that what was left of the indigenous population would eventually be 'blended', socially, culturally and biologically, into the modern *mestizo* nation-state. Indeed, this was seen as necessary in order for the nation-state to progress (Gros 2000).

Policies that encouraged *blanqueamiento* of indigenous peoples, at least in the social and cultural sense, were actively pursued in Ecuador for much of the twentieth century (Wade 2003). Even the so-called *indigenista* movement, while celebrating indigenous culture, sought to incorporate and assimilate indigenous people into the dominant *mestizo* national culture (Roitman 2007). The assumption inherent in this approach was that indigenous people could become *mestizo* by abandoning the markers of their 'primitive', *indio* culture and taking on those of the modern *mestizo*. Indeed, the 'backwardness' of indigenous people was believed to be inevitable, as to acquire any sort of formal education was to become, automatically as it were, *mestizo* (Clark 1998: 203). In a near-perfect example of the 'conceptual hybridity' discussed above, what was once considered an indigenous 'race' came to be treated instead as an ethnic identity that one could shed merely by changing one's clothes and language.

What does it mean to be indigenous in Ecuador? For the *mestizo* of twenty or thirty years ago, it meant backwardness, marginality, illiteracy, inability to speak the national language, unwillingness to participate in national culture. It was arguably unthinkable for a *mestizo* to identify as indigenous, whether or not this was considered possible, as to do so

would be to descend several rungs of the social ladder, to burden oneself with unnecessary social stigma. Yet for an indigenous person, abandoning 'Indian' culture in favour of *mestizaje* was deemed not only possible but highly desirable. Indeed, it was believed to be an inevitable outcome of education, learning Spanish or migration to urban areas. Such attitudes can also be seen on the part of Peruvian *mestizos*, as the writer Mario Vargas Llosa demonstrates:

> Indian peasants live in such a primitive way that communication is practically impossible. It is only when they move to cities that they have the opportunity to mingle with the other Peru. The price they must pay for integration is high – renunciation of their culture, their language, their beliefs, their traditions, and customs, and the adoption of the culture of their ancient masters. After one generation they become mestizos. They are no longer Indians.
>
> Vargas Llosa 1990 (cited in de la Cadena 2000:1)

4.5 Rural-urban migration and urbanisation in the Ecuadorian Amazon

4.5.1 Migration and identity

> 'Identity is formed on the move'. (Chambers 1993)

Migration is the 'quintissential experience' of the age (Berger 1992). As such it initially presented considerable challenges for anthropologists, concerned as they were with conceptualising societies as bounded, static and self-sufficient (Rapport and Dawson 1998). Furthermore, from the late twentieth century onwards, a new, 'turbulent' pattern of migration began to emerge that deviated from the unidirectional, linear trajectories of past migrants (Papastergiadis 2000). Whereas anthropologists historically tended to close their eyes to the realities of migration, globalisation and transnationalism, revolutions in communications technology prompted a conceptual shift towards a view of cultural worlds that are not

spatially or temporally bounded (Rapport and Dawson ibid). Hannerz, for example, has found ample material to contemplate in the new diversity of interrelations that has developed as a result of migration. He has demonstrated that people now draw on a wide range of cultural resources in order to secure their own identities (Hannerz 1980).

Approaches to migration and identity in the social sciences have generally been linked to ideas about social landscape. Until the early 1980s, most scholars adopted a bipolar framework, whereby the places between which migrants moved were 'fundamentally distinct' and the trajectories that they took could only be circular (moving temporarily in order to return) or linear (permanent migration). As identity was still often conceptualised as unified and localised, the assumption was that circular migrants would maintain their original identities, whereas linear migrants would adopt new identities via acculturation into their new environment (Rouse 1995). These theories were eventually overshadowed by studies that drew attention to the emergence of social spaces that transcend the logic of bipolarism, including migrants that maintained lives in both their host and sending communities, creating transnational, multilocal households. These phenomena have variously been categorised in the literature as 'transnational socio-cultural systems' (Sutton and Chaney 1987) which 'link settlements abroad to the source country as a whole' (Rouse 1995: 354) and 'transnational communities' (Kearney and Nagengast 1989) or 'migrant circuits' (Rouse 1989) that link particular villages, towns and counties to the various outposts that their inhabitants establish in the United States (Rouse 1995). This paradigmatic shift led to a reconsideration of identity in the context of migration. 'Localised', unified identities were abandoned in favour of 'multiple identities' that blended flavours from both cultures (Nagengast and Kearney 1990).

4.5.2 Rural-urban migration and urbanisation

It is impossible, or at the very least unwise, to talk of 'rural-urban migration' or 'urbanisation' without problematising the controversial distinction drawn between 'rural' and 'urban'. Earlier sociological and anthropological works often took these to be distinct phenomena that stood opposed to each other in every way: the 'rural' embodied everything that was traditional or 'folk', the urban was its binary opposite (Redfield 1941). These 'categories of colonialism' (Thomas 2002) were bequeathed to development theorists who associated the 'rural' with tradition and backwardness, the 'urban' with modernity and progress (ibid). Lipton went so far as to insist that there were no linkages whatsoever between the city and the countryside beyond what he called an 'urban bias', a hierarchical relationship between rural and urban 'classes' allowing the latter to exploit the former (Lipton 1977).

Yet as Unwin observes, even the evidence proffered by Lipton to support this claim demonstrates that the divide is by no means clear-cut. The existence, for example, of a 'rural elite' that ingratiates itself with the urban class at the expense of other rural dwellers points to far greater variability within the rural population than Lipton's simplistic rural/urban, poor/ rich dichotomy would suggest (Unwin 1989). While Unwin is equally critical of this and other development treatises 'devoted to the analysis of rural and urban "development" as separate issues' (ibid: 11), he acknowledges that such texts often unwittingly reveal the interaction between the urban and the rural, what Gould characterises as the two-way flow of people, goods, money, technology, information and ideas (Gould 1985). They also enable us to appreciate the diversity of factors – economic, political, social and ideological – that influence these flows (Rondinelli 1983).

Thomas's (2002) study of post-colonial moral geographies in Madagascar draws conclusions that could equally apply to indigenous rural-urban migration in Latin America. He observes that moral and ethical judgments about the differences between 'Malagasy' and 'foreign' are mapped onto perceived spatial or geographical differences. Rural dwellers in the Manambondro region of Madagascar draw distinctions between the 'foreign', 'developed' urban areas and their own more 'traditional customs'. Yet while urban areas are often viewed in a negative light as a place where migrants are likely to become selfish and lazy like foreigners, this sentiment is tinged with a sense of desire and envy (ibid). Such ambiguity is particularly troubling for urban migrants, who struggle to maintain roots in their rural community for fear of being 'lost'. Migrants invariably return to their village for important life-cycle events, such as weddings, the birth of their first child, and funerals. Yet the oft-invoked metaphor of 'roots' in a place implies that these can be cut should the migrant fail to maintain close ties with his or her kin (ibid).

Thomas's work also reveals the potential that analysis of the rural/urban dynamic can have for drawing attention to the ambiguity of such categories as 'centre' and 'periphery'. These categories are closely related to the rural/urban dichotomy and have been problematised elsewhere (Appadurai 1996). Nevertheless, while critics such as Appadurai call for such seemingly artificial terms to be discarded, Rubenstein disagrees. He argues that the distinction is real for those that consider themselves either to be at the core or periphery of global culture, and can as a result be useful to anthropologists (Rubenstein 2009). This is certainly the case for Thomas's informants. While residents in the Manambondro region feel 'centred' in their rural community, this feeling contrasts with their sense of being 'peripheral' to urban areas.

The blurring of the rural/urban divide is not limited to Africa. In Amazonia, urbanisation has resulted in changes in the rural landscape, dramatically altering the social and economic contexts that define how rural producers use land (Browder 2002). The relationships between rural and urban areas have also become more complex: rural properties are increasingly being purchased by urban dwellers, suggesting that rural property and land ownership are becoming part of urban household strategies (ibid). Likewise, researchers in Brazil have drawn attention to complications that arise as a result of land-use policies that 'accept as given a dichotomous divide between the urban and the rural' (Simmons, Sorrensen et al. 2002). They argue that land struggle in Amazonia cannot be understood without recognition of the interaction between cities and rural areas (ibid).

Much of the literature on rural-urban migration and urbanisation points out that the anthropologist's traditional focus is on small, isolated rural communities (Canclini 1997). The study of urban migrants effectively amounts to a departure from this tradition (Low 1996). One could legitimately inquire whether anthropologists have a place in urban research (historically dominated by sociology), or whether such research will be of any assistance to the anthropological endeavour. The answer to this may be found in the blurring of the rural/ urban dichotomy. As Geschiere and Gugler observe, life in cities cannot be understood 'without reference to the continuing involvement of urban residents with their rural area of origin. Nor is it possible to understand village life without due attention to the role of the "sons" – and "daughters" – in the city' (ibid: 309). Therefore not only can anthropologists bring their wealth of knowledge about rural life to the urban table, their more traditional inquiries will also benefit from engagement with urban research.

4.5.3 Amazonian indigenous rural-urban migration and urbanisation

Indigenous rural-urban migration is nothing new. Myriad examples of urban indigenous populations exist worldwide, ranging from Maori to Inuit (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Clifford even speaks of an 'indigenous diaspora' – seemingly a contradiction in terms – in countries such as Canada and New Zealand. In Latin America, indigenous peoples have historically played a significant role in rural-urban and international migration trends (see e.g. Napolitano 2002, Kyle 2000). However, these indigenous migrants have tended to originate from highland communities – the Otavaleños of the northern Ecuadorian Andes, for example, regularly travel to Europe and the United States in order to trade textiles and other products. Lowland indigenous peoples, on the other hand, were historically conspicuous by their absence from the rural-urban migration flows that have characterised much of the last century's demographic change in Latin America (but see Chernela 2014 for an overview of longer-term indigenous urbanisation in Brazil).

Nevertheless, in recent years anthropologists, demographers and human geographers have drawn attention to increasingly marked patterns of rural-urban migration on the part of lowland indigenous groups. Although the Amazon region is still considered by many to be 'a place inhabited by forest peoples' (Peluso and Alexiades 2005: 1), it is now estimated that the majority of Amazonian residents live in urban or peri-urban areas (ibid, Browder and Godfrey 1997). In Brazil, the proportion of Amazonian city-dwellers may be as high as seventy per cent (Pinedo-Vasquez and Padoch 2009). Indigenous migrants have formed an important part of this trend, in some cases constituting the majority of residents within these 'rainforest cities', as is arguably the case in Mitú, Colombia (Pena Marquez 2008). Furthermore, a small but growing number of migrants are beginning to travel further afield,

leaving the familiar territory of the rainforest for larger metropolises, including in some cases such far-flung locations as New York and Madrid (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). While census data is difficult to analyse and compare accurately (due in no small part to problems in defining both 'indigenous' and 'urban'), nonetheless a clear pattern of indigenous rural-urban migration and urbanisation has emerged across the Amazon region. Ecuador, as is often the case, appears to be leading this latest indigenous trend. A recent census found that more than seven hundred people identifying as Shuar were living in urban areas (McSweeney and Jokisch ibid).

Several factors have been suggested as motivating lowland indigenous peoples to migrate. Services that are only available in urban areas, such as education, have drawn many young people away from their villages (Peluso and Alexiades 2005; McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Access to a 'better' level of education than is available in rural areas is seen as particularly desirable, as Espinosa (2012) observes among Amazonian peoples in Peru, and Virtanen (2007, 2010) reports among Brazilian indigenous migrants. Moreover, Virtanen observes that for young indigenous students, rural-urban migration is often seen as a sort of rite of passage, one that enables them to transform into 'real people' with mastery of the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the 'contemporary world' (Virtanen 2010: 160).

The rise of so-called 'eco-tourism' has also been cited as a factor. Indigenous groups increasingly trade on their image as 'guardians of the forest' (Conklin 1997) as a means of attracting visitors and earning money. As a result they become a part of the environmental services industry and are integrated to a greater or lesser extent into the market economy. These new roles and the opportunities they present often prompt displacement to urban areas (Peluso and Alexiades ibid). A further crucial factor that has recently been highlighted is the

unprecedented rise in fertility levels among indigenous Amazonian groups. In contrast to declining birth rates across Latin America as a whole, lowland indigenous women can expect as many as eight live births over the course of their lifetime (McSweeney and Arps 2005). This has resulted in a young, rapidly growing population that often exceeds the capacity of the indigenous community for resources and employment, leading many young indigenous people to seek opportunities elsewhere. The rapid rise in the number of dependent children has also forced many to resort to migration in order to support their families (ibid).

In her introduction to the special issue *Circulating between Rural and Urban Communities: Multi-sited dwellings in Amazonian frontiers* (2014) Peluso outlines some of the most common motivations for indigenous urbanisation among the Ese Eja of Peru and Bolivia: temporary and semi-permanent labour opportunities, access to [secondary school] education, extension of [kinship] networks through marriage, political leadership posts in indigenous federations or regional governments, internal conflicts within indigenous communities, dispossession of land, and – crucially – a desire to participate in urban life. The latter is often played down or disregarded by theorists, yet, as Peluso observes, 'urbanisation begins with new ideas and images, whose power lies in their ability to evoke new kinds of desire – not just material desires but the desire for different lifestyles and identities' (ibid: 6). In this statement lies an echo of Appadurai's observations about indigenous access to 'global flows' of things, people and ideas, leading to new aspirations on the part of 'ordinary people' (1996).

The contributors to Alexiades's edited volume *Mobility and Migration in Indigenous Amazonia* (2009) also cite a variety of factors contributing to increased urbanisation in the region, including trends such as 'de-agrarianisation', dependency upon services provided by

the state (and increased presence of 'state agents' in the region), the 'power of the media', and 'a new set of aesthetics and values, including such notions as "recreation"' (ibid: 18). These last two are particularly interesting, in that they imply changing worldviews and broadened aspirations on the part of rural-urban migrants.

Chernela (2014) observes that indigenous urbanisation has been taking place in the Brazilian Amazon since at least the 1960s, when Salesian missionaries effectively trafficked young Tukanoan girls to the rainforest city of Manaus, where they were little more than slaves in the households of wealthy Brazilians. Urbanisation trends continued even after the abolition of these practices in the 1980s, with young Tukanoan women taking advantage of the increasing demand for domestic servants and stricter enforcement of their rights. On the other hand, Pirjo Virtanen (2007, 2010), who has conducted research among indigenous urban youths in Brazil, found that migration to urban areas formed something of a rite of passage for Cashinawa, Apurina and Manchineri youths, who mainly migrated in order to pursue their studies.

Furthermore, it could be argued that indigenous rural-urban migration is nothing new. Alexiades *et al* (2009) demonstrate that, contrary to many anthropological (and other) accounts that tend to emphasise the physical stasis of indigenous peoples, Amazonia has historically been characterised by high levels of nomadism, dislocation and mobility (ibid; Little 2001) and urbanisation can be understood as merely a continuation of this trend (Alexiades *et al* ibid).

4.5.4 Amazonian rural-urban migration and indigenous identity

What is the significance of this new wave of rural-urban migration for notions of indigenous identity? It has been demonstrated that migration can often lead to a renegotiation of identity

with considerable personal and political consequences (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Migration brings populations of different backgrounds together and thus creates boundaries. If we accept the view that ethnicity is sometimes used as a strategic response to certain situations (Durham 1989), migration can therefore result in the strengthening, reinterpretation and even reinvention of ethnic identities. Cultural traditions, for example, are often given far greater emphasis among diasporic communities than in their place of origin (Hesse 2001).

It seems (at face value at least) overwhelmingly contradictory that a new wave of indigenous rural-urban migration has coincided with the rise of the indigenous rights movement, one of whose most persistent demands is the right to own and occupy indigenous 'ancestral territory' (Valdivia 2005). As has been discussed in the previous section, an identity rooted in territory has traditionally been viewed as a fundamental tenet of indigeneity. Indigenous groups in South America and beyond have made considerable territorial gains on the basis of their relationship to and (cultural as well as physical) dependence upon the land in question. Rural-urban migration can theoretically be seen as a denial of the territorial 'rootedness' of indigenous identity, and thus calls into question the 'indigenousness' of the migrant. Certainly this has been the case in other parts of the world: in Australia, claims to aboriginal status are far more likely to succeed if made by locally situated claimants than if made by urban residents, whether the latter migrated voluntarily or (as is often the case) were forcefully displaced (Clifford 2007).

If indigeneity necessarily involves ties to land, and migration displacement from that land, should the two be understood as mutually exclusive? Conservationists may well think so, and this could hamper the support that indigenous communities receive from NGOs and environmentalist lobby groups. Mobility implies abandonment of the 'forest guardian' role

and adoption of a modern (and therefore inherently un-ecological) way of life (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). As Peluso (2014) observes,

> 'The increased linking of traditionally rural dwellers with urban spaces has occurred at the same time as indigenous people have achieved greater political prominence and succeeded in securing historically unprecedented land rights over traditionally occupied lands. As such, there is much at stake in recognizing that urbanity is among many commonplace lifestyles for indigenous peoples.' (Peluso 2014: 3)

The old dichotomies rear their heads: to be indigenous is to be rural, traditional and territorially-bounded; therefore migration to cities – the antithesis of indigenous lands – must necessarily involve incorporation into the modern world, and thus abandonment of one's indigenous status.

However, Clifford argues that indigeneity and diaspora should not be considered incompatible. Rather, they should be taken as two poles, between which the bulk of indigenous experience lies. Indigenous histories have always involved movement and mobility (Clifford 2007), and those of lowland South America are no exception: trade and interactions with missionaries, for example, create specifically indigenous forms of cosmopolitanism (ibid).

What are the implications of migration for indigenous identity formation? The effect of the 'play of mirrors' (Novaes 1997) upon indigenous identity has already been discussed; it is clear that different outsider perceptions of indigenous people, whether 'positive' or 'negative', affect their self-image and thus influence the way they construct their identity as an indigenous person. Migration, whether internal or international, has the potential to multiply and intensify indigenous-outsider interactions. Research into indigenous Amazonian migration, in Ecuador and elsewhere, has already demonstrated the profound effect that even

small-scale regional migration can have on the way that indigenous people perceive themselves and are perceived by others.

To begin with the political level, while migration and urbanisation may delegitimize claims for indigenous rights and status in the eyes of many, it also has the potential to influence the indigenous movement in other ways. Studies have suggested that the most 'acculturated' *indígenas* tend to be more politically active and hostile to *mestizo* culture (Beck and Mijeski 2000). Furthermore, the groundwork for indigenous activism is increasingly taking place in urban areas, as indigenous intellectuals take the opportunity to meet, organise and exchange ideas (Virtanen 2007). Intriguingly, political activism is arguably one of the causes of indigenous migration, as members of the indigenous political elite are invited to talks and events across the globe, becoming members of the 'global cocktail circuit' (Friedman 1999). The institutions that invite indigenous leaders to take part in these events often facilitate the mobility of the latter by obtaining visas, paying for flights and providing other necessary services (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007).

One particular concern of indigenous elders is that urbanisation and migration will expose young indigenous women to the dangers of the 'modern' world, such as promiscuity and prostitution (McSweeney and Jokisch ibid). There is evidence to suggest that this may indeed become an issue for female migrants and their families. Muratorio investigated the effects of migration by young indigenous women to Tena, an urban area in the Oriente. She observed that this small Amazonian town was fast becoming 'a contested space of emergent identities where local and global cultural practices intersect' (Muratorio 1998). The young migrants, who came from an isolated rural area, were being exposed to Ecuadorian and foreign influences that they had never previously encountered; as a result, they were re-

evaluating and reconstructing their identities as indigenous women. One aspect of their identity that had become highly contested was their sexuality: far from the reaches of their elders and from the constraints of the kin groups, and with new role models both on television and in the streets, the women have begun to overturn and resist previously strict practices: 'they are involved in a complex process of identity formation where old and new models of femininity and modernity are partially resisted, incorporated, or discarded' (ibid: 411).

Valdivia has studied the 'internal traumas of identity' that can result from the 'straddling of worlds' entailed by migration (Valdivia 2009). Such experiences are particularly poignant for young people (ibid), from whose numbers, if we are to believe the statistics, the vast majority of migrants derive (McSweeney and Jokisch 2007). Young indigenous migrants are introduced to 'new ways of interacting, new habits and new experiences, as well as discourses about cultural identity that contrast modernity with local ways of knowing' (Valdivia ibid: 544). They are constantly required to re-evaluate their self and group identity as indigenous people in the light of conflicting, often negative views of indigeneity. As Collorado-Mansfeld (1998) and Valdivia (ibid) have observed, racism towards indigenous people is still highly pervasive among white-mestizo Ecuadorians. While Andean indigenous society has occupied the bottom rung of the social ladder for a long time, for some Amazonian indigenous groups the negative, dismissive view of indigenous culture on the part of many white-mestizo people may come as something of a shock.

Analysis of migration by lowland indigenous peoples may also allow anthropologists to reconsider the problematic divide between 'rural' and urban'. The work of Pinedo-Vasquez and Padoch among rural-urban indigenous migrants in Peru and Brazil revealed that most

migrant households maintained at least two homes, one in the city and another in their village of origin (Pinedo-Vasquez and Padoch 2009). Some families even established a third, peri-urban site, from which essential resources such as fruits and vegetables could be provided to urban-based relatives. Furthermore, movements between the different locations are often seasonal, based on working patterns or school schedules. Some migrants stay only temporarily in the city, returning to the village as soon as they are able; others live permanently or semi-permanently in urban areas. Pinedo Vasquez and Padoch concluded that 'apparently discrete rural and urban categories have actually always been, and remain today, indistinct and inextricably linked in numerous ways' (2009: 89).

The role of social networks is also an intriguing element of indigenous rural-urban migration. Indigenous migrants can travel directly from Amazonia to Madrid, without ever having participated in more local rural-urban migration, as a result of well-established migrant networks that facilitate indigenous peoples' mobility (McSweeney and Jokisch ibid). Pinedo Vasquez and Padoch also identified urban-based organisations in Peru that assisted migrants not only in accessing services but also in contacting other, better-established migrants who can provide advice and support (ibid). Furthermore, Fienup-Riordan drew the conclusion that the urban-based Yup'it of Alaska, far from being isolated from their community, are actually extensions of their homeland. They are part of an open-ended social network that sustains connections to land and kin (in Clifford 2007). The simplistic rural-urban divide is also challenged by what is occurring in the space between origin and destination. Merlan has examined the phenomenon of intermediate stopping places along the Aboriginal migration routes between the 'bush' and the city. 'Mobs' have clustered in peri-urban areas and at cattle stations, from which expeditions return to the Aboriginal territory in order to gather food or sing at sacred sites (Merlan 2007).

5. Shuar Urban Ethnicity

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The old lady in the forest

One afternoon, Lorena set out into the forest to look for termites for her chickens, and didn't come back. As the light began to fade I started to worry. Lorena had a tendency to disappear for hours at a time, especially when she couldn't find any termite nests in the woods near to Sucúa and had to travel further afield. But it was Wednesday, and she would normally be home by at least 5pm in order to dress for church.

As dusk closed in, I heard a taxi pull up outside. Lorena jumped down from the back seat and turned round to retrieve a truly monumental pile of groceries. I peered into the bags as she set them down on the table: there was fresh chicken, rice, pasta, a variety of herbs and several tins of tuna – a veritable feast.

'I found Doña María,' she said, by way of explanation.

'Doña who?'

'A little old lady. We know her. I found her house in the woods [*en el bosque*] – I didn't know she was living out there alone. Her niece helps her, but she doesn't have money. The poor *señora* is starving, she has nothing to eat! So,' she concluded, indicating the feast, 'I bought her some things, to help.'

I was impressed. Lorena was normally extremely strict about expenses. She knew instantly, for example, when the price of peas went up in the market, and restricted her intake accordingly. Yet here she was, buying enough food to feed a family for a month, all for an old woman she had found in the forest.

'Is she a relation of yours?' I asked.

'Of course not. *Pero los paisanos nos ayudamos.*'

*5.1.2 '*Los paisanos nos ayudamos*': ethnicity in action*

'*Los paisanos*', a term for 'people from my country or region'[22] was a word I often heard my Shuar friends use when referring to other Shuar. Indeed, it was relatively rare that they would use the word 'Shuar' at all, except when making general statements about Shuar 'customs' or 'culture'. If a Shuar person was not a nameable relative – not a *cuñado* (brother-in-law), or an *abuela* (grandmother), or a *primo* (cousin – and most people had plenty of these), for example – she or he was a *paisano,* a fellow citizen.

Lorena packed up her stock of foodstuffs and took it to Doña María the following morning. Over the next few weeks she kept a close eye on her, dropping in whenever she went out in search of termites, ants' nests or other forest bounty. I began to notice that the case of Doña María was far from unique. Lorena had a habit of meeting elderly, disoriented Shuar men and women in the city centre – in banks, shops and markets. She returned home with stories of how she had translated requests for them, helped them to get a taxi back to their *centros*, or simply invited them for a cup of manioc beer. I noticed that women sometimes turned up at the gate asking for loans of one or two dollars, to buy phone credit or vegetables. Once, when Lorena happened to be out, I gave a dollar to an elderly female visitor, expecting never to see it again. The next day I came home from class to find that the lady had already returned the money.

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[22] *Paisano* is a term that is used by indigenous people across Latin America by indigenous people to refer to each other (Peluso 2013). Although it translates literally into English as 'citizen', Shuar in Sucúa use it almost exclusively to refer to fellow Shuar. Achuar, for example, would not necessarily be *paisanos*, and neither would highland Quichua who have migrated to Sucúa.

Lorena would wash and cut the hair of Shuar women who seemed to have wandered in from the street. She fed them and lent them money and clothes, even though her own household budget was usually very tight. I began to look upon her as a kind of Mother Theresa figure, until I realised that her behaviour was by no means unusual. *Los paisanos nos ayudamos* – 'we Shuar help each other' – seemed to be a commonly held principle. My other Shuar friends also had a steady influx of visitors, whether elderly *paisanos* in urgent need of assistance, or *paisano* neighbours asking for a favour. Many of these were relatives, however distant, but by no means all were. When a two-year-old Shuar boy disappeared from the market one evening, the entire Shuar community of the Artesanos neighbourhood set out to look for him, and did not rest until he had been safely returned to his family (having walked fifteen blocks by himself in the meantime).

I was reminded, as I considered this, of J. Clyde Mitchell's fieldwork among urban migrants on the Copperbelt in present-day Zambia (1956). Although he expected 'tribalism' (as he called it) to become less relevant in the melting pot of urban Africa, he soon realised that ethnic groups formed a kind of surrogate kinship network for migrants. One could usually rely on one's fellow tribesman for food, shelter or assistance in finding a job, obligations that would otherwise have fallen to family members.

The same was true in Sucúa. When Lorena's daughter, Gabriela, graduated from the prestigious San Francisco University in Quito, Lorena set about trying to find a job for her. She contacted the Prefect of Morona Santiago, Marcelino Chumpi, and asked if he could take Gabriela on as part of his political team. Chumpi was a Shuar politician and although he wasn't a relative, Lorena assumed that he would help her family. *Los paisanos nos ayudamos*.

When Chumpi dithered, played for time and eventually admitted that there was nothing he could do, she was furious.

'Of course he should help her, he's Shuar!' she proclaimed angrily. 'If we don't help each other, how will we move forwards [*avanzar*]?'

Seen from this perspective, *los paisanos nos ayudamos* is in many ways similar to a principle, common in Ecuador, known as *palanca*, or 'leverage': essentially a form of corruption common in *mestizo* circles, in which people with the right connections rise quickly up the career ladder, while others – particularly indigenous people – are often disenfranchised and sidelined, regardless of their education or qualifications (see Miles 2000). Yet *palanca* tends to apply only to certain elite groups or families, in much the same way that kin groups support each other. *Los paisanos nos ayudamos* on the other hand appears to be, at least for urban residents, a pan-Shuar phenomenon: if you are Shuar, live in an urban area, and are in genuine need of something, you expect your fellow Shuar to help you. Janet Chernela witnessed a similar phenomenon among Tukanoan woman who migrated to Manaus, Brazil, in the 1960s and 70s. She discovered that, far from urban individualism replacing rural communitarian philosophies, 'new collectivities supplement traditional ones without dismantling earlier ties' (Chernela 2014: 6). Transported from their mission boarding schools to work as maids in the city, the women in Chernela's study overcame marginalisation and a lack of resources by forming their own civil society organisation.

I have drawn upon this particular example in order to demonstrate one of the ways that 'ethnicity' is relevant to Shuar in multi-ethnic urban areas – more relevant, I would argue, than in comparatively mono-ethnic rural communities. In this section I will explore the influence of urban living upon Shuar people's awareness, understanding and appreciation of

their ethnic identity. I will argue, following Barth (1969) and A. Cohen (1974), that far from undermining ethnic identity, the experience of living in a multi-ethnic environment not only increases a person's awareness of that identity, but also often increases their willingness to identify with their ethnic group (see Espinosa 2012). This is the case even – one might say especially – when putative elements of ethnic identity such as behaviour, language and economic activity converge with the cultural norms pertaining to other ethnic groups living in the same area.

As I have outlined elsewhere in this thesis (Chapter 4) I consider both 'Shuar' and 'indigenous' to constitute potential 'ethnic' identities, in that each is treated effectively as an ethnic category both by those who consider themselves to fall within that category and by those who label others as belonging to such categories (see Wade 2010). As Eriksen observes (2010), external, overarching ascriptive categories are often absorbed into a person's internal self-identification, as was the case with the internally diverse and heterogeneous Caribbean immigrant population in the United Kingdom, which came collectively to be known, and eventually to describe themselves, as 'West Indian'.

For my Shuar friends living in Sucúa, the categories 'Shuar' and 'indigenous' overlapped significantly and often (though by no means always) functioned virtually as a single category. This was due on the one hand to the legacy of colonialism, in that relations between Shuar and *mestizos* (via which urban Shuar have to a certain extent come to understand and define their ethnic identity) tended to follow similar patterns to those established between highland indigenous and *mestizo* Ecuadorians over the course of the last five centuries. On the other hand, Shuar have participated in the pan-Ecuadorian (and, one could say, pan-Latin American) indigenous rights movement virtually since its inception in

the 1960s. Urban Shuar in particular have therefore become used to seeing themselves as members of the broader social and political category 'indigenous', which, like an ethnic group, is considered to have its own 'culture' and 'customs' (such as hunting, and drinking manioc beer) which are different from those of *mestizos* or gringos. In this chapter I will therefore attempt to understand the ethnic identity of urban Shuar residents both as Shuar and as indigenous. This argument will be further developed in Chapter 6, when I will look more closely at what it means to be 'indigenous' in places like Sucúa.

Drawing on the literature discussed above, I will explore how ethnicity is experienced and performed in everyday situations and how these daily, seemingly insignificant encounters accumulate to form invisible ethnic boundaries that are nonetheless perceived and recognised by both Shuar and non-Shuar alike. Using a series of ethnographic vignettes as a basis for my discussion, I will demonstrate how ethnicity plays an important role in social relations and social organisation in rainforest cities such as Sucúa – more so, I argue, than in comparatively monoethnic rural communities such as Taant. I will begin with what is a familiar topic in indigenous/non indigenous relations, that of racism and ethnic hierarchy.

5.2 'She can be your guarantor'

5.2.1 The saga of the gas cooker

The gas cooker had been acting strangely for some time.

It had always been highly strung. Occasionally, hobs would spark to life as soon as they were bid, and in these moments you knew that the cooker was having one of its better days. Usually, however, its mood would range from stubborn to outright capricious. Any one of the six hobs could choose to take an extended leave of absence, without notice, and then

suddenly spring to life again just as its neighbouring hob threw in the towel. Lorena knew that she could only count on a maximum of three valid hobs at any one time, which made planning and cooking meals something of a logistical challenge.

Recently, however, we had begun to notice more serious problems. When I heated water for my daily cup of tea, the hob that I generally used would flare up melodramatically with a bright blue flame that nearly set fire to my eyebrows. I pointed this out to Lorena, and she acknowledged that she had noticed the same problem. What was worse, she had discovered that the hobs 'made a hissing sound' and 'smelt of gas' even when they were switched off.

'Do you think it's dangerous?' she asked. I replied that although gas cookers were beyond my usual area of expertise, leaping flames and leaking gas in a wooden house didn't strike me as being particularly safe. Lorena agreed. She looked at the gas cooker sadly.

'My children bought it for me. Oh well, I shall just have to get a new one. I'll call my husband in America and ask him to send money.'

She returned from the living room a few minutes later with a smile on her face.

'I asked Luis to send me $250 for a new cooker, and he agreed,' she announced with some satisfaction.

'Will it really cost that much?' I asked, astounded.

'Probably not,' she replied, 'but *he* doesn't know that. The money should arrive in my account by the end of the day. Shall we go and have a look at the cookers?'

We walked into the centre of town and found the street where the electro-domestic vendors had set up their shops. These were spacious, bright, modern and rather intimidating. Rows of ovens, fridges and monumental American-style washing machines paraded in long, self-important lines, punctuated by the occasional swollen Honda motorcycle. Pale youths with dyed-caramel locks and American jeans patrolled the aisles; they eyed us with a mixture of curiosity and suspicion as we entered.

'There!' said Lorena. 'What about that one?' She had stopped in front of a tall, silver-blue oven with four hobs. It was quite a step up from the old six-hob cooker, which sat not on top of an oven but on a (rather wobbly) wooden table. We looked at the price tag: $195. Lorena smiled.

'Let's buy it now,' she said. 'I have $50; I can bring the rest of the money tomorrow.'

'Will they let you do that?' I asked.

'Of course! That's how things are done in these places.' She beckoned to the nearest caramel-tinted youth. '*¡Joven!* I'd like to buy this oven, please.'

The young man approached hesitantly.

'Are you sure you want *this* oven, *señora*?' he asked.

'I'm sure. Now, will you accept $50 as a deposit, and I'll bring you the rest of the money tomorrow?' The young man looked at the cash in her outstretched hand.

'I'm afraid we can't do that, *señora*. You need a guarantor.'

Lorena looked shocked and confused.

'But nobody ever asks me for a guarantor. Everybody in Sucúa knows me! In the other shops they've never wanted a guarantor. *Mira,*' she said, returning the cash to her handbag, 'my son works for the town council. Alvaro Saant? You must have heard of him. So you see, we're trustworthy people [*somos gente de confianza*]. My husband is sending me the money from the United States, but it won't arrive until this afternoon. I assure you that I'll pay as soon as possible – but I need this oven now. I have to cook lunch!'

'I'm sorry, *señora,*' the youth replied, coldly. 'Those are the rules.' He turned and gestured towards me. 'Perhaps *she* can act as your guarantor?'

'*She* is not even Ecuadorian. She doesn't live here; she's just here for her studies. Please, *joven*, can I speak to the owner of the shop?'

'He's not here, and anyway, he would tell you the same.'

Lorena looked angry and affronted, but mostly frustrated. I took her aside.

'Lorena,' I asked, 'what if I were to pay you the next two months' rent in advance?'

Lorena considered this proposition.

'Can you afford it?'

'I think so. Yes.'

'In that case, I'll buy the oven now. Thank you,' she added, with a curt nod.

The cash-machine was just around the corner; within a few minutes the caramel-haired *joven* had reluctantly surrendered our silver-blue oven and we had co-opted a taxi to take us back to the house.

5.2.2 Ethnic difference in Sucúa

One word springs to mind when I think of Lorena: pride. I do not mean this in a negative sense – quite the contrary. One the one hand, Lorena is a dignified woman. She takes pride in her appearance: on church nights her make-up is always flawless, and she chooses her clothes with care. She loves to shop for new dresses, although she considers any item over two dollars to be an inexcusable luxury. This is because she also takes pride in her household management skills: her house is always clean, tidy and run on a very precise budget. Her son Alvaro never wants for freshly-laundered clothes or cooked meat; the dogs always get their dog food, and the chickens their *balanciado* [non-organic chicken feed].

On the other hand, Lorena is extremely proud of her family. Her husband has managed to earn a comfortable living working in restaurants in the United States, despite his illegal status and poor understanding of the English language. This means that three of the four Saant children have benefitted from the opportunity to go to university. Alvaro, the eldest son, was at the time of my fieldwork the only Shuar employed by the local town council in a professional role.[23] His brother Roberto studied computer science and is now working for an IT consultancy in Quito. And Gabriela graduated from Ecuador's most prestigious university, where she studied with a scholarship.

Lorena grew up in a Salesian boarding school, where according to her own account she was mistreated, forced to work hard and deprived of all but the most basic necessities. Now she lives in her own house, in a pleasant area of Sucúa, and never has trouble satisfying her (admittedly frugal) needs. Furthermore, her eldest son is an important and highly visible member of the church and of the community. The above incident, therefore, is telling for

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[23] He has since taken on a more prestigious role with the city council in the provincial capital of Macas.

several reasons. Lorena did not expect to have problems buying a cooker: her standing in the community, as well as the experiences of her [*mestizo*] neighbours, told her that she ought to be able to buy a cooker on credit without the need for a guarantor. I made enquiries and found out that it is indeed general practice in Sucúa to sell expensive items such as white goods and electro-domestic appliances to locally known residents who offer only a deposit, on the expectation that they will pay the remainder of the price promptly. Yet this option was not open to Lorena – not, that is, unless I was willing to act as a guarantor.

Here any pretence that the young man's reticence was anything other than ethnically motivated fell apart. Those who knew me in Sucúa were aware that I was a foreign student, whose tenuous presence in the country depended entirely upon the benevolence of the Ministry of Foreign Relations in Quito. Those who didn't assumed as much – or, to put it another way, I have never been mistaken for a local. And yet the very fact that I was a foreigner made me, in the eyes of the *mestizo* shop assistant, a more trustworthy customer than Lorena, an indigenous woman, despite the latter's standing in the local community.

Ethnic hierarchies are often the most noticeable aspects of interethnic relations, although ethnic differences can and do exist without such hierarchies being necessary or inevitable. Traditionally in Ecuador, indigenous/non-indigenous relations have been characterised by a strict hierarchy, with 'dark' indigenous people at the bottom and the lightest-skinned of the white-*mestizo* population at the top (Radcliffe 1999; see this thesis, Chapter 4). Euro-American foreigners generally also occupy this highest rung, although their place might be less certain if they themselves are not light-skinned.

This has long been the situation in the Andes, the Ecuadorian region with the longest history of white-indigenous relations. Here colonial habits die hard, and much of the

anthropological literature serves to reinforce my own perception of Andean cities as deeply divided along ethnic lines (see for example, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998, 1999; Torre 1999). Racism is endemic and the indigenous population is often depicted as dirty, peripheral, and in a sense childlike: they are perceived as being unable to manage their finances, for example (see Miles 2000). The vast majority of *mestizo* Sucúans are descended from Andean colonisers (Gonzalez 2000), and so they tended to bring this socio-cultural paradigm with them and continued to apply it in the Amazonian context.

Shuar do not carry the same colonial baggage as their Andean indigenous counterparts (Hendricks 1993b); moreover, they are proud of their reputation in Ecuador as an indomitable, warrior-like people. Nevertheless, the extreme changes inflicted upon their way of life over the course of the twentieth century initially placed them in a very vulnerable position vis-à-vis the steadily growing *mestizo* population of the region. Their ties to the ways of the past having been virtually severed by systematic missionisation, they found themselves increasingly incorporated into a market economy for which they had neither the skills (Spanish language and at least a high school education) nor the necessary connections (*palanca*) to succeed. A system of patronage similar to that of the old *haciendas* (see Becker 2008) began to develop, with Shuar requiring a *mestizo* '*padrino*' (godfather) to act as employer and guarantor in the urban, *mestizo* environment. The missionaries initially acquiesced to this policy, and many Shuar children were even christened with the surnames of their *mestizo* godparents.[24]

Several developments have caused this state of affairs to be challenged in Sucúa and elsewhere, including the mounting influence of indigenous politics, and a concomitant rise in levels of awareness among both indigenous and *mestizo* Sucúans of the status of and respect

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[24] A systematic process of renaming occurred later, led by the Shuar Federation.

for indigenous peoples at an international level. Nevertheless, efforts to impose the old colonial paradigm persist, and often clash with new trends that see the rise in influence and wealth of the heretofore disenfranchised Shuar population.

Sucúa, therefore, is a city divided hierarchically along ethnic lines, where ethnic differences are both marked and remarked upon. In this chapter I will explore the various ways in which these differences manifest themselves and inform urban Shuar residents' perception and understanding of their ethnic identity. Given that, as I have discussed, racism is often prevalent in encounters between Shuar and *mestizo* Sucúans, it makes sense to begin with a discussion of ethnic hierarchy.

5.3 Ethnic identity and ethnic hierarchies

5.3.1 Everyday racism in Sucúa

Racism was a perpetual presence in Sucúa. Occasionally it would rear its head in a visible and obvious way, like the experience that Lorena and I had in the electro-domestic shop. For the most part, however, it bubbled beneath the surface of interethnic relations. I first noticed it in comments made to me by *mestizos* when I told them about my project. Some reactions, particularly from those people who claimed to have lost land or (in one case) even family members as a result of disputes with Shuar communities, were extremely harsh. 'The Shuar are aggressive and violent, and they're thieves [*ladrones*]. You should be careful, they can be dangerous.' More often, however, non-indigenous *sucuenses* exhibited a sort of paternalistic attitude towards Shuar. 'Well, *los shuaras*,[25]　they come here from the *comunidades* ['communities'], see, and they don't know how to live in the city. They drink a lot, they eat

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[25] A pejorative term for 'Shuar', a more paternalistic alternative to 'jívaro' and perceived as equally offensive by many Shuar.

bad food, they have sex [*tienen relaciones*] with many people, and then they fall ill. Or they turn to crime.'

Often a request for a professional opinion would prompt an unsolicited racist remark. Once I visited a lawyer to ask some questions about indigenous justice systems in Ecuador (the right to which had been enshrined in the 2008 Constitution). He told me that indigenous justice did not function for Shuar because they did not know how to write legal documents: 'Look at federated[26] land, for example,' he said. 'It's complete nonsense [*son unas tonterías*]. None of those documents is worth anything in court.' An interview with a doctor prompted similar dismissiveness of Shuar abilities to feed themselves in a nutritious manner or moderate their intake of alcohol: 'they just don't know how to live like *mestizos*, they do everything over the top!'

Many of my informants had experienced racism, although they were often quick to point out that it was 'far worse in the past'. My friend Clara told me that when she was in high school, she was often embarrassed to say that she was Shuar:

> People would tell me 'oh, you're a *shuara*!' and I felt bad. So I didn't want to learn the [Shuar] language, I was ashamed of being Shuar [*tenía vergüenza*]. Then when I was older, I changed my ideas. And so when people made racist remarks, I would say 'at least I'm pure! You're a mixture [*eres una mezcla*]!'

This remark on Clara's part reminded me of a moment during one of my classes at the Shuar primary school where I taught English. Two boys aged around twelve were arguing; one of the boys called the other '*shuara*', and his classmate, horrified, shouted back, 'I'm not a *shuara*!' While '*shuara*' (like '*jívaro*') is used in Sucúa as a synonym for 'savage', the fact

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[26] Federated [*federado*] land is land that belongs to Shuar communities and as such can only be sold to other Shuar. *Mestizos* and foreigners would not normally be allowed to purchase this land.

that it is a pejorative term directed exclusively at Shuar would not have been lost on either of the boys. Had the pupil using the term been a *mestizo*, there would have been no doubt that it was a racist remark. As both boys were Shuar, however, the comment was more ambiguous: nevertheless, there was a strong implication that the children had internalised the racist language and ideas used by *mestizos* in Sucúa and were reproducing that same racism, even within the protective confines of the Shuar primary school.

Conducting interviews with informants often felt like an exercise in collecting examples of racism. One informant, Daniel (whose story I will tell in full in Chapter 7) was refused permission to play in Sucúa's town football team because he was Shuar, despite being acknowledged as the best player in his school. Decades later, it was obvious that this slight was still painful to him. Another, Miguel, travelled all the way to Connecticut as a migrant worker and even there, his fellow migrants (*mestizos* also from Sucúa) were racist and discriminatory towards him. Ironically, in this particular case their treatment of him apparently backfired dramatically, as I shall describe in Chapter 7.

Racism is a fact of life in Ecuadorian towns like Sucúa. Although its characteristics and the responses to it may be changing (as I will discuss in Chapter 7), it is and has always been present in everyday interactions between Shuar and non-Shuar urban residents. It thus acts as a constant, subtle reminder to Shuar that they are Other – that they are viewed and treated differently – to their *mestizo* neighbours.

5.3.2 *'Shuar are bad with money, it's in our blood'*

The effects of the old colonial hierarchy and its impact upon contemporary Shuar-*mestizo* ethnic relations can clearly be seen when it comes to money. I realised this when I met Santiago for the first time. Like many middle-aged Shuar men, he had an aura of dignity and

composure that demanded the full attention and respect of those around him. He spoke slowly and clearly, even quietly, but no one missed a single word of what he said.

Santiago lived in a smallholding beyond the Kutuku mountains, on the outskirts of a nearby Shuar *centro*. When I met him, he and his wife were staying in Sucúa with a family to whom they were distantly related. Santiago was no stranger to Sucúa, having served as Leader [*dirigente*] of Education at the Shuar Federation. Now he had gone back to live more or less permanently on his farm, emerging occasionally to perform necessary errands in the city.

As his wife, Lucia, fed their new-born baby Yumi,[27] Santiago told us about a visit he had made to the bank that day.

'I wanted to ask about a loan, to buy a plot of land. They told me that, as a Shuar man, I need a guarantor, somebody who will consent to pay my debt on my behalf. And,' he added, 'that guarantor can't be Shuar – he has to be *mestizo*.'

Santiago sighed and took another sip of water.

'Where will I find a *mestizo* who will help me? Nobody trusts Shuar when it comes to money. They say that we spend it all and then don't pay it back. Of course, they're right. We don't know how to spend money.'

As my fieldwork progressed I came across this attitude several times. Once, when I was interviewing a young Shuar teacher, the conversation came round to money. I asked him whether he agreed with what Santiago had said.

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[27] 'Rain' in Shuar; increasingly, Shuar parents are giving their children 'Shuar' names.

'Are Shuar bad with money? Of course. It's a shame, but it's true,' he said. 'We Shuar don't know how to save money. It's in our blood.'

'But your *cuñada* managed to save enough money to buy her own house,' I insisted, referring to his sister-in-law, who had migrated to Connecticut in the United States and sent back enough money to build a two-storey, five bedroom home.

'Well, yes. But she's an exception. I've never saved any money.'

Another interview, this time with a middle-aged Shuar woman living in Sucúa, produced a similar reaction.

'Shuar are bad with money, Enmita. No Shuar family in Sucúa owns their own house. When we have money, we spend it quickly and then we can't pay it back.'

'But you own your house.'

'Yes, but I'm different. I worked hard and saved my money. Most Shuar people don't do that.'

It seemed odd to me that the people who insisted on Shuar being inherently bad with money were often the very people whose behaviour and attitudes contradicted this assumption. And yet I could not deny that they had a point. While several of my Shuar friends owned a house or land, they did appear to be in the minority. Many Shuar, and especially, young, urban Shuar, spent what little money they had quickly and conspicuously.[28]

My friend Alvaro appeared to be a case in point. A young professional, and (as many people pointed out to me) the first Shuar to work for the town council (that is, the first one

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[28] I will return to this point in Chapter 7.

not employed in a menial role such as a cleaner), he had been earning a substantial monthly salary for some time. Nevertheless, when he decided to buy a new car, he found that he had no savings.

'It's not a problem,' he told me. 'I'll just borrow money from the bank.'

'Will you need a guarantor?' I asked.

'No. Why?'

I told him about my conversation with Santiago.

'Ah. But for me it's different. I work for the council, and everybody in Sucúa knows me. They know that I have money. Although,' he admitted, 'what your friend says is true. I've never saved any money. As soon as I got my job, I started buying things. A laptop, a motorbike, cable TV, nice clothes. We Shuar are like that, we can't save money.'

These incidents provide classic examples of what Eriksen (2010) refers to as stereotypes becoming 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1977). Continual repetition of ethnic stereotypes about Shuar being 'bad with money' lead to these stereotypes – which begin merely as facile explanations – being internalised by urban Shuar residents and eventually turning into self-fulfilling prophecies, in that many Shuar people – such as Alvaro, for instance – find it difficult to save money and rely on bank loans and assistance from family members to get by. This perception on the part of many Shuar regarding their own relative inability (compared with *mestizos*) to save and invest money, seems to justify their unequal position within the ethnic hierarchy in Sucúa and elsewhere in Morona Santiago. If nothing else, it is yet another signpost drawing attention to ethnic difference within the Sucúan community.

5.4 Ethnogenesis in action: education and technology

5.4.1 The cultural festival in Ambato

The students had been practicing for weeks. The last two hours of every school day had been devoted to rehearsals, regardless of whether or not pupils missed classes, and paying no heed to the weather. Come rain or shine or burning heat, Hilda was out on the tarmac volleyball court with her stereo, ready to whip her dancers into shape. Boys and girls, carefully selected from each age group, lined up at opposite ends of the court; when the music started they inched slowly forward, keeping time with the beat and remembering to turn or jump in the correct places. As the dance progressed, the troops of male and female dancers would form into couples who would then enact a step that reminded me of the 'do-si-do' in English country dancing. The dance ended with a series of increasingly tight concentric circles in the centre of the court.

Initially, the rehearsals had been chaotic, and Hilda's voice had become hoarse from shouting. The lines had grown tidier and the leaps and turns increasingly synchronised as the weeks progressed, yet she was still far from satisfied.

'You're going to dance in front of people from all over the country!' she would shout. 'Why bother if you can't even learn the basics? Let's start again!'

The focus of all this furious activity was an intercultural dance event that was taking place in the highland city of Ambato. Schools from every region had been invited to perform, including several from the *oriente*. The event had been organised by the Ecuadorian government, which was providing food and transportation to all the participants.

On the morning of the event we gathered in the pre-dawn gloom outside the town hall to await the bus that would take us to Ambato. The students, burdened down with costumes, spears and calabashes for manioc beer, were sleepy but excited. A couple of them were fairly well-travelled, having visited relatives in Quito or Cuenca, but for many it was the first time they had left the province.

When the bus arrived, I sat next to Carlos, Hilda's brother. He told me that he had recently arrived from the United States, where he had worked for several years in a restaurant. I asked him what he thought about the cultural event that the students were participating in.

'It's great [*chevere*],' he said. 'Look, when I was young, we didn't have events like these. It's [President] Correa who wants to promote culture. It's a very good thing'.

After several hours on the bus, during which more than one of the pupils succumbed to travel sickness, we finally arrived in Ambato and made our way to the immense conference centre. The atmosphere as we entered was overwhelming. Thousands of adolescents in different costumes jostled with each other to pick up welcome packs and breakfast rolls: Quichua, Shuar, Saraguro – it seemed that every Ecuadorian cultural group was represented – except, apparently, for by far the largest group, *mestizos*.

Our students were scheduled to dance in the morning. They proceeded nervously to the back of the auditorium to change into their costumes, as Hilda and her team of assistants drew designs on their faces with red lip liner. I had brought my camera, so the students posed with their spears and calabashes, backs straight and faces stern. Then it was time to perform.

The dances were taking place at one end of the auditorium. The other school groups, those who had already performed as well as those that were yet to go on stage, were seated along ascending rows of stone steps that ran around three sides of the building. The remaining space was reserved for dignitaries, most of whom were apparently local politicians. Our students filed nervously onto the dance floor, the beads on their belts and ankles rattling. Hilda, standing next to me, took a deep breath, and then the music started.

Fig 6: Ready to perform. Photograph taken by the author.

The performance was a success. The students left the dance floor beaming, to rapturous applause. Afterwards, they were allowed to change out of their costumes immediately, but most chose to leave them on. We settled into our reserved space on the stone steps and watched as the rest of the schools performed. There were three or four other Shuar groups, all of whom came from the neighbouring province of Pastaza. Our students watched their performances critically, drawing comparisons with their own music and choreography. They enjoyed the Quichua dances and were impressed with those from Esmeraldas, which were fast-paced and had elaborate, brightly-coloured costumes.

5.4.2 Discussion

> 'Uniform educational systems covering large areas greatly facilitate the development of abstract identifications with a category of people whom one will never meet – who are neither kinsfolk, nor affines nor neighbours' (Eriksen 2010: 109).

Eriksen's astute observation is crucial to understanding the dynamics of ethnic identity among urban Shuar. As we saw in Chapter 3, from the 1930s onwards the majority of Shuar in southern Ecuador were subjected to a system of widespread, standardised education, developed by Salesian missionaries and aimed specifically at 'the Jívaros' which in theory referred to all Jivaroan-speaking peoples but in practice was specifically restricted to Shuar. One could argue that, prior to missionisation, there was no 'Shuar population' – only a collection of nomadic families whose interests were restricted to their own kin and allies. Descola makes this point with reference to Achuar in his short but perceptive article examining the latter's participation in national elections. Although Achuar were compelled as citizens to vote, very few did so, partly, as Descola observes, because they could not fathom the idea that they 'constituted elements of a political society that transcended their particular existences' (2002: 54):

> '[T]he only reason the Achuar get together is to wage war […] They do not particularly care for one another's company, […] which is why their houses are scattered through the jungle at a distance of many hours' walk. They have no chiefs to tell them what to do or to encourage them to seek consensus. At the most they have war-leaders, or "great men" who are in charge of setting up transient coalitions in times of crisis' (ibid).

Although this description was probably slightly outdated even at the time that Descola was writing, nonetheless it serves two purposes. Firstly, it gives us a relatively reliable picture of how Shuar social organisation was likely to have been prior to missionisation (supported

by ethnographies of the period including Karsten [1935] and Stirling [1933, 1938]). Secondly, it provides a sharp contrast with the way that Shuar are viewed and view themselves as a community and as a 'nationality' today. Achuar in this description have no common, pan-national ethnic 'identity'; although they can and do recognise people as either 'Achuar' or 'not Achuar' (for instance, in the prolonged period of raids and warfare with Shuar, or in efforts on the part of shamans to acquire 'stronger' foreign powers [Descola 1996]), this does not mean that a 'fellow Achuar' cannot also be an enemy – on the contrary. Again, this was apparently the case for Shuar in the years prior to missionisation, in which small, nomadic family groups lived in continual anticipation of attacks from hostile parties, both Achuar and 'fellow' Shuar. Elaborate greeting displays were played out whenever two strange men met, so as to ascertain whether the other man was a friend or an enemy (Hendricks 1993a).

What was the effect of Salesian missionisation upon this disorganised collection of nomadic groups? Arguably, by treating Shuar as a single group and the focus of a missionising project, the Salesians, in partnership with the Ecuadorian government, went a long way towards 'creating' Shuar as an ethnic group, in that they instilled in a large population of people the notion that they had a common identity, culture and language, and that this was different from the ethnic identities of both the missionaries and the non-indigenous Ecuadorians. Segregated education in Shuar-only boarding schools reinforced this message, even though the ostensible aim was to relieve Shuar of their 'savage' ways, including their language and customs, and to teach them how to be good Christians and citizens of the Ecuadorian state (Rubenstein 2005). In these schools, students encountered and formed friendships with other young people from across the region, many of whom were not relatives or allies but all of whom were 'Shuar'. The Salesians encouraged students to

marry each other, thus disrupting traditional marriage practices (based largely on Dravidian kinship) and rupturing or preventing bonds between kin and allied groups. The result was that anyone was potentially a viable marriage partner, as long as they were 'Shuar'. A new, extremely broad category had been formed; ethnogenesis was underway.

Crucially for the purposes of this thesis, this process of ethnogenesis coincided and in many ways went hand in hand with incipient urbanisation among Shuar. Mission boarding schools were often established in or near to *mestizo* urban areas (including, of course, Sucúa). A Salesian education was also a crucial factor in encouraging alumni of the schools to seek employment (initially as teachers or nurses) in urban areas, so as to make use of their new skills and knowledge. This meant that although Shuar urbanisation was for a long time little more than a trickle, that trickle was largely mission-educated and thus already aware of a 'Shuar' identity far broader than the kinship networks that their parents relied upon.

Although the initial aim of the Salesians was effectively to eradicate Shuar culture, this changed following the Vatican Council of 1962-5 which condemned mission efforts to wipe out cultural diversity and encouraged a more sympathetic kind of proselytism that allowed for cultural and linguistic differences. One result of this change for Shuar was the introduction of SERBISH, the Shuar Radiophonic Bicultural Education System, in 1968 (Rubenstein 2002). This radio-transmitted education project was established as an alternative to and eventual replacement of the mission boarding schools. It was made possible by the donation to Father Juan Shutka of a radio transmitter originally belonging to the wife of the United States ambassador, who had found that she no longer had any use for it (Shutka 2012, personal communication). Initially a means of communicating between Sucúa and more distant Shuar communities, the transmitter was soon put to use for a kind of distance learning

programme that provided a basic education for Shuar children, in the Shuar language. The effect was to consolidate the burgeoning Shuar ethnic identity, this time with increased emphasis placed upon the importance of the Shuar language as a distinguishing factor.

This highlights the significance of technological initiatives for the development and consolidation of Shuar ethnic identity. As Eriksen observes: 'Technology can be essential in generating opportunities and constraints for culture and social organisation' (2010: 109). He goes on to draw connections between technology and mass, uniform education (see above) arguing that the latter is made significantly easier and more effective by access to and use of the former. This was certainly the case for Shuar: the SERBISH project brought together people from across the region, in a virtual space and under a common 'Shuar' identity.[29] Furthermore, local 'teachers' were needed in the communities in order to explain the radio-led lessons to the pupils; as a result, many young Shuar men and women travelled to Sucúa to train as teaching assistants[30], where they met Shuar politicians and other Shuar employees of the Federation and SERBISH, and thus received an even more distinct impression of Shuar as an 'ethnic group'.

Unfortunately, SERBISH closed down a few years before my fieldwork began. The reason for this largely derived from an increased desire on the part of Shuar parents for their children to have a 'good' education, one that involves qualified teachers, classrooms and equipment. For a while, many parents did not want their children to learn Shuar, as they felt that this would put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis *mestizo* children, and would lead to the children experiencing the same kind of discrimination that their parents had suffered. Nevertheless, there has been a revival in enthusiasm for Shuar-language education, leading to

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[29] The radio transmitter was also increasingly important for Shuar political cooperation and organisation.

[30] Lorena was one of these young people.

the establishment of several bilingual primary and secondary schools across the region. Modelled in part on the bilingual Quechua schools in the highlands (Hornberger 2000), these initiatives go even further towards establishing Shuar awareness of themselves as an ethnic group. The schools aim to teach at least part of the curriculum in the Shuar language, and provide an education in Shuar history, as well as customs such as music, dance, dress, handicrafts, farming techniques and '*cosmovisión*'. Although this curriculum is arguably problematic for several reasons, there is little doubt that attending a Shuar bilingual school encourages a Shuar pupil to see herself as a member of the Shuar 'nation'; indeed, to prioritise this particular facet of her identity over other elements.

5.5 'I want to marry an indigenous man': Awareness of indigenous identity

The uniform education system has not only instilled in Shuar students the importance of their ethnic identity as Shuar. It has also made them aware that they are part of a much larger 'ethnic group', that of the indigenous population. The cultural event described above was organised exclusively for the benefit of ethnic minorities; no *mestizos* were present, beyond the odd member of staff. The impression was that indigenous peoples in Ecuador were, in a way, united by their difference, not only from each other but from the *mestizo* population.

Fig. 7: Preparing to dance. Photograph taken by the author.

As I have noted before, I argue in this thesis that 'indigenous' can for the purposes of analysis be treated as an ethnic identity in its own right, at the very least vis-à-vis Ecuadorian *mestizos* if not on a pan Iberoamerican or even a worldwide scale. Awareness of and emphasis upon this identity among Shuar has developed gradually over the course of the last few decades. I will discuss the construction of an 'indigenous' identity among Shuar urban residents in Sucúa in more detail in the next chapter; here I would just like to briefly examine the way that living on the 'ethnic boundary' between indigenous and non-indigenous populations influences urban Shuar construction of their ethnic identity as 'indigenous'.

Lorena claims that she always knew that Achuar and Amazonian Quichua were 'like us'; however, until very recently she did not realise that the 'ladies with hats and scarves' from the highlands were also 'like us'.

'You mean indigenous?' I said.

'What does that mean?' she asked. 'Not *mestizo* or *inkis* [foreign]? In that case, yes. Indigenous'.[31]

For the highland Quichua to be 'like us' implies the perceived existence of a group – '*us*' – with a collective identity – '*like* us'. Although Lorena had never heard the word 'indigenous', she understood that if the Quichua women were not 'like them' (*mestizos* or *gringos*) then they belonged to the 'like us' group. Her understanding was doubtless informed in large part by her early involvement with Pachakutik, a political party that purports to represent all indigenous nationalities in Ecuador, and whose rhetoric emphasises the united struggle of indigenous peoples against the Ecuadorian state. She would also have been influenced by the ideas and activities of her children, and particularly her youngest daughter Gabriela, who studied a module in Quichua language at university (she once joked to me that her Quichua was more fluent than her Shuar).

My younger informants, particularly those who had attended university or were involved in some way in the political movement, were keenly aware of their indigenous identity. Diana, a woman in her early twenties who studied at the Riobamba satellite in Macas, told me that she had once dated a Quichua Runa man.

'He was nice, and very smart, but… a bit racist,' she told me.

'Racist?' I asked. 'In what way?'

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[31] Please note that, unlike some other South American nations with large indigenous populations (e.g. Bolivia), in Ecuador the vast majority of the population identifies as *mestizo* (INEC 2011). *Mestizo* Ecuadorians for the most part do not speak an indigenous language, and would not recognize themselves or be recognized by others as having an indigenous identity (although they acknowledge – and often romanticize – their 'indigenous heritage'). When Lorena refers to 'indigenous' people from the highlands, she means the highland Quichua: men and women from the region surrounding Cuenca, who speak Quichua as their main language, tend to dress in an immediately identifiable way, and maintain a distinction between themselves and *mestizo* colonisers. The latter may be *campesinos* (poor peasant farmers), but they would not identify or be recognized as 'indigenous'.

'He wouldn't go out with *mestiza* women. He only wanted to date indigenous women. I don't know, but that seems racist to me.'

Clara, on the other hand, had no qualms with this approach.

'I want to marry an indigenous man,' she told me firmly. 'I prefer a Shuar man, but he has to be indigenous at least.'

'Why an indigenous man?' I asked her.

'Because of politics,' she replied. 'And because I want to preserve the race [*la raza*]. My parents are really worried by the fact that so many indigenous people are marrying *mestizos* and losing their identity.'

As I discussed in Chapter 4, the indigenous political movement in Latin America has played a considerable part in raising awareness among indigenous groups of an 'indigenous' identity (Jackson 1991). While I have endeavoured to avoid focussing on the rhetoric and discourses of indigenous politicians, political activity in general was a part of life for many of my informants. Clara, for example, was increasingly involved in indigenous politics and in 2014, during my third visit to the field, she stood for election as a councillor with Pachakutik. Her parents were equally politically engaged, and often attended rallies organised by and for indigenous activists.

Once, Clara's family invited me to come with them to Zamora, where they were attending a political rally organised by Pachakutik. We travelled on a bus which had been provided by the Shuar Federation, and which was packed to the brim with rally attendees. The meeting took place in a vast auditorium filled with different national groups from across the Amazon and the southern Andes, united by a common cause (in this case, a prelude to the

Indigenous March in spring 2012). Many of the indigenous authorities were wearing 'traditional' clothing. This varied slightly depending on the nationality, but tended to include feathers, face paint and a rainbow Pachakutik scarf. As for the rest of the attendees, everyone was wearing and waving rainbows. Manioc beer was passed round and a general atmosphere of conviviality prevailed. The effect was overwhelmingly of a united indigenous group with common cultural elements and common political objectives.

Not only did the political rally in Zamora, and the cultural event in Ambato, raise participants' awareness of their identity as indigenous people; they also instilled a heightened sense of pride in that identity. The aim of the Ambato event, and others like it which are organised each year, was to celebrate 'indigenous' cultures and to emphasise the importance of their place as part of Ecuador's 'national heritage'. Likewise, the apparent strength and energy of the indigenous political movement on display at the rally in Zamora created the impression of an influential force that would not be easily overcome or pushed aside. This is the more positive side to increased ethnic awareness in urban areas: for every racist encounter, there is a reminder of the increasing prominence of indigenous Amazonians on the national and international stage. This impression is consolidated by the environmental tourism industry, and by NGO workers and anthropologists who regularly visit the region, as I shall discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

5.6 'Long hair and *ojos chinos*': looking and sounding 'Shuar'

> '[I]ndigenous bodies' are inscribed with meaning through Orientalizing (Said 1979) intersections of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, generation and gender that shape the everyday experiences of individuals in spaces of work, home and community. This gives the corporeal exterior – phenotypic expressions, clothing, sex and language – the potential to signify 'indigenousness' within a matrix of intelligibility that places individuals as Others

outside of modern space and time – *there*, instead of *here*' (Valdivia 2009: 538, emphasis in original).

What does it mean to 'look' Shuar? This was a question that I asked myself before I left for the field. Prior to commencing my PhD, my experience in Ecuador had been largely confined to the Andes, where to my knowledge I had met may Otavaleños and Saraguros, but no Shuar. Although I had a thorough grounding in the ethnography of the region, the few pictures that these books contained tended to depict Shuar in 'traditional' dress, making manioc beer or hunting. I was not confident that if I passed a Shuar person walking down the street in an urban area, I would know that she was Shuar.

This question stayed with me throughout my fieldwork, and was one that I would often pose to my informants. One evening, I discussed it with Clara's sisters Carmen and Marisol as I helped them with their English assignment.

'Do you find it easy to tell the difference between Shuar and *mestizos*?' I asked.

'Of course!' they replied, laughing.

'Okay, so how do you know that a person is Shuar?'

'You mean, like, from their appearance?' asked Marisol. I nodded. 'Well… I guess from their eyes. We have small eyes, like the Japanese – we're descended from the Japanese, you know.[32] And women have very long, dark hair.'

'And the men?' I asked.

'No, they all have hair like soldiers!'

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[32] See Chapter 4

As we continued our discussion, it became clear that, according to the sisters, certain 'markers' physically identified a person as Shuar. These included: *ojos chinos* ['Chinese eyes', referring to eyes of 'Asian' appearance]; dark skin; short stature and stocky build; very long hair (for women) or short hair shaved close at the side in a military style (for men); colourful plastic beaded jewellery (for women and men, although men tended to restrict themselves either to bracelets or to large, medallion-style necklaces with words such as 'Shuar' woven in to them. The latter were particularly popular with political figures).

'Looking Shuar' was ambiguous. On the one hand, appearance was considered to be an intrinsic element of Shuar identity (as I shall discuss in more detail in the next chapter). On the other, a 'Shuar' appearance was often a burden. During a police crackdown on a spate of homicides rumoured to be linked to the making and selling of *tsantsas* [shrunken heads], a Shuar friend of mine was arrested without warning by the Sucúan police as he walked towards his home. He was eventually cleared of suspicion; however, his release was conditional on his promise to cut his long hair. Another friend, who resided in Puyo, would often tell me how proud he was of his own long hair and facial tattoos, saying that they were a way of displaying his 'culture'. One day I bumped in to him in the street and saw that he had cut his hair off. When I asked him why, he told me that he had received 'problems' on account of it and had decided that it would be easier to cut it.

I was reminded of Valdivia's (2009) remarks about the embodiment of indigenous identity, 'the ethics that bodies become, intersect and affirm their existence through practice and interactions' (ibid: 535). She argues that it is not only obvious phenotypical differences or markers such as jewellery and hair which identify a person as 'indigneous'. Just as important

are gestures, ways of moving, behaving, eating, or speaking, which are embodied over time and become part of what Bourdieu would refer to as a person's 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977).

'Sounding Shuar' was equally problematic. As Carmen observed: 'you can tell [who is Shuar] by the way they speak. Shuar people – old people, at least – don't speak Spanish properly. They pronounce 'r' like 'l'.' At this point she and her sister laughed, and proceeded to do impressions of the 'Shuar' way of speaking.

Clearly, then, there was a way of sounding 'Shuar', and it marked Shuar out as Other – and not in a good way. While ability to speak the Shuar language was increasingly lauded, 'speaking [Spanish] like a Shuar' was still something that even Shuar themselves made fun of (provided, of course, that they spoke Spanish well themselves). Older Shuar, and those who had recently migrated from rural areas, were said not to speak Spanish well: they confused 'r' and 'l', changed the gender of nouns, sometimes omitting articles altogether. I noticed this especially on the part of my elder informants, such as Lorena, Luis, Rosario, and Vicente. Younger urban Shuar did not speak in this way, and would often tease their elder relatives for the 'mistakes' that they made. I remember that once, while speaking in Spanish, I confused the gender of a word. Alvaro laughed and told me: 'you're spending too much time with my mother. You speak like a Shuar!'

5.7 An urban Shuar in a rural Shuar world

5.7.1 Arriving in Taant

The bus glided smoothly along the newly asphalted road that cut through the forest on its way from Macas to Zamora. Here the trees were sparse, in many places giving way to haciendas, surrounded by orchards and plantations of plantain or sugar cane. We passed through small

towns with intriguing names: Huambinimi, Huambi, Logroño. After a while these towns seemed to blend into one another: each was organised around a central park, with a large, brightly-painted catholic church and several smaller concrete or wooden dwellings. To our left, the river kept pace with us as we sped along – perhaps it would be more accurate to say that we followed the river, seeing as the latter's presence had created the only possibility for building a road through the forested foothills of the Andes.

The journey to Maqueda took around forty-five minutes. From there it was about another forty-five-minute walk through the forest and across the river to the Shuar *centro*, Taant. I had completed the trip many times with Clara; her parents owned a smallholding on the outskirts of the village, and many of the villagers were members of her extended family. As we travelled, I asked her why she visited Taant so often.

'Well, Enmita, it's my community. And being Shuar, my community is important for my identity. I live in Sucúa, but I'm *from* Taant. I mean, I wasn't *born* there, but my family is from there.'

We were on our way to a *minga*: a community-wide collective work effort inspired by Quichua practices in the Andes. It was my first *minga* in Taant, and I was keen to show the residents that I was prepared to work hard and do my bit for the community. I had come dressed for the part in old jeans and a loose, comfortable t-shirt; Clara, perplexingly, was wearing her best trousers, 'kitten' heels and an expensive-looking shirt.

We alighted from the bus and set off down a steep dirt track, away from the road and towards the river. Occasionally, pick-up trucks bounced past, fully laden with passengers; the latter seemed to levitate precariously whenever the truck shuddered over a pothole, but somehow always managed to end up more or less where they were sitting before.

We crossed the large bridge stretching over the River Upano. A few Shuar from Taant were down by the river, panning for gold. Clara called out to them and asked (with gestures more than words) whether they were going to the *minga*; they replied in the affirmative. Of course, everyone was going – everyone, that is, except those former residents of the community who now lived in urban areas, but were still officially *socios* [members]. Clara's father fell into this category, which was why her parents had sent chicken, coriander and tomatoes in lieu of elbow grease.

The path wound up and away from the river towards the village. As we climbed, a view gradually emerged: acres of forest, interspersed with bald patches of grass and, in the distance, the foothills of the Andes. We rounded a corner and found ourselves abruptly on the edge of the village. Taant was a Shuar *centro* of some thirty households, most of which were single storey and made of wood with tin roofs. These clustered around three sides of a large, overgrown football pitch; the fourth side was given over to a small wooden catholic church and an even smaller building with a loud speaker attached, which was used for making village-wide announcements (and, as I discovered, for playing music on festival days).

The men were already gathering with their machetes outside this building; they crouched in jeans, thick boots and football shirts, discussing the plan of action for the day. A voice over the loud speaker attempted to rouse those stragglers who had yet to arrive. We crossed the football pitch and shook hands with each of the men in turn. Clara asked the group if they knew where the women would be cooking, and one of the men replied 'in Jacinta's bar', indicating a broad, single-storey wooden shelter at the corner of the pitch. We thanked him and headed over. A group of women and children were milling around inside, amassing meat, vegetables and herbs on a large table in the middle of the room. They greeted

us as we entered and, when we offered to help with the food preparations, assigned us the task of peeling the mountain of green plantains that sat in the corner.

I settled down to this arduous task (sensing that I would be picking thick green peel out of my fingernails for days afterwards). Clara added our chicken and herbs to the food on the table, and then set about catching up on the gossip with the women, most of whom were relatives of hers. As I peeled and looked on, I was struck, and not for the first time, by how different Clara seemed from the other women around her. While Clara wore makeup and fashionable clothes, the women with whom she was chatting were dressed in very old, dirty t-shirts and trousers – but then, they had dressed for a *minga*, whereas Clara seemed to have dressed for a night at the local *discoteca*. The differences were obvious on the surface and yet it seemed to me that they were more than skin deep.

Clara spoke in Spanish, loudly, confidently, and fluently. She addressed all the women there as if they were old friends; the women, on the other hand, were polite and reserved, letting her do all the talking. Occasionally they would make comments to each other in Shuar, at which point Clara would scold them and point out that it was rude to speak Shuar because 'Enmita can't understand you!' Finally, Clara fished an old, baggy t-shirt out of her backpack, pulled it over her smarter top, and set about peeling plantains with me.

I tried to put my finger on the incongruence I was witnessing between Clara and the Taant women – and then it struck me. In Sucúa, Clara stood out as a Shuar woman, with her long black hair, dark skin and '*ojos chinos*'; in the Taant context, however, surrounded by rural women, she seemed like a *mestiza*. Her clean, neat clothes and makeup, her fluent Spanish and confident, university-educated way of speaking, all marked her out as urban.

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'Enmita, what was that question you asked us the other day? In the restaurant? I remember! It was, "how would you prove to someone that you're Shuar?" Is that right?' I nodded assent. 'Well, how would you do it?' she asked the group of women. They looked at each other in confusion.

'Prove it? Why?'

'Well, if for example, someone said to you, "you're not Shuar", how would you show them that you are?'

The women stared blankly at her. For them, this was the ultimate hypothetical question. Why would they need to 'prove' that they were Shuar? Who would ever ask them to do that?

'What was your answer, Clara?' I interjected. 'I can't remember.'

'I said that I would show them my community, my family, and tell them about my heritage,' she replied. Jacinta smiled – now she understood.

'Yes, yes,' she said. 'But… would it not be easier just to speak Shuar to them?'

'*Pues, sí,*' replied Clara, a little tersely, 'but I can't really speak Shuar. I understand,' she added hurriedly, 'but I don't speak.'

'My children are like that,' sighed Jacinta. 'They go to school in Mendez [the largest town in the area] and they never speak Shuar. They don't know how. They are becoming *mestizos*.'

Clara threw herself into village life that day. She chatted with the women, played with the children and helped out with the various stages of cooking. At one point she tired of

chopping vegetables and took me to watch the men, who by now were cutting the grass with the machetes. Clara tried her hand at wielding a machete herself, to the amusement of the people who gathered to watch. At lunch she served and drank manioc beer, and shortly afterwards we began to say our goodbyes. Clara said that she had to be home by 4pm in order to take care of her nephews while her sisters studied.

'That was fun,' she said to me as we walked down the hill. 'I love going to Taant, I feel at home there. The fresh air, the *comida típica*, it's perfect.' She checked her watch. 'Look, we have time to buy an ice cream before the bus comes!'

I realised a few days later that my experience with Clara in Taant reminded me strongly of a conversation that I had with a *mestizo* doctor who worked in the Sucúa medical centre. Luis Rojas had worked with Shuar communities for twenty-five years, and had seen plenty of changes in that time. He was very clear about what he thought of 'urban' Shuar.

'They're not Shuar anymore [*ya no son shuar*]!' he insisted. 'They live in the city, they don't speak the language. When they go back to the communities, the people there don't recognise them as Shuar. They're different; basically, they're *mestizo*.'

Of course, I disagree with this statement, for reasons that I shall elaborate upon in the next chapter. However, Dr Rojas raised a point that struck a chord with me. Clara was more similar – in dress, education and mannerisms – to her urban *mestizo* neighbours than she was to her rural Shuar relatives. For all her assurances that she felt at home there, she was in many ways almost as uncomfortable, almost as much a stranger, as I was.

This fact was driven home to me by a later experience in Taant. Clara needed to conduct a project for her ecotourism degree, and decided that she'd like to carry out the project in Taant.

'I want to help my community,' she told me. 'I want to promote Shuar culture there, rescue lost customs. We don't do things the way people did them in the past, we've forgotten everything: gardening, myths, songs… I want to "revitalise" [*revitalizar*] our culture in Taant.'

'Her' community was not convinced. At a village meeting, held to decide whether Clara could work in Taant, many people stood up and voiced the opinion that she had no business carrying out her project there.

'She won't help our community,' said one man. 'She only wants to get her diploma. She'll find out what she needs to know and then we won't see her again.'

I was shocked, listening to these complaints, to realise that they were markedly similar to the charges levelled at me when I began my fieldwork with urban Shuar in Sucúa. I understood why the members of the FICSH did not at first trust my motives in wanting to work with Shuar: I was an outsider, just one of many foreign students who came, did their fieldwork, and left, without ostensibly providing any benefit to the local community. Yet how could the people of Taant accuse Clara in the same way, when she was not only a fellow Shuar, but also a '*socio*' of the community and a close relative of many of the people living there?

5.7.2 Shuar 'identity', or Taant personhood?

Clara saw herself as Shuar, and as a member of the rural Taant *centro* – it was her 'community', even if she didn't live there. Her Shuar identity was important to her, and as far as she was concerned, being Shuar meant being in touch with her rural roots, with her community. She wanted to rediscover her Shuar 'culture' through her interaction with that community – to her, 'culture' and 'customs' were an intrinsic part of her – and their – ethnic identity.

Yet the people of Taant considered Clara to be, if not *mestiza*, at least very different from them. She was urban; her mannerisms, her priorities, even her habitus (Bourdieu 1977) were different, and marked her out as Other. The fact that she spent so much time with a *gringa* anthropologist probably didn't help her cause (although, intriguingly, Clara insisted that I attend every village meeting as she believed that my presence added legitimacy to her project). Clara couldn't speak Shuar, make manioc beer or weed a garden. What did it matter, therefore, if she had books about Shuar myths and medicinal plants?

Here the residents of Taant demonstrated an understanding of processual personhood that is commonly found in the Amazon region, but that clashed with or contradicted Clara's notions of ethnic identity. This understanding is summarised nicely by Conklin and Morgan in their 1996 paper on Wari' personhood:

> 'The Wari'… locate key features of the person in social ties, and their discourse on personhood invokes a model of the body as constituted through interpersonal exchanges of body fluids and foods. Embedded in social flows, Wari' personhood is correspondingly fluid and contingent; personhood is acquired gradually, and it may be lost or attenuated under certain conditions associated with changes in social interactions and bodily composition.' (Conklin and Morgan 1996: 658).

A.C. Taylor's work with Achuar (1996) draws similar conclusions. The implication is that, for rural Shuar communities like Taant, the construction of personhood, and in particular the making of kin, is more important and more immediately relevant than more abstract notions of ethnicity and indigenous identity. While for Clara, being Shuar was about performing her identity, adopting the right indigenous markers and identifying with other Shuar (or other indigenous people), people from Taant placed more emphasis upon their immediate kin group, whose bodies had formed over time in the same way through shared food and activities. In this sense, we are perhaps witnessing the reverse of what Clyde Mitchell (1956) and Colson (1996) observed in urban areas: whereas ethnicity operates as a kind of surrogate kinship network in cities, in rural areas it is still the making of *real* kin that counts. And although Clara was ostensibly 'kin', in that she was related to many people in Taant, she was still Other: she had grown up in an urban area and her body had been made in a different way. The way she walked, the clothes she wore, her language, her relaxed confidence, all marked her out as different (see Valdivia 2009).

Lasmar has observed, with regards to indigenous urbanisation, that communities and urban areas represent 'two distinct modes of life that translate into distinct social philosophies' (2008: 440). While rural communities are 'characterized by a peaceful, communitarian ethos in which kin relations, exchange, and the collective good' are emphasised (Chernela 2014), Lasmar asserts that in urban areas 'desires and objectives become more individualized, and competition becomes the rule' (Lasmar 2008: 440). While I feel that this dichotomy is over-simplistic, and does not take into consideration the levels of solidarity often found among urban indigenous residents, certainly the primacy of kinship and the importance of trade and good relations within the immediate community reflected my own findings in Taant.

This does not mean necessarily that the people of Taant would deny that Clara was 'Shuar' or 'indigenous'; rather, it would not necessarily occur to anyone to consider this question in the first place. For people from Taant, 'indigeneity' as an 'identity' only really comes to the foreground in two situations. The first is during elections, when all Shuar in the region are compelled, through local campaigns and awareness-raising, to vote for the indigenous party Pachakutik. In this context indigeneity is essentially a political identity and nothing more: the rainbow scarves, flags and posters of the Pachakutik party symbolise solidarity on a political level with indigenous people across the continent, and communicate a promise to defend the interests of indigenous people. As voting is compulsory in Ecuador, it suits people in Taant to vote for Pachakutik[33], as they feel that this will serve their interests better than voting for the incumbent, *mestizo* government. Yet beyond this obligatory engagement with political life, in my experience, the people of Taant were not that interested in what it meant to be 'indigenous' or 'Shuar'.

The other situation in which people from Taant usually become aware of their ethnic identity is in the occasional trips that many of them make to nearby towns and villages, the majority of which are dominated by *mestizo* colonists. Here the identity in question is not so much 'indigenous' as '*indio*', denoting a class identity founded upon ethnic inequality (Canessa 2014). Rural Shuar travelling to urban areas in Morona Santiago generally find themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy: they are spoken down to and mistreated by urban *mestizos*, and usually keep to certain areas. In Sucúa, for example, while urban [middle classed] Shuar usually feel free to travel anywhere in the city (as I shall explore in further detail in Chapter 7) rural Shuar (and some poor urban Shuar) are often restricted to areas such as the market and the Shuar Federation, and rarely linger in *mestizo*-dominated zones such as

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[33] Although not always, as I discovered - see Epilogue.

the central park or the Catholic church. My informants in Taant report similar experiences when travelling to nearby Logrono and Mendez. As wealthier urban Shuar do not experience these difficulties, or are made aware of their ethnicity in different ways and for different reasons, it is arguably the case that the experiences of people from Taant and other rural Shuar in urban areas have as much to do with being poor and rural as they do with being '*indio*'. In this case, Clara's urban mannerisms, *mestizo* style of dress, and ability to navigate the cityscape without restriction, all contribute to her positioning as Other vis-à-vis her Taant relatives.

Clara, on the other hand, sees ethnicity very differently. Growing up in an urban Shuar family, in a *mestizo* world, she has been made continually aware of her ethnicity, whether through overt racism from her *mestizo* peers, through involvement in indigenous politics, or simply through the subtle messages that are communicated via everyday interactions. While rural Taant residents only encountered racism from relative strangers, during occasional trips to urban areas, Clara and her fellow urban Shuar were made aware of their ethnicity virtually on a daily basis. As a result, they came to consider it the most significant element of their identity. As she grew older, Clara's education and network of young, computer-literate peers gave her access to ideas about ethnicity and indigeneity that prompted her to think deeply about her ethnic identity and to take it seriously.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have put forward the idea that Shuar identity, as an ethnic identity, is more relevant to Shuar in an urban context than it is in a rural environment. This is because while rural Shuar, such as the residents of Taant, spend most of their time in a largely monoethnic community, urban Shuar regularly encounter non-Shuar, whether *mestizo* Ecuadorians or

foreigners. In Barth's words (1969), therefore, they live on the boundary between ethnic groups, at the point where ethnic identity becomes relevant. Living in the multiethnic environment that characterises many cities (A. Cohen 1974), and especially rainforest cities (1992), they undergo a continual process of ethnic identification, in which their awareness and understanding of their ethnic identity is repeatedly reinforced with each interaction (Jenkins 2008; Hall ibid).

Multi-ethnic communities are rarely egalitarian, and a hierarchy has long existed between indigenous and non-indigenous residents in Sucúa, meaning that the former have experienced racism, discrimination and marginalisation. Nevertheless, in part as a result of the successes and prominent profile of the indigenous political movement in Amazonia, Shuar in Sucúa have learnt to take pride in their identity as indigenous people. This pride has been reinforced by exposure to more positive attitudes towards indigenous people on the part of foreign tourists, NGO workers and activists who occasionally visit the region and are keen to meet with Shuar people. One significant downside to these encounters, however, is that they often engender unrealistic ideas in the minds of urban Shuar as to what it means to be 'indigenous', creating an impression of a 'hyperreal Indian' (Ramos 1994) that leads Shuar to believe that they fall short of the ideal. I will discuss the pervasiveness of this impression and its influence upon urban Shuar residents in the next Chapter.

6. The Hyperreal Shuar

'[P]reoccupation with cultural loss is one of the main concerns for contemporary indigenous peoples.' (Espinosa 2012)

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Who are the 'real' Shuar?

In the early days of my fieldwork, I went for a drink with an anthropologist who had been working in the region for a while. We were discussing our research and she asked me what my project was about. I told her that I was looking at rural-urban migration and Shuar urban identity.

'That's interesting,' she said, 'but are you going to work with *real* Shuar?'

Her question stunned me; up to that point it had not even occurred to me to think in terms of 'real' Shuar – or, for that matter, their antithesis. Which was what? 'Fake' Shuar?

I spent a lot of time thinking about my colleague's question. I assumed of course that she was referring to the *mestizos* who adopted an 'indigenous' identity in order to take advantage of the symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977; Conklin and Graham 1995) available to indigenous people in spheres such as tourism, politics, and even the performing arts (the singer Francisco Ecuador is the quintessential example of this phenomenon). In the three years that I have spent living, working and studying in different regions of Ecuador, I have never met any of these characters (with the exception of Francisco Ecuador, who does not actually claim to be Shuar), although I have been assured by many people that they exist.

Fig. 8: Francisco Ecuador. Source: http://www.lahormigaecuador.com

I gradually came to learn that my colleague was not alone in distinguishing between 'real' and 'not real' Shuar. The question of who could *legitimately* describe her or himself as Shuar was a familiar one in Sucúa, and everyone had an opinion: *mestizos*, foreign tourists, NGO workers, missionaries, and especially Shuar themselves. This insistence upon the existence of a 'real' Shuar reminded me of Ramos's paper, *The Hyperreal Indian* (1992) in which the 'Indians' evoked by well-meaning NGOs and human right activists – exotic, virtuous, and deserving of protection – become 'more real' than the 'real Indians', who cannot hope to live up to such a 'romanticised' image.

This chapter is concerned with the second half of the paradox outlined in the introduction: namely, that although living in an urban environment increases Shuar urban residents' awareness of and pride in their ethnic identity, it also exposes them to an idealised, rural-based image of 'Shuarness' or 'Indianness' that they cannot hope to live up to. This carries serious implications for urban Shuar, as well as for the indigenous political movement more generally. If Shuar living in urban areas are no longer considered to be 'legitimate' or 'authentic' indigenous people, then the increased trend towards indigenous urbanisation could spell disaster for all the hard-won rights and advances achieved on their behalf.

As I discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, many indigenous claims to territory, for example, are based upon an assumed relationship between the land in question and the 'culture' of the indigenous group claiming it. Urbanisation may be seen as a betrayal of that relationship and thus a renunciation of those claims. Other specific rights and privileges, including those laid out in the Ecuadorian Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) might be denied or revoked on the basis that those claiming them are not 'real' indigenous people. The newfound pride on the part of urban Shuar in their identity as Shuar and as indigenous people, described in the previous chapter, would also be undermined. The question of what it means to be Shuar and who can legitimately call themselves Shuar is thus a crucial one for urban Shuar residents.

In order to explore this question, I will employ Novaes's (1997) concept of the 'play of mirrors'. Just as a person in a hall of mirrors, such as those found at a fairground, sees a distorted image of herself in each mirror, so an indigenous person will see different versions of herself reflected back from the various 'mirrors', or perspectives, on indigeneity. These are many and varied, and in this chapter I have chosen to focus on those that I consider to be the

most relevant, namely: the indigenous political movement, the international environmentalist movement, human rights organisations, (eco-) tourism, the Ecuadorian state, and non-indigenous Ecuadorians. Having summarised in the theoretical framework (Chapter 4) the various theories surrounding the concept of indigeneity in social theory and international human rights discourse, I shall focus in this chapter upon the 'emic' perspective: what do urban Shuar understand the term 'indigenous' to mean, and how does this understanding affect their indigenous identity?

6.1.2 Meeting Clara

I can clearly remember the first time I met Clara. It was August 2011, around two weeks after I had moved to Sucúa. Within a few days of arriving, thanks to a surprisingly successful attempt at networking, I had secured accommodation with the family of Paloma Ankuash, a Shuar woman in her early fifties who lived in the 'Artesanos' neighbourhood on the southern edge of the town. 'My' new family were travelling to Macas to attend the graduation ceremony of Paloma's youngest daughter, Gloria, who at 22 had just completed her high school diploma at a distance learning institution.

We arrived at the *municipio* [town hall] in Macas and made our way through the entrance hall to a large auditorium in the rear. Several families were already milling around, and I noticed that many of them appeared to be indigenous. Our own group consisted of Paloma, Gloria (who was holding her baby daughter Layla), myself, and Paloma's Shuar neighbour Rosario, who had brought her teenage daughter, María José. One of the other Shuar groups beckoned us over, and soon I was adrift in a sea of strangers, all of whom seemed to know each other intimately.

Suddenly Gloria realised that the other graduating students had already donned their robes and were lining up next to the stage. She thrust Layla into Rosario's hands and hurried down the stairs. Looking around us we discovered that nearly all of the seats were taken. Paloma spotted three empty places near the front of the room and beckoned to me to accompany her there. As I made my way down the steps, I noticed that a young woman, a face from the sea of strangers, was making for the same seats. She sat down between the two of us and began chatting to Paloma in a friendly, familiar way. Paloma looked away and merely grunted in response. Unperturbed, the young woman turned to me and introduced herself as Clara Antich, 'but everyone calls me Clarita'.

'My mother is graduating today,' she told me. 'She trained as a nurse with the Salesian [missionaries], back when you didn't need to have your high school diploma. Now, of course, all nurses need to have finished high school. That's her on the stage – Alba. I think you know her already, don't you? [I nodded.] And what about you?' she asked finally, 'how come you're here in Ecuador? Are you a student?'

'Yes,' I replied. 'I'm doing research for my thesis.'

'What's your project about?'

'Well… I'm studying indigenous identity. I want to understand what it means for indigenous people to live in a town or city. Do they… do they feel "less indigenous" because they don't live in a rural community?'

'Yes, yes! I understand what you mean. Well, in my case, it's difficult. I'm Shuar, but, well, I don't *speak* Shuar. I was born in Sucúa, you see? When I was at school, the other

students were *mestizo*, and they used to bully me for being Shuar, so I didn't want to learn the language. And my parents thought that it was more important for me to learn Spanish.'

'Really?'

'Yes! I think they regretted it later. They even took us away from the Salesian church in Sucúa, where the priest gave mass in Shuar. We started going to the evangelical church instead. It seems a shame now. Look!' she said suddenly, pointing at the stage. 'My mum is about to give her speech!'

My eyes sought out Alba, who was advancing towards the podium. Alba was a Shuar woman in her early fifties. I had met her once before, through a mutual acquaintance. Today she was wearing the shiny blue robes and mortarboard of the distance-learning school from which she and her fellow students were graduating. In her hands were a few sheets of A4 paper, which she arranged neatly in front of her on the stand. Clara whispered in my ear that Alba had been chosen from among the other students to give a speech on behalf of the graduating class.

Silence descended upon the room as Alba began her speech. She spoke slowly and clearly, in fluent Spanish; her presentation was eloquent and concise, and the mostly Shuar audience roared their approval when she had finished. As the graduating students filed slowly onto the stage to receive their diplomas, Clara and I continued to chat. By the end of the ceremony, we were firm friends.

6.1.3 Being or not being Shuar

Clara was to become my best friend in Sucúa. I liked her immediately: she was intelligent, funny, talkative, friendly and optimistic. At 24, she had big dreams for the future: she was

studying ecotourism at a 'satellite' branch of the Riobamba Polytechnic University, and dreamed of leaving the *oriente* and moving to Quito or Cuenca. Crucially, she was very interested in my project; it turned out that many of the questions I was addressing were similar to questions that she had recently begun to ask herself.

The most pressing question for Clara seemed to be, was she really Shuar? In other words, could she 'legitimately' identify herself as Shuar, when she didn't know the language, had lived all her life in an urban area, and couldn't even make manioc beer, or sing an anent, or tend a garden? On the one hand, Clara was what she called 'pure', in that she claimed to have no (known) non-Shuar ancestors. Her family had lived in Morona Santiago for as long as anyone could remember, and her parents both spoke Shuar as their first language; her paternal grandmother was monolingual in Shuar. If (for the sake of argument) one were to follow the 'blood and soil' approach to indigeneity that is often implicitly adopted by indigenous rights groups and NGOs (see Kuper 2003), then Clara would certainly have satisfied the first criterion: nobody could really question her Shuar 'ancestry'. Furthermore, she 'looked Shuar': in her own words, she had long, black hair and 'Chinese' eyes [*ojos chinos*].

Yet what of the 'soil'? Clara was born in Sucúa and had lived there all her life. Although Sucúa was in Morona Santiago, a province largely covered by rainforest and populated by Shuar households, most people acknowledged a clear distinction between 'urban' areas like Sucúa, which was largely surrounded by farms and *haciendas*, and the more 'rural' *centros*. Clara's family often travelled to the *centro* Taant where many of her cousins lived; nevertheless, as I discuss in Chapter 5 and later on in this chapter, the people of Taant didn't necessarily recognise her as 'one of us' – to them, she was quintessentially

urban, in effect no different from the *mestizos*. It was not hard to see why they perceived her in this way. Clara loved fashionable clothes and make-up. She enjoyed going to *discotecas* where she would drink beer and dance with her friends. She spent hours on Facebook, or watching cable TV in her parents' bedroom.

Being (or not being) Shuar was important to Clara. She wanted to identify as Shuar; she wanted to be one of the 'original' inhabitants of the rainforest. She felt strongly that Shuar were a proud nation, fierce warriors who had long lived 'in harmony with nature'. Yet she felt that to identify herself as Shuar was somehow inauthentic; after all, was she a 'real' Shuar? Together we would have endless discussions about Shuar identity: what did it mean to be Shuar? Who could call themselves Shuar, and who was allowed to decide this?

This was the fundamental paradox that I witnessed many of my urban Shuar informants grappling with: while (as I discussed in the previous chapter) the experience of living in an urban area heightened their awareness of – and pride in – their ethnic identity, it also exposed them to different images of and opinions about indigeneity that left them feeling somehow inadequate, insufficient or even 'inauthentic' as indigenous people.

The rest of this chapter will deal with the various perspectives on indigeneity, or 'mirrors' as I refer to them, following Novaes (1997). I have divided it up so as to explore each 'mirror' in turn. The influence of these 'mirrors' is complex and multifaceted: no one mirror dominates, and it is often difficult (and, I would argue, unnecessary) to identify the specific and unique impact of a particular mirror. Rather, it is the cumulative effect of the various mirrors which composes a picture of a 'hyperreal' Shuar (Ramos 1994) in the minds of urban Shuar, an essentialised image of an 'ideal' indigenous person, thus increasing their own sense of themselves as 'not quite Shuar enough'.

6.2 'Indigenous peoples are the best conservationists': The 'international' mirror

It was difficult to know how to organise the various 'mirrors' that I am discussing in order to structure this chapter to best effect. I have decided to begin with what I refer to as the 'international' mirror, not because it is necessarily the most influential in the construction of urban indigenous identity, but because it acts as a framework for the various other influences, or mirrors, discussed in the chapter. Within the scope of the 'international' mirror, I include the rhetoric both of the international human rights movement, including international organisations such as the United Nations and prominent INGOs such as Survival International and Amnesty International; the environmentalist movement, the rhetoric of which depicts indigenous Amazonians as 'guardians of the rainforest' (see Conklin and Graham 1995); and the 'Euro-American philosophical tradition', by which I mean, broadly, ideas, theories and terms that ostensibly originated in 'Western' thought but that have influenced the way that urban Shuar understand and construct their identities as indigenous people.

6.2.1 Human Rights

One day, Marisol told me the story of how her son, Carlos, was born.

'I expected to give birth in Sucúa, in the hospital where my mother works. We told the doctors that I wanted a Shuar birth.'

'What's a Shuar birth?' I asked.

'You give birth sitting up, instead of lying down,' she replied. 'They say it's less dangerous, and a lot less painful! I wanted to give birth like an indigenous woman, and we have the right to do that – it's in the Ecuadorian Constitution. But in the end I couldn't.'

'Why not?'

'There were problems – 'complications', I think they said – and so they took me to the hospital in Macas. The nurses there didn't know anything about Shuar birth so they told me that I had to give birth the normal way, lying down [*acostada*]. I was very disappointed.'

A week or so later, coincidentally, another Shuar friend told me about the Ecuadorian Constitution, and the rights it provided for indigenous people.

'My uncle is a shaman,' he said, 'and I want to become a traditional healer. Did you know that in the Ecuadorian Constitution, we [indigenous people] have the right to our own healthcare?'

These conversations reminded me of something that I had read in *El Observador*, a newspaper that circulated in the Amazonian region of Ecuador. The article in question had spoken of a review that was about to take place of 'indigenous justice systems'. Reading on, I discovered that the Ecuadorian Constitution allowed each indigenous nationality to have its own justice system, in accordance with the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to which Ecuador was a party. The government wanted to clarify the boundaries between 'ordinary' and 'indigenous' laws, as several ambiguous cases had revealed that this was far from clear-cut. Indigenous political groups, on the other hand, saw any attempts to delineate the jurispridence of their legal systems as a fundamental breach of their rights under international law and the national constitution.

The *El Observador* article mainly referenced highland Quichua communities, with the exception of Amazonian groups such as the Huaorani, who (apparently) insisted upon their

right to impose the death sentence in certain cases. I wondered to what extent Shuar had their own justice system, so I asked the Leader for Justice at the Shuar Federation.

'No, we don't have our own justice system,' he told me bluntly. 'We would, if we had more resources, but we have no money.'

He went on to explain that one law that the Shuar Federation did insist upon was that of federated land, a system set up by the Salesian missionaries which prohibited non-Shuar from buying any land communally owned by a local Shuar community. Of course, as the lawyer I interviewed informed me (see previous chapter) these rules were often bent, if not broken outright. This led to conflict between the new landowners and dispossessed Shuar, which could quickly become violent. During my fieldwork, *mestizo* landowners were forcibly evicted from previously federated land by the offspring of Shuar who had originally sold it. The situation was eventually resolved by the national government in favour of Shuar because, as several participants in the debate put it, they had a right to the land that was defended in the Constitution.

In the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 4) I described increased efforts over the course of the twentieth century to protect the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups have benefitted considerably from the post-World War Two era of human rights, with international organisations such as the United Nations (UN)[34] and the International Labor Organisation (ILO)[35] drafting declarations and treaties aimed at protecting indigenous rights, declaring an International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples[36], and encouraging

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[34] United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007

[35] Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, known as ILO 169

[36] Proposed by the United Nations; ran from 1995-2004. A second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples ran from 2005 - 2014.

nation-states to incorporate the needs and interests of their indigenous populations into their constitutions.

Ecuador is one of a majority of nations in the Americas (with the notable exceptions of the United States and Canada) to have ratified the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). As a result, the government is, in theory at least, obliged to incorporate elements in the Ecuadorian national constitution which provide for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights within Ecuadorian territory. The latest Ecuadorian Constitution, ratified in 2008 by the incumbent Alianza País government under President Rafael Correa, enshrines a long list of indigenous rights in law. These include the right to own their land collectively, and the right to organise their own political representation.

What is interesting about the provisions of the Constitution for the purposes of this thesis, is that many of the 'rights' prescribed reveal significant assumptions about what indigeneity is.[37] These include the right to:

- Freely maintain, develop and strengthen their identity, sense of belonging, ancestral traditions and forms of social organisation;

- Not be displaced from their ancestral territories;

- Maintain, protect and develop their collective knowledge; their sciences, technologies and ancestral wisdom… their medicines and traditional medicine practices, including the right to recuperate, promote and protect sacred and ritual sites.

- Maintain, recuperate, protect, develop and preserve their cultural and historical heritage as an indivisible part of the heritage of Ecuador.

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[37] See Appendix II for the full section in the original Spanish

While even the theoretical provision of these rights is laudable, given the refusal of such rights across previous centuries, it is not hard to see how the wording of these rights presents a particular image of indigeneity that does not necessarily reflect the way that many urban indigenous people live. In particular, the Constitution emphasises the link between indigenous people's identity and, among other things, their 'ancestral territories', 'collective knowledge', 'traditional' practices, and indigenous languages. All of my informants were aware to a greater or lesser degree of the rights enshrined in Ecuadorian law, and many were aware of their origins in international agreements designed to protect indigenous peoples across the world. They therefore received an impression not only of the privileged position accorded to indigenous people vis-à-vis the state, but also of the underlying assumptions that apparently justify that privilege. Why, one might ask, should indigenous people be afforded more rights than other groups, if they are effectively no different to these other groups in the ways they live and behave?[38]

The focus on indigenous rights therefore creates a sense of ambiguity in the minds of many urban Shuar. On the one hand, it reinforces their pride in their identity as indigenous people, an identity so valuable that even the United Nations is determined to afford them rights above and beyond those of a non-indigenous person. On the other hand, it also consolidates the impression in the minds of Shuar and other indigenous peoples that there is a 'right' (and therefore also a 'wrong') way of being indigenous. It emphasises certain elements of indigeneity that take on the impression of key ingredients: ancestral territories, cultural heritage, language, traditions and customs, without which an indigenous identity no longer

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[38] This is an extremely difficult question to answer, and one that I believe lies beyond the scope of the present thesis. Nevertheless, I would argue that historical discrimination against indigenous peoples ought to be addressed in contemporary legislation. Indigenous peoples in Latin America were deprived of their land and reduced to serfdom for generations as a result of colonisation, and these injustices need to be addressed. To deny certain indigenous peoples rights to which they are entitled, on the basis that they 'no longer live like indigenous peoples' is effectively another form of serfdom, another way of forcing indigenous peoples to live a restricted way of life, and to deprive them of the rights afforded to full Ecuadorian citizens.

appears possible. It also goes some way towards prescribing a pan-'Indianness' that elides or conflates ethnic differences.

6.2.2 Environmentalism

'[Indigenous Ecuadorians have the right to] conserve and develop their ways of managing the biodiversity of their natural environment'.

Extract from the Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, my translation

A recent article in Christian Science Monitor described the Yanomami group's twenty-year struggle to defend their territory from legal and illegal extraction industries. Among those interviewed was Sarah Shenker, an employee of Survival International, who was quoted as saying: 'Indigenous peoples are the best conservationists – we have so much to learn from them' (Jones 2014)[39]. This comment neatly encapsulates the 'myth' of the ecologically noble savage: the indigenous Amazonian living 'as nature intended', in perfect harmony with her surroundings. Yet, as I discussed in Chapter 4, this is a fairly recent approach to the relationship between indigenous peoples and the natural environment – and one that has had a significant impact on indigenous Amazonians' construction of their own identity as indigenous people.

The trend in early attempts at wildlife conservation was to segregate people and nature, which were seen as mutually incompatible (Conklin and Graham 1995). This approach began to change in the 1980s with the advent of the 'think globally, act locally' agenda (Varese 1991) which in the Amazon region had the effect of uniting environmentalists and indigenous peoples against common adversaries, such as companies intent upon building

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[39] It is perhaps ironic that Napoleon Chagnon (1974), probably the most famous anthropologist to work with the Yanomami, uses an ethnographic vignette in an attempt to debunk the myth of the 'ecologically noble savage' (in which he describes the way his Yanomami informants leave rubbish lying around and carve symbols into tree trunks with their machetes).

hydroelectric dams in Brazil (Conklin and Graham 1995). The underlying premise of this alliance was 'the assertion that native peoples' views of nature and ways of using natural resources are consistent with Western conservationist principles' (ibid: 696). This led Rousseau's traditional primitivist ideal of the 'noble savage' to be reborn as the 'ecologically noble savage' (Redford 1990): a human being at one with the natural environment, a guardian of the flora and fauna of the rainforest. While I have discussed this development at length in the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 4), here I would like to focus upon the effect of such romanticised notions of indigenous peoples upon urban Shuar conceptualisations of their own identity.

When I talked about what it meant to be Shuar with my informants, I soon realised that Redford's 'ecologically noble savage' was at the heart of their understanding of Shuar identity.

'We Shuar,' Paloma, a woman in her forties, told me, 'are the guardians of the rainforest. We have always protected the forest. When the *apach* [*mestizos*] came, they cut down trees to make space for cattle [*ganado*] and crops.'

Rosario, her neighbour and friend, agreed.

'We have always known how to live in the forest without destroying it,' she said. 'We respect nature, the government doesn't, and that's why we need to protect the *amazonía* from the *petroleros*.'

Ruth, my colleague at the Shuar bilingual school, told me that the reason she was proud to be Shuar was because of indigenous people's relationship with their environment.

'Shuar have always respected nature,' she insisted. 'We learnt from Nunkui [the 'spirit' that makes gardens grow] how to live in the forest, and that knowledge is inside every Shuar.'

This rhetoric is telling as the interviewees in question were among the least politically engaged of my informants (although, as I will explore in Section 6.3 of this Chapter, politics infiltrates all areas of Shuar family life). They are therefore at some distance from the political activism that emphasises indigenous people's relationship with their environment. Furthermore, the language used by my informants to describe their ethnic group's relationship to nature openly contradicts the actions of many Shuar over the past few decades, who have themselves chopped down trees and set up ranches and farms in order to keep cows or cultivate crops. These actions are arguably justified – after all, if they had not made their land 'productive', they would have lost it (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, the reality of many urban Shuar families' interaction (or lack thereof) with their natural environment means that it is impossible for them to live up to their assigned reputation as 'guardians of the rainforest', an especially pertinent issue when we realise that Amazonian indigenous rights claims are often made on the basis of their location within, and positive relationship with, the rainforest. Here, as Peluso observes (2014), the experiences of urban Shuar reveal the contradictions in the way that 'indigeneity' is defined:

> 'The circulation of [indigenous] individuals between rural and urban landscapes complicates simple links between identity and place, challenging western notions of spatially bounded cultures, "localities," or territories.' (Peluso 2014: 6)

I will discuss the implications of urbanisation upon indigenous rights claims in the conclusion to this thesis (Chapter 8). Here, I would like to focus upon the way that the image of the 'ecologically noble savage' influences the way urban Shuar understand their own

indigenous identity. As I mentioned above, one of the most common remarks I heard in interviews when discussing 'what it means to be Shuar' was a variation on the line 'we Shuar know how to care for the rainforest'. It became clear to me over the course of my fieldwork that 'environmentalism', although they did not refer to it using this term, was nevertheless one of the most important elements of my informants' identity as Shuar. There was a perceptible generational difference in this attitude (noticeable in the prologue to this thesis, when Lorena and her children disagree over whether or not to clear away the petrol bottle). Nevertheless, it was a remark that I heard repeated by a variety of people, young and old, male and female, university-educated or otherwise. It appeared that, for many urban Shuar, the ability to live in harmony with nature was one of the principal elements of an indigenous identity, and the very basis of their claim to privileged rights vis-à-vis the state, non-indigenous Ecuadorians, and the international community.

This troubled me a great deal, as it appeared that my urban Shuar informants' environmental credentials were also the easiest to 'disprove'. Far from living 'as nature intended', many of them owned cattle (for which they had cut down trees to create fields); those that could afford it had cars, or at the very least motorbikes; and several had been involved in throwing dynamite into a nearby river in order to kill as many fish as possible in a single attempt.

As I further probed my informants on this issue, I began to discover a disjuncture between two kinds of 'Shuar': 'the Shuar' [*los shuar*], an idealised group of 'hyperreal Indians' (Ramos 1994) whose behaviour and attitude were held up as exemplary, but whose lives bore no resemblance to those of contemporary urban Shuar. 'The Shuar' lived in rural

isolation, in complete harmony with their surroundings; they hunted using 'natural' weapons (rather than rifles and dynamite); and they did not consume more than they needed.

This image, which every one of my informants knew well, seemed to be yet another stick with which to beat urban Shuar, for whom such an idealised lifestyle was impossible. Furthermore, it was not a lifestyle to which any of my informants aspired, although they often romanticised it (particularly the women) and said that it was a life they might have found enjoyable or fulfilling. Their aspirations tended more towards an urban lifestyle: a good education, a professional career, wealth in the form of land and/or cattle, and the perennial Ecuadorian ambition of building a house of one's own. Yet many of my informants felt uneasy about such goals, as they knew that these contradicted the image of ideal 'Shuarness \with which they were presented and in which they wanted to believe.

6.2.3 Euro-American philosophical tradition

'So,' said Ipiak as we sat down with our beers, 'you study anthropology'.

'That's right.'

'I hate anthropologists.'

'Why?' I asked, anticipating an explanation of how I, as an anthropologist, was appropriating Shuar wisdom (including, by implication, Ipiak's) and using it to further my career.

'Well,' he said, 'I've studied anthropology at university, and I don't like the way you try to freeze culture and stop it from changing. Culture has to change, and yet you, anthropologists, want it to stay the same. You want Shuar to stay in the rainforest.'

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I was stunned, not least because his critique of anthropology mirrored my own anthropological (or so I thought) critique of *other* external influences upon indigenous urban identity. Did he, in that case, feel that Shuar culture could change? Did he want it to?

We were sitting in a bar on the trendy Plaza Foch in Quito. I had come to Ecuador's capital city to pick up some supplies, and had been put in touch with Ipiak by his brother, Amaru, whom I had met through mutual friends in Sucúa. Both Amaru and Ipiak came from a Shuar community that lay on the *río blanco* ['white river'] between Sucúa and Macas; both were studying at the San Francisco University, funded by prestigious scholarships that had been targeted specifically at indigenous candidates.

I warmed to Amaru as soon as I met him: he was open, gregarious and enthusiastic, with an intelligence and a sensitivity which belied his mere twenty-one years. Ipiak, who was three years younger, at first seemed rather more aloof, but as we began talking it became clear that he was sharp. He was studying international relations at university and, as part of his course, he had taken a couple of modules in anthropology. What he had learnt had left him unimpressed.

'But anthropology isn't like that any more,' I hastened to point out. 'It used to be, in the early days, but that was decades ago. Now we see cultures as dynamic, as constantly changing.'

'*Pues*, they don't teach it that way at the San Francisco,' he replied.

I had to wonder. If arguably the best university in the country was teaching its students seemingly outdated notions of anthropology, what were the other universities

teaching? Were all anthropology students in Ecuador learning to 'preserve' culture – to 'freeze' it, as Ipiak has said?

I soon discovered that while more advanced degrees in Ecuador (such as the postgraduate courses offered at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences [FLACSO] and at the Salesian University in Quito) provided a more contemporary and comprehensive picture of anthropological thought, the introductory courses that were most Ecuadorian students' only taste of anthropology did indeed focus upon older, apparently outdated notions of 'culture' as something that could – and should – be preserved and protected.

One issue with which I have been continually confronted while researching and writing this thesis is the assertion that concepts such as 'identity', 'ethnicity,' 'indigeneity' and 'culture' are not emic – they are external categories and tools that serve the anthropologist's purpose. For example, next to a sentence in one of my chapters which began with the words 'Shuar define culture as…', a fellow anthropologist, who had been kind enough to review and comment on my work, wrote: 'Shuar don't define culture; *anthropologists* define culture.'

I would argue, on the contrary, that Shuar do define culture: they have a clear understanding of what 'culture' means to them. This understanding comes for the most part from a Euro-American philosophical tradition that has influenced what is taught in Ecuadorian schools and universities, which many urban Shuar residents will have attended. Even those who for whatever reason have not had access to educational opportunities are aware of the discourses surrounding indigeneity and ethnic identity in Ecuador, in part because they are in contact with educated Shuar. The majority of urban Shuar therefore have an awareness of terms such as 'culture' and 'identity'; this understanding is not always as

sophisticated or nuanced as, perhaps, that of a social scientist, but then neither is that of the average lay person anywhere else.

The question, for the purposes of this chapter, is to what extent these ideas about identity, ethnicity and culture, originating in a 'Western' tradition, influence urban Shuar understandings of their own ethnic identity and participate in the 'hall of mirrors' effect. I maintain that such notions have had and continue to have a considerable effect. I did not expect direct questions about ethnic identity to bear much fruit in my ethnographic enquiries, and yet – as the opening anecdote with Clara suggests – many people had the vocabulary and understanding to be able to speak eloquently and seriously about these issues. Moreover, the vast majority of my informants were not indigenous leaders who had mastered the necessary language in order to be able to make political claims; they were ordinary Shuar men and women, who for their own personal and political reasons were prepared to take seriously questions of identity, and particularly of their own identity as Shuar.

As I noted above, the social scientific education that many Ecuadorians, including indigenous people, receive is arguably somewhat outdated. David was easily able to critique the old-fashioned anthropological ideas that he was taught, and no doubt other students could do the same, but this does not change the fact that many – perhaps most – students (whether indigenous or not) will have absorbed the idea that 'culture' is a fixed, static element that ought to be 'preserved' and that can be 'lost'. This was certainly a very common idea among my Shuar friends: people would lament constantly the idea that Shuar culture was being 'lost'; that 'in a generation at most' there would be no more Shuar. It was odd to find an idea so prevalent among Shuar people, which had been dismissed on a national level in Ecuador precisely because of the political success of these same Shuar people!

6.3 'We should all wear *traje típico* to work': the 'indigenous politics' mirror

'Alba is my best friend. We've known each other for a long time.'

I've lost track of how many times Lorena told me this during the first six months or so of my fieldwork. Yet by the time I left the field, Alba and Lorena barely spoke to each other. Nothing had really happened to pull them apart: there was no argument, no scandal, no dramatic falling out or taking of sides. They still greeted each other whenever they met in the street. But Lorena gradually stopped going to Alba's house, and when Alba's daughter Clara called on me, she would wait at the garden gate rather than risk walking through Lorena's front door.

What could have happened between these two old friends that succeeded in driving such a firm wedge between them? In a word, politics. 2011-12 was a time of escalating political tension in Sucúa. President Correa, leader of the Alianza País party, was rumoured to be bribing and threatening indigenous political groups into cooperating with government activity in the region, such as mining, oil prospecting and privatisation of natural resources. In retaliation, the indigenous political party Pachakutik mobilised its members to take part in various demonstrations, including a *caminata* [march] in Quito. Locally, the Shuar Federation's perceived complicity in the government's agenda resulted in several attempted coups, led by splinter groups of Shuar from the south of the province.

Lorena and Alba found themselves on either side of a political divide. Lorena's son Alvaro worked for the city council, and thus for Alianza País (as the mayor was a member of this party). Furthermore, her husband was a successful migrant, meaning that the family had a decent income and were members of an urban middle class that was generally more inclined to vote for President Correa (see Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon). Alba,

on the other hand, was and always had been a fervent Pachakutik supporter. She was a close friend of Marcelino Chumpi, the Pachakutik Prefect of Morona Santiago, and her brother had been an indigenous leader and later a politician.

Where Alba sided with Pachakutik on national issues, Lorena sided with the President. And where Alba sided with the Shuar Federation on local issues, Lorena sided with the City Council. Although neither was involved directly in politics, it was eventually politics that drove them apart. By the end I had become a sort of go-between, a sounding board for their disintegrating friendship. When Marcelino Chumpi expressed his intention to stand again as Pachakutik's prefecture candidate, Lorena said to me, 'I expect *Alba's* really pleased about that.' When the Shuar Federation, under financial pressure from the government, agreed not to participate in the Pachakutik *caminata* in Quito,[40] Alba muttered bitterly, 'well I suppose *Lorena's* satisfied now.'

When I began my project, I decided to avoid dealing directly with the indigenous political movement. I felt that enough had already been written on this topic (see e.g. Selverston-Scher 2001, Postero and Zamosc 2006, Brysk 2000, Jackson and Warren 2005) and furthermore, I wanted to focus upon the everyday experiences of urban Shuar residents and how these quotidian, less 'symbolic' moments and interactions shaped their identity as indigenous people. However, it soon became apparent that it would be impossible for me to ignore politics entirely. Even if Sucúa hadn't been the site of the FICSH headquarters (as well as a local branch of Pachakutik), indigenous politics would still have permeated the lives of my urban Shuar friends. In this section, therefore, I will examine the influence of the

indigenous political movement upon my urban Shuar informants' conceptualisation and representation of their indigenous identity.

A substantial amount has been written about the multiple ways that indigenous peoples in general and Amazonian peoples in particular make use of certain cultural and ethnic symbols in political campaigns (e.g. Conklin 1997, Conklin and Graham 1995). Such symbols can include, on the one hand, physical elements such as feathers, body paint, spears, nudity, long hair, tattoos, jewellery, or indigenous dwellings; and on the other, intangible elements such as indigenous language, music, creation narratives, and 'typical' dances. Indigenous political leaders have increasingly come to recognise the potency of these symbols on the international stage, evoking as they do in the Western imagination a romantic, orientalised image of a 'primitive' way of life, one that is under threat from the relentless drive of globalisation. In a political context in which indigenous peoples hold few cards, it is understandable that they would want to make use of any weapons at their disposal, and especially those that have the potential to call forth the combined wrath of international organisations, human right charities and the world's press. Nevertheless, the use of such symbols is influenced by and further perpetuates potentially damaging stereotypes about 'authentic' indigeneity.

The Shuar Federation is as aware as any other indigenous political organisation of the power of 'ethnic' symbols. While the *dirigentes* dress in 'Western' clothing in their everyday lives, for political and other public events they wear *traje típico*, consisting of an *itip* [long skirt] for men and a *tarach* [blue dress] for women.[41] A recent announcement by the newly-

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[41] During my fieldwork, a meeting of the General Assembly decreed that all dirigentes should wear *traje típico* to the office; while this policy was roundly approved, it had yet to be implemented by the time of my departure.

elected President of the FICSH, Agustín Wachapa, mandated that only he and the other *dirigentes* of the FICSH were allowed to wear the *tawasap* [feather headdress].

RESOLUCIÓN QUE REGLAMENTA EL USO DE TAWASAP
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EL CONSEJO DE GOBIERNO DE LA FICSH ADOPTÓ RESOLUCIÓN QUE REGLAMENTA EL USO DE TAWASAP En la Asamblea realizada los días 28, 29 y 30 de julio del 2014, se aprobó el nuevo Estatuto de la Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar, donde en uno de los artículos prohíbe el uso de TAWASAP de todas las personas que no tenga dignidad de Presidente, por lo tanto a partir de la publicación, queda prohibido el uso de TAWASAP, a los electos por elección popular, lideres de diferentes organizaciones y entre otros, el incumplimiento de este estatuto, sera sancionado con calidad de perdida de socio de la Organización, por lo tanto adjunto el articulo y su literal del presente estatuto. Art.6.- Son principios fundamentales de la FICSH: f) Los símbolos míticos del poder de la nacionalidad Shuar son: el TAWASAP y el NANKI, que solo podrá usarse en actos oficiales por el Presidente y miembros del Consejo de Gobierno de la FICSH, los líderes o sabios; y los socios podrán utilizar SENTA por la jerarquización del poder en la organización. Lcdo. Jimpikit Agustín Wachapa. PRESIDENTE DE LA FICSH

Political speeches will often be made in the Shuar language, and large-scale events of any kind will generally involve traditional Shuar dances, which will sometimes be filmed and later broadcast on regional television channels. Over the course of my fieldwork I attended several events of this description at the Shuar Federation, ranging from the opening ceremony of the annual General Assembly [*asamblea general*], to the crowning of the Shuar/Achuar beauty queen.

Fig. 9: Parade to open the annual FICSH General Assembly. Photograph taken by the author.

Indigenous identity is first and foremost a political identity. The power of these symbols of 'Indianness' – the feathers, body paint and Amerindian languages – lies in the fact that they afford those who wield them a kind of symbolic capital,[42] allowing them successfully to make political claims for land and other rights, including the return of several *tsantsas* [shrunken heads] from the National Museum of the American Indian's (NMAI) Research Branch (formerly the Heye Foundation) in the Bronx, New York, in 1995, an act which further consolidated the symbolic capital of the Shuar Federation (see Rubenstein 2007).

Arguably, then, in the eyes of many Shuar, the 'value' of their indigenous identity – the relevance of being Shuar at all – lies in the fact that (as an ethnic group) they are able to make political claims at a national and international level. International organisations such as

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[42] For a full discussion of symbolic capital see Chapter 7

the United Nations, and large NGOs such as Survival International, insist upon the recognition of indigenous rights, and especially those of Amazonian peoples, as the latter are often believed to typify the quintessential 'indigenous tribe'. The Ecuadorian government has responded both to direct pressure on the part of indigenous rights groups such as CONAIE (see Chapter 3), and to indirect pressure from their international allies, in granting increasing land and other rights to indigenous peoples in Ecuador, including an explicit mention of respect for their rights in the Ecuadorian constitution, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Yet this support, and the political success upon which it depends, are often contingent upon indigenous groups like Shuar maintaining the illusion of a romanticised 'primitive tribe'. An interesting example is that of the world-famous Yanomami political activist Davi Kopenawa. Yanomami, an Amazonian ethnic group straddling the Brazilian and Venezuelan border, have famously been portrayed by anthropologists such as Napoleon Chagnon as a 'fierce people' (Chagnon 1968), inherently violent and war-mongering. When Kopenawa attempted to present an alternative picture of Yanomami culture, he was dismissed by Chagnon as being insufficiently Yanomami, because of his fluency in Portuguese (Graham 2003). According to Chagnon, Kopenawa's apparent acculturation meant that he no longer had any authority to speak on behalf of Yanomami.

There is, therefore, concern among indigenous leaders that urbanisation (or at least, the visibility of urbanisation), and the changes in lifestyle and occupation that it inevitably entails, will somehow delegitimize their claims for land and other rights (see Peluso 2014). Indeed, the very fact that indigenous people are leaving the forest and taking up residence in towns can on its own be perceived as a reason not to concede land rights to them, as it contradicts their insistence upon the cultural necessity of their relationship with the forest.

McSweeney and Jokisch refer to the concerns of indigenous political leaders in their 2007 paper and these concerns are to a certain extent justified, as we saw in the previous paragraph.

This concern also exists, in a diluted and diffused form, among ordinary urban Shuar. Clara would often criticise Diana Atamaint, a Shuar Member of Parliament, because she did not wear full Shuar *traje tipico* when appearing in public.

'Look at Lourdes Tibán [a Quichua MP] – she always wears her traditional clothes, but Diana Atamaint never does.'

When I asked her why it troubled her so much, she paused for a minute, then said: 'It makes Shuar look bad, like we're losing our culture.' She was also among several of my Shuar friends in insisting that the FICSH dirigentes ought to wear *traje tipico* to work.

6.4 'Please show me your indigenous I.D.': The government mirror

6.4.1 Andres's dilemma

Rosario was thrilled. Her son was coming home at last!

Five years previously, Rosario's son Andres had left for Spain. Then a young man with two small children, he felt at the time that he would earn a better living abroad. His girlfriend chose to accompany him, and so the children were left with Rosario. After a few years of relative prosperity, the economic crisis struck, and suddenly Spain was no longer the promised land. Andres decided to return home to his family.

By the time of Andres's arrival in Sucúa, I had come to know Rosario very well. She was Clara's aunt and Paloma's best friend, and as such was included in virtually every Shuar

social gathering I attended. She often invited me to her house for a chat, and I would usually drop in whenever I was passing by, to play with her many grandchildren – all of whom had been left in her charge by parents bent on seeking their fortune in America or Europe.

Rosario didn't 'look' Shuar. Everybody said so. There was no doubting, of course, that she *was* Shuar: she had grown up in a Shuar *centro* and spoke Shuar as her first language. Yet she had wide green eyes, brown hair and a dusting of light freckles across her nose and cheeks. One day her '*mestizo*' appearance came up in conversation, and she smiled sadly and said, euphemistically, 'my grandmother was taken advantage of'. In those days, she explained, the *colono* landowners could sleep with whomever they chose, and many Shuar women bore '*mestizo*' babies.

When Andres arrived, I noticed that he had the same large, pale eyes as his mother. Moreover (unlike her) he didn't know how to speak Shuar. Indeed, his accent, dress, and mannerisms were by now almost more European than Ecuadorian. Nobody realised at the time the problems that this would cause him.

One day, a few weeks after Andres had come home, Rosario appeared in the doorway of our house. She was furious.

'Can you believe it?' she said to Paloma. 'The President won't do it! He said no!'

'Um, who won't do what?' I asked.

'The President of the FICSH. He won't give Andres papers to say that he's Shuar.' Rosario explained to me that the Shuar Federation usually provided certificates to Shuar men and women who needed to prove, for whatever reason, that they were Shuar. However, in the case of Andres Tsakimp, the President had refused to grant this service.

'Did he say why?'

'He doesn't think Andres is Shuar. He says that he doesn't look Shuar, and he doesn't speak Shuar, so how can he be Shuar? Honestly! What about his surname? Tsakimp is a Shuar name! And I'm his mother! Is anyone going to say that I'm not Shuar?' As if to prove her point, she lapsed into Shuar with Paloma. I understood, from the rest of the conversation, that Andres needed to prove he was Shuar in order to apply for a job in Quito, one which was open exclusively to candidates from the indigenous 'nationalities'.

As we have seen in the previous section, one result of the indigenous political movement is that many countries will now afford certain rights to their 'indigenous' populations, whether in the form of territorial claims, indigenous justice systems or positive discrimination in applications to jobs or elite universities. In most cases, governments will follow a pared-down version of Martínez Cobo's UN definition (UNPFI 2009), emphasising self-identification as indigenous and recognition of one's identity by the indigenous group in question. This is the case in Ecuador where the government has recently begun a campaign of positive discrimination, aimed particularly at Amazonian indigenous nationalities, who are underrepresented at top universities and in government roles. In these cases, recognition of a candidate's indigenous identity is usually left up to the most prominent indigenous political organisation representing that candidate's nationality – in Andres's case, the Shuar Federation. Whether or not the FICSH President considered Andres to be Shuar was therefore of not inconsiderable importance.

Gabriela Saant was the beneficiary of one such government initiative. Lorena's daughter and Alvaro's sister was a graduate of the most prestigious university in Ecuador, where she had studied with a scholarship specifically targeted at indigenous candidates.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to secure a role in the Shuar-controlled Prefecture (see previous chapter), she entered a nationwide competition for entry into the Diplomatic Service. She discovered that her indigenous identity would once again prove beneficial, although as it turned out, it was a mixed blessing. The final stage of the recruitment competition was an individual interview with a panel of senior staff. Shortly afterwards, Gabriela visited her family in Sucúa and told us about her experiences.

'Well, there were five of us — five Shuar — left in the competition. And as you know, they gave extra points to candidates who were indigenous, and also to candidates from the Amazon region. Because, *pues*, educational standards are lower here so we're at a disadvantage in these kinds of competitions. So: we each had two extra points for being indigenous Amazonians, and I had one more point on top of that because I'm a woman. But as we were waiting to go into the interview, someone said, 'what if they ask us to speak Shuar?' We all looked at each other: none of us could speak Shuar; or at least, not well enough for a whole job interview. We panicked, Enmita! I mean, we all had our membership cards and certification from the Shuar Federation, but if you can't even speak the language, what are they going to think?' She took a deep breath and smiled. 'Fortunately, none of the interviewers spoke Shuar either, so we were fine.'

6.4.2 Discussion

As this thesis is endeavouring to demonstrate, the question of who is and is not indigenous is a murky one and is virtually impossible to answer in any clear-cut way. Although the Ecuadorian government's solution – allowing indigenous groups themselves to determine who is or is not a member of their group – is arguably the best way of addressing this issue, it does encourage the drafting of an artificial line around what may, ironically, turn out to be a

very limited and stereotyped notion of what it means to be indigenous. At the Rio Summit in Brazil in 1992, Kayapó political leaders stationed themselves at the entrance to the self-styled 'Tribal Village' and turned away anyone whom they deemed not to be indigenous. One group of North American indigenous people turned up in Western clothing and were refused entry; the next day they wore typical costume and were allowed in (Conklin 1997). The refusal of Andres Tsakimp's identity card is arguably a similar issue: he did not 'look' or 'sound' sufficiently Shuar, despite, as Rosario pointed out, having a Shuar surname. He was therefore refused access to the benefits of being Shuar.

What influence will the distribution of 'indigenous I.D. cards' have upon Shuar notions of their own ethnic identity? Possibly less than might be expected. Shuar are known for being fiercely independent (Rubenstein 2002) and are unlikely to be guided or restricted by the FICSH's definition of who is or is not 'Shuar' enough. These decisions can be overturned, and anyway, everyone 'knows' who is really Shuar. Nevertheless, these I.D. cards – stamps of 'authenticity', in a way – serve to reinforce the notion that in order to be Shuar, a person needs to tick a certain number of 'boxes' – that is, to satisfy the expectations that non-indigenous people have of them – and failure to do so may lead to a loss of the very opportunities that bring value to the Shuar identity.

6.5 Staying with 'the real Shuar': The tourism mirror

'Emma, can I ask you a question?' said my friend (and host brother) Alvaro, one morning over breakfast.

'Of course,' I replied. 'What's up?'

'Well, you know the waterfalls in the *centro* Asunción?'

'The ones we visited a few weeks ago?'

'Yes, exactly. What did you think? Do you think foreign tourists will want to go there?'

Alvaro, as I've mentioned earlier, was employed by the town council to promote tourism in Sucúa. His main focus was upon attracting foreign travellers, especially those from the United States and Europe. As a result he would often ask my advice about what kind of tourist attraction would appeal to this elusive demographic.

'Um, yes, I suppose so,' I replied cautiously. 'It might be a good idea to make a bridge over the river, so that it's easier to cross. But sure, why not?'

'*¡Qué bien!* I'm working on a project to attract more tourists. *Mira*, I'm going to work with the Shuar family that lives by the entrance to the waterfalls. They know how to make typical Shuar food. So we'll offer a one-day package: you can visit the waterfalls, eat *comida típica* for lunch, and maybe listen to someone telling myths. Things about *arútam* and the pilgrimages to the waterfalls that we used to do in the past, *cosas así*. What do you think? Would you pay $10 for a day like that?'

'$10? I don't know. The entrance fee only costs $2 normally.'

'True, but you get so much more with this package. And then maybe they could stay overnight with the family, and sleep in a *casa típica*, and drink *chicha* [manioc beer] in the morning. That would cost extra, of course. Oh – and the wife and daughters could sell *artesanía* [handicrafts]! I guess they should all wear *traje típico*, at least when they're with the tourists – although it might make it difficult to climb to the waterfall. So, what do you think?' he persisted. 'Would people from your country like it?'

I thought about it for a moment and had to agree that they would. After all, it was a classic example of the cultural tourism that had become so popular in the Ecuadorian Amazon in recent years (although not nearly as popular as Amazonians assumed it to be – see Carpentier 2012). During my periodic trips to Quito I would usually stay in a hostel frequented by 'Western' backpackers, mostly Europeans, Americans and Australians. They would often exchange stories and advice about trips to the rainforest that were highly illuminating. One Spanish backpacker told me that he had stayed with the 'real Shuar' in an 'isolated village' an hour's walk from the main road. While there he had eaten 'traditional food' which mainly appears to have consisted of insects and their larvae. Another showed me the various items of jewellery he had picked up while visiting a 'Shuar village'. He had bracelets, necklaces and bags made of seeds. I remembered a conversation I had recently had with a woman who made and sold 'Shuar' jewellery: she told me that the *artesania* made with seeds was aimed exclusively at a '*gringo*' market, as Shuar themselves preferred brightly-coloured plastic beads.

Fig 10: Artesanía made from natural materials. Photograph taken by the author.

Cultural tourism has been shown to have a strong influence upon indigenous perceptions and understanding of their own identity as indigenous (see in particular Peluso and Alexiades

2005). For indigenous people like Shuar, it is yet another example of the potential 'value' of an indigenous identity: people are prepared to travel from other countries – including America and Europe – and pay money in order to see, experience, and learn about the indigenous cultures of South America. It is no surprise that so many of my urban Shuar friends had studied, were studying, or intended to study, a degree in 'ecotourism'.

While Sucúa was actually something of a backwater in 'ecotourism' terms, compared to its northern neighbours Puyo and Tena, the influence of tourism was nevertheless pervasive. As I have mentioned above, many of my Shuar friends studied tourism at university, and the relatively few tourists that did pass through Sucúa were highly visible. Lorena told me about a group of French and Argentinian tourists who visited her brother Julio, an *uwishin* [shaman], and stayed in his lodge – she was appalled at how much money he had charged them.

Alvaro's idea of what tourists are looking for when they visit eco-lodges and other indigenous attractions is clear from the vignette that opens this section. Effectively, they are seeking (or are perceived to be seeking) an 'authentic' experience, denuded of any external contamination such as modern clothing, electricity or Ecuadorian food. Tourists want to eat 'typical' food (including, of course, insects and larvae), drink manioc beer, live in a 'traditional' wooden dwelling, experience 'Shuar' music and dance, and ideally be healed by a 'genuine' Shuar shaman. They want their Shuar jewellery made of natural materials such as feathers and seeds, and not of colourful plastic. They want, in short, the 'authentic' Shuar experience, uncontaminated by contact. The insistence upon this idealised image of Shuarness, and the value of it in real economic terms for Shuar, contributes to the idea in the minds of many urban Shuar that they are simply not Shuar enough.

6.6 'In a few years there will be no Shuar': The *mestizo* mirror

Looking back, my first two weeks in Sucúa seem like a confused rush of introductions. Everyone I met knew at least one person who could help me with my project, and that person knew someone else. Occasionally the people that I met were Shuar, but for the most part, in those two weeks, they were *mestizos* who worked with Shuar. My first impressions of the situation of urban Shuar in Sucúa and Macas thus came from these early *mestizo* informants.

One of these was a doctor, Antonio Reategui. He worked at a local hospital, and he was married to a Shuar woman. After our interview in his office, he drove me to meet a Shuar teacher friend of his (who would later also become a close friend of mine), and on the way he told me his thoughts on the future of Shuar in towns like Macas and Sucúa.

'The culture is dying,' he told me. 'Shuar who come here, they stop eating their traditional food, they start eating rice and drinking coca cola. They stop speaking the language, they… they marry *mestizos*!' He laughed a little in embarrassment. 'In a few years,' he continued, 'there will be no Shuar. Not in towns anyway.'

My good friend, the doctor Luis Rojas, agreed with this point of view. Having worked in the region for twenty-five years, he had seen a lot of changes among his Shuar patients.

'They've become acculturated over the years,' he told me. 'They used to drink manioc beer; now they drink Pilsener, and they get much more drunk. The girls all end up in prostitution. They don't grow up in what I call the 'school of the house' [*la escuela de la casa*] so they don't learn how to be Shuar.' He insisted that 'Shuarness' was something tangible, that could be lost. When a person changed her language, clothes, diet and

occupation, this was tantamount to acculturation, and acculturation resulted in the loss of her ethnic identity.

What is interesting is that these ideas are consistent with Amazonian notions concerning the processual making of people through continual interactions, exchange of bodily fluids, and – especially – commensality, eating the same kind of food, usually together (Vilaça 2005). My Shuar informants, both urban and rural, were equally insistent upon this latter point, and emphasised the importance of continuing to consume manioc beer, *ayampaco* (a dish of grilled fish or chicken and palm fruit, wrapped in leaves), 'organic' [*criollo*] chicken, and other forest delicacies such as ants, palm weevil larvae, or armadillo. Those that chose to consume 'processed' *mestizo* food instead were said to be less healthy. Indeed, there was a strong association, according to many of my informants, between 'Shuarness' and eating 'good food'. Clara often told me that she liked to spend time in Taant because 'the food there is so good – I can be there a week and not eat any rice.'

Fig. 11: Clara's grandmother preparing 'mukindi' (palm weevil grubs). Photograph taken by the author.

The difference between these Amazonian notions of commensality and processual personhood, and the *mestizo* ideas about acculturation, is that the latter are highly reminiscent of the old '*blanqueamiento*' theories, whereby indigenous people who move to urban areas and change their behaviour become somehow 'whiter' and leave behind their indigenous identity. Although these ideas are now outdated (and have to a large part been disproven by the rise of indigenous identity politics and the indigenous population boom – see McSweeney and Arps 2005) they appear to have stuck in the minds of even the most intelligent and sympathetic *mestizos*. It is no wonder, therefore that such impressions are then transmitted to urban Shuar, thus heightening their sense of themselves as somehow less Shuar, less indigenous, than their rural counterparts, and therefore doomed to lose their cultural identity.

Another issue with Ecuadorian *mestizos* is that there is an increasing tendency, especially among the youth of Ecuador, to fetishise their indigenous past. This is by no means new in Latin America – the original meaning of '*indigenismo*' refers to celebrating the indigenous past of Latin American countries while at the same time predicting the inevitable decline and assimilation of indigenous culture (Clark 1998). This idealisation of *mestizos*' indigenous past has arguably experienced a comeback as a result of the economic crisis in Ecuador and subsequent wave of migration to Spain. Many Ecuadorians returning to the land of their (other) ancestors reported experiencing racism, as well as severe mistreatment on the part of Spanish employers. The spike in Ecuadorian migration to Spain, coupled with increased freedom of movement within the European Union (and therefore a need to tighten Europe's borders), led the Spanish government to impose previously unnecessary tourist visas upon Ecuadorians travelling to Spain. This move was extremely unpopular in Ecuador and left many middle-classed Ecuadorians in particular feeling disinherited, in that the 'Spanish' element of their culture and heritage seemed to have effectively rejected them. As a

result many young, middle-classed Ecuadorians preferred to emphasise their indigenous ancestry (O'Driscoll 2010a).

A related element is the fact that *mestizos* in Ecuador and elsewhere are also prey to the influence of indigenous 'mirrors'. They too are exposed to the symbols appropriated by indigenous politics (in the form of feathers, nudity, body paint, piercings etc), human rights campaigns, environmentalists, and tourism. More *mestizos* than indigenous people, after all, have a university education, and many work in tourism, environment-based jobs, or NGOs. They therefore build up expectations of how an indigenous person ought to be that are for the most part based upon externally-generated, idealised images. It is therefore unsurprising that many *mestizos* have a romantic image of indigenous people, one that is rooted in a mythical past, and are thus disappointed by the contemporary indigenous reality. Again, this negative attitude is communicated to indigenous people, and Shuar are no exception.

Finally, *mestizo* romanticisation of indigenous groups is arguably due in part to the success of many indigenous people as a result of out-migration. Ann Miles (2000) describes the disgruntlement of elite Cuencan families when their previously poor and marginalised indigenous neighbours were suddenly able to afford large, lavishly decorated houses, and notes that the elites tended to identify their own sadness at the loss of Ecuador's 'cultural heritage' as the reason for their dismay. I witnessed a similar phenomenon in Sucúa among *mestizo* informants, who claimed that Shuar were losing their culture, 'especially those that travel to the United States'.

6.7 The burden of heritage: The *patrimonio intangible* mirror

Shortly after I moved in with Alvaro's family, he invited me to an event that was to take place in the auditorium of Sucúa's town hall [*el municipio*]. The subject was local architecture, and

several experts in the vernacular architecture of the Amazon region had been invited to give talks and lead discussions. When I arrived at the venue, I noticed that several Shuar men and women, prominent local political leaders judging by the way they were dressed (feather headdresses and colourful jewellery), were taking their seats.

The opening presentation was about Ecuador's cultural heritage [*patrimonio cultural*]. The speaker, a young woman, began by providing us with a definition of 'cultural heritage'.

'*El patrimonio cultural*', she explained, 'can be tangible or intangible. Tangible heritage includes architecture, but also ceramics, jewellery, *traje típico*… things you can see and touch. Intangible heritage is mythology, '*cosmovisión*'[43], customs and traditions.' She then went on to show us various photographs of Morona Santiago's 'tangible' architectural heritage, including wooden buildings and traditional Shuar dwellings.

I was struck by the implications of the speaker's definition of 'heritage'. Up to that point, my understanding of heritage, in the collective sense, had been gleaned from visits to UNESCO World Heritage sites, and consisted more or less of something created in the past which people considered worthy of preserving, in its original form (or as close to the original form as possible) for the benefit of posterity. It had never occurred to me that heritage could be 'intangible' – that is, that it could include traditional ways of life as well as tangible objects such as houses, pots and baskets. What would it mean, in that case, to 'preserve' a cultural tradition? Specifically, what would it mean for the practitioners of that tradition?

When I set about to explore this question I discovered a rich literature available not only in anthropology, but also in fields such as law and heritage studies, of which I will

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[43] A term used commonly among Shuar and other Ecuadorian indigenous groups, meaning roughly 'cosmology' or 'ontology'.

unfortunately only be able to scratch the surface in this thesis. In this section I will bypass the broader debates on cultural intellectual property, and will instead deal specifically with the question of how 'intangible cultural heritage' and its importance, to ethnic groups as well as to nation-states, influences the way Shuar view their own practices.

In their introduction to the collected volume *Intangible Heritage* (2008), Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa observe that the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' was effectively conceived as a means of redressing the imbalance in world heritage which historically favoured European 'tangible' heritage, and particularly 'monumentally grand and aesthetic sites and places' (2008: 1). It was thought that an emphasis on cultural heritage would instead privilege 'Asian, African and South American countries and Indigenous practices' (ibid).

So what does this notion of 'intangible cultural heritage' mean to urban Shuar, and how does it influence their understanding of what it means to be Shuar? I asked several of my friends to tell me what they took '*patrimonio intangible*' to mean; the majority were familiar with the concept, but disagreed with me that it referred to the past.

'No, Enmita,' said Marisol Antich, Clara's sister, as we walked towards Taant one day. 'They're talking about things that exist today, that need to be preserved.'

'Such as Shuar customs and traditions?'

'Exactly.'

'And is this *patrimonio cultural*… is it just for Shuar, or is it everybody's heritage?'

Marisol paused for a moment to think.

'I think it's everybody's,' she said finally, 'but Shuar are the ones that keep it going.'

Alvaro, when I asked him, agreed. 'Our heritage [*nuestro patrimonio*] – it's everybody's [*pertenece a todos*].'

I found this idea fascinating. According to this perspective, Shuar 'intangible heritage' was not merely the property and prerogative of Shuar; rather, it was part of Ecuador's national heritage, part of the nation's history and collective identity, something that ought to be preserved for future generations – and it was up to Shuar to preserve their traditions for the benefit of everybody. On the one hand, the fact that intangible cultural practices and beliefs were considered worthy of protection demonstrated how far ideas about the importance and worth of indigenous culture had come, and my Shuar friends were clearly proud of the fact that their practices were valued in this way. On the other hand, what immense pressure to place on people!

When the cultural practices and cosmologies of an ethnic group become the 'intangible heritage' of a nation, or even of the whole of humanity (as the term 'world heritage' implies) this places the onus of 'preserving' such practices upon the people who originally practised them. Whilst this bestows upon the cultural proprietors a certain 'value' (literally, according to the Oxford English Dictionary [2014], whose definition of [cultural] heritage observes that it is often subject to 'exploitation', 'especially as tourist attractions'), that 'value' is only maintained if the traditions are also maintained. The obligation for Shuar, therefore, is to freeze their culture in time and space, to live and breathe this intangible heritage, or else lose their status as guardians of the nation's *patrimonio cultural*.

6.8 'Revitalising Shuar culture': Clara's project

I have endeavoured to establish so far in this chapter that urban Shuar residents often suffer from what could be described as an identity crisis vis-à-vis their ethnicity, in large part as a result of the various and diverse influences and perspectives that they encounter and experience on a daily basis while living in urban areas. What, in that case, of rural Shuar, whose comparative isolation and largely monoethnic environment render these influences less pervasive? In order to ascertain how rural Shuar feel about their identity as Shuar, I conducted a long-term study in the *centro* Taant, in cooperation with Clara, who was collecting data for her undergraduate thesis in ecotourism. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Clara's aim in this project was to 'revitalise' Shuar 'customs' and 'culture' in her community. As a result we began by attempting to ascertain what the people of Taant considered these 'customs' to be, and how much they felt that they knew about them.

Taant is a beautiful and fascinating place. When it was originally built in the early 1960s, it must have been a fairly isolated spot, as the road from Macas to Cuenca did not exist yet and the nearest colonist settlements were small and sparsely populated. By the time I conducted my fieldwork, Taant was a mere 45-minute walk from an asphalted highway with regular buses to Cuenca, Sucúa and Macas. Nevertheless, old habits seemed to die hard, and the older residents of Taant tended to venture away from the *centro* only when absolutely necessary, for example to visit the nearby Catholic Church at Easter, or to sell surplus vegetables in one of the local markets. They even resisted visiting hospitals, which they did not trust, preferring to consult with local healers or shamans (depending upon the assumed source of the infliction). Younger people expressed the desire to travel more widely, but were

often restricted or discouraged by their elders – young women in particular were mostly forbidden from leaving the *centro* alone.

The results of our study were intriguing. It appeared that the vast majority of Taant's residents felt that they knew little or nothing about Shuar 'culture' and 'customs'. By this they meant that they did not know any of the myths (except for popular myths such as Nunkui – see Chapter 4); they could not sing an '*anent*'; they had never organised a 'Shuar' festival such as the *chonta* festival (a celebration, focusing on the ripening of a kind of palm fruit, which has become a common and popular event in recent years); and they did not wear 'traditional Shuar clothing'. They attributed this perceived lack of knowledge in part to the negative influence of the Salesian missionaries who founded the *centro*, but mostly to a failure on the part of schools. This is interesting as many of the older generation were educated in Shuar as part of the SERBISH radio distance-learning programme, while younger residents will mostly have attended the local bilingual primary school, which is part of a province-wide system that seeks to provide indigenous pupils with a fully bicultural education. Only the very oldest residents claimed privileged knowledge of '*las costumbres*' [customs], and these complained that younger generations were not interested in learning what they had to teach.

Clara was keen to 'revitalise' the 'culture' and 'customs' of Taant as part of her thesis project. However, her energetic interventions were mostly met with apathy on the part of her fellow *socios*. She would organise meetings and focus groups for particular dates and receive everyone's assurances that they would attend. Yet inevitably we would arrive to discover nobody in the meeting room, and would be forced to go from door to door, persuading individual people to join in. The women would protest that they needed to tend their gardens,

finish their weaving, or prepare lunch for their husbands; the men would be out hunting or seeing to their cattle. Finally, after much effort, a mixed group of men and women, young and old, would be encouraged into the small meeting room, where they would muse for a couple of hours about whether 'traditional culture' was worth maintaining, or why (for example) they no longer wear '*traje típico*' ('it's not practical for working').

The residents of Taant agreed in principle that they would like to make more of their ethnicity in order to attract tourists to the *centro* and thus increase their household income. Nevertheless, in practice, they were largely hostile to the presence of outsiders. One day I arrived in the *centro* to find everyone gathered in the basketball court, engaged in heated debate. Clara informed me that a *gringo* – believed to be Italian – had come to Taant the day before and asked if he could visit the community. He was abruptly turned away, but was later seen 'lurking' around the bridge over the Upano river, and was deemed extremely suspicious

'He must be a head-hunter,' people repeated angrily, and it was decided that if he dared to show his face in the *centro* again, he would not live to tell the tale. Fortunately, it appeared that he had already moved on by this stage, as he was not heard of in the region any more.

Clara persisted with her project, but as time passed her resolve began to weaken. She organised a training course in weaving, which was well-attended and culminated in a lavish prize-giving ceremony, at which I was persuaded to give a speech about the importance of *artesanía* in attracting tourists to the *centro*. She then concluded from the results of our study that the best project for her thesis would be to organise a *fiesta de la chonta* in Taant, and set

about busily planning this. However, when I asked her recently[44] whether she still intended to conduct her thesis project in Taant, her answer was a definitive no.

'They're very difficult to work with,' she wrote. 'They don't care about the customs and the culture, and they're not interested in tourism. I can't stand it anymore.'

There are many possible interpretations of Taant's apathy for a project that would seemingly enable them to 'reinvigorate' their practice of 'Shuar culture and customs'. My impression throughout the project was that they simply did not have the same drive as Clara to (re)identify with their ethnicity. It was not necessarily because they were too busy – despite their not-insignificant daily workloads, they always found time to relax, gather together and discuss village business, or gossip with friends and relations. Rather, they apparently did not feel the need to explore their identity as Shuar, or – crucially – to make up for any perceived deficiencies in their 'Shuarness'. Being Shuar, for them, was not necessarily about wearing traditional clothing, singing *anents*, or knowing myths – and it was certainly not about 'environmentalism', an ideology with which they were not familiar. 'Shuarness' was about living together in a *centro* with your kin, eating together, helping each other and learning to cope with the same restricted livelihoods. Speaking Shuar was a common, but not essential, element. The people of Taant were not bombarded with differing, contradictory messages about what it meant to be Shuar, and so the question simply did not interest them.

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the second part of the contradiction postulated in the introduction to this thesis: namely, that while living in an urban environment renders Shuar

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[44] During a Facebook Chat conversation on 12th June 2014

both more aware and more proud of their ethnic identity, it also exposes them to various, sometimes contradictory ideas about what it means to be an 'authentic' Shuar person. This exposure to romantic ideas about a 'hyperreal Shuar' (Ramos 1992) can lead urban Shuar to feel that they are 'less' Shuar or indigenous than their rural counterparts, even as their ethnic identity becomes more important and relevant to their everyday lives. I adopted the metaphor of the 'hall of mirrors' (Novaes 1997) as a tool with which to explore this phenomenon: each 'mirror' (by which I mean, each perspective on 'authentic' Shuarness) reflects back a distorted impression of Shuar identity, one that is impossible to recreate in everyday life. The result is that the arbitrators of authentic indigeneity are for the most part non-indigenous, meaning that it is not Shuar themselves who determine what it means to be Shuar. This is potentially dangerous because – as I mentioned in Chapter 4 – the gains made by Shuar and other indigenous peoples in the name of indigenous rights remain at the mercy of a change in international attitudes towards indigeneity. At the very least, indigenous peoples are consigned to a particular way of life, overwhelmed by the burden of heritage which denies them the right to pursue other life plans.

Nevertheless, the situation is not entirely bleak. For one section of the urban Shuar population at least, this paradox is not keeping them awake at night. Thanks to new educational opportunities and remittances sent by relatives abroad, young, urban, middle-classed Shuar are acquiring new economic, cultural and social capital, meaning that they have the agency to define for themselves what it means to be Shuar, and to reject or dismiss others' attempts to impose a certain kind of externally-defined 'authenticity' upon them. This is the phenomenon that I will discuss in the next chapter.

7. A Process of Becoming:
Migration and the Shuar Urban Middle Class

'Indian agency has often been read as a demand to return to a utopian past that never was. Another emendation would suggest that we know very well that such a return is impossible: instead the conversation is about a different kind of today, where we are present in the world like anyone else. We have always been trying to be part of the world.'

Paul Chaat Smith, Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong

7.1 Gabriela's speech

'Has it started?'

'*Mami*, I've not found the website yet! You have to wait.'

'Well, I don't understand why it's not on the television. If the President personally asked her to speak...'

It was just after dinner on a Friday evening. Lorena, her son Alvaro and I were sitting in the living room — well, Lorena wasn't sitting exactly, or at least not for more than ten seconds at a time. For the most part she was pacing frantically around the room, perching momentarily on the edge of an armchair or table before springing forward again to see whether Alvaro had managed to locate the correct *página web* on his laptop computer. Occasionally she would take up the remote control and flick through the channels, reasoning that 'maybe they've decided to show it after all'.

Alvaro, for his part, was lounging shirtless on the sofa, with the laptop balanced at an angle on his knees and one eye trained on the television.

'*Mami*, put the football back on! Gabriela already said that they wouldn't show her speech on the telly.'

From my vantage point on the other sofa I surveyed the scene and thought of Gabriela, its absent focus. A few months previously, Lorena's youngest daughter had entered an open competition for a position with the Ecuadorian diplomatic service. After several rounds of examinations and interviews she was chosen as one of thirty-five successful candidates from an original pool of seven hundred. Tonight was the inauguration of these new 'Third Secretaries' as they would henceforth be known. President Correa himself would be present, along with the most senior members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was customary for one of the new Third Secretaries to give a short speech, and this year that honour had gone to Gabriela. Although only the President's speech would appear on television, the full event was to be broadcast online — *where* exactly online, we were yet to ascertain.

I heard the front gate open. A few seconds later Lorena's elder daughter María appeared in the doorway.

'Has it started yet?'

'No! I'll find it, now just let me watch the football!'

María leaned over the back of the sofa and peered at Alvaro's computer screen. '*Pues*, you haven't even opened the page yet.'

'Because it hasn't started yet.'

'How do you know if you don't even have the page open?'

'You don't have the *page* open, Tuntiak[45]?' shrieked Lorena as she completed one of her nervous turns around the living room.

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[45] Alvaro's 'Shuar' name, and the name most commonly used by Lorena.

'No *mamá*, but it starts at eight o'clock,' replied Alvaro. 'We have a lot of time. *¡Puta madre!*' he cried in dismay as the opposition team scored a goal. Something in the look he shot María implied that he held her accountable.

'Do you think she'll give her speech in Shuar?' asked María.

'Of course,' said Lorena. 'Why wouldn't she?'

'*Pues*, how ridiculous: she doesn't even speak Shuar!' retorted Alvaro.

'She does! Although,' Lorena admitted, 'not very well.'

It was a few weeks earlier, while on a trip to Sucúa, that Gabriela had received news of her success in the competition, and was informed about the speech that she would be asked to make. Once the initial congratulations and family celebrations had died down, attention had turned to what she would wear at the event.

'You have to wear *traje shuar*, traditional Shuar clothing' announced Lorena. 'You already have the *tarach* [blue dress] and the *shakap* [belt], and I have a necklace that I can give you — I made it myself.'

'Did you *mami*? It's beautiful.'

'*Pues, claro*. I'm selling them for $15 each, so please send it back to me afterwards. Now, will you go barefoot?'

'No! It'll be freezing in Quito. I'm going to wear heels.'

The final whistle blew on Emelec's defeat. Alvaro switched off the television in disgust and turned his attention to the computer screen. Within a couple of minutes he had

found the correct website and was calling to his mother and sister, who had repaired to the kitchen to make *huayusa*.

'It's started!'

'I *told* you!'

We crowded round Alvaro's sofa and watched as President Correa concluded his opening speech. A few important men in suits said a few important words, and then it was Gabriela's turn. As she stepped up to the podium, I was astonished by how professional, how competent, how *confident* she looked. She spoke in clear, calm Spanish, pausing in the right places, saying the right words with the right emphasis. Her Shuar *traje típico*, offset by thick-framed glasses, didn't look at all out of place against the official backdrop. Gabriela finished her speech and sat down smiling to overwhelming applause. I saw a tear creep into Lorena's usually solemn eyes.

Gabriela called about an hour later to tell us about her experience of the event. It turned out that she very nearly didn't experience it at all: the security guards had refused to let her into the building, ignoring her pleas that she was one of the new Third Secretaries.

'They let me in eventually, but they kept referring to me as "*tercer secretario*" — I had to point out that it was "*tercera secretaria*"[46]. Never mind,' she said, 'they'll learn.'

7.2 Introduction

The previous two chapters might have left the reader with the dispiriting impression that urban Shuar have no agency in determining what 'being Shuar' means to them; that they are

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[46] The feminine form of 'Third Secretary' in Spanish; Gabriela was pointing out that it was still unusual, in some people's minds, for a diplomat to be female.

mere empty vessels into which externally-generated meaning is poured, mixed and left to distil. If this has ever been the case, it is no longer: for one section of the Shuar population at least, things are starting to change. This chapter is about how the phenomenon of international out-migration has contributed in enabling urban middle-classed Shuar families to reclaim and redefine what it means to be Shuar.

According to anthropologists (see e.g Rubenstein 2002, Harner 1972, Hendricks 1993a), Shuar have historically lived in a virtually classless society. Older ethnographies generally emphasised the egalitarian nature of their social organisation. 'Big men' [*uunt*], shamans and warriors were made, not born, and any male at least could aspire to these positions. Even a warrior's hard-won *arútam*, accumulated with much time and effort, would be inevitably and irrevocably lost in the course of battle (Rubenstein 2006), bringing the warrior back down to the level of his peers.

Yet the arrival of the Salesian missionaries and the gradual integration of Shuar into the Ecuadorian market economy changed this dynamic. *Mestizo* Ecuadorians did not share the Shuar egalitarian ethos; it soon became clear that indigenous Amazonians were now part of a hierarchical society – and moreover, they were at the bottom. Increased urbanisation and the opportunities it provided, such as education, new jobs and, crucially, the possibility of migrating abroad, led to hierarchy and stratification both between and within Shuar families. While these developments fostered resentment and disputes (as well as exacerbating pre-existing family feuds), they have also provided fertile ground for the formation of a new Shuar urban middle class. Although the indigenous identity of this class has been constructed in part by the play of mirrors (as discussed in the previous chapter), they are arguably the first

generation of Shuar to contest or even discard those same mirrors and define what it means to be Shuar on their own terms.

In this chapter I will trace the development and rise to prominence of middle-classed Shuar families in urban areas such as Sucúa. In particular, I will examine the role played by migration to the United States and Europe in endowing urban Shuar with the economic and social capital necessary to establish themselves within the Ecuadorian urban context. I will draw upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a useful conceptual tool with which to understand this change in Shuar social structure and the implications that it has for the construction and articulation of Shuar collective identity. While I will examine initially the events and influences that led to the formation of this social field, I wish to emphasise that urban middle classed Shuar are not merely the sum of their parts; rather, they are an independent group, informed but not bound by the practices, beliefs and opinions both of past generations and of other contemporary actors, whether Shuar or otherwise. While they strongly identify as Shuar, they feel equally free to cast off the 'burden of heritage' that has encumbered many of their urban compatriots, and to live and express their identity in a manner of their own choosing.

7.3 Migration and the formation of the Shuar urban middle class

7.3.1 Daniel's story

When McSweeney and Jokisch talk in their 2007 paper of the apparently unprecedented phenomenon of indigenous migrants who travelled from the Amazon rainforest to the United States without even pausing in large cities such as Quito, they could quite easily have been talking about Clara's uncle Daniel. A fit, stocky man in his late thirties, when I met him for

the first time he had recently returned from twelve years in Connecticut, the destination of many migrants from Sucúa, including an increasing number of Shuar.

Daniel had come back to Ecuador with money, on-the-job training in construction, and a sense of purpose. While he was away, his wife had used the remittances that he sent each month in order to set up a small shop, and now Daniel was supplementing this income with work as a freelance builder and as a private taxi driver. His teenage daughters attended the Río Upano school and the family lived in a large, spacious new house in the Artesanos neighbourhood.

When I interviewed Daniel he was keen to talk about his experiences as a Shuar migrant. He told me that his decision to migrate to the United States was difficult but with hindsight inevitable. As one of the youngest siblings in a family of eighteen, he had witnessed the trajectories of his elder brothers and sisters with interest and no small amount of envy. His brother, for example, had been elected as President of the Shuar Federation and then as an MP, before leaving to spend several years in the United States. Many other family members – siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews – had also travelled to the US to look for work, and it seemed not only possible but highly advisable for him to do so as well.

Daniel's childhood and adolescence in Morona Santiago had not been easy. Having spent much of his youth in a fairly isolated Shuar *centro* near Gualaquiza, as a teenager he had moved to Sucúa to live with his aunt, Clara's mother Alba. Here he had learnt that to be Shuar in Sucúa was to be considered a second-class citizen.

'I was a good footballer,' he told me (several other people had already mentioned this fact to me). 'I wanted to play for Sucúa's youth team, but the coach wouldn't even let me try out. He didn't want me, and although he didn't say so, I knew it was because I was Shuar.

Gradually, I realised that the same was true in every walk of life. Good schools, universities, jobs, were all closed to me because I was indigenous. If I wanted to get ahead, I needed to go abroad.'

Despite his bitterness over the treatment he received as a result of being Shuar, Daniel was nevertheless scathing in his views of his Shuar contemporaries, those who had not migrated. He would routinely describe them as 'lazy' and lacking in ambition, and said that they were untrustworthy employees. He felt that his time in the United States had taught him the value of hard work and perseverance.

When I returned to Sucúa during the local elections in January 2014, the streets were awash with brightly coloured flags, declaring the voting intentions of the town's residents. The fluorescent green flags of the President's Alianza Pais party were dominant, punctuated in places by rainbow Pachakutik flags, which usually indicated a Shuar household. Shortly after arriving I wandered past Daniel's house: a large, green flag was proudly displayed outside.

7.3.2 Shuar migration from Sucúa

Ecuadorian migration to the United States and Europe has been studied in-depth (see for example Kyle 2000, Miles 2000, Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Scholars have identified two main peaks in numbers of emigrants: in the 1970s following the collapse of the Panama hat trade, and in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a result of a devastating economic crisis in Ecuador, in which many families, and particularly the middle classes, lost all of their savings. While the former wave set the stage for indigenous out-migration, it is arguably the latter that created the conditions necessary for Shuar migrants to leave Morona Santiago in droves.

The 'first wave' of Ecuadorian emigration mainly involved those *campesinos* and skilled craftsmen and women who were originally involved in the Panama hat trade between, on the one hand, Cuenca and the surrounding region, and, on the other, New York. When this trade collapsed, those who had been involved in the industry were left without a source of income; nevertheless, what they did have was a network of contacts who could facilitate their (for the most part illegal) migration from the Ecuadorian highlands to the United States. Thus a migration trend largely consisting of poor *campesinos* (and therefore including large numbers of indigenous people) developed, and rates of illegal migration from the Ecuadorian Andes to the United States have hardly diminished since this era (Herrera et al 2005).

Ann Miles (2000) examines the reasons cited by indigenous migrants when asked why they chose to make the dangerous journey to an unknown future in New York. The response, for the most part, was that they were unable to accrue economic or social capital in any other way. As indigenous people living in Cuenca and the surrounding region, an area with a reputation for racism (ibid), they faced insurmountable barriers when it came to acquiring an education and a profession. Even if they were somehow able to gain entry to university and graduate with a good degree, the doors of employers remained closed to them because they did not have *palanca*, or 'leverage': in other words, they did not benefit from the connections that white and *mestizo* Ecuadorians took for granted. In the United States, on the other hand, they could make far more money than they otherwise would have been able to in Ecuador, and send this money back in the form of remittances to family members in Cuenca who would then use it to buy land, build large, comfortable houses, and educate their children. *Palanca* could thus be bypassed, much to the annoyance of non-indigenous *cuencanos* (ibid).

This migration of indigenous highlanders arguably set the precedent for the flow of Amazonian indigenous emigration described by McSweeney and Jokisch (ibid). However, it did not set the scene. While I cannot speak for the whole of the Amazon region, I argue in this thesis that in the case of Morona Santiago, emigration came about in large part as a result of the Ecuadorian economic crisis in the late 1990s and the subsequent migration both of *campesinos* and of middle-classed Ecuadorians to the United States and, increasingly, Europe. Historical connections between Morona Santiago and Cuenca (Gonzalez 2000) mean that many non-indigenous residents of Sucúa and Macas are from Cuencan families, whether they be middle-classed or *campesino*. As a result members of these families were able to take advantage both of the established migrant network to the United States and of the burgeoning, middle-class network to Spain and Italy.

If you live in the town of New Haven, in the American state of Connecticut, you would be forgiven for assuming that the Ecuadorian city of Sucúa must be enormous. Why else would so many Ecuadorian migrants hail from here? *Sucuenses*, on the other hand, presumably assume that the streets of New Haven are paved with gold, given that so many migrants leave for this mythical city with nothing but the clothes on their back and a dream, and then send home enough money to build luxurious, American-style three-storey houses.

The truth, of course is that during the last two decades, a significant migrant network has been established between Sucúa and Connecticut, with many migrants travelling to New Haven in particular. Nobody is quite sure when, or why, the first *sucuenses* migrated to Connecticut; presumably a few early pioneers established themselves, encouraged their families to join them, and the rest is history. What is certain is that by the time I commenced my fieldwork, about a third of the town's residents had relatives living in New Haven and

other Connecticut cities (Larrea 2010). This pattern of migration must have commenced prior to the economic crisis; nevertheless, it increased dramatically from the late 1990s onwards, and came to involve increasing numbers of Shuar. While there are no statistics relating to the ethnicity of emigrants from Sucúa, each of the twelve Shuar families with whom I worked closely in Sucúa had family members abroad, and most of these had migrated to New Haven and the surrounding region. Other popular destinations for Shuar migrants included Spain (Madrid and Barcelona) and Italy (Milan and Rome).

A word here before I continue about the migration process itself. The fact that migration to the United States is considered to be a viable option by so many Sucúan residents, Shuar and non-Shuar, male and female, young and old, from an outsider's perspective suggests that it is not a difficult or challenging process. This could not be further from the truth. Aspiring migrants first need to acquire a certain amount of money in order to pay the *coyotes*, or people-smugglers (at the time of my fieldwork, the going rate was around $12,000-$15,000). This is usually borrowed, and will need to be paid back over a significant period of time. Migrating illegally to America is therefore a considerable gamble: if for whatever reason you do not make it across the border, you cannot usually get your money back from the *coyotes*, and paying it back to the lender without access to an American salary is virtually impossible. The journey itself is fraught with difficulty and danger. Migrants travel to Guayaquil, where they board an overcrowded and poorly maintained boat, bound for Guatemala; from there, they make their way illegally across the border into Mexico. Crossing Mexico is itself extremely dangerous, as drug cartels threaten groups of migrants and their *coyote* guides, demanding money or even using them as pawns in their ongoing wars with rival gangs. The final stretch is nearly always a long, perilous trek across the desert between

Mexico and the United States, a journey that was memorably, if horrifically, depicted in the film *Siete Soles*.

I remember sitting down to watch this film with the family of a young woman, Monica, who had migrated to Connecticut, and whose large, comfortable house (in which we were sitting) had been built with the proceeds of a job at Dunkin' Donuts. The protagonists of the film, a group of Mexican migrants, suffered what I took to be considerable bad luck in their fictional journey across the Mexican desert: one elderly man broke his leg and was abandoned and left to die; a young woman was raped by a *coyote* in return for water to give to her baby (which later, inevitably, died). In fact, by the end of the film practically everyone had suffered a painful and lonely demise, and those that survived were nearly all caught by the police upon their arrival in Texas.

Monica's mother, Paloma, was crying by the end of the film.

'Poor Monica!' she sobbed. 'How much she has suffered!' I tried to tell Paloma that this film showed extreme cases, and was probably designed to scare people and persuade them not to migrate.

'Oh no,' said Gloria, Monica's sister. 'Monica told me about her journey – it was exactly like this. They walked for days, and a pregnant woman died, and they just left her there, there was nothing they could do. I wanted to migrate as well,' she continued, 'but when Monica told me all those stories… I couldn't do it.'

Nancy, a woman in her thirties who had migrated to Connecticut with her husband, then returned to Sucúa following a car accident which left her unable to work, told me that her experience of migrating was similar.

'And if you're a woman travelling alone – without a man – you'll almost certainly be raped,' she added ominously.

So with the dangers so serious and so well-known, why did Shuar migrate in such high numbers to the United States and Europe? Put simply, for most people, the stakes were high but the rewards seemed worth the risk. During my fieldwork I was able to interview not only returned Shuar migrants like Daniel, but also migrants who were still in the United States and whom I got to know via friendships with family members (this was one of the incredible benefits that social media and Skype brought to my fieldwork). Most migrants I spoke to, when asked why they had chosen to migrate, cited similar reasons to those put forward by Miles's informants: as indigenous Amazonians, there were simply no opportunities available to them in Sucúa. Furthermore, those migrants, both Shuar and non-Shuar, who had been successful, tended to display their success in visible material terms: like their contemporaries in the Andes, they bought land and built large, American-style houses, set up successful businesses, and were generally better off than the people who had stayed behind. As an isolated Amazonian region, Morona Santiago had always been a fairly expensive place to live, with most products imported from the *sierra* at a premium. With the growing popularity of migration and the influx of remittances, cities like Sucúa and Macas became increasingly unaffordable to those families who were not themselves benefitting from the new wave of migration (Larrea 2010).

Migration benefitted urban Shuar in more than just economic terms. Not only were they able to purchase land and build houses that would otherwise have been out of their reach, but they could send their children to private schools and, eventually, to university. The latter were then able, in the new, 'plurinational' atmosphere of the Ecuadorian state under

Rafael Correa, to take advantage of opportunities that would previously have been unavailable to them. Furthermore, they had access to a network of similarly positioned people: university-educated indigenous youths (and those sympathetic to the indigenous cause). I have found it useful to approach this new situation in terms of capital, as Bourdieu (1984) understood it: the economic capital of remittances; the cultural capital of a university education; the symbolic capital of political activism; and the social capital of the new educated indigenous urban elite. I will discuss in further depth what I mean by capital and how it relates to urban Shuar in the next section.

7.4 Social field and capital

'Class' is a highly difficult and contentious topic for social scientists, and anthropologists are no exception. While it was clear to me that many of my informants in Sucúa were, in comparison with the majority of urban and rural Shuar, relatively wealthy, owned property, sent their children to university, and filled their homes with luxury items such as refrigerators, ovens and television sets, I was unsure of how to approach this situation theoretically. I found a solution in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), the French sociologist and anthropologist who wrote in depth about what he referred to as 'social fields' and the importance of 'capital' in creating and maintaining hierarchies.

According to Bourdieu, a social field is an arena within which struggles take place over resources or other stakes. These include cultural goods such as 'lifestyle'; more practical benefits such as housing and access to healthcare and education; and abstract goods such as 'power' and, crucially, 'capital'. Bourdieu identifies four kinds of capital: economic (money); social (connections); cultural (education, and particularly familiarisation with the 'arbitrary' elements of 'highbrow' culture such as opera, fine art or literature); and symbolic (prestige or

status). Social fields are therefore hierarchically organised: those with the greatest access to benefits, and thus with the greatest capital, are at the top (Bourdieu himself uses the term 'class' to describe the different levels within fields, each with different amounts of capital). The nature of capital itself and the persuasive power of 'doxa' (the internalisation of objective structures so as to preclude questioning or inquiry) mean that such hierarchies come to appear 'natural' or even justified to members of the social field. Thus, according to Bourdieu, the high cultural capital of many of the richest members of French society appears to justify their economic capital, and thus their position at the top: they seem to have worked hard to achieve their place in society, whereas the uneducated poor are believed – and believe themselves – to deserve their poverty and low levels of capital, in whatever form.

Parallels can be drawn with the place of indigenous people in Ecuadorian society. Ever since colonisation, Ecuador, like many Latin American nations (Gootenberg and Reygadas 2010), has been a highly unequal and hierarchical society, with white descendants of Spanish *conquistadores* at the top, and indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians at the bottom (Wade 2010). The social position of this 'Spanish' elite is perpetuated both by their immersion in cultural capital from an early age, their access to social capital in the form of *palanca*, and even the symbolic capital of, for example, their surnames (I have often heard it mentioned that if you do not have the right surname, you will find it impossible to get a professional job in Cuenca) and of the paleness of their skin. This mixture comes together to increase the chances that the white, Spanish Ecuadorian elite will have the greatest access to the most lucrative jobs, and thus both facilitates and in a way appears to justify their position at the top.

For indigenous people in Ecuador, on the other hand, most forms of capital have traditionally worked against them. The darkness of their skin, the 'Indianness' of their names, and of the way they dressed and walked (Valencia 2009) originally denied them symbolic capital (although this, as we shall see, has changed significantly in the second half of the twentieth century). Furthermore, as I discussed in Chapter 4, for an indigenous Ecuadorian to educate herself and integrate herself into the national market economy was effectively to discard her indigenous identity. Indigeneity – the *indio* – was therefore strongly associated with low economic and cultural capital. As for social capital, I have already mentioned that indigenous people were for the most part denied access to the system of *palanca* that allowed white-*mestizo* Ecuadorians to monopolise the most lucrative professions (although, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, urban indigenous have recently benefitted from a form of social capital within their own urban networks). This inequality was internalised by highland indigenous people to the point where it formed a doxa so powerful that it seemed impossible to overcome.

For indigenous Amazonians, the influence of this doxa was perhaps not so powerful as for their Andean counterparts. Their comparative isolation allowed them to maintain a high degree of independence from Ecuadorian mainstream society right up until the mid-twentieth century, when they came under the increasingly pervasive influence of Salesian missionaries. Despite this sudden and brutal rupture in the Shuar way of life, and the humiliation of subjugation to missionary and governmental control, Shuar maintained a reputation, and a sense of themselves, as 'indomitable warriors' – a far cry from the five hundred years of persistent oppression that had led highland indigenous people to see their place on the bottom rung of society as 'natural'. This perhaps has something to do with the fact that many elements of the indigenous political movement, in Ecuador and elsewhere, were conceived in

the Amazon region (Andolina 2003), and indeed with the fact that the Shuar Federation was the first indigenous political organisation in Ecuador.

The symbolic capital of indigenous Ecuadorians gradually rose over the second half of the twentieth century as a result of the various processes that have been discussed throughout this thesis: the establishment of indigenous activism in Latin America and internationally, the increased popularity of eco-tourism, and especially the gathering strength of the environmentalist movement, all of which, as we have seen, relied upon a rather romanticised and essentialised image of indigenous Amazonians. Nevertheless, while indigenous political organisations gained power and influence on the national stage, and individual politicians occasionally acquired economic and social capital as a result, these forms of capital, along with cultural capital, still eluded the overwhelming majority of indigenous people. Ecuadorian society was still rigidly hierarchical, and the place of indigenous people was firmly at the bottom of that hierarchy. With no access to good private schools or expensive university places, and no chance of finding a job worthy of their skills even if they were to acquire an education, social mobility seemed out of reach.

One problem with Bourdieu's work on capital and social fields is that it makes no allowance for social change. Structure is so entrenched, so internalised in the minds of social actors that it allows for no agency, no defiance of the status quo, and no ability to challenge it. Yet this was not the case for Shuar. One reason that urban middle classed Shuar have achieved such a prominent place in Ecuadorian society relative to past generations is because they have actively taken advantage of opportunities made available to them over the latter part of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first. These have included, as we have seen, the rising symbolic capital of the romantic image of the Amazonian 'Indian', as

well as the establishment of international migrant networks and the ensuing possibility to acquire economic capital.

Another key element is increased access to education and professional occupations as a result of policies introduced since 2006 by the government of President Rafael Correa. Partly a response to increased indigenous political pressure, Correa's reforms – such as university scholarships aimed at indigenous candidates and positive discrimination in government recruitment – have significantly improved young indigenous people's access to the cultural and social capital necessary to establish a more prominent position in Ecuadorian society. While their parents were limited to careers as teachers or nurses, or perhaps a precarious political career, for these young Shuar, the sky is apparently the limit: they can work for local or national government, start their own NGOs, become doctors, lawyers or university professors, and for once their indigenous identity is, in theory at least, a positive advantage.

7.5 Urban middle classed Shuar and conceptualisations of indigeneity

My argument in this chapter is that the increased economic, cultural and social capital acquired by the new generation of urban middle classed Shuar, largely as a result of migration on the one hand, and affirmative action on the other, has afforded them the agency necessary to redefine what it means to be indigenous on their own terms. So how do young, urban Shuar construct their identity as Shuar and as indigenous people? This is the question that I will explore in this section. I hope to demonstrate that while urban middle classed Shuar are influenced by the 'play of mirrors' (Novaes 1997) in the construction of their identity as Shuar, they are not bound by or restricted to these 'mirrors'. Instead, they use

them as ingredients in a broader, more diverse and more inclusive social identity as Shuar, indigenous and Ecuadorian citizens, and as full persons in their own right.

7.5.1 Symbolic capital

In the previous chapter I identified and discussed the various 'mirrors' that reflect back upon urban Shuar residents different impressions of their identity. These same mirrors have contributed and continue to contribute to the construction of middle classed Shuar identities. The symbolic capital of the 'hyperreal Indian' (Ramos 1994) reflected in the political, environmental, and tourism 'mirrors' is perhaps at first glance the most obvious. My urban middle classed Shuar informants were keenly aware of the symbolic power of 'traditional' indigenous imagery: in the opening ethnographic vignette of this chapter, Gabriela wore full Shuar *traje típico* when invited to speak on television in the inauguration ceremony for new diplomats; in a less public – but no less important – event, my friend Clara wore indigenous jewellery when presenting her eco-tourism project to the examiners at her university; and whenever she is invited to a special event at church, Lorena always wears her best clothes – and her Shuar jewellery, which she makes and sells herself. This is in part because she is trying to advertise her wares, but not entirely.

Nevertheless, the symbolic capital of these adornments is juxtaposed with symbols of a different sort. Alvaro, for example, while he declares his Shuar identity with pride, is rarely without his Gucci sunglasses, Diesel jeans and Converse trainers. I noticed that he was particularly careful to wear these items in situations when he came into contact with other Shuar, whether UMCS like himself or less well-off urban or rural Shuar. For example, his neighbourhood football team, of which he was an active member, took part in a region-wide competition, in which they played against teams from the local Shuar centros. As the only

Shuar member of his team, Alvaro made sure to arrive at the match in his own car (shunning the usual offer of a lift from a fellow team member); he brought his football strip with him and changed at the very last moment. For the thirty or so minutes prior to the match, therefore, Alvaro was lounging on the side of the pitch in branded jeans and sunglasses, chatting casually with his (mostly white) teammates and striking a startling contrast with the rural Shuar team, who all turned up for the match together in the back of a battered old pick up truck which afforded standing room only, and which was probably used more often to transport chickens or plantain.[47]

The point that I would like to make here is that although in this scenario Alvaro was clearly attempting to distinguish himself from the poor, rural Shuar who were playing on the other team, this is not the same as distancing himself from his identity as Shuar. In fact, when a mutual (non-Ecuadorian) friend of ours suggested that Alvaro was ashamed of his Shuar identity, Alvaro became very upset and staunchly denied this. I lived with Alvaro for almost a year in total, and knew that he was very proud of the fact that he was the first Shuar person in Sucúa to acquire a professional position in the city council, and the first Shuar to be president of his mostly *mestizo* neighbourhood. He wore colourful beaded bracelets made by his mother, hung out at the Shuar Federation during *programas* such as sporting tournaments or beauty queen competitions, and would often speak in (quite basic) Shuar with friends and family members. I argue therefore that it was not the ethnicity of the rural Shuar football team that troubled Alvaro, but rather their position in the social field: poor, rural, marginalised. As far as Alvaro was concerned, being Shuar did not necessarily entail being of a lower class – he could be Shuar and own a car, and he wanted to make sure that his white-*mestizo* teammates understood this crucial difference.

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[47] Ironically perhaps, the Shuar team defeated Alvaro's team by five goals to one.

7.5.2 Politics

To be Ecuadorian is to be politically engaged. In part perhaps because of compulsory voting, local and national elections in Ecuador are extremely significant events. Political parties invest considerable capital, energy and creativity into their campaigns, and a greater degree of tolerance of noise than would perhaps be found in Europe means that pick-up trucks bearing stereo systems and powerful speakers will circulate the streets day and night, blaring out the political messages and campaign tunes of their candidate (*'sigue… la obra sigue – **Saúl!** '*). Indigenous politicians throw themselves into these activities with as much, if not more enthusiasm than their non-indigenous counterparts, and in Morona Santiago the *centros* and smaller towns are bright with colourful posters urging residents to vote for the local Pachakutik candidates.

Shuar in Sucúa cannot help but be swept up by this political enthusiasm and, as they make up one quarter of the county's population, their vote is crucial to the success of any candidate. Furthermore, with the rise of the indigenous political movement in Ecuador, they have come to see that indigenous success in local and national elections can lead to real, tangible legal and social changes for indigenous people on the ground. As a result, most of my Shuar friends have significant experience of being involved in political campaigns, either as candidates or as campaigners. The latter activity involved the majority of my female friends, including Lorena and Alba, who used to campaign for Pachakutik together, knocking on doors and putting up posters.

One crucial difference, however, among the urban middle classes, is that their voting preferences have tended to change over the years, relative to the increase in their economic and social capital. Poor rural and urban Shuar, and those in the middle classes whose families

have not migrated, tend in general to support Pachakutik and see the incumbent Alianza Pais government as the enemy, in that the latter supports the resource extraction industry and is seen as passing laws which deny or restrict indigenous communities' access to natural resources such as water (see Hoy 2012).

Urban middle classed Shuar, on the other hand, have a far greater tendency to support the President and his party. This is especially the case among those who have migrated or who have family members abroad. I have already mentioned the Daniel's newfound support for Alianza Pais, as demonstrated by the green flag proudly displayed outside his home. Another migrant, Cristian, spent five years in the United States, before returning to set up his own business in Sucúa. He tells me that while he was away, Correa's government made substantial changes that have improved the lives not only of Ecuadorians in general, but of indigenous citizens in particular.

'Look at all the new roads! Before they were a disgrace… full of holes. And now they organise *programas* [cultural programmes] for Shuar dances [*danza shuar*], they never did that before. …And what have Pachakutik done for us? The mayor of Macas is Shuar, he's from Pachakutik, and he's done nothing.' He explained that the streets in Macas were full of potholes and rubbish, whereas Sucúa – where the current mayor is from Alianza País – was much cleaner.

In March 2013, indigenous political groups in the Andes and the Amazon participated in a *caminata* (political march) to Quito, in protest at the introduction of a new law which would apparently privatise water resources in the Amazon region. While the Shuar Federation did not officially take part (arguably because of an agreement that they had signed with the Ecuadorian government that promised them vital resources but at the same time prohibited

them from participating in demonstrations), several Shuar made the journey to Quito in an individual capacity. My urban middle-classed Shuar friends were not impressed with this show of support.

'What will people abroad think when they see them on television?' said Cristian angrily. 'They'll think that indigenous people are all violent and savage. Not all indigenous people are like this!'

At a dinner party to celebrate María's birthday, the Saant family discussed the *caminata*.

'The thing is,' said Alvaro, 'they don't understand why they're protesting. The government isn't going to take away their water – why would they?'

'Of course not!' agreed Lorena.

'Well, this is what the political leaders tell them,' said Gabriela. 'They go to the villages and they tell the people, "The government wants to take away your water and give it to the *petroleros*. What are you going to do [about it]?" I'm glad the FICSH isn't participating. I think the [indigenous political] leaders are just exploiting innocent people so that they can achieve their own objectives.'

Alvaro turned and looked at me.

'I hope people in your country don't think that we're all like this,' he said, repeating Cristian's sentiment.

One crucial element of this shift in political affiliations is the fact that many urban, middle-classed Shuar now work for the government itself, assisted in part by the

aforementioned affirmative action schemes. Gabriela is an obvious example of this phenomenon, as is her brother Alvaro, who worked initially for the Sucúa Town Council and later for the Provincial Council. Another example is Valeria, a young Shuar student whose father runs a successful ecolodge, and who at the time of my fieldwork was completing an internship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My friend Margarita's son Gonzalo gained a scholarship to the San Francisco University and then secured a job with the Provincial Council; her nephew José is planning on following in his footsteps. As a result, their families are also increasingly likely to support the government: Lorena is a staunch supporter of Alianza País, and Margarita is also highly critical of Pachakutik in particular and indigenous rights groups more generally.

Perhaps the most important element, however, is social capital. As the economic and cultural capital of urban, middle-class Shuar has increased, they have begun to see their networks, their allies, differently. The government wants to build up a relationship with urban middle-class Shuar as this enhances their own symbolic capital, as well as their reputation both in Ecuador and abroad. Meanwhile, the urban, middle-class Shuar themselves, while appreciating and valuing their indigenous identity, recognise the power of a strong relationship with the government. Finally, they have seen what they perceive to be increased efficiency in the United States and believe that Rafael Correa is the person who can bring – indeed, has already brought – the same efficiency and progress to Ecuador. They identify themselves with those Ecuadorians, the motivated, ambitious migrants and their families, who want to move Ecuador forwards, not hold it back. In this respect, they are the polar opposite of traditional ideas about indigeneity in Ecuador – and yet they insist upon their indigenous identity. Indeed, this is yet another thoroughly twenty-first century way of being indigenous (see Greene 2009).

7.5.3 Migration as another 'mirror'

When Miguel Jimpikit migrated from Sucúa to Connecticut, one of his first tasks was to find employment. After a short period he was offered an interview at a construction firm where several migrants from his hometown already worked.

When two of these migrants saw Miguel arrive for his interview, they took their American employer aside and advised him not to hire an '*indio*'. They explained that Miguel was a Shuar, and that Shuar were lazy, dishonest thieves who could not be trusted to work in an American company.

Miguel replied: 'It's true that I'm a Shuar, an indigenous person from the Ecuadorian Amazon. Shuar have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years, but recently our land has been invaded by *mestizos*. They have discriminated against us and left us with nothing, which is why I came to America to find work.'

The American employer listened carefully to everything that Miguel said. Then he walked out of his office, went over to the two *mestizo* migrants, and told them that they were fired. Miguel was offered a job and has since been made a manager.

Miguel's story may be an exaggerated version of the facts. Nevertheless, it is true that his experiences in the United States have taught him to attribute value to his identity as a Shuar and an indigenous person. Whereas non-indigenous Ecuadorians tend to have a racist attitude towards '*indios*' – referring to them as '*sucios*' [dirty], '*bravos*' [violent] or '*puercos*' [pigs], the experience of many of my Shuar friends who migrated to the United States is that Americans seem to be far more receptive to and interested in Amerindian cultural identity. This is perhaps ironic given the historical treatment of peoples native to

North America; nevertheless, it is a positive approach that feeds into Shuar migrants' own sense of self and even encourages them to further explore aspects of their indigenous identity that they might have neglected.

Daniel told me about a fellow Shuar whom he met both in Sucúa and again in Connecticut. 'In Sucúa, he denied being Shuar, he said he was *mestizo*. But when he went to the United States he realised that actually, there, the *americanos* like indigenous people. They treat *indigenas* far better than other *latinos*. So he became far more Shuar, he ate Shuar food and hung out with other Shuar people. He even learnt the language – he actually learnt Shuar in Connecticut!'

Not every Shuar migrant I spoke to attributed any increased sense of pride in their Shuar identity to the positive reinforcement of American attitudes – in fact, a couple told me about experiences of racism, as well as close shaves with the police. Yet in general, the experience of migrating appears to have given those Shuar who attempted it an increased sense of pride, self-assurance and confidence in their abilities, enabling them to leave behind their previously low status in Ecuadorian society and take their place – or encourage their children to take their place – among the country's middle-classed, educated population.

7.5.4 No contradiction

The crucial point that I would like to make in this chapter is that, increasingly, urban middle-classed Shuar do not see any contradiction between the way they live their lives and the fact of their Shuar or indigenous identity. They celebrate that identity – they often wear it as a badge of pride – and yet they do not feel bound or restricted by it when it comes to pursuing their ambitions. They do not follow the implicit social protocols about how indigenous people should look and act.

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As part of a side project organised with fellow research students, while I was in the field I interviewed many Shuar people living in Sucúa about their hopes and dreams for the future. What I discovered was that urban Shuar – whether middle-classed or not – have a clearer view than their rural counterparts of horizons that are continually expanding. They can see what economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital can buy, and they want these benefits, for themselves and their families. Most of them (although by no means all) want to be involved in the market economy; they want to earn money, to educate their children, to buy American-branded clothes and live in a nice house. They want access to cable TV, refrigerators and ovens in their kitchens, and a separate room for each of the children. Yet some Shuar are still afraid that if they claim these benefits, achieve these ambitions, they will somehow lose their Shuar identity, an identity that has become increasingly important to them over the years.

In a way they are not wrong. Moving up the class spectrum has in effect become the new '*blanqueamiento*' – whereas before, indigenous people who learned Spanish and dressed in non-indigenous clothing were considered *mestizo*, now it is the *indio* with social mobility who fits this mould. '*Indio*', after all, is as much a class-based as an ethnic category, as Canessa (2012a) demonstrates. To change class, therefore, is to leave behind this category of *indio* – which means changing not only class but also ethnicity. While few people nowadays, in Ecuador at least, would persist in arguing that an indigenous person who speaks Spanish is no longer indigenous, the same would not necessarily be said of an indigenous person who speaks Spanish, lives in Quito, works for an IT company and buys his clothes from American and European stores. That person, according to most people, has left behind everything that makes an indigenous person 'indigenous'.

And yet, this does not appear to bother many of the urban, middle-classed Shuar. Alejandro, the person I described in the previous paragraph, studied in Quito and continues to work there. He is learning English to improve his prospects of promotion within the international IT company where he works. He watches American movies and plays computer games in his spare time. Around once a month he visits his mother in Sucúa, where he looks forward to drinking manioc beer and helping her to make *ayampaco*. Often when he is in Morona Santiago, he will go to his grandmother's community and help her to grow and cultivate plantain and manioc. He extols the virtues of corn-fed chicken over those fed with '*balanciado*' or non-organic feed (a practice that Shuar associate with *mestizos*), and claims that by far the best chickens are from his grandmother's farm. He enjoys spending Christmas with his grandmother's community as much as he enjoys spending Saturday evenings at Plaza Foch, the centre of nightlife in Quito. Put briefly, he sees no contradiction between these two worlds, between these two ways of living – he enjoys both, both are part of who he is, and he does not feel the need to change them, or to feel in any way guilty because he does not fulfil seemingly arbitrary, externally-mandated notions of what kind of person he should be.

In the next section I will attempt to demonstrate further this idea of expanding horizons among urban Shuar by telling the story of Margarita.

7.6 Broader horizons

7.6.1 Margarita's story

One evening, when I was living at Paloma Ankuash's house, her sister Margarita dropped by. I was happy to see her: large, cheerful and confident, she was always excellent company. Her life story was inspirational: at the age of thirteen, she was promised in marriage to a much

older man, but she defied her parents and refused to marry him. Later she ran away to the coast to train as a nurse, where she met the father of her child (although she referred to him as her 'husband', as with many Shuar couplings they had never legally married).

'Enmita,' she roared as she came through the door. 'I wanted to know if you would like to come on a trip with me tomorrow?'

'Of course,' I replied, 'where?'

'To a *centro* nearby. I want to buy some cattle.'

The next morning I was ready to leave at 6am. Margarita, her twelve-year-old niece Alejandra, and I caught a taxi to the old marketplace and then boarded a bus that took us westwards out of Sucúa, across the Miruim river and towards the foothills of the Andes. After about thirty minutes, Margarita said 'we're getting off here,' and called '*¡gracias!*' to the bus driver, who pulled over. We descended from the bus and then followed a steep path downwards towards another, shallower river, which Margarita crossed with difficulty. Thirty more minutes of walking through grassland and sparse forest brought us to a large square plot of grass around which were scattered about seven small, wooden houses.

'Here we are,' announced Margarita.

She led the way to the largest of the houses, a two-storey wooden building in the far corner of the plot (which turned out, as with so many *centros*, to be a makeshift football pitch). As she called out '*pujamek*!', a small, thin, middle-aged man with a serious face emerged from the front door.

'Tío José!' bellowed Margarita. 'It's been years!' She shook his hand vigorously; he, polite but reserved, led the way into his house, where his wife was waiting for us with a breakfast of chicken and rice.

Buying cattle, it turned out, took a long time. Over breakfast, Margarita and Tío José (but mostly Margarita) talked of their mutual acquaintances, and of the new road that was to connect Tío José's *centro* to the main highway, a project of which he was entirely in favour, as it would allow vehicular traffic to reach his community. When the last grain of rice had been scraped up by a hungry spoon, we sat outside on wooden stools and listened to the shuddering beat of the sound system upstairs, which belonged to Tío José's daughter. The cows, I noticed, were in an enclosure slightly downhill from the house.

Alejandra soon became bored and asked her aunt for some money to buy an ice lolly. Margarita gave her fifty cents, told her to buy one for me as well, and together Alejandra and I set off across the football pitch towards a house on the opposite side of the *centro*.

'Good day… good day… good day…' called Alejandra, until a young boy emerged cautiously from the front door. 'Do you sell ice lollies?' she asked. The boy nodded.

'What flavours?'

'Naranjilla. Or "chewing gum".'

Alejandra asked for two naranjilla lollies, which the boy retrieved from a small freezer next to the front door. On the way back to Tío José's house, I asked her if she would like to live in a *centro* like this.

'Uhhh, no!' she replied, wrinkling her nose.

'Why not?'

'It's difficult to live here. There's nothing to do, the food is boring… it's boring. And I couldn't play basketball.' Alejandra was on Sucúa's junior basketball team and her family were proud of the fact that she was one of the most talented players.

When we returned, Margarita and Tío José were getting ready to go and look at the cows. I wandered down the hill with them and watched as Margarita examined the three which were closest to the house.

'I'll give you three hundred dollars for each of them,' she said eventually. Tío José frowned.

'I was hoping for seven hundred,' he replied. Margarita let out a guffaw.

'Seven hundred? They're not worth that! I won't take them if that's how much you want!'

Tío José negotiated feebly but it was clear from the beginning which of the two was going to win. After about ten minutes they had settled on $300 for the two smaller steers and $400 for the large black cow. Pleased with her purchase, Margarita led the way back up the hill towards the house. We settled back onto the wooden steps and Margarita asked Tío José about his children.

'Are they studying?' she asked. Tío José shook his head sadly.

'They go to high school sometimes, but they're not good students,' he muttered.

'It's a shame,' replied Margarita, 'there are so many opportunities now for good students, if they're Shuar. My Gonzalo, for example: he got a scholarship to study at the San

Francisco! They have scholarships which are only for indigenous candidates, and they prioritise students from the *oriente*, because we're underrepresented. When Gonzalo went for his interview,' she continued, 'they asked him: "have you ever read a book all the way through?" He was honest; he told them that he hadn't. And so they said: "well, we'll accept you, but you have to start reading."'

I recalled this conversation a few weeks later when I was talking to Margarita about her 'husband'. He had travelled to the United States around ten years previously, apparently to work for only a year or so, but had never returned. After a while he stopped sending remittances, and Margarita had to become financially independent. I asked her how she coped.

'I coped because I had to,' she told me. 'I have my work at the pharmacy, which is useful. And I buy cattle. It's very important. If Gonzalo needs to go on a trip with his university, or if he needs a computer, I can sell one of my cows and use the money to pay for it. Everything I'm doing is for him.'

7.6.2 Discussion

It would never have occurred to Tío Jose to enter his children for a scholarship to the San Francisco; this was clear from the look on his face when Margarita suggested it. For Margarita, on the other hand, these opportunities were there for the taking. The horizons she contemplated, on behalf of her son at least, were vast, and she saw no reason why she should not take advantage of every chance that presented itself.

Perhaps Margarita's horizons had always been broader than most other people's. It takes a certain kind of courage, after all, to leave your family and travel to the other side of

the country, especially at a time when Shuar women rarely defied their parents or chose to live alone. Although Margarita had studied for a nursing qualification, a fairly common ambition for educated Shuar girls, she had done it far from home, and had been independent and defiant ever since her return to Sucúa. The remittances of her 'husband' had been enough to initially purchase a plot of land and build a house, but she always wanted more for her son, Gonzalo. Besides the land in nearby Miriumi (where her family were from), she had a plot in Tiwintza, bought with money she had earned herself.

Margarita denied herself even basic things such as beef, or cans of tuna, and yet she would spare no expense for her son. If her horizons were broad, his were to be even broader. During his studies, Gonzalo travelled to Australia and Israel to carry out internships; he even visited a very expensive Shuar 'cultural tourism' resort as part of a university anthropology class. Gonzalo made the most of his education; by the time of my return in 2014, he had graduated and was working at the Provincial Council in Macas; he had his own car, a white sports car, which he would drive around Sucúa in the evenings.

7.7 Defying convention

As I mentioned previously, the indigenous march [*caminata*] to Quito in March 2012 divided opinion among Shuar in Sucúa. As the participants were protesting about laws that would supposedly restrict their access to water and other natural resources, I took the opportunity to ask my informants questions about Shuar people's relationship to the natural environment. I predicted that I would hear an affirmation of the closeness of Shuar people's relationship to nature, and for the most part I wasn't disappointed. Nevertheless, some of my informants provided a different narrative.

Alvaro, in particular, had strong opinions on this subject. When I asked him whether the government should allow extractivist industries to have access to the forest, he replied,

'Of course. Look, it's going to happen anyway. I think they should train Shuar to work in the mines, in the oil fields, then we can earn money from it as well. I can't stand people who say, "you indigenous people need to protect the forest". These *gringos*, they tell us that we can't have cars, or TVs, or… iPhones, because it'll destroy the forest – or because the money we earn from the *petroleros* will destroy the environment. But they go back to America, or to Europe, and *they* have cars and TVs, *they* have iPhones. *They* have laptops. Why can't we have them, if they do? Why do we have all the responsibility of protecting the rainforest?'

I couldn't fault his logic: I was writing down everything he was saying on my own MacBook Air. Alvaro wasn't trying to refute the idea that indigenous people had an intimate relationship with their natural environment, he was simply saying that as an indigenous person, he wanted the same opportunities as non-indigenous people – he did not want to be denied access to material objects that non-indigenous people, and particularly foreigners, took for granted. Why couldn't he be indigenous and not have an iPhone? Who was saying that he couldn't? Why, the people with iPhones!

Alvaro's critique of western environmentalist rhetoric was simple and effective. Having worked hard, completed his education, and earned his own money, he saw no reason why these achievements ought to be taken away from him because he was indigenous. Being 'indigenous' for Alvaro did not mean that he needed to live a particular kind of life, one dictated by the very outsiders who contradicted their own environmentalist mantra. If environmentalists could travel in aeroplanes fuelled by oil from Ecuadorian oil fields, what right did they have to say that he, or his indigenous contemporaries, did not have the right to profit from these same oil fields? No matter: regardless of whether it made him 'less

indigenous' in the eyes of non-Shuar, Alvaro was going to drive his car with pride, use his computer, watch American cable channels on his television, and talk to his friends on his smartphone. Whether people wanted to judge him for this was their business.

7.8 (Re)claiming '*mestizo*' space

A clear indication that urban middle classed Shuar are rejecting the assumptions about indigeneity imposed upon them by outsiders can be seen in the way that they challenge the implicit hierarchy between Shuar and *mestizos* in Sucúa. One such incident occurred towards the end of my first period of fieldwork, when Lorena visited the bank to withdraw money. She returned to the house with a furious look on her face, and I asked her what was wrong.

'Oh, the security guards in the bank!' she muttered crossly.

'What did they do to you?' I asked, worrying that they had refused to serve her, or had otherwise treated her disrespectfully, because of her ethnicity.

'To me? Nothing!' she replied. 'But there was a poor old man in the queue. He was a *paisano*. The security guard asked him what he was doing in the bank, and of course, he didn't understand Spanish, the poor thing. So they became very angry and tried to make him leave. Fortunately,' she concluded, 'I was there so I could help him.'

'Yes, that was very lucky,' I said.

'But he shouldn't need luck!' said Lorena, frowning. 'The people in the bank should speak to him in his own language! That's what I told them. They don't bother to learn Shuar, but they should! We learned Spanish, I told them, so why can't you learn Shuar?'

I was struck by the difference between Lorena's account of her experience at the bank, and Santiago's story about his attempts to get a bank loan (see Chapter 5). While Santiago appeared to accept his poor treatment as an inevitable result of his subaltern status (and 'inherent' inability to manage his finances), Lorena expected more from the bank. She insisted upon good treatment, not just for herself but also for her fellow *paisanos*, who deserved a service available in their own language. What was interesting was that the bank, as the location and guardian of money, has traditionally been a Shuar-free zone – a space from which Shuar were excluded by virtue of not having money or land, or 'not being able to manage it'. The clean, sterile walls and air-conditioned rooms were no place for an '*indio sucio*' – they belonged to the *mestizo* elite. And yet Lorena, a middle-aged Shuar woman who had been born in an isolated rural area, felt confident enough in that space to insist that Shuar rights ought also to be respected. This is partly because she was aware of her economic and social capital (as the wife of an emigrant and the mother of successful children). It was also arguably partly to do with the increased pride she experienced as an indigenous woman, as a result of the success of the indigenous rights movement.

7.9 The President's Visit

It was 9:30am, and the house was in chaos. Gabriela was running from room to room, rummaging through piles of clothes and tangled bundles of beaded necklaces and bracelets. Lorena had just emerged from the shower and was hurrying to dry and comb her hair, while still wrapped in a towel. Luis, Gabriela's father, also wrapped in a towel, was ironing his best shirt. And I was standing over my overflowing suitcase in a state of mild panic, trying to work out which of my tatty, old field clothes were the least tatty and old.

The reason? We were about to meet the President of Ecuador.

It was January 2014. I had returned to Sucúa, to discover that Gabriela was now firmly established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was doing very well. What was more, her father Luis had finally come home to Ecuador after eighteen years in the United States.

A couple of days previously, Gabriela had telephoned to say that she would be coming home for the weekend. She had explained that President Correa was planning to make a visit to Sucúa as part of his party's local election campaign. As Gabriela was from Sucúa, she was allowed to accompany him and see her family in the meantime.

Gabriela arrived at around 6am, having travelled all night; the President was to arrive later that morning, with his entourage of security guards and advisers. Alvaro, who by now had landed a position with the municipal council in Macas, had promised to telephone us to let us know when Correa was expected to reach Sucúa.

By 10am, following a short nap, a generous breakfast and several changes of outfit, we were all more or less ready to meet the President. Gabriela and her mother were wearing beaded necklaces, feathered earrings and bracelets, most of which had been made by Lorena herself. My appearance was fairly underwhelming by comparison, although I had miraculously found a pair of trousers that wasn't covered in mud or torn at the hem.

Gabriela's mobile phone rang; it was Alvaro, who told her that Correa had left Macas and was due to arrive in Sucúa imminently. He was making for the Río Upano High School, where he would be attending meetings with local delegates. We locked up the house and made our way towards the school. The streets of Sucúa were cordoned off, and intimidating security guards in bright tabards were standing vigilant on each corner.

We arrived at the school gates, where a buzz of activity was developing. Several prominent members of the Sucúa community, having heard about the President's arrival, were milling around, trying to gain access to the building. Luis, Lorena and I waited outside while Gabriela went in to check whether the delegation had arrived yet or not. As we chatted, a man of about eighty approached and spoke to Luis. I recognised him as Don Guimo, eldest member of an old, 'white', well-to-do Sucúan family, who lived in a large-ish house next door to the library.

Don Guimo was smartly but casually dressed in a shirt and a pair of brown trousers. He seemed thrilled to see Luis, who was having trouble recognising him.

'They told me that one of the *shuaritas* had returned from the States, but I didn't know it was you!' he gushed, patting Luis affectionately on the shoulder. As Gabriela joined us, Don Guimo turned to me, and said 'you know, I've known this *shuara* since he was a boy. He used to play basketball, he was very good. And now look at him, he's even travelled to the United States!'

As Luis smiled and nodded politely, I tried to recall previous conversations that I'd had with Don Guimo. During my first period of fieldwork, I would regularly visit the library, and so I often encountered him working in his garden and usually paused to chat with him over the fence. Having asked me about the topic of my thesis, he would recount with amazement that nowadays '*shuaras*', as he referred to Shuar, 'even go to the Río Upano school! I taught there for a while and I had one or two *shuaritas* in my class – you know, they were just as good as the *mestizo* students!' I once shared his observations with Clara, who had attended the Río Upano. She simply sighed and said 'yes, Don Guimo was my teacher at school. He's a bit racist, but he's old, you know?'

Don Guimo didn't recognise me now, and I could see that the year which had passed since our last conversation had not been kind to him. His clothes, once smart, were now rather worn, and he was having trouble collecting his thoughts. He asked me where I was from, and when I told him that I was British, he smiled and said, 'did you know, there's a *shuarita* working at the Ecuadorian embassy in London? His mother was a *shuara*; I think his father was Ecuadorian. Can you imagine! A *shuarita* in England!'

I tried to glance discreetly at the faces of my companions. Gabriela and Luis were listening to what Don Guimo was saying and nodding politely; Lorena seemed to have lost interest in the conversation and was scanning the crowds for people she knew. None of them, not even Gabriela, had flinched at the mention of the words *shuara*, or *shuarita*, despite these words being considered offensive and demeaning by many Shuar.

The President's arrival proved to be a false alarm; he wasn't coming until the afternoon. Gabriela, Luis, and Lorena wandered back to the house in the morning sunshine, pausing to greet people that they knew on the way.

'Poor Don Guimo,' said Gabriela as we left the school. 'He's getting so old and he had nobody to take care of him. Did you see his clothes?' Lorena and Luis nodded sadly. I found it odd that none of them even thought to mention Don Guimo's well-meaning but racist and patronising comments about '*shuaritas*' – even I had found them offensive.

Yet as I followed the Saant family through the streets of Sucúa, I began to understand why Don Guimo's comments hadn't mattered to them. Well-dressed, in new, neat clothes and colourful Shuar jewellery, they cut a very handsome family as they strolled along the pavement, greeting Shuar and *mestizo* acquaintances, pausing to chat with a few people. Luis had recently returned from a successful period in the United States, where he had made

enough money to buy land, build a house, and pay for his children's education; Gabriela had attended the best university in the country, and was now a budding diplomat. They had every right to be proud of their achievements, and were equally proud of their Shuar identity. They had therefore no reason to take to heart the comments of an old man like Don Guimo. His attitudes, like the influence of his family, belonged to the past. The Saants were masters of the future.

7.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that although many urban Shuar residents struggle to live up to the 'hyperreal' standard of indigeneity that is seemingly expected of them, not all urban Shuar are willing to accept outsiders' definitions of what it means to be indigenous. For (mostly young) urban, middle-classed Shuar in Sucúa, being indigenous is what they choose to make of it. Following Bourdieu, I have demonstrated that increased economic capital, accrued through the migration of their parents and relatives, and cultural capital from a top-level education, have afforded urban Shuar the agency to determine for themselves what it means to be indigenous. Crucially, they are able to critique, romanticised, essentialised and externally-generated images of what it means to be indigenous. Being Shuar is an important part of their identity, yet it does not restrict what they feel able to do with their lives and with their future.

In the next and final chapter, I will summarise the broader implications of my research for questions of ethnicity and indigeneity in rainforest cities and beyond. I will also explore further avenues for research in this area.

Fig. 12: Attending the President's speech. Photograph by Radio Macas.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Across the generations

Lorena's grandfather was an *uunt*, a big man, who had four wives. One fateful night, he was murdered in his sleep by the lovers of three of his wives. His fourth wife, Lorena's grandmother, who had no knowledge of the plot, tried desperately to defend her husband from the attackers. Ultimately, she could do nothing but watch as the men stabbed her husband to death, threw his body onto the fire, and escaped with their lovers.

Lorena's mother was the elder of her father's two wives. When the Salesian missionaries came, they told Lorena's father that to have two wives was a sin, and that he needed to choose between them. Lorena's father chose the younger wife, and abandoned Lorena's mother to her fate. Shortly afterwards, the missionaries came again, this time to take Lorena and her siblings away to the mission boarding school. Lorena's mother was not aware at the time that her children would never come home again.

Lorena does not know how old she was when she was taken to the mission school; the nuns assumed her to be around five. She was never allowed home, not even to visit her family, who could only come every other weekend to see her. Lorena describes life in the school as intolerable: the pupils did all the work, cooking and cleaning and tending the garden, and were only fed rice and mouldy cheese, while the nuns thrived on the vegetables produced by their wards' backbreaking labour. Anyone caught speaking Shuar instead of Spanish was heavily punished.

Lorena's youngest daughter, Gabriela, graduated from Ecuador's most prestigious university, the San Francisco University in Quito (SFUQ), and is now a trainee diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2012 she married Lucas, a fellow graduate of SFUQ and

the son of one of the most influential 'creole' families in Quito. At the time of writing, Gabriela and Lucas had recently left Ecuador for Gabriela's first post as a diplomat: she will spend the next five years (2014 – 2019) as Third Secretary at the Ecuadorian embassy in Beijing, China.

Fig. 13: Three generations of Shuar women. Photograph by Alejandro Montalvo.

8.2 Summary of the arguments of this thesis

In this thesis I have analysed the recent wave of rural-urban migration and urbanisation among members of the Shuar ethnic group in the southern Ecuadorian Amazon. Focusing on middle-classed rural-urban migrants and urban residents, I have endeavoured to understand how the experience of living in an urban environment influences the way in which Shuar construct their identity as Shuar and as indigenous people.

Having set the scene theoretically and ethnographically in the first part of the thesis, I argued that urbanisation both increases urban Shuar residents' awareness of (and pride in) their ethnic identity, and made them feel somehow 'less' indigenous. Following Barth, in Chapter 5 I suggested that ethnic identity only becomes relevant to an individual when she encounters people from a different ethnic group – that is to say, it is at the boundaries of ethnic groups that ethnic identity is formed. Ethnicity is neither a list of 'cultural traits', nor a state of being; rather, it is a continual process of identification based on similarity and difference. Urban Shuar maintain their ethnic distinction from non-Shuar by continually identifying *with* their ethnic group (other Shuar) and *against* those that are not Shuar. They focus on symbolic elements of their cultural identity, such as Shuar language, food, and appearance (including long hair for women, colourful beads, and 'Chinese' eyes). Such elements are selected based in part upon the external definitions of indigeneity discussed in Chapter 6, and are liable to change over time without necessarily altering the essential dichotomy between 'Shuar' and 'non-Shuar'.

Nevertheless, as I asserted in Chapter 6, while the experience of living in an urban area may heighten Shuar residents' awareness and sense of pride in their ethnic identity, it also exposes them to a variety of external perspectives – a 'play of mirrors' (Novaes 1997) – on what it means to be 'indigenous'. These images tend to be essentialised with a particular objective in mind, whether it be environmental activism or eco-tourism, for example. The result is that urban Shuar feel unable to live up to the image of the 'hyperreal Indian' with which they are presented, and feel that they are somehow inauthentic as Shuar and as indigenous people. The opinions of non-Shuar living in or passing through cities like Sucúa, including local *mestizos*, western tourists, NGO workers and missionaries, serve to continually reinforce these beliefs, leading urban Shuar residents simultaneously to

romanticise and essentialise their Shuar identity and feel that their own urban lifestyles make them 'less' Shuar than their rural counterparts.

In Chapter 7, I asserted that at least one partof the Shuar population has managed to break free from the existential contradiction facing urban Shuar. Increasing migration to the United States and Europe, as well as a more plurinational agenda on the part of the Ecuadorian government, have allowed the children of many urban Shuar to obtain unprecedented economic, social and cultural capital. A burgeoning indigenous urban middle class has formed, with its own dreams and ambitions; these ambitions are not limited by beliefs about what indigenous people can or cannot do, whether as a result of discriminatory practices within Ecuador or well-meaning but equally restrictive romanticised notions of 'how an indigenous person should be'.

These young people are defining for themselves what it means to be indigenous: while they take pride in their identity as indigenous people, they see no contradiction between being indigenous and graduating from university, having a professional job, wearing 'western' clothes, travelling abroad, speaking Spanish and English, marrying outside their ethnic group – indeed, dreaming the same dreams and following the same potential life plans available to any non-indigenous Ecuadorian. They are not encumbered by the 'burden of heritage': they feel free to cast off that burden without calling into question their status as indigenous people.

In the rest of this chapter I will assess the implications of my findings and suggest further directions for research in this area. I will begin by analysing the implications for the meaning of the term 'indigenous', in the Amazonian context and more generally. I will then discuss the political implications, particularly the shift in support among the urban middle

class elite in favour of the ruling party, Alianza Pais, and its potential impact upon the future of indigenous activism in the region. Finally, I will explore some potential future avenues for research, including, crucially, a more in-depth analysis of Amazonian indigenous migration to the United States and Europe.

8.3 Contributions to anthropological scholarship

My original aim in this thesis was to analyse the implications of urbanisation for indigenous identity in the Ecuadorian Amazon. More broadly, I set out to understand what it means to be 'indigenous' in the twenty-first century. What I discovered was an intricate, interconnected world of contested meanings, with roots perceived and experienced as being deep in the past but with sights set upon ever-broader horizons. In this section I hope to demonstrate how a study of urban Shuar residents in Ecuador can help us to understand the multiple, conflicting meanings of indigeneity, and why this is still a relevant category both for anthropologists and for indigenous peoples.

In Chapter 4, I explored the history of the concept of indigeneity, both in Latin America and more generally. Briefly, although 'indigenous peoples' have arguably existed since the colonisation of the Americas, the term 'indigenous' only really came to prominence in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Prior to this period, indigenous peoples in Latin America were for the most part '*indios*', members of a simultaneously ethnic- and class-based category whose place was firmly at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Even the more well-meaning *indigenismo* of early twentieth century South American nations such as Brazil (Clark 1998), while it romanticised the continent's indigenous past, assumed that indigenous peoples were doomed to disappear as they were gradually absorbed into the dominant national culture. The post-war human rights era, with its more positive approach to

minorities, coupled (perhaps ironically) with neo-liberal agendas that facilitated increased social and cultural diversity, led to the rise in prominence of indigenous rights groups, and the increasing use of the term 'indigenous' as an empowering alternative to the more pejorative '*indio*'.

The 'indigenous movement' was a worldwide phenomenon, embracing both 'traditional' indigenous populations such as those found in Latin America and Australia, and more contentious claims from groups in Africa and Asia, where the history of colonialism and displacement is arguably more complex. The result was that the term 'indigenous' became so broad and all-encompassing as to be rendered virtually meaningless in the eyes of many anthropologists (see e.g. Kuper 2003). Nevertheless (as is often the case), 'indigenous' was becoming an increasingly powerful and popular term for minority groups at precisely the same moment that social science was discarding it from its epistemological toolkit.

What does 'indigenous' mean today? Andrew Canessa (2014) suggests that indigeneity is essentially a relationship with the state, in that all indigenous peoples, whatever else divides them, are professing an indigenous identity in order to claim or defend their rights vis-à-vis the state, whether that right be to territory, resources, cultural practices or an indigenous justice system. This is the case both in Canessa's field site Bolivia, where indigenous people make up 63 per cent of the population and where the incumbent president, Evo Morales, is pursuing an overtly 'indigenist' agenda, and in Ecuador, where indigenous peoples still form a political and demographic minority.

It is true to say that indigeneity, as it is lived and understood among urban Shuar in Sucúa, is essentially a political identity, but I would argue that it is not *only* a political identity. Both the indigenous politicians working for the Shuar Federation and Pachakutik,

and the urban middle class Shuar who support the government, have entered into a relationship with the state based in large part on their indigenous identity; yet while the former are campaigning for indigenous rights, the latter are using indigenous symbolism in order to acquire and consolidate their place as part of the nation's middle class establishment. Nevertheless, their understanding of their own identity as 'indigenous' runs deeper than these surface meanings suggest.

For urban Shuar in Sucúa, their ethnic identity is made up of multifaceted, overlapping and interrelated categories. 'Indigenous' is perhaps the overarching umbrella term, linking them not only to other Shuar but also to other Amazonian peoples, to indigenous Andeans, and to ethnic groups across Latin America. ('What do you have in common with indigenous peoples in other countries?' I asked one informant. 'We all drink manioc beer,' he replied). 'Shuar' is a more localised, but still broad, category. Imposed to a large extent from outside as part of the Salesian missionaries' educational activities, it eventually became, in a sense, the political face of the ethnic group, a term that called up images of red and yellow feather headdresses, blue dresses, *itips*, and coloured beads (and, inevitably, shrunken heads). Yet it is a term that was rarely used among my Shuar informants except to refer to these essentialised symbols of their identity. '*Paisano*,' on the other hand, is a far more common term, and is used to refer to anybody who is 'one of us': essentially, Shuar rather than non-Shuar. '*Paisano*' does not impose any burden upon a person to perform her identity in any way, it merely states that she is part of one group and not the other, 'us' and not 'them'. In that sense, it clearly demarcates an ethnic identity. Finally, pejorative terms

such as '*indio*',[48] '*jivaro*', and '*shuara*' (or '*shuarita*') imply an ethnic or racial category that is at the bottom of a social hierarchy.

In reality, these different categories blend into each other on a daily basis, to the point that it is difficult to determine where being 'indigenous' ends and being 'Shuar' or '*paisano*' begins. In Chapter 5 I recounted a conversation that I had with Lorena about other 'indigenous' people. She told me that initially, she did not realise that the highland women in Sucúa who wore *polleras* (short, voluminous skirts), and braided their hair, were 'like us'. When I asked, 'do you mean "indigenous"?' she claimed never to have heard this word before. Nevertheless, she quickly understood what it meant: the people who are 'like us' – not *mestizos*. She knew that Shuar belonged to the same 'category' not only as the other Amazonian groups, Achuar, Quichua, and Huaorani, but also as the indigenous people who came down from the highlands.[49] In this sense, 'indigenous' as a category can move beyond the limitations of politics and embrace a sense of sameness and difference that influences the way that indigenous people perceive, understand and interact with the people around them.

8.4 Implications of research

8.4.1 Urbanisation and indigenous politics

At the beginning of this thesis, I argued that Amazonian indigenous urbanisation potentially carried implications for the indigenous rights movement in Latin America. Indeed, this is one of the issues raised in McSweeney and Jokisch's 2007 paper. The concern put forward was that '[s]ome observers are likely to see in indigenous mobility a betrayal of the very place-

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[48] I rarely heard the term '*indio*' used among *mestizos* in Sucúa; '*jivaro*' and '*shuara*' were more common. I include these terms in the same category as I believe that they reflect the same racial hierarchy commonly found in the Andes, where '*indio*' is a more common term.

[49] Crucially, however, I never heard highland indigenous people in Sucúa referred to as '*paisano*'.

bounded identity that for many defines authentic indigeneity, and with which so many political and territorial gains have been leveraged' (2007: 174). What, in that case, will the effect be of a shift in the political alliances of the urban indigenous middle classes *away* from the indigenous rights cause and towards the established non-indigenous political authorities?

I cannot hope to do full justice to this question here: the implications of indigenous urbanisation for the indigenous political movement are the topic of another doctoral dissertation project. Nevertheless, I will say the following. Firstly, the point that I have endeavoured to make throughout this thesis, and continue to make now, is that externally-generated and imposed definitions of indigenous identity cannot and should not determine what an individual is or is not able to do with her life. If an indigenous person chooses to study at university, get a degree, move to the city, get a professional job, marry a *mestizo*, and vote for a non-indigenous political party, she should be able to do all of these things. Moreover, these decisions should not determine in any way whether she can still identify as indigenous. One can ask, in that case, where we draw the line between indigenous and *mestizo* citizens: the answer is that it is not up to us to draw that line.

Secondly, and more generally, it is clear that a shift in attitudes towards, and understanding of, indigeneity is needed among key stakeholders: not only external figures such as academic commentators, NGO activists or western journalists, but also on the part of indigenous political leaders themselves. While espousing a romanticised, essentialised image of Amazonian indigenous identity has accrued valuable symbolic capital for the indigenous political movement, this trend can only continue for so long. Not only does it severely restrict the life options and ambitions of indigenous people, weighing them down unfairly with the 'burden of heritage', it also alienates those people who are arguably in the best position to

further the indigenous cause. The young, urban, indigenous middle classes that I have described in this thesis are well-educated, well-connected, ambitious and influential. They want to pursue their life goals but they also take pride in their indigenous identity, and see no contradiction between these two elements of their lives. If indigenous political groups could step away from the restrictive images of 'Indianness' that they have hereto espoused, and incorporate a broader, more inclusive understanding of what indigeneity means, and who qualifies as 'indigenous', they may yet be able to take advantage of the energy, enthusiasm and resources of this new generation of middle class indigenous urban residents.

Furthermore, by changing their and others' perceptions of what it means to be 'indigenous', indigenous leaders are at less risk of losing the gains they have made through accusations over a 'lack of authenticity'. Studies, my own included, point to ever-increasing urbanisation and out-migration on the part of indigenous Amazonians; if this is the case, then continued insistence upon a limited view of indigeneity will increasingly be contradicted by the situation on the ground. Academics (and especially anthropologists), NGOs, eco-tourism companies and other interested parties can contribute to these efforts by diversifying the images of indigenous people that they present to the world, in order to reflect people's lives as they are actually lived, rather than romantic or outdated scenes.

8.4.2 Amazonianists and the people without history

Another point that I have endeavoured to make over the course of this thesis is that Amazonianists – and particularly those trained in Europe – are not engaging sufficiently with the contemporary events and processes that are affecting the lives of Amazonian indigenous peoples. While urbanisation continues at an ever-increasing pace, many ethnographers of the

region continue to depict Amazonian peoples as isolated, small-scale societies trapped in an eternal ethnographic present.

Recently, I attended the annual Marilyn Strathern Lecture at the University of Cambridge, where Eduardo Viveiros de Castro was speaking about perspectivism in Amazonia. Following the lecture, a member of the audience asked Viveiros de Castro whether he considered Amazonian peoples to exist in the same temporality as Europeans. 'No, I do not: they are not contemporary peoples,' he replied. Regardless of the presumed differences between European and Amazonian ontologies (to which he was no doubt alluding), to say that Amazonians are 'not contemporary peoples' appears to demonstrate a profound ignorance of the situation of many indigenous Amazonians, and particularly those living in or near urban areas. My impression, on leaving the Cambridge lecture, was that anthropologists are just as guilty of romanticising and exoticising their informants as any of the other 'mirrors' discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

I argue therefore that ethnographers of Amazonia need to extricate themselves from the ethnographic present (Rubenstein 2002) and endeavour to engage with the challenges and concerns facing *contemporary* indigenous Amazonians. If, as Gow (2007) suggests, we do not have the ethnographic tools for this task, then we owe it to our informants to develop them. How else are we truly to understand their lives?

8.5 Future research possibilities

The most obvious informants for further research in this area are Shuar and other Amazonian populations living in Quito and other major Ecuadorian cities. A particularly interesting project might involve university students and recent graduates, looking at their life histories, future aspirations and networks of friends, colleagues and classmates. Such a project could

replicate the methods and objectives of my thesis in a different context and on a larger scale, looking at the influences of a large, cosmopolitan, metropolitan area upon indigenous Amazonian residents' sense of self and identity as indigenous people.

Another project would involve Amazonian, and particularly Shuar migrants to the United States and Europe. One possible location could be Connecticut, where many Shuar migrants have travelled in recent years. If anything, this research is more urgent than research taking place in Ecuador, as following the financial crisis, many Ecuadorians, including a large number of Shuar, are returning to Ecuador. The project could address migrants' reasons for travelling to the United States, why they chose Connecticut, their experiences of living and working in the US, their relationship to other migrants and to American citizens, how they spend their income, and their plans and aspirations for the future.

Questions for future research on indigenous urbanisation more generally might include the following: If indigenous identity is for the most part a political identity first and foremost, to what extent are indigenous ethnic identities such as 'Shuar' and 'Quichua' also political? Does middle-class disengagement with indigenous political struggles betray a lack of concern with the issues of their fellow *paisanos*? How and to what extent do highland and lowland indigenous people interact in large urban areas and/or other countries? Do they share the same objectives, the same life plans?

Finally, as I argued in the previous section, there is scope for a broader debate about Amazonianist ethnography and its general lack of engagement with contemporary developments in the region, including indigenous urbanisation. This could involve a discussion about the challenges of urban ethnography, and in particular of different methodological and theoretical approaches that could allow for more and better

anthropological contributions to our understanding of urban societies. Life is changing at an unprecedented rate for indigenous peoples in the Amazon region, and if we fail to focus upon these changes we run the risk not only of distorting the anthropological picture that we present of the region, but also of letting down our informants by failing to understand the issues that really affect their lives.

Epilogue

I returned to Sucúa at the start of 2014 for a final period of fieldwork. I had always planned to come back, but the timing of this visit was deliberate: Clara was standing as a candidate in the local elections, representing Pachakutik in Taant.

Elections in Ecuador are generally a passionate affair, and Morona Santiago did not disappoint. Months before the vote was due to take place, trucks bearing flags and loud speakers began circulating the streets, blaring out the election jingles of their candidates: '*Bos-co! Yo te con-oz-co!*' Posters covered every spare scrap of walls and fences, and flags adorned each and every house – fluorescent green for the ruling Alianza País party, blue for the opposition, and rainbow for the indigenous party, Pachakutik. Political rallies took place in all of the neigbourhoods, involving free beer and a certain amount of unsporting behaviour (following an opposition rally in the park outside our house, we awoke to find that all of Alvaro's Alianza País flags had been stolen; he was forced to procure not only more flags, but also extra long poles on which to tie them).

I agreed to help Clara with her campaign in Taant and the neighbouring town of Maqueda. Together we traipsed up and down the streets, hanging up posters and trying to persuade local residents to vote for Pachakutik. Shuar that lived in Maqueda seemed convinced by Clara's arguments; the residents of Taant were less so. Clara's grandmother, who still lived in the smallholding on the edge of the *centro*, told us that people in Taant were reluctant to vote for Clara, even though she represented Pachakutik.

'They say that she's not from there, so why should they vote for her? They don't think she cares about them,' she explained. 'They say, it's the same as with her diploma: she wants to use them [*aprovechar de ellos*] so that she can become a politician.'

I asked Clara why she had put herself forward as a candidate.

'Because I want to help Shuar people!' she told me defiantly. 'I want to be involved in politics. I think it's really important, to help my people.'

A political rally was organised in Taant, and all the local Pachakutik candidates attended. Coming from the British context, I was amazed at how many different posts were available in Ecuadorian local government: come election day, the residents of Taant would need to elect seven different political figures, including the mayor, the prefect, and several councillors. All of these candidates were invited to the rally, and all but the prefect attended. Over the course of the evening, each of the candidates got up to speak; everyone except Clara gave at least part of their speech in Shuar, to rapturous applause. It transpired that most were a good deal older than Clara, and while some of them lived in urban areas, they had apparently maintained strong links with their communities. Clara, on the other hand, was still seen and treated as a stranger in Taant, and her speech received a lukewarm reaction.

I left Ecuador shortly before the results were announced, and kept a close eye on my Shuar friends' Facebook pages to see whether any updates would be posted. Alvaro announced gleefully that the Alianza País mayor had kept his seat in Sucúa. Another friend posted the news that Marcelino Chumpi was still prefect of Morona Santiago. Clara was unusually silent, so one day, when she was online, I sent her a message to ask how she did.

'I didn't win,' came the reply. 'There was a conspiracy against me!'

'Really? By whom?' I asked.

'My uncle![50] He went round and told everyone not to vote for me!'

'Why would he do that?'

'I don't know! He's jealous, I think. It doesn't matter – now I have more time to focus on my studies. I just want to finish my thesis, get my degree, and get away from Sucúa once and for all.'

* * * * *

In July 2014 I received another message in my Facebook inbox, this time from Gabriela.

'I'm at Guayaquil airport, about to leave for China!'

'Wow! How long will you be going for?' I asked in reply.

'Five years! I'm so nervous – but sooo excited! I can't believe it... China!!!'

I looked at Gabriela's Facebook wall: friends and family had all posted messages of love and support in Spanish and Shuar. Alongside a photograph of herself and her husband at Guayaquil airport, Gabriela had published photographs of her *despedida* with her family in Sucúa, including a picture of her grandmother, Lorena's mother-in-law, taken in front of the Saant farm in the *centro* of Santa María[51]. The message was clear: Gabriela was about to embark upon a journey that her parents and grandparents could never have dreamt of, and yet she would never forget where she came from, or the people that helped to get her to where she was going. She would never forget she was Shuar.

---

[50] A kinship term rather than a 'true' uncle.

[51] Name changed.

APPENDIX I

Glossary of key Shuar terms

Anent	Magical song
Apach	*Mestizo* [non-indigenous Ecuadorian]
Chichám	Speech, words, language
Inkis	Foreigner [non-Ecuadorian]
Itip	A long skirt worn by men, usually held up by a belt
Kakarám	Powerful man; power
Maikiua	Hallucinogen made from thorn apple
Mukindi	Edible palm weevil grub
Nua	Woman
Shakap	A beaded belt worn by women with the *tarach*
Tawasap	Feather headdress
Tarach	A long blue dress, usually sleeveless on one side, typically worn by women
Tsantsa	Shrunken head
Uunt	'Big man'
Uwishin	Shaman

APPENDIX II

Extract from the 2008 Ecuadorian National Constitution, p. 26

Derechos de las comunidades, pueblos y nacionalidades

Art. 56.- Las comunidades, pueblos, y nacionalidades indígenas, el pueblo afroecuatoriano, el pueblo montubio y las comunas forman parte del Estado ecuatoriano, único e indivisible.

Art. 57.- Se reconoce y garantizará a las comunas, comunidades, pueblos y nacionalidades indígenas, de conformidad con la Constitución y con los pactos, convenios, declaraciones y demás instrumentos internacionales de derechos humanos, los siguientes derechos colectivos:

1. Mantener, desarrollar y fortalecer libremente su identidad, sentido de pertenencia, tradiciones ancestrales y formas de organización social.

2. No ser objeto de racismo y de ninguna forma de discriminación fundada en su origen, identidad étnica o cultural.

3. El reconocimiento, reparación y resarcimiento a las colectividades afectadas por racismo, xenofobia y otras formas conexas de intolerancia y discriminación.

4. Conservar la propiedad imprescriptible de sus tierras comunitarias, que serán inalienables, inembargables e indivisibles. Estas tierras estarán exentas del pago de tasas e impuestos.

5. Mantener la posesión de las tierras y territorios ancestrales y obtener su adjudicación gratuita.

6. Participar en el uso, usufructo, administración y conservación de los recursos naturales renovables que se hallen en sus tierras.

7. La consulta previa, libre e informada, dentro de un plazo razonable, sobre planes y programas de prospección, explotación y comercialización de recursos no renovables que se encuentren en sus tierras y que puedan afectarles ambiental o culturalmente; participar en los beneficios que esos proyectos reporten y recibir indemnizaciones por los perjuicios sociales, culturales y ambientales que les causen. La consulta que deban realizar las autoridades competentes será obligatoria y oportuna.

Si no se obtuviese el consentimiento de la comunidad consultada, se procederá conforme a la Constitución y la ley.

8. Conservar y promover sus prácticas de manejo de la biodiversidad y de su entorno natural. El Estado establecerá y ejecutará programas, con la participación de la comunidad, para asegurar la conservación y utilización sustentable de la biodiversidad.

9. Conservar y desarrollar sus propias formas de convivencia y organización social, y de generación y ejercicio de la autoridad, en sus territorios legalmente reconocidos y tierras comunitarias de posesión ancestral.

10. Crear, desarrollar, aplicar y practicar su derecho propio o consuetudinario, que no podrá vulnerary derechos constitucionales, en particular de las mujeres, niñas, niños y adolescentes.

11. No ser desplazados de sus tierras ancestrales.

12. Mantener, proteger y desarrollar los conocimientos colectivos; sus ciencias, tecnologías y saberes ancestrales; los recursos genéticos que contienen la diversidad biológica y la agrobiodiversidad; sus medicinas y prácticas de medicina tradicional, con inclusión del derecho a recuperar, promover y proteger los lugares rituales y sagrados, así como plantas, animales, minerales y ecosistemas dentro de sus territorios; y el conocimiento de los recursos y propiedades de la fauna y la flora.

Se prohíbe toda forma de apropiación sobre sus conocimientos, innovaciones y prácticas.

13. Mantener, recuperar, proteger, desarrollar y preservar su patrimonio cultural e histórico como parte indivisible del patrimonio del Ecuador. El Estado proveerá los recursos para el efecto.

14. Desarrollar, fortalecer y potenciar el sistema de educación intercultural bilingüe, con criterios de calidad, desde la estimulación temprana hasta el nivel superior, conforme a la diversidad cultural, para el cuidado y preservación de las identidades en consonancia con sus metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Se garantizará una carrera docente digna. La administración de este sistema será colectiva y participativa, con alternancia temporal y espacial, basada en veeduría comunitaria y rendición de cuentas.

15. Construir y mantener organizaciones que los representen, en el marco del respeto al pluralismo y a la diversidad cultural, política y organizativa. El Estado reconocerá y promoverá todas sus formas de expresión y organización.

16. Participar mediante sus representantes en los organismos oficiales que determine la ley, en la definición de las políticas públicas que les conciernan, así como en el diseño y decisión de sus prioridades en los planes y proyectos del Estado.

17. Ser consultados antes de la adopción de una medida legislativa que pueda afectar cualquiera de sus derechos colectivos.

18. Mantener y desarrollar los contactos, las relaciones y la cooperación con otros pueblos, en particular los que estén divididos por fronteras internacionales.

19. Impulsar el uso de las vestimentas, los símbolos y los emblemas que los identifiquen.

20. La limitación de las actividades militares en sus territorios, de acuerdo con la ley.

21. Que la dignidad y diversidad de sus culturas, tradiciones, historias y aspiraciones se reflejen en la educación pública y en los medios de comunicación; la creación de sus propios medios de comunicación social en sus idiomas y el acceso a los demás sin discriminación alguna.

Los territorios de los pueblos en aislamiento voluntario son de posesión ancestral irreductible e intangible, y en ellos estará vedada todo tipo de actividad extractiva. El Estado adoptará medidas para garantizar sus vidas, hacer respetar su autodeterminación y voluntad de permanecer en aislamiento, y precautelar la observancia de sus derechos. La violación de estos derechos constituirá delito de etnocidio, que será tipificado por la ley.

El Estado garantizará la aplicación de estos derechos colectivos sin discriminación alguna, en condiciones de igualdad y equidad entre mujeres y hombres.

APPENDIX III

Example of questionnaire completed by Shuar students aged 12-15 at the *Escuela Fiscomisional Padre Alfredo Germani*.

Encuesta sobre el idioma shuar:

Edad: _____

Clase: _____

1. ¿Qué tan bien hablas shuar?

No hablo shuar	☐
Hablo un poco	☐
Hablo más o menos	☐
Hablo bien	☐
Es mi idioma nativo	☐

2. ¿Dónde hablas shuar?

(Escoge todo lo que aplica)

En la escuela	☐
En la casa	☐
En la finca	☐
Con mis amigos	☐
Con mis abuelos	☐
En la FICSH	☐
En el mercado	☐

3. ¿Es importante que los Shuar saben hablar el idioma Shuar?

Sí	☐
No	☐
No sé	☐

¿Por qué?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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