



## **Blood Feud and Table Manners: A Neo-Hobbesian Approach to Jivaroan Warfare<sup>1</sup>**

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While doing fieldwork among the Awajun<sup>2</sup> many years ago,<sup>3</sup> I tried to be a good Jivaroan host. Over several months, I contracted with my neighbors to provide me with manioc beer mash and was thus able to serve the continuous flow of visitors the bowls of manioc beer that any visitor to a Jivaroan house had a right to expect. This experiment went fairly well; my guests seemed to appreciate my efforts and to enjoy themselves. However, there was one thing that irritated me -my male guests would continuously and copiously spit on the floor. Though I didn't say anything, I wondered "I don't spit on their floors when I visited their houses, why should they spit on mine?" Even though the floor was dirt, and the saliva was readily absorbed, it annoyed me. It continued to do so until I noticed when visiting other Awajun houses that they did not just spit on my floor, they spit on each other's floors and none of them seemed to mind, it was just the thing to do when visiting. So my irritation gave way to puzzlement.<sup>4</sup> Why should spitting on the floor be considered polite in Awajun society? I think I can offer a solution to the puzzle by connecting the behavior with the anxiety I believe it is designed to allay, but first I should lay out a background suitable to this volume on warfare.

### **A Neo-Hobbesian Approach to Warfare**

The usual approach to theorizing about warfare, primitive or otherwise, is to take peace as the human default or unmarked condition and to take warfare as the marked state that requires explanation. The task is defined as explaining why it is that humans go to war, not how they manage to stay at peace. In general, this mode of explanation sees warfare as a form of competition for a limiting resource although theorists differ in their choices of what resource is contested.<sup>5</sup> Candidate resources for competition include women, land, protein, wealth, power, trade routes, etcetera. Thus, Chagnon argues for the Yanomamo that success in warfare leads to reproductive success: "*unokais* [men who have killed]<sup>6</sup> had on average, more than two-and-a-half times as many wives as non-*unokais* and over three times as many children" (Chagnon, 1997: 205). In contrast, Ross interprets Achuar-Shuar warfare as

establishing “crucial population-resource relationships” (Ross 1980: 34), dispersing populations and creating buffer zones that maintained game populations, while Steel (1999) interprets the same conflict as the result of the competition for trade goods. It is not just material or genetic resources that can be competed for; Vallée and Crépeaux (1984) interpret Shuar warfare as a result of individual competition for power, while Taylor (1981: 665) views the long running warfare among the different Jivaroan groups as an exchange of deaths that assures the symbolic reproduction of their individual members.<sup>7</sup>

I think that there is much to be learned from this way of thinking, and believe that many of these positions are not mutually exclusive of one another. It seems perfectly possible that tribal warfare is massively over determined and might achieve all of the proposed functions simultaneously. However, here I am advocating an exploration of the complementary mode of explanation. I am suggesting that, at some times and places, it is warfare that should be considered the default or unmarked state and peace (or at least the reduction of lethal violence) the state to be achieved and explained. Ross (1980) has derisively labeled this mode of thinking about warfare as neo-Hobbesian in that, like Hobbes, it sees anarchy and ‘the war of all against all’ as the natural or default condition of human beings. For the purposes of the present paper and in the spirit of other groups who have taken pejorative labels as prized badges of their own identity, I affirm that I am a neo-Hobbesian and I am proud.<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, what I want to do here is to analyze and extend Harner’s (1972) description of the ideological basis of Shuar warfare. I will argue that the complex of Shuar beliefs about warfare and the spirit world form what I will call a coercive ideology. Like hegemonic ideologies (Gramsci, 1971), coercive ideologies involve beliefs that may be contrary to the interests of the believer. Unlike them, they force an individual member of the society to act in accordance with the belief system even if he (or she) is a skeptic.<sup>9</sup> Here, I examine how this Shuar belief complex coerced a particular set of behaviors, describe the two principal patterns of Shuar coalitional violence, and explore what consequences the complex had for within-group interactions.

Because this analysis depends so heavily on Harner’s description of this belief complex and Harner’s account has been criticized of late, I consider the objections to Harner’s description in another article.<sup>10</sup> I argue there that although more recent scholarship may offer a more elaborated account of *arutam* in the Shuar model of the person, it does not alter the internal logic of the system and its implications for the patterns of Jivaroan warfare.

### ***Arutam* as a Coercive Ideology**

The key propositions in Harner’s (1972) description of this complex of beliefs that form the ideological basis of Jivaroan warfare are the following:

1) If you have an *arutam* spirit, you cannot be murdered. If you have two, you cannot die, even through infectious disease (1972: 135).

2) If you have an *arutam* spirit, you are fierce and have an enormous desire to kill. Killing shows that you have it (1972: 139).

3) Although you acquire *arutam* spirits through a vision quest, killing other people "entitles" you to one (1972: 140).

4) If you don't kill someone every few years, your *arutam* will leave you and make you vulnerable to being killed (1972: 141, 142).

5) If you tell other people that you have an *arutam* spirit, it will leave you and make you vulnerable to being killed (1972: 139).

6) The only way to show you have an *arutam* spirit is through your actions, by showing great interpersonal energy, assertiveness, and aggressiveness and by killing (1972: 139).

Taken together, this complex of beliefs creates a situation in which a man's best insurance policy against assassination is someone else's head. One need not actually believe in the system to come to the pragmatic conclusion that if one does not kill, one is likely to be judged as a vulnerable target, and hence more likely to be killed. However, it might help convince others that one had *arutam* if one actually believed the system, because, as Trivers (1991) points out, those who are self-deceived make the most convincing deceivers. Although it is a mystery how it is that a complex of beliefs like this would become established in the first place, it is easy to see that once established, the complex would be self-perpetuating and would acquire enormous directive force (D'Andrade, 1992) to control people's behavior. The whole community would be constrained to act in accordance with the ideology and it would be in one's strong self-interest to do the same.<sup>11</sup> It is the stability and self-perpetuating character of this belief system supporting a pattern of aggressive and violent behavior that justifies taking a neo-Hobbesian stance and treating warfare as the default in this case.

This interpretation is close to that offered by Vallée and Crépeaux (1984). The critical difference is that they regard Jivaroan warfare as a competition for power pure and simple, whereas in this analysis, individual Shuar strive to have others perceive them as powerful, so as to preserve their own lives.

The detail that one loses an *arutam* spirit by talking about it may be a critical element in ensuring that the ideology is enacted. Its effect is similar to what Max Weber (1958 [1904-1905]) describes as the situation of Calvinists who wanted to show they were members of the elect. The elect, according to the Calvinists, are those who are predestined to go to heaven. One cannot know in this lifetime for certain whether one is in the elect but it was thought to be evident through certain kinds of external signs. If one declared that one

was a member of the elect, it would only signal your vanity since no one could be certain of his or her own status. The best indicator stemmed from the Biblical scripture "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7: 16). People who showed God's grace and favor by accumulating wealth in this lifetime were thought to have riches in store for them in the next. Thus, the best way to convince your neighbors that you were a member of a very important elite community was to accumulate as much wealth as possible. According to Weber, this belief was a root cause of the accumulation of capital that made capitalism possible. For both Calvinists and Jivaroans, barring self-report as evidence of one's spiritual status would have greatly enhanced the likelihood that the ideology would be evident in individuals' deeds and not just their words.

This ideology forms the basis of two different modes of Jivaroan coalitional violence: intra-tribal feuding and inter-tribal warfare. Intra-tribal feuding was not warfare *per se*, but instead involved episodes of homicide and feuding between individuals and families in the same group. The motives for this violence were interpersonal: avenging the death of kin or affines murdered either in a raid, by poisoning, or through witchcraft, avenging wife stealing, etcetera. These raids were directed toward the assassination of a single individual, usually from ambush. They were made over relatively short distances, and were carried out by small groups of raiders. Inter-tribal warfare was warfare proper, coalitional violence directed on a large scale against members of another group. These raids were led by a *kakaram* 'powerful one' and carried out by large groups of raiders, over long distances, in which large numbers of the enemy were killed at one time.

The differences between intra-tribal feuding and inter-tribal warfare largely reflect the operation of strong constraints on intra-group aggression and the absence of those constraints on acts of violence across groups. Harner states that (1972:172), "according to Jivaro norms, approved sanctions are an approximation of equivalent retaliation against the guilty party himself or a member of the immediate family, such as a brother, wife or child... Great pains are usually taken to kill only one person in retaliation for one murder." There were also clearer standards for beginning and ending feuds than intertribal war. Feuds were begun when one family sent the message to the other "Let us fight with guns" and ended with either the payment of a pig or shotgun to the oldest male of the family, with the death of the oldest male of the family, or with the mutual declaration of an end of the feud (Harner 1972: 181-182).

However, probably the most important difference between feuding and inter-tribal warfare is that it was almost exclusively in inter-tribal warfare that the Shuar reduced the heads of their enemies, producing a shrunken head or *tsantsa*. According to Harner (1972: 148), "making a full fledged *tsantsa* would be more insulting to the victim's relatives and neighbors and thus more likely to bring large-scale retribution" if one were to do it to a

member of one's own group. In contrast, the goal of inter-tribal warfare is to kill and take as many trophy heads as possible, even to the point of trumping the other objective -the abduction of women. Harner (1972: 186) reports that

"A man may seize an Achuara girl or woman as a captive to try to take her home to be an extra wife, but usually he is unsuccessful in this because one of his companions kills her on the homeward trail to secure a trophy head."

The ideological motivation for preparing a *tsantsa* was as a prophylactic measure against the avenging spirit of the deceased or *muisak*<sup>12</sup> -by sewing the lips and closing the eyes of the trophy head, the *muisak* could not escape and avenge the death (Harner 1972: 144). In addition, this bottled up spiritual power was believed to enhance the productivity of the women of the household (Harner 1972: 147). Taking and preparing trophy heads also would have served as a powerfully effective means of advertising one's fierceness and terrorizing the enemy. It can be viewed as efficiently extracting the maximum amount of horror from each loss of human life. In comparison to the industrial scale murder of modern state warfare, this system seems relatively humane.

However, it was the exchange of *tsantsa* for trade goods, especially shotguns and carbines that ultimately vastly increased the intensity of inter-tribal warfare and added a material basis to the ideological system. For with the exchange of the *tsantsa* for a shotgun, the head taker not only gained the spiritual power and invulnerability of the *arutam* spirit, he also gained the power of the gun. This led to a (mainly one-sided) arms race especially in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Although other groups such as the Achuar, Huambisa, and Aguaruna also carried out head-taking raids, none did it with the intensity of the Upano valley Shuar, in part because the Shuar had the best access to traders in Macas to exchange the trophy heads for shotguns.<sup>13</sup> The market for trophy heads greatly accelerated the course of Jivaroan head taking: Jivaroans would trade heads for shotguns, and as conflict escalated and shotguns became vital, more heads were converted into trophies. The process continued until roughly half the adult men had shotguns and the other half were headless. A number of independent accounts from different ethnographers all come up with a figure of approximately 50% of adult men dying violent deaths, either through witchcraft, poisoning, or direct physical violence (Berlin, E.A. personal communication; Ross 1980: 46; Patton, J. G., personal communication).<sup>14</sup> The figure was as high as 59% for the Achuar, as they bore the brunt of Shuar raids for heads. This moment, in which half the men had both shotguns and *arutam* and the other half were dead, may have provided a kind of natural stopping rule for this cultural complex of raiding and trading for heads. Regardless of whether one calculated the vulnerability of a potential enemy by their possession of an *arutam* spirit or the possession of a shotgun, there was now a scarcity of potential victims. Other factors

include the crash of the rubber boom, the development of important trade relationships between the Shuar and the Achuar (Harner 1972: 204-205; Ross 1984: 94-95), and the growing presence and influence of state authorities and Christian missionaries in both Ecuador and Peru.<sup>15</sup>

Should we consider this complex of beliefs regarding soul power and murder to be a selfish meme, like the Jonestown cult or the Shaker religion- a viral piece of culture that spreads among humans at the expense of the people that are coerced to believe in it, or at least act as though they do? Although this is an intriguing possibility, it is more likely to be the case that the ideology served the interests of the Shuar in reducing the levels of within-group violence, mainly at the expense of members of outgroups, such as the Achuar. Given the large numbers of Shuar warriors who participated in inter-tribal raiding expeditions (up to 400 to 500 warriors participating in monthly raids), many more Shuar were likely to have established a reputation for power and the possession of an *arutam* spirit with an Achuar head rather than a Shuar one. Given that the same head earned one an *arutam* spirit and a shotgun, there would have been strong incentives to protect oneself within the group by killing members of out-groups. Even if the relatively conservative rule of revenging a death with a death were to be carried out indefinitely, eventually the entire group of men would be wiped out. By shielding many of the potential victims with reputations for invulnerability, this ideology would slow the cycle of feuding within the group and enhance the probability that the feud could be ended.

This is a case in which one's assessment of the rationality or reasonableness of a cultural system is dependent on one's starting assumptions. If one's default expectations of within and between group relations are peaceful, than any system that motivates the demise of half of the adult men and some substantial fraction of the rest of the population, is horrific and mad. However, if one's expectations are of endless feuding, of the war of all against all, then a system that protects the surviving half of the men with a reputation of invulnerability is an attractive option.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the reputations are won primarily with the lives of members of out-groups would not be considered a cost.

### **Towards a Behavioral Ecology of Spitting**

I now turn to the implications of this belief complex for day-to-day interactions among Jivaroans. Let us assume for sake of argument that the Jivaroans themselves are acting and thinking like Hobbesians and have a reasonable expectation of an indefinite continuation of hostilities, as articulated by the complex of beliefs I have just described. How should someone who expects war but wants to live in peace behave in this system?

There are two important messages that would be important to communicate:

1) I am so fierce and powerful that you dare not attack me.

2) I am not an immediate threat to you, so you do not have to attack me.

I have already discussed how the taking, displaying, and trading of trophy heads would have broadcast the first message: "I have *arutam* and a shotgun as well." But it was also communicated in more ordinary contexts.

Jivaroan rituals of greeting and leave taking are as empty of semantic content as any on the planet. The approaching visitor shouts from outside the house *Pujamek?* ("Are you there?"), the host answers *Pujajai* ("I'm here."). On leave-taking, the visitor announces *Pujumata, weajai* ("Stay there, I'm going.") and the host answers *Ayu, pujumatjai, weta* ("All right, I'll stay here, you go.").<sup>17</sup> No information in the words is transmitted that wouldn't be indicated by the appearance and the subsequent disappearance of the visitor. It is in the manner of the greeting that the important messages are being sent. The fact that one continues to forcefully shout even when face-to-face with the host signals one's *kakarma* ('power and strength'), communicating the first message. It was probably this kind of aggressive display that gave rise to Karsten's (1923: 8) impression that "the Jibaros are by nature impulsive and choleric, qualities which among them frequently give rise to disputes and quarrels which may degenerate into sanguinary feuds." But the very fact that the shout of the greeting call comes from outside the house also signals to the host that one is not approaching the house by stealth to attempt an assassination, the second message of non-threat. Similarly, a woman's practice of dipping her thumb into the manioc beer bowl as she serves it to a visitor and then conspicuously sucking it as he drinks serves to advertise that the beer is not poisoned and also sends this second message.

But what about spitting, the puzzle I started with? This is another practice, like dipping one's thumb into the beer, which seems merely disgusting if one's expectations of others are pacific, but is positively reassuring from a Hobbesian perspective. While a visitor might have cause to worry about being poisoned, the host has cause to worry that the visitor may have come with the intention of assassination. In all but the coolest sociopath, entering a household with the intention of murder would summon the adrenal medulla to full operation and flood the system with norepinephrine, stimulating the sympathetic autonomic nervous system that evolved for the 'fight or flight' response (Mandler, 1984). Stimulation of this system causes a number of coordinated effects throughout the body: increase in respiratory rate, heart rate, and blood pressure, increase of blood flow to the heart and muscles, dilation of the pupils, the bronchioles and the GI tract, and inhibition of the salivary glands, or "dry mouth." Because these effects are controlled by the autonomic nervous system, they are beyond conscious control. Only the calmest murderer could enter a house with the intention of killing the host and continuously and copi -

ously spit on the floor. Filled with rage and fear, a typical assassin would not be able to spit to save his life. Thus, spitting on the floor is perhaps the most honest signal of friendly intentions and non-threat available.<sup>18</sup> The value of the signal is not diminished by the fact that its transmission is most likely unconscious, just as a hand shake clearly signals that one is not carrying a weapon, regardless of whether one is aware that that message is transmitted by the gesture.<sup>19</sup>

The account I am offering here is consistent with Frank's (1988) explanation of emotions as (difficult to imitate) honest signals of human commitment to social contracts. Frank interprets emotional displays, whether of love, anger, or shame, as binding the displayer of the emotion to a particular social commitment: to remain faithful if loved, to take vengeance if aggrieved, to redress fault if one has sinned, etcetera. The emotional display helps establish trust when words alone would not be trustworthy. By this interpretation, guests spitting on Jivaroan floors honestly signal their commitment to non-violence.

To close, I want to reaffirm that a Hobbesian perspective is justified here: Accepting conflict as the default state and peace as the condition to be achieved, leads not only to a more sympathetic but a more coherent understanding of beliefs and practices that might otherwise appear horrific or irrational. I also want to reiterate that I see the mode of explanation I have offered as complementary to the ecological and materialist explanations given by other authors, addressing proximate psychological mechanisms rather than ultimate causation. I believe that in trying to understand the nature of warfare, complex accounts are generally preferable to simple ones.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Originally presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists, Warsaw, Poland in the session "War and Peace in the Aboriginal South America," Catherine Julien, Stephen Beckerman, and Paul Valentine organizers. It became a separate piece when its length swelled to twice the length of the original article. I am grateful to Stephen Beckerman, Juan Bottaso, Beth Conklin, William Crocker, Cornelia Dayton, Catherine Julien, José Juncosa, and Paul Valentine for their helpful comments, to Karin Aldridge for her diligence in tracking down references, and to Elke Mader for the kind gift of her book. I am also very grateful to Michael J. Harner for his careful reading and critique.

<sup>2</sup> In general, I follow the Shuar Federation's terminology for the various Jivaroan groups: "Awajun" to refer to the Aguaruna Jivaro, "Wampis" to refer to the Huambisa, "Achuar" to refer to the Achuar, "Shiwiar" to refer to the Mainas, and "Shuar" to refer to the Untsuri Shuar described by Harner (1972). I use the term Jivaroan to refer to all five groups as a collectivity, in the absence of a well agreed upon cover term.

<sup>3</sup> My field work among the Awajun was conducted for approximately 18 months between summer 1976 and autumn 1978, as part of the Second Ethnobiological Expedition to the Alto Marañon, lead by Brent Berlin and funded by the National Science Foundation. My research was directed toward understanding the cultivation, classification, and selection of manioc varieties.

<sup>4</sup> For one reviewer, my admission that I was irritated by my guests spitting on my floor "rompe una de las reglas primeras del trabajo antropológico" [breaks one of the first rules of



anthropological fieldwork]. I submit that I am not the first and only anthropologist to ever have had an emotional reaction in the field (witness Malinowski's diaries) and that for anthropologists to deny their emotional responses as a matter of political correctness is dishonest and hypocritical. (To act on one's emotional responses is another matter.) In the present case, my emotional response of irritation was an important signal to me that something of interest was happening and was a vital clue to my paying attention to it and eventually (I believe) understanding it. Had I passively accepted all human possibilities without reaction, I probably would not have noticed my guests spitting at all. I advocate using one's whole perceptual-cognitive-emotional-intentional being as an anthropologist participant-observer, and being as attentive to the signals that one's emotions send as one's "rational" and dispassionate cognitive evaluations. It was noticing that I was irritated and realizing that my irritation was not justified that led to my current understanding.

<sup>5</sup> Kelekna's (1981) explanation of Achuar belligerence as a result of the sexual division of labor and the separation of the spheres of men and women does not fall into this category, unless a mother's attention is regarded as a limiting resource.

<sup>6</sup> Lizot (1989) has noted that this term has a more ample meaning than simply "killer," but also includes other markers of cultural success.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor presents an updated version of this argument in (1993), where the Jivaroan taking and shrinking of heads is viewed as competition for a finite pool of individuation, making her model less of symbolic exchange and more of symbolic (and demographic) competition.

<sup>8</sup> Taking warfare as the default and peace as the achieved state is to emphasize the influence of a bellicose social environment rather than material or ecological constraints. Both in that respect and in not treating materialist and social/ideological factors as offering mutually exclusive explanations of warfare and conflict, my position is close to that espoused by Colajanni (1984: 231-233), although unlike me, he states: "... no me siento en la obligación de declararme un "neo-hobbesiano" (ver J. B. Ross, 1980)." I trust that my own declaration of myself as a neo-Hobbesian in this context does not constrain my liberty to identify myself otherwise in other contexts.

<sup>9</sup> Some interpret Gramsci's notion of hegemony to include what I am calling coercive ideologies (Valentine, personal communication), in which case a distinction must be made between persuasive and coercive hegemonies.

<sup>10</sup> That article, "*Arutam* and Cultural Change," was originally intended as an appendix to this article.

<sup>11</sup> Descola states that "Tseremp has told me in confidence that he has never seen *arutam* despite many attempts to do so. He seems resigned to his lot and says it would be pointless for him to claim to have had the vision since the effects of *arutam* soon become manifest in a man in the way he behaves: he speaks out forcefully, particularly in ceremonial dialogues, is visibly at ease in all circumstances and can face danger and adversity with equanimity, all qualities that he himself admits to lacking." ([1993] 1996b: 303-304). This suggests that even those who are not protected by the ideology subscribe to it.

<sup>12</sup> *Muisak* is referred to in contemporary literature as *emesak* (e.g., Jimpikit, 1987: 160).

<sup>13</sup> The Shuar probably did not have a technological advantage over the Achuar in all of their engagements with them. Mader quotes a description of a Shuar pursuit of retreating Achuar (circa 1940) in which the Shuar narrator claims that although the Achuar had better weapons, the Shuar were better shots:

Los Achuar eran inútiles, torpes. Mi abuelo siempre decía que solo disparaban por disparar, aunque tenían mejores armas: en el Perú su gente comerciaba con fusiles, carabinas, Winchester, calibre 30. Pero no sabían disparar, eran muy torpes para dar en el blanco. Pero en cambio los Shuar Untsuri no disparaban por disparar, disparaban y llegaban en el blanco. De cinco tiros tan sólo uno podía fallar" (Mader, 1999: 178-179).

<sup>14</sup> It would be useful to be able to distinguish the cases of witchcraft from those of physical violence but, unfortunately, these are undifferentiated by the available reports.

<sup>15</sup> Steel (1999) argues that Jivaroan warfare can be only explained as conflict over trade goods. Although I agree that the trade of *tsantsa* for shotguns massively accelerated the inter-tribal warfare by giving the ideology a material basis, I believe it is folly to identify a single factor as causative when none are mutually exclusive.

<sup>16</sup> Harner asserts that "It should be noted that the personal security which the Jivaro believe comes from killing has some social reality. A man who has killed repeatedly, called a *kakaram*, or "powerful one," is rarely attacked, because his enemies feel that the protection provided him by constantly replaced souls would make any assassination attempt against him fruitless." (Harner, 1972: 142).

<sup>17</sup> This version of the *enemamu* is the one employed by the Awajun in casual settings during my fieldwork on the Rio Cenepa from 1976 to 1978. It has been recorded with slight variations by many authors: Karsten (1935: 335), Allioni ([1910] 1978: 113-115), and Seymour-Smith (1988: 176), among others. The best descriptions of it are by Gnerre (1986) and Juncosa (2000: 97-113).

<sup>18</sup> Descola offers a symbolic interpretation of this same behavior among the Achuar:

Of all the body substances whose emission is controlled by Hill-power only saliva is freely and publicly expelled within the confines of the house. Women's saliva is the prime principle of the fermentation of manioc beer, and liberal use of it is made during the preparation. Men's saliva in the form of long streams elegantly directed between two fingers pressed to the lips forms the counterpoint to any dialogue or conversation. Punctuating the speeches, the cadence of emissions keeps pace with the mounting tension between the speakers. Principle of alimentary transformation and phonic lubricant, saliva is a body substance that is both instrumental and highly socialized, being an adjunct to speech. (Descola, [1986] 1996a: 134-135).

Whatever the symbolic opposition of female saliva and manioc versus male saliva and words, my claim is that the continuous spitting also serves to reassure host and visitor of the friendly intentions of the other, hence the greater frequency when the tension of the conversation is greater. By the same token, my account is complemented but not contradicted by Juncosa's (2000) observation that spitting serves to indicate the end of a speaking turn and the beginning of another's. Many aspects of social life are, in this respect, over-determined.

<sup>19</sup> I have not elicited a Jivaroan explanation of spitting, although Harner did. He reports that "Shuar spitting has two main functions: 1) to lubricate the vocal chords when speaking loudly and rapidly; and 2) to provide spiritual power in the production of words so that they come out spontaneously without delay and forcefully in order to display the speaker's power (the saliva incorporates some of the speaker's spiritual power). Spitting between two fingers is done to spit farther and thus also to advertise the speaker's power" (Harner, personal communication). This suggests that the signaling of non-hostile intent is not a conscious part of the meaning of spitting for Harner's Shuar informants. However, I do not believe that conscious awareness of the meanings of spitting is necessary to the functioning of the signaling. (I welcome suggestions about how to probe for the unconscious meanings of these signals without leading the informant – consider how one would ask for an explanation of why Westerners shake hands.) Indeed, the institution of spitting to indicate non-hostile intent has long outlasted the intense pattern of warfare that provoked it (according to my interpretation) much as the custom of shaking hands has long outlasted the immediate need to convey that one is not holding a weapon. Harner's fieldwork in the late 1950's and early 1960's coincided with the end of the period of intense Jivaroan inter and intra-tribal warfare and feuding. In this sense, present-day Jivaroan spitting may be anachronistic.

## Abstract

*This article presents a neo-Hobbesian approach to Jivaroan warfare. Rather than assuming that peace is the human default condition and interpreting warfare as the state to be explained, it explores the ideological and psychological implications of assuming that war is the default, and peace is the state to be achieved and explained. Building on Harner's 1972 account, it argues that the Jivaroan beliefs about warfare and the spirit world served as a coercive ideology that would have compelled even non-believers to behave accordingly. The endemic warfare and its supporting ideology created a context in which it was important for individuals to be able to honestly signal two important messages: 1) I am so fierce and powerful that you dare not attack me and 2) I am not an immediate threat to you, so you do not need to. The first message was powerfully conveyed by the taking and displaying of trophy heads. The displays that were recruited to honestly signal the second message of non-hostile intent include spitting copiously and continuously on the host's floor during a visit. This account is consistent with Frank's (1988) explanation of emotions as difficult to fake honest signals of human commitment to social contracts. Emotional displays, whether of love, anger, or shame, bind the displayer of the emotion to a particular social commitment: to remain faithful if loved, to take vengeance if aggrieved, to redress fault if one has sinned, etcetera. The emotional display helps establish trust when words alone would not be trustworthy.*

## Resumen

*Este artículo presenta una aproximación neo-hobbesiana a la guerra jivaroa. Este trabajo explora las implicaciones ideológicas y psicológicas, asumiendo que la guerra es el elemento faltante, y que la paz es el estado que se debe alcanzar y explicar. Basándose en el recuento de Harner de 1972, el autor arguye que las creencias jivaroa en torno a la guerra y al mundo espiritual servían como una ideología coercitiva que obligaba a comportarse en conformidad hasta a los no creyentes. La guerra endémica y su ideología subyacente crearon un contexto en el cual era importante que los individuos pudieron expresar honradamente dos mensajes importantes: 1) soy tan fiero y poderoso que no te atreves a atacarme y 2) no soy una amenaza directa para ti, así que no necesitas atacarme. El primer mensaje se transmitía poderosamente al cortar y exhibir las cabezas, trofeos de guerra. Los despliegues que se hacían para señalar honradamente el segundo mensaje consistían en que el visitante escupía copiosamente y de modo continuo en el piso del anfitrión. Este recuento es consistente con la explicación de Frank (1998) acerca de las emociones, como señales honradas difíciles de fingir en cuanto a compromisos humanos en contrato social. Manifestaciones emocionales, sea de amor, ira o deshonra,*

*atan al actor de la emoción a un compromiso social específico: permanecer fiel si uno es amado, tomar venganza si uno es atacado, enmendar una falta si uno ha pecado, etc. La exhibición emocional ayuda a establecer confianza cuando las meras palabras no son fidedignas.*

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