



Arutam and Cultural Change¹

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Different ethnographers often produce conflicting ethnographies of the same people. When do we describe the discrepancies in their accounts as cultural variation and when do we describe them as error? This essay deals with this question in tracing the history of descriptions of the Jivaroan idea of *arutam*. I will make the argument that it is more useful in this case to view the discrepant accounts as cultural variation than to choose one as "correct" and the others as "in error," given that the accounts in question have been produced in very different historical and cultural circumstances.

My own encounter with ethnographies of the Jivaro and with the Awajun² (Aguaruna Jivaro) themselves began in 1976. Much as Harner had taken the ethnographies by Karsten (1935) and Stirling's (1938) to the field and checked them line-by-line with his informants, I took Harner's ethnography with me and reviewed it during my fieldwork with the Awajun about twenty years later.³ Unlike Harner, who reported that his predecessors' accounts were rife with errors,⁴ I found that Harner's ethnography rang true in as many respects as I had an opportunity to check. I acknowledge my fieldwork was not as wide ranging as Harner's own, focused as it was on the cultivation and selection of manioc, so I did not attempt to delve into the intricacies of Awajun beliefs about *arutam*. Nevertheless, I was impressed with how closely Harner's account accorded with what I was able to observe,⁵ and this led me to trust his account for the parts I did not.

A second factor leading me to trust Harner's ethnography was his description of his method:

Informants' accounts were continually cross-checked and contradictions called to their attention individually. An informant, when thus confronted with a contradiction, and with his reputation for knowledge and veracity at stake, generally provided elaborative supporting detail...

My chief mode of communication to obtain detailed information was through interpreters. However, unlike my predecessors, I exclusively used for this purpose Jivaro men who had learned Spanish as a second language at mission stations. I used a variety of

interpreters, eventually working mainly with those who had proven themselves the most accurate, reliable, and intelligent. As my own knowledge of the language progressed, I was able to check up on much of that which they interpreted, but even before that stage the comparison of different accounts on the same subject by using different interpreters and informants made substantial verification possible (Harner, 1972: 5-6).

Given that Harner was able to observe the Shuar during the end of the period of intense intertribal warfare and intratribal feuding and given that he attempted to check his descriptions using several different informants and several different translator/interpreters, I am inclined to interpret the discrepancies between Harner's account and contemporary descriptions of Shuar concepts of *arutam* and the spirit world as due primarily to cultural change among the Shuar in the last 45 years, especially in the highly missionized and acculturated Upano valley around the Shuar center of Sucua. This interpretation is supported by internal evidence of acculturating influences in the contemporary accounts of Shuar concepts of *arutam*. Harner's description of *arutam* and *arutam* souls is repeated here to serve as a basis of comparison with the contemporary accounts.

Arutam wakanī is perhaps best referred to as the "ancient specter" soul. The term *arutam* alone refers to a particular kind of vision of apparition. *Wakanī* alone simply means "soul" or "spirit." Thus the *arutam wakanī* is the particular kind of soul that produces the *arutam*, or vision. An *arutam* appears only occasionally and, when it does, is only in existence for less than a minute. The *arutam* soul, on the other hand, exists eternally once it has been created. It is in the system of thought regarding the *arutam* soul that the Jívaro seek security from the ever felt menace of death.

The Jívaro believe that the possessor of a single *arutam* soul cannot be killed by any form of physical violence, poison, or by sorcery, although he is not immune to death from contagious diseases such as measles and small pox. In other words, a person who has only one *arutam* soul in his possession is relieved from daily anxiety about being murdered. A Jívaro who is fortunate enough to possess two *arutam* souls cannot die of *any* cause whatever, including contagious disease (Harner, 1972: 135-136).

Of the three kinds of souls in which the Jívaro believe, they seem to be least interested in the "true" one, the *nekás wakanī*, which does little to help the individual survive in his insecure society. It is the *arutam* souls instead that seems to rank first in the Jívaro mind.

The *arutam* soul possessor believes himself to be unkillable, thereby gaining a greatly desired sense of security in a social context of continual physical violence and witchcraft, both real and imagined. Paradoxically, the *arutam* soul concept also endorses assassination as a necessary form of behavior in the society (Harner, 1972: 151-152).

Harner's description of the meaning of the word *arutam* varies slightly from but is nevertheless fairly consistent with other early descriptions. The earliest⁶ description I am aware of is that by Karsten (1923: 2), who explains

The most important of these spirits [seen under the influence of *Datura*] are the so-called *arútama* ("the old ones") which are in their nature the souls of the ancestors. These appear in all sorts of terrible shapes, as tigers, eagles, giant snakes, and other wild animals, or reveal their presence in stupendous phenomenon of nature, in the lightning, in the rainbow, in meteors, etc. They speak to the young Jibaro and advise and teach him in all kinds of manly business, but first of all in warlike deeds. Only the Jibaro youth who has seen the *arútama* in the dream and has been spoken to by them can expect to become a valiant and successful warrior, to kill many enemies, and himself secure long life.

Later, in his ethnography of the Shuar, Karsten (1935) defines *arútama* in several places.⁷ First, he defines it as "the spirits of the forefathers, who will admonish him and instruct him as to what the customs of the forefathers requires of him as a member of the tribe" (Karsten 1935: 238). Next, he defines it as "the Old Ones", who give the sleeping Indian information and advise in the matters which interest him" (Karsten, 1935: 439). Next, he describes it as "those mysterious spirits which are called *arútama* and which always appear to the narcotized Indian, whether the medicine causing the supernatural state is tobacco, *natéma*, or *maikoa*" (Karsten, 1935: 444). Next, he explains it as "the mysterious demons which have already been introduced under the name of *arútama* and who make their appearance partly in the shape of wild animals, partly as striking phenomena of nature, partly in other shapes" (Karsten, 1935: 447). Finally, he says "The word *arútama* means 'the Old Ones.' These spirits, it should be understood, are the first ancestors of the Jívaros, and they were great warriors."⁸ (Karsten, 1935: 448). Karsten's discussion emphasizes the importance of the *arútama* for success or failure as a warrior, for if one has the right sorts of vision and one is not afraid of them, one will be able to kill one's enemies with security. On the contrary, if one shows fear of the visions, one's companions will judge that one will not be a good warrior and will promptly fall victim to one's enemies (Karsten, 1935:

448-451). I believe that the variety of Karsten's alternate renderings of the meaning of the term *arútama* (e.g., "forefathers," "Old Ones," "mysterious spirits," "mysterious demons," "first ancestors") should be regarded as indicating the range of reference for a term that does not have a neat equivalent in English, rather than as self-contradiction. This variation within a single account should be taken into consideration when evaluating the significance of discrepancies between accounts – the discrepancies may be no greater than what one would encounter in alternate renderings of a complex idea by the same ethnographer.

Harner (1972) and Karsten's (1923, 1935) descriptions of *arutam* are also concordant with later ethnographic descriptions of the Shuar and other Jivaroan groups. Antonino Colajanni (n.d.), in his field notes on the Shuar taken in 1971 describing the effects of the ingestion of *natéma* (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), states that:

... así se procuran visiones de "iwianchi" (especie de Diabolo de la versión misionera) y "arutam" (algo así como almas de antepasados) y adquieren fuerza "(*kakarma*") (n.d.:65).

Charlotte Seymour-Smith offers a similar description of the Shiwiar concept of *arutam*:

La búsqueda de almas *arutam* (descritas en español como *sobre ánima* o "extra espíritu") está ligada con la búsqueda de un abuelo que se aparece al que lo busca y le da esta alma especial que le confiere larga vida e inmunidad a los ataques (1988: 217).

Anne Christine Taylor's description of the Achuar concept of *arutam* is also quite close to Harner's, even though she, like Seymour-Smith, writes more than thirty years after Harner's original fieldwork, about a different Jivaroan group:

The second component [of the person], by contrast is specifically human and as such it is gendered. Also, it is not 'vital' in the sense that one can exist without it, as in fact children and many women do. This entity is called *arutam*, a term Harner (1972) translates as 'ancient spectre soul.' *Arutam* are essentially visions, which are sought after by men from the age of ten or twelve in the course of drug-induced hallucinatory experiences, which constitute the most important rituals of their existence. (Taylor, 1993: 660).

It is the acquisition of this vision [*arutam*] -or 'audition,' strictly speaking- which gives meaning and direction to life for most Jivaroan men. Individuals who have undergone several successful *arutam* quests are immediately recognizable by their forceful manner of speaking, their self-

possession and obvious confidence in their own moral authority and strength. Having had several *arutam* visions is in fact tantamount to being a killer, or at least to being an active participant in raiding parties, since *arutam* are lost only through circumstances directly linked to homicide: the 'soul' of the vision disappears at the moment of killing an opponent, and a new vision must therefore be sought immediately upon returning from a successful war expedition. At the same time, each new *arutam* experience instills in the recipient of the vision an increasingly powerful urge to kill. Thus, real *kakaram* or 'strong men' are individuals who have accumulated both 'anger' (*kaje*) and self-control to a high degree, as opposed to impulsive young men who kill in fear and on the spur of the moment. Conversely, persons who had failed to acquire a new *arutam*, or for whatever reason had not experienced one for a very long time, described their state as one of physical and mental weakness, vulnerability, and lack of purpose. (Taylor, 1993: 661).

Not surprisingly, Descola's description of *arutam*, collected at the same time as Taylor's in collaboration with her, is concordant with hers ([1993] 1996b: 302-314).

Dictionary entries are also consistent with a view of *arutam* as a spirit of an ancestor or 'old one' seen with the help of hallucinogens. The "Diccionario Jibaro-Castellano y Castellano-Jívaro" compiled by the early Salesian missionaries (Vicariato de Mendez y Gualaquiza, 1924) does not have an entry for *arutam* but does define *aruta* as "usado, deteriorado". In 1972, Father Luis Yankuam Bolla, revising and extending a Shuar Vocabulary compiled by Father Juan Ghinassi in 1939, defines *arút* as "usado, viejo (cosas)" and *arutam* as "el ser espiritual que se encarna en el tigre y en otros seres o cosas, buscado en las cascadas, protector del shuar" (Bolla, 1972: 8). In the Diccionario Achuar-Castellano Castellano - Achuar, produced by the Centro de Promoción de la Cultura Achuar Wasakentsa (1993), *arút* and *arútam* are defined in a nearly identical fashion as "Usado, viejo (cosas)" and "Ser espiritual" respectively.⁹ (However, I was unable to find the term at all in the Diccionario Comprensivo Castellano - Shuar dictionary produced by the Instituto Normal Bilingüe Intercultural Shuar (1988), perhaps because their method was to start with a student's dictionary and translate it into Shuar (1988: XVII - XIX), a method which misses all concepts that do not have a natural analogue in Spanish.)¹⁰

The concepts of *arutam* described by earlier ethnographers of the Shuar and by recent ethnographers of the Achuar and Shiwiar, stand in stark contrast to more recent descriptions of the Shuar concept. This discrepancy I believe has been largely due to the influence of Salesian missionaries, as discussed below.

Syncretism¹¹ has been a deliberate strategy of the Salesian missionaries to the Shuar, a policy lucidly articulated by Father Siro Pellizaro in his article "Un misionero se confiesa" (1978: 34-35):

En la evangelización se decía que Cristo hizo muchos milagros para que todos se dieran cuenta de que él es el mismo Dios que ayudó en todos los tiempos al pueblo shuar y que vino a corregir lo que había de equivocado y perfeccionar lo que era incompleto.

El método usado en la evangelización consiste en:

- 1) Comparar un mito religioso con un milagro de Cristo, para hacer ver que Cristo tiene el mismo poder expresado en el mito.
- 2) Comparar un mito ético con una enseñanza o hecho de vida de Cristo para hacer ver que Jesús perfecciona la moral tradicional.
- 3) Comparar los medios de salvación tradicionales con los nuevos medios instituidos por Cristo (oración y sacramentos) para hacer ver su superioridad.
- 4) Comparar los sacerdotes y profetas tradicionales con los nuevos profetas y sacerdotes para que conozcan lo que se debe agregar a la enseñanza tradicional y lograr así una nueva comunidad de fe, orientada según las parábolas de Cristo.

Elsewhere, in the introduction to his seventh volume of *Mitología Shuar*, he states:

Una verdadera cristianización debe asumir todo lo bueno enseñado por Etsa y mejorarlo aún más, dándole una fuerza nueva. Una cristianización colonizadora, que destruye las tradiciones míticas, en lugar de valorizarlas, y purificarlas, lejos de mejorar al pueblo Shuar, lo lleva ciertamente a una mayor degeneración (Pellizzaro, 1982: 7).

I am not passing judgment on this approach.¹² Given the goals of a Christian missionary and the situation that Father Pellizzaro encountered when he began his work,¹³ this policy appears to have been motivated by a humane impulse. My only observation is that such a process of 'improving and purifying' would leave its stamp on the descriptions of traditional culture made by the missionaries and the missionized alike. This stamp is evident both in the exhaustive compilation of Shuar mythology by Father Pellizzaro and in accounts of Shuar religious themes by contemporary missionized Shuar (Chinkim', Petsain, and Jimpikit, 1987). The building blocks of the construction are unmistakably Shuar (they are the same stories the Awajun had told me 25 years ago) but the overall architecture has a strong flavor of Catholic theology. For example, even though the characters in Jivaroan mythology rarely overlap in the individual myths (the earth spirit *Nunkui* does not appear in a myth with the sun spirit *Etsa*, and so on), Pellizzaro interprets all of the characters of Shuar mythology as "hipóstasis" or manifestations of *arutam*, each providing moral and practical instruction in different spheres of

life: *Nunkui* as gardener, *Etsa* as hunter, *Shakáim* as clearer of fields, *Tsunki* as master shaman, *Ayumpum* as lord of death, etcetera. The use of the term “hipóstasis” itself reveals both the influence of Catholic theology on Pellizzaro’s interpretation of Shuar mythology, and (as discussed below) Pellizzaro’s influence on contemporary Shuar. According to the Diccionario de la Lengua Española, of the Real Academia Española, “hipóstasis” is a technical theological term, defined as follows: “Supuesto o persona... Más hablando de las tres personas de las Santísima Trinidad”.

I quote at some length from Pellizzaro’s (1996) introductions to the various myths, to indicate how he has drawn out the common properties of the disparate characters of Shuar mythology:

Nunkui es un *Arútam*, por eso los shuar lo encuentran en la orilla de río. Tiene todo poder debajo de la tierra. A él se debe el desarrollo de los tubérculos y la vida de los animales que viven en la tierra. En la mitología se presenta como mujer, porque es el arquetipo de la mujer. Sus hipóstasis pueden ser todos los animales que viven debajo de la tierra, sobre todo el armadillo y el ratón... (Pellizzaro, 1996: 13).

Etsa es *Arutam* que sale de las aguas del río para ayudar a los shuar en la caza. Sus hipóstasis pueden ser el sol, el fuego, los ajíes, y todos los animales diurnos, sobretodo el colibrí, la ardilla, las hormigas que pican, los grillos, las lagartijas. Es el Señor de los animales de la selva y de la fuerza para cazarlos. Con estos mitos se transmite toda la experiencia de los cazadores, sus técnicas de caza, la vida de los animales, y los peligros de la selva... (Pellizzaro, 1996: 37).

Shakáim es *Arutam* que sale del agua del río para enseñar a los shuar el trabajo y darles su fuerza. Sus hipóstasis son los gusanos de la madera, los aguaceros pero, sobre todo, el hombre trabajador. Es el complemento de *Nunkui* en la vida doméstica... (Pellizzaro, 1996: 99).

Tsunki es *Arutam* Señor del agua. Sus hipóstasis son la sal y todos los animales del agua, sobre todo el manatí *wankánim*, el pato, el cangrejero *unturu*. Entrega los poderes misteriosos a los chamanes junto con el talismán *Namur* y los *ánent*, para que curen a los enfermos, sacándoles los espíritus maléficos *wáwek*. Enseña las técnicas y las plegarias para pescar... (Pellizzaro, 1996: 141).

Ayumpum es *Arutam* que en el cielo posee el agua del nacimiento (*Uchímiatai entsa*) y del crecimiento (*úuntmatai entsa*). Es el señor de la vida y de la muerte. Sus hipóstasis son los seres relacionados con la muerte como el guerrero, la arpía, el tigre, la anaconda, los

vientos huracanados, y los rayos. Él posee los talismanes de la muerte “*Amúank*”. Como dador de la vida, su hipóstasis es la mujer. El shuar lo busca en la cascada sagrada y en el *ayúmtai*, ayunando y tomando tabaco, *ayahuasca*, o floripondio, para que se presente bajo cualquiera de los semblantes revelados en la mitología, o enviando el alma de los valientes guerreros shuar, que se han reunido con él, después de la muerte. Todo shuar en su adolescencia debe sacar la vida de *Ayumpúm* de la cabeza cortada (*tsantsa*) del mono perezoso (*Uniush*), celebrando el *úunt namper*, o celebración de la *Tsantsa*, para poder transmitir la vida en el matrimonio y para poder quitar la vida de los enemigos como guerrero... (Pellizzaro, 1996: 167) Emphasis is in the original.

Pellizzaro's description of *Ayumpúm* is particularly important for an understanding of cultural change in the belief complex of *arutam*, for it represents the contemporary transformation of what Harner had described as the quest for an *arutam* spirit. While in Harner's account, *arutam* refers primarily to a vision and *arutam wakanĩ* refers to the spirit one acquires as a result of the vision (Harner, 1972: 135), in Pellizzaro's treatment, *arutam* is the unitary spirit being manifested as *Nunkui*, *Etsa*, *Shakaim*, *Tsunki*, and *Ayumpum*. What in Harner's account is a quest for a vision (*arutam*) that will allow one to acquire an *arutam* spirit (*arutam wakanĩ*), becomes instead a solicitation of the aid of a particular manifestation of *arutam*, *Ayumpum*, to help and protect one as a warrior. Many of the elements that Harner describes in the vision quest are here in Pellizzaro's account: the use of hallucinogens, the trip to the sacred waterfall, the particular animals that are frequently seen in the *arutam* visions (the tiger and the anaconda), the protection offered to the warrior, etcetera; the major thing that has changed is that *arutam* seeking by warriors becomes only one of a host of ways that individual Shuar might seek spiritual aid in their enterprises.

By drawing out the similarities and common properties of Shuar mythological characters and by stressing their common derivation from *arutam*, Pellizzaro has increased the coherence of the collection of myths and has emphasized their implications for moral instruction with some resulting alteration of their content.¹⁴ The most important substantive change is in regarding *arutam* spirits not as a general class of spirits, but as a single essence manifested in a variety of forms analogous to the sharing of a single essence by the Holy Trinity.

The imprint of Catholic theology is even more evident in a collection of accounts written by Shuar who studied at the Instituto Bilingüe Intercultural Shuar in Bomboiza¹⁵ while Pellizzaro taught there (Chinkim', Petsain, and Jimpikit, 1987). In these accounts, *arutam* takes on many more of the characteristics of a supreme being:

Arútam es un ser omnisciente, lo sabe todo, omnipotente, todo lo puede, omnipresente, está en todas partes, se encuentra en todas las cascadas de los ríos, sean pequeñas o grandes. También habitará principalmente en el lugar donde el shuar ántes de morir tuvo visión.

Arútam es una realidad, se trata de un ser existente y vivo; su naturaleza es muy distinta a la del ser humano, la sabiduría de este ser va ligada a la realidad, los poderes proceden para realizar acciones exclusivamente buenas o para conseguir todo aquello que se considera beneficioso para el hombre. Es protector contra la muerte y hace posible tener larga vida; su fuerza es indispensable para corregir la mala conducta.

Arútam no es un ser corpóreo, su naturaleza es de difícil descripción, por lo tanto para demostrar su existencia se manifiesta de diferentes maneras. Ya sea como objetos, animales, etc... se identifica por medio de ellos, sobre todo con la característica de ese objeto o animal y al mismo tiempo transmite poderes, el mismo poder que tiene ese objeto o animal. Esta forma de manifestación se le llama hipóstasis (Petsain, 1987: 56).

Por eso sugiero que no nos vayamos olvidando de *Arutam* que es nuestro ser superior y que nos ayudará en las situaciones difíciles que encontremos; pero siempre que nosotros también lo busquemos y pidamos su ayuda (Chinkim', 1987: 33).

Y yo también ahora te digo que *Arutam* para mí y para todos los auténticos hermanos shuar es nuestro padre que nos protege y nos libra de todo peligro.

Así como nosotros los protegemos y cuidamos a nuestros hijos para que crezcan bien, así mismo hace *Arutam* con nosotros. Gracias a El nuestros mayores han vivido largo tiempo y yo también vivo lo mismo gracias a El, aunque lo que vivo es todavía poco.

Existen dos tipos de espíritus *Arutam*: el primer tipo de espíritu *Arutam* ha existido eternamente y el otro tipo: *Arutam Wakani* en cambio es el espíritu de nuestros mayores, *Arutam* adquirido del *Arutam* eterno (Jimpikit, 1987: 133).

In sum, *arutam* in-these contemporary Shuar descriptions is an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, superior being who helps in difficult situations and who protects and delivers us from danger. This is a far cry from the "ancient specter" soul that Harner's informants described 40 years ago. Instead, it is very closely assimilated to Judeo-Christian ideas of a supreme being. Note that the use of the same technical term "hipóstasis"

employed by Pellizzaro is, in itself, evidence of his influence on his students: This rarely used term was not understood by the educated Ecuadorians I have asked nor is it to be found in most Spanish dictionaries.

Although both Petsain and Jimpikit¹⁶ acknowledge that it is possible to seek *arutam* to protect oneself from assassination and for success in warfare (Petsain (1987: 58) even quotes Harner in this context), each contrasts it with the seeking of *arutam* for power in life (having children, surviving illness, etc.). Jimpikit goes so far as to say that there are good and bad varieties of *arutam*, the latter being the life destroying force used to protect oneself in warfare.

Pero en cierto sentido nosotros consideramos y creemos que existe otro *Arutam*, *yajaúch Arutam* (*Arutam malo*) que destruye la vida de los shuar, ya sea la vida propia del individuo, o la vida de los demás, es decir un shuar que ha adquirido *yajaúch Arutam* puede morir en temprana edad como también puede matar a los demás shuar, e inclusive, a sus propios hijos, porque no soporta la tremenda ira que tiene en su corazón. Un shuar que vio *yajaúch Arutam* se vuelve, o se convierte en un cazador de sus hermanos, en lugar de cazar a los animales para su subsistencia. Allí, es cuando se dice que *Arutam malo* destruye la vida de las personas¹⁷ (Jimpikit, 1987: 135).

I interpret Jimpikit's introduction of a distinction between the two kinds of *arutam* as an effort to reconcile his image of *arutam* as a beneficent supreme being with the Shuar traditions of seeking an *arutam* soul for success in killing fellow Shuar.

The influence of Pellizzaro's syncretic synthesis is evident in other contemporary Shuar accounts as well. An interview with an elderly Shuar informant reported in Napolitano (1988: 183), quotes him as stating:

Con el nombre de hipóstasis de Arutam se indica a todos los seres en que se transforma y que ocupan el puesto del ser superior, siendo estos objetos, animales, etc... en el momento en que dentro de éstos está el espíritu protector.

Arutam puede ser *Etsa* cuando viene en ayuda al cazador; *Ayumpum* al ayudar al guerrero; *Nunkui* cuando llega providencial a satisfacer las necesidades de la mujer en la huerta.

Again, the use of the technical theological term "hipóstasis" and the associated proposition that the figures of Shuar mythology are manifestations of *arutam*, points to Pellizzaro's influence.

The final stage of the assimilation of the Shuar concept of *arutam* to the Catholic ideas of the trinity is seen in the most recent version of the Shuar catechism (Vicariato de Mendez y Gualaquiza, 1991).¹⁸ On page twelve of the catechism, there is illustration titled "*Arutam*" which pictures the Father

("Apa"), Son ("Uchi"), and Holy Spirit ("Arutmar" literally 'his *arutam*') sitting in a triangle holding hands, with three logs aligned with the figures burning in the form of a traditional Shuar hearth. Outside of a circle enclosing the Holy Trinity are four beings from Shuar mythology, *Etsa*, *Nunkui*, *Ayumpum*, and *Tsunki*. On the facing page are the following questions and answers:

1) Arútam urutmáit? -Arútam chikíchkiti; chikích Arútam atsáwai. (Mk. 12, 32) [How many *arutam* are there?- *Arutam* is only one; there is no other *Arutam*.]

2) Ii úntri Arútman wáinin ármakia? -Arútam iniáshtichu asamtai, ii úntri aya nii wantinkiamurin wáinin áarmiyai (Jn. 1, 18; Rum. 1, 19-20; Jn. 6, 46) [Did our elders encounter *Arutam*?- Because *arutam* is not visible, our elders only encountered *Arutam* in their visions.]

3) Etsa, Shakaim, Ayumpumsha, Uwisha, Tsunki, Numkuisha, yaunchu ii úntri wainkiármiana nu, núkap Arútam áiniawak? -Atsá; Arútam chikíchkiti; iniáshtichu asamtai, ii úntri warinkish wáinin áarmiyai. (Isr. 1, 1; Jn. 1, 9) [Etsa, Shakaim, and Ayumpum, and Uwi, Tsunki, and Nunkui, long ago our elders saw these, are all of these *Arutam*?- No, *Arutam* is only one; because it is hidden, our elders had their own manner of encountering Him.]

4) Nekás Arútam urukuít? -Arútam írutráiti; Apasha, Uchisha, nii Arutmarjáisha, chikíchik Arutmáiti; iwianch asa, penke iniashtichuíti (Mt. 3, 16-17) [What is true *Arutam* like?- *Arutam* is united; Father, and Son, together with the Holy Spirit, only one *Arutam*; because they are not living, they are totally hidden.]

This appears to be the culmination of the transformation of the meaning of *arutam* initiated by Pellizzaro. To repeat, in his compilation of Shuar mythology, Pellizzaro treats all of the figures of Shuar mythology as manifesting a single spirit *arutam*, analogous to the manner in which the three persons of the Holy Trinity manifest a single divinity. In contrast, here in the catechism, the word *Arutam* is used to refer to the Trinity itself: The Shuar concept of *arutam* is now completely fused with the Catholic idea of the Trinity.

Although the transformation of *arutam* into the Trinity represents an extreme position, this appropriation of the concept by the Salesian missionaries has clearly influenced how the Shuar presently understand the concept and consequently how ethnographers interpret it. I believe this influence is evident in the most complete recent description and analysis of Shuar and Achuar ideas about *arutam* presented by Elke Mader in her monograph "Metamorfosis del poder" (1999). Mader shows how ideas of *arutam* are linked with ideas of personal power (*kakarma*) in the Shuar

concept of the person. She argues that the picture that Harner offers of *arutam* is too narrow:

Aquí¹⁹ Harner subraya en primer lugar la función protectora de la fuerza que la visión, la cual en verdad constituye una dimensión importante, y en segundo lugar su carácter acumulativo. Sin embargo, no diferencia entre distintas imágenes de visión y sus connotaciones simbólicas, sino que atribuye la gama funcional a ciertas visiones de uno o dos "espíritus *arutam*". Éstas no sólo han de protegerle de la enfermedad y la muerte, sino que abarcan también otras dimensiones. De este modo, Harner enumera distintas cualidades que son creadas en el ser humano por intervención del espíritu *arutam*: habla, en primer lugar, de un aumento general del poder del individuo, relacionado con su idea del *kakárma*. Este poder es paralelo a una gran capacidad de resistencia a los ataques o las enfermedades. La obtención de un espíritu-*arutam*, por otra parte, despierta un incontenible deseo de matar:

Cuando uno ha obtenido así un espíritu *arutam*, generalmente le invade un tremendo deseo de matar, y es ordinariamente una cuestión de pocos meses antes que él participe en una expedición de matanza. Si es un jovencito, acompañará a su padre. Las pocas mujeres que poseen espíritus *arutam* matan principalmente por medio de la comida o chicha de yuca envenenadas (Harner 1972: 139).

Esta afirmación es válida para determinadas visiones en las cuales se transmite el poder de matar, pero no puede ser generalizada. En su estudio, Harner habla de distintos aspectos que son importantes para la búsqueda de visiones y la concepción del poder en esta sociedad. Sin embargo, su idea de un espíritu *arutam* no corresponde a las categorías cognitivas de los shuar y no hace justicia a la complejidad del fenómeno. La descripción que ofrece Harner de las visiones *arutam* sugiere un fenómeno homogéneo que siempre muestra efectos similares y tiene implicaciones sociales semejantes. Según mis investigaciones, se trata de la faceta de una compleja teoría de la persona, cuyas implicaciones sociales van mucho más allá de los conflictos armados. Las visiones de guerra, sin embargo, poseen una importancia esencial para la esfera masculina en la sociedad tradicional de los Shuar y los Achuar. (Mader, 1999: 184).

I do not believe the difference between Mader's description and that offered by Harner is as great as implied by Mader.²⁰ Although in the

passages she quoted, Harner is emphasizing the implications of the acquisition of *arutam* for success in warfare, elsewhere he describes its more general importance:

The most important use of hallucinogens in child-rearing, from the Jivaro point of view, is to assist a boy in seeing an *arutam* at a sacred waterfall, since his life is believed to depend on it... Of all a boy's childhood experiences, nothing is considered to compare in importance with the experience. The power deriving from the acquired *arutam* soul is seen in Jivaro terms as an enculturating and socializing device, since its force is believed to promote almost all of the valued aspects of character, including honesty, inclination to work, and intelligence; as well as to increase the actual knowledge of the child. (Harner, 1972: 91).

Nevertheless, there also has probably been a genuine increase in the elaboration of the number of *arutam* visions distinguished by the Shuar, with a corresponding differentiation of their symbolic import. Where Harner describes only about five different kinds of *arutam* visions with one principal symbolic import, Mader describes more than twenty distinct types of visions and an equal number of symbolic meanings, conveying not just success in warfare and protection from enemies, but also health, long life, luck and happiness, success at work, in marriage and in love affairs, and in other social endeavors. Some of the difference between the numbers of visions enumerated by Harner and Mader is probably one of the ethnographer's interest and emphasis - Karsten, for example, lists a much greater variety of possible visions than Harner even though his ethnography was earlier, (1935: 448-451). However, it is likely that much of the difference is due to cultural change - in particular, the transformation of *arutam* into the central organizing principal of the Shuar cosmivision, initiated by Father Pellizzaro and the other Salesian missionaries.²¹

Given the unfortunate unavailability of time travel to allow a thorough resolution of the differences, I believe the following points provide a framework for interpreting the cultural variation in the accounts.

- 1) There is considerable variation over time, across distances, and among individuals in understandings of a domain that is by its very nature hidden and secret. That is, it is hidden in that an independent observer cannot test for the accuracy of different accounts - the disparate experiences of individual Shuar constitute the defining reality. And it is secret in that the individual Shuar risks losing the soul power he has acquired if he divulges whether he has encountered *arutam*, let alone reveal the details of the encounter.

2) Nevertheless, in the long history of accounts, various ethnographers have acknowledged the great importance of *arutam* in the Shuar concept of the person (Harner, 1978: 91, Karsten, 1935; Mader, 1999).

3) The major shift in emphasis in the belief complex from a focus on the role of *arutam* in protecting and aiding warriors to its more general role in giving power and productivity to all Shuar can be attributed to (at least) three important changes: -

- a) the cessation of feuding and warfare;²²
- b) the use of Shuar myth as a framework for syncretic evangelism;
- c) the growing importance of the belief complex as a badge of Shuar identity.

This collection of factors probably worked in concert to produce the discrepancy between Harner's description and the contemporary accounts. Under constant threat of assassination through intratribal feuding and intertribal warfare, Harner's informants (mostly adult males) would have very likely have emphasized the aspect of the belief complex that worked to protect their adult male lives: the visions that protected against attack and conveyed personal forcefulness. Conversely, with the cessation of feuding and warfare, the increased influence of Christian missionaries, and the growing awareness of their place as a tribal nation both in the larger Ecuadorian and global contexts, it is likely that the implications of *arutam* for intra-Jivaroan conflict would be de-emphasized and the broader implications of *arutam* for a life of moral rectitude emphasized. Hendricks (1988) has already noted a shift from a traditional rhetoric about *kakarma* (power) as an individual property manifested by forceful speech and personal industry to a contemporary rhetoric of *kakarma* as a collective attribute of the Shuar nation as a whole achieved through political solidarity.

Given ample reason to expect that emphasis and interpretation would shift in the cessation of feuding and warfare (a process already begun at the end of Harner's field work), it seems fairest and most probable to attribute discrepancies to culture change rather than to Harner's error. Indeed, Harner himself acknowledges that the world he described has largely disappeared.

In any case, the culture of the Jivaro as described in this book now largely belongs to history. Personally, I view it as a loss, emotionally and scientifically, and only hope that these meager efforts will help preserve a record of what was once a magnificently distinctive life style. (Harner, 1972: 215).

Given all of the changes, what is remarkable is how many of the elements of the belief complex have remained stable:

- 1) *arutam* can help protect from death and aid in feuding and warfare;
- 2) one loses *arutam* if one discloses that one has it;
- 3) one shows *arutam* through forcefulness of speech and other characteristics demonstrating personal power (*kakarma*).

One lesson of this tale of variation in cultural description is that it pays to read *all* the ethnographies, even if (or especially if) the accounts diverge. I made the mistake of allowing Harner's criticism²³ of the inaccuracies in Karsten's work to dissuade me from reading his work until recently and was startled at how many points of agreement there were between Harner and Karsten, given Harner's critical appraisal. Harner, like other ethnographers following him, was more focused on the discrepancies between his account and the alternatives rather than on the commonalities. Although this essay largely vindicates the value of Harner's classic ethnography, we can also note the irony that it was Harner who introduced the notion that discrepancies between ethnographies should be treated as evidence of inaccuracy. Thus, he might be regarded as having brought the present criticisms of his own work on his own head, even though (as noted above) he provided sound criteria for preferring his version to those of his predecessors. However, I will pose the question of whether in general the discrepancies between alternative accounts might better be treated as evidence of cultural variation rather than error. In this case, both the diversity and the similarities of the various accounts suggest the robustness and vitality of this cultural complex: There is much more to be learned by treating the accounts as complementary alternatives than as deviations from a single cultural truth.²⁴

Endnotes

¹This essay was originally developed as an appendix to the article "Blood Feud and Table Manners" which was presented at the 50th 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 Madër for the kind gift of her book. I am also very grateful to Michael J. Harner for his careful reading and critique.

²In 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.

³ 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.

⁴ Harner explains the results of his review of Karsten's and Stirling's works as follows:

Except for Stirling's data on material culture, I found that there was scarcely a paragraph of ethnographic information in either work that could be considered wholly accurate (1972, p. 2).

Descola takes Harner to task for this criticism of his predecessors:

When Harner (1972: 2) rejects Karsten's whole monograph on the Jivaro on the grounds that the Finnish ethnographer's data differ from his own, he makes the mistake of elevating his favorite informants' interpretations to the rank of sacrosanct dogma. However the erratic impression the reader gets from Karsten's portrait of Jivaro religious life (1935: 371-510) is in fact more consistent with what we have been able to observe among the Achuar than the normative paradigm to which Harner, in his positivist zeal, would reduce it. Not one readily to appreciate the dynamic virtues of contradiction, Harner has bent his efforts to constructing "canonical" versions of the native system of representations. (1972: 5-6). By proposing an outline of the stages of metempsychosis, Harner (1972: 150-1) has frozen into a single dogmatic version one of the many interpretations proposed by the Jivaro (Descola [1986] 1996a: 336).

I disagree with the tone of Descola's critique and also with some of the specific claims (e.g., I don't think Harner can be called a positivist nor do I think that he has constructed a canonical version of Shuar beliefs any more than Descola has done so for the Achuar, or indeed any ethnographer does in offering a single description of a culture). However, I do agree with the notion that communities can often maintain several contradictory ideas simultaneously and that in general it is safer to attribute discrepancies between different ethnographers' accounts to intracultural variation or to cultural change, rather than to ethnographer error. But this raises the general question of whether we ever would want to say that someone got it wrong. I believe we should allow for the possibility that sometimes ethnographers just get confused (perhaps sharing the confusion of their informants) and that we should describe the resulting account as mistaken rather than just an alternative version. I believe Harner (1972) lays out appropriate criteria (e.g., over reliance on non-Shuar translators, incoherence, and vagueness) to support his claim that his account is more accurate than Karsten (1935).

Interestingly, Descola himself might be chided for failing to practice what he preaches, for he fails to consider the possibility that the greater correspondence between his own observations to Karsten's than to Harner's also might be due to cultural variation. As Harner (personal communication) points out:

"Naturally Descola found that Karsten's material on "the Jibaro" was often more similar to his own Achuar data than to mine for the Shuar (*untsuri shuar* or Jivaro proper). Karsten commonly mixed up Shuar material with that for the Achuar, which he especially obtained while residing among the Canelos Quichua, who were heavily intermarried with the Achuar. His Shuar data were particularly obtained while residing in Macas, via the Macabeos, who had significant trade and conjugal relations with the Shuar. This highlights the problem of lumping all the Jivaroan tribes as "Jibaro" or "Jivaro," a long-standing practice with which I tried to deal by calling the *untsuri shuar* "the Jivaro proper," since unlike the Achuar they were the ones who made the *tsantsas* as well as having other distinctive cultural features."

⁵ This close correspondence was despite the fact that the Awajun community in Peru I worked with is separated by more than 100 miles, twenty years, and a linguistic and national boundary from the site of Harner's field work east of the Cordillera Cutucu in Southeastern Ecuador. Steven Rubenstein, working in Ecuador in the 1990s, reports a similar experience: "Thus, when Michael Harner went to the field he brought with him the earlier ethnographies of the Shuar by Rafael Karsten (1935) and M. W. Stirling (1938), and he reviewed them with his Shuar informants. I had brought Harner's monograph with me and at one point decided to do the same. This book, [*The Jivaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls*], is a classic example of traditional ethnography, presenting an abstracted portrait of Shuar culture written in the present tense - the 'ethnographic present.' The result of my experiment was tedious. I would read a sentence, and Alejandro (who, as a young boy, knew Harner) would say, 'That's right.' I would read a paragraph and he would say 'Yes.' Occasionally, he would remark 'Not anymore, but yes, when I was younger.' I consider these responses in part to testify to the accuracy of Harner's depiction of Shuar culture" (Rubenstein 2002: 19).

⁶ Allioni describes the visions induced by taking hallucinogens ([1910] 1978: 130), but unfortunately does not identify them with a Shuar name.

⁷ The following citations are not exhaustive of Karsten's (1935) discussion of *arutam* since Karsten dedicates a substantial portion of his 598 page ethnography to a discussion of this and related beliefs and practices.

⁸ This passage goes on to detail some of the specific *arutam* visions:

Among the spirits there are, in the first place, two human apparitions. The first is called *ikyáhinamchi*. He is a Jivaro Indian, 'a red form enveloped in flames,' and therefore not clearly visible. His voice, on the other hand, is distinctly heard. He calls out to the sleeping Indian, through his closed hand, certain words in the peculiar, staccato tone which is customary among the Jibaros when, in performing the *Enéma*, they ceremonially salute one another: *wi - wíkáhei - shuara - níkápsathel - andúcta*, that is, 'I go off (to the war), I will take (the heads of my enemies), listen!'. The other human form is called *mayéi*, and he is also a Jivaro Indian. His name is derived from his custom of repeatedly calling out to the sleeper in a loud voice: *mayéita, mayéita, mayéita*, that is 'kill, kill!' To see or to hear the *ikyáhinamchi* or the *mayéi* in narcotic sleep is regarded as a good omen, for such a warrior will certainly be able to kill enemies." (Karsten, 1935: 448).

⁹ Checking a number of cognates in Shuar and Achuar, I found that most of them were defined identically or nearly identically in the dictionaries of Bolla (1972) and the Centro de Promoción de la Cultura Achuar Wasakentsa (1993). This suggests not only the close similarity of the two languages but also the likelihood that Father Bolla's dictionary was of considerable use to the Centro as they compiled their own dictionary. This inference was confirmed by Father Domingo Bottasso, who stated that Bolla's dictionary was the starting point for the Achuar dictionary (Bottasso, personal communication).

¹⁰ The method used in compiling the dictionary may also explain why Descola (2000) found it such a rich goldmine of cultural revealing neologisms. I believe the dictionary is still ore bearing. For example, the writers of the dictionary make their religious beliefs manifest in the following two entries: *Cathólico*: Aents yus chicham nekas numia "A person of the true word of God"; *Protestante*: Ruteran enetai aintiu. Chikich enetai aintiu. "Someone of Lutheran beliefs. Someone of other beliefs."

¹¹ Taylor (1981) describes this syncretic evangelism as a result of a liturgical and pastoral reform, based on the principle that God is present from the beginning in all native religions and that the role of the evangelist is simply to reveal His presence. For one assessment of the impact of this approach, see Descola ([1993]1996:356). I will be compiling a collection of interviews with a number of Salesian missionaries, including Father Pelizzaro, in a forthcoming monograph "La búsqueda de la semilla del verbo" [The Search for the Seed of the Word] with Abya-Yala.

¹²Those inclined to pass judgment might consider Bottasso (1984), especially its concluding sentence:

Como misioneros reconocemos nuestros límites y errores, y vislumbramos el riesgo de nuevas equivocaciones, pero sólo quien no se juega la vida y no hace nada, puede mantener sus manos limpias en el quehacer de la historia (Bottasso, 1984: 264).

¹³ Father Pellizzaro describes that situation as follows (1978: 32):

Pero me encontré con comunidades shuar destruidas. Familias cristianas que, en nombre de un mal entendido cristianismo, querían romper con todas las tradiciones shuar. Una sociedad desorganizada porque la autoridad nacional quería imponer sus leyes, desconociendo absolutamente la organización shuar y sus costumbres, cuando no se añadían también los prejuicios etnocentristas.

Los viejos tradicionalistas pensaron vivir según sus costumbres. La juventud tomó al blanco como ideal de vida, perdiendo así su personalidad propia. Explotados por los colonos necesitados de mano de obra; engañados por comerciantes; depravados por los vendedores de trago, prostitutas y el vagabundo. Y, angustiados por su vacío espiritual y las continuas frustraciones de no ser aceptados como blancos, sino despreciados siempre más como indios, caminaban hacia la marginación y el caos sin remedio.

¹⁴ The process by which this synthesis came about is hinted at in Father Juan Bottasso's introduction to the first of the volumes of Pellizzaro's *Mitología Shuar*, written originally in 1976:

El p. Siro tiene en su poder varias decenas de rollos magnetofónicos y de cuadernos, pero nunca se había decidido a publicarlos, porque esperaba lograr algún día, una sistematización de todo el material que lo dejara satisfecho. Mientras tanto los años iban pasando y ese día parecía alejarse siempre más, hasta que ha aceptado la idea de publicaciones parciales y, de cierta manera, provisionales, en cuanto la organización por ciclos no es definitiva, y muchas cosas pueden ser corregidas y perfeccionadas (Pellizzaro: 1988: 2-3).

I believe that Father Pellizzaro found in the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity a possible way of giving coherence to the corpus of myths he was struggling with; just as the Trinity is a single divinity with three distinct persons (hipóstasis), Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so the various figures of Shuar mythology could be treated as manifestations of a single essence, for which purpose Pellizzaro appropriated the term *arutam*.

¹⁵ I am grateful to José Juncosa for bringing to my attention that Chinkim', Petsain, and Jimpikit studied at Bomboiza while Pellizzaro taught there, so that the correspondence between their accounts and his is far from accidental. This link is also stated in Juncosa's introduction of the book (Chinkim', Petsain, and Jimpikit, 1987: 5).

¹⁶ Chinkim's treatment of the protective role of *arutam* is more general, stating only that "Arutam le ayudaba, le protege y le salva del peligro" but not specifying assassination as a specific kind of danger (Chinkim', 1987: 32).

¹⁷ Jimpikit (1987: 135) goes on to allow as how in the case in which one is avenging the murder of one's relatives by members of another tribe, "en este sentido es positivo."

¹⁸ I am grateful to José Juncosa both for bringing the catechism to my attention and for his help in translating it.

¹⁹ Mader is referring to the passage quoted from Harner (1972: 135-136) above, in which he states that the acquisition of one *arutam* spirit will protect one from physical violence and two will protect one from death from any source.

²⁰ It is interesting that Mader (1999) uses an idiom of cultural variation to describe the discrepancies among contemporary Shuar accounts, and between her account and that of Taylor, but uses the language of error in describing the difference between Harner's account and her own interpretation.

²¹ Mader offers a compelling description of the cultural context of her fieldwork, in the course of explaining why she and Taylor had such disparate experiences of their informants' talent and taste for explanation:

Las experiencias dispares que tuvimos al respecto, Taylor entre los Achuar de la región del Bobonaza, y yo entre los Shuar de la región de Sucúa, están relacionadas en parte con diferencias regionales. Como se analiza en otro lugar más exhaustivamente (cf. Cap. I.3), esto tiene que ver menos con diferencias interétnicas en cuanto a la cultura tradicional que con la intensidad de la interacción con distintos sectores de la sociedad nacional. Los Shuar del valle del Upano se hallan permanentemente confrontados con el hecho de que su forma de vida y su cosmovisión son cuestionadas o devaluadas por muchos actores e instituciones que existen o frecuentan su medio. En este contexto, la conservación de la cultura tradicional es un elemento importante de la ideología compartida por muchos Shuar (cf. Mader y Sharup', 1993). En este último caso tenemos a muchas personas que poseen teorías explícitas en determinadas esferas de su sociedad y cosmovisión, y que a menudo también estuvieron dispuestas a compartirlas conmigo. Mostraron, pues, de manera contundente "gusto y talento para explicar" (Mader, 1999: 25).

This description also helps explain why it is that the account of *arutam* she elicited from her informants was more generalized and all encompassing than those collected by Harner and other ethnographers of Jivaroan groups outside the Upano valley. Sucúa (base of the Salesian missionaries, home of the Shuar Federation, and effectively the Shuar capital) provided her and her informants with an environment that promotes the explicit formulation, elaboration, and integration of Shuar traditions and culture.

²² Mader acknowledges that some of the differences between her account and Harner's are likely to be due to the diminution of armed conflict, but asserts that Harner still had it wrong: that "visiones de Guerra siempre han constituido un aspecto específico del complejo de visiones, el mismo que se extiende a muchas otras esferas de la vida" (1999: 183).

²³ In my original manuscript, I had characterized Harner as "dismissing" his predecessors. Harner (personal communication) in reviewing the manuscript states:

You also asked, I believe, for an evaluation of the accuracy of your description of my work. In this connection, the last few paragraphs of your paper, where you said that I made a "dismissal" of Karsten's work and a "complete dismissal of [my] predecessors" are inaccurate.

Please review my 1962 *American Anthropologist* article, "Jivaro Souls," in which I carefully made detailed comparisons with Karsten's information (Harner 1962: 268-270). I do not see how these comparisons can be considered "complete dismissals" or even "dismissals" of his material. For example, I state, "Any such deities are not part of the supernaturalism of the Jivaro proper. Karsten (1954: 26) has already taken note of this situation, saying, 'But the Jibaros have no belief in a personal Raingod Piribri.'" Similarly, I state, "Karsten (1954:31) is also correct in rejecting a claim for a Jivaro deity named 'Cumbanama'..." (Harner 1962: 269).

With regard to my other "predecessor," Stirling, I was careful to report that his data on material culture were accurate. In addition, with regard to Shuar beliefs, Stirling wrote to me, "...I am inclined to agree with you that the errors in my account were the result of wrong interpretation".

Also in *The Jivaro* I stated, "Since the purpose of the present book is to provide a broad introduction to Jivaro culture rather than a detailed comparison with earlier publications, the reader will not find specific criticisms of Karsten's and Stirling's data in the following pages. These will be gradually provided in more specialized publications, which will also have the function of focusing on particular aspects of Jivaro life in greater detail" (1984: 4). One of the intentions of those words was to make clear that I was *not* dismissing out-of-hand the work of others, and planned to provide detailed comparisons with them. I do regret that other emerging priorities in my life interfered with fulfilling that intention."

In addition, I wish to note that in *The Jivaro*, I also investigated the matter of cultural change, to which the last chapter is devoted. I wrote: -

"...I made a special effort to secure field data that would reveal aspects of Jivaro culture that had changed or remained stable during this century, and the final chapter of the book is devoted to that subject" (1984: 4). In that connection, elderly informants reported to me the few changes that had occurred in their lifetimes regarding arutam (1984: 203), with most of their memories extending back before 1910 (1984: 194-195).

I stand corrected, and agree that Harner can not be accurately described as "dismissing" his predecessors and have corrected my description accordingly.

²⁴ I advocate the same approach to other famous discrepancies between ethnographies, such as that between Redfield's (1930) and Lewis' (1960) discrepant accounts of communal values in Tepoztlán or Mead's (1928) and Freeman's (1983) discrepant accounts of violence and Samoa. Indeed, Gerber (1985) does something similar for Mead and Freeman, showing that each is describing complementary aspects of a single cultural/psychological system and that each, by emphasizing one part of the system and ignoring the other, are equally "in error."

Abstract

This article reviews the considerable variation over time, across distances, and among individuals in ethnographic descriptions of Jivaroan beliefs about the arutam spirit. These beliefs are both secret and central to the Shuar concept of the person. Changes in the ethnographic descriptions of the beliefs parallel historical changes in the ethnographic context. The major shift in emphasis from Harner's and Karsten's early descriptions to contemporary accounts was from a focus on the role of arutam in protecting and aiding warriors to its more general role in giving power and productivity to all Shuar. This shift in description can be attributed to three historical changes: the cessation of feuding and warfare; the growing importance of the belief-complex as a badge of Shuar identity; and the use of Shuar myth as a basis for syncretic evangelism. Under constant threat of assassination, Harner's mostly adult male informants would have emphasized the aspect of the beliefs that worked to protect their adult male lives: the visions that protected against attack and conveyed personal forcefulness. Conversely, with the cessation of feuding and warfare and the increased influence of Christian missionaries, the implications

of arutam for intra-Jivaroan conflict would be de-emphasized and the broader implications of arutam for a life of moral rectitude emphasized. Finally, the transformation of arutam into the central organizing principal of the Shuar cosmovision, initiated by Father Pellizzaro and other Salesian missionaries, was in part prompted by their own desire to find the seed of the word of God in Shuar myth.

Resumen

Al describir etnográficamente las creencias jivaroa en torno al espíritu arutam, este artículo examina la considerable variación en el tiempo, las distancias y entre individuos. Estas creencias son a la vez secretas y centrales en la concepción shuar de la persona. Cambios en las descripciones etnográficas de las creencias corren paralelo con cambios históricos en el contexto etnográfico. El mayor cambio de énfasis, de las descripciones tempranas de Harner y Karsten hasta los relatos contemporáneos, va del enfoque de arutam como protector y auxilio del guerrero al enfoque más general de dador a todos los Shuar de poder y productividad. Esta variación en las descripciones se puede atribuir a tres cambios históricos: la suspensión de hostilidades y de guerra, la creciente importancia del conjunto de creencias como insignia de la identidad shuar, y el uso del mito shuar como base del evangelismo sincrético. Bajo la amenaza constante de la muerte violenta, los informantes de Harner -en su mayoría varones adultos- pondrían mayor énfasis en aquellos aspectos de las creencias que sustentaban sus vidas adultas: las visiones que protegían contra ataques, y expresaban su poderío personal. Contrariamente, al suspenderse las hostilidades y las guerras y al aumentar la influencia de los misioneros cristianos, las implicaciones de arutam en los conflictos intra-jivaroa tendrían menor importancia, poniéndose más énfasis en las implicaciones mayores de arutam, para llevar una vida de rectitud moral. Finalmente, la transformación de arutam en el principio organizativo central de la cosmovisión shuar, iniciada por el Padre Pellizzaro y otros misioneros salesianos, fue inspirada por su propio deseo de encontrar la semilla de la palabra de Dios en el mito shuar.

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