

**REINVENTING RITUALS AND THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE PROCESS OF  
AFFIRMING IDENTITY AMONG THE AMAZONIAN KICHWA-QUIJOS FROM  
NAPO, ECUADOR.**

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For Allison, Lucas and Asha,  
who inspired me with their words everyday.

For my parents Melchora Tacuri and Ricardo Yunga  
for letting me be a curious kid.

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I study how the Kichwa-Quijos are reconstructing rituals in order to strengthen self-identity, and how music is an essential part of those practices. My research is based on fieldwork I conducted in the Napo Province in the Amazonian region of Ecuador. Older generations are concerned that traditions and culture are being lost by youth. I explore how rituals surrounding kinship are used in order to continue traditions and reaffirm identity. I study the reconstruction of traditional wedding rituals in two communities and explore how music is used to strengthen identity. In one community, traditional music is incorporated into the ritual, strengthening their “Kichwa” identity; in another community, more modern music is used in the same way to strengthen their ancestral “Quijos” identity. I study how such different styles of music are both understood as “traditional” by different groups of people, and how that understanding reinforces their identities.

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## Glossary of Kichwa and Spanish Words

**Avila:** One of three areas where Quijos historically inhabited, in what is now Napo Province. The others are Archidona and Baeza.

**Ayllu:** Indigenous concept used to describe one's extended family who usually, but not always, live in the same area.

**Archidona:** Is one of the five districts that make up the Napo province. Also, it is one of three areas where Quijos historically inhabited, in what is now Napo Province. The others are Avila and Baeza.

**Baeza:** Is one of the five districts that make up the Napo province. Also, it is one of three areas where Quijos historically inhabited, in what is now Napo Province. The others are Avila and Archidona.

**Bachata:** It is a genre of Latin American music that originated in the Dominican Republic.

**Boda (Bura):** Actual wedding – third of three formal ceremonies of the wedding ritual among Kichwa-Quijos. See also Patachina and Tapuna.

**Cary:** Man in the Kichwa language.

**Caciques:** Indigenous leader during colonial times.

**Chicha:** A fermented or non-fermented beverage usually derived from manioc, yucca, maize, *chonta*.

**Chonta:** Fruit that grows from the *chonta* palms (Peach Palm) that is mashed to make *chicha*.

**Compadrazgo:** Godparent-hood ceremony. It is a component of the religious act of baptism, most frequently seen in Catholicism in which the parents of the child entrust the spiritual future of their son or daughter to a person or couple, who, from that moment, become the godparents of the child and, simultaneously, the *compadre*, or co-parent of the biological parents. Traditionally it is celebrated during baptisms, weddings, and occasionally first communions.

**Compadre:** Co-parent of biological parents. See *compadrazgo*.

**Cumbia:** It is a genre of Latin American tropical music.

**Dirigentes:** In the Amazonian region, community leaders – political, cultural and activists.

**Finca:** Forested land that has sections used for agriculture.

**Guayusa tea:** Caffeinated tea-like drink made from the dried leaves of the guayusa plant.

**Guarapo:** Alcoholic drink made from sugar cane; served at special events.

**Guiro:** Percussion instrument used in tropical music; produces sound by rubbing a stick or comb over notches.

**Jivaro:** Concept given by the Spanish colonizers to identify the inhabitants from the Amazon in Ecuador and Peru.

**Kichwa coplas:** Musical genre derived from the poetic form – couplets.

**Madrina:** Godmother

**Maitos:** A traditional meal among the Kichwa-Quijos consisting of yucca, onions, meat, fish or chicken wrapped in plantain leaves and steamed over a slow fire.

**Manioc:** Woody shrub, native of South America of the spurge family.

**Matrimonio:** Catholic wedding ceremony. Among the Kichwa-Quijos, this is sometimes considered by some to be the fourth ceremony in the wedding ritual. See also Tapuna, Pactachina and Boda (Bura).

**Mestizaje:** A concept that the state used to attempt to create a national identity by dismissing the existent cultural diversity.

**Mestizo:** Person of combined European and Amerindian decent.

**Mushuk Kawsay Association:** Group dedicated to promoting political and cultural aspects related to the Kichwa-Quijos territory and identity.

**Naranjilla:** *Solanum quitoense*. It is a citrus fruit know also as *lulo*.

**Nueva Canción:** Is a movement and genre with Latin American and Iberian popular music that incorporate social and political themes.

**Oriente Ecuatoriano:** Region including eastern slopes of the Andes and Amazon region of Ecuador.

**Pactachina ritual:** The fulfillment of agreements – second of three formal ceremonies of the wedding ritual among Kichwa-Quijos. See also Tapuna and Boda (Bura).

**Padrino:** Godfather.

**Pingullo:** Traditional bamboo flute.

**Quijos:** Historically the Quijos were a pre-Hispanic culture that controlled the highlands between the Andes and Upper Napo regions in the Ecuadorian Amazonia. The Quijos today are the newest Ecuadorian ethnic nationality.

**Kichwa:** Native language spoken by the indigenous population from the Ecuadorian Andes and Amazonia.

**Kichwa:** Concept that provides the ethnic identity of the indigenous Ecuadorian population.

**Kichwa-Quijos:** Term created by the author that identifies the indigenous population from the Napo province in Ecuador.

**Kichwa-Tropical:** See Runa Paju.

**Regueton:** Is a musical genre with roots in Latin and Caribbean music.

**Runa:** The Kichwa word for “human being.”

**Runa Paju:** Music genre that incorporates electronic instruments, combining ancestral and modern musical forms. Runa is the Kichwa word for “person,” and “Paju” means “the ability to do or create something.” Some communities believe that it is a modern invention; other communities believe that Runa Paju represents cultural tradition. Also known as Kichwa-Tropical.

**Samay:** Kichwa word that means or could be understood as the vital energy, breath of life or soul substance deposited in a person, animal, plants, places, or other meaningful things.

**Shaman:** Person believed to be able to connect and influence in the world of good and evil spirits. Also called yachak.

**Takina:** Shamanic ritual music.

**Tambor:** Musical drum-like instrument.

**Tapuna (pedida):** The request - first of three formal ceremonies of the wedding ritual among Kichwa-Quijos. See also Boda and Pactachina.

**Tapuna-Boda:** Tapuna and Boda are rituals that complement the wedding sequence of formalizing a relationship.

**Versiador:** A well-respected and knowledgeable person who plays and chants during the Kichwa-Quijos wedding ceremonies of Pactachina and Boda.

**Warmy:** Woman in the Kichwa language.

**Warmy yaya:** The father of bride.

**Yachak:** Wise person. See shaman.

**Yaya:** Father in the Kichwa language.

**Zápara:** An ethnic nationality from the Ecuadorian Amazonia.

## Introduction

*Ecuadorians are somewhat ambivalent about Jivaroans. On the one hand, there is a certain pride that fierce and until recently completely unconquered tribal peoples lived their head-taking ways in the rugged jungle terrain. On the other hand, there is a national shame that the land of Jivaroan insolence is as yet unconquered, and the conquest, as it grinds on, depends nearly totally on foreign-made planes and equipment borne mostly by missionaries, oil searchers, and the military. (Whitten, 1976, p. 5)*

Every morning I woke up to Teresa's soft footsteps as she turned on her old black Emerson radio, tuning in to the radio show. Teresa would devotedly repeat the Catholic prayer to the Virgin Mary in the Kichwa language that she heard on the radio. Traditionally, Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, usually women, wake up very early in the morning to prepare the *guayusa* tea. In past times, old men used to accompany the preparation of the drink while playing the *pingullo* (a traditional bamboo flute) and telling stories to the youth through their songs. Nowadays, at least in the community of Jondachi, in the Napo province, *pingullo* music and storytelling are absent,<sup>1</sup> but women still prepare the *guayusa* tea every morning.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Berna Alvarado, Teresa's husband, many other older men, including him, do not play *pingullo* or possess the knowledge for performing the "storytelling" tradition. One of the main reasons is that they did not spend time with their parents and community during most of their childhood. "It was that, if an indigenous couple had lots of kids, the missionaries used to come and take us to the church shelter. I was taken to Cotundo mission when I was very little... There we had to work and study the Bible... I didn't like it there; that is why I always ran away. Sometimes I used to come home or just stayed in the forest. But the next day or two either my parents or the priest had to take me back... 'Regala unito (give us one of your kids)' they used to say. 'What are you going to do with all of them? They are going to die,' they used to say." (Berna Alvarado, August, 2011).

The steam from the *guayusa* boiling in an aluminum pot helped to warm up the chilly atmosphere of the house at this time of the day. “*Alli punsha*, good morning Teresa,” were the first words I would say every morning. After responding, Teresa would serve me some of the hot *guayusa* drink. “*Upi guayusa papito*” (drink some *guayusa*, my son), she would say to me, and together with the still-dark sky, sitting on low wooden stools, we would listen to the radio. After the thirty-minute religious program, traditional music sung in Kichwa was played, interwoven with a number of messages given only in Kichwa by the young announcer, Gloria Grefa, who later became my informant. While we listened to the music and drank the *guayusa* tea, one by one the light bulbs inside the houses around town would turn off, welcoming the daylight of the morning in the still-foggy and quiet town of Jondachi.





**Figure 1: Teresa, my son Lucas, and I drinking *guayusa* tea in the morning.**

In this thesis I show how Amazonian Kichwa People (Kichwa-Quijos from now on), located in the Ecuadorian province of Napo, are recreating ancestral traditions in order to reaffirm and re-establish ethnic identities. The thesis is based on my observations and study of these people in their everyday lives and, in addition, on my study of their more complex ritual ceremonies. I explore through the lens of music how ordinary Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants and *dirigentes* (in the Amazon, community leaders, political and cultural activists) use and understand the concept of “traditional” music in order to contextualize their sense of a particular identity. I pay particular attention to the role of political and cultural *dirigentes*, the community leaders who seek to emphasize the production and performance of “traditional” music during social and cultural events. They see

such music as an element that provides authenticity in the context of ethnic identity. I develop my thesis using data I gathered from my experience in two different communities, Jondachi and Tiwinza, both in the Napo province. In Jondachi and other communities that surround it, *dirigentes* are enthusiastic about the creation of a new ethnic nationality called the "Quijos nation." Meanwhile, in Tiwinza, *dirigentes* are attempting to reaffirm their Amazonian Kichwa identity.

In this context it is important to mention that, considering the complexity of the subject of identity among the inhabitants, I decided to use the word "Kichwa-Quijos" when I refer to the Amazonian Kichwa people from Napo. In the lower areas of the province such as Tiwinza, inhabitants attempt for reaffirm their ancestral "Kichwa" identity. Thus, I will refer to them as Kichwa. In the case of the upper areas of the province, such as Jondachi, inhabitants work for the recognition of their "Quijos" identity. Thus, I will refer to them as Quijos. When referring to all the people of the province, I have used Kichwa-Quijos.

This thesis is the result of six months of fieldwork among Kichwa-Quijos peoples from the Napo province in the Ecuadorian Amazon during the months of June to November 2011. Ritual, music, identity and tradition are the main subjects I discuss. Throughout the thesis I attempt to weave the narratives of recent developments into the context of cultural identity and self-representation that exist in this region. The communities involved in this research are Jondachi (my "hometown" during fieldwork) and Tiwinza in the Napo province. Although I was able to explore other communities, the main sources I used for constructing my research are these two places.

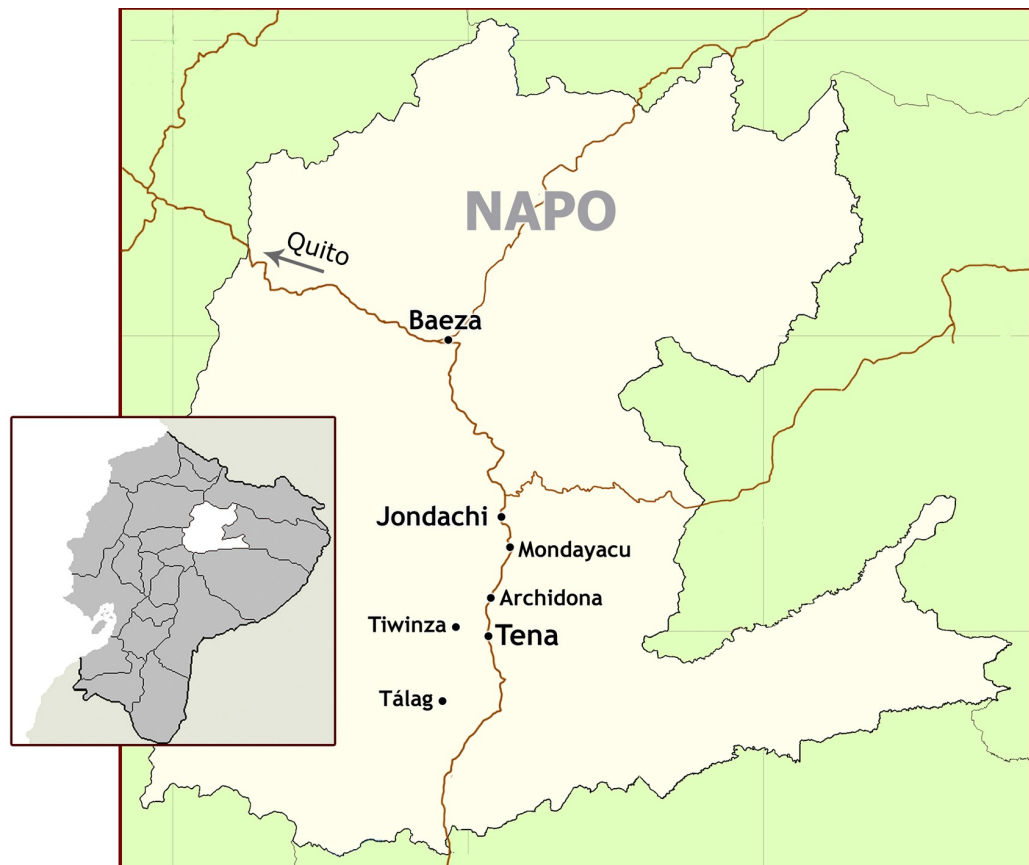
The community of Jondachi is located approximately one hour north of the city of Tena, capital of the Napo province. It stretches approximately two kilometers along the main road that connects the northern areas of the Amazonia with the city of Quito. Approximately four hundred people live in Jondachi and, even though it is located in the Amazonian Kichwa area, a significant portion of the population does not speak the native language - especially the youth, who mostly prefer to speak Spanish. The older generations are commonly bilingual, but there are a number of interesting inhabitants, like Teresa, who do not speak Spanish but only Kichwa. Growing small gardens for personal consumption around the house is common in Jondachi, and many of the inhabitants also own or rent a bigger plot of land for a larger production of corn and *naranjilla* (citrus fruit also known as *lulo*).

The second location is the community of Tiwinza, located forty-five minutes northwest of Tena, between the Clavario and Pano parishes. This community is relatively new and, according to its inhabitants, it was created because of the need for land for agricultural production. Most of the people who live in Tiwinza moved there from a situation in which they rented land for production, similar to the situation in Jondachi. According to community member Gustavo Chiguango, who moved from Misahualli Port<sup>2</sup> to Tiwinza with his wife and children considers that “owning a plot of land where one can plant one’s own food helps to support the family’s economy and is a very important reason for being in Tiwinza” he said. But he also sees the importance of the land in terms of

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<sup>2</sup> The Misahualli Port is located at the junction of the Misahualli and Napo Rivers in the Napo province. In previous decades, it was the main entrance to the Ecuadorian Amazonia.

culture and tradition: “Here is where we can teach our kids how to be Kichwa,” Gustavo said, showing me the land. There are no more than twenty families that live in this community. As a new community concerned about their cultural identity, the goal of the Tiwinza population is to grow not just in numbers, but in traditions and cultural values.



**Figure 2: Map of Napo Province**

## **Methodology**

H. R. Bernard (2011) suggests that research is a “craft.” According to the author, research is a craft because it is something that is constantly being practiced, experimented with and particularly produced. During all the years it

took me to finish my thesis, and after many frustrations and limitations, I finally understood that research does not come in a package and does not necessarily follow a "recipe" that allows anthropologists (in this case) to gain a common satisfactory experience. Rather, I learned that research, seen as a craft, is constantly in creation by the multiple experiences of the researcher who has encountered them—all kinds of experiences, whether they are considered productive or not. And finally, after these five years of continuous practice, I began to appreciate my craft.

I engaged fieldwork through open dialogues and discussions with different members inside and outside of these communities, where I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews. I also recorded music in audio and video in order to analyze it myself, as well as with the musicians and people involved in it (R. H. Bernard, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Meyers, 1992). I engaged in participant observation of my host family, and of many others during celebrations and community visits. I also engaged in both forms of interview in the streets, bars, and soccer fields and during my bus or taxi commutes.

I conducted fieldwork within and around the Napo province, while living in Jondachi from June to November of 2011. The two main methods of research that I used were participant observation and interviews. After my family (my wife and my two-year-old son) and I left, I visited Jondachi three more times, mainly for the purposes of my research. The first visit I made was few weeks after I had initially left in November of 2011. I went to attend the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, which are two of the three stages that Quijos traditionally celebrate for gaining official marriage. I made my second visit in May of 2013 to attend the ceremony

in celebration of the legal recognition of Quijos nationality. In June 2013, Gonzalo Alvarado, my host contact and Teresa and Berna's son, visited us and stayed in our house for a few days in my hometown of Cuenca. I made a third visit to Jondachi in January of 2014, a few weeks after Teresa had died. During this last visit, I also met with Gloria Grefa, who helped me with the addition of the language of the songs that I used for the text analysis in this thesis.

Prior to and during fieldwork, numerous phone calls and emails were necessary throughout these five years in order to contact people who helped me with my research. Contact with community members of Jondachi was made prior to my trip by University of Lethbridge professor Dr. Patrick Wilson, who had done research in the same province. Even though my original proposal listed the site of my research as Shamato, another Kichwa-Quijos community located one hour away from Jondachi, several conversations with our host, Gonzalo Alvarado, convinced my wife and I to stay in Jondachi to do the fieldwork.

Prior to my fieldwork and while writing my thesis, I spent many hours in the library of the University of Lethbridge investigating the scholarly literature that could better guide me both in the field and in my writing. I also visited some public Ecuadorian institutions such as the *Ministerio* and *Subsecretaria de Cultura*, *Casa de la Cultura*, *Gobierno Provincial del Napo*, and also different museums such as *Museo de la Universidad Catolica de Quito*, *Museo del Banco Central de Cuenca*, and *Museo de Baeza*, looking for more bibliographic information and interviews that could support my work.

Also, I continuously visited different Kichwa-Quijos communities searching for musicians. Even though I was often unsuccessful, I always found something

or someone who helped me to expand my understanding of Kichwa-Quijos culture. For example, I experienced the different ways of preparing *chicha* (manioc beer) and their different tastes. The drink was made either by chewing the plant with the mouth, smashing it with a rock, or using a blender. Perhaps this will sound like a mundane experience for those seeking something more “exciting or exotic,” but it is important to consider that, despite all the modern influences in these areas, the act of sharing *chicha* with visitors still remains for the Kichwa-Quijos a token of reciprocity and friendship, and an indication both of the ancestral values that define their identity and of their approach to their perceived tradition (R. H. Bernard, 1994).

I also visited a few radio stations in Napo, one located in the city of Baeza and two others in Tena, in order to compare the kinds of music and programs they played. I interviewed the announcers of each radio station and collected some of the traditional Kichwa-Quijos music they kept in their collections.

Most of my research is based on participant observation while I lived in Jondachi. During the four weeks after I first arrived in Jondachi, I spent the greater part of every day in the house talking with Berna and Teresa about my family and about theirs, and about how I met my “gringa” wife. I always asked for the native words in order to learn basic Kichwa, so that I could communicate better with Teresa (who only spoke Kichwa). Even though I never developed a good skill for speaking the language, I learned enough that Teresa and some other Kichwa speakers could understand me.

From the early hours of the morning, I learned from Teresa. She usually liked to listen to the radio and then prepare the *guayusa* tea. She liked to boil the

*chonta* from the early hours of the day, and then she would make a breakfast that usually consisted of green plantains and warm *chugula*, a thick drink made of little bananas. After breakfast, she dedicated herself to cleaning the kitchen room, washing the dishes, feeding the chickens, bringing wood, and peeling and smashing the *chonta* for the *chicha*. After a few days, and after I learned more of how Teresa did her work, I was able to follow her and help her with some of the duties in the house. I must say, after those first four weeks of eating practically the same things, I decided that cooking would be my main duty. My food style, which had a totally different taste for them, opened up a big connection between their family and mine. Cooking became a method through which I could learn, ask questions, become more active and feel more confident.

Among the people in the community, having my son Lucas with us there was an advantage too. As a child who looked different from the rest of the children in the community, he was always a subject of interest for other kids and also adults. Out of curiosity, they would touch his long brown hair and listen to him talking in his baby English words, kindly offering us their friendship. Having other kids around was also a big help, since neither my wife nor I spoke Kichwa but most of the kids did especially Alex, Teresa's eleven-year-old grandson (Sicu, as every one called him by his nickname), who became Lucas's best friend.

I also conducted participant observation with the musicians whom I encountered during my research. I recorded in audio and video the interviews and their music, and took pictures of them and their instruments. My interest in the music (traditional) of the Kichwa-Quijos comes from my own experience as a musician and interpreter of Andean traditional music. During both wedding



ceremonies, *Pactachina* and *Tapuna-Boda*, I recorded and interviewed the musicians. I have to mention that I did not record any audio or video, or take pictures at Miguel's graduation and *compadrazgo* celebration that occurred in Jondachi. Instead, I wrote notes related to what happened and what conversations were had during the party. H. R. Bernard (2011) identifies this as "informal interviews," a method applied during the beginning of fieldwork. The reason I did not record is that I wanted to be present as the guest that they (Miguel and his family) had invited, in order to merge with the family and to enjoy and learn from what was happening, rather than feeling overwhelmed with all the details of what I was experiencing.

I conducted a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews within and outside of Jondachi. In Jondachi, for example, I practiced unstructured interviews with Berna, Carlos, Mariana, and the kids (mostly Berna's grandchildren) that constantly visited the house. I was able to do this because I spent a lot of time with them. Going for walks, going to the river, playing soccer, or just eating cacao were good moments for us to sit and chat for long periods of time. The information gathered from them was mostly related to understanding their common everyday life: for example, understanding why people in the community do not eat lunch. In the cities, even in Tena, people organize their meals in a set of three - breakfast, lunch and dinner. But in isolated communities like Jondachi, people mostly eat breakfast and sometimes dinner. Talking with Mariana about this matter, she explained that "lunch" as an everyday meal doesn't make any sense for them, since *chicha* circulates most houses and is offered to people at any time during the whole day.

I used semi-structured interviews mostly when I had to interview the musicians from different and distant communities like Domingo Grefa, Silverio Grefa, Velizario and Manuel Shiguango, Pablo Alvarado, Darwing Grefa, and some *dirigentes* or people from public institutions. In the case of the musicians, I also asked how to play the *tambur* used during the traditional wedding ceremonies. I learned the rhythm in the *tambur* (drum) and also to sing few lines of the songs in Kichwa. An audio and video recording almost always accompanied the interviews with the musicians, so that I could analyze not just the sound and texts but also the context. My interviews with musicians were facilitated by the fact that I am, myself, a musician.

### **The Production Kinship**

Research in the context of kin production among Amazonian societies has revealed that consanguinity does not necessarily determine kinship ties. Rather current literature shows that Amazonian societies have created a complex dynamic for recognizing one's relative or member of an extended family (Carsten, 1995, 2000; Lepri, 2005; McCallum, 1990; Praet, 2009; Van Vleet, 2008; Vilaça, 2002). Simple and conventional acts, such as the transfer of land and other material exchanges (Barnes, 1962; Feinberg, 1981), as well as other much more complex behaviors expressed by rituals and every-day performances (Lepri, 2005; Vilaça, 2002, 2005), have been identified in diverse societies as ways of constructing and strengthening kinship.

Current literature suggests that among Amazonian societies, the production of kin is not simply related to the domestic or intra-tribal realm, but it

also occurs in the context of a constant dialogue with non-human beings (Descola, 1996; Lepri, 2005; Vilaça, 2002). I approach the idea of "dialogue" not only in its verbal form, but also from ritual-performance forms such as music, food and *chicha* preparation, tobacco smoking in the forest and healing sessions, gardening and hunting (Brown, 1984; M. Uzendoski, 2008). In this sense, the construction of "kinship" can occur in a series of ritual moments, not necessarily performed publicly, or visibly, but symbolically represented in acts of every-day life (Overing, 1999).

For the Kichwa-Quijos kinship represents living a good life among kin. To attain this good life it is important to continue with the practice of the circulation of substances, *Samay*. Considering the importance of substance circulation or *Samay* transferred in the context of kinship, M. Uzendoski (2006) suggests that *Samay* among the Kichwa-Quijos is a micro-cosmos itself that represents not only kin forms, but also a constant reproduction the inhabitant's life vision connected to all their times and forms.

According to Overing (1999), anthropologists have created a disconnect between the ordinary domestic lives of native peoples with regard to kinship, while focusing on other more "exciting" scenarios related to spiritual and cosmological issues. Meanwhile, Aparecida Vilaça (2002) suggests that Amazonian conceptions of kinship have been disassociated by anthropologists and regarded as two different objects of study. The first notion of kinship is associated with human relations, something more terrestrial and structured by society. The second notion of kinship is associated with spiritual and cosmological beliefs in which humans and non-humans communicate. Istvan

Praet (2009) suggests that “South American Indians envisage the ‘social’ and the ‘cosmological’ as one continuous field” (p. 737). In this same context Michael Cepek (Cepek, 2009, p. 232) emphasizes that “anthropologists should not abandon ‘cosmological thought’ or separate the real from the ‘mythic’”. Certainly, the complexity of the construction of "kinship" and its purposes within different societies does not entail a pre-structured way of understanding and portraying kin.

### **The Complexity of Amazonian Music**

My approach in exploring the phenomena and issues of identity in the Napo province is guided by my encounter with multiple means of understanding the concept of "traditional music" by Kichwa-Quijos. Throughout this territory, people do still practice what they identify as "ancestral" traditions, such as food and drink preparation, healing ceremonies, handcrafts, dance, and music, all understood as elements that provide cultural continuity. *Dirigentes*, in their effort to recreate traditions, deem the practice of such elements important because they collectively embody a sense of authenticity. Although the social and cultural dynamics in different Kichwa-Quijos communities initially appear to be all mixed up, the performance of old versus new forms of traditional music marks a difference in the identities of people historically established in the same place. Thus I found myself confronting what appeared to be two separate issues: traditional music and ethnic identities.

Common understandings of the practice of music among Amazonian societies are often linked to ritual shamanic contexts. Every time a person

creates the image of a shaman in his or her mind, the shaman depicted always appears as the figure of an old person holding and shaking rattles, dancing, and chanting. The study of music practice during shamanic rituals among Amazonian societies has largely been interpreted by scholars as a form of communication between earth inhabitants, their ancestors' spirits and other non-human beings that inhabit the forest (Brown, 1984; Fuks, 1988; Hill, 1993; Rios & Katz, 1975; Seeger, 1979, 1987; Seitz, 1981; M. Uzendoski, Hertica, & Tapuy, 2005; Viveiros de Castro, 1998; Whitten, 1976). In this same context, scholars have argued that the practice of such music allows shamans to increase their ability to enter an altered state of consciousness under the influence of hallucinogenic substances or fermented traditional beverages (Fuks, 1988; Gow, 1989; Praet, 2009; Rios & Katz, 1975; Seeger, 1979; M. Uzendoski, 2004b). Specific literature on music of the Kichwa-Quijos is very limited. Despite these limitations, music as a complement to ritual engagements has been well considered in anthropological, ethnographic, and historical research (Blanca Muratorio, 1998; Spiller, 1974; M. Uzendoski, 2005, 2008).

Scholars have long agreed that music is one of the most conservative elements of culture (Belzner, 1981; Myers, 1993; Seeger, 1987; Solomon, 2000). My constant interest in the music of the Kichwa-Quijos helped me to participate in a series of re-invented traditional social and cultural ceremonies and rituals where traditional music was performed. Most of these events were organized with great seriousness by the community *dirigentes* who were concerned about the loss of their cultural traditions and, therefore, their "identity." Here, the role of music shaped the events. It was considered an important element for influencing

culture and sending social messages related to cultural identity and ethnic politics.

Community leaders are attempting to re-invent traditional practices because of deep concerns about the "loss of culture" within new generations. This is especially important since the practice of traditions and rituals represents life itself in the Kichwa-Quijos philosophy. Being immersed for six months in the small community of Jondachi with a Quijos family allowed me to experience their everyday life. On July 16th, 2011, I participated in the ritual of *Pactachina* in the community of Tiwinza, which is traditionally part of a series of rituals that form the whole process and concept of marriage for Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants. On July 30, 2011, a ritual of *compadrazgo* (kinship-making) was performed in Jondachi for the high-school graduation of Miguel Alavardo. It was the first time that such ritual had been celebrated for a graduation, because *compadrazgo* is traditionally performed during baptisms, weddings and, occasionally, first communions. On November 26, 2011, I participated in a *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi. Both *Tapuna* and *Boda* are rituals that complement the wedding sequence of formalizing a relationship. I also experienced in Jondachi the impromptu baptism and *compadrazgo* ritual of my two-year-old son, Lucas. The elements of food, drink, music, and dance were present in all of these traditional rituals, and each one of them was part of a particular ritual performance. I saw that all of these smaller rituals, sequentially during the day or days of a ceremony, transformed and newly consolidated the relationships of the people taking part in them.



**Figure 3: Regional map of Ecuador**

### **Kichwa or Quijos in History**

The complexity of recent issues concerning the ethnic identities “Quijos” or “Kichwas” finds its roots in two parts of a still-unclear and largely-speculative Ecuadorian Amazon history. The first is related to the vanishing of the “Quijos ethnicity” as a result of Spanish colonization, and the second, to the introduction of Kichwa language—a language largely spoken by the indigenous inhabitants of the Andes—into the societies of Amazonia by missionaries.

The claim for a Quijos nationality is not one of recent times. Rather, it was a process that, having moved “underground,” was rediscovered in the theoretical arguments of scholars (Blanca Muratorio, 1998; Oberem, 1980; Ospina, 1992, 1997) who provided historical knowledge about the obscured heritage of the people who inhabited these lands in the past. The effort of Kichwa-Quijos *dirigentes*—shamans (political, cultural, social-ecological activists who I will refer to as *yachak* from now on)—to establish Kichwa or Quijos identities for inhabitants (from their independent territories) represents an ongoing process of collective knowledge from community memories. It is relevant to explore the historical context revealed in the most recent scholarly accounts of the history of the Quijos.

Most research on the history of the Quijos agrees that this ethnic group inhabited the areas of Baeza (historically known as Hatunquijos), Avila, and Archidona, all of them located in the north of what today comprises the Napo province (Cuellar, 2011; Oberem, 1980; Ospina, 1992, 1997; M. Uzendoski, 2004a). This lowland and highland Quijos territory has become an area of great interest for scholars who believe that the historical Quijos developed an important network of economic and social exchange with their neighbors from the Andes and in the Amazon due to their geographical location (Oberem, 1980; Reeve, 1993). However, a history of Quijos that provides some details about such social complexity before the arrival of the Spanish is lacking. Meanwhile, in a 1577 report about the people inhabiting the Quijos territory, Diego de Ortégón describes them as “people who wear little clothing, are disposed toward war and drunkenness, practice cannibalism, and eat lots of fruit and little maize.” In



addition, Ortegón describes them as “great sorcerers” and as possessing beneficial herbals like “cinnamon” (Ortegón, 1989 [1577]: 260-66 quoted in (M. Uzendoski, 2004a, p. 322). Another important account that appears in the history of the Quijos is related to their language. M. Uzendoski (2004a) shows that, according to a report provided by Ordoñez de Cevallos in 1614 about the Quijos region in Baeza, all the inhabitants of this area “speak the general language of the Inca (Quechua) ...and in particular they have their maternal languages in their provinces and towns, and each different” (p. 322).

There is very little data that shows a successful Incan incursion or cultural influence on the lowland inhabitants of the Ecuadorian Amazon as it occurred in the Andes. In this context, the history of the Quijos prior to and after the first decades of the creation of the Spanish colony is based on a series of sporadic accounts and unofficial reports provided by explorers and a few official travellers (Oberem, 1980; Reeve, 1993). According to some accounts, as a consequence of the war between the Incas Atahualpa and Huascar, Atahualpa took his army into the Quijos territory for military training. Later on, the Incas decided to leave this land and its inhabitants, whom they considered “primitive and poor people” (Oberem, 1980, p. 36). The specific period of time for this Incan incursion in the Quijos territory is not provided, but it is possible that there were places inhabited by these “primitive societies” that were named by the Inca, and that the language of the dominant group was introduced as well. One example could be the name of the town Hatun-quijos, as *hatun* is a Kichwan word that means “up” or “above.”

The city of Quito, the current capital of Ecuador, was founded in 1534. A few years later, focused on finding the mythical “Dorado” and the “kingdom of the

Cinnamon,” the Spanish decided to explore the eastern lowland regions (Blanca Muratorio, 1998; M. Uzendoski, 2004a). The incursion of the Spanish into the Quijos territories took place around 1538, led by Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda who found himself under attack by the Quijos army located in the area of Hatun-quijos (Oberem, 1980; M. Uzendoski, 2004a). It is said that there is no evidence of the establishment of any settlement from this expedition. New attempts to head into the Quijos lands were made by Spanish colonizers between 1539 and 1542, but in almost all incursions they faced the resistance of the Quijos, who prevented permanent Spanish incursion for around sixteen years (Ospina, 1992).

In 1556, Gíl Ramírez Dávalos was, by order of the viceroy Marqués de Cañete, put in charge of new expeditions into the Quijos lands. The mission requested by the viceroy was the pacification and conquest of the territory, the establishment of a Spanish town for religious conversion, and the establishment of the *encomienda* system, which forced the conquered people to work in order to generate tribute for the colonists.<sup>3</sup> By 1559, Dávalos had succeeded in his mission, having founded the city of Baeza. But his governance did not last long. Dávalos was removed after being accused of being too kind with Indians in the view of the *encomindas*. After his removal, his successors were less concerned with the indigenous situation (M. Uzendoski, 2004a). This new order in the life of Quijos quickly weakened them. Forced by the Spanish to work as domestic servants, and to weave cloth, pan for gold, and carry cargo by foot to Quito, the Quijos became assimilated. There were complaints that women were raped and

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<sup>3</sup> The term “colonists” here refers to the Spaniards of the colonial period (1531-1822).

mutilated, and ferocious dogs were set on anyone who rebelled. Such conditions ultimately led the Quijos to revolt (Oberem, 1980).

As a consequence of harsh conditions and abuse by the Spanish, the Quijos organized a series of revolts prior to 1560. But a period of pacification occurred between 1561 and 1578, which led to the creation of the cities of Avila and Archidona (M. Uzendoski, 2004a). In 1578, the Quijos cautiously organized a general rebellion, determined to eradicate the Spanish. Ospina (1992) suggests that the increase of indigenous violence against Spaniards occurred right after the arrival of Diego de Ortega in 1576, because of his opulent lifestyle, the increase in taxes, and the amount of forced labor imposed on the indigenous people.

Scholars establish the period between 1576 and 1600 as the period of “general uprising and decadence” (Oberem, 1980; Ospina, 1992; M. Uzendoski, 2004a). The 1578 rebellion, known as the Revolt of the *Pendes*, was led by the *pendes*<sup>4</sup> and *caciques*<sup>5</sup> from the areas of Archidona, Avila, and Baeza/Hatun-Quijos. This moment is considered the beginning of a new era in the region (Ospina, 1992).

The influence and power of the *pendes* (*yachaks*) and *caciques* over the indigenous inhabitants is considered by scholars to be vast. Their agency for controlling extensive social networks was determined by the quality of their powers (Ospina, 1992). The famous Quijos *pende* Beto, from Archidona, and

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<sup>4</sup> Oberem (1980) refers to *Pendes* as synonymous with shaman (*yachak*) but I question such a definition because the word *Pende*, in the Kichwa language, refers to a community leader - someone with large economic and social power, held sometimes by a *yachak*, but not always.

<sup>5</sup> Indigenous leader during colonial times.

Guami, from Avila, led the revolt. These *pendes* led the Quijos in their attack and successfully burned the towns of Avila and Archidona, killing all the Spanish colonist residents and the highlanders who served them (Oberem, 1980; Ospina, 1992). For the attack of the town of Baeza, Beto and Guami agreed in electing Jumandi, a well-known *cacique* (but not a *yachak*), to lead the army against the Spaniards. By the time Jumandi attempted to attack Baeza, the news of the attacks on the cities of Avila and Archidona had already been made known in Quito. The Spanish sent troops to fight the Quijos attack. Jumandi and his army were defeated. Afterwards, many Quijos surrendered, while the *pende* leaders fled and hid in the forest. Four months later, they were found and sent to Quito, where the Spaniards used them as public displays of the punishment faced by anyone who ventured to rebel. They were exhibited through the city, tortured, and finally quartered, after which their heads were displayed in the streets (Oberem, 1980; Reeve, 1993; M. Uzendoski, 2004a).

After putting down the revolt and punishing the Quijos leaders publicly, the Spaniards began a campaign of persecution against all those who identified as Quijos, and those who were involved in the rebellion were killed (Reeve, 1993). A few who survived were reincorporated into the *encomienda* system to serve the Spaniards, but there were others who escaped deep into the Amazon rainforest (Ospina, 1992). By escaping from the control of the Spaniards, the Quijos left behind not only torture but also their roots. It is argued that the few Quijos that escaped into the forest ended up mixing and integrating with members of other ethnic groups. In this context, scholars assert that contemporary Amazonian Kichwa identity evolved from diverse ethnic origins - from diverse groups who

mixed throughout the centuries and were eventually organized by the mission system that taught them the Kichwa language (Whitten, 1976).

### **Napo Runa and Kichwa**

According to Blanca Muratorio (1991), Kichwa inhabitants from Napo “internally, further differentiate themselves by place-name such as that of the village or river area they come from” (p. 1). For example, Muratorio points out that those who live near the River Tena are identified as Tena Runa, those who live near Archidona are the Archidona Runa, and so on. Yet, in my own research I did not encounter people who identified according to place (such as Tena, Archidona, or Jondachi). Instead, some identified themselves on the basis of linguistic Kichwa pronunciation. This reality became more evident when most of my interviewees disagreed with the term I used to identify them during the interview.

While community leaders focused on building the Quijos nationality in Jondachi, I encountered a different situation in the more southern areas of the province. This became apparent in my interview with Silverio Grefa, a sixty-year-old traditional musician from Bajo Talaj. Instead of asking him how he identified himself, I told him that I was confused about the idea of identity in the province. I had observed that some people in the central-northern part of the province (Archidona and upper areas) identify as Kichwa, and some people as Kichwa Amazonico, or Quijos; meanwhile, in the southern areas some people identify as Napo Kichwas, or Napo Runa. He explained, “We are Napo Runas, that is our identity here; the idea of ‘Quijos’ is just a crazy thing that some people from the

northern areas from Archidona are concerned about. Here they have also started talking about that, but we don't care too much. We are Napo Runas, and that is the culture that we have inherited from our ancestors and by the blessings of God.”

On the morning of November 25, I interviewed Pablo Alvarado, a cultural promoter from the Napo Ministry of Culture and an activist of the Quijos nationality. While trying to explain my research I asked Pablo if “Napo Runa” was an appropriate term to identify the Kichwa inhabitants in this province. He disagreed, saying that:

“You could, but there is a certain problem, I think, because “Napo Runa” only describes people in the communities or cultures that live along side the River Napo, which excludes other Amazonian Kichwas. Also, by using that name we could be talking about Huaorani or Omagua descendents—for me all of them are Napo Runa because they all live along that river. Instead, we could say “Amazonian Kichwas,” which gives a bigger perception about the inhabitants of the province, but there is a more precise form to identify indigenous people from here that we could use, which is descendants of Quijos—yes that should be it.”

According to Pablo, Kichwa inhabitants of Napo are direct descendants of the Quijos, and that identity is reflected in their daily cultural traditions. Even though it seems that there has been a lack of continuity in some of the traditions, the recent recreation of certain traditions reflects the legacy of Quijos culture deposited in inhabitants' memories. Pablo also argues that the Quijos's legacy present in the daily life of Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants is mostly perceived in their music, and that even though people have incorporated foreign or electronic

instruments, the music maintains ancestral musical patterns. While Silverio Grefa rejected the Quijos identity, Pablo included all Kichwa inhabitants from Napo (which would include Silverio) as part of such identity, revealing that the Quijos nationality project is not just concerned with Jondachi and its surrounding areas but, rather (at least as a projection), it includes the whole Kichwa Napo population.

### **The Radio: The Influence of *La Voz del Napo***

As the sun rose and the humidity began to blanket the chilly dawn, just as it did every day in Jondachi, Teresa shut off her old black Emerson. While having breakfast, I asked my host family in the kitchen for more information about this radio station. Gonzalo told me that it was called *La Voz del Napo* (The Voice of Napo), and that it was an indigenous radio station because most of the people who listened to it were Kichwa. Mostly people listened to it twice a day: early in the morning and during the evening. It is important to mention that Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants traditionally go to bed around 6:30 pm and wake up very early - around 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning. Considering the way Gonzalo identified the radio station, I asked if the radio station belonged to some indigenous organization, but he told me that it was actually part of the Josephine mission in the nearby city of Tena. Mariana told me that a lot of Quijos people usually listen to this radio station because it is different than the others in the province, principally because it is the only one transmitted mostly in Kichwa. "It is the only radio that plays traditional Kichwa music and that helps Kichwa people to identify with our culture," said Gonzalo. They also identified Gloria Grefa as the woman

who hosts the program in the mornings and at night. Gonzalo added that she is really good at her job and that people like to listen to her. “She is Kichwa, she is always happy, and people like her mostly because she only speaks in Kichwa,” he said. Hooked by this information, I decided to go to Tena that same afternoon to learn more about the radio station to which Teresa and many other Kichwa inhabitants were listening.

Before I left the house, Teresa took my hand and asked me for a favor. Despite the fact that she didn’t speak Spanish, she understood it quite well, and had heard my plans to visit the radio station. Clasp my hands, she told me (translated by Mariana), “Say hi to Gloria from me, and ask her to say hello to me here in Jondachi through the radio tonight. I will be listening.” I said, “Yes, of course, I will,” and she immediately hugged me and gave me a kiss on the cheek. “*Ashka pagrachu papito*” she said, meaning “thank you very much, my son.” Because of her request, I assumed Teresa knew Gloria but I later found out that she did not. Later on, I understood that what she was looking for was to be mentioned on the program so that people she knew, whom she hadn’t seen for a while and who might be listening, would learn that she was still living. But by letting people know that she was still alive, she did not just want to demonstrate her presence in terms of materiality. Through this simple radio message, she communicated that her knowledge of tradition and cultural memories was still viable; reminding people of her presence also strengthened the links that connected her kin and maintained her *ayllu* (extended family).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ayllu* is an indigenous concept used to describe a large group of kin who usually, but not always, inhabit the same area.



Among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, the radio station *La Voz del Napo* is still used as a medium for communicating local information between people and Kichwa-Quijos communities. For example, during one of my visits to the station, an elderly woman came to send a message. She wanted to let her family in the community of Talaj know that she was already out of the hospital and that she was about to go home in a taxi cab. However, she did not have any money to pay for the ride. Her message through the radio would allow her family time to collect the money they would need to pay the cab. Other times, while I was cooking in our kitchen in Jondachi and listening to the radio, I would hear Gloria say, “the tilapia fish was already sent on the Quijos bus” or “the road to such town has been blocked by the flood of the river, so people should find another way to go,” and so on. This type of message-relay system did not occur on the other radio stations that usually played non-Kichwa foreign music or commercials, or that people on buses, in bars, and in restaurants tuned in to. Gonzalo told me that “kids” used these other radio stations to send their “love” messages: “They’re just used for flirting.” He also argued that these other radio stations were completely out of context in the types of programs and music they played, since most of the population in the province spoke Kichwa.

Gonzalo and Mariana’s opinions about the influences of the radio stations in the province revealed an interesting approach to understanding the Kichwa-Quijos musical context in Napo. Teresa’s excitement also displayed the importance that a radio station, in particular *La Voz del Napo*, has for the Kichwa-Quijos community. First, it provides a social service as a medium for communicating messages between far-away communities or people. Second, it

provides cultural continuity because of the type of music that it plays. And third, it reinforces identity and kinship through a common language, since the interactions between Gloria and her listeners are all in Kichwa language.

After wandering around the mission, I finally arrived at the office of the radio station. Here, the green light in the master room announced my presence. Gloria, who, at that moment, was going live and giving information to the listening communities, signalled for me to come in and wait for her. A number of pictures of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and some Josephine missionaries decorated the walls of the waiting room. In the next room, the shelves were filled with a considerable collection of various LPs and cassettes that had survived to the digital era. I was impressed, for many of these were recordings of local Kichwa musicians from Napo and Pastaza. Most of Ecuadorian society is unaware that there is such a diversity of Amazonian Kichwa music. The “traditional” music that is widely played throughout the country is indigenous music from the Andes.

After browsing through the music on the shelves, I finally got to meet Gloria, the young and friendly woman who, every early morning and late afternoon, reached out to many Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants through her music and announcements. I introduced myself, explained the purpose of my visit to the radio station, and talked about my thesis research. I told her that I was becoming frustrated by the lack of information for my thesis, and that it had been impossible to learn much about the traditional music or to be part of a traditional Kichwa-Quijos wedding ceremony in Jondachi. She told me that, nowadays, such traditions were quite unusual. “Kichwa people are starting to forget about many of the traditions and ritual practices,” she explained. “Although, there are

some areas, such as Bajo Talaj, where a few people still practice some of these traditions and where you might be able to find something, especially music.”

I asked Gloria to help me find people or places where I could begin my fieldwork. She suggested publicizing my work through the radio; “people will be interested since there are some cultural activists that are nowadays working to recreate our ancestral rituals,” she told me, “and I am sure that they would like someone who wants to record what they do.” So, that is what Gloria did and that is how, a few days later, I got to be part of the *Pactachina* ritual (fulfillment of agreements) in the community of Tiwinza (see figure 2). After Gloria answered the phone calls made to the radio and continued announcing messages to the community, she showed me the radio station’s music collection. She talked about the two most popular, oldest and most representative Kichwa musical groups, “Los Chawamangos”<sup>7</sup> of the Alvarado family from Archidona, and “Los Jilgueritos” (The Humming Birds) of the Grefa family from Talag community.<sup>8</sup> Of these two groups, “Los Chawamangos” have the greatest number of recordings and are better known. She told me that both of these groups practice traditional music sung in Kichwa and also perform with a group of dancers, usually

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<sup>7</sup> The Chawamango is a bird native to these areas. It has a unique way of whistling and a capacity to imitate almost any sound, and is therefore admired by local Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants. “When they tweet,” said Berna Alvarado, “it’s like if they were talking. If you pay attention, you realize that actually they are saying something to you.” When a chawamango bird sings, it is often understood as communicating a specific message.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to mention that in the Napo province, Kichwa-Quijos commonly share the same last names; most of a population, in certain communities, shares the same last name without meaning that they have any blood ties. For example, Gloria Grefa, who lives in the community of Talag, shares a last name with Silverio Grefa, the director of the music group “Los Jilgueritos” but, according to Gloria, they are not blood relatives.

consisting of their wives, daughters, and nieces. She also suggested that, since my interest was in traditional local music, I should interview Carlos Alvarado, the director and founder of the Chawamangos. (Despite my efforts, unfortunately, I could not locate him.) She further suggested that I interview Silverio Grefa, a sixty-year-old man and the director of the well-known group “Los Jilgueritos”, whom I did meet and interview.



**Figure 4: Gloria Grefa, the broadcaster of La Voz del Napo**

According to Gloria, because the radio station belongs to the Josephine missionaries, its primary goal is to continue to support the evangelization process among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants. “Every day this job becomes more

difficult because Kichwa people are distancing themselves from Catholic ideology,” she said. According to Gloria, the station plays its programs (music, messages, and prayers) mostly in Kichwa as a strategy to capture the interest of a good part of the Kichwa-Quijos society, although there are moments during the day when they play Spanish music too. The emphasis on religion is mostly given during the two main programs that Gloria conducts during the day: one early in the morning and the other late at night. In both of these programs, *La Voz del Napo* starts with the Catholic prayer to the Virgin Mary. This part is done in connection with a radio station from Quito, *Radio Santa Maria*. Since Catholicism is still a strong practice among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants as part of their every-day life, the number of people who devotedly listen to it is significant, revealing the influence and presence of the Catholic religion among the Kichwa-Quijos.

Gloria believes that nowadays, despite its Catholic emphasis, the radio station has an important role in the context of reinforcing the cultural values of Kichwa-Quijos identity. She sees the radio station as a social and cultural lens that allows her to perceive the constant transformations of Kichwa-Quijos society better than from other spheres, such as cultural institutions, because of the every-day contact with society rather than just specific moments or events.<sup>9</sup> For example she said:

“From this place, I have been able to see how our society changes constantly, especially among the younger generation, whose members seek, little by little, to incorporate foreign customs and styles, and to look less

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<sup>9</sup> Gloria believes that cultural institutions base much of their understanding of cultural changes through time on specific Kichwa moments: for example, public rituals or festivities.

indigenous. It is as if the majority of the younger generations hate our culture. They feel shame for being Kichwa and therefore they don't even want to speak our language. In this process of cultural change in our society, I have seen how our music has been abandoned in its practice and therefore appreciation, especially by youths. Many of these transformations are happening because the elders have stopped practicing many of our traditions. For example, it is still common for Kichwa families to wake up early for drinking our traditional *guayusa* tea, this is something that still persists. Before, during the *guayusa* time, the elders used to play their instrument called *pingullo*, telling the youth stories and teaching them how to play it. But this musical part is not practiced any more, not that I know of at least. The practice of the *guayusa* drinking still persists, as well as the habit of waking up early for making handicrafts, but the music and stories are vanishing.... Since these and other traditional practices are being abandoned by elders, youths cannot understand what is to be Kichwa, and easily they adopted other [foreign] forms that identify themselves ...”

The interaction between Gloria and her Kichwa-Quijos audience, which occurred every day in the early morning and late evening, opened an interesting window for understanding the cultural and social transformations among local inhabitants in terms of ethnic identity. For example, although Kichwa families have stopped practicing the tradition of playing the *pingullo* and telling stories, a lot of these families haven't interrupted the tradition of waking up early to drink *guayusa* tea. Yet, this statement does not incorporate the fact that although the practice still continues, it is mostly among older people. It does not really

incorporate youth who, nowadays, have no reason to wake up before dawn when they have to go to school. Older people, themselves, are much more preoccupied with manufacturing their handicrafts for the support of their economy than with sharing a tradition. In their practice of waking up early in the morning to drink *guayusa* tea and to make handicrafts, Kichwa-Quijos have adopted the radio station as their source for complementing their spiritual and musical interests, since both are incorporated into Gloria's program. The "spiritual" comes from the Catholic point of view, and the "musical" from the traditional local recordings that Gloria plays.

Like Teresa, most listeners of *La Voz del Napo* are older people who have grown up participating in traditional practices, especially those involving music. Considering that such practices have become less present in Kichwa-Quijos every-day life, inhabitants have adopted the radio station as a source that provides them with a sense of tradition and, therefore, identity. Benedict Anderson (2006) develops the notion of "imagined communities" which he uses to explain how nations are formed. Although I don't believe the listeners of *La Voz del Napo* form a nation, I do believe that this program forms a type of imagined community among its listeners. Anderson (2006) writes, "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). This is true for listeners in Napo. In the absence of morning *guayusa* gatherings, the radio station provides a feeling of connectedness between people, despite the fact that they do not see or interact with each other. By the ability to send and receive messages through the

program, people feel linked to others - including family members who are absent, friends they have not seen for some time, and even people they have not met, but who they know are also listening to the radio. Although they may never see these people, every morning and evening they connect by turning on their radios, linking themselves to this imagined community.

But this imagined community has its limitations for providing continuity of traditions. Despite the fact that most people tune in to the station because of the *guayusa* mornings, they now lack the traditional music that used to accompany those mornings. The radio station does not provide the transmission of what they believe is ancestral knowledge. In past times, people played music in the mornings in order to transmit knowledge between elders and youth, and to connect to the spirits (Descola, 1996; Katz & De Rios, 1971; Macdonald, 1999; Solomon, 2000; M. Uzendoski, 2008; Viveiros de Castro, 1998; Whitten, 1976). Thomas Solomon (2000) argues that “the presentational aspects of much musical performance makes it particularly useful for the public construction of identities...” (p. 257). In this context, despite the fact that "traditional music" is played in the mornings on the radio and appreciated by its listeners, I argue that the possibility for cultural continuity is limited, since the rituality of the performance of Kichwa-Quijos music and social participation is absent.

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In the first chapter, “**Intensifying Social Relationships Through Ritual**”, I discuss the importance that kinship relationships have to Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, nowadays more than ever, for the purpose of continuing cultural



traditions and reaffirming and claiming ethnic identity. The reconstruction of certain ritual practices is considered necessary for achieving such goals, and the ritual of *compadrazgo* (godparent-hood) represents one of the main forms that allows and validates kinship.

In the second chapter, “**The Music of Napo**”, I describe the means by which I came to understand how music and identity are intrinsically related in Napo. Traditionally, music had a very important role in the daily lives of the inhabitants of Napo. I came to realize that, although the types and mediums of the music have changed, music is still pivotal in daily life. I also explore the social and ritual context of the different types of musical genres which exist in Napo: “Ancestral,” “Traditional,” and “Tropical or Runa Paju.” I analyze the cultural role of the “Runa Paju” musical genre, which I use as a lens for understanding identity. Members of some communities believe that Runa Paju is a modern invention, while members of other communities, such as Jondachi, believe that Runa Paju represents cultural tradition.

In my third chapter, “**Rituals, Music, and Tradition**”, I discuss the cultural, social and ritual differences in the development of two traditional wedding rituals, *Pactachina* and *Tapuna-Boda*, in two different Kichwa-Quijos communities. The first took place in the community of Tiwinza, located forty-five minutes northeast of the city of Tena, and the second took place in the community of Jondachi (my hometown during my field work), located one hour north of Tena.

This thesis then examines two communities at a particularly important time in the lives of the people of Jondachi and Tiwinza in terms of their participation in

the Ecuadoran constitutional state. It investigates self-identity and the conflicts surrounding it, the reinstatement of ritual practices, and the importance of music, both traditional and not so traditional, within those practices.

## Chapter 1

### Intensifying Social Relationships Through Ritual

*“Are you Blackfoot?” a group of people from the Canadian First Nation-Blackfoot asked me. I just looked and stayed quiet. I felt like I was naked, no words came out of my mouth for a short moment, but it was enough time for me to realize that I did not have an answer to respond to such a question. Identity? No, I am Ecuadorian, I said hiding my insecurity behind a smile. “But you look like us...” they said happily. “Maybe I am one of yours, maybe it is just that I didn’t know...” “Now you are...” they told me while they shook my hand and hugged me...*

*(from my memories during my time in Lethbridge, Canada while I was attending the University of Lethbridge, 2011)*

It was the day before our last day in Jondachi, and from the early morning, the house looked a little different from normal. There were more people around than usual—there were Mariana and her daughters Nury and Genesis; and Alex and his two little sisters; and even Gonzalo had not gone anywhere this day. Everyone was running from here to there and everybody was in charge of something related to the preparation of our good-bye meal. The smell of the tilapia fish for the *maitos*,<sup>10</sup> the meat, and the steam from the big plantain pot created a festive atmosphere. Soon, my wife, Allison, my son, Lucas, and I came out of our room. Teresa served us a bowl of *guayusa* tea and even though she had served it to us almost every day, this time I felt it was different. While we joined the preparation team, jokes and memories about our time with them made us laugh. Suddenly Teresa happily looked at us and whispered something to

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<sup>10</sup> Maito is a traditional meal among Amazonian Kichwa people. Its preparation consists of yucca, onions, meat, fish or chicken wrapped in plantain leaves and steamed over a slow fire.

Gonzalo. At first Gonzalo hesitated in how to translate from Kichwa to Spanish what Teresa had told him, but finally, smiling, he said, “my mom wants to know if you want to baptize Lucas, so that we can become *compadres* (godparents).”

Immediately a short silence transformed the atmosphere. Despite the six months that we had spent in the house of Teresa, Berna and Gonzalo, having enjoyed and shared their kindness, food, friendship, dreams, and family, we were still seen as three outsiders to them. But now, through wanting to baptize our son in order to become *compadres*, Teresa was asking us to change our relationship with them from one of acquaintances to one of family. It was one way of making sure that we wouldn't be the anthropologists that came and left, but that we would maintain and strengthen our relationship with their family through time (specifically, throughout all of our lifetimes). After my wife and I agreed, Gonzalo ran to get a bottle of holy water that he kept in his room, and Teresa, Berna, and Mariana held Lucas. Right there, in the middle of the kitchen, Gonzalo poured the holy water over Lucas' head, declaring him baptized. Then we began hugging each other – “*compadre! comadre!*” Although it would be our last days with them for a while, through a simple but profound ritual, we had become their kin.

For Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, being among kin represents the main root for "living a good life" (Praet, 2009; M. Uzendoski, 2004b). With the introduction of other modern and foreign lifestyles into their social and cultural ways, the concept of "being among kin" has been intensely questioned between generations. The need to intensify social relationships among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants is a phenomenon that is occurring throughout Napo province based on issues of cultural continuity and ethnic identity (Macdonald, 1999; Blanca

Muratorio, 1998). While inhabitants from lower Napo areas attempt to reinforce a Kichwa identity, upper Napo inhabitants (Jondachi zone) are working at strengthening their long lost Quijos ethnic identity. Rituals like *compadrazgo*, *Tapuna*, *Pactachina*, and traditional practices like *chicha* preparation and drinking, forest hunting, garden production, tobacco smoking, fishing, weaving, oral traditions,<sup>11</sup> and music had become less practiced in every-day life for a large part of the population. Nowadays these rituals are carefully being re-thought and performed as a way to transform and integrate Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants in terms of their ancestral “Kichwa” and new “Quijos” ways of approaching identity.

In this chapter I explore how for the Kichwa-Quijos, the fragmentation among kin and intergenerational gaps are strongly influenced by the loss of traditions from every-day life and rituals performed in certain ceremonies. Although there are other aspects that have also influenced this phenomenon, such as the introduction of behaviors from outside and urban expansion, I will focus on the subject of recreating and inventing rituals. I discuss the elements that are socially and culturally transforming the lives of Kichwa-Quijos from Napo, how elders express the desire to recreate traditions because of this significant intergenerational distancing, and how community *dirigentes* are recreating and inventing rituals with the goal of integrating all generations into the traditions and the meaning of being among kin. I argue that all of these acts are efforts to recreate and reinforce kin bonds that people feel are necessary to maintain and /or claim their particular Kichwa or Quijos ethnic identities.

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<sup>11</sup> All of these traditions are certainly shared by Napo indigenous population.

## Making Kin

Research in the context of kin production among Amazonian societies has revealed that consanguinity does not determine kinship ties; rather, current literature shows that Amazonian societies have created a complex dynamic for recognizing one's relative or member of an extended family (Carsten, 1995, 2000; Lepri, 2005; McCallum, 1990; Praet, 2009; Van Vleet, 2008; Vilaça, 2002). From simple and conventional acts, such as the transfer of land and other material exchanges (Barnes, 1962; Feinberg, 1981), as well as other much more complex behaviors expressed by rituals and everyday performances (Lepri, 2005; Vilaça, 2002, 2005) have been identified in diverse societies as ways of constructing and strengthening kinship. The complexity of the construction of "kinship" and its purposes within different societies does not entail a pre-structured way of understanding and portraying kin.

Among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, it is difficult to determine who is or is not kin because they always find a way to assume relatedness. Social and geographical boundaries do not constitute limitations for them in determining kin. I remember hearing Gonzalo often say "*primo, primo*" ("cousin, cousin") to random people in the town or on the bus. When I asked him how these people were related to him, he would say that they are not his cousins, at least not directly, but that he calls them cousin because they are cousins of his parents, or *compadres* of a brother or sister in law, and/or because they are funny and they like *el chupe* (to drink alcohol).<sup>12</sup> On another occasion, while visiting the

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<sup>12</sup> The latter is represented by the act of drinking beer or rum at any time. Getting "drunk" is seen as an act of commitment and respect, not just for the act of

community of Bajo Talag in the southern area of the province to interview Silverio Grefa, an old musician, after I told him that I had interviewed another person called Domingo Grefa from the community of Calvario, he told me with certainty that this person was related to him: “he is my cousin, we are relatives,” Silverio said. The explanation given by Silverio to demonstrate his relatedness with Domingo was not one of consanguinity or parenthood—both had the same last name— but a relationship based on musical and shamanic skills.

For many Amazonian societies, the production of kin is not merely related to the domestic or intra-tribal realm, but it also occurs from a constant dialogue with non-human beings (Descola, 1996; Vilaça, 2002). I approach the idea of “dialogue” not only from its verbal form but also from ritual-performance forms such as music, food preparation (especially *chicha*), tobacco smoking in the forest or healing sessions, gardening or hunting (Brown, 1984; M. Uzendoski, 2008). Istvan Praet (2009) suggests that “South American Indians envisage the ‘social’ and the ‘cosmological’ as one continuous field” (p. 737). In this sense, the construction of “kinship” can occur in a series of ritual moments, not necessarily performed publicly, or visible, but symbolically represented in acts of every day life. An example is the act of shamanistic practices, rather than blood, shared between Silverio and Domingo. Considering the importance that “kinship” holds for the Kichwa-Quijos, rituals practiced in everyday life are needed in the effort to make kin.

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drinking itself but for the time and interaction that people (the invited) could provide. It is an act of performing relatedness. Drinking is one of the most representative processes for transforming the status of people and therefore the relationship. I will say more about this subject later in the chapter.

The practice and performance of traditions and rituals are believed to shape youth, and sometimes foreigners, physically and spiritually into the form of real persons (Praet, 2009) able to transit into the social and cultural life of the native inhabitants. M. Uzendoski (2004b) writes that for the Kichwa-Quijos, “being among kin...is the essence of living a ‘good life’ and the essential criteria for happiness” (p. 889). In this same context, Theodor Macdonald (1999) states that “the structure of kinship serves as an idiom for ordering positions and defining a wide network of relations” (p. 21). Both authors base their statements on the practice of *compadrazgo* (godparent-hood) and marriage.

However, at the present time, inhabitants emphasize kinship less. This consequently limits the agency of the kinship "network" in social, cultural, and political contexts. The boundaries of such limitation are expressed by the disagreements of elders when pointing out “new” youth behaviors. In this context, the elders consider that culture and tradition are lacking continuity, and that this lack disrupts traditional ways of creating identity and kin.

### **Traditional Ways of Creating Identity and Their Disruptions**

Formerly, the dynamics that integrated a nuclear family into the cultural and social forms of the community were developed entirely within the household (Descola, 1996; Macdonald, 1999). They included everyday rituals (music and story telling), food and drink preparation (*guayusa* tea, and *chicha*), work for the production of food, and material objects (manioc (yucca) plantation, *chonta* (palm) harvesting, and handicrafts). All these activities were destined to maintain



the family, socially and culturally, as a whole. This way of life was shared with other families in the community, which contributed to the strengthening of kinship.

There are a number of traditions that strengthen kinship bonds that are being practiced less and less. For the Kichwa-Quijos, kinship represents living a good life among kin. To attain this good life it is important to continue with the practice of the circulation of substances, *Samay*. Linguistically, *Samay* is a Kichwa word that means or could be understood as “vital energy.” Research done among the Kichwa people in the Ecuadorian Amazon describes *Samay* as the vital energy, breath of life or soul substance deposited in persons, animals, plants, places, or other meaningful things (Blanca. Muratorio, 1991; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2008; Whitten, 1976). In its cosmological context, *Samay* represents the energy for transforming life, time, and place. Likewise, for the Kichwa-Quijos, *Samay* is a person, animal, or thing’s vital energy or soul. It is believed that *Samay* can be transferred into another person or thing through breath. For example in a shamanic practice *Samay* can be transferred to either cure or cause some curse. *Samay* can also be transferred by means of the act of transforming substances that people introduce into their bodies. For example, the practice of *chicha* offering and drinking is the act of sharing *Samay*, as is the transformation (preparation) and offering of the food for celebrations.

Considering the importance of substance circulation or *Samay* transferred in the context of kinship, M. Uzendoski (2006) suggests that *Samay* among the Kichwa-Quijos is a micro-cosmos itself that represents not only kin forms, but also a constant reproduction the inhabitant’s life vision connected to all their times and forms. In this context, the everyday life and identity of Kichwa-Quijos

that is nowadays re-constructed by the recreation of ritual and traditions is also a process of re-learning local-indigenous concepts—like *Samay*—that go beyond Western linguistic understandings.

Here I briefly describe some examples of traditional practices that entail *Samay*, including healing, agriculture, education, and drinking. I discuss the ways in which these practices have been disrupted and what effects that disruption has had on creating or re-enforcing identity.

## Healing

Healing has traditionally been a family affair. *Yachaks* (or shaman, the term by which these healers are internationally known)<sup>13</sup> are the traditional healers and use plants and tobacco that they or the sick person's family harvests from their own gardens. Healing is therefore traditionally linked to the land and cannot exist without rituals that begin with the preparation of the earth and the planting of seeds that eventually become the plants used to heal.

A few days after we arrived in Jondachi, Gonzalo announced that a *yachak* was coming the next day to the house for treating Teresa's very painful leg problem. Gonzalo depicted this person as a very powerful *yachak* from Archidona. "She is very powerful, and it was really hard to arrange a visit from her because she is everywhere, everybody wants her." Commonly, in the context of the indigenous healing environment, men and women play the role of a *yachak*,

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<sup>13</sup> *Yachac* in Kichwa language means "the wise person" or "the keeper of the knowledge." This term is in very common use in Ecuador, although the term shaman is much better known. *Yachac* or shamans drink hallucinogenic beverages to communicate with the spirit world, diagnose illnesses, determine guilt, and see the future.

although, men *yachak* have more presence in the context of leadership (Praet, 2009). Rarely does one see a woman playing this role. The *yachak* arrived at around nine in the morning, and spent the rest of the day participating in all of the traditional family activities, such as peeling *chonta*, smashing it, and drinking *chicha*.

For the healing session, which would take place at night, she had requested several items such as creams, plants, and tobacco. Most of these items were brought from Archidona, a place that dedicates itself to producing traditional remedies. Other things were bought in western pharmacies in Tena, although the tobacco, according to Mariana was the hardest thing to find, since there is a decrease in its production because of the lack of demand for it. The tobacco she bought was not a common one. It has the form of a cylinder of 30cm long by 5cm in diameter, wrapped with a traditional rope. According to Berna, this tobacco was commonly homemade. The tobacco plant used to grow in the garden and people knew how to grow and prepare it, but nowadays this is not common knowledge. "Now people just heal using regular tobacco (i.e., cigarettes) bought in the stores, but this is the traditional one," Mariana said, showing me the strong smelling tobacco.

The healing session took place at the back of the house, in a small room usually used for preparing the *guayusa* and storing the *chonta*. I was not allowed to be inside the room for the healing session, but my wife, Allison, was. Even though the *yachak* requested some specific items for the healing, she also brought her own remedies. She did not just work with Teresa, but also Berna and my wife as well. The session lasted for many hours, and during all this time the

room was very quiet. In the ethnographic literature that talks about *yachak* healing sessions, it is often noted that the *yachak* sings his chants, or whistles, and uses some kind of shaking plant, but I did not hear of anything like that during this session.

Towards evening, different family members who lived around the town began to arrive—they too wanted to have the *yachak* heal different ailments and consult her. At around 8 o'clock, she began her healing sessions, lasting about an hour for each person. While waiting, Mariana and her two daughters, Gonzalo, Alex, Ines and his two sons, and I sat in the kitchen around the fire talking about what was going on. Mariana took the leftover tobacco roll, and she unwrapped and began to scrape it with a knife. She started to roast the scraped tobacco in a pan for about two minutes, and then she ripped a sheet of paper from an old notebook and rolled the tobacco. Everyone began to smoke the tobacco, even the kids, who really enjoyed it. It was the strongest tobacco I had ever tried, and quickly made everyone dizzy. Gonzalo told us that the reason for the tobacco being so strong is so that it can protect from evil sorcery, "sometimes the devil follows you, especially when we go to the forest or by the river, and it is the strong smell that keeps evil away."

The next day, I asked Berna about the session. "She began sucking my neck and head to suck out the *maldad* (sorcery), which she would then spit out into a bowl. She told me that my eyesight was poor and that I have headaches because there were members of the community who were envious of the fact that I once had a large herd of cattle and that I had a large amount of land. Envy was

making me sick, but she told me that she sucked most of it out for the time being,” he said. The next day he felt and looked much better.

Yachaks are not always sought out. People are increasingly going to clinics or hospitals, or, more commonly, simply going to a pharmacy in the town, where they are given medicine without a prescription. My wife, Allison, once accompanied Teresa to Tena to buy medicine for her leg. She told me that they went into the pharmacy, and waited in line until Teresa was able to tell the pharmacist what her ailments were. The pharmacist took one look at her, and without doing any tests or asking further questions, she took her back, gave her a shot, and gave her a few vials with needles to take home to use as shots in the coming days. When she came out, Allison asked Teresa what medicine she had been given. Teresa didn't know, and Allison asked the pharmacist. “Vitamins,” she said. “She's vitamin deficient.”

While people definitely go between using traditional medicine (*yachaks*) and western medicine (pharmacies/doctors) relatively fluidly, one can see how the disruption of traditional healing affects identity. With the *yachak*, healing and illness were all community and family oriented. The illness emerged from social interactions and Berna's socio-economic position; the healing occurred in the home, and the arrival of the *yachak* drew together family. On the other hand, the pharmacist assumed Teresa's ailments were caused by vitamin deficiency, because she was an elder Quijos who was obviously not from the city. Here healing and illness were taken so much out of the hands of Teresa, her family, and the community, that Teresa did not even know what she was being given to “heal” her.

## The production of *Chicha*, the production of knowledge

Current literature on Amazonian societies argues that the consumption of *chicha* is understood by locals as a social and spiritual act for creating relationships and shaping people (Belzner, 1981; Brown, 1984; Descola, 1996; Fuks, 1988; Gow, 1989; Heckler, 2004; Macdonald, 1999; Seitz, 1981; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005; Whitten, 1976). In the context of kinship, for Kichwa-Quijos the act of consuming *chicha* as the production of kin is also seen as the production of people since, from the symbolic point of view, *chicha* embodies the *Samay* (soul and energy) of the producer, which is transferred into the body of the consumers. Studies that assert that the consumption of *chicha* is a way to transform society and the individual commonly focus their approach from the production of *chicha* made from yucca (manioc beer), also known as *asa* among Kichwa-Quijos, as part of their daily life (Smith, 1984; M. Uzendoski, 2004b).

Little has been explored in the context of the symbolic social and spiritual relation of *chicha* made of *chonta*, the kind that I mostly saw being prepared and drunk during my fieldwork. Teresa's old wooden *batana* (wooden tray) did not have an age, not at least in her own memory. "It belonged to my grandfather," she said. The *batana* is used for smashing the manioc or the *chonta* that Teresa usually brings every time she goes up hill to the *finca* (forested land at a distance from the town that has parts that are used for agriculture) to gather the *chonta* for preparing the *chicha*. In almost every place I visited, people had one *batana*, and some of them were still being used. In the places where people did not have one or it was not used, it was mostly because they had a blender. I never saw Teresa

or any person in Jondachi prepare chicha from yucca (also known as manioc beer), but I saw them prepare *chicha de chonta* (peach palm). The *chonta* grows abundantly in the *fincas*. Other people who do not have access to a *finca*, grow their *chonta* trees in their garden, and from one or two palm trees, a family of five people can have *chonta* for the *chicha* for at least two months.



**Figure 5: Teresa preparing the chonta for the *chicha*.**

In the literature about Kichwa-Quijos and about Amazonian societies in general, it is common to read that parties are always accompanied by "manioc beer," or *chicha*, a traditional drink that supposedly is present in all celebrations (Blanca. Muratorio, 1991; M. Uzendoski, 2005; Whitten, 1976). In my experience,

most parties that I attended among the Kichwa-Quijos have been accompanied by bottled beer, while manioc beer (*chicha*) is barely present. *Chicha* is consumed mostly during everyday life, and these days it is very unusual to see it served at celebrations.

In the past few decades, however, there has been much less production and harvest of yucca. Many members of the younger generations now have jobs in towns and do not have the time required to produce large quantities of yucca. The result of this is that most families simply do not have enough yucca to use for making *chicha* as the alcoholic beverage shared and consumed at festivities. The replacement is beer. Beer cans are bought from stores in large quantities and the twelve-beer cases are distributed among the different guests at a celebration.

Towards the end of our fieldwork, we prepared for our goodbye party, and I asked Gonzalo whom we should invite. He told me “just the family,” who from my understanding was no more than twenty people, but little by little the guest list grew bigger and bigger. Then when I asked him about the drinks, he told me that for that number of people we were inviting, 20 cases of beer (each with 12 bottles) might be good, but that just in case, I should ask Carlos to save at least five more cases for us. We ended up drinking through all of Carlos’s stock and having to look for more in different houses in the town. Throughout the night of the goodbye party, all the people were getting drunker and drunker mostly with beer, although at the end people started serving *cachigua* (sugar cane alcohol).

From my experience in participating in different celebrations and rituals among Kichwa-Quijos, such as Miguel’s graduation party that featured a traditional *compradre* (godparents) ritual, *Pactachina* (fulfillment of agreements),



*Tapuna-Boda* (request and wedding), and my own goodbye party, I realized that beer was the usual drink, destined for use in intoxication and in symbolizing acts of social exchange. Beer as the modern celebration drink is piled in the middle of the party room, so that, by displaying the usual large number of beer cases, local people express the abundance and success of the celebration, and a long continuation of a good time among kin. In the case of Miguel's party, the quantitative abundance of beer cases piled in the middle of the room revealed the strength of the bonds between the *padrinos* (godparents), in this case Berta and Pedro, with their kin. Normally beer is not purchased just by one person; rather beer is provided by close relatives and friends as an objectified gift that commemorates gratitude for the invitation. Also the act of sharing beer subjectifies an exchange of values of respect, reciprocity, and happiness.

At Miguel's party, once people were starting to get intoxicated by the effect of drinking the beer, sharing and serving beer to each other became more common and it was not difficult to get drunk fast. Each person in the room had been provided with at least five bottles of beer, but close relatives were given two or three entire cases. Different groups of people were distributed around the whole room; I was with my wife, Allison, my son, Teresa, Berna, Teresa's brother and his wife and we made up a whole family group drinking and serving beer to each other. Later Ignacio, Teresa's ex-son-in-law, came to our group offering beer from his bottle, and as is the tradition, each one of us had to accept it and in return offered him a drink from our bottles too. If the bottle of the person who first offered the drink empties first, the group that has been served must provide another bottle from their own. The dynamic of giving and sharing beer, rather

than just being an act of getting drunk, transforms the atmosphere of the party into a common reciprocal interchange of substances and relatedness in which the beer has a fundamental role.

As we can see, people continue to use beer at parties in a way that strengthens relationships and kin bonds. However, while this dynamic is similar to the role that *chicha* used to play when it was consumed at parties, it is limited to the physical space and time of the party, whereas *chicha*'s role in creating social relationships began from the moment it was planted, and extended through its care in the garden, its harvest, and, finally, its consumption at the party. Now that beer has replaced *chicha*, much of the process and depth of the social relationships that existed when *chicha* was used, have disappeared. Now for example at big parties, people go to a bank to get out a loan to buy beer, so the person becomes anonymous and indebted to a foreign state system.

As opposed to going to a bank for getting a loan, in past times, local inhabitants involved in the celebration (not just relatives but other community members) dedicated themselves to the production of yucca which involved the preparation of the land, the planting, the care of the production, the harvesting, the preparation of the yucca into the actual *chicha* and the serving of it. Because of the lack of time that all this process demanded and also because of the lack of sufficient land, Kichwa-Quijos replaced this traditional process of production by buying beer (Butler, 2006; M. Uzendoski, 2005).

## **Marriage**

Traditionally, when a couple wanted to get married, they went through a series of rituals, which I describe in detail in chapter three. The groom's family traditionally organizes the rituals, guided by the desires and requests of the bride's family. The ceremony is directed and run by the *versidor*, who drums and chants directions and advice to the two families who are being united, as well as to the groom and bride. Through his verses, he unites them in marriage.

Within the past twenty years, these wedding rituals have waned and most people either simply begin living together without getting married, a practice that is heavily criticized by the older generation, or get married in the Catholic Church. When this happens, it is the priest and the Catholic institution that controls the ritual and marriage. The emphasis is on uniting the individuals, not on uniting the families. The shift in the wedding ritual traditions therefore heavily affects the social/kin relationships and *ayllus* (extended family).

## **Education**

Traditionally, children accompanied their parents and families in most of the daily activities. During the 1970s, a school was built on the main road in Jondachi by the Josephine Mission. This began a major shift, where families built small structures on the main road where the children would live during the week, in order to be able to attend the school that was on the road. Whereas before they spent all their time with their families, now, they were separated from them for most of the week, and spent many hours a day in a school run by non-indigenous missionaries. Many children were sent to mission boarding schools,

where they did not see their families for months and were taught to forget their indigenous traditions.

Berta distinctly recalls the nuns making her eat foreign “mestizo” food, such as garlic, and telling her traditions such as drinking *chicha* were uncivilized. This shift in education was widespread and had a deep effect on the continuation of traditions being passed on to the younger generations. Berna (Berta’s father-in-law) recalls that when he was a child, missionaries would enter houses where they saw more than one child and pressure the families to “gift” them a child, arguing that it would be too hard to raise more than one in the “harsh” conditions they lived in. Families were often broken up in this way; Berna’s response was always to run away and hide in his parents’ *finca*, which was deep in the forest.

## **Horticulture**

Many families continue to practice traditional horticulture methods, which I was able to observe when I visited families’ *fincas*. Throughout the day, people would engage in different activities for brief periods of time. For example, a morning would be spent removing weeds from a field. The work would be broken up by drinking *chicha*, collecting *chonta*, hunting the *chontacuro* grub, or cooking *maitos*. Time would be spent fishing, collecting *guayusa* leaves, and sucking on cacao and spitting out the seeds to sell later. Lots of work is done, but it is diverse and slow-paced.

However, nowadays, in addition to traditional plants, many cash crops are planted, such as *naranjilla* (citrus fruit also known as *lulo*) and corn, in order to bring in money (as opposed to its use as food). The use of large tracts of land for

the production of *naranjilla* and corn require long periods of time for its care. Kichwa-Quijos, usually men between the ages of 20 and 50 years old, abandon their household for several days in order to work on the land, and they continue to do this for the whole year.

In August, a few weeks before the school year was to begin, I returned to the house to find Anita and Lidia, Berna and Teresa's two-year-old twin grandchildren sitting on the floor eating dinner. I was told that they would be staying with them, us, for a few nights. Their parents and older siblings had gone to one of their *fincas*<sup>14</sup> in Misahually to spend a week intensely harvesting corn to sell. The finca was apparently located in a region that was inhospitable—an overabundance of mosquitos and full days of long, hard work. It would be better for the twins to stay in Jondachi with their grandparents, rather than accompany the rest of the family, who would not have the time to care for them.

While families often go to *fincas* for extended periods of time to live and harvest, the type of trip Ana and Lidia's family was taking was for purely economic reasons. There would be no hunting or fishing or *chonta* picking or *guayusa* picking. This trip was labor intensive, so much so that they would not be able to care for their youngest children. For a week, the two year olds had to be separated from their family as a result of economic pressure and the need for their family to harvest and sell the corn that they had planted on land no one wanted to live on.

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<sup>14</sup> A few days later while I returned to Jondachi from Tena, I met Gabriel (Anita and Lidia's father) on the bus returning home from the finca in Misahually. He told me that the finca did not belong to him but that they were just renting it for producing and making some money. His return to Jondachi was not for visiting his daughters but for bringing back some papers that he needed.

During the *naranjilla* harvest season in Jondachi, I often saw young children temporarily living with their grandparents, while their parents went to distant *fincas* to harvest the *naranjillas* and pack them into boxes that would be trucked to the Andean city of Ambato and sold in the markets. People in Jondachi who had *fincas* with *naranjillas* would religiously go to work on them during harvest season because that was their main source of income during the year. Yet it meant leaving their homes and daily customs, and often their families. This relatively new cash crop has had a significant effect on the daily life of people in Jondachi, on their families, and on where they spent their time.

The introduction of this new form of economic production, among some families and communities, has caused not only a change in economic behavior, but social and cultural changes as well. I could say that what has changed is not just the place of material production, but also the place of symbolic production. In this context, because of the requirements for agricultural production on large properties, many Kichwa-Quijos have lost their traditional ways of transmitting tradition to younger generations, and also have lost the ability to acquire knowledge from the elders. In the words of elder Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants “young generations lost the path for communicating with our ancestors because they lack *Samay* (vital energy) and *paju* (the ability of doing or making) that are vital principals of being a Kichwa (From a conversation with Silverio Grefa).

Theodore Macdonald (1999), suggests that among the Kichwa-Quijos, traditions no longer “flowed from generation to generation by symbolic transfer” (p. 133). The shifting to new economic forms of production severely reduced the role of the household as the center for every-day practical and symbolic activities.

Children are now away at school instead of in their homes, healing is sought out in health centers outside of the community by people trained in western medicine, and parents are away from their children as they harvest cash crops.

The need for going back to the roots of ancestral customs is a phenomenon occurring in many places especially in Latin America. The development of public ritual performances that recall ancestry and ethnic authenticity in the context of ethnic identity, demonstrates this. Not only are public events part of such a process, but also more mundane practices that are consciously developed during the day-to-day life of the Kichwa-Quijos. Ordinary practices that involve the re-collection of seed for the manufacture of jewelry to more socially complex activities like the development of public celebrations and rituals reveal the efforts that community leaders are making to reaffirm and reinforce Kichwa-Quijos identity.

The generation involved in this process is one that goes from the ages of between twenty and fifty years. Some of them are well known yachaks like Marcos from Mondayaku, Sebastian from Km.21, and Domingo from Calvario; others are highly educated political and cultural activists like Gonzalo, Berta, Anibal, Ramon, Pablo (all of them are part of the Quijos nationality). Velizario, Manuel, Gloria and others are community members who have knowledge of some traditions that they wanted to share, as is also the case with Pedro Alvarado. I remember Pedro (Gonzalo's younger brother) telling me about his work in the community and how it was growing and becoming more accepted, especially by the women. "They are not just coming themselves to the classes because now they are also bringing their kids who are learning from their parents

how to make the “artesanias” (handcrafts) and some of them are also practicing in their house and taking their “artesanias” to stores in Tena, and that is really good,” he said.

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The need that some Kichwa-Quijos community members feel for revitalizing social relationships is not because they want to reinforce social exchanges between communities. Rather, they feel it is necessary to reinforce social, cultural, and cosmological traditions and knowledge between generations.

The need for revitalizing social relationships focuses its attention on the necessity of reinforcing social (as a network of exchanges), cultural (in the context of creating or reaffirming ethnic identity), and cosmological (expressed in the defense of the territory-forest terrestrial and spiritual realms) traditions to bound up the generations. Thomas Solomon (2000) suggests that public ritual performances play an important role in bringing people and generations together. They include many elements with powerful meanings that embody community identity. Meanwhile, the re-creation of rituals that attempt to reattach kin throughout the province is occurring continually. There are some who have begun to critique such activities for being “inauthentic” or “badly performed.” In other moments these activities are seen as merely political arrangements between local *dirigentes* with some political party or political interest at the state level.



## **Reinforcing Kinship through *Compadrazgo* Ritual**

Current literature about the Amazonian Kichwa People states that two of the most common ways of introducing "others" into the social, cultural, cosmological, and natural kin dynamics rest on the ritual ceremonies of *compadrazgo* (godparent-hood) and marriage, both meaningful and powerful rituals of transformation (Butler, 2006; Lepri, 2005; Macdonald, 1999; Robertson, 1979; Turner, 1967; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005; Whitten, 1976). The qualitative transformation that Kichwa-Quijos society experienced through these two rituals was, in past times, the basis for the strongest of friendships, considered in the context of conviviality; and general harmony, understood as the respect and continuation of traditions. Such social transformation was represented in daily collective life based on principles of respect, labor on the land, visits, giving, and sharing, all of them values that provided senses of identity (Franco, 2005; Macdonald, 1999; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005).

The institution of *compadrazgo* is commonly understood as a component of the religious act of baptism, most frequently seen in Catholicism, in which the parents of the infant entrust the spiritual future of their son or daughter to a person or couple, who, from that moment, become the godparents of the child and, simultaneously, the *compadre*, or co-parent along with of the biological parents. Their obligation is to ensure the well being of the godson or daughter, but this responsibility is not always taken on fully. Usually, the godparents need to have been baptized by Catholic clergy and be in good standing with the church. In this sense, Geoge M. Foster (1953) had identified *compadrazgo* as a network of interpersonal kin relations, based on spiritual kinship recognized by

the Catholic church.

However, in the Kichwa-Quijos reality in Napo, this is not always so. I know a few people who were asked to be *padrinos* (godparents) for a baptism who were not Catholic. My experience of being asked to baptize my son was also indicative of how the reality in Napo differs from “standard” rituals of *compadrazgo*. Teresa wanted us to baptize our son, not primarily for any religious reason, because she knew that my family were not practicing Catholics, but for the social reason of creating kinship ties. It is significant that she asked to have our son baptized in order for her and her husband to become the godparents, and, just as important, our *compadres*.

The day our son Lucas was baptized by Gonzalo, our kin status changed. During the whole day and from then on, the only way that we, my wife Allison and I, Teresa and Berna began calling each other was through the word *compadre* and *comadre*. Teresa always told people she was talking to that we were *compadres*. Our “goodbye” party was now also a celebration of a *compadrazgo* ritual. Food was devotedly prepared; drinks, cigarettes, and candies were constantly offered, and all our new extended family members thought of us and treated us in a new way.

Thus, while the institution of *compadrazgo* may have emerged from the Catholic Church, in practice, it has been appropriated by the different cultures that use it. Michael M. Uzendoski (2004b) considers that after centuries of practice, Kichwa-Quijos “have created a system of *compadrazgo* that is socially and conceptually indigenous” (p. 893). In contrast to the practice of *compadrazgo* by highland indigenous societies where it is common to seek rich and powerful

outsiders to be the *compadres*, the Amazonian Kichwa people mostly make some or all of their siblings *compadres*, and this attitude, according to M. Uzendoski (2004b) creates a “higher level of love... and respect” (p. 893).

During the first three months of fieldwork, it was very common to hear people in town say that on a certain weekend there was going to be a party, and the most common reason was because someone was graduating. At the end of the parties it became a habit to listen to drunken people going into Carlos’ store asking for beer, and cheap box wine; I would have to tolerate their noise until the morning. Until that point, I only understood parties in Jondachi to be nothing more than big celebrations to get drunk for a couple of days. As such, a graduation party was not considered a traditional celebration in which rituals were supposedly being performed among Quijos. Other events such as baptisms were celebrated in the same way. Although I was verbally invited to go to one of these parties, I did not go because I wanted to avoid the hard drinking part of it.

One day a young man left an invitation at our house for his graduation. Another graduation party I thought. I hesitated to accept the invitation first because I didn’t know who this person was but mostly because I was worried about the heavy drinking that would take place. This young man was Miguel, the younger brother of Berta Alvarado. Berta is married to Pedro who is Gonzalo’s younger brother and the daughter-in-law of Teresa and Berna. Berta and Gonzalo are the co-founders of the Mushuk Kawsay Association that is dedicated to promoting political and cultural aspects related to the Quijos territory and identity. The graduation party was one of the cultural projects that they were working on in recent days.

The party would take place in a week in Jondachi, and little by little Gonzalo was telling me what this party would be like, because he and other people had been seriously thinking about its performance— “this party is going to be different, not like the other parties with just drinks and music from the DJ. This party is going to be done in a traditional way, we are going to do the ritual for *compadres*, prepare food for all the guests, we are going to bring live traditional music, and do the ceremony of drinks, it is already planned,” he said.

The party would be an attempt by community and family members to reinstate traditional forms of celebration and throughout would feature performance of rituals that had disappeared in Jondachi. Community organizers were attempting to make this celebration one in which members of the community would realize the relevance of the conceptualization of “place” as a space where powerful relationships are made (Solomon, 2000; Viatori, 2010). In this context, it was not just performing the ritual act that was important to them, but the symbolic value that would be created during the transformation of every single element (food, drinks, music, dance), and as a consequence, the appreciation of people for strengthening family and community ties converging in one common place, Jondachi.

### **Key Ritual Elements of the *Compadrazgo*/Graduation Party**

A few weeks after my arrival in Jondachi, Gonzalo asked me to help him and the people from the *Mushuk Kawsay* who were working to write an official document for a project related to the Quijos territory. For a few days every morning I went with him to the city of Archidona, to Berta and Pedro’s house,

where the Mushuk Kawsay office was located, to help them. There I met Ramón Alvarado for the first time, a young and very enthusiastic person. Most of my mornings I spent talking with them about the old traditions and how lots of them are less practiced or not practiced at all. Also they told me that they had already collected books, articles from journals, magazines, and tapes related to their traditions, and that they were working<sup>15</sup> to re-integrate them into their culture starting with their own families. They told me that they are aware that not many of the Kichwa-Quijos consider it important that old traditions should be practiced again in their everyday lives since “modern forms” are being seen as the way to go.

The effort to reconstruct traditional culture was strongly attached to the process of the creation of their new ethnic nationality, the Quijos nationality. During those days, such a project seemed to me very distant and in some ways, not very interesting because it involved many political aspects. For them the recreation of old Quijos traditions had two purposes, as far as I could identify. One was cultural and social, related to the generational conflict between older and younger generations in the context of traditional practices. The second was politically determined by the conditions demanded by the Ecuadorian State in the context of nationality formation. “That is why we are taking advantage of every single meeting (political or cultural) to mention how important it is for the well

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<sup>15</sup> Aside from Ramón, Gonzalo, Pedro, and Berta had frequently worked with scholars who carried out their research in Napo. Gonzalo worked as a field assistant in an archeological project with Dr. Andrea Cuellar in Baeza, Napo; Berta and Gonzalo helped Dr. Patrick Wilson during his anthropological research in the same province. Pedro has always been involved with missionaries who had dedicated themselves to the care of children from Kichwa-Quijos communities. He teaches traditional forms of handcraft to these children.

being of our culture to continue with our practices and being proud to say who we are,” Berta says. A few weeks later, they were the people who organized the ritual of *compadrazgo* in Jondachi, a tradition adapted in the graduation of Miguel.

Detailed observation of the party made evident some of its key ritual elements including the *campadrazgo* ceremony. Those elements included the sharing of food, gift giving, the giving and sharing of drinks, the playing of traditional Kichwa music, and the *campadrazgo* ceremony itself. These ritual elements taken together transformed ordinary interactions and practices into meaningful ritual symbols filled with *Samay*.

### **Miguel’s graduation and the ritual of *compadrazgo***

On the day of the party and after many talks with Gonzalo, it became clear that the party would be large and that food and drinks would be important ritual elements. In the morning, from my balcony, I saw almost 30 women, surrounded by smoke, cooking in a wooden kitchen near the school coliseum in Jondachi. When they saw me, Antonia waved her hand and I just thought that she was saying "hello" but fifteen minutes later when a young girl came to the house with a pot of chicken soup, I understood that they were inviting me to go down there for breakfast. As the day went by I saw people running everywhere, men bringing boxes and boxes of beer, rum, and wine into the house, other men cutting wood, and others doing what some might consider the silly job of offering cigarettes to people, while the women cooked and laughed. All the presents that were mostly for the feast were stored in the room next-door to mine in Teresa’s house. Lots of

beer cases and wine boxes were brought from different relatives and friends of Miguel's family, and it seemed like a competition about who could bring more with a smile. Berta who had come to chop onions in the house and use the blender started thanking people for coming and for their presents. As it is the tradition, she began serving *chicha de chonta* to them as an act of gratitude. She explained that it was important for the people who were bringing the drinks (mostly beer and rum) to be seen and thanked because that made them feel like they belonged at the party and that they were among friends and kin. It was the first time that I saw a lot of people really working and dedicated to a party in Jondachi.

During the whole day, big pots of chicken soup, and rice were cooked, lots of chickens were roasted and a few sacks of manioc were piled up. At the beginning I thought that the manioc (yucca) was going to be for the *chicha* but Antonia told me that those few sacks (about four or five) wouldn't be enough, not even for half of the people who were invited. This time, the manioc was just for serving with the rice and chicken. I was told that most food was purchased in the market, but manioc and other things like onions, garlic, heart of palm, and potatoes were donations harvested from the gardens of several relatives. The money invested in the party came from donations of relatives who wanted to contribute to the feast, as well as from the sale of a few cattle that belong to Miguel's parents, and from many hours of work done by Miguel in the previous months. Richard Feinberg (1981) describes activities with a dynamic similar to the Quijos among the Polynesians. He shows that the giving and sharing of goods, assistance, and particularly food and land, is no less significant for the

Polynesian definition of kinship and group structure. Cooperation of effort and “preparation” is understood as the beginning of the transformation of kin ties. In the same context, Marshall (1981) has emphasized the importance of economic co-operation, particularly sharing food, as a determinant of kinship.

The day of Miguel’s graduation party and the *compadrazgo* ritual started very early in the morning. The distribution of the duties was always marked by the principle of gender and duality. While the women were dedicated to the preparation of the food, the men focused on other activities like repairing, chopping wood, and serving beer and cigarettes. Gonzalo, Pedro, Miguel, and other men were in charge of the accommodation of the “Casa Comunal.” Chairs and tables were carried and light bowls were replaced. At the same time the *Disco Movil* (sound equipment) began playing some music to create a party atmosphere. After seven o’clock, people started to arrive at the patio of the “Casa Comunal” carrying presents. My wife, my son, Teresa, Berna and I were almost the first to arrive at the party. After a constant line of people shaking hands finally ended, Gonzalo, who was the master of ceremonies, announced that the party would begin in five minutes. Men continued going around offering cigarettes, while on the other side of the room a group of women improvised a kitchen with all the food that they had been preparing since the early morning.

At the same time a group of three men came in carrying a keyboard, a set of drums, and *guiro* (a percussion musical instrument); it was the music group that Gonzalo had invited to play at the party. When he saw them coming into the room, Gonzalo announced their presence: “tonight traditional Kichwa music from the locality with the famous international ‘Brother *Pillag*’...” While his



announcement had a trace of sarcasm, since everyone knew the musicians were from Osayacu, a community only five minutes away, it was centrally important that they would be playing traditional Kichwa music—entirely a different music from what would be played at a simple party that was not intended as a *compadrazgo* ceremony.

When most of the people had gathered in the room, the public ceremony began. Berta and Gonzalo stepped onto the stage and read from the prepared program, listing chronologically the number of “things” that were about to be revealed during the night. After a short musical interlude, Gonzalo announced that Berta and Pedro Alvarado would be asked by Berta’s parents (who were also Miguel’s parents) to become Miguel’s *padrinos*, and thus their *compadres*. Berta and Pedro were completely taken by surprise at this request, and felt extremely honored. In the context of recreating traditions and ritual forms for reattaching kin and identity, the act of requesting relatives, in this case Berta and Pedro to be *compadres* and *padrinos*, emphasized the importance that community leaders gave to the old practices in order to publically reinforce a social sense of identity and tradition. At the same time, the fact that such a request had been made by Miguel’s parents reveals that tradition and some other cultural forms of understanding kinship still remain within the knowledge of elders.

The request from Miguel’s parents was made entirely in Kichwa. At the beginning Miguel’s parents welcomed and thanked the guests for coming and especially thanked Berta and Pedro for accepting the request. Gonzalo asked that a table be put in the middle of the room and chairs placed around it, then he suggested to Berta and Pedro that they take a seat because Miguel’s parents

were going to begin the ritual of the gift giving ceremony as a signal of respect, thanks, and commitment.

The food that the women had been preparing since early morning now was brought in as a central part of the ceremony. A few hours before, when the women were cooking, I had seen mountains of food—chicken, meat, rice, big pots of chicken soup, and fried manioc. Because it was part of a ritual ceremony, none of that food was to be eaten until the right moment. So, the moment now seemed to have come as Berta and Pedro were gifted with big plates of food, and surrounded by the several crates of beer, rum and wine, bags of candy, packages of cigarettes, and so on, with the applause of the guests. The only act that the new *compadres* had to do was just to receive all the presents.

After all the goods were offered, Miguel and his parents knelt down for a few minutes taking, individually, Berta and Pedro's hands, thanking them for accepting their new role of *compadres*, and asking them to take care and guide Miguel from then on. When Miguel and his parents finished the "plead act," then both Berta and Pedro knelt down to receive the blessing of Miguel's parents, an action adopted from the Catholic Church but that symbolized the pact. Then they stood up and hugged to each other announcing that they were now officially *compadres*. This part of the ceremony is an adaptation of other traditional ceremonies among the Kichwa-Quijos since it is remarkably similar to the one of *Tapuna* and *Pactachina*, in which the parents kneel down holding the hands of the new relatives (in this case *compadres*), thank them, and ask them to take care of the new member.

With their newly acquired status of *compadres*, the way in which they

referred to and addressed each other changed. Up until this point, Berta and Pedro knew that they had been asked to be their parents' *compadres*, but this relationship had not yet been solidified. What was creating this imaginary distance between them and their parents, as well as between them and Miguel, was that the ritual act of gift giving was not yet finished. The completed materialization or creation of *compadrazgo* between Miguel's parents and Berta and Pedro was expressed by ritualizing the act of giving gifts. This can be seen because before the ritual, Berta and Pedro, although they were "announced or asked" to be the *padrinos*, didn't have control of the celebration. This changed only when the parents transformed this condition by gifting them with all they had as a signal of respect, thankfulness, and commitment.

M. Uzendoski (2004b) states that for the Kichwa from Napo the act of "giving is not the same as *reciprocity*" (p. 891) where the person that receives needs to do something in exchange. However through the act of *giving*, people reflect their capacity for sharing elements in the sense of creating deep relationships. These *given* elements are not just empty, or material things. By the *preparation* of food, space, drinks, and all the things that comprised the celebration, people transformed ordinary elements into meaningful ritual symbols filled with *Samay*. Before the gift giving, Berta and Pedro referred to their parents as "parents" or "parents-in-law." However after the ritual, they began referring to them as their *compadres*, signaling the importance of *compadrazgo* for strengthening relationships in that it took precedence even over blood ties between parents and daughter and son-in-law. Up until the gift-giving ritual, the main cause for celebration had been Miguel's graduation; however after the

ritual, this became secondary. The celebration focused on the newly strengthened ties between *compadres*.

Now both Berta and Pedro had control over everything at the party, deciding the portions of the food, the distribution of the drinks, and the party. After the ritual, both stood up and profusely thanked their *compadres* and the guests for coming and being part of this important moment, because it was the first time in a long time that such ritual had taken place in Jondachi, and because it was an important tradition of the Quijos that was in the process of disappearing.

The next part of the ceremony, as announced by Gonzalo, entailed the presentation of gifts. Both *padrinos* (Berta and Pedro) went back to their seats at the table where Miguel joined them. Berta and Pedro began giving him gifts, hugs, and advice. The gift-giving was accomplished in a very formal way. The closest relatives of Miguel began walking to the center of the room, placing their gift on the table, and congratulating Miguel. The most spectacular gifts were wheeled in: a refrigerator and a table-top stove, followed by machetes, perfumes, cloths, and more. Soon everyone began rising from their seats around the room to form a line to the table, where they would present their gifts. Gifts ranged from extremely large and expensive household items, to cases of beer, to rolls of toilet paper and soap for hand washing clothes.

The importance of speaking Kichwa was underscored when Miguel went to the stage to publicly thank the guests for all their generosity. He started speaking in Spanish, but Gonzalo and others kind of jokingly forced him to do it in kichwa, because all the people who had spoken (his parents, *padrinos*, etc) had spoken in Kichwa.

After this, food was served to all; it was Berta who organized the distribution and, the amount of food served on each plate represented the value and kind of relationship that existed between Berta and the person who was being served. Pedro started bringing alcoholic drinks to different groups of people—the massive amounts of alcohol and cigarettes that he and Berta had been gifted by their new *compadres* were not meant to be consumed by just them, but distributed to others as a way of solidifying social ties (Praet, 2009; Rival & Whitehead, 2007; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005). Isabella Lepri (2005) who writes of the Ese Eja of the Bolivian Amazon, argues that “kinship ties are constantly made and relatedness is highly performative...through the quality and reciprocity of acts of nurturance, care taking, cooperation and generosity” (p. 703) in which Amazonian societies persistently shape and reaffirm relatedness. Meanwhile, Uzendoski (2004b) suggests that for the Kichwa-Quijos “‘giving’ is a basic principle of value...and its presence reflects the intimacy and moral structure of the *ayllu*” (p. 891). Despite the large number of people at the party, food, drinks, cigarettes, candies, and attention were given to almost everyone. The amount of food served on plates, as well as the number of beer bottles by the feet of each person represented the kind of relationship or hierarchy of the person to whom they had been given.

The re-creation of the *compadrazgo* ritual at Miguel’s graduation allowed participants, including guests, to consider the importance and meaning that ritualizing moments have among them in the sense of reinforcing social relationships and identity. At the same time it revealed the existence of an intergenerational gap, considering that most people who participated in the

preparation, ritual moments, and the actual party were adults. Because tradition and knowledge are transmitted from elder to youth throughout multiple forms and moments, it was not expected that adults would directly teach or explain to the youth the meaning of the rituals at Miguel's celebration. Rather what was expected was that the youth would indirectly and voluntarily participate in the whole celebration. It was not surprising, however, to see that the youth seemed completely indifferent to what was happening around them concerning the party's preparations, including how the responsibilities were distributed among different members of the community. They also seemed indifferent to the values that were embedded in such traditions, such as giving and cooperating. I believe that this is in part because the younger generations had already adopted other forms of learning that in many ways have taken precedence over traditional forms of learning. The satisfaction of adults at the party contrasted with the dissatisfaction of youth; the transformation of the society as a whole is therefore still under construction.

As mentioned, the development of the ritual of *compadrazgo* at Miguel's graduation was the result of a series of conversations between Gonzalo, Ramón (a leader from the nearby community of Pungarayacu), Berta, Pedro, and other people who realized the existence of a fragmentation in their culture and identity. The fact that the ritual of *compadrazgo* was incorporated into a celebration (i.e., graduation) completely outside of traditional celebrations, such as baptisms and marriages, revealed that despite the lack of ritual production, people still preserved the knowledge and agency to develop rituals; and that people still considered the importance of values such as giving, sharing, reciprocity, and

"respect for knowledge and tradition" in their daily life. Reinventing rituals among the Kichwa-Quijos metaphorically represents a window through which society, especially adults who still preserve the knowledge to interchange and intertwine traditions, are able to strengthen social bonds between kin and friends. In this context, the local community leaders from Jondachi and other communities have begun an important process that does not just attempt to recreate their traditions and ritual, but attempts to construct their new ethnic identity, the Quijos nationality.

## Chapter 2

### The Music of Napo

*"Nada hay en verdad tan triste y monótono como la música de los indígenas de la selva; nada hay en el que pueda compararsele con el indio serrano que en sus quenas y rondadores llora su pasada grandeza y añora tiempos mejores de la raza. El indio Yumbo para sus momentos emocionales tiene un pequeño tambor a cuyo redoble baila o brinca furiosamente...Del caparazón de la tortuga "yahuate" el indio saca roncas notas que él conceptúa armoniosas. Será falta de gusto por la música? Estimamos que no, pues al escuchar la música criolla ecuatoriana el Yumbo se siente alegre y entusiasta, pero es cierto que no conozco indígena del Oriente que se haya dedicado a la música" (Spiller, 1974). (See translation)<sup>16</sup>*

The image of the Amazonia territory as an exotic mystery still remains and influence, even when approaching Amazonia as a place with a future where people live and work. Despite all the efforts of recent years for the achievement of indigenous self-representation, the association with "cannibalism and head hunting" practices as the main referents to the identity of Amazonian peoples is still present as a major part of the imagery of the Ecuadorian population as a whole. In May 2011, when I returned to Ecuador to start my fieldwork, I had a conversation in the city of Cuenca, located in the *sierra* of the Andes, with a high-level functionary of the *Casa de la Cultura de Cuenca*. When I told him that I was

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<sup>16</sup> "There is nothing so sad and monotonous as the music of the indigenous people of the jungle; it can't be compared to the highland Indian who, with his *quenas* and *rondadores* cries for his grand past and yearns for better times for his race. The Yumbo Indian has a small drum for his emotional moments, to which he furiously dances and jumps... When the Indian plays the "yahuate" turtle shell he gets hoarse notes that he thinks are harmonious. Is it a lack of taste for music? We think not, since the Yumbo feels happy and enthusiastic when he listens to Ecuadorian *criollo* music; but what is certain is that I don't know any indigenous person from the Oriente that has dedicated himself to music." (My translation)



going to do research on music among the Amazonian Kichwa people, he responded, "And they actually have music?" At the beginning I hesitated to answer this question, yet there is no doubt that he was asking me seriously. Unfortunately it seems that until recently, the image of Amazonian societies as simple and uncultured still prevails in much of Ecuadorian society as well as in much in the world. Despite how much has been written about the historical, social, geographical, political, mythical, and cultural realities of Amazonia, the understanding of it as a whole is still little known. Perhaps, as I described in the previous chapter, indigenous representation at the national level is mostly perceived through its political rather than cultural aspects, since it is still ambiguously understood.

This chapter has three sections. In the first section, "Music and Ethnic Identity," I describe how I came to understand how music and identity are intrinsically related among the Kichwa-Quijos. Traditionally, music had a very important role in the daily lives of the inhabitants of Napo. I came to realize that, although the types and mediums of the music have changed, music is still pivotal in daily life. I explore the general ethnomusicological research that has been carried out in Amazonia and the Andes, and explain how I hope my research will help to fill a gap in Amazonian ethnomusicological studies.

In the second section "Varieties of Music in the Napo Culture," I explore the different types of musical genres, which exist in Napo, as explained by Pablo Alvarado. There are four main genres, each one connected to a certain period, though all still exist in some form or another today. The first, and earliest, is "ancestral" music, highly connected to ritual. The second, "traditional" music,

incorporates newer instruments, but remains active in rituals. The third, Kichwa-Tropical or “Runa Paju” incorporates electronic instruments with different sounds. Some communities argue that this genre is a continuation of traditional music, while others believe it is a break from tradition. Although a fourth genre, “experimental,” is identified by my informant, I do not treat it here in detail, since I have not seen performances or listened to recordings.

In the third section “Runa Paju, and the perceptions of tradition,” I analyze the Runa Paju musical genre, which I use as a lens for understanding identity. Members of some communities believe that Runa Paju is a modern invention, while members of other communities, such as Jondachi, believe that Runa Paju represents cultural tradition, and, as such, are reintegrating this type of music into their ceremonies in order to deepen their ethnic identity.

People are in the process of self-reflection on identity throughout the province, and music is an element that shapes that identity. Ideas about “traditional” music shape how locals identify themselves as an “authentic” cultural group. Through music, I came to understand the process of reaffirming and constructing ethnic identities in Napo. I therefore use the concept of “traditional music” as a basis for this second chapter to ask the question: what does music give to these people in terms of identity?

### **Music and Ethnic Identity**

Under the shade of a big guava tree, I waited for my bus, watching the strong sun evaporate the water from the pavement of the road that runs through Jondachi, creating an atmosphere of a desert in the middle of the jungle. During

this time of the year (between June and August), when school has already finished, most of Jondachi inhabitants leave the town to go to their properties, called *fincas* (forested land that has parts that are used for agriculture) to work for most of the three months that summer vacation lasts in this Ecuadorian region. People from Jondachi who do not temporarily move to their *fincas* leave town very early in the morning to spend the day at the *finca* and return around five or six in the afternoon. If it were not for the few children that remained in town, I would have felt like I was staying in an empty and desolate town. There were some days that I felt absorbed by the perennial silence, standing on the balcony, waiting for a pickup truck to drive by just to break this muted town's "spell." During this time of the year most buses, which usually come from Quito, do not stop in small towns like Jondachi because of the absence of passengers. The old red and green packed "Jumandy" bus that comes from the Amazonian city of Coca was the only one that stopped in town.

On any Ecuadorian local public transportation music is usually played very loudly. In this part of Napo, Bachata and Regueton (both foreign tropical genres) music were played over and over again on the route during the forty-five minutes it took to go from Jondachi to Tena. On other occasions traveling around the province, once in a while Western pop and rock music from the 70's or 80's was tuned on the radio station, but local Kichwa-Quijos music was never played on any of these trips during the day. Despite the fact that music was already being played on the bus to Tena, teenage passengers would often turn on their cell phone radios without using headphones. This "musical environment," with Bachata, Rock, Ballads, or Regueton often played simultaneously, would

disappoint anyone seeking the “exotic native music” of the Amazon; on the other hand, such musical mixture created a fascinating scenario for those, like me, who were interested in the musical context.

Along the road from Jondachi to Tena there are a number of families who have made shelters under which they sell local products like *chonta*, *guayusa*, bananas, papayas, or artisanal handicrafts like *canastas*,<sup>17</sup> *pirches*,<sup>18</sup> and *shigras*.<sup>19</sup> They distract the attention of the passengers and tourists, reveal the existence of local production, and provide a brief escape from the “chaotic sound” environment inside of the bus. The small square wooden houses reflect Kichwa-Quijos indigenous architecture, while the enormous brick and cement buildings mark the beginning of the modern city of Tena, capital of the Napo province. At the north entrance of the city, an enormous statue of the Indio Jumandi, an indigenous Quijos warrior and icon of Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, welcomes locals and visitors to the capital. I remember someone in the bus asking who this statue was and heard the response of a local passenger – “It is the statue of Indio Jumandi... a warrior descendent of the Incas.” I expected him to tell more about the history of this warrior, but he did not. In the absence of more questions, he silently returned to his seat. Hearing a local inhabitant refer to Jumandi as a descendent of the Incas confused me and sparked my interest in local self-identity. That was the only time I heard such statement, and perhaps it was said

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<sup>17</sup> A netted basket made with fibers from the roots of local trees.

<sup>18</sup> A container made from the bark of gourd. It is very common among the Amazonian communities who use it for drinking *chicha*.

<sup>19</sup> A netted bag made with fibers from local plant. Among the Kichwa-Quijos both men and women make this bag for a variety of uses.

because the Inca image was more known compared to Quijos, or perhaps just because that's what he really meant.

At this point in my research the themes of music and ethnic identity began to intertwine and I realized that they were issues that I needed to approach together. Identity, I began to see, was a phenomenon that was unclear both for me as well as for many local Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants. But such ambiguity about identity is not a recent phenomenon. Identity in this region has been questioned and altered throughout history, most notably during the multiple socio-cultural struggles influenced by colonialism, missionaries and conversion to Christianity, rubber extraction, cinnamon and oil exploitation, state policies of domination and expropriation, and most recently, state discourses of "culture" which place importance on the "authenticity" of indigenous peoples (Blanca Muratorio, 1998; Perreault, 2003; Taylor, 1981; Whitten, 1976, 1981a, 1981b).

According to Gerhard Kubik (1994) the identity of a particular ethnic group is represented by the experience of their everyday life practices and therefore does not need further confirmation. The author writes, "There is no need to discuss 'cultural identity' in an environment where the cultural identity of its inhabitants is obvious." (p. 27). But what happens when local inhabitants begin discussing "identity" and the music that provided roots for their cultural identity is no longer practiced spontaneously but organized solely for social and political events? In certain areas people organize such events in order to reintroduce tradition into their communities; in others, the focus is on increasing outside tourism.

Among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, music had commonly preserved traditional rhythms and incorporated values from the past into lyrics that sought to generate cultural continuity. It was hard for me to really grasp these ideas since the performance of music in rituals of daily life and in other traditional ceremonies in Jondachi was limited. The production of traditional ritual music among Kichwa-Quijos throughout the province is much more common south of the city of Archidona than farther north where Jondachi lies. I began to ask myself, if Kichwa music is used as a form of cultural continuity in every-day contexts, how do Jondachi inhabitants consider themselves part of the same cultural ethnic group if the music is no longer present? Such question was somehow gradually answered by my continuous encounter and appreciation of the other forms of Kichwa-Quijos musical expressions and genres.

Despite the boom in research on culture and ethnic identity, there is a paucity of information about Kichwa-Quijos music and how the Amazonian music of Ecuador is tied to cultural identity. Although scholars have worked on ethnomusicological studies in Latin America since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, research on the music of the Amazon basin didn't emerge until the 1960s (Béhague, 1982). In 1979, Anthony Seeger (1979) wrote that the music of Amazonian societies has been "little known, less analyzed, and hardly understood" (p. 373) because of its socio-cultural complexity. Although he wrote this more than three decades ago, and the music of Amazonian groups is better known these days, there is still very little research done on music in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and the music is not well understood or deeply analyzed. In the same context, Victor Fuks (Fuks, 1988) argued that music, dance, and performing arts were largely excluded from

the anthropological studies of Amazonia, which, instead, focused on issues such as human ecology, social structures, and myths. Fred Katz and Marlene Dobkin de Rios (1971) considered that the minimal attention that anthropologists gave to Amazonian music meant that people did not recognize the crucial role that music played in many Amazonian societies as a particular "space-time" of communication. Since these authors conducted their research, newer scholars have demonstrated an interest in the music of Amazonia (Belzner, 1981; Descola, 1996; Seitz, 1981; M. Uzendoski, 2008; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005); however, the subject has not been deeply explored in Ecuador.

Most of the ethno-musicological research conducted in Ecuador has been carried out in the Andes rather than in Amazonia. Béhague (1982) seriously critiques the lack of research on music in Latin America. In his article "Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and Brazilian Ethnomusicology: A General View" he discloses the critical ethno-musicological situation of these three South American countries, arguing that the production of theory by local scholars has been underdeveloped. Although the author considers that this problem is the result of the lack of capable local researchers, and the lack of local interest from public institutions in supporting such studies, he emphasizes that the main problem originates from the lack of relevant and reliably collected data. Béhague considers that the absence of fieldwork has had a negative influence on current ethno-musicological studies, therefore contributing to limitations in theoretical production. Most of the studies done during this time have been based on the same bibliographic work, producing and reproducing the same ideas.

Research on music and identity suggests that music, in its communicative and art form, is one of the highest and most complex cultural expressions in which peoples' values and worldviews are embedded (Adinkrah, 2008; Béhague, 1994; Belzner, 1981; Downey, 2002; Fuks, 1988; Hill, 1990, 1993; Seeger, 1987; Solomon, 2000; M. Uzendoski, 2008). William Belzner (1981), who writes about the Amazonian Shuar (another Amazonian indigenous group) in Ecuador, suggests that music is one of the most conservative elements of culture, and that even if societies suffer dramatic modifications in their economic, political, or religious forms because of external influences, music helps to maintain many of their traditional practices. Dana Rappoport's (2004) study supports this theory. She describes the dramatic changes in the ritual music of the Toraja from Indonesia that have occurred in the last century, influenced by missionaries and political agendas. In spite of these changes, many aspects of traditional music continue, even in Christianized forms. During the time I was in the field, I was faced with the fact that traditional ritual music was no longer a part of everyday cultural practices, at least not in the sense of a living family tradition as the literature I had read suggested. However, I believe that this ritual music might actually continue to exist, but in a different form and place, which is the Catholic Church. This is a fascinating subject, which I cannot cover in this thesis, but that I hope becomes the subject of future research.

### **Varieties of Music in Napo Culture**

My experience with music in Napo province, among the Kichwa-Quijos comes from the different contexts that I encountered such as ritual live music



performances, parties, healing sessions, celebrations of mass, radio programs, recordings played in the house, in buses, in stores where people met for drinking beer, in sport sessions, and music played during my interviews with local musicians. The variety of genres played during these times revealed to me how wide the musical production among the Kichwa-Quijos is, and at the same time, how little I knew about this music. I was fascinated to see how in each context Kichwa-Quijos enjoyed the music, but not just as a mundane pleasure for fun, rather I saw it as a collective dialog that was expressed throughout their body movements, conducted by the sounds of the melodies and texts. For example, during a shamanic session, the whistling and chants uttered by the healer or shaman are considered to be a way to connect with the spirits (Adinkrah, 2008; Katz & De Rios, 1971).

But in my experience, to get to that point, the music needs to be first enjoyed by the people that are part of the session. It therefore creates the atmosphere that opens up such communication with their spiritual entities. The same thing is true with regard to the music played in the church, since the Kichwa-Quijos' devotion to Christianity is deep. I also experienced this during the times when Teresa listened to the radio *La Voz del Napo* in the mornings. Perhaps the most significant encounters of this experience were when I joined the *Pactachina* and *Tapuna* wedding ceremonies, and also during Miguel's graduation party. On each of these occasions, the Kichwa-Quijos music played was different in its genre, but in each, people enjoyed it. The Kichwa-Quijos continuous enjoyment of their music revealed that music was a way to express their identity, whatever that identity was called.

Kichwa-Quijos appreciation and "timeless" understanding of traditional music revealed to me that the conflict of identity was tied to music production in the context of the creation of genres. Each genre (Traditional and Runa Paju identified by Pablo Alvarado) was appropriated and defined as traditional music for local inhabitants, but in different locations. Other practices, which had been reshaped from their old forms of practicing by incorporating modern features, are today subject to criticism, and are sometimes rejected by some inhabitants. Yet Runa Paju music has not been subject to such criticism in Jondachi despite its incorporation of modern Western features. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 1, in some communities or families, people do not smash or chew the yucca for preparing the *chicha* as it traditionally was prepared, but they make it using an electrical blender. Such practice is not considered or seen as a "traditional" form for preparing the *chicha*, and thus people reject the value of drinking the *chicha* as a symbolic act of friendship. The same transformations have happened with other practices, as in the shamanism that nowadays uses regular cigarettes instead of their strong local tobacco, which was considered to be a way to banish evil presence. Also, during wedding ceremonies as *Pactachina* or *Tapuna*, hunted meat was traditionally requested. Nowadays people buy meat from other groups of hunters or buy beef in the market. This practice is also criticized and sometimes rejected. In all of these practices, modern methods have influenced or changed the traditional ones. In this context, the understanding of "tradition" as moments or practices that are not static but changeable is important (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992).

My aim is not to argue that one genre is more or less traditional than the other. Rather I aim to demonstrate how Kichwa-Quijos, in the process of achieving a new Quijos ethnic identity that diverges culturally and socially from those who insist on an ancestral Kichwa identity, incorporate modern musical forms of expression and present them as traditional. In contrast, those who insist on Kichwa identity persist in identifying ancient practices as traditional and newer practices as non-traditional. In the context of the world of "Quijos Nationality" leaders, a modern form of "traditional" music known as "Runa Paju," a tropical genre, is used for expressing identity and authenticity. What is important also to suggest is that the incorporation of Runa Paju into traditional music has more to do with a political need of those leaders rather than a cultural need. And it is important to see how ordinary inhabitants understand such as an appropriation.

Since this phenomena involves different generations, I considered the approach of Mensah Adinkrah (2008) important. The author analyzes the representation of witchcraft in contemporary music in Ghana, and suggests that "a diachronic analysis of musical genres" (p. 299) could provide a lens for understanding the phenomena of cultural continuity and change.

To learn more about the local musical transformations and people's perceptions of it, I interviewed Pablo Alvarado, the 46-year-old Quijos traditional musician and cultural activist from the Archidona. Alvarado, who works for the Ecuadorian Cultural Minister in Napo, considers himself to be a traditional musician who developed his musical skill by listening, and watching elder Kichwa-Quijos musicians.

According to Alvarado, despite the multiple transformations that Kichwa-Quijos music has gone through, it still preserves traditional cultural patterns that embody local senses of identity. Alvarado believes that local people stopped practicing many of their cultural traditions because of the pressures and influence of the state and other institutions. He argues that, after many years of forgetting their cultural traditions, many people are expressing a renewed interest in recreating traditional forms of life, which includes the reinvention of traditional music.

Alvarado considers that in recent years, more people have begun practicing and producing music, and more people have become interested in local identity. This has driven communities to re-learn their past, and to both practice and share this new knowledge. He said, "Traditional and new forms of performing music are present among us. All of them enrich us and also bring us many questions about our original roots." He suggests that, for a better understanding of the musical context of Kichwa-Quijos, in the terms of its variations, it is necessary to classify the music in Napo into four different periods, according to the chronological period in which they emerged: Ancestral, Traditional, Kichwa-Tropical or Runa Paju, and Experimental (Nueva Canción).

### **Ancestral Music**

The first period, "Ancestral time" represents the locus of Kichwa-Quijos culture and identity. For the Kichwa-Quijos, as for many other indigenous groups that inhabit the Amazonia, the forest represents a domain inhabited by powerful beings that provided them with not just the food that they need to eat but also the

knowledge that they need to continue (Basso, 1995; Brown, 1984; Descola, 1996; Hill, 1993). It is directly associated with the forest and cosmos, both considered the sources of their knowledge and lives. The music expressed during the ancestral time is represented in traditional practices and rituals occurring during every-day life. This music was played for ceremonies such as traditional weddings, morning *guayusa* drinking, "canto de la mujer Kichwa-Quijos" (song of the Kichwa-Quijos woman), and shamanic songs. Formerly, during this time (with the exception of when women sang), when this music was played, instruments such as *pingullos*, *llawta*, *turumpas*, *yahuate* (turtle shell), and *caja or tambur* (little drum) accompanied it.

The *pingullo*<sup>20</sup> is a melodic horizontal flute. It is one of the most common musical instruments still present in the music of many indigenous groups from the Amazonia and the Andes. One of the most important and less explored differences is that in the Andes, the *pingullo* has been used in ceremonies that are more public festive in nature, while in the Amazon shamans and elder householders have used it in a private ritualistic context. In earlier times, this instrument was made from the bone of a big bird (Condor in the Andes, and *Curiquinga* bird in Amazonia), but nowadays it is mostly made of bamboo. Although in both the Andes and Amazonia the *pingullo* is a flute-type of instrument, its form varied, confusing its origins. The Andes *pingullo* has three holes at the lower part, two in front and one in the back; while the Amazonian

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<sup>20</sup> The *pingullo* is also known as *pijuano* in other Ecuadorian indigenous communities.

*pingullo* has five or six holes in the front part and one in the back. Both have the same mouth form, something like a whistle.



**Figure 6: *Pingullo* made of a bird bone shown by Pablo Alvarado, Tena 2011**

The *llawta* is a melodic traverse bamboo flute. Its form and execution is different from a *pingullo*. Usually it is longer and has three holes in the lower part, two in front and one in the back. It has one hole on the top part where the musician blows to produce sound, while the bottom holes are manipulated to create the desired melody. The *llawta* also appears in the music of many other indigenous groups from Ecuador. According to Pablo Alvarado, this instrument is also used by the shamans during some rituals, as well as by elders during their time in the forest, both seeking to communicate with the spirits.



**Figure 7: *Llawta*, made of *carrizo* (bamboo) that belongs to Silverio Grefa**

The *turumpa* (named differently among other Amazonian ethnic groups) is an ancient string instrument, and perhaps the first string instrument before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. It is made of two parts, a string and a bow made of bamboo. It is about two feet long (60cm) and usually is very light. The *turumpa* player holds one side of it with his mouth (it's played mostly by men), specifically with his teeth. One hand holds the bow from the center, while with his index finger from the other hand the musician plays the string, While it vibrates, he manipulates the speed and vibration of the string with his tongue to create different musical sounds.



**Figure 8: Vicente Shiguango, playing the *turumpa* in the community of Jondachi in 2013**

The *yahuate* is a turtle's shell, usually one of a small size, which makes it easy to hold with one hand, while the other hand rubs its sides to produce deep sounds. Nowadays this instrument is practically absent from the musical context of the Kichwa-Qujos. According to local versions, in old times the *yahuate* was one of the most common instruments. Its particular deep sound "produced an inner sensation in the musician, especially during ritual music, *takina*<sup>21</sup>," Silverio said.

The *tambur*, is a little wood cedar and jaguar skin drum. Cedar trees are still abundant in these areas of the jungle. Its soft wood makes it easy for people

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<sup>21</sup> Michael M. Uzendoski et al. (2005), suggests that for the Kichwa-Quijos *takina* is understood as all forms of traditional music, and that this music is able to transform social and human conditions since *takina* embody *Samay* itself. According to Silverio Grefa, not all the Kichwa-Quijos music can be considered *takina*. *Takina* is the music that only *yachaks* (shamans) play, because this music is sacred and carries intentions, good and evil ones.



to carve its inside for building the cylinder of the drum. This work only takes a couple of hours. The skin of the jaguar—usually it is required to be from a young cat—is dried but only for a few days, so it can be soft enough to manipulate on both sides of the cylinder. It is tied temporarily and then left to dry. After a couple of days, when the skin looks settled on both sides, they stretch the skin using a type of rope made of local fibers. Sometimes, there are some musicians who put a type of string on one side of the drum for provoking a sort of vibration sound, similar to the sound and effect of the snare drum. The *tambur* represents the major percussion instrument traditionally used in music for rituals, ceremonies, and festivities among the Kichwa-Quijos.



**Figure 9: Holding the *tambur* played in the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza, with Domingo Francisco Grefa.**

In the case of shamans or *yachak*, whistling is one of the most common forms of musical practice. Commonly, this type of ritual music is accompanied by

the use of rattles or some sort of shakers (Brown, 1984). Among the Kichwa-Quijos' *yachak*, leaves of *surupanga* plant are use for producing this sound. The production of musical sounds by the use of *surupanga* leaves is not disconnected from the healing process. While the *yachak* shakes leaves around the ill person these leaves are supposed to absorb the evil part from the person's body. Pablo Alvarado states that among local inhabitants it is believed that the development of ancestral music allowed communication between the human world and the world of the spirits. The spirits, who are ancestors, are the ones who provide the people with the knowledge and power needed for success in their every-day activities. These traditional musical practices in the context of ritual life allow inhabitants to strengthen their culture and ethnic identity.



**Figure 10: Silverio Grefa, explaining the shamanic music (*Takina*) in his house located in the community of Talag. On his right hand he holds the Surupanga plant and with his left hand he shows the *chonta* spires.<sup>22</sup>**

In this context, the performance of ancestral music is, according to Pablo Alvarado, considered sacred. This is because, first, it belongs to immemorial times and is full of traditional sounds that provide a sense of authenticity. Second because the ritual practice of the music allowed successive generations of people to acquire mastery of it. For example, the everyday practice of *pingullo* playing by the elders was a way to introduce the youth to the instrument and encouraged them to develop the ability to play it themselves. In this context, according to Domingo Grefa, a fifty-six-year-old traditional musician and shaman from *Calvario* who I interviewed, teaching or sharing knowledge intrinsically occurs during ritual moments or in the course of traditional practices (healing, fishing, weaving, planting, harvesting, chanting, etc.). Conventional Western forms of teaching

<sup>22</sup> Copy the following link to see Silverio Grefa's music performance.  
[https://youtu.be/\\_cA3\\_F9U2S0](https://youtu.be/_cA3_F9U2S0)

were not present among native people in old times. Third, the music is considered to be sacred because the people consider the instruments themselves to be sacred, rather than mere objects for producing random sounds. Domingo Grefa says that these instruments embody, in their sounds, "the voice of nature," which allows the creation of a space-time of communication between people and their ancestors during the ritual performance.

Various authors have demonstrated that the ritual performance of music plays a special role for this communication. (Brown, 1984; Fuks, 1988; Hill, 1993; Katz & De Rios, 1971; Robertson, 1979; Seeger, 1979; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005). Anthropological and ethnographic research on Amazonian societies has shown that among Amazonian people "communicative action is not limited to humans but also includes spirits and beings from the non-human natural world" (M. Uzendoski, 2008, p. 12). The continuous relationship of Amazonian people with the spirits and other beings has been considered fundamental for the process of cultural continuity. Through a variety of forms of communication, "knowledge" and "power" are often acquired from visions experienced through dreaming, storytelling, the consumption of hallucinogenic plants, and music. (Bennett, 1992; Brown, 1984; Descola, 1996; Gow, 1989; Hill, 1990, 1993; Katz & De Rios, 1971; Macdonald, 1999; Seitz, 1981; M. Uzendoski, 2004b; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005). The presence and relevance of "ancestral" music during shamanic practice among Amazonian and other ethnic societies has been widely discussed in the anthropological literature.

Fred Katz & Marlene Dobkin de Rios (1971) for example suggested that for shamanic healers from Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazonia, the performance of music is fundamental for the success of the healing session, in the sense that such music allow the healer to visualize the best way to proceed. Among the Shipibo people from Peru, the *icaros*<sup>23</sup> open up the communication with the spirits of the ancestors, “who help them to see the cause of illness (often witchcraft hexes) and to allow them to return the evil to the perpetrator so that healing could occur” (Dobkin de Rios, 2003, p. 2). Michael F. Brown (1984), analyzes the importance that "magical songs" known as *anen* by the Aguaruna people from the Peruvian Amazonia have for hunting activity. Based on his understanding of the Aguaruna myth about the Tsewa (the primordial spider monkey), Brown (1984) describes how in old times Tsewa provided men with the knowledge and ability to hunt the spider monkey, a creature whose cleverness has challenged the skills of even the best hunter. According to the author, “Contemporary hunters outwit the wary spider monkey by various means, prominent among which is the performance of special songs. These songs are said to exert a powerful attracting force that leads the monkeys to abandon their usual caution” (p. 545). For the Aguaruna, words and music (*anen*) come directly from the ancestors. They put social songs into a different category—they are produced in more informal moments during get-togethers for drinking. Scholars who investigate indigenous music from the point of view of its mythical nature agree about the special place

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<sup>23</sup> The word Icaro is commonly used among the Shipibo, an indigenous group from the Peruvian Amazonia. Icaros are the shamanic songs performed by whistling, shaking rattles, chanting, instrument-playing practices, and singing during healing ceremonies.

local inhabitants give to the production of "ancestral" music as the link that allows communication with the ancestors (Bennett, 1992; Brown, 1984; Callicott, 2013; Hill, 1993; Katz & De Rios, 1971; Seeger, 1987). Local inhabitants often present this musical practice as an authentic traditional form.

In this sense, music in ritual performance seems not just to be assumed as a medium of communication; rather music is a place of transformation. It is the creation of a parallel world of transformation (Praet, 2009; Viveiros de Castro, 1998), in which humans and spirit beings develop a ritual language through which the production of knowledge and power is generated (Hill, 1993; Praet, 2009; Robertson, 1979; Seitz, 1981; M. Uzendoski, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005). This ritual language—the combination of words and the sounds of instruments—embodies people's feelings, movements, emotions, circumstances, memories, places, and beliefs, and is strongly shaped by their cosmovisions. (Adinkrah, 2008). In this sense, the ritual language developed during the music ritual can be understood as the musicalization of knowledge and power (Campbell, 1995; Descola, 1996; Robertson, 1979), which are sources of culture and ethnic continuity.

### **Traditional Music**

The second genre, which is identified by Alvarado as "traditional," is not less ritualistic, but here, the introduction of foreign instruments like the violin and guitar diversified the contexts in which the music was played. This music is not just played during ancestral ritual moments or ceremonies, but also on other occasions, such as baptisms, graduations, birthday parties, and the celebration of

mass. The melodic versatility of instruments like the guitar and violin has provided indigenous musicians with a wide conduit for musical exploration and creation. It is interesting to see that, although the guitar and violin were introduced into local music at around the same time, the violin has taken on a more important, and even sacred, role. Current literature on Amazonian societies in the context of culture emphasizes the role and adaptation of the violin in the music and culture of these societies (Belzner, 1981; M. Uzendoski, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005). Concerning the role of violin among the Kichwa, M. A. Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy (2012) suggest that local inhabitants see and associate the sound and music of the violin as a continuation of the past. It embodies sounds of nature, which the Kichwa believe are the voices of the spirits.

Scholars who have conducted research in Napo (Macdonald, 1999; Blanca Muratorio, 1998; Oberem, 1980; Spiller, 1974; M. Uzendoski, 2005; M. Uzendoski et al., 2005) describe the presence of the violin in the performance of wedding ritual ceremonies. The Kichwa-Quijos, as well as other ethnic groups, such as the Canelos of Pastaza province, and the Shuar and Achaur of Morona Santiago province, adapted the violin to their own culture and society (Belzner, 1981; Seitz, 1981; Whitten, 1976). It is unclear exactly when and how the violin was adopted by the Kichwa-Quijos, although it is thought that missionaries introduced it through the process of evangelization (Oberem, 1980). Just like other neighboring ethnic groups, the Kichwa-Quijos created their own form of playing and constructing the violin; the result is a violin that sounds and looks significantly different from a traditional classical violin (Whitten, 1976).



**Figure 11: Daniel Tapu (violin player), and Domingo Grefa (*versiador* and *tambur* player), at the celebration of *Pactachina* in the community of Tiwinza, Napo 2011<sup>24</sup>**

### *Kichwa-Tropical or Runa Paju Music*

The third genre that Alvarado describes, is that of Kichwa-Topical or Runa Paju music. This type of music is currently the most popular among locals, and it is present in almost all Kichwa-Quijos celebrations. Compared with the music of Ancestral and Traditional genres, Runa Paju music is mostly used for dance parties rather than for specific ritual celebrations, although according to Pablo Alvarado, Runa Paju songs and lyrics still preserve ancestral and traditional patterns, and that "nature" is still the source of inspiration for its creation. During

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<sup>24</sup> Copy the following link to see the *Pactachina* music in Tiwinza.  
<https://youtu.be/-XWSaBj2-Ac>



my fieldwork, the constant presence of Runa Paju in different celebrations, in bars frequented by Kichwa-Quijos, and at the local radio station *La Voz del Napo*, led me to consider this genre as an important focus for understanding the cultural and social variations and contexts of the music of Kichwa-Quijos, and how it influenced their perception of ethnic identity. I develop this subject more below.

### **“Experimental” or “Nueva Canción” Music**

Finally, the fourth genre, which Alvarado calls “experimental,” or “Nueva Canción,” is associated with the influence and adaptation of Andean rhythms and instruments, as well as of the popular Cuban genre, “Nueva Trova.” According to Alvarado, this experimental genre combines many different external musical forms, but local musicians are adapting those foreign components into local musical forms. Of the four musical periods that Alvarado describes—Ancestral, Traditional, Kichwa-Tropical (Runa Paju), and Experimental—the ancestral and traditional are, nowadays, less common than Kichwa-Tropical (Runa Paju). It is interesting to note that, although the four genres represent a temporal development of music beginning with ancestral and ending with experimental, music from all four periods are still played today in different settings and contexts.

### **Runa Paju, and the perceptions of tradition**

After I had gone to a number of local parties and ceremonies, I began to pick up on the variety of musical genres and types of musicians that provided musical accompaniment for these events that Alvarado had discussed. For most of the celebrations I attended among the Kichwa-Quijos, music was always

provided from a *Disco Mobil* which played all types of foreign music (cumbia, merengue, regueton, baladas, etc.) during the daytime and also sometimes at night. Commonly, a group, or sometimes a singer of Runa Paju is hired for managing social dancing that usually happened at night.

Ritual "traditional" music is played variously, depending on the type of celebration (such as weddings) and/or the way people have organized the event (for political reasons or for tourists, or for social-cultural reasons). I attended three major parties during my fieldwork—Miguel's graduation and *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, and *Pactachina* in Tiwinza—from which I gathered data that I use to support parts of this thesis. Only in Tiwinza during the ritual of *Pactachina* was the "traditional music" of a *versiador-tambor* player and violinist, or *tocador*, performed. Meanwhile, the sound equipment and Runa Paju group were present in all three of these celebrations. Commonly, the sound equipment and Runa Paju group are designated for the social dancing, and ritual "traditional music" is performed only for specific moments during the ritual ceremonies. I provide further explanation about the presence of this ritual "traditional music" in the next chapter.

Analyzing the parties I attended, I learned the musical preferences of the local people for social dancing. An intense preference for live music played by the Runa Paju group over the sound equipment (despite the fact that this has the "possibility to play more diverse music") prevailed in all the celebrations that I attended. People's enjoyment of Runa Paju music, rather than music from the sound equipment along with social dancing revealed the importance of this genre in terms of culture and identity. I consider three reasons why Kichwa-Quijos

developed such an attitude toward Runa Paju music. First, Runa Paju songs are mostly sung in the Kichwa language, which for locals represents a fundamental aspect of cultural authenticity; second, as Alvarado says, Runa Paju preserves both musical and cultural ancestral-traditional elements. Despite the fact that it is played with modern Western instruments like keyboard, drum set, bass, and has incorporated other harmonies, I believe that Runa Paju maintains not just musical but also symbolic elements that still provide a sense of collective cultural continuity. And three, because of the effect of high levels of intoxication with alcoholic drinks that comes before social dancing, and also influenced by the lyrics, local inhabitants develop emotional responses of affinity and relatedness, not only between *ayllus* but also between them and their environment, natural and cosmological.

The first time I heard Runa Paju was at the *Pactachina* ritual. When I heard it, I personally didn't associate it with the local cultural tradition; rather I felt indifferent and thought it was out of context due to the electronic sound of a keyboard. I was more interested in the "traditional music" of the *Pactachina* ritual, considering it was the subject of my original thesis proposal. Later on, after the battery in my camera had run out, and influenced by the intoxication of the beer, I started enjoying the party. Little by little I got more involved in it. Seeing people's reactions and happiness when dancing to the rhythm of Runa Paju music made me realize that there was something special about it. "But what?" I asked myself.

In the context of Amazonian music, Anthony Seeger (Campbell, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Seeger, 1979, 1987) states that among the Suyá from the Brazilian Amazon, every-day life activities of this Indigenous Amazonian group

are strongly determined by the act of collective music creation. Time dedicated for music creation is about the same as it is for any other activity, but the creation of this music is not isolated from other activities. In this context, Seeger suggests that the Suyá make music to “re-establish the good and beautiful in the world...When we stop singing, we will really be finished.” And “whenever music is heard, something important is happening...some connection is being created or re-created between different domains of life...human body and its spirit.” (Campbell, 1995, p. 20). Victor Fuks (1988), among the Waiãpi from Brazil suggests that, for them music and dance lack a verbal explanation in terms of individual practices, and that the understanding of both activities comes only through the effect of the *caxiri* (manioc beer) served during collective celebrations. Hence, high levels of intoxication with *caxiri* put participants into a state of consciousness in which the music and dance are symbolically transformed into activities of meaning and sensation. Therefore, it is only at this point that music, as such, can be understood and enjoyed. As the Waiãpi say, “music and dance are like sex. You do it and do not talk about it” (p. 161).

In this context, during the social dance moment, I perceived that through the music and people’s behaviors, something was being created. Was this the creation and strengthening of kin and identity, I thought? I began to wonder: if the Runa Paju musical structure was so distant from “traditional” musical forms, what did Runa Paju provide to Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants in terms of ethnic identity? If elements of a culture change, how does Runa Paju extend from traditional forms

of music but contain new musical forms, harmonies, and instruments that embody a sense of identity for people in the modern context?

A closer understanding of the etymological meaning of Runa Paju was necessary for continuing my research. The combination of the two Kichwa words Runa and Paju means "a person with the extraordinary ability to do or create something." Runa is the Kichwa word for "person" and Paju means "the ability to do or create something." According to Kichwa-Quijos cosmology, the spirits from the forest, the *Sacha Runa*,<sup>25</sup> provide them with this ability and power (M. Uzendoski et al., 2005; Whitten, 1976). According to Francisco Grefa, the transmission of Paju usually comes from elders, who have developed the mastery for doing something— "they are the medium from where our ancestors transmit or give us the power...the ability for playing and singing." It is important to mention that Paju is not just relevant for instrumental music and singing, but necessary for all activities that require special skills, such as fishing, planting, weaving, hunting, and building.

The Runa Paju genre, which combines ancestral and modern musical forms, is nowadays the most popular among Kichwa-Quijos inhabitants, to the point that for some local people it represents local tradition and culture. However, there are other people who do not share such a view, since it belongs to a much more modern time and aesthetic. The view that this musical genre does not

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<sup>25</sup> According to the Kichwa-Quijos, the *Sacha Runa* is the most powerful of the spirits that inhabit the jungle. It is said that this is a spirit that sometimes takes the personification of a man, and is the one who provides the *Paju* –power—to the ordinary men who later become powerful shamans. Also it is said that sometimes the *Sacha Runa* provides *Paju* to some other men who do not necessarily become shamans but are capable of performing important activities related to traditions and culture.

represent local tradition and culture is mostly shared by those indigenous people and *colonists*<sup>26</sup> (mostly people who migrated from the Andes to live in the Amazon) who pursue the tourist trade, seeking to portray an exotic image of "jungle people." According to Silverio Grefa from the group *Los Jilgueritos*, even though Runa Paju preserves some traditional Kichwa musical forms, this genre breaks away from their cultural roots. For example, he says,

"I am an old man and I know how to play like my ancestors because since I was a child I paid attention to what they used to do and say, and I practiced everything I learned. But this hasn't lasted forever. ...Our culture has changed dramatically since the economy became an issue that determined our social and cultural behavior, and in that process I changed too. Therefore, my youngest son doesn't know everything I learned because he is no longer involved in our cultural environment or the continuity of our everyday traditions. The fact that he plays with me now doesn't mean that he can perform traditional music, chant, conduct a ritual, or be a *versificador*. My son is musically different from me because his musical behavior is mostly based on western patterns rather than traditional Kichwa forms. Even though he still plays with me, he is the one who encouraged us to move our traditional style to Runa Paju. So nowadays we have two groups, the traditional for cultural activities or events and the Tropical (Runa Paju) one for social events" (Interview, August 1, 2011).

According to Silverio Grefa, there is a cultural boundary that splits the traditional period from the Runa Paju period. Although Silverio accepts that the Runa Paju genre maintains some traditional particularities in its form, he believes "it does not totally adhere to the Kichwa traditions." He is explicit about saying that Runa Paju is not traditional but music for social celebrations that does not necessarily carry a sense of cultural identity, as "ancestral" and "traditional music" do.

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<sup>26</sup> To this day, people who are not indigenous Amazonians but who reside in the Ecuadorian Amazon are referred to as "colonos," or colonists. Because this is the term used in Ecuador, I utilize it in the same way throughout my thesis to refer to contemporary non-indigenous residents of the Amazon. I also use the term "colonists" to refer to the Spaniards of the colonial period (1531-1822).

What does make people, individually or collective, decide how or when to consider any social and cultural practice as a part of their culture and identity? Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992), has demonstrated that not all cultural practices within the everyday life of a society that are collectively identified as "traditional" and assumed to have been created in old times necessarily belong to immemorial times. Rather, the author suggests that tradition is constantly created, transformed and adapted over generations according to social, cultural, political, and geographical conditions and needs. By assuming that "tradition" is the result of old practices that have been reproduced over generations through the eras, one disregards certain "modern" activities that have been incorporated into the social and cultural dynamic of the society. Such an assumption removes the possibility of understanding the society as a whole, and its entire social and cultural context. This is the situation within the "social dance" practice among the Kichwa-Quijos where Runa Paju music is commonly performed. In my case, when I disregarded the Runa Paju music at the beginning of the social dance in Tiwinza, I limited my own ability to understand the music and dance performance. Subsequently, by integrating myself into the celebration, drinking beer, and dancing, I believe I was better able to perceive and feel the particular context and meaning of the celebration. I was dancing, I was drinking, I was eating, and I was not being seen as "Mr. Journalist" anymore.

Later on in my fieldwork, several times I heard critics that dismissed the social and cultural importance and ritual nature of the social dance embodied in celebrations. Further, criticism directed at punishing the Kichwa-Quijos habit of drinking lots of alcohol before the social dance, portray this activity as a "social

problem" rather than a cultural practice that fits into ritual performances. Another criticism was made concerning the type of music played during this part of the celebration, with the assumption that because Runa Paju is performed with modern Western instruments, it is less "cultural" and less "authentic." I believe that although Runa Paju music is not performed during a specific or identifiable ritual moment, and although it incorporates modern Western musical elements, the local inhabitants have found in it a sense of identity that connects them to their past, and that it is subconsciously part of a ritual context.

According to Pablo Alvarado, the Kichwa-Quijos have increasingly begun to create and produce music in recent years. He considers that, compared to other parts of the country, local music production in Napo has undergone important developments, both qualitatively and quantitatively. While mestizo musicians have had more success on radio stations and in other public spaces, Alvarado argues that they relied on playing old hits from other, mostly foreign, musicians; he believes that they just copy what has already been done, therefore limiting their production and creativity. According to Alvarado, old and new Kichwa-Quijos musicians constantly make their own music—"there is no group that would not have their own song-writer... so there is no need for local musicians to copy from others."

There are usually three or four musicians who make up a Runa Paju group. The electronic keyboard is the principal instrument, since, because of its technological properties, musicians can manipulate melodies, harmonies, and rhythm with more facility. Other instruments used include the cymbals and the



güiro<sup>27</sup>. The singer usually does not play an instrument, but sings, MCs the event, and interacts with the guests, always in a happy and humorous manner. Some groups are beginning to incorporate other instruments like the electric guitar, bass, congas, and trumpets, giving the group an image similar that of a "tropical-band" common on the Coast and in the Andes. Despite these new adaptations, people still identify the music performed by these groups as Runa Paju.



**Figure 12: The Runa Paju group 'Sacha Churis' from Archidona city performing at the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, in November, 2011<sup>28</sup>**

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<sup>27</sup> The güiro is a percussion instrument, commonly used in tropical musical styles like salsa, merengue, cumbia, son, and others that are played in most Latin American countries. It consists of two parts, a cylinder of one foot high by four foot diameter that is held in one hand, and a stick or a long plastic comb in the other that produces a sound by rubbing the stick along the notches. Depending on the material (gourd, wood, metal, plastic) that it is made from, the form of both pieces changes, but the sound it produces is the same.

<sup>28</sup> Copy the following link to see the *Runa Paju* music in Jondachi.

<https://youtu.be/NvRy9csm4NU>

Although the social dancing is not pointed out as ritualistic at a particular time, I believe that it has ritualistic implications, since it is performed at the end of the celebration completing like this the ritual process. Runa Paju music is played for dancing during parties, so a group must have an extensive repertoire that allows them to entertain an audience and guests for multiple hours. On two occasions I saw a Runa Paju group play through the night and into the early hours of the next day. At Miguel's graduation party in Jondachi (which I describe in the previous chapter), the dancing started after a plate of hot food was served to every single person, including infants. A set of Ecuadorian *cumbias*,<sup>29</sup> was played by the sound equipment for beginning the party, but people did not feel like dancing and it seemed as if they were not even listening to it. Later, after people set up the electronic instruments, microphones, and speakers, the Runa Paju group began to play and had people dancing for the rest of the night. The long set of songs prepared for the night by the Runa Paju group came to an end but this did not end the party. Despite my limitations in understanding the Kichwa language I realized that the group had started to repeat some of the songs, but people did not seem to mind at all. I left the party at around four in the morning, and the group continued to play through the night. I found out the next day that they had played straight through until eight in the morning.

The lyrics of Runa Paju songs are diverse, but most of them, as Pablo Alvarado argues, are strongly based on Kichwa-Quijos culture and environment. Because of this, he believes that one of the most important aspects of the music,

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<sup>29</sup> A musical genre, very common in Latin America although in each country and region where this genre is played has some variations.

as a medium for transmitting identity, is found in its sacredness. He considers that the creation of music is not just a mundane activity, but that it always has a purpose and reason within local cosmology. Considering music in a ritual context as an ongoing process of destruction, production, and transformation of cultural and social values (Adinkrah, 2008; Solomon, 2000), I suggest that Runa Paju music through its rhythms, lyrics, and melodies provides the Kichwa-Quijos with a sense of place, culture, and ethnic identity.

### Chapter 3

#### Rituals, Music, and Tradition

*Music is a special form of communication. Its very non-speech features make it a privileged vehicle for transmitting values and ethos that are more easily “musicked” than put into speech. These are communicated not only through the sounds, but in the movements of the performers, and the time, place, and conditions under which they are performed. (Seeger, 1979, p. 373).*

Research suggests that a wedding is one of the most relevant ritual events for developing kin and identity among the Kichwa-Quijos (Macdonald, 1999; Simson, 1883; Spiller, 1974; M. Uzendoski, 2004b, 2005). According to Macdonald (1999), and M. Uzendoski (2004b, 2005), three formal ceremonies make up the entire marriage ritual. The first is called *Tapuna (pedida)* or the request; the second, *Pactachina*, or the fulfillment of agreements; and the third, *Bura* (or *Boda*) or wedding. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to participate in two of these marriage ceremonies in two different communities. I attended the *Pactachina* ceremony in the lower-Napo community of Tiwinza in July 2011, and the *Tapuna-Boda* ceremony in Jondachi in November of 2011.

In Jondachi, I found that people consider the Catholic wedding ceremony, which they called *matrimonio*, as a fourth ceremony of the Quijos wedding tradition. According to local versions, *matrimonio* traditionally is celebrated on the same day as *Boda* (from now on only *Boda*) ritual. In old times, it was believed that the formalization of a marriage relation, for a couple to be able to live together, needed to complete the ritual sequence *Tapuna*, *Pactachina*, *Matrimonio* and *Boda* (wedding). This process often took a number of years.

Even though *Tapuna*, *Pactachina*, and *Boda* persist in the collective memory of the Kichwa-Quijos as part of their ancestral cultural traditions, nowadays these ceremonies are less practiced. Currently, couples rarely participate in all of these traditional wedding ceremonies. Often, they will only participate in one, or combine two, or all three into a major celebration that takes place in one day<sup>30</sup>. The main reason for this is to minimize the costs of these usually expensive celebrations. For the practice of the *Pactachina* in *Tiwinza* I was told by Aníbal Velizario Shiguango<sup>31</sup> that they invested approximately \$3,000, while for the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, according to Ramón Alvarado<sup>32</sup> they invested approximately \$4,000. And as it is the tradition, the groom's family had to pay all of the expenses (Blanca Muratorio, 1998; M. Uzendoski, 2005).

Another explanation for why these ceremonies are no longer practiced in their entirety is simply because they are one of many rituals which are becoming associated with traditions of the older generations. As elders begin to die, there are fewer people who carry that cultural memory and can teach younger people how the rituals should be carried out. However, the fact that the *Pactachina* and the *Tapuna-Boda* were celebrated by incorporating older traditions, demonstrated what Gloria Grefa, Pablo Alvarado, Silverio Grefa, and Gonzalo Alvarado believe,

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<sup>30</sup> There are also those who just prefer to get married through the law and/or the blessing of the Catholic or Christian church. Although, mostly among young generations, there are those who reject participation in both the Kichwa-Quijos wedding rituals and the church, and decide just to live together without getting married.

<sup>31</sup> Anibal Velizario Shiguango is a fifty-year-old Kichwa. He was the father of the groom and one of the *Pactachina* promoters.

<sup>32</sup> Ramón Alvarado, is a young Quijos *dirigente* and very involved with the cultural and political activism related with the Quijos nationality process. He is Jaime's (the groom's) big brother, and since his father passed away, according to the tradition he now is responsible for most of the organization.

which is that many local inhabitants are becoming more conscious about their cultural traditions and are questioning themselves about their ethnic identity and culture continuity.

Both the *Pactachina* and the *Tapuna-Boda* that I attended were, individually organized by families, local *dirigentes*, and some community members who were committed to the process of reinforcing local identity. Scholars have suggested how important it is in the context of expressing cultural authenticity for people to use their traditional language, food, dance, and music and to maintain their traditional physical appearance (Seeger, 1994). In Tiwinza and Jondachi the manifestations of these elements (language, food, dance, ornaments, music) were fundamental, allowing people to attain a sense of community and identity. In the context of ritual-recreation as a process of group-formation, the role of the *dirigentes* is fundamental. *Dirigentes* base much of their knowledge on elders' memories. However, because of their agency in organizing people, their ability to manipulate the concept of "traditions" in order to achieve authenticity in the process of identity creation or affirmation, is significant. One of these traditional elements is music.

I learned that music plays a significant role in how ethnic identity is reinforced as in the case of Tiwinza, and in how it is claimed as in the case of Jondachi. Although both communities, Jondachi and Tiwinza, sought to recreate these wedding rituals based on what they believed were cultural traditions rooted in a common cultural past, they approached "authenticity" through very different ideas and performances of "traditional music." Through the recreation of these rituals and the emphasis on different forms of music, both communities ended up

reinforcing, conceptually, very different cultural identities. People in Tiwinza strengthened their Kichwa identity through the *Pactachina* ritual and the traditional music played by the *versiator* and *tocador* that accompanied it. Meanwhile, the people in Jondachi strengthened their Quijos identity through the *Tapuna-Boda* and the Runa Paju music that accompanied it. The *Pactachina* ceremony in Tiwinza used the music of a *versiator*, drum, and violin, while the *Tapuna-Boda* ceremony in Jondachi used the music of a Runa Paju group. While in each case the organizers of the rituals suggested they were incorporating music that emphasized the continuity of ritual traditions, the music used in each ceremony seemed to be harmonically, aesthetically, and conceptually different from the other. Although in both places the atmosphere was one of happiness and friendship.

This chapter has four sections. In the first section, The *Pactachina* Ritual, I ethnographically describe the social and cultural processes in the recreation of this ritual. In the second section, The *Tapuna-Boda*, I in turn ethnographically describe the social and cultural processes in the recreation of these rituals. In the third section, Comparison of the Ceremonies in Tiwinza and Jondachi, I explore the differences and similarities in the context of ritual creation and ethnic authenticity.

In the fourth section, I analyze the lyrics of two Runa Paju and one “traditional” song. I explore the lyrics of two independent songs, both considered traditional, but in two different contexts of ritual performance and place. My aim is to investigate the cultural differences and similarities that make some people view Runa Paju as traditional, while others do not. In this context I will present the

analysis of the lyrics of two Runa Paju songs performed in Jondachi during the *Tapuna-Boda* and considered hits among Quijos inhabitants.

### **The *Pactachina* Ritual**

Gloria Grefa, of *La Voz del Napo* radio station, told me about the *Pactachina* that would take place; she, along with her friend Nancy accompanied me to the celebration. Tiwinza is relatively a new community, a fifteen-minute walk from the Catholic parish of Calvario, which is located 45 minutes by car from Tena. About seventy people live in Tiwinza; most are agriculturalists and raise cattle. According to Aníbal Velizario Shiguango, the fifty-year-old father of the groom and a Kichwa cultural activist, this was the first time that a *Pactachina* ritual had been celebrated in this community. “Although I moved out from our small community of Calvario to the city of Tena many years ago for work, I have worked in my community to re-integrate our Kichwa cultural traditions...because I am Kichwa from Napo, and what you are about to see is our ancestral culture traditions” he said. He, like many other inhabitants, emphasized that most people no longer practice many Kichwa traditions. He told me that when he got married, he did not celebrate with the traditional ceremonies—“people forgot about this ritual many years ago, and, now, we are taking the responsibility for recreating these Kichwa rituals, we are continuing our Kichwa traditions for our new generations,” he said, pointing to his son. Note how Shiguango uses the word "Kichwa" for expressing identity.





**Figure 13: Map of Tena and the communities of Tálag and Tiwinza.**

Gloria, Nancy and her family, and I arrived in Tiwinza around 11:00 am. Nancy was the cousin of the bride's father, and it was she who helped ask permission for me to be present, participate, film, and record the ritual. According to the s tradition, the groom's family or *cary ayllu* takes most of the responsibility for the organization and development the *Pactachina*. In fact that is exactly what happened, and as part of the tradition, such responsibility ended only when the father of the bride followed by his *ayllu* arrived at the *canchon*<sup>33</sup> where the

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<sup>33</sup> The word *canchón* comes from the Kichwa word *cancha* or *kancha* that means or refers to a place destined for the social and cultural practices in a community. These wooden structures are very common in small and isolated communities across the province for practicing celebrations. In communities that are more visible, especially the ones that are along the road, like Jondachi, these structures are replaced by big metal and cement once called "*cancha de usos*

ceremony was about to take place (I will explain this further in the following sections). Anibal Shiguango told me that the day before, members of the groom's *ayllu* traveled from different communities to Tiwinza to help with all that was required (food preparation, getting and chopping wood for the fire, serving drinks, cleaning, moving and carrying things, and much else). But another reason for coming a day earlier was to celebrate the *cary parti*, which is a sort of party just among the groom's relatives that traditionally occurs in the bride's community.<sup>34</sup>

The day of the *Pactachina* ceremony, the entire groom's family was busy with preparations. Smoke billowed out of a small wooden shed, where the women of the groom's *ayllu* were preparing the feast. Big pots of chicken soup were constantly stirred with a big wooden spoon; in the other side of the shed a group of women peeled and chopped yucca, onions, and garlic, while others cooked rice and potatoes. A group of men were in charge of roasting the two hundred chickens bought—at the request of the bride's father—for the celebration. Meanwhile while one group of the family was in charge of all the cooking, another

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*multiples*" normally built as part of development programs handled by local governments or sometimes as part of the mitigation process of some transnational mining companies, seeking for the resources like oil, or gold from the areas.

<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately I did not participate of the "*cary parti*" in Tiwinza, but Anibal Velizario Shiguango told me that most men spent the whole night drinking and cutting wood for the next day, while the woman were dedicated to the preparation of the kitchen room and washing pots. M. Uzendoski (2005) describes this *cary parti* as the official beginning of the *burra* that takes place the night before the bride's family arrives, with a party solely for the groom's family. This party is to celebrate and officialize the groom separating from his parents, as he is put under the "protection" of the *padrinos*. This night party incorporates most of the rituals that are repeated the following day when the bride's family has arrived, making the *cary parti* a type of rehearsal for the next day. This is an opportunity for the groom and his family to practice the dance movements, follow the *versaidor's* instructions, and perfect the speeches that they will make in front of the bride and her *ayllu* the following day.

group offered soda, beer, and cane sugar alcohol to those who were working. As one important aspect of the process of ritual recreation, the role of food is important for Kichwa-Quijos culture. The presence of large amounts of food and the effort in its preparation is not a consequence of the number of people who are coming to the celebration, but represents and expresses respect for and commitment to the bride's *ayllu*, specifically to the bride's father in the first part.



**Figure 14: Pots and buckets with food for the *Pactachina***

At the beginning we arrived in the *canchon*, but after a while, we were told that we should go to the house of the bride's father since we were part of that *ayllu*, myself included. With other members of the bride's *ayllu*, who came from far away communities, we gathered in the bride's house until the groom's family announced that everything was ready. Meanwhile, relatives started recognizing

each other. In one big room, an old-looking man started insulting (in Kichwa) the people from the groom's *ayllu*. He was complaining about how long it was taking for them to prepare the food, and that the MC was constantly speaking in Spanish. Then he came to me, still with the same expression, calling me Mr. Journalist. "You record as much as you want and you can," he told me, "because this is an important moment for our community and culture. This is the first time a *Pactachina* is celebrated here in Tiwinza. It is an ancestral tradition of the Kichwa from Napo, it's authentic, and we are committed to celebrating it today, so my granddaughter can marry under the traditions of our Kichwa ancestors... You do whatever you have to do because I am giving you the permission to do it... I am Manuel Tanguila, the grandfather of the bride and carrier of this authentic tradition."

In the old Kichwa-Quijos tradition, the role of authority is played entirely by the father of the bride, but since he lacked knowledge about ancestral procedures, Manuel Tanguila, the grandfather, took his place. I immediately set up my camera and started recording and taking pictures. We were there for about one hour before we were told it was time to go. The bride's house was ten minutes away from the place of the celebration, and we could clearly hear the MC welcoming the bride's *ayllu* as they filtered into a 40 by 60 meter shelter that was called the *canchón*. With big extended smiles, the groom's family passed out glasses of beer and cigarettes to the arriving members of the bride's family at the entrance of the *canchón*, as a sign of thanks.



**Figure 15: *Canchón* in the community of Tiwinza**

On the stage, the DJ played *tecno-cumbia* music while the MC continued to welcome the arriving guests. Meanwhile, the groom's father and godparents stood on the other side of the *canchón*. Beside them was Domingo Grefa, the *versidor* that would give life to the ceremony. The *versidor*, who is always a man, is considered the main character at this *Pactachina*. While he plays his tambur (a drum box) with his hands, he sings and is also accompanied by a violinist, know as *tocador* (player). Domingo Grefa, Anibal Shiguango, and the godparents began to organize the structure of the ritual. A little rehearsal was needed to teach the *compañías* (a married couple chosen to accompany the first dance), who lacked knowledge of how to dance to the music played (drum and violin) and sung by the *versidor*. M. Uzendoski (2005) suggests that rehearsal

the day before the actual ceremony is important because the groom's *ayllu* does not want to be ridiculed by the bride's *ayllu* if the music and dance do not satisfy them. The dance of the *padrinos* and *compañías* entailed the interpretation of the lyrics and music of the *versificador*. At this point in the ceremony, it was Domingo Grefa, the *versificador*, who took control of the ritual.

In the literature that covers traditional rituals of marriage among special attention is given to the role of the bride's father during these celebrations. (Macdonald, 1999; Spiller, 1974; M. Uzendoski, 2005). Uzendoski (2005) refers to the bride's father as the "key actor" during the development of the *Tapuna* ritual that surrounded his own wedding experience. For Macdonald (1999), the bride's father or *warmy yaya* is one of the most influential persons in all wedding ritual sequences that complement Kichwa-Quijos marriage. Both authors agree that the significance that the *warmy yaya* has in these rituals is determined by his ability to influence the ceremonial context and thereby briefly allow himself to express and even alter his social status.

For example, traditionally, the *warmy yaya* had the control to decide if, when, and to whom his daughter would marry. Traditionally, the groom's family would spend hours and sometimes days begging the *warmy yaya's* permission for his daughter could marry their son. For the groom's *ayllu*, it was already assumed that the *warmy yaya* was going to have an attitude of resistance and anger. For dulling this situation, the groom's *ayllu* offered to the *warmy yaya* the food, cigarttes, and drinks that they brought along with them, as symbols of commitment and respect. In the case that *warmy yaya* gave a negative answer, the groom's *ayllu* would have had to pack up everything and leave to go to a

different house where they knew there was a potential bride. In the case of a positive answer, the *warmy yaya* controlled the organization, food amount, and time when other traditional celebrations would be performed. During the whole period of the traditional wedding rituals, the whole groom's *ayllu* was working according to the wishes of the *warmy yaya*, always caring for the well being of the wedding ceremonies.

Alternatively, Spiller (1974) identifies the "key actor" as the groom's godfather, who, according to local narratives, is the person in charge and responsible for dealing with the act of the *Tapuna (pedida)* with the bride's father. Although the author does not refer to the groom's godfather culturally in a representative way, calling him "*un charlatan*" (a charlatan), I think that by the attention given in his study, Spiller provides an important place for this character.

Because of limited research on this subject, and since the celebration of ritual weddings had declined in recent times, other perspectives concerning these particular Kichwa-Quijos traditions are lacking. Further studies that construct new approaches to the roles and influences of other actors in the context of the Kichwa-Quijos wedding tradition are needed. Despite the lack of available research, I do not dismiss the relevance and influence that Uzendoski and Macdonald give to the bride's father (*warmy yaya*) for the creation of traditional wedding rituals. But I would argue that his power is limited more to "earthly" (rather than spiritual) actions. In consideration of Istvan Praet (2009) suggestions about how South American Indians envisage the social and cosmological as one continuous field that creates the communication between human and non-human entities, the bride's father or *warmy yaya* does not directly participate when such

transformation and transgression takes place (Vilaça, 2002). He does not seek and prepare food and drink considered important in the context of kin making and *Samay* transfer, both related to a more spiritual stage. Nor does he chant, play, or dance; these being considered gestural moments that open up the communication between the social and cosmological fields suggested by Praet. Hence, his influence is limited to only terrestrial since he only controls functions in that sphere any not the spiritual.

Based on local meaning and memories, the figure of the *versidor* appears as an important and influential character. From my own experience of *Pactachina*, I would position the *versidor* as the key actor, and emphasize the importance this character has for the success of Kichwa wedding rituals in the context of kinship and identity. I consider that it is the *versidor* who has the most important role, since he controls and manipulates both the terrestrial and spiritual aspects of the rituals.

The performance of the *Pactachina* ritual focuses on the contrasting attitudes of the different *ayllus*, or extended families, of both the bride and the groom. While the groom's *ayllu* expresses their humility and gratitude throughout the ritual, with their tremendous effort to organize and prepare all the elements of the *Pactachina*, the bride's *ayllu* expresses a sort of apathy, disdain, and anger about the ceremony and what the groom's family says or does. According to M. Uzendoski (2005), "Ritual marriage among Runa exhibits principles of destruction that allow for social recombination and the production of valued relationship that defines adult personhood. Ritual involves the exchange and circulation not only of things but also of the relational parts of person." (p. 70). I believe that the



intentional polarization of the relationships that I saw at the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza is socially and culturally necessary for the production of the new relationships and values between both *ayllus*, as well as for the purpose of reinforcing their cultural continuity. The *versidor*, however, exists in a liminal position, between both families, and, according to their perceptions of what represents "tradition" for them, he is vital for the reinforcement of their ethnic identity and cultural continuity. Being in between, the *versidor* controls the historical, cultural, social, spiritual, and political symbols that surround the ceremony and that directly influence the social behavior of the participants. In his songs, the *versidor* sings about old memories and values related to the importance of being among kin. The *versidor* sings about how important it is to respect each other, for the continuation of their culture as a couple and as a community. He constantly brings the memories and behaviors from the past (from human and non-human contexts) as references for the new generation's behaviors.

The important position of the *versidor* in the development of wedding rituals is not just a random chance. It is a socially and culturally claimed place, acquired by his background and mastery of decoding the symbols "hidden" in the instrument and mastery of words that reveal perceptions of self and identity for local inhabitants. In the words of Macdonald (1999) about the presence of the *versidor* (which he calls the *virisiadur*): "A running narrative complements the visual, gestural, and locational imagery of the ceremony...With words and music, the *virisiadur* describes a context that combines beauty, balanced reciprocity, respect, and alliance" (p. 25).

According to Pablo Alvarado, the role of the *versiador* is fundamental for the meaning of wedding rituals. He believes that there can be no ritual meaning or social commitment without the music of the *versiador*. Through his music, which is made up of a series of verses sung following a similar melodic pattern, the *versiador* has the power to tell people what to do, how to act, and how to express their feelings. Through songs, he tells hosts and guests what it means to be a Kichwa couple, what it means to start a new family, what it means to extend the *ayllu*, and why it is important for the entire community to commit to caring for this young couple and their kin, now and in the future. The *versiador* creates a song that narrates the actions of the present ritual, and through this narration, he advises the two *ayllus* to become and act as one. An analysis of the *versiador* song is required. Example:

**First verses sung by Domingo Grefa, *versiador* of the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza.**

*Kaytamari ñukatashka alabadu sacramentu  
nishkallapi chaki maki palabrawa  
shamukani verciadorka, tokadorka,  
kaima chilin, chima chilin.*

*Kaytamari verciadorka manallara  
pagrachunka, padrinupa, compañapas,  
madrinatas pagrachunka chaitamari atun,  
atun licenciara charingami.*

*Kunamari Antonela munanaita llaktapichu,  
kunamari Tiwinzalla amorcito kayma tulu,  
chima tulu shamuskanchi nikanchika  
padrinulla compañalla naupapunda.*

*Kaytamari ñukapaska manallara pandai, pandai  
apuchina nishkaway kunamari alabaska awyakuna,  
alabaska kushkallay padrinulla,  
licenciara washapika.*

(Translation)

*Padrino* and *Madrina* (Godmother), this is a very important day.  
You must enjoy the talking and you must  
make your presence known, I say.

This petition to you that I make with my hands and feet  
are the very profound words of the *versiador*.  
Since yesterday, until today,  
and until the parents-in-law arrive,  
you must enjoy the talking.

Today we are in Tiwinza, the land of Antonela,  
who receives us with love  
as everyone continues to arrive,  
say the *padrino* and the *madrina*,  
who were the first to arrive.

This *versiador* and this o  
speak to you, *padrino*,  
and speak to you, *madrina*,  
and request that you say nice things  
until everyone gets here.  
We ask that you show your good heart.<sup>35</sup>

Local people believe that the *versiador* represents tradition and identity. Both the *versiador* and the violinist play their instruments seated in a strategic place in the front middle part of the covered area, where everyone can see and hear them. The *versiador* sings in short stanzas in a subtle and melancholic tone, as he beats his drum. When he plays his drum loudly, he raises his voice; when he plays softly, he lowers the volume of his voice. Nevertheless, the *versisador's* song follows the same melodic sequence, which is repeated over and over in each verse that he creates until the ceremony ends. His lyrics are unique to the

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<sup>35</sup> Gloria Grefa made the transcription and translation to Spanish from my recordings of the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza. I made the English translation.

ritual; in other words, he does not practice the song, but invents it on the spot so that it is completely relevant to the context and people involved in the ritual.

According to local cosmology, the *versiator* represents power. His voice and rhythm intimidate and manipulate people's behaviors. In order for a wedding ritual to be carried out successfully, not just anyone can be a *versiator*. He must be a person of respect and hold knowledge about music and culture. He is a person who is capable of creating a space-time of communication between the *ayllus* and the spirits. People's desires and commitments are bound up in this space-time of communication. It is a magical moment, and must be performed by a person who has the expertise to transform society, and particular times within it, and who has developed the ability to communicate with nature through words and sounds. As such, the *versiator* is also usually a shaman, which Domingo Grefa is.

Domingo Grefa played his drum and sang for about three hours straight, accompanied by the melody of the violin. Grefa's song also dictated how the first dance should be carried out. Two couples, the *padrinos*, who came from the groom's side, and the *compañías* (a couple chosen by the bride's family), who came from the bride's side, participated in the first part of this dance, which I call the "plea." In this dance the *padrinos* attempt to please, while the *compañías* express apathy and arrogance. These two couples, dressed in traditional costumes<sup>36</sup> danced in front of the musicians and followed the instructions sung by the *versiator*. Example:

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<sup>36</sup> Only for the development of *Pactachina* and *Boda* did *padrinos*, *compañías* and the couple wear a special costume. For the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza, male

## Second verses from Pactachina.

*Awayakuna paktamuska shamukpichu  
kasna tunu alabasha rikuchinki padrinulla,  
compañalla imanasha rikuwanki midia vuyta  
tukuchinki, kamba, kamba lisenciara, kamba  
sombiruta midia, midia vuytachisha,  
shayarinki verciadorka rimapika pandanalla.*

(Translation)

*Padrino and madrina*, until the parents-in-law arrive,  
I ask of you to not make any mistakes or behave badly.  
He who is asking is the *versidor*.  
After I speak two or three words, we will play the violin.

*Padrino and madrina*, you will stand in the middle  
and then dance forward and backward.  
When the violin sounds and I say “turn around,”  
you will raise your hat *padrino*, as a show of your love  
for the people who are arriving. This is what I ask of you  
*padrino and madrina*.

## *Performing Ritual Dance in Tiwinza*

During a conversation with my host father, Berna, I was told that during rituals in which a *versidor* participates, the quality of his music determines the quality of the dance. “When the music is played well, the dancers are able to dance skillfully; when it is played poorly, their dancing is unskilled,” said Berna. In Tiwinza, during the “plea”, the soft, back-and-forth and left-and-right movements of the *padrinos* symbolized the intentions of the groom’s *ayllu* to become part of the bride’s *ayllu*; in other words, it is a moment of kinship production. Throughout

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*padrino* and *compañã* wore a white hat decorated with colourful ribbons, a light white poncho or *cushma* with the inscription of the Catholic church on the center, a shirt, and blue pants. Female *madrina* and *compañã* did not wear a hat, but they wore a white shawl, a white blouse, and blue skirt.

the ritual dance, there were always two elements that opposed but also complemented each other: the music and dance, the *padrinos* and *compañas*, the male and female roles, the happy and angry interaction, the back-and-forth and left-and-right movements - all expressing duality, an important value in the philosophy of life the Kichwa people.

Current literature in the context of “dance” suggests that more attention to the role of dance is needed. It will provide deeper understanding of the dynamics of culture since dance, as a physical activity, expresses individual and collective social features (Bakrania, 2014; Kaepler, 2000; Reed, 1998; Seeger, 1979). Adrienne Kaepler (2000) suggests that dance, seen as a structured system of movement, is “a cultural form that results from creative processes which manipulate human bodies in time and space” (p. 117). Here, the cultural form fashioned during the performance, although transient, is a visual manifestation of social interactions, and may be the subject of an elaborate aesthetic system. In other words, ritual dance performance embodies a process of human transformation. During the *Pactachina* ritual, the dance performed by *padrinos* and *compañas* collapsed into an act that reflected Kaepler’s statement, since the movements they produced constantly represented the integration of two opposite points: in this case the two “unknown” *ayllus*. Here, a description of the ritual dance in Tiwinza is pertinent.

The ritual dance of the *Pactachina*, performed by the *padrinos* and *compañas*, is a reproduction of the *versidor*’s words. After the rehearsal is over, the *padrinos* and *compañas* walk to the center of the *canchon*. Male *padrino* and *compañã*, holding their hats, salute and request permission (*lishinsha*) from the

people sitting around, who are members of the bride's *ayllu*. After the people clap as a symbol of acceptance, coupled *padrinos* and *compañias* situate themselves in the center of the *canchon*, the males and females standing approximately six feet away from each other, waiting for the first words and melodies of the *versiador* and *tocador*.

Once the music begins, the men perform the first dance. They hold their arms out to each other and begin to move back-and-forth in coordination. They lift their feet very softly from the ground, while their shoulders move back and forth and they both move their bodies following the same directions. The movement is so subtle that sometimes it almost seems as if their bodies do not move. They repeat these moves for about five minutes. After they have gone back and forth several times, they stop. Then it is the turn of the *madrina* and *compañia* to dance. The male couple does not move during this part; they just look and smile at the *madrina* and *compañia*. Their dance follows a pattern very similar to that of the men, except that the *madrina* and *compañia* hold each other with their hands. Also, the movements of their bodies are a more visible and sensual. The male and female *padrino* and *compañia* repeat this dance pattern until it is time for both couples to move together. Until now, the physical area used for the dance has been no bigger than ten or twelve feet, considering that they constantly move back and forth but always return to the same place before the turn of the other couple.

During this part, both couples dance together as if they were one, but the two women and the two men always keep a considerable distance from each other. Now, their back-and-forth movement begins to cover a bigger area,

approaching the distant ends of the *canchon*. They repeat this several times until they feel that people have seen their dancing closely enough. Then, they return to the center and begin to move sideways. Here, it is important to mention that after the *padrino* and *compañía* have begun to move and cover larger distances, the guests appear more enthusiastic about the dance and the ceremony itself. The separation from the center outward is seen as a process of integration by Kichwa inhabitants. This is because *padrino* and *compañía* movements in the dance, based on the music and words of the *versiador* and *tocador*, cause the transformation of the behavior of the bride's *ayllu*.

Anthony Seeger (1979) suggests that the non-speech features of “music”, seen as a privileged system of communication, should not be approached as an isolated subject of study for understanding the phenomena occurring in the field. Seeger argues that “music” as a medium of communication not only “communicates” through musical sounds, but also through other forms that are directly associated with the ritual context where music is being performed, like place and time. The author also considers the role of corporal movements or dance as a language that allows such communication.

Once the *padrinos* and *compañías* have returned to the center and stopped dancing, as the words of the *versiador* determined, they hug each other and again take their hats off to acknowledge the people's appreciation of their dance. At this point the ritual dance is over.





Figure 16: Performing the *Pactachina* dance<sup>37</sup>

The entire “plea” dance took about 45 minutes, after which the young couple to be married (Gabriel and Antonela) finally entered the ritual circle. At this point, what I call the “integration period” began. During this part of the ritual, the couple did not dance; they just stood next to each other in front of the *padrinos* and *compañas*, waiting for the words of the *versificador*. Despite the fact that the whole *Pactachina* was organized for their marriage, the role of the couple itself was secondary. Before the ritual started, the young couple obeyed the words of the *padrinos* or parents (individually from each *ayllu*) who told them what to do or how to proceed. They lacked social status among their kin, having little authority

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<sup>37</sup> Copy the following link to see the *Pactachina* music in Tiwinza  
<https://youtu.be/YLUKsl1-9zI>

or agency in their *ayllu*. This put them in a liminal place according to Kichwa cosmology (Lepri, 2005; M. Uzendoski, 2005).

During the "integration period" members of both *ayllus* finally began to communicate with words and expressions like kisses on cheeks, hugs, and handshakes, without having to express arrogance on one side, or humility on the other. The groom and his parents were led by his *padrinos* and made to kneel in front of members of the bride's *ayllu*. There, on their knees, they asked each member of the bride's family for advice and requested to be part of their *ayllu*. This act was repeated with almost every single member of the bride's *ayllu* and took about two hours to complete. Throughout the "integration period," the *versidor* and the *tocador* continued singing the verses that were created as instructions for the member of both *ayllus* should proceed.



**Figure 17: *Padrino* and *compaña* kneeling in front of the bride's parents**

Once the "integration period" was completed, the music ended. I identify this musical silence as the "union period." During this period, the *versiator* thanked everybody for listening to his music, and improvised a prayer for the future well being of the new couple. People began to hug members of the other *ayllu* and applaud. As the day ended, I began to see the *versiator's* song as a type of thread, weaving two pieces of cloth together, represented by the violin and the drum. The violin, with its soft, melodic sound, represented the humility of the groom's *ayllu* at requesting acceptance from the bride's *ayllu*. The drum, with its sharp energetic sound, represented the power and strength of the bride's *ayllu*. Throughout the ceremony, the *versiator's* words worked to tie the opposing

*ayllus* of the bride and groom together. As the ceremony ended and the music stopped, the dualism of opposing sounds (and *ayllus*) ceased to exist. Once woven together, what was left was one union, between the *ayllus*, and the lone voice of the *versidor's* prayer for future well-being. At this point of the day, the role of "traditional music" identified by Alvarado, ended.

The re-creation of traditional rituals during the *Pactachina* attempted to be a constant process of communication between the human and the non-human realms. In this sense, every single practice developed for the realization of the ceremony (cooking, drinking, gifts, sharing, music, dance, and even verbal actions) must be approached as processes of transforming "kin" (as a social network), and "place" (as a source for cultural continuity) (Solomon, 2000).

Following the traditional forms, the afternoon and part of the night of the *Pactachina* ceremony went on with the practice of the food, drink, and gift rituals between the grooms with the bride's *ayllus*. While the night started taking place of the day light in the Amazonia, and after food was served, and gifts were offered, the DJ came up with some cumbias and other tropical music that suggested the beginning of the social dance. As it had been during the whole day, and the day before, beer and other alcoholic drinks continued to be offered, although this time it was the bride's *ayllu* who served. The alcohol began to influence peoples' attitudes. After the rituals' creation, they began to hug and laugh, gradually changing the atmosphere into one of friendship.

Studies suggest that the importance of the consumption of alcoholic drinks as a medium of communication between humans with a ancestors is always pertinent among indigenous people (Arguedas, 1998; Butler, 2006; Praet, 2009;

Solomon, 2000). Victor Fuks (1988) suggests that for the Waiãpi from the Brazilian Amazon, intoxication is necessary for visualizing the context of the ritual performance. According to the author, Waiãpi drinking habit during celebrations is not just for pleasure, but also for introducing themselves into an altered state of consciousness, from which state elements that comprise the ritual context acquire a "real" meaning. In this sense the appreciation of music, and dance is only perceived under the effects of high levels of intoxication, for the Waiãpi "the best musicians and dancers, were also the best drinkers" (p. 152). Barbara Butler (2006), who studied the indigenous people from Otavalo in the Ecuadorian highlands, suggests that the consumption of alcohol, seen as a sacred substance provided by the gods, is understood as a continuous field where culture is being made and re-made. Since for the Otavalo, reciprocity represents the most important value, the offer and consumption of alcohol "carries a special capacity to mediate between human and spirits, containing and activating the force of life," (p. 83).

In the cultural context of the *Pactachina* ritual, the ingestion of large amounts of alcohol during the whole day could be therefore understood as a constant field of social transformation, and cultural continuity. Although it did not influence the skill of traditional ritual music or of the ritual dancing, since neither the musicians nor the dancers drank while they performed, it influenced especially the forms of how the nuclear parts of both *ayllus* were related to and served each other during the rest of the celebration. The bride, the moms, sisters, and cousins drank together while the groom, fathers, brothers, and cousins, etc.,

shared from their bottles too. But such division was constantly recalled by Runa Paju music for the social dance.

What I saw during this ritual celebration is that for the Kichwa, consuming large amounts of alcoholic drinks (beer, rum, cheap wine, sugar cane alcohol) helps to create an atmosphere of kinship, in which the more people drank, the closer and happier they felt. The influence of alcoholic beverages in the cultural and social behavior among Kichwa-Quijos and many other Amazonian societies opened up an important subject of study. I consider that a continuation of the investigation of this practice among the Kichwa-Quijos is necessary.

Although the influence of alcohol had opened up different levels of relatedness between both *ayllus*, and the night was already a few hours upon us, the social dance had not yet begun. My lack of familiarity with the local music and my focus on the "traditional music" drove me to underestimate the importance of the Runa Paju group at the beginning of their performance. I underestimated its influence on people's behavior as they switched from a state of apathy during the DJ's music, to a state of euphoria when Runa Paju music began. Influenced by the beer and people's happiness, and without my cameras, I decided to join the dancing part of the celebration. The sets of this music, played on an electronic keyboard, a *guiro*, and sung in Kichwa, were long, and as long the group played, people seemed to feel satisfied. Nancy, Gloria and I left the party late, at around 12:30 am, and the people continued dancing. The enthusiasm of those who stayed at the party somehow revealed that the celebration was not going to end soon. That experience made me more appreciative and understanding of Runa Paju music. I also realized that music and dance in Kichwa celebrations were not

disconnected from intoxication with beer. The whole context was important for understanding the ways in which the Kichwa appreciate such music as part of their culture and identity.

### ***Tapuna-Boda***

The *Tapuna-Boda* ceremony, which took place in Jondachi, had elements that were quite different from the “traditional” elements of the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza. Although *Tapuna*, *Pactachina*, and *Boda* are understood as three different ceremonies of the Kichwa-Quijos traditional wedding ritual, there are certain elements that they share, especially between the *Pactachina* and *Boda*. According to Silverio Grefa, traditional music from *versidor*, drummer, and violinist is necessary for both of these ceremonies. On this occasion in Jondachi, the *Tapuna* ceremony, which is traditionally the first of the three wedding ceremonies, and the *Boda* ceremony, which is traditionally the last, were collapsed into one ceremony that took place in one day. Additionally, the *matrimonio* ceremony, which is the Catholic wedding ceremony, was also celebrated before the *Tapuna* and *Boda* rituals. During the *Tapuna-Boda* ritual, the presence of “traditional music” was absent, or at least, the type of “traditional music” that Pablo Alvarado had identified when explaining about local musical transformations among Kichwa-Quijos. When I asked Ramón Alvarado if a *versidor* would be playing, he responded: “We haven’t prepared that music. There are no *versidores* or musicians in this community that have the skills for doing such a thing. It seems that that tradition disappeared a long time ago here and from most of the surrounding communities as well. But we have hired a DJ

and also a Kichwa-Tropical (*Runa Paju*)<sup>38</sup> music group from Archidona, and they are responsible for making people dance and feel happy.” At this point of my experience among Quijos, I knew that there were a few things that really made locals feel satisfied during a celebration party, lots of drinks and good music for dancing to draw people together and make them happy.

I arrived in Jondachi from Cuenca the morning of November 26<sup>th</sup>, the same day that the *Tapuna-Boda* ritual was celebrated, to which I had been invited a few days before my family and I left Jondachi. The couple celebrating their wedding was Lourdes Tanguila and Jaime Alvarado, who lived four houses down from my host family. Although I was invited to the celebration, I asked Ramón Alvarado (Jaime Alvarado's older brother) to allow me to videotape and photograph the event. Since it was the first time a *Tapuna-Boda* was celebrated in Jondachi, Ramón accepted my request. He and the couple also asked me for a copy of the video, both for themselves and also for the community records. I was finally able to deliver these copies in a visit to Jondachi in May 2013. I think it is interesting that in this case, prior to the *Tapuna-Boda*, the couple was already living together and had a baby; in the past, a couple in this situation would have already participated in the *Tapuna-Boda* in order to be able to begin living together.

As the Quijos tradition demands, the celebration took place in the bride's community, and it was the groom's *ayllu* that was in charge of all the preparation that such rituals require. In this celebration, I identified Ramón Alvarado as the "key author," a 38-year old Quijos, and cultural and political *dirigente*. Ramón is

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<sup>38</sup> Copy the following link to see the *Runa Paju* music in Jondachi.  
<https://youtu.be/6EoX-PcQSe4>



not only Jaime's older brother but also the selected person for being the godfather of the couple. In a conversation with Berna Alvarado, my host father, about his memories of wedding rituals, he told me that the godfather's role was decisive for the success of the whole process of the wedding ritual. In contrast to what Spiller (1974) has argued about the role of the godfather, Berna said that "the groom's *padrino* was usually the same person his parents chose to be his godfather during the groom's baptism as an infant. In previous times, no decisions could be made without the godfather's approval. When parents thought about finding a woman for their son to marry, they discussed it with the godfather, who needed to approve whatever decision they made. Also, he had to deal with the organization and coordination of everything that was required for the celebration, such as hunting for the food, and contracting of the musicians, a *versidor*..." But as Berna said, that was before, in the distant past, but nowadays things are certainly different.

Ramón gave importance not only to the "old tradition" for itself, but also to modern social and cultural forms of organization. Since traditional wedding rituals and other cultural practices had been absent for many years in Jondachi, but not from its collective memory, Ramón was working to find the link between the memories and "behaviors" of the older generation and modern codes (social and cultural) that new generations use in everyday life. He had the capacity to collapse the differences between old-time memories and present day cultural and social practices. He also had the agency to influence "families" and "society" in the re-creation of a new sense of understanding their ethnic identity. Both of these things were present in the development of the *Tapuna-Boda* ritual.

The groom's *ayllu* had reserved the local school's large covered court to use for the ceremony. Members of the groom's family had arrived early in the morning from the community of Pungarayacu, about an hour's drive away, and were in charge of organizing the day's rituals. Inside a wooden shelter located next to the covered court, women prepared the feast. Big aluminum pots of chicken soup, and rice, yucca, smoked tilapia fish, two hundred roasted chickens bought from poultry farms, and fresh beef were the meals that would ritually draw together kin. Behind the covered court a group of men prepared the sugar-cane alcoholic drink called *guarapo*. They mixed big buckets of sugar cane juice with pure cane alcohol until the mixture was just right. Each man tested the drink until everyone agreed it was ready. They prepared at least five twelve-gallon tanks of this drink to serve throughout the day, in addition to the beer and other alcoholic drinks that came as gifts. *Chicha*, the "traditional" wedding drink that scholars often describe as being essential to these rituals (M. Uzendoski, 2005; Whitten, 1976), was not prepared for the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi. As I explained previously, nowadays people rarely make alcoholic *chicha* for these celebrations because it involves a huge effort to plant, harvest, and prepare such large quantities of yucca, the main ingredient for this type of drink. The groom's *ayllu* spent most of the day preparing food and drink. Lourdes, the bride, never participated in the preparation of the food, which was the responsibility of the groom's *ayllu*. Instead, she stood at the entrance to the roofed court and welcomed the arriving guests while accepting their gifts.

While Jaime fixed the floor of an old wood stage in the covered court, Ramón dedicated himself to installing the electrical and lighting equipment. Many

light bulbs, hung on a white cable, were put around the stage and in the cooking area. Since Ramón was the main authority, everything that was done was according to his advice. I therefore directed my questions to him. I asked Ramón if "traditional music" from *versíador* was about to be present for the Boda but he told me that no, unfortunately such music had disappeared from Jondachi, and even in the communities that surround it. During the time I spent in Jondachi for my fieldwork, I never saw any individuals dedicated to musical performance in any of the four genres of Kichwa-Quijos music.

Instead of "traditional music," a DJ and Runa Paju group from Archidona had been hired for the musical part of the *Tapuna-Boda* ritual. This was not the first time that a Runa Paju group was about to play in Jondachi, but it was the first time that it was going to be part of this ritual in town. The DJ arrived at noon, and played techno music, *reguetón* and *bachata* to give an air of festivity among the groom's *ayllu*, who kept preparing everything for the feast. Gifts and beer boxes were also brought to the covered court. The sugar cane alcoholic drink *guarapo* was offered to the people who were bringing these things as sign of acknowledgement, while the activities in Lourdes' house were dedicated to welcoming the relatives who had come from distant communities.

The church bells rang at 4:00 pm, announcing the beginning of the wedding mass for the *Matrimonio*. Inside, the church was packed with people from Jondachi and members of the groom's *ayllu*. Jaime, the groom, stood nervously waiting for Lourdes, the bride, who arrived almost one hour late. It is important to mention that people in Jondachi are practicing Catholics. Every Sunday morning, they attend mass at the community church. The priest who

presided over the *Matrimonio* celebration came from the Cotundo Parish and was the same one that came every Sunday. He knew the couple and their infant daughter, as well as the people from the community. He spoke Kichwa, and therefore had some authority over people's behavior. During the almost hour-long mass, the Priest advised the couple, telling them to respect one another, and how important it is for them to go through the Catholic ceremony, "God is the one who blesses this union, and no one will be able to split you apart," he said. The priest made a request for alcoholic control during the celebration too, as a way of critiquing Quijos forms of party celebrations.

Throughout the *matrimonio* celebration, a guitar player and three young singers performed their music. I was very familiar with many of the songs played during the mass, except that all of them were sung in Kichwa, rather than Spanish as I used to hear it. As traditional Catholic wedding ceremonies require, rings were placed on the couples' fingers, representing the union of the couple and the families. After mass ended, friends and relatives stood outside of the church to welcome the couple into their new married life.

After the mass was over, all of us were invited to the covered court where the *Tapuna-Boda* ceremonies were about to be performed. In the covered court, cigarettes and the *guarapo* drink were served to welcome the guests. Meanwhile, the groom, his parents, and his *padrinos* walked around shaking the hands of all those present as a sign of gratitude. Multiple cases of beer and other presents, especially the bigger ones, were located strategically in front of the stage, and represented various kinship ties and abundance.

After people had filled most of the seats around the covered court, the *Tapuna* ritual began. The MC was Ramón, the godfather. Ramón ordered step by step the ways in which things will take place. It began with “the request,” which was led by the father of the groom, and followed by his *padrinos*, and then the groom himself. They kneeled in front of the members of the bride’s *ayllu*, and, with their heads down, looking at the floor, took the hands of each of the members of the bride’s *ayllu*. Through this ritual, they told each member of the bride’s *ayllu* that they would be committed to welcoming and taking care of Lourdes as she became part of their *ayllu*. It is interesting that even though Lourdes and Jaime had already been living together for a number of years and had a child, it was only in this ritual moment when the two *ayllus* began to unite, and recognized Jaime and Lourdes relationship as one of a married couple and kin.

During with the *Tapuna* ceremony the DJ played alternating a set of Colombian cumbias and Runa Paju as the musical background. People did not seem to be disappointed by that. After about an hour of the “request” part, Ramón announced that the *Tapuna* ritual was over. People applauded and hugged each other, obviously happy that the ceremony had gone well. Ramón, throughout the course of the ritual, continuously emphasized that the ceremony that was taking place was part of their Quijos traditions. He thanked everyone, and invited the head members of both *ayllus* to the stage to publically express their gratitude over the microphone. In addition to the relatives of the couple, one of the people invited to speak was Aníbal Tangulia, the current president of the CKAS. Each one spoke about how happy they were that they had carried out such an

important traditional ritual, and how they were proud to be re-creating and transmitting Quijos traditions and cultures. They also talked about their joy of now being part of the other's *ayllu*. After the last person spoke, the *Boda* ritual ceremony began.

Ramón told me that the performance of music for the *Tapuna* ritual was not needed: "Traditionally, *Tapuna* was not celebrated with music. It was a ritual performed only with the several persons from both *ayllus*. According to tradition only plantain alcohol was the main element carried... That is why we did not worry about traditional music in the *Tapuna*, but for the *Boda* it is important." According to Theodore Macdonald (1999) the *Bura (boda)* ceremony is "nearly identical to the *Pactachina*" (p. 24), but in Jondachi, neither "traditional music" nor the *padrinos* dance part, were performed for the *Boda*.

The performance of the *Boda* ritual occurred in three stages. First, the parents of the groom's *ayllu* offered food to the bride's *ayllu* in the middle of the covered court. Tasting the soup, the chicken, the fish, and the meat was necessary before accepting it and sharing it with the rest of the people. After the approval of the food, hugs and handshakes were exchanged to complete the first part. From now on, the food distribution depended on the bride's *ayllu*. The level of the relationship determined the portion on the plate. After the last plate was handed out, the gift-giving part began. As the second part of the ceremony, Lourdes and Jaime received presents from all the people that were there. The presents varied in size and price. They ranged from a refrigerator to rolls of toilet paper. The big presents, which were already sitting in the middle of the covered court, were given first, and after that the rest of them. Once the gift-giving part

was over, the third part of the ceremony began, which was the offering and handing out of the drinks. Many cases of beer, cheap wine in boxes, rum, and bottles of artisanal sugar cane alcohol that were piled in front of the stage were given to the couple by men on the groom's side. The couple immediately distributed the alcohol, more to groups than to individuals. During the course of the *Boda* ceremony, it was interesting to notice that kin closeness was represented by the amount of food or drink given, but this was true mostly on the bride's side; for example, in the first part, the biggest plates of food were given to Lourdes' brothers and sisters, and they in turn offered the biggest gifts. In the third part, beer was distributed among groups, and here as well the number of bottles of beer was determined by the kind of relationship.

Glasses of beer were shared between everyone, and as is the habit among Quijos, it needed to be drunk in a flash, so they could keep sharing with the rest of the people. In a matter of fifteen minutes, people's demeanor, strongly influenced by the levels of alcohol, changed from one of shyness to one of sociability. At the culmination of the *Boda* ritual, Ramón invited the couple and their closer relatives to begin the social dance, "*Kai sumac tushunami kan 'rukushito' kasna nishami kantanun*" ("Next, you are invited to join the dance of the autochthonous song called 'Dear Grandfather'"). The Runa Paju group from Archidona city *Sacha Uris* played this song. The group was made by four musicians one singer, electric keyboard player, drum set player and a guiro player. From around 9:00 pm, until the early hours of the next day, the music of this group made people in Jondachi feel happy and dance. I didn't hear the DJ play

again, only the group sang their repertory and also songs from other well-known groups.

During the social dance part, people's emotions were caught up by the Runa Paju music. Neither the *cumbia*, the *bachata* nor the *regueton* played earlier by the DJ provoked such a response. Ramón's usual communication used words to emphasize Quijos ethnic identity. However, in the Runa Paju music, he found an efficient medium to make people feel what he really meant. "This is our music, this is our culture, this is our Quijos identity," he said in a confident voice, while people applauded. An analysis of the Runa Paju music is pertinent in order to understand the role of words for communicating cultural values and tradition in the context of ethnic creation. I'll explain my approach through the analysis of two Runa Paju songs *Rukushito* and *Rukuyaya Kawsaymanta*, both performed in Jondachi during the *Tapuna-Boda*.

### **RUKUSHITO**

*Rukushitomi tukuni kungurimuku nanachihuan.*  
*Rukushitomi tukuni kungurimuku nanachihuan.*

*Chaupi ñambibi tiarisha huma shitura apirini.*  
*Chaupi ñambibi tiarisha huma shitura apirini.*

*Paikuna paktamunga iyarishami tiani.*  
*Paikuna paktamunga iyarishami tiani.*

*Chaupi ñambibi tiarisha ashuatami upiani.*  
*Chaupi ñambibi tiarisha ashuatami upiani.*

*Rukushitomi tukuni kungurimuku nanachihuan.*  
*Rukushitomi tukuni kungurimuku nanachihuan.*



(*RUKUSHITO* Translation)

Grandfather, I'll stay here until my knees begin to hurt.  
Grandfather, I'll stay here until my knees begin to hurt.

In the middle of my way home I sat holding my head.  
In the middle of my way home I sat holding my head.

Until everyone comes, I will sit here to think.  
Until everyone comes, I will sit here to think.

In the middle of my way home I sat drinking the *chicha*.  
In the middle of my way home I sat drinking the *chicha*.

Grandfather, I'll stay here until my knees begin to hurt.  
Grandfather, I'll stay here until my knees begin to hurt.<sup>39</sup>

### ***RUKUYAYA KAWSAYMANTA***

*Rukuyaya kawsayra taripasha rikusha, tuta,  
puncha yuyarisha llakirisha kawsanchi.  
Rukuyaya kawsayra taripasha rikusha, tuta,  
puncha yuyarisha llakirisha kawsanchi,  
guacashalla kawsanchi.*

*Pukunawara apisha, pishkuwara wanchisha  
karak yaya chingaripi llakirisha kawsanchi.  
Pukunawara apisha, pishkuwara wanchisha  
karak yaya chingaripi llakirisha kawsanchi,  
guacashalla kawsanchi.*

*Lumuwara yanusha, uchuwara karasha,  
kawsak mama chingaripi llakirisha kawsanchi,  
Lumuwara yanusha, uchuwara karasha,  
kawsak mama chingaripi llakirisha kawsanchi,  
guacashalla kawsanchi.*

*Karan ñanvi purisha, pingullusha purik yaya chingaripi  
yuyarisha llakirisha kawsanchi.  
Karan ñanvi purisha, pingullusha purik yaya chingaripi  
yuyarisha llakirisha kawsanchi, takinchi.*

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<sup>39</sup> Gonzalo Alvarado made the transcription and translation to Spanish from my recordings of the *Tapuna-Boda* music in Jondachi. I made the English translation.

*Napu marka nishkapimi ruku yaya kawsauskay, pingulluwa wankarguandi tushurisha kawsauskay.*

*Napu marka nishkapimi ruku yaya kawsauskay, //pingulluwa wankarguandi tushurisha kawsauskay//*

*Kuna pacha churiguna kungarisha kawsaychi, mishu takinallowami tushurisha kawsanchi.*

*Kuna pacha churiguna kungarisha kawsaychi, mishu takinallowami tushurisha kawsasha, mishu takinallowami tushurisha kawsanchi.*

*Kuna puncha churiguna wangurisha llamunchi rukuyaya takinara taripasha rikunga.*

*Kuna puncha churiguna wangurisha llamunchi rukuyaya tushunara taripasha rikunga.*

*Rukuyaya takinara taripasha rikunga.*

(*RUKUYAYA KAWSAYMANTA* Translation)

Every morning, every night, remembering our grandfather's life we feel saddened. Every morning, every night, remembering our grandfather's life we feel saddened and we are crying.

We are saddened by the absence of our grandfather who used to feed us hunting birds with his "bodoquera" in the forest. Holding his "bodoquera," we began to feel the absence of our grandfather who used to feed us hunting birds in the forests, that is why we are crying.

We are saddened because of the absence of our grandmother who used to cook yucca and chili peppers. We are saddened because the absence of our grandmother who used to cook yucca and chili peppers. That is why we are crying.

Wandering on the roads walked by our grandfather, remembering him playing his "pingullo," we began to feel his absence, and that is why we are crying. Wandering on the roads walked by our grandfather, remembering him playing his "pingullo," we began to feel his absence, and that is why we are crying and singing.

In the Napo Province our grandfather used to live, playing songs on his "pingullo" and "rondin." In Napo Province our grandfather used to live playing his traditional songs on the "pingullo" and "rondin." He played his traditional songs on his "rondin" and "pingullo."

Youth are forgetting our native music, and they just like to listen modern music.  
Youth are forgetting our native music, and they just like to listen modern music.  
They are enjoying, dancing and celebrating with this new music.

The new generations are joining together to learn the music of our grandparents.  
The new generations are joining together to learn the music of our grandparents,  
and cultivate their songs and dances.<sup>40</sup>

At first glance, music of Runa Paju genre follows the conventional formulas of Kichwa-Quijos "traditional music." The preferred literary forms are Kichwa coplas. The lyrics contain crafted verses, often with cultural and social commentary that perpetuates the Amazonian ancestral and religious context, reintroduce local traditions in several customs (Adinkrah, 2008; Hill, 1993). Notice that in both songs, every second line is a repetition of the line above, as a form of emphasis in the lyrical message; the text is always in the past tense. The way that the Quijos remember the past is represented first in the figure of the *rukuyaya*, grandfather as the carrier of the knowledge and tradition. In the song *Rukushito* the new generation requests the return of the *rukuyaya* for the purpose of teaching everyone the traditions. In the process of waiting, in the song it is said that "while they wait they would drink the *chicha*." The song also mentions that their head is going to hurt after drinking the *chicha*, as a way to represent that they are getting drunk. Here two forms of Quijos traditions are represented, one in the figure of the *chicha* and two in the act of consumption and intoxication; but also there is another form that intrinsically is expressed, which is the state of consciousness as the result of the intoxication. For the Quijos the act of

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<sup>40</sup> Gonzalo Alvarado made the transcription and translation to Spanish from my recordings of the *Tapuna-Boda* music in Jondachi. I made the English translation.

intoxication is considered in ritual contexts as a way to acquire knowledge from elders and spirits, and this “vision” is expressed through the song by the arrival of the *rukuyaya*.

In the song *Rukuyaya Kawsaymanta*, the sequence of the narrative is similar, as is the verse composition. Even though it is a longer song, the phrases are sung in a form similar to *Rukushito*. Here, the narration described in the first verse only concerns the death of the grandfather. This remembrance becomes involved in the rest of the verse: past traditions that the *rukuyaya* used to carry out as a way to express identity and the importance of being among kin. In the second and third parts, the song involves themes of ancestral forms of living, like hunting, food production, and conviviality in the context of gender roles in everyday life. The lyrics recall the grandfather as a good hunter and the grandmother as a good cook, both complementarily able to feed, physiologically and spiritually, the family (generations). The fourth and fifth phrases involve music in the context of its traditional production. The fifth part reminds listeners how important the elders considered the every-day practice of music, and also mentions the kinds of instruments that were played, such as the *rondín*, or flute. In the sixth and seventh, the lyrics touch on how the new generation of the Quijos lacks of musical knowledge, ending with a hopeful announcement that this new generation must be aware about how important the reconstruction of the tradition is in the claim of ethnic authenticity and place embodiment.

The inhabitants of Jondachi reintroduced the *Tapuna-Boda* according to a traditional pattern. The ritual unfolded not only from the early hours of the morning at the wedding, but also from the year before when Ramón decided to

encourage his brother, his brother's wife, and other relatives to re-introduce this Quijos ritual. It was a ritual that had been absent for many years in the cultural and social dynamic of Jondachi, but present in the collective memory of elder inhabitants. Since neither music nor musicians of ancestral music existed in Jondachi, residents used Runa Paju as a way of expressing their identity, both traditional and contemporary. As in the case of Miguel's graduation party (presented in my first chapter), where the ritual of *compadrazgo* was introduced as a moment that recalled ancestral tradition, Runa Paju in the *Tapuna-Boda* represents culture and tradition as an aspect of the every-day life of the contemporary Quijos.

### **Comparison of the Ceremonies in Tiwinza and Jondachi**

Prior to both the *Pactachina* that took place in Tiwinza, and the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, the bride and groom's *ayllus* came to agreements about how much and what type of food the groom's *ayllu* would prepare for the rituals. During both rituals, the groom's *ayllu* spent the entire day preparing all of the food that the bride's *ayllu* had requested. The fact that the groom's *ayllu* followed through on their agreement about the food was a symbol of their *ayllu's* commitment and sense of responsibility towards the bride's *ayllu*. Food preparation, or, as Uzendoski (2004b, 2005) states, food "transformation," is one of the most common traditions that persists and is practiced today in other ritual celebrations among Kichwa-Quijos. The ritual act of cooking and serving food is gendered: the women of the groom's *ayllu* "transform" the raw food into a delicious meal to satisfy the desires of the bride's *ayllu*. However, the women of

the bride's *ayllu* are the ones who serve this food. They distribute it according to the strength of kinship ties; those closest to them receive the largest amounts of food first, thus symbolizing and strengthening respect within their own *ayllu*.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting to compare the order of precedence in the serving of food in Tiwinza and Jondachi. While in the *Pactachina* in Tiwinza the groom's *ayllu* had prepared local river fish, organic local chicken, and hunted peccary meat (animal resembling wild pig) to give to the bride's *ayllu* as part of the ritual meal agreement, for the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi the groom's *ayllu* prepared farmed tilapia fish, chicken bought from poultry farms, and beef. I was told that traditionally, the bride's father requested that the meat offered for the *Pactachina* or *Boda* needed to be hunted in the forest by members of the groom *ayllu*. Since hunting was exclusively a male activity, the request for wild meat by the bride's father represents a challenge to the ability of the groom, and the groom's *ayllu* to provide a good future for his daughter. The practice of hunting is much more common in the lower areas of Napo where Tiwinza is located than in the upper region where Jondachi lies. Despite this fact, the meat offered during the *Pactachina* in *Tiwinza* came from a group of Huaorani (another ethnic group from the Ecuadorina Amazon) who dedicate themselves to this activity more than the Kichwa do, and provided the peccary meat and river fish.

After the women of the bride's *ayllu* had served food to everyone, the gift-giving ritual began. In both the *Pactachina* and *Tapuna-Boda* rituals, there was an abundance of gifts, varying from refrigerators and stoves to machetes and

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<sup>41</sup> For more on satisfying desires and strengthening social relationships through the making and serving of food, see M. Uzendoski (2004b); (2005).

rolls of toilet paper. Just as with the distribution of food, the size of the gifts represented kinship ties; the larger the gift, the closer related the person was to the couple. I was told in both the *Pactachina* and *Tapuna-Boda* rituals that gift-giving was understood as an exchange of effort. Since the cost of putting on these rituals was so high, the monetary value of the gifts that the guests gave represented their gratitude for being invited to the ritual. Both Velizario Shiguango, the father of the groom in Tiwinza, and Ramón Alvarado, the *padrino* of the *Tapuna-Boda* in Jondachi, told me that that expenses for the celebrations were considered an investment that would later be gained back through the gifts that the guests gave, since there were so many gifts and some that were quite expensive. This phenomenon is obviously a consequence of the modern market, yet it is now very present in Kichwa-Quijos celebrations.

In both the *Pactachina* and the *Tapuna-Boda*, people distributed the alcoholic drinks towards the end of the rituals. In this case, the distribution did not follow that of the distribution of food; rather, cases of beer and *guarapo* were given to groups of people instead of individuals, although the drinks were always given to the person who appeared to be the head of each group. If the food distribution followed an order (from left to right or vice versa) and concentrated special attention on the amount of food according to relatedness, the distribution of drinks concentrated on hierarchy. Here, the head of the group was someone who received higher levels of respect in relation to the other people in the group. For example, if the group consisted of the bride's brothers, the cases of alcohol were given to the oldest. Drink distribution was also gendered. While food and its

distribution were considered to be the domain of women, drinks were always distributed first to men.

The main alcoholic drink that nowadays is consumed during parties and other social moments among Kichwa-Quijos is beer, although cane sugar alcohol is also consumed but in lesser quantities. Perhaps this preference for drinking beer is because the process of getting intoxicated with beer is gradual (slow), similar to what would happen if three-day-fermented manioc beer were drunk. This gradual process of intoxication allows people's celebration and crossing over into a different, altered state of consciousness by the effect of beer intoxication, to be a more continuing and enjoyable process. Even though research in Amazonian communities has suggested the importance of *chicha* (especially manioc beer), as the symbolic traditional drink from the societies of this area, the elder Kichwa-Quijos always remembered their past and associated it with the production of "plantain alcohol."

It is often said and thought that among Amazonian societies the presence of *chicha* (in its alcoholic stage) is abundant and constantly consumed for intoxication. Such an idea is always the reason for tourists' disappointment when they see that local people instead of drinking and getting drunk with *chicha* are instead drinking beer bought from stores. During my fieldwork I never saw anyone getting intoxicated by drinking fermented *chicha* despite the ubiquitous and exotic image of Amazonians drinking *chicha*. Neither in Tiwinza for the *Pactachina*, nor in Jondachi for *Tapuna-Boda*, was *chicha* served as the main traditional drink.



Silverio Grefa told me that traditionally, people perform music only during the *Pactachina* and *Boda* rituals, but not the *Tapuna* ritual. During the *Tapuna* and *Boda* in Jondachi, for both rituals the music was provided by the Disco Movil, but only as background. During “the request” of the *Tapuna*, the DJ played Colombian *Cumbia* in the background; during the *Boda*, the DJ played a mix of *cumbia*, *regueton*, and techno and pop music. Mostly, the DJ played music during the interludes, as well as at the end of distribution of the food, motivating the guests to dance. At around 8:00pm the Runa Paju group from Archidona began to play. When the music of the Runa Paju began to sound at night, all people could think about was the music; they were overjoyed to hear it and to dance to it. They were helped, of course, by the constant consumption of beer, rum, and cane alcohol. The music and dancing lasted throughout the night.

In both communities, people recreated traditional wedding rituals with the idea of “returning” to more ancestral traditions. In these wedding rituals, people used what they considered “traditional” music as a way of strengthening their identity. In Tiwinza, the “traditional” music of the *versidor* made the unifying *ayllus* and community feel more Kichwa. In Jondachi, the Runa Paju music made the *ayllus* and community feel more Quijos. For both communities, similar ancestral wedding traditions were reinvented to solidify kin and identity. Music was key to the reaffirmation of identity and increased with intoxication. Despite the similarities of the ancestral wedding rituals being reinvented, the result was the strengthening of the two different identities: Kichwa and Quijos, and music played a fundamental role.

## Conclusion

On December 23th, 2013, while I was working in my house in Cuenca, I received an email from Gonzalo. It said that his mother Teresa, my son's godmother (*comadre*), had passed away. A car had hit her on her way back home after working in the garden. "There was nothing to do, she died immediately ..." Gonzalo wrote. After I finished reading his email, a cold sensation paralyzed my body. I remembered it clearly because I had been looking at some pictures of Teresa a few days before, thinking about which ones I could use for the first chapter of my thesis. I remembered because I could not decide which picture to use because each one captured Teresa the way she was everyday—always happy, and always in charge of something. I remembered because I had reread the introduction of my old first chapter, which is now in my introduction. There I talk about Teresa and how she taught me several things about her every day life, such as guayusa tea preparation, religion, and Kichwa music, among many other things. All these things were part of the traditional life that was disappearing among the Kichwa and Quijos.

I did not share this sad news with my wife Allison or my son Lucas immediately. I stayed quiet for a few hours, thinking about the value of my thesis now that Teresa was not here. I stayed quiet, thinking about the idea that the moments that I was looking at her pictures, reading and writing about her, were the sort of moments created in order to say *kaya gama* (see you later). According to Kichwa and Quijos beliefs, a person who dies never really leaves, because her or his spirit stays and lives in the memories of their relatives. Among the people

of my hometown in Cuenca, there is belief that when a person is about to die, their soul wanders around the places that she or he has visited in life. Teresa never came to Cuenca in person, but I am sure that she was in my house because of the spiritual connection that we created through our *compadrazgo* ritual. I began to see my thesis as an extension of our life, as a voice that echoed Teresa's memories and kinship.



**Figure 18: Teresa and Lucas sharing *chicha de chonta*.**

Reflecting on Teresa's life and the work in this thesis, I see that the kinship relationships that are formed or solidified through ritual, are ways for the Kichwa and Quijos to continue the cultural memory and traditions that the elders, like

Teresa, embody. Rituals are essential for the creation of those kinship relationships, so through their performance, or reinvention, they not only solidify relationships, but also continue, or reinstate traditions, which in turn reaffirm ethnic identity, whether it be Kichwa or Quijos.

Through my fieldwork, I found that music plays a vital role within the rituals, and that different communities use different styles of music in their rituals in order to reinforce their identity. In Tiwinza, the traditional *versidor* and violinist's presence and music endowed the Pactachina with tradition. The community could not have carried out the Pactachina ritual without their participation. People in Tiwinza continued to carry the cultural memory of traditional rituals, and of the music that was played in them. For them to perform the Pactachina ritual with the appropriate traditional music was a way for them to strengthen what they believed were Kichwa traditions, and solidified their Kichwa identity. The *versidor* and violinist created the traditional pathways needed in order to strengthen the kinship bonds between both the bride and groom's *ayllus*. By participating in this ritual that was guided by the musicians and their music, the community of Tiwinza revived a tradition that made them feel authentically Kichwa.

In Jondachi, there is no living collective memory of traditional music; nevertheless, community members are in an active process of reaffirming their Quijos identity based on tradition. The community revives these traditions in ways that differ significantly from the ways in which traditions are being revived in lower Napo. In Jondachi, traditional musicians have been absent for many years. Therefore, when the time came to recreate the tradition of *Tapuna-Boda*, they

sought tradition in a newer form of music, Runa Paju, which was more accessible to them. People in Jondachi were able to see and feel the Quijos tradition in this more modern musical genre. By using it as part of the recreation of their traditional rituals, they emphasized the traditional aspects of it and used it to reaffirm their Quijos identity.

Music that is seen as “non-traditional” by some groups is actually used to access tradition and ancestral ritual by other groups. People in Jondachi found tradition in the Runa Paju, a modern genre considered non-traditional by people in Tiwinza, and used it to reshape their historical Quijos identity. The Runa Paju music functioned as tradition in the revived rituals that were created for the purpose of strengthening kinship as well as identity. This type of music is then just as important for reconstructing cultural identity and tradition because of the way it is used and valued.

Music, I found, is an essential component to strengthening one’s identity in Napo. Through the different forms of live music, as I saw in the *Pactachina* and *Tapuna-Boda*, as well as broadcast music, with *La Voz del Napo* radio station, music connects people to each other and to their particular notions of tradition. People’s different perceptions of various types music and their choices of which music they use and when, influence how they perceive themselves and how they identify themselves. During this time of rapid cultural change, people are turning to music to create, reinforce, and contest their cultural identities in Napo.

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