



REVEALING SOCIAL SPACES: COMPARISON AND MODES OF RELATING IN LOWLAND PERU

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Resumo: Neste trabalho, examino diferentes tipos de atividades coletivas, enfatizando especificamente no trabalho e seus resultados. O movimento do argumento desse texto parte de uma comparação externa feita pelo presidente da Comunidade Nativa, Manuel Sarasara, em direção à comparação entre diferentes atividades na comunidade. Minha percepção é a de que a Comunidade Nativa, tomada como instituição social, econômica e política, oferece valor comparativo substancial para pensar as maneiras em que os Amawaka se tornaram bons cidadãos Peruanos, bem como como a Comunidade Nativa pode ser entendida como parte integral da construção do Estado-Nação. Adicionalmente, meu interesse consiste em investigar o que diferencia um tipo de atividade coletiva de outra, e como o trabalho pode ser entendido como significativo para o que pode-se entender como comunidade, num sentido que desafia a distinção entre moderno e tradicional.

Palavras-Chave: Amawaka, Peru, Comunidade Nativa, Comparação

Abstract: In this paper, I examine different kinds of collective activities with a specific emphasis on work and its outcomes. The movement of the argument comes from an external comparison made by native community president, Manuel Sarasara, inwards to a comparison of different activities within the Native Community. I believe that the Native Community as a social, economic and political institution offers substantial comparative value for thinking through the ways in which Amawaka people have become good Peruvian Citizens and that the Native Community might be understood as integral for the construction of the nation-state. Additionally, I am specifically interested in what makes one kind of collective activity different from another, and how effort, or work, might be understood as being significant for what it means to be a community in a sense that defies a distinction between modern and traditional

Keywords: Amawaka, Peru, Native Community. Comparison

Introduction

It was the dry season in the Ucayali region of Peru and the communal meeting of San Juan de Inuya was held at 11 in the morning, so the sun was high and strong. People began congregating in the communal building, a structure made from the same timber extracted from the community, where 12 small 4HP Chinese-made outboard motors had been layed out on the ground, one for each family then living in San Juan. Almost a year earlier a



community meeting was organized by the previous president, during which a contract was signed by all the adult members of the Native Community exchanging wood extracted from their territory for these motors. At that meeting each family was given a choice between receiving money (700 soles: \$225), a small outboard motor, or consolidating the funds to build a community health clinic.¹ There had not been much discussion and each family chose to receive a motor, signing their name, or marking their fingerprint, to make it official in the community register, or *libro de Actas*. The Acta, which officially defines the parameters of communal organization actually refers to three things: a notebook where documentation of meetings, agreements and issues are logged, an official map of the land held by the community, and a community charter that sets out the framework for the governing body of the community, including rules and regulations.

As the community members gathered that morning, waiting to receive their share of the wealth based on their membership in the Native Community, the president, Manuel Sarasara, began to speak. He started by reminding people who had sent the motors and offering an explanation for why the logger was not present, before shifting his focus towards the community and its members. He specifically emphasized the importance of working together and especially during the *faenas*, or community work parties. He said that everyone should participate, because if they do not then they will not be able to share in the distribution of wealth, such as the motors. He also stressed that once the motors were distributed each family would become responsible, and therefore must take good care of them. He compared the motors to people, and stated that they needed to be given their food, which is oil and gasoline.

He continued on to compare a *Comunidad Nativa*, or Native Community with a *caserio*, which is a village that is not recognized as indigenous, does not share collective ownership of wealth or resources, and where individual families have ownership of their own parcels of land. President Manuel Sarasara said,

In a Caserío they don't know how to work together. They live apart.
Being a *comunidad* means working together. When we have a work

¹ There is an important theme here regarding collectivity, trust and health. Certain things are left to the individual, and they will go to either the state clinic or, more likely, a healer in town. This also raises the point about the health visits, which are a part of community life, relations with government, and the making of subjects.



party everyone should participate because we live together in a *Comunidad*.²

This notion of working together is based on the ‘idea’ and ‘practical realization’ of a Native Community among Amawaka people on the Inuya River in eastern Peru (Hewlett 2017). It is, in short, the outcome of a collective history that entailed leaving the forest and becoming indigenous Peruvians, which is a seventy-year long process that has been well-documented (Capa and Huxley 1961; Carneiro 1964a, 1964b, 1970; Dole 1973, 1974a, 1974b, 1979, 1998; Hewlett 2014; Huxley and Capa 1964; Russell UM1, UM2; and Woodside 1981). Prior to the 1950s arrival of missionaries, the Amawaka at the headwaters of the Purus, Sepahua and Inuya Rivers lived in small, dispersed villages primarily comprised of closely-related kinspeople.

Among Amawaka people living in this area, history is often defined as the building of specific kinds of relations they have cultivated with one another (Hewlett 2014), as well as missionaries, government officials, loggers and other indigenous people (Hewlett 2017). Through their recent history they ‘learned to live together’ and value community life as both a product of this history and, as Manuel refers to, the ongoing work that this entails. In fact, one of the most striking aspects of life in these Amawaka Native Communities is that it is not taken as given, but requires effort, including reminders from leaders. I wanted to draw attention to this particular speech that calls forth this need to ‘work together’ in order to open a space to discuss what working together looks like and how it might be related to processes of becoming good Peruvian citizens. An interesting component of this speech is the differentiation Sarasara draws between a Native Community and a Caserio. In addressing this comparison by way of further comparison, I am building on Viveiros de Castro’s (2004) notion of perspectival anthropology. He poses the problem as such,

‘[D]irect comparability does not necessarily signify immediate translatability, just as ontological continuity does not imply epistemological transparency. How can we restore the analogies traced by Amazonian peoples within the terms of our own analogies? What happens to our comparisons when we compare them with indigenous comparisons?’ (2).

The problem for Viveiros de Castro is one of translation and he argues that comparison should be understood as a form of translation, rather than the other way around.

² This is a summary and translation of his remarks and is not a transcription as the meeting was not recorded.



In other words, we should compare ‘so as to translate’ and not in order to ‘examine’, ‘interpret’ or ‘explain’ (ibid. 3). Furthermore, I understand his this as signifying that one must do more than translate one ethnographic example into our terms, but actually setting out a ‘principle of translative comparison’ that takes as its ground difference rather than identity. In order to attempt to follow the line of argument this paper will examine different kinds of collective activities with a specific emphasis on work and its outcomes: *minga*, *faena*, communal meeting and *fiesta*. Thus the movement of the argument will be from an external comparison made by Sarasara inwards to a comparison of different activities within the Native Community. I believe that the Native Community as a social, economic and political institution offers substantial comparative value for thinking through the ways in which Amawaka people have become good Peruvian Citizens and that the Native Community might be understood as integral for the construction of the nation-state.

I am specifically interested in what makes one kind of collective activity different from another, and how effort, or work, might be understood as being significant for what it means to be a community in a sense that defies a distinction between modern and traditional. As I stated, Amawaka people experience living in their Native Communities as historically constituted and this includes the ways they relate with one another and with outsiders. It is my contention that the comparison of communities and *caserios* set out by the president offers an Amawaka theory of different forms of sociality that correspond to, but do not align with general western definitions of these different kinds of collectivities. In this short paper, I aim to offer some insights into this theory by focusing on the ways Amawaka people differentiate kinds of work. This paper is not meant as an explanation for his comparison as much as it is as an experiment in engaging with this comparison by using examples from Amawaka people’s ‘lived world’ (Gow 1991).

Part I

The model of the Native Community is based on the legal framework set out in the 1974 *Ley de Comunidades Nativas*, which gave indigenous people in lowland Peru titles to land and officially recognized their rights as juridical entities (Greene 2009). This law was part of a wider series of changes to the legal frameworks for citizenship in Peru, or



‘citizenship regimes’ (Yashar 2005), including the abolition of literacy laws that had denied many people recognition as full citizens.

Three of the most important results of this law are: recognition of indigenous communities as political entities with clear physical boundaries; the formation of a political system of elected officials, including a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, which is given charge of relating with such outsiders; and legal rights to make contracts with outside companies such as loggers. Additionally, legally recognized Native Communities are also eligible to have a government-funded bilingual primary school.³

Caserios also have schools, though not bilingual, and are almost always organized physically in the same way as Native Communities, but are comprised of families that may or not be indigenous to the amazon region.⁴ For example, both have a ‘center’, which might be considered public and therefore require some kind of collective responsibility. This area is where the school, public building, radio and soccer field are located. In short, there is a ‘public space’ that must be maintained through collective work, and this ‘center’ stands in contrast to personal spaces in both cases; however, a *caserio* is defined by privately held parcels of land where people build their houses and make their gardens while a Native Community is based on collective ownership of an entire territory. While ownership in a *caserio* is based on a title, ownership within a Native Community is based on the work of building a house, planting a garden, and clearing particular spaces that are by definition collectively owned, but personally maintained, while in a *caserio* this is not possible.

Faena

The Native Community was taken as an initial object of comparison by Manuel, so I want to ask whether the ground from which different collective activities emerge remains the same depending on context. The difference he drew was based on work and particularly working together during a *faena*. *Faenas* in San Juan are organized by the President and are most often held on Saturdays. In the morning, usually around 9am, an Amawaka teenager

³ This is a common reason for why indigenous people initially formed Native Communities (Gow 1991; Killick 2008).

⁴ And, while there are many *caserios* with populations that are ineligible to be considered Native Communities because they are not indigenous, some *Caserios* are comprised of populations as high as 85% indigenous, which choose to remain *caserios*.



blows the conch shell that signals to those living outside the central clearing that they should come and join the group. At this time, some of the people who live further upriver have already come down by canoe and sit on the platforms of the empty houses surrounding the football pitch, which marks the center of the village. All able adults are expected to participate and should bring their own machetes for the work. Both men and women participate as well as teenagers.

As more people arrive they begin to congregate in and around the house of the president who greets them and socializes as they wait for others. Prior to a start of official 'work' he may invite one or two 'friends' to have a bowl of manioc beer, but it is not served to all those present or who will participate. Many people wait in nearby houses, which are usually vacant due to the owners being away for work as loggers, in town, or for oil and gas companies. The absences of individuals who regularly attend are explained by family members or neighbors. When there is a large enough group, the president tells them what they are going to do that day. The most common reasons for work parties are to cut the grass on the football pitch, clear the area around the beach that functions as a port, or cut back brush that is slowly taking back the village.

These *faenas* are organized more frequently leading up to a large party or football tournament and it is the responsibility of the president to make sure the surroundings are presentable for the event. If a village does not look good, the visitors will see this as a lack of civilization, organization and group cohesion. If a village is *como monte*, like jungle, this will be used as an insult against the community as a whole. There is a strong competition between Native Communities to present themselves as being better, more civilized, more generous, and more organized than others.

The president and his wife work alongside the others and can be understood as leading the work, but it is done in the name of the Community so they cannot be considered the 'owners' as it is among some other groups (see McCallum 1990 for an alternative system of leadership), or during another type of work, which I discuss below. The places where food and drink are not served during similar forms of work are in *caserios*. In these *caserios*, every household is expected to carry out collective work, or else pay a fine, a system organized by the elected officials of the *caserio* that parallels the political system of a Native Community. The President of San Juan owns a house in this village and carries out



work there. He once told me that he had been traveling when the workday was held and when he returned he had to work so he would not have to pay the fine. Apparently, the payment of fines is becoming a more common form of punishment in some Native Communities (Brown 1984; Sarmiento Barletti 2011). In San Juan, people would not be expected to pay a fine for not participating, and the idea of them doing so would make no sense; however, those who do not participate may be denied the wealth that is earned through contracts with outsiders, as suggested in the speech of the president.

Internally, there are two significant differences between *faenas* and other similar activities. First, during *faenas* they do not serve manioc beer or food. Second, men and women work together, though sometimes in separate groups focusing on different areas. The president's wife will lead the women while the President will lead the men, both in terms of beginning first. Externally, the primary difference is that in *caserios* the *faena* is mandatory, which means that those who do not participate will either be asked to work at another time by themselves, or pay a fine. Neither of these kinds of compensation are possible in Native Communities, though people will complain that people do not participate as they should.

The lack of drinking and eating together during this specific kind of work is significant for several reasons. First, serving manioc beer is a common practice during similar events in other Native Communities in Peru, including among the Ashaninka (Sarmiento Barletti 2011), Aguaruna (Brown 1984), Cashinahua (McCallum 2000) and Yine (1991) for example. The consumption of manioc beer might be understood as food for the body and a form of 'social lubricant' (Brown 1984) that joins people in their collective efforts. Second, the sharing of food and drink, especially during collective work or celebrations, is not just a way to get people together, but can also be understood as a way to produce collectivities of a specific kind. As Fausto (2007) has argued, for example, the consumption of certain substances, particularly during important events, 'appears less as an activity directed toward the production of a generic physical body than as a device for producing related bodies—literally, 'bodies of a kind'' (500). Third, the lack of manioc beer during this kind of work marks it as different from another kind of work that is very common among Amawaka people today, which is the collective work party organized, or *minga*, organized by a household, which entails the preparation of manioc beer, *masato* by the women and



collective work of the men alone. Women have their own kinds of mingas, which can include preparing manioc beer or harvesting manioc.

This inversion in people's relation to ownership, work and wealth is an important point of differentiation between San Juan and Caserios, as well as the ways Amawaka people organize this work compared to other indigenous groups in the region. This kind of work in San Juan is organized based on relations between the President and community members, a 'model of a relations' that is found throughout the region. It is based on a specific mode of relating that is defined by the Native Community and not by kinship or traditional leadership. While this may seem like a minor point, the significance of the kind of work entailed, and form this collective work takes among people in San Juan allows for an analysis that draws out distinct modes of relating that exist as part of living in a Native Community.

It is my contention that these modes of relating are important for understanding the ways that individuals become agents in making of specific forms of collectivities. In the case of the *faena*, the corresponding event is the political meeting, which is based on the same mode of relating and produces a specific form that is identified with the community charter or *acta*. I will return to this point later, but now I want to discuss the other type of collective work I have been mentioning, *mingas*.

Minga

Collective work parties, or *mingas*, are organized by a husband and wife in order to undertake large projects such as building a new house, or clearing and planting a garden. The process of a *minga* is based on the combined effort and complementary capacities of the husband and wife beginning with the making of manioc beer. The preparation of manioc beer entails a couple visiting the garden together to harvest a large amount of manioc and sweet potato, *camote*. Once they have collected a sufficient amount, the husband finds firewood and brings water to fill the large metal pot, while the wife makes the fire and peels the manioc. When the water is boiling a husband's work is basically over, and the woman begins cooking. During this part of preparations she sometimes has help, usually from a younger unmarried woman, such as a daughter or niece.



The wife boils the manioc until it is cooked, mashes it with a large ladle, removes the water and then masticates *camote*, which she then sprays into the mix. Once it is properly mixed, it is set aside for two days in order to ferment. During this time, the husband makes suggestions to other men that he is going to work in his garden and could use help. Most people already know this based on their preparation of manioc beer, but his remarks and rounds of recruitment are integral aspects of living together because he cannot make demands on others for help no matter how closely related he may be to them. If certain people do not arrive, the couple complain, gossip and refuse help in the future, but do not confront them directly. Confrontation is strongly avoided with very few exceptions, including political meetings to which I will return below.

Once the manioc beer is sufficiently strong, usually on the second or third day, the husband invites other men to come to his house in the morning where his wife serves them several large bowls. The ‘helpers’ come prepared to work and once they are full the ‘host’ heads off to the garden taking along a large bucket of manioc beer. This prompts others to follow, though he says nothing. In some cases, the wife goes with them and serves them, but most of the time the men go alone. If they are only clearing a garden the wife stays behind, but if they are planting a crop then she is more likely to attend to dictate where things should be placed. It is she, more than he, who returns the garden to harvest. They will both weed, usually spending an entire day together in the garden, a time that is both productive and intimate.

During a *minga* men work in the garden all day taking breaks to drink, talk and rest. These days are very relaxed despite the intensive effort required to cut through the jungle because men do not stress over the work and seem to enjoy the company of one another. They work hard and sweat, but are not eager to finish or return home. They seem content in the garden cutting, talking, joking and occasionally yelping, which seems to be as much for themselves as it is for the others. If they finish the bucket of manioc beer they will have more brought by sending a younger man or anthropologist to retrieve it from the house. It can take an entire day to clear a large garden and even more if there are lots of large trees. Planting is somewhat less arduous, but if it is a large garden it can take an entire day or more.



Most *mingas* in San Juan include between four and ten men between the ages of 14 and 60. Once the job is done the group will sometimes stay in the garden and finish what is left of the manioc beer. Again, there is no urgency to leave, and once they return to the village some of them may continue to drink at the house of the host. On some occasions food is served afterwards, though this is not typical. It is important to stress, however, that a work party cannot be held without manioc beer.

The amount of manioc beer and its strength have an impact on people's ability and willingness to work for long periods of time. *Mingas* occasionally result in spontaneous celebrations of conviviality, of which the yelping may be one example. Manioc beer is an intoxicating drink, so some people will end up being drunk while they work, and indeed, a good host is one who has an abundance of good strong manioc beer. The concept of conviviality is appropriate here (Overing and Passes 2000) because while they are together in the garden, the men share a certain attitude towards work and the body that is made possible through the presence of others and the drinking of manioc beer. This sentiment can also carry over to the space outside of the garden as people may return to the 'hosts' house and continue drinking and socializing. In some cases, this can end in an impromptu party, which involves drinking and sometimes music.

I want to stress here that *mingas* follow the logic of the complementary work of men and women from the first preparations until the final outcome, which includes a garden, planted crops and thus the possibility of holding another one in the future. It is an annual cycle, which is defined by a particular mode of relating: gender complementarity. A single man or woman has difficulty finding good help to make a garden. This is also part of wider processes of re-asserting relations of friendship and mutual respect and a person's absence is a way of demonstrating their distrust due to some offense, or because they were not helped in the past. On the other hand, the participation of men is a way dealing with the temporality of life. The men who participate and assist the host seem to be looking forward towards the time when these same men will work to make a garden for them and their wives. Through working with other men they take the position of men, while the wife prepares the manioc beer, thus re-affirming her position as well.⁵

⁵ Women do hold work parties, though these are not held very often and seem more spontaneous. Women may invite others to their garden to harvest manioc or plantains when they are abundant. They do not usually drink manioc beer. Each woman is allowed to take what she harvests.



In both cases, however, relations are based on what might be understood as being a horizontal logic in which the relations of difference and sameness are of a specific kind: they are egalitarianism in the sense that there is no source of coercion, but they are based on difference and not sameness. The power of production is one that is constituted through the differentiation of men and women, the work that each does, the care they have for one another, and the help they receive from others; and also the differentiation between men who relate within the frame of affinity, which is particularly strong in San Juan as it is comprised mostly of women related generationally and their husbands from different places and/or ethnicities. It also appears in temporal terms, as in the future a similar *minga* will be held by a different one of the men, and they will relate to one another through, as it were, a different woman.

While men may be seen as ‘owning’ the *minga*, in terms of recruitment and work, it is made possible by previous work and particularly that of his wife. This complementarity of male/female or, more accurately, husband/wife is important as a focal point for the generation of flows, which extend out from this relationship and contribute to the formation of wider social relations. Furthermore, there is no official position that regulates who does or does not attend a person’s *minga*. Thus, I am calling this form horizontal/kinship because the relations between individuals are based on a relation of autonomy and egalitarianism. This form of egalitarianism should not be understood in terms of actual equality, but it is important to note that each person helps another in a task that they themselves are capable of doing.

All men can clear and plant gardens and build houses, although not all do this in exactly the same way or with the same expertise. In short, during a *minga*, there is no division of labour among men, and while there is an owner he is not a boss. These men do not relate as owner and worker, but come together through the mediating substance of manioc beer and produce the ground for a garden, thus more manioc beer. The owner of the *minga* cannot tell others what to do or how to do it.⁶ And I want to suggest, this autonomy, this mode of relating based on exchanges of effort, caring and substances, differs dramatically from that which emerges through the *faena*, which is based on a vertical relation that is both individuating and formalized. Each person is accounted for based on

⁶ A similar point has been made by Killick for the Asheninka.



their identity as a unique member of the Community, but are considered as being of the ‘same kind’. Their presence, or absence, is counted through the idea of the Community, and the power located in the community charter or Acta.

Part II

I have begun an attempt a form of translation by comparing collective activities, which I hope will reveal insights regarding the ways Amawaka people experience and understand their participation in making a Native Community, and collective life more broadly. And, this is why I think the conceptualization of a Native community as collective individual is somewhat interesting, but is also not really appropriate the given case due to its underlying assumptions. Therefore, I want to draw upon a distinction closer to home, so to speak, that has not garnered as much as attention as it might in terms of comparative analysis: corporate groups and corporal groups.

For example, building on Lévi-Strauss’ (1995) insight that the ‘opening to the Other’ that defines Amerindian thought is ‘physiological’ Aparecida Vilaça argues that although Amerindian societies are by no means ‘organic’ in the sense that has often been attributed to them, there is still a relationship between individual bodies and the collectivities they generate. Vilaça states:

While society may not be an organism, in the sense of functionally differentiated parts, it is a somatic entity, a collective body formed from bodies. Located at diverse levels, the boundaries separating kin from non-kin, and the latter from enemies, are corporal. (2010: 316-317).

I aim to demonstrate, by focusing on both the distinctions Sarasara takes seriously and Amawaka people make seriously, that this is neither a simple problem that emerges based on a difference indigenous people might realize through their form of living together in Native Community, nor just a passing comment on the differences between the institutional ‘models’ of a *Caserio* and a Native Community. The work the president was directly referring to not only has similarities with types of work found in *caserios*, but is markedly different from other types of collective activities carried out within the Native Community.

The division of work during a *faena* takes a much different form than that of a *minga*, as during the former, both men and women work, but at different tasks. The most



common division is for men to clear the soccer field and for women to weed the area around the paths and communal building. The president leads the men on their task and the president's wife leads the women in their task. Most importantly, during the *faenas* the president does not serve *masato*, which is an exclusion of a fundamental component in the sharing of substances and therefore affect, which are central in the processes of corporal growth, and we is called consubstantiality. The ability to work together today is derived from certain modes of knowledge and capacities they have come to value through relations with indigenous as well as non-indigenous people, including teachers, missionaries, loggers, and state representatives. I could find contradictions in the statement and set out an analysis in which the *faena* and *minga* are of the same kind based in a fundamental order.

Fiestas

Fiestas can take place either in the host family's house or, in the case of big parties, in the communal building located adjacent to the soccer field. When a big party is being planned, the hosts may ask others to assist them by preparing manioc beer. It is more common, however, to hold the fiesta in the house. Three to four days before a party will be held, preparations begin with the collection of manioc. Organizing must begin days in advance for the preparation of manioc beer requires at least two, if not three days to ferment to the 'proper' strength. Often times two batches will be prepared a day apart so there is 'good' manioc beer when the party carries over to the second or even third day. This follows the same processes as the *minga*.

The party I will describe takes place in the local or community building and as every party site is arranged in more or less the same way, my description here of this site is indicative of how other sites are organized. The local or community building is a rectangular structure with three walls and a dirt floor. The CD player and speaker are set on a table that is placed at the closed end of the structure. Boys (ranging in age from 12-17) tend to take control of the music equipment since they are the ones who know how it works and are responsible for music. It is very seldom that women touch, try to use, or even go near the music equipment. There is no rule, but I have only seen one 14-year-old girl using the equipment.



There can be no 'real' party without music and manioc beer. Music alone is good for some things, but is not sufficient to make a party without manioc beer. Manioc beer without music is acceptable, but the lack of music is commented upon and some people will not attend. It is the music that calls people to the local because when they hear it they know the party has begun, and it is the manioc beer that gets people drunk so they dance to the music. Both elements have been incorporated from the outside over the past decades by making contracts with loggers.

Once the music begins and people congregate they will drink manioc beer sitting and talking. They come in groups and sometimes a few will come and say hello, have a few bowls, see how much manioc beer there is, and then leave returning later on in the evening. Dancing almost never begins before dark because of the heat, so the party commences with drinking, talking, socializing, and joking, mostly among men. Hammocks are hung or blankets are put down outside the structure and near the manioc beer containers. This is where women sit and babies sleep. The placement of music at one end and manioc beer and children at the other divides the space into the domain of women and the domain of men. These domains become the sources, from which the party derives its energy.

Men are given large pitchers to drink individually or share amongst a small group while women have their own pitchers or drink together with one another, but separately from men. Generally, men locate themselves near the music and women near the manioc beer, which is at the open end of the building. The centre of the room is left open and will become the dance floor. Before the party begins this space is occupied by dogs, or the lone toddler who dances and is a source of joy and laughter. As adults begin dancing this changes the atmosphere. Pitchers are slowly taken back from men and the host woman or a close female relative begins moving around the room, distributing manioc beer out of pitchers into bowls they carry with them and serve individually to guests.

This is a social shift and marks a moment when the groups of men and women who drink together, but separately, become part of the larger process of mixing in the central area. The music is played at a volume that makes it difficult to talk and does not stop until there is no more gasoline. People dance in more or less the same simple style stepping back and forth in rhythm with their partners. At the end of every song people tend to return to their seats. There are no rules about men asking women or women asking men to dance.



Either one is normal. During the entire party women take turns distributing manioc beer to people lining the walls around the dance floor. At the peak of the party few people are sitting, so they are served while dancing.

The music is always blaring, but certain songs or styles energize people to dance while others only draw a few couples. The discs constantly break and parties are sometimes held with only a few different ones so the same music is played over and over for hours on end. As people get drunker they dance more and the motion of the different dancing couples becomes less differentiated. People are laughing, smiling and dancing together. This is the climax of the party and the most visible social distinction between is men and women, which is continually realized as men and women get up to dance, only to return to their respective areas. The diagram below is useful for gaining a better notion of the form that emerges during parties, and how it is comparable to the mode of relating during *mingas*. The significance of this is revealed when compared to how the same space is transformed during political meetings, to which I now turn.

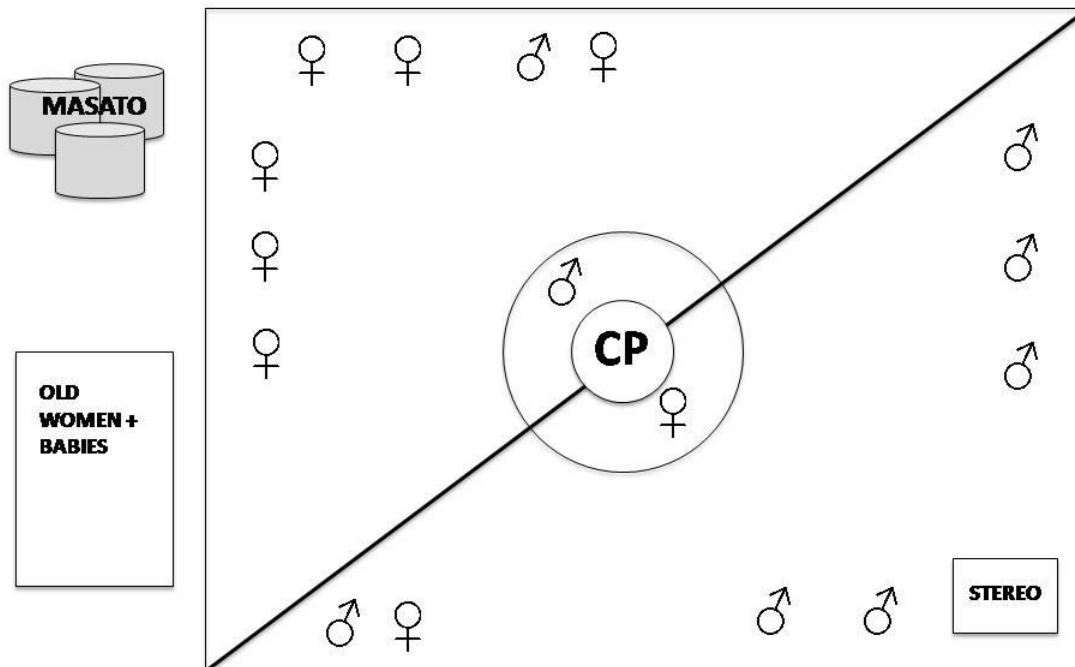


Figure 1. *Fiesta* diagram.



Community Meetings

Communal meetings in San Juan are generally organized in the days leading up to an actual event. They are usually held on Saturdays in the mid-morning so people have time to fish or go to the garden before they begin. Around 9 or 10am the president has one of the boys (young teenagers) blow the conk shell horn.⁷ When the horn is blown people begin to make their way towards the centre of the village, marked by the soccer field (parallel to the river), which is surrounded by the school, community building, and a few houses. There is a trail that runs parallel to the river that connects most of the houses in the community.

The meetings are held in the president's house, schoolhouse or community building. In either case, once the horn is blown, the president begins setting up the space of the meeting. This entails placing a table and two chairs at one end of the platform/space/room, and situating himself at the large desk either alone, or in some cases with the secretary. Chairs are situated around the centre of the room leaving space in the middle. This physically creates the space of the meeting as all people are facing the front where the president and secretary sit facing community members. It is a variation on the way a classroom is set up, but different as it is uncommon to have many people blocked by others, such as is the case with rows of desks for children. People also sit on the sides, with chairs facing inwards and forwards, rather than in straight lines, thus giving the impression of a circle, but with a flat end where the president sits and attention is focused. The *libro de actas* is placed on the desk between the president and the community members.

People arrive in waves and there is no sense of urgency to get started. Once most of the people have arrived, the president will be notified if a particular person is not attending the meeting and why. Once everyone who is attending is present and seated in their chairs, the president begins the meeting. He welcomes the *comuneros* and has a list of his agenda that he reads out to the group. He usually speaks in Spanish first and then in Amawaka. If there is a guest, such as a logger, he will make note of them but it is rare that a new person comes

⁷ This can be heard in most of the houses except those who live 20 minutes upriver. They do not attend these meetings, which is an issue I deal with elsewhere (Hewlett 2014).



to ask to log, so there is no need for an official introduction.⁸ While the president speaks people tend to remain attentive. If he speaks for a long time (more than a half hour), however, people begin to chat amongst themselves, but they still pay attention. For the most part, they already know what he is going to say.

The most common themes or purposes for holding a meeting are: upcoming events; news from town such as government programs or development projects that will impact San Juan (one example is the program to give each house a solar panel and light that was fulfilled in October 2011); discussions concerning the school (this either involves people complaining that the teacher was not present and their children were missing school, or the teacher himself giving an update on programs for the school such as the arrival of personal laptops for each student); problems with outsiders such as fishermen who come from town, or people cutting timber illegally inside their territory; internal disagreements or arguments; and, updates on potential logging contracts.

The most important meetings involve contracts with loggers because this is the only time people actually vote, besides the election for leaders, which occurs every three years. Dealing with loggers, logging contracts and government programs are the primary jobs of the president. The Community has usufruct rights over the land they have title over, but in order to enter into contracts with loggers this must be certified by the government ministry for agriculture, which is located in Pucallpa. This is an arduous process that requires the president to travel to Pucallpa at least once if not more often. The trip to Pucallpa takes several days by boat from Atalaya, or thirty minutes by plane. The loggers pay for this travel, which is a way of indebting the president.

During the period 2009-2011 San Juan had one official contract and several other partial contracts. In the case of the official contract, one logging boss had the rights to extract timber from a specific area of the Community's land. This is regulated by a group of forest engineers who make regular visits to San Juan, and other Communities, to check what trees have been cut. If there has been illegal cutting, the Community is forced to pay a large fine of tens of thousands of soles, \$10,000 or more. Thus, it is very important that the

⁸ It was during one of these meetings that I was introduced.



president be knowledgeable of the laws and that he follow proper procedures for making contracts with loggers, as it is the Community and not loggers who are held responsible when an infraction is proven by government officials. In this relationship, the community, as represented by the president enters into a three-way contract between themselves as a collective, the government and the logger.

In the meetings when a decision needs to be taken, individual community members are called upon to give their opinion. This can take the form of a yes or no answer, but often includes an opportunity to give a longer description of what they think about the problem or issue and why. All meetings end in the same way. Every individual is called to the front where they either sign next to their printed name or, if they cannot write, they give a thumbprint thus leaving their official mark.⁹

⁹ For historical connections see Hewlett's (2014) connections between marking, tracks and civilization.

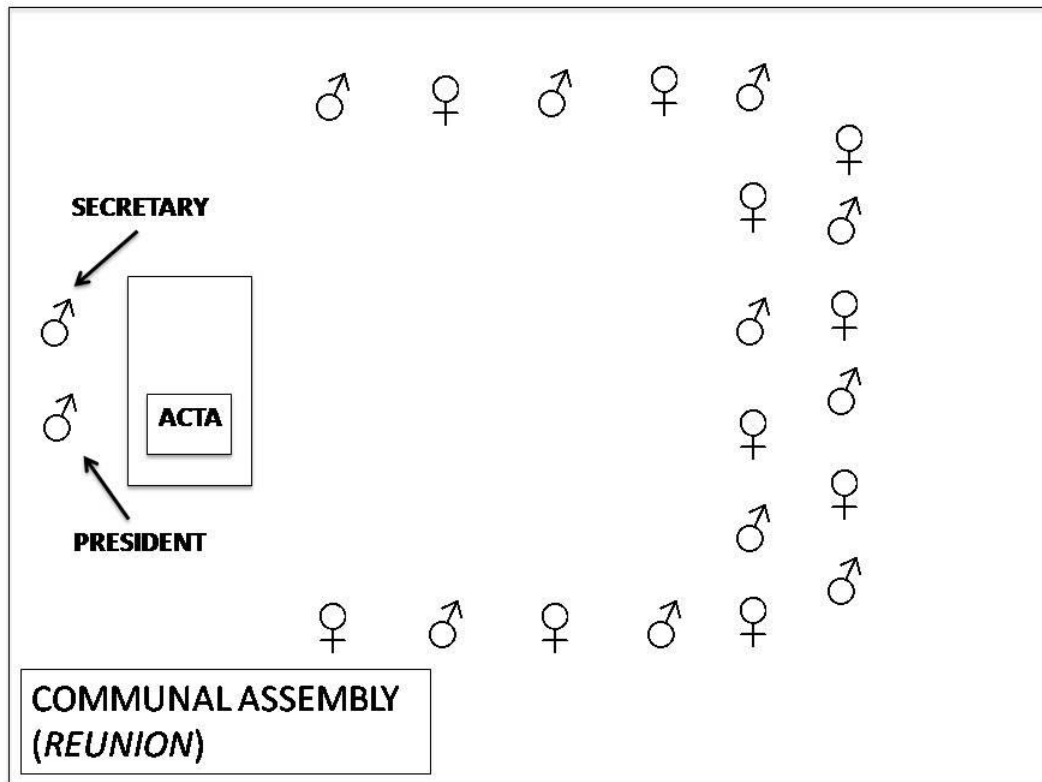


Figure 2. Communal meeting diagram (Acta/Contract).

There are four points regarding the meetings themselves, and what aspects become significant when they are compared with the other collective activities. First, the meetings are headed by the president who has a central position in what the meetings are about, and in how they are formally organized. This includes placement of *libro de actas*, on the table, and the formal documentation of the meeting, both of which set meetings apart from all other collective activities in socio-spatial terms. Both *faenas* and meetings are marked by the blowing of a conk-shell horn, which are not part of *mingas* or parties. In fact, parties have their own kind of call, which is music. And, as mentioned above, manioc beer is served to workers who join a *minga*, and is, according to some, a ‘social lubricant’ (Brown 1984).

As should be clear, I am drawing attention to distinct modes of relating, and I have aimed to demonstrate how these relate to different social forms. It seems that these



distinctions are not arbitrary, but have meaning to Amawaka people. Moreover, it seems to me that they are revealed based on alternate processes, which are intended to instantiate differences. Therefore, it seems plausible that these kinds of relations and corresponding processes (*faena* and meeting, as well as schooling), ‘create the effect of the state not only as an entity set apart from society, but as a distinct dimension of structure, framework, codification, planning, and intentionality.’” (Mitchell 1991).

Second, the ordering of the space by positioning the president, and Acta, as separate from, but in direct relation with the group of individuals. The differences between age (for those above 17) and gender are irrelevant to the proceedings, as each individual member of the Community is physically and bureaucratically situated as equal members of a collective that stands apart from the president and in direct relation to proceedings with political and economic ramifications. The president, as a leader and spokesperson for the Community, is granted this position of apartness, as outsider, by relating to the Acta, which is something that is perceived as mediating both internal relations and relations between the Community as an entity and outsiders. In both cases, the president stands outside of the group that is the Community. When he addresses the people during a meeting, he is addressing the community members, and refers to the Community as both an object and a moral order.

Third, the individuation, presenting themselves in the event, community members are practicing a kind discipline of their bodies, which is marked in the space and documented through a detailed log of the meeting and the signing of the Acta by all participants. This form of individuality/personhood stresses equality between community members, and a type of separation/hierarchy between leader and Community members such that people act in accordance with the leadership of the president, but in the name of the community.

Alternatively, the mode of relating guided by the principle of gender complementarity focuses on the differentiation between men and women (husband and wife) as the locus of generative power, the production of substances and their flow. And, to be clear, this arrangement is new for Amawaka people in the sense that they did not organize work parties based around manioc beer, and actually did not even drink fermented beer until quite recently. It is equally part of their ‘learning to live together’ as the holding of communal meetings. In other words, Amawaka people had different social divisions, and



contemporary distinctions have emerged historically, which leads one to say that contemporary differences are no less traditional than modern, just different.

Thus, the centrifugal potency of the 'Acta' gives precedence to the individual as a member of the Community in a certain context. This is differentiated from collective activities in which gender and related capacities are emphasized, which I frame as kinship/horizontel/corporal.¹⁰ The social relations that emanate from these different positions extend outwards and constitute sociality in specific ways that reverberate through space and time.

Fourth, the idea of the Acta held by Amawaka people is more than just analogous to the idea of the state. In this case, the Acta gives it the community a specific form that is most recognizable to the state and other outsiders. The form is made by the specific mode of relating, which is am considering individual/vertical/contractual. The Native Community might, therefore, be understood as not a separate institution from the state, but as being integral in its constitution based upon a specific citizenship regime, and the ways people relate. As Mitchel states, 'The state should be addressed as an effect of detailed processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, and super-vision and surveillance, which create the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society.' (Mitchell 1991).

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented an Amawaka form of comparison that I turned inwards in order to discuss the kinds of relations which Manuel Sasara was comparing. While this is a specifically Peruvian issue as it relates to the ways Native Communities are understood and enacted by indigenous people, it also opens space for other questions regarding the ways social forms emerge based on specific modes of relating that derive their potency from different relations, but in ways that challenge the conceptions regarding modernity. In other words, by beginning my own comparative analysis with a comparison made by President Sarasara

¹⁰ I extend this argument elsewhere based on a notion of the conception of a 'composite' which is derived from Woodside (1981).



I aimed to derive my own problematic from an ethnographic question. Manuel presented part of a theory about what a community is, which I try to take seriously by asking questions about collective life, work, people and difference. I did, of course, then pursue a specific line of enquiry that is my own which is based on my own questions regarding something that became quite clear to me during fieldwork: there are different ways of relating depending on the kinds of collective activities being carried out.

This leads me to my second aim, which is address what I consider to be a fundamental problem for anthropology: the emergence of different kinds of social forms. I then extend this to ask questions that extend beyond anthropology and not only discuss kinship and community, but also point towards analogies between the ways these forms relate to the concepts of the state and economy.

In *Vital Relations*, Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell (2013) demonstrate that the division between ‘status’ and ‘contract’ has remained a guiding principle for western notions of social development and contemporary social life, i.e. modernity. In short, the “conditions for modernity are conceptualized in terms of the separation and subordination of kin-based regimes and their characterization as prior, more primitive, and more deeply primordial [which] marks the difference between kin-based societies and territorially bounded states, while in “modern” societies, it is manifest as a distinction between the domestic domain of kin relations and the domains of political and economic relations” (1).

More specifically, Mckinnon (2013) discusses the persistence of the logic of ‘contract’ as displacing a prior and more natural domain of kinship can be found in work on kinship from Lewis Henry Morgan all the way to Geertz who, McKinnon argues, maintains a coherency between typology and sentiment.

The persistence of the logic of ‘contract’ as displacing a prior and more natural domain of kinship can be found in work on kinship from Lewis Henry Morgan all the way to Geertz who, McKinnon argues, maintains a coherency between typology and sentiment. I take this as an important contribution to the analysis of ‘modernity’ and the persistent relevance of ‘kinship’ in its many guises; however, in their assessment of relations between ‘kinship’ and the ‘nation-state’ their focus on modernity as a cultural category drives forward a series of assumptions that are somewhat problematic.



Central to my argument is the fact that, despite their intentions, the nation-state is taken as an entity/institution/agent in and of itself. From my perspective, one of the most interesting and powerful points that emerged through debates regarding kinship as a topic of study is that it does not really exist. And, more importantly, the domestic or kinship domain/sphere emerges through practices of different kinds. I have tried here to connect this with Mitchell's point, which builds on Abram's foundational work, that a very similar point can be made about the state. Thus, the boundaries between kinship and society as well as between society and the state should be understood as emerging historically and impermanent. This is relevant for the division between mingas/fiestas on the one hand and faenas/meetings on the other. In essence, during political meetings and faenas, the line between society and the state is not clear as Amawaka people are constructing the state through their participation in the making of their communities and presenting themselves and state-like actors.

Finally, in building this point, I have tried to take President Manuel Sarasara's comparison and differentiation seriously, so I want to end with several points of reflection. While he was undoubtedly focusing on historical transformations and the emergence of different modes of relating, thus forms of sociality, I think he is expressing anxieties about the past as well as the future. The problem of different ways of relating is expressed through a comparison with a caserío, but also seems to point to a more complex problem relating to individualization, generalization and the problematization of difference. Here I am thinking specifically of membership in a collective such as citizenship that takes as its model a notion of sameness, and thus shared relations with a third term, which is the State. In this case, becoming a good citizen might entail a transformation of the basis of relating from difference being given and thus productive of transformation, towards difference as a problem that must be overcome in order to for equality and parity to be produced. Thus, difference transforms or oscillates between being a basis for relations that is productive in certain respects and not in others.

This obviously glosses over many complexities, including the legal status of indigenous people in the amazon region, which defines them as different; however, it does correspond to a series of differences revealed in Manuel Sarasara's speech, as well as my discussion of collective activities. Moreover, it draws our attention to the anxiety expressed



by Manuel Sarasara regarding the notion of work as a collective activity, which should be valued as productive of a collectivity. This collectivity is producing wealth in different ways, one of which is the objectified in the motors which he distributed that summer morning. As he distributed those motors he spoke about the importance of work and made it clear that each family was responsible for taking care of their motors. The motors are, in a sense an expression of the productive potential of living together in terms that are defined by economic and political concerns; the state.

Finally, a relation between wealth and work is revealed to be central problematic, as a difference arises between two systems of exchange: the community in which wealth is produced through working together and the caserío in which wealth is owed for not working together. The former is based on a notion of working together to make the community appear, while the latter not only makes the collectivizing agent appear as if it were as an apriori entity, such as the Caserío or even the State, but one which extracts work from its members. The members appear indebted to the collective, which stands as a transcendent entity. While Sarasara threatened to withhold motors from those who do not participate in faenas, in fact everyone received one. Moreover, all he can do is withhold wealth, which is very different from caseríos. The two forms stand in opposition to one another: one mode implies a system of credit with no possibility of debt, and the other implies a system of debt with no possibility of credit. Thus, Manuel Sarasara's speech might be understood as a complex discourse on the problem of living together and different modes of exchange employed by socio-political entities. A fundamental difference between them is the types of extractive power that are recognized as legitimate: withholding wealth vs. extracting wealth.

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