

**Cosmology and transformation  
in the perception of the kichwa-lorocachi  
of the ancestral people *Kawsay Sacha*.  
Curaray river. Ecuadorian amazon**

***Cosmología y transformación en la percepción  
de los kichwa- lorocachi del pueblo ancestral Kawsay Sacha.  
Río Curaray. Amazonía ecuatoriana***

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***Abstract***

This article is the result of a larger study that investigates elements of the Kichwa cosmological system. The theme has been explored since the 80s from the so called *perspectivist ontological turn* that combines theoretical models resulting from different ethnographic works with a common interest to propose alternatives to the traditional dualism between nature / culture. Based on an ethnographic methodology based mainly on the perceptions of local people, the article aims to show descriptively how certain cultural markers: shamanism and body building, local mythic and territorial perception are retracted. From the data collected, it is concluded that said retraction is due to the attractiveness of modernity and its technologies, mainly towards the new generations. On the other hand we have the pause in the generational transfer of traditional knowledge. This is inserted in a particular socio-economic dynamic in a territory located outside the urban centers of modern development.

***Keywords***

*Cosmology, cultural transformation, ontology, territory, ethno politics, shamanism.*

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### Resumen

Este artículo es resultado de un estudio más amplio que indaga elementos del sistema cosmológico kichwa. La temática ha sido explorada desde la década de los 80 a partir del llamado *giro ontológico perspectivista* que conjuga modelos teóricos resultado de diferentes trabajos etnográficos con un interés común por plantear alternativas al tradicional dualismo entre naturaleza/cultura. A partir de una metodología etnográfica basada principalmente en las percepciones de la gente local, el artículo tiene como objetivo evidenciar descriptivamente cómo ciertos marcadores culturales: chamanismo y construcción del cuerpo, mítica local y percepción territorial son retractados. De los datos recolectados se concluye que dicha retracción obedece a lo atractiva que se muestra la modernidad y sus tecnologías principalmente hacia las nuevas generaciones. Por otro lado, tenemos la pausa en el traspaso generacional de conocimientos tradicionales. Esto inserto en una particular dinámica socio económica en un territorio situado al margen de los polos urbanos de desarrollo moderno.

### Palabras clave

Cosmología, transformación cultural, ontología, territorio, etnopolíticas, chamanismo.

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## Introduction

The Amazon is the largest tropical forest on the planet (6.7 million km<sup>2</sup>). As an ecosystem, it houses 10% of the biodiversity on the planet. The Amazon River extends for more than 6600 km, feeds on hundreds of tributaries and holds a unique ichthyological wealth on the planet. It is a culturally diverse space, where people linked in direct relation with natural resources coexist on the one hand, and on the other, there are accelerated urbanization processes marked by industrial and commercial development axes.

Pastaza province is located in the southern center of the Amazon region. With an area of 29,375 km<sup>2</sup>, it holds three continuous ecological floors: Andean foothills, very humid premontane forests and premontane rainforest (Báez, 2004). High rainfall maintains an excessively humid habitat most of the year. Hydrographically Pastaza has six basins where the *Copataza*, *Capahuari*, *Bobonaza*, *Corrientes*, *Pindoyacu*, and *Pastaza* rivers are located.

Before the European presence, different tribal societies struggled to define territories according to their own forms of spatial management. Their adaptation to various biomes was maintained - even today - in cycles of agricultural cultivation, fallow, graze and burn, as well as the use of várzea within itinerant agricultural patterns alternated with hunting, fishing and gathering activities (Santos Granero, 1996; Vallejo, 2006).

At the time of the first Spanish incursions with the Franciscan missions, *Tukano* affiliation groups settled on the banks of the Napo, while southward in the Pastaza were the *Zápara* who were developing in a continuum of war and inter-tribal alliances against the Shuar tribes. The *Zápara* by the sixteenth century occupied the medium and high *Curaray*. In the seventeenth century, this space was dominated by Secoya tribes, the *avijiria* and *omagua*. By the colonial era, the Jesuits occupied the Bobonaza, Tigre and Pastaza rivers, while the Dominicans maintained the missions of the canelos and zapara. By the 18th century, according to missionary data, the area was dominated by *chontoas* or *garrinchas* who were later identified as canelos (Vallejo, 2006, p. 227). Among these, there were different lineages - that last until today- like the *Gualingas*, *Santis*, and *Inmundas*, who extended until the mouth of the *Bobonaza* in the border with the *coronados* or *andoa*.

In the 19th century, the hacienda system was established, which controlled the Curaray basin through peonage. The indigenous society was integrated into local trade networks through missions and finance dynamics. In this context, there was an important demographic collapse of the *Zápara*, who until the first decade of the 20th century occupied the Curaray basin, which became the *Kichwa* domain until today. These transformations imply a change of linguistic and cultural patterns from *Zapara* to *Kichwa*. However, the virtual disappearance of the *Zápara* does not constitute a physical act, they were subsumed in the *Kichwa* complex (Muratorio, 1987; Santos, 1996; Vallejo, 2006; Trujillo, 2001; Moya, 2007; Bilhaut, 2011). In this sense, the space management system was also transformed, which became occupied by *ayllus* or families already called *kichwa* based on community settlements with organizational forms based on kinship and the figure of a founding shaman (Vallejo, 2006, p. 34; Whitten, 1976, p. 170).

Lorocachi belongs to the ancestral village: *Kichwa Kawsak Sacha*. In 2008, it was recognized by the Ecuadorian State through the Development Council of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE). By 2011, *Kawsay Sacha* obtained the title of its territory with 190,000 hectares inha-

bited by approximately sixty families. The communities that comprise it are *Nina Amarun*, *Macao*, *Sisa*, *Lorocachi*, *Jatun Playa*, *Victoria*; and on the Pindo river, the community of *Yanayacu*.

*Kawsay Sacha* maintains a rotating system of authorities elected every two years in a general assembly. The main threats to their territorial management can be synthesized in: 1) pressure from logging contingents that come from Peru, an activity registered for more than two decades; 2) the pressures from San José de Curaray towards the resources of the river, fishing and over-harvesting of charapa eggs; and 3) the expansion of the extractive frontier towards the southern center of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

On October 22, 2018, the Ecuadorian State announces the tender for blocks 86 and 87. The oil would be taken to the Norperuano pipeline through agreements with PETROPERÚ. The State claimed to have carried out an analysis of the impacts of blocks 86 and 87, concluding that the impact would be minimal since there are no communities in those blocks. However, these blocks overlap the territories of the *Kichwa* communities of *Kawsay Sacha*, *Shiwiar*, *Zápara* and Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation (IPVI).

The methodological strategy applied to extract data was based on the application of the ethnographic method: fieldwork, direct, and participant observation. Trust relationships were established with known subjects<sup>1</sup> (informants) to apply different tools: physical and social space survey, life stories for older adults, micro workshops for establishing genealogies, mapping of the area, micro workshops of oralities and perception of natural resources. To complement participant observation, we worked with field diary records.

Within the testimonial tools, open interviews were conducted with different members of the community, as well as with external actors with knowledge of *Kichwa* cultural dynamics. Two oral stories were worked around the perspectives on *Kichwa* ethnicity based on *sumak kawsay*, (good living) *sumac allpa* (good earth, healthy ecosystems) and *sacha runa yachai* (traditional knowledge).

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1 Irene Vasilachis proposes a redefinition between the traditional researcher and informant for the epistemology of the cognitive subject and the known subject. The latter prepares to speak there, where the epistemology of the cognitive subject is silent, mutilated or limited. The proposal intends that the voice of the known subject does not disappear behind that of the cognitive subject, or is distorted as a consequence of the need to translate it according to the codes of the socially legitimized ways of knowing (Vasilachis, 2009, p. 50).

Perceptions about territory, territoriality, and cosmologies were collected from two differentiated discourses, one more ideological and political and another from every day/experiential. The first discourse is represented by a teacher with high school education, and a long career in the former OPIP who manages the ancestral knowledge *Sacha Runa Yachai*. Other perspectives were worked through open and in-depth interviews with people from the community who, although not related to political work, have excellent knowledge of the cultural particularities that were of interest for this study. The work with a person knowledgeable of traditional healing practices based on the intake of *ayahuaska* (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) is highlighted.

The theoretical proposal is presented through the Amazonian Amerindian perspectivism which bases its postulate on the so-called *ontological turn* on a way of seeing the world in the three indigenous Americas that affirms that human beings are not the only subjects of the universe (Ruiz & Del Cairo, 2016, p. 193. Viveiros de Castro, 2004). According to this theory, indigenous thought establishes a single sector of coexistence between nature and society. That is, for these peoples, the relationship with each element of nature becomes part of their experiential, daily and trans-specific universe. Within the Shuar, Candoshi, Kichwa or Kayapó cosmologies and ontologies a person can be a relative of a deer, have a pajil brother-in-law, a jaguar ancestor or establish an interdependent relationship with a hill or a waterfall. Unlike modern societies where the natural and social sectors are separated, Amerindian cosmologies hold a continuum in them.

### **Problematic. The retraction of shamanism as a model of social cohesion**

For Viveiros de Castro, Amazonian shamanism is defined as “the ability of certain people to cross corporeal barriers and adopt the perspective of allo-specific subjectivities with a view to directing relationships between them and human beings” (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, p. 43). It is also related to the foundational structure of an ayllu or to recurring models of Amazonian chieftainship (Whitten, 1976; Oberem, 1980).

It is evident that in Lorocachi the shaman or *yachag* no longer has the same force of articulation or cohesion in the social relations of the *Kichwa*

world as a few decades ago. Nor is it projected within a religious-political structure that regulates the coexistence of *ayllu*.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of research in the community, there were two shamans. The first did not fulfill any political or other functions related to healing. Over time he lost the confidence of a large part of the community, people did not consult him and the relationship remained between accusations of practices related to harm or evil; on the other hand, the shaman adduced envy. As a result, there was a conflict materialized in mutual increments and death threats. The second shaman had more respect, had more knowledge of herbalism and healing tradition, however, he was not a reference for social articulation, he lived occasionally in Lorocachi, since he maintained his residence in the community of Victoria.

Perceptions aimed to identify two types of shamans, *bankus* and *tawakeros*. The former can talk with the spirits of the dead and are very respected. It is said that they constitute the highest level that can be reached in the formation of the shaman. However, *tawakeros* are feared by the same *bankus* as they master the art of magic, damaging spells, and witchcraft. According to an interviewee, “they see in sperm and say this is so and so, without one telling him anything” (Life Story, Jorge Cuji, *Kichwa*. Lorocachi. Age 70 years). Several narratives point to the existence of enemy shamans from a specific community, which enclose the animals keeping the fauna in enchantment (*tupashca* or *ukuy tupashca*), causing a collapse in the dynamics of territorial usufruct.

The *Kichwa* recognize hieratic peculiarities and the need to interact with various kinds of spirits and deities both telluric or urean and from the underworld:

Shamans drink *ayahuaska* and enclose all animals in a port. They have their soldiers or *supay*. They close the doors with padlocks. Another shaman cannot open this door unless he is more powerful than the first. (Life story, Jorge Cuji, *Kichwa* Lorocachi. Age 70 years)

In Lorocachi, the elderly informants identified spaces in their territory where the animals were locked up by an already dead enemy shaman.<sup>3</sup>

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2 In the *kichwa* families of Lorocachi there is the persistence of a shaman grandfather founder of *ayllu*. This detail supports the *ayllu* shamanism and regulation structure defined by Whitten (1976)

3 In this sense, in several interviews and conversations, especially with older people, it was affirmed that the records on the population reduction of wildlife had its origin in the activity of certain sha-

The retraction of certain cultural signs, in particular, that of the shamanic practice, can be explained on the one hand through the concept of transculturation and ethnogenesis. Transculturation (Reeve, 2002; Oberem, 1980), is a historical process common to all the peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon. It consists in the acquisition of a new ethnic identity through intercultural marriages. In Lorocachi there were processes that have historically fluctuated from which new cultural codifications are largely constrained by the influence of modernity and capitalism through missions, rubber exploitation from the haciendas, the established battalion and now around the allure of the new generations towards modern elements mainly located in the urban centers.

Ethnogenesis is a complementary state to transculturation that involves the construction of new identity categories that transcend local ethnic divisions (Reeve, 2002). The figure of the shaman, in this case, is not assumed as an immanent model with a social and political articulating sense of *ayllu*, but it is still evidenced through the discourse in certain narratives and mainly in reference to the mythical and kinship structure. In this sense, we see that the caution towards shamanic activity is shown in the identity and competition testimonies that arise in certain contexts of conflict both inside and outside the community.

Currently, many shamans are killed on charges of manslaughter. The accusations are promoted by both ordinary people and other shamans, usually enemies. As a consequence of this problem in the narratives of the informants, the idea of the little interest expressed by the new generations to get involved in the learning of shamanism persisted. In another aspect, there was talk of the psychological and physical difficulty and persistence that certain formative practices such as sexual and food abstentions (*sasi*) that a shaman apprentice has to endure.

Under these parameters, it is intended to answer the question of how the cultural transformation of certain signs related to their cosmological systems is expressed, in this case, of shamanism, mythology and social construction of the body.

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mans who “enclose the animals”. In Lorocachi there was a known case in this regard, the fact that a shaman X enclosed the animals in the ukupacha or underworld was well known. Once this individual left the community, little by little the animal populations were restored (Information extracted from the micro workshop of natural resources, Lorocachi 2018).

## Transformations in *Kichwa* cosmology

Within the myths and cosmologies of indigenous peoples in general and of the *Kichwa* in particular, we note that the behavior of beings of nature is based as one more ontology within the perceptions associated with the interpretation of the world and explained in their practices of territorial management.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the social relationship that humans establish with animals and certain environmental subjectivities is evident. As an example - with certain variations of form with respect to other Amazonian Amerindian groups - in *Kichwa* cosmology it is noted that certain trans-specific entities (spirits, *supay*, *ayakuna*) reside in different territorial contexts and hold human attributions, even wearing clothing of humans. For the *Kichwa*, all the animals of the jungle have an entity (*supay*) that guides them through the territory, protects them from humans, has the shape of an animal, even they are dressed with human clothing.

The articulating entity of the spiritual world with the sphere of the masculine is *Amazanga* who is the *owner* of the animals of the jungle. It can only be seen by shamans, who, as noted, serve as channelers between these entities and the world of the tangible, usually through modified states of consciousness based on the use of psychoactive substances such as ayahuaska.

In short, these *supay* of the *allpa* or biosphere take care of the territory or *kaipacha* and establish a constitutive relationship with the shaman.

For its part, *Nunguli* is the entity that governs the world of the feminine, teaches women to take care of the farms, to prepare *chicha* made of yucca among other activities related to the agricultural world. In this way, the mythological discourses are always mediated by these two spheres: *Nunguli* and the farm, female, *Amazanga*, male.

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4 Etymologically ontology means “the study of being”: *ontos*: to be, being, and *logos*: study, discourse, science, theory. Ontology studies the nature of being, its existence and reality. From contemporary anthropology, it is theorized from the so-called “ontological turn”, which has influenced the understanding of the corpus of cultural interpretation within the nature-society relationship. In this sense, the “ontological turn” attracts a series of interrelated approaches in the search for alternatives to the naturalistic model of modern Cartesian rationality. These proposals discuss a model that puts in a dilemma the way in which traditional anthropology interprets the ways in which societies interact with their surroundings (Ruiz, & Del Cairo, 2016). In this sense, subjectivation-objectification is defined to the way in which every society generates representations about the world (cosmology), both objectively and subjectively, the latter specified especially in the fields of religion and the arts.

Another variable is formulated by Whitten (1976, p. 59) in his analysis of male and female activities, where he considers to be important these constitutional discourses with symbolic spheres associated with main spirits or key symbols. In this sense, women, the farm and the female spirit *Nunguli* on the one hand and men, the jungle and the male spirit *Amazanga* on the other, are closely linked, forming a complementarity in the symbolic sphere of the *Kichwa* world.

The masculine sphere represented by *Amazanga* surrounds the female sphere symbolized by *Nunguli*. We have an additional notion that encompasses the water spirits or *yaku supay*, which Whitten (1976) calls a hydrosphere, represented by a third key symbol: *Sungui*. A dichotomy between culture and nature is subsequently established, which is considered equivalent to the dichotomy between *Nunguli* and *Sungui*. The contrast between *Nunguli* and *Sungui* is mediated by *Amazanga*. Thus *Amazanga*: men and jungle are linked to both culture and nature, while *Nunguli*: women and the farm represent domesticated culture and nature.

These three entities, in their condition as key symbols, are paradigms that order people's understanding of the ecological system in which they live (Guzmán, 1997, p. 207).

## Forms of shamanic practice

In several Amazonian studies, one can see the persistence and durability of the shaman as a channeler of *worlds* and possessor of cosmological wisdom (Calavia, 2004; Descola, 2004; Chaumeil & Chaumeil, 2004; Reeve, 2002; Oberem, 1980; Whitten, 1976; Viveiros de Castro, 2004). Amerindian perspectivism is related to two significant enduring systems: the symbolic estimation of hunting and the relevance of shamanism (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, p. 42). It is affirmed that the field of local knowledge, especially the knowledge of the world of hunting is approached from several perspectives, including cognitive and ethnobiological, related to a multitude of themes, especially the knowledge of the world of the supernatural.

The *Kichwa* assign demographic aspects to the different periods of time relating them to the structure of *ayllu* and shamanism, that is to say, there were more ancestral *runa* (people) than now contemporaries. The structure of an *ayllu* in the Kallaric uras (ancient times or narratives) agree with Whit-

ten assessment that for the *Canelo Kichwa* it is a hypothetical network of interwoven souls that extend backward from before *the times of destruction to the ancient times* (Whitten, 1976, p. 169).

Regarding the forms of practice of shamanism, the reports describe how the shamans use their power by inserting themselves in the sleep (*musku*) of their victims. Catching a person's *musku* means taking their soul in sleep and making them sick (Bilhaut, 2011). In other cases, shamans send dangerous animals when people are awake as noted in the following testimony:

Sinchi Yachag sent the tiger to attack me, but I had five hunting dogs, that happened to me here in Lorocachi.

Now that Sinchi Yachag has died, I am at peace, he did not left my wife and me alone, in our house, when we fell asleep, we wanted to kill ourselves in the dream, but as I say I am Catholic and every afternoon I asked God and He did not let me. And the dog also barked and when I went to the mountain, he sent the tiger after me.

There are times when I ate three or four of those extra spicy peppers, "the tiger runs from the one that eats spicy". That was what the old people said when you go to the mountain, the tiger comes out, and when you leave tracks, the tiger puts his hand, to verify it must be and there comes the hand and burns the tiger. When this is not the case, the tiger seeks to kill.

I killed three tigers sent by shamans, this shaman has already tested me with snakes, boas, witchcraft, and he could not touch me, even though he is my compadre. Other shamans told me that it is him, that it is for me, but it affected another, but since he did not affect me, it affected my grandchildren. I had words with him, I said compadre why you hurt me? if you want to hurt me, then hurt me, not my grandchildren or my daughter-in-law, I said it face to face, if you want to kill me I am already tired of life, but facing me. (Life story, Jorge Cuji. 70 years old)

For the *Kichwa*, once a bad shaman dies, it is a reason for tranquility, since his soul can no longer harm. In the same testimony, the informant reports:

The shaman Sinchi Yachag, made me sick one day I found myself dying, something I dreamed hurt my son, the evil jumped to him, gave him many pimples on his head that were already rotting. In the hospital they could not cure him. Since he was 15 years old, he began to bother, when one lives quietly in his house in peace with his family one prey of the jealousy of shamans.

In this narrative, one can see certain stages of the shamanic disease. The first is when the enemy shaman takes the victim's *muskuy* and the damage jumps to the victim's son. Both children and women are susceptible to being hurt by the spiritual darts of the enemy *yachag*. The second is the healing that is always done through a shaman that is more powerful than the one that caused of the damage.

According to Whitten, illness and envy maintain a unique parallel. This has a lot to do with the structure of *ayllu* and the kinship relationships that occur within it. Many times, the spiritual darts directed against a person bounce and fly through the space of the *ayllu* until they enter a house going to the most vulnerable body of a child or a young man. (Whitten, 1976, p. 176).

An illness that cannot be cured with simple medicines, homemade herbs or, failing that, prayer to spirits or the Christian saints, is directly considered shamanic damage. In this sense, among the *Kichwa* of Lorocachi, envy encounters were mediated by damage done by a relative or known shaman. They were hired to kill or see a potential enemy or rival in the victim. Killing is linked to a shamanic learning exercise, clearly expressed by those who have to go through a series of hermetic demonstrations to perfect their empirical learning process.

## **Mythical expressions and cultural transformation**

The myth as a functional device constructs temporal and spatial arrangements defined in their description and event. The myth is a device that places humanity in time and history (Surrallés & García Hierro, 2004). Its conceptualization can be abstracted as a static sequence of diachronically pre-located events. At an intersection between the everyday and symbolic worlds, it can be seen that the mythical-discursive narrative of the natural and social sectors are essentially dissimilar to those we distinguish in Western or mestizo white societies, where we maintain a definite intersectoral gap between nature and society.

It is clear that certain social structures of mythical thought are integrated into the world of the tangible and intangible. In the case at hand, shamans are agents that relate the different *worldologies*, from the sphere of the supernatural subjective to the tangible world.

The mythical expression configures a *telos* where the scenarios are defined by a deontological superorganicity. As an example, in certain *Kichwa*

myths one can see how a jaguar forgives a hunter's life, or a *paujil* advises a shaman or the mother of the chakras or agriculture *Nunguli* maintains a relationship with women. This indicates that through the mythical these subjectivities are shown as civilizing entities, teachers, counselors, and punishers. In sum, these entities are subject to persistent deontology, within the framework of animism expressed in the local mythic.

For indigenous thought, in the discursiveness of myth, beings of nature are perceived from the status of humanity, but not of species; It is the animal and the vegetables that are framed in many cases in relation to humans. These demonstrate their specific qualities to guide their daily endeavors, especially through the world of dreams and premonitions. The different anthropozoomorphic transformations and transmutations materialize in the social sphere and are confronted in the field of kinship, reconstituting themselves within myth and reality through the shaman as the arbiter of the different spaces of the world.<sup>5</sup> Many *ayllu kichwa* identify with an animal and shaman ancestor, a mythical feature that has also recanted in the modern representations of the *kichwa* subject. In the mythology of these people, Zápara cultural heroes are present, which is explained by the process of transculturation and ethnogenesis that has subsumed the Zápara culture in the *Kichwa*.

For the Kichwa in Lorocachi the relational metaphysics between entities and human beings is defined in the myth, however, the mythological generational transmissions volatilize and lose continuity. According to the collected data, there is no interest in many young parents, aged thirty to fifty years, in transmitting the traditional myth to new generations. Cultural markers related to the transmission of these narratives are volatilized by different transformations in generational behavior. Spaces of relaxation and social cohesion such as the time of the *guayusa*, the discussion about dreams or (*muskuykuna*) at dawn have been rescinded, many young families do not practice them. On the other hand, the young people's approach to modernity is notorious. Traditional myths go to the background to contract urban myths with their respective meanings. Access to activities in these contexts, such as salaried work, are meager means of prestige to those who reach them.<sup>6</sup>

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5 As an example, we have in this text the story of Jorge Cuji in relation to the shaman Sichi Yacchag who sent him a jaguar through dreams with the intentionality of causing harm.

6 The labor spaces, however, end up proletarianizing Kichwa women and men who, at very low percentages, reach average levels of schooling.

## The social construction of the body in the shaman person

In the cosmology of Amazonian indigenous societies, the body is represented with differentiating connotations. This is manifested as that which combines individuals from the same community as opposed to others. From the study of the different meanings of corporeality, we can better understand the strong meanings that individuals give to the intense semiotic use of the body.

The abundance of meanings inserted in the body defines the identity of individuals and the transit of values that are directed towards a prototype of a social object, inserted in the Amazonian *Kichwa socius*. In this context, the importance of the body stands out as an object and subject capable of serving as a support for social and exchange relations, based on a model of body strength.

For the Kichwa, the construction of the person as a shaman requires great physical strength. Teachings are received since childhood and are worked throughout life through *samai* (blow, breath, strength). The parents insert the *samai* into the occipital region of the child's head with tobacco. This *samai* is corporeally transmitted from person to person. The father who wants his son to be a shaman must insert strength into his body. In this context where the body plays a determining role, we see that the *samai* is transmitted not only from body to body but from soul to soul; It is procedural and constructive. In this way, the body is the place where breath and vigor are located and the capacity for transformation in a person's psyche.

The bodily strength of a person, whether male or female, is much admired. It is frowned upon to show weakness before another person. The fact of being a good farm worker, a good hunter, and in some instances a good fighter or in others a good warrior is a source of satisfaction and pride for the person who possesses these characteristics and source of admiration or envy for the *other*.

Many shamans nullify a person's *samai* until they die, which is a basic principle of the shamanic practice of doing harm that is taking *someone's breath away*. "The person goes out like a candle until he dies when the shamans hurt him" (Mario Garcés, Lorocachi). The ethnographic *Kichwa* proves that the person obtains a lot of strength or *samai* through a plant identified locally as *llaina*, however, in certain narratives there was impartiality regarding a magical-mythical dynamic for the strength of the body, which reveals a change in the way of seeing the mythical space:

Just as your dad has raised you clean, without *chiricaspis* without anything I was raised only for *pukuna* I have taken *chiricaspis*, I take enough for *samai* and a *pukuna* puff. I cook and drink, I scrape the stick and with tobacco I cook and drink, this puts one with a good *samai*, but you don't have to drink too much, because it gets you drunk, it gives you a cold, that's why it's called *chiricaspis*, or tree cold. if one drinks a lot the tongue rolls up and leaves you mute, one has to measure the drinking. If one that does not know drinks a lot, dies, it is like poison. (Life story, Kisto Aguinda. 50 years. Nina Amarun)

## Conclusions

It is proposed that for the indigenous peoples the legitimacy of their lands ensures their ways of life, safeguards their symbolic heritage and allows them to recreate their own territorial visions. However, the result of territorialization processes imposed by national states translates into weak consolidation of indigenous territories, accelerated ecological deterioration and, in many cases, the relocation of their territorial space. In this sense, cultural transformation materializes in events such as the insertion of large contingents of the Amazonian population into marginal urban spaces in contexts of socio-economic inequality. In spite of everything, based on ethno-political processes of territorial recovery, the indigenous organizations of Pastaza together with various NGOs and through international financing have achieved legal recognition of their territories.<sup>7</sup>

Certain cosmological cultural markers can be systematically unstructured by pressures that modernity and the global economic production system through devices such as the threat of extractivism present. As an example, for a teenage *kicwha*, the insertion of people in the world of shamanic learning will be retracted by situations such as the lack of generational transfer of knowledge related to the construction of the shaman person; the self-censorship of young people in terms of continuing this knowledge; the dangers that shamanic practice entails and, above all, the attraction of young generations towards elements of modernity and new technologies. In this way, by reviewing the ways of apprehension of the different elements of the en-

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7 For more detailed information on the ethno-political process in the Amazon center, see Martínez (2015), Silva (2003), Ortiz (2016), Vallejo (2006).

vironment of the *Kichwa* of Lorocachi, we can observe a retraction of the knowledge of their worldview systems: mythology, shamanism, rituality, cosmographies, herbal and medicinal knowledge; which end up losing symbolic validity in time.

Although among the *Kichwa* there is a duality in their cosmological vision, inserted in mythical gender roles: *Amazanga* for the masculine world and *Nunguli* for the feminine one, it is necessary to investigate more if the feminine roles are abstracted only to the domestic space or their activities are equivalent to a sphere of domestication of nature, while the masculine space held by *Amazanga* encompasses the space wild and untamed.

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