POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS AMAZONIANS IN PERU:
THE CASE OF THE SHIPIBO-KONIBOS

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Abstract:

This study uses theories from anthropology, political science, and sociology, together with an international law framework, to understand the political participation of the Shipibo-Konibos, indigenous Amazonians of eastern Peru. It explains why Peru's native peoples do not follow the generic sequence of indigenous social movements in Latin America in their quest for rights of self-determination.

Using an original case study of the Shipibo-Konibo nation, including analyses of the historical record and of data collected using anthropological field methods, I argue: (i) that the politics of equal interaction is a better analytical model than identity politics for understanding indigenous political participation in Peru; (ii) that colonization has weakened Shipibo-Konibo's cultural, social and political customs and their spirit of resistance, resulting in their systematic co-optation by the state, which hindered their autonomous organizational development; (iii) that despite several decades of political activity, the Shipibo-Konibo have not achieved a bona fide social movement (one that is continuous and systematic), but rather have engaged in repeated discrete campaigns or "waves" of social mobilization; (iv) that Shipibo-Konibo identity has been weakened by an array of forces acting over time, and this weakening partially explains the lack of advancement from mobilization to genuine movement; (v) that the new political process of the Shipibo-Konibos — namely, participation in municipal elections — is paradoxical in the sense that they have not yet implemented an indigenous agenda in municipal politics; (vi) that attaining municipal power in the majority of Shipibo-Konibo districts has had both positive and negative effects, empowering their collective identity and

cultural revival on the one hand, but resulting in political schisms and disillusionment of the populace due to poor performance by most indigenous mayors, on the other.

The thesis contributes to the older political, sociological and anthropological debate about Peru's exceptionalism with regard to indigenous social movements. It also offers a recommendation for indigenous organizations about ways that the long quest for rights of self-determination can be implemented in a realistic manner in Latin America.

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CHAPTER 1

THE QUESTION OF INDIGENOUS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PERU

In this chapter, I first lay the conceptual framework for my dissertation by reviewing the generic sequence of indigenous political participation. I show that Peru is an unusual case that does not fit the generic sequence and briefly explore the question "why not". Second, I review the implications of this difference for understanding indigenous social movements in Latin America. In this context, I discuss the transition of indigenous peoples from being labeled as a "problem" to entities with rights to self-determination. Thirdly, I discuss how the politics of equal interaction is a better analytical model than identity politics to understanding indigenous political participation in Peru. Finally, I give an overview of the hypotheses and methods that guided my research, and describe briefly the relevance of the dissertation to broader discussions today about indigenous political participation in Latin America.

Indigenous peoples' political "participation" in Latin American states, either voluntarily or involuntarily, is not a new topic. Historically, there was first a long period of resistance to the state's policies to homogenize them culturally and physically. Their "resistance to colonialism, economic exploitation, and political oppression" was internationalized by the early 1970s (Varese 1996:62; Stavenhagen 1996; Urban 2001), and these new voices of contestation have built national, continental, and global social movements in the last two decades, most notably since the 1990s (Selverston-Scher 2001:1; Garcia & Lucero 2004:159). With the return of democratic regimes in most Latin America states, both Amazonian and Andean indigenous peoples have led a visible national and international movement to demand new collective rights summarized in the

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international right of *self-determination.* Hence, the end of the twentieth century marks a period when indigenous peoples made historical progress—one could say a 'dent'—as they attempted to break the iron gates of exclusion by states.

Internationally, momentum has built in support of the concept of self-determination. In September of 2007, the long-debated draft of indigenous rights at the United Nations (UN) was approved, and discussion of similar rights for the Americas is currently being held in the Organization of American States (OAS). Meanwhile, indigenous peoples invoke International Conventions (such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169) to reject state exclusionary and discriminatory policies. Corollary to these combined actions to develop and use international policy instruments, a number of Latin American countries (including Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico) have adopted new constitutional norms that grant progressive, yet largely symbolic rights to indigenous peoples (Venne 1998; Yashar 1999: Brysk 1996; Assies 1999; Brysk 2000; Van Cott 2002c; Grey & Zamosc 2004). This proactive approach by most indigenous peoples through social movements has made them new political actors from the local to the national level, and they have worked through their political organizations to participate in local to national elections (Albó 1995a: Albó 2002b; Selverston 1995; Avirama and Marquez 1995; Langer 2003). A significant success of this participation is found at the *municipal level,* in part due to democratization and legislative changes that favor decentralization (Veliz 1980 in O'Neill 2003; Nuñez-Roman 2003). Scholars have coined this indigenous movement as "identity, cultural, and ethnic politics," and the framework of analysis for its study has been primarily social

movement theory and identity politics (Gnerre 1995; Hale 1997; Alvarez, 1998; Ramos 1998; Ireland 2003; Langer 2003; Warren 2003; Niezen 2003).

The evidence from most Latin American countries suggests what I will call a *generic sequence* of indigenous political participation. Each indigenous group creates a local organization, that unites with other groups, thereby establishing confederations at the regional and later at the national level. Consolidations of these national indigenous social movements have been followed by the creation of indigenous political parties which run candidates for national and regional competition, and sometimes seek alliance with other non-indigenous parties (Van Cott 2005). Examples include *Partido Pachakutic* of Ecuador, and *Movimiento Katarista* of Bolivia. However, for local elections (municipalities), a simple indigenous majority is often the only necessary condition needed, irrespective of the indigenous movement.

Peru is an exception to this generic sequence, one in which a national indigenous social movement never consolidated, and indigenous candidates have emerged chiefly at the local level. What accounts for this divergent pattern in Peru? Does it reflect an alternative relationship between indigenous peoples and the state in contrast with other Latin American countries or does the international agenda of indigenous self-determination not resonate with the indigenous peoples of Peru? Finally, what motivates their participation in local electoral politics?

The political participation of the Shipibo-Konibos in the Peruvian Amazon emerges within this complexity of movement, or lack thereof, and it too does not follow the generic sequence found in other Latin American countries. However, once given the opportunity to participate in electoral processes, the Shipibo-Konibos ran for city council,

municipalities, and the regional assembly. They have been surprisingly, though not uniformly, successful in these efforts, starting in 1989, when the first Shipibo-Konibo district won a municipal election. Since that time, they have repeated this success and also gained power in two other majority Shipibo-Konibo districts either by affiliating with National Parties, or by forming their own local parties. Different political conditions in Peru may explain their divergent strategies of political affiliation, including decentralization policies that provide an opening for local parties to succeed, and the variation in the strength of national parties since the advent of democracy in 1980, and their eventual collapse in 1995 (Kenney 2003).

Despite the 20-year record of Shipibo-Konibo's participation in electoral process and political achievement in the Peruvian Amazon, no academic inquiry has yet sought to understand its process, outcomes and candidates' motives, or to expose its implications in terms of indigenous identity, citizenship and self-government rights, state policies vis-à-vis native people, and a national indigenous movement.

Against this backdrop, my thesis aims to answer the following main question: What can the Shipibo-Konibo's participation in municipal government tell us about Peru's indigenous peoples' social movement, their demand for self-determination, and their overall relationship with the state? Furthermore, I break this subject down into four complementary questions: (1) What was the motivation for Shipibo-Konibo participation in municipal elections, and under what agenda did they rise to power in the municipalities of Iparia (1989), Tahuania (1994), and Padre Marquez (2002)? 2) How successful have their experiences in "self-government" been politically, economically, socially and culturally? 3) How has Shipibo-Konibo's municipal political participation strengthened

or weakened their existing local and regional indigenous organizations and movements?;
4) To what extent have indigenous municipal politics in Peru been affected by non-local organizations that have played an important role in indigenous organizing in other Latin American countries, including social and environmental NGOs?

Theoretical Review

Indigenous Social Movements

The Latin America Cases

Parallel to the process of democratization of most Latin American states, the indigenous movement in many countries also became visible during the 1980s. This new movement demanded respect of indigenous individual rights, constitutional recognition of their 'cultural differentiation', autonomy, quota-based political representation, natural resource rights, and legal pluralism (Yashar 1999: 78; Van Cott 1995b; Stavenhagen 2002). This social mobilization was successful nationally and transnationally, which is often credited to financial and logistical support from human rights and environmental NGOs (Brysk 2000b; Martin 2003). In many cases, as a direct result of this movement, there were Constitutional reforms in Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Colombia, where 'pluricultural and multiethnic' concepts were introduced into their legal system (Yashar 1998; Yashar 1999; Van Cott 2000b:1)

Scholars of indigenous social movements have used 'identity or cultural politics' frameworks to point out the shift from a peasant-based to a cultural- and identity-based movement, since identity was the only resource and mechanism available to these people to advance their cause (Brysk 1996a; Brysk 2000b: 23; Selverston-Scher 2001; Ramirez

2002; Levi 2002). Generally, social movement theory (based on a collective action model) has been used to understand and analyze indigenous people's response to political, economic, social, cultural and environmental encroachment into their territories by national and international corporations (Davis 1988; Leonel 1992; Garcia H 1998; Colchester 2000; Ireland 2003; Sawyer 2004). From this perspective, indigenous social movements arose because they (1) shared common grievances, (2) espoused common ideologies, (3) had the resources to mobilize, and (4) had the political opportunity to mobilize (Oberschall 1993). Theoretically, these four requirements are the minimal conditions for a social movement to rise and have an impact in a society.

Furthermore, recent scholarship focuses on indigenous peoples' increasing participation in local, regional, and national elections. Their national success has, in many cases, been seen as the direct result of the indigenous social movement (Van Cott 2005). In Colombia, there are indigenous senators, deputies, and mayors; in Mexico, there are autonomous indigenous municipalities; in Ecuador, there are indigenous Parliamentarians, and regional and locally elected authorities in most levels of government; and in Bolivia, indigenous leaders have been participating in the municipal elections of communities since the passage of the Law of Popular Participation in 1994 (Sieder 2002; Albo 2002b, Albo 1999c; Albo 2002d; Van Cott 2005). In January of 2006, an Aymara indigenous leader, Evo Morales, was elected President through the Party he created called Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS). Hence, a consolidated indigenous social movement has the resources —at least the human capital, and ideology —to create a party of their own and compete nationally with the leading national mestizo parties. However, this is not the case everywhere.

From Being an "Indigenous Problem" to Peoples with Self-Determination

Classical Methods of Solving the Indigenous Problem

Current indigenous social movement is encapsulated in their demand of recognition as peoples with the right of self-determination. This is contrast to the way how they were perceived and treated by states after the conquest. Indigenous peoples were a 'burdensome obstacle' (Stavenhagen 2002) in the nation-building projects of Latin America states and, within this context, the term "indigenous problem" was coined (Diaz Polanco 1997: 3). This "problem" was addressed by three different theories, each offering their own solution: (1) the "indigenist" theory advocated the economic, social, political, and cultural integration of the indigenous populations into mainstream society [1]; (2) the "classist" theory viewed "indigenous problems" as the historical product of 'a class-based social structure'; thus, indigenous people had to join the proletariat in revolution to change the societal structure; (3) the "ethnicist" theory rejected the previous theories by arguing that indigenous peoples should conserve their identity, their internal organization system, and their customs within the framework of multiculturalism or a multination (Ibarra 1987:17-30).

The new political space gained by indigenous peoples through their movement makes the "indigenist" and "classist" theories irrelevant today as possible alternatives to solve the "indigenous problem." However, the ethnicist theory is now more promising than ever because it proposes a multinational state where each group could develop their own cultures and societies. However, it must be noted that indigenous societal structure is

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[1] Diaz Polanco differentiates between the common usage of *indigenists*, who are usually people sympathetic to and advocates of indigenous rights, and indigenist policy, which is literally to 'wipe out' the ethnic diversity, by assimilating or integrating indigenous people into the dominant culture (Diaz Polanco 1997: 23).

dynamic; thus, a mere "conservation" of indigenous culture would largely exclude the innovative nature of their societies. The cultural and societal innovations are reflected in their modern organization to resist the state's exclusionary policies, mainly through their social movement in most countries, or through participation in the electoral process, as is the case in Peru. Theories similar to ethnicist have emerged, such as minority rights in political philosophy and self-determination in international law, which contribute to attempts to solve the "indigenous problem."

Minority rights theory provides a good normative foundation for indigenous rights. However, this theory is often criticized by indigenous leaders on the grounds that it advocates integration and assimilation (parallel to that of indigenist theory) of national and ethnic/religious minorities in the dominant society by nation-states (Hannum 1990; Brysk 1995:35). But a conceptual distinction must be made: national minorities have specific territories (homelands), maintain a distinct society, and their existence precedes the nation-states, while ethnic minorities are those who have voluntarily or involuntarily immigrated to a country and are integrating into the national society (Kymlicka 1995:14, 19); Thornberry 1991; Spinner-Halev 2000; Kymlicka 2001;. Thus, in my view, the theory of national minorities is equivalent to that of indigenous rights — both encompass the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples (Freeden 1991; Mackay 1997; Valadez 1999; Ivison 2000; Mackay 2002; Keal 2003; May 2004). This collective right, also known as "group differentiated rights", includes self-government rights, and special representation rights for national minorities (Young 1990; Kymlicka 1995: 26, 27). I posit that 'group-differentiated rights' for national minorities is epitomized in the legal right for self-determination found in international law, as discussed below (For further

discussion on collective and cultural rights see Van Dyke 1974 & 1977; Kukathas 1992; Margalit 1994; Perry 1996; Musgrave 1997; Levey 1997; Shapiro 1997; Jones 1997 & 1999)**.**

Modern Methods of Solving the Indigenous Problem: Self-Determination Rights

Self-determination of 'peoples' is recognized as 'customary' and 'peremptory law' in the international legal system, which historically, has been associated with decolonization and the creation of statehood (Anaya 2000; Musgrave 1997). "Peoples" in this context connote independent states (which are subject to international law) and which inherently bear self-determination rights, as opposed to individuals and organizations that compose civil society (Pritchard 1998: 7). Thus, indigenous self-determination, as well as the term "peoples" when referring to native people, are often rejected by nation-states on the grounds that indigenous peoples within national borders are not subjects of international law (Swepston 1989; Corntassel 1995; Aroca 1996; Wilson 1998; Marshall 2000; Pitty 2001).

Recent scholarship interprets self-determination as a "universe of human rights precepts concerned broadly with peoples, including indigenous peoples, and grounded in the idea that all are equally entitled to control their own destinies." This right aims to "remedy" historical oppression of peoples by other peoples (Anaya 2000:75). Hence, self-determination is not exclusive to states, but it can apply to indigenous peoples, who use this interpretation as political discourse, and as an argument for international legal entitlement (Indian Law 1984; Leger 1994; Perry 1996; International Covenant 1994; Pitty 2001: 46; Anaya 2000: 69,70; Kly 2000; Kymlicka 2001:124).

Some scholars go further and divide self-determination in two: external and internal—the former allows colonies to create independent states, and the latter renders rights of indigenous peoples to autonomy within existing nation-states (Pitty 2001: 58). Generally speaking, indigenous peoples are not interested in secession for pragmatic reasons, lacking resources and wherewithal; rather, they seek autonomy or self-government rights to deal with their local affairs (McCorquodale 1995: 119; Anaya 2000: 81; Venne 1998: 213; Pritchard 1998: 8). Following Anaya (2002: 97), the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination may be said to encompass five elements: (1) cultural integrity; (2) land and natural resource rights; (3) self-government or autonomy; (4) social welfare and economic development; and importantly, (5) non-discrimination. This right is incorporated and elaborated in the draft declaration of indigenous rights in the OAS and in the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The merit of whether ethnic minorities, as differentiated by Kymlicka, are entitled to self-determination is not discussed here, given that my research interest is "indigenous peoples" as defined by the United Nations in 1986.[2]

The claim of 'self-determination' by indigenous peoples internationalizes their domestic political situation, with two effects. First, the language of international law gives a greater weight to their cause; second, it also makes it more difficult to implement at the national level. Both nationally and internationally, governments legally determine the fate of indigenous peoples. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that in

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[2] ...[I]ndigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories....They form at present a non-dominant sector of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (UN 1998: 43).

institutions such as the UN and OAS, the member states resist using the legal terminology of self-determination.

In Latin America, the manifestation of self-determination is very limited. Two countries have granted visible regional and territorial autonomy to indigenous people; the Miskitos in Nicaragua and the Kunas in Panama have "semi-autonomous territorial reserves" (Hanum 1990; Polanco 1997; Howe 2002). In Bolivia and Ecuador, although the Constitution recognizes indigenous communal lands, customary rights, and control of their own development initiatives, there is no explicit constitutional autonomy right for indigenous peoples. In Colombia, the Constitution recognizes an Indigenous Territorial Entity (of contiguous communal lands) that is equivalent to a municipality, as well as *cabildos* (the traditional government system) (Van Cott 2002). Thus, indigenous Colombians have the most visible autonomy rights apart from the regional autonomy in Nicaragua and Panama (Stavanhagen 2002). Although indigenous peoples in the Americas are demanding the recognition of self-determination, and there are increasing normative theories on this topic, few studies have explored the municipal system as a possible means of implementing the policy of self-determination. This is despite a seemingly new trend where indigenous people are moving towards participation in municipal elections, which might represent a shift from communal autonomy to "self-government" (and hence self-determination) through the municipal system.

In sum, the policies of assimilation and integration promoted by states are rejected by most indigenous peoples in Latin America through social movements, and they are demanding collective rights in the form of self-determination. In contrast, what is happening with Peru's indigenous peoples? Is there really a weak indigenous social

movement in Peru, or does it not exist at all, as some scholars argue? Can the Shipibo-Konibo's political participation in municipal elections and experience in "self-government" shed light on indigenous movement? What are the policy implications of the normative theories on indigenous/minority and self-determination rights just discussed?

The Unusual Peruvian Case

In Peru, native communities began to create local federations in late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1980, the first regional organization, *Asociación Interétnica para el Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDESEP) was established, and in 1988, another competing organization was founded, called, *Confederación de Nacionalidades de la Amazonía Peruana* (CONAP). The two regional organizations emerged to represent all of the 42 Amazonian nationalities (out of 64 indigenous peoples nationwide) by using indigenous identity as the key platform (Atlas Amazonia Peruana 1997). They both seek self-determination, sustainable development, cultural respect and security of their lands/territories and natural resources. AIDESEP is funded primarily by human rights NGOs and some environmental NGOs, and is viewed as a 'principled' organization, which is often bellicose toward the state and toward international corporations. Nevertheless, its members participate in an electoral process through *Movimiento Indígena de la Amazonía Peruana* (MIAP).[3] Conversely, CONAP is financed by corporations and Catholic NGOs, and is portrayed as a 'pragmatist' that negotiates with

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[3] There is a dispute about the founders of this party. The Shipibo-Konibos claim that they established MIAP in 1992, while AIDESEP leaders claim that they created this party as a political branch in 1993.

international corporations and compromises with the state; despite their interactions with the state, they do not have their own political party (Grey 1997).

Although these two regional organizations emerged as early as 1980, they seem not to be gaining strength, and have not been effective at building a strong and visible local movement as found during the field research.[4] Conversely, other scholars argue that at the national level Amazonian indigenous movement in Peru is strong and effective as the leaders are able to dialogue and participate in high level meetings with government officials to promote the interest of the communities such as titling land and territories, and defending natural resources (Garcia and Lucero 2004: 167, 172; Dean 2002). The two Amazonian federations compete and they are far from unification. In fact many indigenous groups affiliate with both entities, since neither seems to be very powerful. An Amazonian indigenous political party exists (*Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia Peruana-MIAP*) but it has weak institutional infrastructure and is largely ignored by indigenous voters whose candidates affiliate with National Parties to participate in local elections, or when possible, create their own local parties, irrespective of local/national indigenous federations or their movements.

The Peruvian highlands also lack a strong identity-based national organization. Attempts at national organization there have been challenging: for example, in 1998, a national organization emerged, but it split into two a couple of years later—*Conferencia Permanente de Pueblos Indigenas del Peru* (COPPIP 1), and *Coordinadora Permanente de Pueblos Indigenas del Peru* (COPPIP 2). The latter organization is attempting to become an umbrella organization for all Peruvian indigenous people. This effort has been

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[4] This may vary for each indigenous Amazonian group.

slow and controversial, as many communities and local organizations charge that they do not credibly represent them and are thus illegitimate.

Despite this organizing processes and background, scholars who study indigenous peoples agree that the national indigenous social movement in Peru is weaker and less marked than in other countries (Remy 1995; Van Cott 2005), and that strong and visible cultural, identity, and ethnic politics is not evident, despite Peru's significant indigenous populations (Mayberry-Lewis 2002: 353; Yashar 1998: 24; Brysk 2000: 25). They argue that there are three main reasons why there was not an analogous movement in Peru, such as occurred in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. The first one argues that Peruvian President Velasco's corporatist and populist policies eroded indigenous identity. That is, in order to vindicate the historically marginalized "Indians" (Quechuas and Aymaras), the term "Indian" was terminated and replaced with peasants, while for the Amazonians, the term became "Natives". The second claim is there was a lack of political opportunity for an ethnic movement to emerge as a result of the violence of the civil war that Peru experienced during the 1980s. Thirdly, De la Cadena (2000) argues that scholars have not regarded the activism of "indigenous mestizos" as a part of an ethnic movement which, in her view, it deserves to be.[5] The most current analysis is presented by Garcia & Lucero, 2004, who point out that scholars and "indigenous advocates" have misread the existence of the "complex dynamic" of Peru's indigenous movement by focusing solely on conventional social movement "frameworks and models." From their perspective, there is diverging and converging local, regional and transnational indigenous mobilization in Peru (2004).

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[5] This theoretical suggestion is based on a case study in urban Cuzco. For more reading see De la Cadena (2000).

Both Garcia and Lucero are correct in pointing out that if we apply conventional social movement theory, the indigenous movement in the Peruvian Amazon is weak, divided, and not consolidated, and its success has been limited. However, if we analyze what is actually happening across Peru, as opposed to the publicly manifest degree of force, then nobody would deny that *something* is happening among the indigenous peoples of Peru. Along these lines, I would argue that an analysis of each ethnic group's movement (as opposed to analyzing the whole aggregate of indigenous Peruvians) might more accurately inform the relative strength/weakness of their movements or lack thereof. At the national level, the indigenous movement is still in its organizing stage if we use the conventional "framing" and "models" of social movement theory. Having said that, I concede a good measure of utility to conventional social movement theory for understanding and explaining how social forces bring change in a society. But how far does it go? In my view, social movement theory is useful to the degree that it elucidates why and whether social movements arise. By the same token, it is important to look beyond social movement theory, because it might not detect "what is going on" quietly within the society.

Recent scholarship on Peru's indigenous movement (Van Cott 2005) presents an overview of the state of the movement, its organization processes, and its participation in municipal elections by both Andean and Amazonian indigenous people. Van Cott concurs with other scholars about the weakness of that movement, and further argues that Peruvian national ethnic parties failed to emerge because they lacked resources, because they were constrained by a political dictatorship under Fujimori, because 'non-indigenous and provincial mestizos' promoted indigenous cultures, and because the term "Indio" had

significant negative effect on identity as a basis for organizing.[6] While Van Cott provides

a good political landscape to see the nature of indigenous movement in Peru, her study

does not examine a particular indigenous group's participation in municipal politics to

understand its nature, the process it took to reach power, the outcome of the experience in

municipal government, or the cultural and political meaning of such accomplishment. I

hope to fill some of those gaps with the present study.

Complicated Transitions, Political Parties and Indigenous Peoples

From independence in 1821 up to 1968, "oligarchic rule and political instability" marked

Peru's political history—from seemingly endless *coups d'état* to occasional presidential

and Parliamentary elections. In the 1920s, political debates emerged to change this

oligarchic system, which set the stage for formation of Parties among ideological lines

(Cotler 1995). Victor Raul Haya de la Torre founded *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria*

Americana (APRA) in 1930; while Jose Carlos Mariategui created *Partido Socialista del*

Peru (PSP) in 1928 (which eventually became *Partido Comunista del Perú*, PCP).

Both Haya and Mariategui unleashed anti-oligarchy and anti-imperialism

rhetoric—Peru's liberation from political and economic domination from feudal national

landlords and international capitalism. They promoted a new national social, politico-

economic course, state reform, and inclusion of the indigenous mass in decision-making,

who then constituted 80% of the national population (Ibid 1995). During the 1950s, other

parties inclined to the Right began to emerge. In 1956, Fernando Belaunde Terry

established *Acción Popular* (AP), which was a populist, reformist and conservative party.

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[6] The new political party, *Partido Nacionalista del Peru* (PNP), founded by Ollanta Humala sounds and smells like an ethnic party, and the national media has labeled it as "ethnonationalist." However, in my view is far from being an ethnic party; rather, it is more like an old *izquierdista* party coated with the brand of nationalism.

This was followed by the creation of a centrist and reformist *Democracia Cristiana* (DC) in 1956, which split into two in 1967, thus allowing the birth of *Partido Popular Cristiano* (PPC) under Luis Bedoya Reyes (Cotler 1995).

The inclusion of the masses in the state, as proposed by Haya and Mariategui, never materialized because neither of their parties reached power. Three decades later, a military dictatorship would make this policy a reality under the direction of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) through *Sistema Nacional de Mobilización Social* (SINAMOS). This state-run corporatist policy promoted social and economic benefits by way of subsidies and land reforms—this system opened a new relation between the indigenous mass and the state (Yashar 1998; McClinton & Lowenthal 1983; Franco 1984). In many cases, SINAMOS triggered the organization of Amazonian native communities into federations (Abad 2003: 167). Many indigenous leaders were promoters of SINAMOS in their communities.

With the advent of democracy in 1980, besides the return of political parties, two very significant and historic changes occurred: the Constitution of 1979, which allowed illiterate people to vote, including highland and the Amazonian native peoples; and the debate on decentralization as well as changes on electoral laws began to take place. In 1980, there were four main and strong political parties: AP (governed 1980-1985), APRA (governed 1985-1990), PPC, and IU (*Izquierda Unida)* (Cotler 1995; Tanaka 1998; Ego 2003; Nuñez 2003). In 1989, a decentralization bill was passed, only to be terminated in 1992 (Garcia 1999). In 1990, Alberto Fujimori (*Cambio 90)* appeared amidst skyrocketing inflation and terrorism, and his antiparty rhetoric—blaming them for inefficiency and corruption—had public resonance. He won the presidency over Mario

Vargas Llosa's more organized conservative alliance, *Frente Democratico* (FREDEMO).
In 1992, Fujimori led a self-styled *coup d'état,* thus establishing a civilian dictatorship
until 2000. In 2001, Alejandro Toledo (*Peru Posible*) won the presidency, thus
reinitiating democracy and decentralization process (Tanaka 1995; Kenney 2003).
Scholars agree that, in the1995 presidential elections, the traditional Parties (AP, APRA,
PPC, and IU) had collapsed, only to emerge again in the second advent of democracy in
2001 (Tanaka 1998; Kenney 2003).

This background helps to explain Peru's exceptionalism regarding the rise of
strong indigenous social movements. First, Peru's history shows that alternative
movements did not emerge partly because of strong political parties—in this case PSP
and APRA who controlled the masses (including rural peasants and indigenous
organizations), and encouraged them to gravitate around parties. Secondly, a progressive
military dictatorship through SINAMOS implemented corporatist policies, thereby co-
opting the masses. The resulting dependency on the government was a barrier to any
independent social movement. Conversely, a civilian dictatorship completely blocked any
attempt by civil society, including indigenous people, to establish anti-movements
because they were all labeled as guerrilla sympathizers. Thirdly, the decentralization and
changes in electoral laws permitted creation of regional and local parties—this scenario
on one hand empowered local peoples to solve their problems, and on the other hand
discouraged creation of supra organizations to take their grievances to the national level.

In sum, Peru's abnormal democratic process—from military dictatorship-to-
democracy, then civilian dictatorship-to-democracy—may account for Peru's
exceptionalism regarding conventional social movements compared to other countries.

Conversely, the reemergence of democracy, changes in electoral laws, decentralization process, and suffrage right of illiterates had an enormous impact for the political empowerment of Amazonian indigenous peoples, which eventually precipitated their participation in municipal politics. Tables 2, 4 and 6 show the affiliation of Shipibo-Konibos candidates with different national, regional and local political parties for participation in their respective municipal Districts. It makes the point that while the Shipibo-Konibos did not emerge as strong identity based movement; they certainly became important political actors locally.

Hypotheses

Having discussed the regional context of my topic, and the underlying questions of my research, I propose seven hypotheses that, woven together, provide a new and deeper understanding of indigenous political participation in Peru:

Social Mobilization Not Social Movements

H1. In several decades of political activity, the Shipibo-Konibo have not achieved a bona fide social movement (one that is continuous and systematic), but rather have engaged in repeated campaigns or "waves" of social mobilization.

Shipibo-Konibo Relations with the Peruvian State

H2. Electoral success, often used as an indicator of the strength of indigenous social organizations in Latin America, does not work in the Shipibo-Konibo context.

> H2a. Shipibo-Konibo success in municipal elections followed changes in the national political regime and electoral laws that facilitated their participation. (Alternately, their lack of success occurred at times when these regimes and electoral laws created barriers to their participation.)
>
> H2b. Communities that won in municipal elections, succeeded also because electoral districts were drawn to maintain their majority. Communities that lost in municipal elections suffered from fragmentation of their valued riverine territory, which increased the voice of *mestizo* communities and undermined the strength of the indigenous base.

H2c. The Shipibo-Konibo people have been fully co-opted by the state and national culture, and this historical cooptation further undermined the strength of their indigenous organization.

Internal Divisions

H3. Internal divisions partially explain the unusual weakness of Peru's indigenous movements. In particular, divisions internal to the Shipibo-Konibo people hinder the ideological cohesion required for a visible and strong social movement as normally defined.

H3a. Instead of strong social movements, Peru's Amazon indigenous peoples are characterized by the "politics of equal interaction". As the Shipibo-Konibo people lose their culture, they lose the fierce, resistant spirit of their ancestors in the face of invasion from outsiders. They now want to interact with the outsiders within a framework of mutual respect, equality and cultural interaction in a process I will call "politics of equal interaction".

H3b. There is a conceptual and physical gulf or division between the people who are represented (i.e., the native communities) and the federations (local, regional, and national) that purportedly represent them. Hence, the Amazonian regional organizations are not able to lead a concerted social movement supported by their bases.

H3c. The lack of coordination among leaders in two main categories of Shipibo-Konibos leadership, namely mayors and indigenous federations, shows that mayors have reached power without federation support, and thus an overarching regional "indigenous agenda" does not exist in municipal politics.

H3d. Electoral success, while strengthening some aspects of indigenous identity, has the effect of creating more divisions and disillusion. La toma del poder (the gaining of municipal power) has brought disillusion to the Shipibo-Konibo people, due to "poor performance" and lack of tangible economic benefits.

In this dissertation, I present evidence assembled from the historical record and from my fieldwork in an attempt to provide an empirical test of these hypotheses.

The Shipibo-Konibo Case: Politics of Interaction and the Municipal System

This section will develop the concept introduced earlier of a "politics of equal interaction." As discussed previously, indigenous people generally have strong social movements in Latin America, including in the greater Amazon region, and they use "identity-politics" to advance their rights within nation-states. However, in the case of the Peruvian Amazon, we find the variation described above both at the national level and

the local level, specifically among the Shipibo-Konibo people. They have neither a strong social movement nor do they use explicit identity-based politics per se; rather, they seem to advance their rights by participating in municipal government through their alliance with traditional national political parties, as well as through their own local political parties.[7]

Thus as we have seen above, social movement theory and an 'identity politics or cultural politics' framework may not fully explain the political participation of Amazonians in Peru. Since the Shipibo-Konibo are the majority in the districts under study, rallying through their cultural identity or symbolism might not make common sense because identity is already a given. However, if they were to bring their grievances to a national level where they are a minority, "identity-politics" framework would not only be important, but a key resource for asserting political claims and social mobilization. To be sure, identity is present in every contested political situation; however, "identity-politics" as a model of analysis does not help us understand the Shipibo-Konibos' involvement in municipal politics, because an indigenous social movement was not the general conduit for such political action. During my research, I found that Shipibo-Konibos reached power without the support of regional or national indigenous Amazonian organizations, and that their political ideology was both indigenous and non-indigenous—that is, they reached power through conventional political parties, not through their indigenous organizations.

---

[7] Municipal government in Peru is the local political-administrative structure of the Peruvian state. It has political, economic, and administrative autonomy. It receives funding from the Central Government, but can also generate its own revenues by taxations, and loans from banks and international cooperation (*Ley Organica de Municipalidades* No. 27972).

For these reasons, I propose a new model—the 'politics of equal interaction'—which may better frame Amazonian political participation in municipal elections and its mode of relations with the state. This model is based on the demand by indigenous people in Latin America to be included and to participate in all political spheres within a nation-state, while maintaining their distinctness as indigenous people. A strong national indigenous movement or organization is not required, only a strong alliance of communities through their local leaders. Put differently, they literally want to interact with the dominant society, and they use the state's system – in this case, the municipality – to reach power and resources that were long denied to them from regional and racial marginalization. The term, 'intercultural', has a similar connotation and is the basis for a new discourse in Peru, when public policy makers talk about indigenous peoples' educational programs (Tubino *et al* 1996).

This 'politics of interaction' connects indigenous peoples' demand for self-determination with the level of concession on collective rights by states. In other words, it is a middle ground model where indigenous people are not fully self-determining, but they are not fully absorbed by the dominant society and state. This model also implies a horizontal relationship—equality at the individual and group level as recognized in several Latin American Constitutions by the term multiethnicity (see Model 1).

The Shipibo-Konibos' political participation in municipal elections falls within the constitutional framework of pluriculturalism and multiethnicity, and the theoretical debate of indigenous and minority rights. Participation in municipal government is not an isolated event, but rather a growing trend in Latin America where indigenous people are reacting to domination by implementing "self-government" in their own terms. To be

sure, a mere declaration of multiculturalism in a nation-state does not necessarily

translate into rights for these diverse ethnic groups. Therefore, normative theories about

indigenous and minority rights must be discussed in the public policy setting to find

models of how to implement the multiethnic nature of modern nation-states in Latin

America.

Model 1

HISTORIC POLICIES
OF THE STATE:

ELIMINATION

INTEGRATION

ASSIMILATION

EXCLUSION

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

REJECT THOSE POLICIES &
DEMAND SELF-
DETERMINATION

WANT TO MAINTAIN
THEIR OWN SOCIETIES
WITHIN THE STATE

**POLITICS OF EQUAL
INTERACTION**
PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL ELECTION
& GOVERNMENT

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: DEMAND THE RIGHT OF
PARTICIPATION, SELF-GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL
INCLUSION AND RECOGNITION AS EQUAL CITIZENS

THE STATE RECOGNIZES THEM AS EQUAL CITIZENS
WITH GROUP RIGHTS, AND INCLUDES THEM IN THE
NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

My research on the political participation of the Shipibo-Konibo will attempt to fill this theoretical and policy gap by studying the 'municipality system' that is based on the existing national political organization—regions, departments, provinces, and municipalities. Since legal recognition of territorial indigenous autonomy is difficult to achieve in this political context in Peru, the 'municipal system' is grassroots-based and pragmatic—it allows immediate self-government of indigenous peoples. Moreover, in the best case, it could galvanize a resurgence of the indigenous movement. In fact, most indigenous communities are already participating in this system, and it does not require a strong indigenous movement or organization, only an initiative to organize an independent political party by taking advantage of the decentralization law. The drawback is that the municipal system does not cover one ethnic group under a cohesive politico-territorial unit. Furthermore, it has the potential to create intra- and inter-community political schisms.

To be sure, the municipal system is complementary to a 'politics of equal interaction'. The former allows indigenous people to be self-determining and self-governing (a type of autonomy), while the latter is a horizontal relation between the state and indigenous peoples (a type of relation—at the local, regional, and national levels), which allows them to maintain their distinct societies while promoting their participation in the national decision-making process.

Research Relevance and Site

The research described in this dissertation contributes to our understanding of how, despite many constraints, powerless societies may find a way to survive culturally, and

reinvidicar [8] themselves politically, and in this process, I hope to illuminate whether self-determination is relevant to understand the indigenous "self-government" through municipalities. Furthermore, I provide a specific case study of the outcomes of the law of decentralization and municipalities, and how it is empowering or disempowering local communities. By so doing, this research will add to the growing literature on indigenous politics and social movements, through which they seek for inclusion and self-determination in nation-states.

This research aims to interpret the Shipibo-Konibos' political participation in municipal elections within the national electoral legislation, as well as current constitutional laws vis-à-vis indigenous peoples in Peru. The research will show how the Shipibo-Konibos rose to power, and how they governed themselves in three districts. The findings could be used both by Peruvian indigenous organizations and state representatives to open a national dialogue as to how to establish new political arrangements to make national governance more participative in this age of decentralization. Furthermore, the research will contribute to policy debate as to how autonomy rights can best be applied, and what self-determination means in *realpolitik*—thus, helping policy makers and indigenous people to design self-government arrangements that are viable, which will set the base for peaceful coexistence of their distinct societies within the state system. This arrangement may suppress the rise of ethnonationalist movements in Peru or elsewhere.

---

[8] *Reinvidicación* is the term commonly used in Peru and Latin America by indigenous people and leaders to discuss their quest for equality, inclusion, respect and justice from the state to safeguard their culture, language and territories. Thus, this term will be used throughout this thesis rather than its translation of revindication whose connation of reclaiming, or demanding rights includes some but not all of this meaning in Spanish.

Surprisingly, there is little research on the political experiences of the Shipibo-Konibos, nor of other Peruvian Amazonian indigenous groups, in municipal elections and government. Academic studies on the Shipibo-Konibos are related to their land use, economic activities, cosmology, textiles and pottery (Roe 1982: Behrens 1984a; Behrens 1989b; Gebhart-Sayer 1985; DeBoer 1986). Even the most recent ethnography by Jacques Tournon only briefly covers their political life, mainly describing their organizing experience (Tournon 2002). I hope this research will contribute to the field of political anthropology in offering the first political ethnography of a Peruvian Amazonian indigenous group's involvement in municipal government. This case will show how Shipibo-Konibos are choosing their destiny through participation in the mayoral political process despite constitutional setbacks, guerrillas and narcotraffic infiltration in their areas. Furthermore, it can be argued that the "indigenous problem", as stated by nation-builders in dealing with the first peoples during the post colonial period, can now be changed to "indigenous agenda", because they are setting their own agenda in one way or another— participating in municipal, regional, and national elections. Thus, they are somehow "interacting" with the dominant society and the state; hence I view the term 'politics of equal interaction' as appropriate in the Peruvian context.

The Shipibo-Konibo population was officially registered in 1997 as comprising 20,178 people in 116 communities located along over 200 miles of the Ucayali River in the Regions of Ucayali and Loreto. Unofficially, the number is thought to be higher by the Shipibo-Konibo, and estimates by the Shipibo-Konibo organization count around 35,000 people in 150 communities. Thus, many Shipibo communities are not represented

in the national census. Geopolitically, they are divided among 14 Districts (Atlas Amazonia Peruana 1997).

Despite their broad extension, Shipibo-Konibo communities and populations are concentrated in three districts: Iparia and Tahuania located in the Region of Ucayali, and Padre Marquez located in the Region of Loreto (See Map 1). These are the only three districts with a majority Shipibo-Konibo population; unofficially, they constitute 90% in Iparia, 60% in Tahuania, and 65% in Padre Marquez. I conducted my research in these districts, which are also the only ones to have elected their own mayors. The Shipibo-Konibo first took power in Iparia in 1989; since then, they have had uninterrupted control of the municipal administration for the last 20 years. In Tahuania, the first indigenous mayor was elected in 1994, and governed for seven years consecutively. In Padre Marquez, a Shipibo-Konibo mayor only recently took power in 2002.

Map 1: Location of Majority Shipibo-Konibo Districts in Peru

(Source for base map: www.cia.gov)

Research Methodology

The fieldwork on which this dissertation is based was conducted within a 10-month period (2005-2006) during which I lived in the districts of Iparia, Tahuania, Padre Marquez, and Masisea[9]. I used the classical anthropological method of participant-observation, complemented by structured and semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I carried out a total of 57 structured and non-structured interviews in the following distribution: (a) *14 Shipibo-Konibo indigenous politicians:* 2 current mayors of Iparia and Padre Marquez respectively; 3 ex mayors of Iparia and Tahuania; 2 ex vice-mayors of Iparia; and 7 *Regidores* or municipal councilmen from Iparia, Tahuania, Masisea, and Padre Marquez respectively. The interviews were on several topics, such as reasons for involvement in municipal politics, preference for national parties, political platforms, community progress, recent elections, indigenous autonomy/self-government, indigenous federations, effects of municipal politics, effects of indigenous municipal power on mestizos, and methods of relating to the dominant society and the state.

I also interviewed a total of 14 *indigenous federation leaders* as follows: president of ORAU, president of ORDIM, president of FECONADID, president of FECONBU, president of FECONAU, 2 ex presidents of AIDESEP, president of CONAP, ex president of FECONBU. The topics covered were past and present organizing process, current plans and projects, assessment of the indigenous movement, relations/coordination with indigenous mayors, the meaning of municipal power, effects of municipal power, relations with NGOs, and "peaceful" vs. confrontational politics with the state.

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[9] The Shipibo-Konibos have participated in municipals elections in the District of Masisea since 1994 but did not achieve any single victory.

In addition, I interviewed 29 *community leaders* from 12 native communities, aiming for 3 in each district. I separated them from the community members because I assumed they are more knowledgeable about municipal and federation politics, and perhaps even international issues, than the majority of the population. The topics in the interviews included the nature of leadership and duties, the process of election, community development, relations with indigenous and mestizo mayors, contacts with NGOs, relations with federations, opinions about the indigenous movement, and "peaceful" vs. confrontational politics with the state.

Finally, I also led a total of 48 focus groups with 229 community members in four districts. I had four sampling groups: (a) 69 men; (b) 58 women; (c) 55 young men; (d) 47 young women ("young" meaning students in the local high school or at least people of school-age). Inclusion of young people in the focus groups was necessary to determine their identity, view and interpretation of municipal politics. Communities in each district were selected based on their population and sizes (large, medium, and small). The volunteers for focus groups were selected by using two methods: (1) *In community mapping*, I drew the geographical location of each house and gave them a number. These numbers were then selected randomly, which gave me a list of potential participants. If any given candidate was not interested, then I continued selecting until at least five people agreed to attend the focus group; (2) *community assembly* was chosen because community mapping became a political problem in some villages. Many community members requested a formal meeting where I would explain the reasons for my presence. They had become suspicious because I was asking political questions. Thus, upon arrival in a village, I met with local authorities, and they called for a communal assembly. There,

I had the chance to present myself, explain my presence, and I called for volunteers to meet with me after meeting. From this pool, I selected participants by giving each person a number and drawing up a random list.

The selection of young people was slightly different. Upon request, the school administrators gave me a list of students who were at least 18 years old. I separated males and females, so I could have equal representation, I then selected them randomly. In other cases, when students were on vacation, I sought young people at social gatherings (sport events, and communal work) and then they were selected randomly.

The topics discussed in the focus groups included identity or self-perception vis-à-vis mestizos, opinions on indigenous and mestizos mayors, preference for candidates, expectations of the mayor, community progress/development, the meaning of political participation and power, effects of municipal politics in communities, ethnic pride, and relationships with mestizos and authorities. The focus groups shed light on whether indigenous power in the municipality could be interpreted as self-determination, political pragmatism, or full political assimilation. Data collected in this section has been complemented by collection of electoral data from the ONPE (*Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales*), and JNE (*Jurado Nacional de Elecciones*) in Lima, which was crucial in order to analyze the voting pattern of the people in those districts, and study the percentage of votes that each candidate obtained in each election.

Lastly, I conducted an additional 16 focus groups in eight mestizo communities comprising of a total 83 adults, 38 men and 45 women. The method of selection was the same as with native communities. I used both the community mapping and assembly methods. I coordinated with community leaders to obtain their permission; I then

proceeded to randomly select the participants. I conducted focus groups in mestizo communities for comparative purposes, and in order to gain insights about their perceptions, interpretations and understanding of the municipal politics, and assessment about their non-mestizo leaders.

I personally conducted the interviews, but I had the assistance of two undergraduate indigenous students in leading the focus groups. This same methodology was used in each District.

Thesis Overview

Let me conclude this chapter with a brief outline of the remaining chapters. In Chapter 2, I discuss the beginning of Amazon Indigenous peoples' (Shipibo-Konibos) formal relations with the state that date back to 1974, when native Amazonians were recognized as "native communities". Based on the information obtained from 48 focus groups in 12 Shipibo-Konibo communities, interviews with community and federation leaders, and historical data, I will show how the Shipibo-Konibo people have been systematically co-opted by the state and national culture (culturally, socially, economically, politically, legally), hindering the ideological cohesion necessary for a visible social movement as defined by social movement theorists.

My data also reveal that the Shipibo-Konibos are what I will call "micro-internally divided," that is, each community is independent and operates autonomously without a sense of oneness with other communities. This independence is exacerbated by the geopolitical division imposed on them by the state. In short, Chapter 2 will give new insights as to why Shipibo-Konibos have not consolidated their social movement. As

noted in the literature review, scholars have pointed out three main reasons why there was not a strong rise of social movement in Peru. My thesis contributes to this debate by giving a fourth reason.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how other studies have shown that identity is a key element in social movement formation. Due to absorption of mestizo culture and customs, the Shipibo-Konibo recognize that their indigenous identity has been diminishing. They recognize that they are losing their identity and culture, but credit the women for sustaining what remains through making pottery and wearing traditional clothing. As part of losing their culture, they admit that they no longer have the fierce resistant spirit of their ancestors in the face of invasion from outsiders. Today they want to interact with outsiders within a framework of respect.

I also describe and analyze the organizing process of the Shipibo-Konibos that dates back to 1979 according to my interviewees, when the first Shipibo-Konibo federation was established. That date marks the first creation of indigenous federations *per se* as opposed to government-sponsored *sindicatos* (unions) during Velasco's regime in the 1970s. I discuss how the first federation was "strong" due to funding from European NGOs. Then when "mismanagement" of funds was discovered, financial aid evaporated and consequently the federation itself was "weakened". The proliferation of new federations within the Shipibo-Konibo nation during the 1980s further contributed towards its weakening by competing for resources and credibility. My focus groups also reveal there is a strong conceptual and physical divorce between the people who are represented (native communities) and the federations (local, regional, and national) that purportedly represent them. Hence, the Amazonian regional organizations were not able

to lead a concerted social movement supported by their bases (native communities) to have a major impact on national policies. I further discuss how indigenous leaders perceive, interpret and evaluate the municipal politics, their own "social movement" and identity. Based on these data, I show that they are relatively weak in their organization, and they are now seeking alliance with indigenous mayors.

In Chapter 4, I show, by using interviews with indigenous politicians and leaders and focus group data, how the reach of municipal power by the Shipibo-Konibo is paradoxical. On one hand, it symbolizes the "take over" of power; hence, *reinvidicación;* on the other hand, it is counter-productive because it has divided families and communities due to ideology or preferences for mayoral candidates. I also show that there is not a thorough coordination between the Shipibo-Konibos mayors and the local and regional indigenous federation; hence, the mayors have reached power without institutional support of the federations, which confirms the lack of "indigenous agenda" in municipal politics.

As to effects of indigenous governance, I show that *la toma del poder* at the municipal level has brought disillusion to the Shipibo-Konibo people, due to "poor performance" and insufficient measurable economic benefits. Put differently, the longer the power is on the hands of the Shipibo-Konibo mayors, the more "inefficient" and "corrupt" they had become, hence, "betraying" the people who elected them. Conversely, the Shipibo-Konibo mayors' "hands are tied" because they cannot use the traditional customs to govern, but abide by national municipal laws, hence their perception as "selfish" and "bad mayors".

With regards to the significance of attaining municipal power and government, I demonstrate that the rise to municipal power of Shipibo-Konibo people is due primarily to the change of national political regime and progressive local electoral laws, and not to the strength of indigenous organizations or indigenous social movement. In other words, the *"toma del poder municipal"* is an isolated event when it occurs, not a part of a conscious, organized, social movement seeking self-determination as portrayed by Amazon national federations. Furthermore, my data points out that municipal power is seen as "an indigenous mayor with mestizo workers;" hence, not an "indigenous government".

In Chapter 5, the conclusion, I discuss how this thesis has implications for indigenous politics in South America for the following reasons:

(1) It shows the non-monolithic nature of the indigenous movement in Latin America, in contrast to studies arguing that strong indigenous social movements are a necessary step to the creation of an ethnic party, and to gaining power. We do not find a similar pattern in this Peruvian Amazon case. Among the Shipibo-Konibo, social, cultural, and ideological cohesion did not act as a catalyst to a massive movement to demand collective rights from the Peruvian state;

(2) Judging from the Shipibo-Konibo, indigenous peoples in Latin America might be better off through strengthening social and ideological unity, through building an institutional (eg, federation) base, and thorough *concientización* (consciousness raising) among their people *before* launching a national movement;

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(3) The Shipibo-Konibos' pursuit of politics of equal interaction, or diplomacy

without visible resistance through a social movement, might not enable them

to gain lasting rights in contemporary Peru;

(4) There is a need for indigenous young people to be trained professionals, so

that they can constitute a genuine "indigenous government" once an

indigenous person is elected mayor.

These and other implications of this study are discussed in the concluding Chapter 5 of

this dissertation. I hope that this research will inspire others to conduct parallel studies

among other ethnic groups (e.g., Ashaninka, Awajun, Yine, Ese eja, etc) of the Peruvian

Amazon.

CHAPTER 2

THE SHIPIBO-KONIBOS WITHIN THE PERUVIAN STATE: CO-OPTATION BY THE STATE AND NATIONAL CULTURE

This chapter provides a selective ethnographic profile of the people at the center of this dissertation—the Shipibo-Konibo people of the east central Peruvian Amazon. The sketch focuses on their strong and rich cultural, political, and religious organizations as well their history of resistance to Europeans. And it also discusses how the colonization has weakened both their cultural and political elements and their spirit of resistance. I then systematically present the process and the outcomes of state co-optation, politico-legal as well as socio-cultural, of the Shipibo-Konibo peoples—co-optation which hindered their autonomous organizational development in the form of social movements. As I will argue, this history of co-optation shows through today in the municipal elections of the Shipibo-Konibo people.

THE SHIPIBO-KONIBO PEOPLE: FROM RESISTANCE TO REFERENDUM [1]

Historically, Shipibos and Konibos had been two distinct ethnic groups who belong to the *Panoan* language family.[2] Oral history, legends, linguistic nuances and early chronicles attest to this differentiation (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986). It is estimated that the "ethno-fusion" of the two groups began to take place in the early 20th century, and that the process was well advanced by the 1970s (Tournon 2002: 138). For this reason, and

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[1] In this section, I will not give a full ethnographic account of the Shipibo-Konibo people, but a brief outline that emphasizes the cultural components that are relevant for the arguments of this chapter (for more detailed description of Shipibo-Konibo ethnography, see *People of Ucayali* by Eakin, Lauriault and Boonstra. International Museum of Cultures. Dallas, Texas. 1986).

[2] Missionaries, government officials, anthropologists have referred the Konibos with "C;" today the Konibos use "K" when they refer to themselves, so in this thesis, I use Konibos.

because of their linguistic and cultural similarities, many linguists do not make distinctions between them today.

> The Shipibo can be distinguished only with difficulty from the Conibo....Apparently the languages were never different, and today the distinction is largely a matter of pronunciation and some lexical items. Cultural differences are minimal; moreover, extensive intermarriage has nearly erased any separation of the two groups (Eakin, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986:1).

Indeed, Shipibo and Konibo people do not generally see themselves as two groups but as one, and again the reason given is intermarriage. Each group has relatives on both sides. The community members identify themselves as "we as Shipibo-Konibo", or use geographic reference such as *rëbokia joni* (southern man) or *chiponkia ainbo* (northern woman) (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2006). However, some leaders use only the term Shipibo in certain formal documents and centers names, such as *Centro Shipibo,* despite complaints by Konibo people. Peruvian national culture, or more specifically Limeños, use "Shipibo" to refer to the Shipibo-Konibo people. This type of linguistic discrimination against the Konibos may eventually result in dropping the term Konibo completely; thus, the outcome may be that Konibos are absorbed by, rather than fused with, the Shipibos. However, there is a strong counter-current of respect for this "ethno-fusion", as organizations created by both groups continue to recognize each other, such as, *Federacion de Comunidades Nativas de Ucayali* (FECONAU), *Organización de Desarrollo Shipibo-Conibo (ORDESHC), Asociación de Iglesias Evangelicas Shipibo-Conibo (AIESHC). De facto*, such organizations legitimize the unity of the two ethnic groups. An ethno-geographical distinction further complicates the naming issue: people from north of Pucallpa are commonly known as Shipibos, while those from the south, as Konibos (Tournon 2002).

The history of the Shipibo-Konibo can be traced back scantly to the 16th century, based on journals and reports by soldiers and missionaries. This history mentions their inter-ethnic contact with other groups as well as with the Spaniards. According to this source, three groups - Shipibo, Cashibo, and Konibos - dislocated each other in the 17th century. The Campas pushed the Cashibos to the Upper Aguaytia River where the Shipibos were settled. As a result, the Shipibos moved to the mouth of the Ucayali River where the Konibos were living. Then, the Konibos made the Cashibos their mortal enemies and fought frequently with them, as well as against the Amahuaca to expand their territories (Lathrap 1970; Lyon 1974; Roosevelt 1994; Steward 1963: 535-45). On this point, Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986:2 note:

> It is reported that in the seventeenth century the Conibo sold the captives [taken from warfare] as slaves to the Cocama in exchange for iron tools. They continued their slave raids into the nineteenth century 'among all tribes from the Mayoruna near the Amazon to the Amahuaca of the upper Ucayali' (Steward and Metraux 1948:563).

Furthermore, the Shipibos aggressively attacked another Panoan group, the Shetebos, in the 18th century, which forced them to seek refuge in local Catholic missions. The Shipibo and Konibo's earlier comparative military advantage over smaller groups is reflected in their current geographical occupation. They are located mainly along the Ucayali River (see Map 2), while smaller groups such as the Capanahua, Cashibo, and Amahuaca are located further away from the river (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986).

COMUNIDADES NATIVAS POR GRUPOS ETNICOS

INSTITUTO DEL BIEN COMUN

SISTEMA DE INFORMACION SOBRE
COMUNIDADES NATIVAS DE LA
AMAZONIA PERUANA
(SICNA)

Fuentes:
- Áreas naturales protegidas - INRENA
- Carta nacional, escala 1:100 000 - IGN digitalizada por MINEDU, IBC y ACPC
- Información de comuneros
- Información sobre comunidades nativas: ACPC - CEDIA
- Límite regional - INEI
- Plano de comunidades nativas tituladas - Ministerio de Agricultura - PETT

FECHA:	ESCALA:	PROYECCION:	PROGRAMAS SIG:
Lima, 2005	1:1 800 000	Geográfica Datum WGS 84	Arcgis 9.0 (Donación ESRI)

LEYENDA

- LIMITE REGIONAL
- RIOS
- RESERVA TERRITORIAL
- PROPUESTA DE RESERVA TERRITORIAL
- AREA NATURAL PROTEGIDA
- PARCELAS
- LAGOS
- AREA URBANA

GRUPOS ETNICOS
- AMAHUACA
- AMUESHA (YANESHA)
- ASHÁNINKA
- ASHÉNINKA
- CACATAIBO
- CAQUINTE
- CASHINAHUA
- CULINA
- MACHIGUENGA
- MASTANAHUA
- NOMATSIGUENGA
- PIRO (YINE)
- SHARANAHUA
- SHIPIBO-CONIBO
- YAMINAHUA

Mapa de Ubicación

Map 2: Native Communities by Ethnic Group in the Central Peruvian Amazon. Source: Instituto del Bien Común. Lima, Peru. This map shows that the Shipibo- Konibos (depicted in brown) have settled along the Ucayali River, although the   northern communities are a bit cut off from the map. A few Ashaninka communities also near the Shipibo-Konibos.

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***Key Themes in Cultural Organization: The Role of Women, Marriage System,
and Ornamentation***

Shipibo-Konibo society is characterized as matrilineal and matrilocal (Karsten
1995:155; Girard 1958:245). Yet, women's leadership is mainly at the household level,
where they have influence over their husbands in decisions such as selecting a potential
son-in-law or choosing a community to move to.[3] Women's domestic influence does not
translate into equal rights to participate in community decisions, due to family
obligations. For instance, in a community meeting, women often leave early to take their
children home; thus, men are often the only ones who cast votes on important community
items, except for the few women who do not have responsibilities for children (Eaken,
Lauriault and Boonstra 1986)

To accommodate women, some communities conduct the meetings on Sunday or
Saturday morning. This was very clear in one of the villages where I conducted a focus
group; the community police officers reserved the front seats for women. In one heated
topic, after the men quieted down, some men shouted. "Women must speak, it is their
turn to speak now". Then, women began to speak, from older to younger (Field Notes,
2006). Despite the encouragement by men, women tend to be shy in speaking publicly. In
the words of one female leader: "Our mothers and young women do not generally speak
in community meetings or federation congresses because they feel ignorant and do not
want to be ridiculed by men" (Priscila Maynas, Personal Interview, 2006).

Women's primary leadership in the household seems to be explained by gender
roles. Women take care of the children while men are gone hunting, fishing, working on

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[3] In chapter 3, I will discuss how women's role in leadership has evolved as they have become more aware
of their rights and are now proactively seeking more participation in leadership outside the household.

their crop fields or working as laborers for local mestizos. However, each gender takes its responsibility again, once both the fathers and mothers are all in the house. For instance, men have traditionally taught their sons survival skills such as making canoes, paddles, bow and arrows, and spears. Similarly, women have taught their daughters how to weave, make crafts, pottery, and cloth painting. The passing down of the skills, technology, and knowledge is, however, diminishing. Parents complain that both young men and women do not want to learn how to make those artifacts (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2006).

Marriage

Dating does not exist in the Shipibo-Konibo world. Traditionally, marriages have been arranged by parents, although young men and women's preferences were taken into account. A potential husband is an excellent hunter, a great fisherman, a hard worker in the *chacra*-farm and talented in building canoes and other useful skills. Similarly, a potential wife is a good cook, talented in weaving and art skills (cloth painting, pottery, etc.) (Hilario, 1999). The newly married couple live in a matrilocal residence for an indeterminate time, either with the woman's parents or building their own house near the wife's parents. Other extended families may follow suit in building a house near their kin (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986; Tournon 2002).

Thus, a community is composed of patches of extended family, which traditionally has maintained close relationships among the Shipibo-Konibo kin.[4] Matrilocality also has an economic function. The new son-in-law has to provide food for his in-law's and close relatives. In this respect, Eakin *et al.* (1986) point out that, "Since

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[4] This matrilocal practice has deteriorated due to political schisms as we will see in Chapter 4.

the young man is considered part of his parents-in-law's household, he must contribute by his work. He hunts with his father in law and works in the family garden."

The collective family decision-making process for their offspring has changed over the last 40 years as the decision to marry has been informally granted to the individual young people. They are no longer obliged to marry the person chosen by their parents. They instead choose, or attempt to choose, rationally and romantically their wives and husbands. The criteria are now somewhat stratified by educational attainment. For instance, an educated person will not marry somebody who has does not have formal education. Teachers will marry among teachers, and university students will marry other students, who do not have to be from the same ethnicity. Today there are extensive inter-ethnic marriages, as well as marriages with foreign partners, i.e., Americans and Europeans (Field Notes, 2006).

Clothing and Ornamentation

The Shipibo-Konibos have historically planted cotton to make clothing. They now purchase fabric for blouse and skirts, but a few women still weave skirts, mainly to sell to tourists (Field Notes 2005). The typical dress for man is called *tari* (a full long tunic). This poncho-like dress is made of woven cotton and requires arduous manual labor to complete. On *tari,* Eakin *et al.* 1986:19 write, "This design typically consists of a number of interlocking geometric motifs, with a dominant right-angle step. The resultant pattern is a profusion of lines, squires, rectangles, and especially crosses". *Tari* is no longer worn daily, but only for protection in cold weather, for festive occasions, and meetings with government officials. Western clothing, such as shirts, shorts and pants, bought from a traveling merchant or retail stores in Pucallpa, have become the regular clothing of

Shipibo and Konibo men (Field Notes, 2006). Women's clothing consists of a skirt (*chitonti)* and a blouse (*koton*). The skirts are also decorated with a geometrical pattern, while the blouse is made of a colorful fabric bought in Pucallpa. According to Eaken, Lauriault and Bostra 1986: 20: "[The blouse] is rather straight, short in the front, and with a ruffle in the back and tight sleeves, reaching almost to the wrist".

Beadwork is the well-known ornamentation among the Shipibo-Konibo. They make bracelets and earrings with small beads of different colors (*mörö)* bought in Pucallpa and combined with natural beads (*bëro*). Women also wear *chineshëti* ("a belt made of multiple strings of small white beads"); the quantity of strings implies her economic status and that the husband is a good provider (Field Notes 2006; Eaken, Lauriault and Bostra 1986). Furthermore, women have traditionally made necklaces of old metal coins of around fifty disks, but they are now rarely used, except on ceremonial occasions. A nose ring ("a metal nose-piece held with a thin string wire from the pierced septum") had been a common practice traditionally worn by men, woman and children. However, this, too, is no longer practiced; it is rare to find younger generations with a pierced septum. Similarly, body and face paint are rarely seen in the communities, which were geometrical designs applied to people participating in ceremonies and communal parties (Field Notes 2006; Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986). The Shipibo-Konibos have traditionally practiced "head deformation". This cranial reshaping was mainly for esthetic and ethnic identification purposes (Tournon 2002). Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra (1986: 20) describe this:

> [A] piece of flat padded wood was commonly placed on the forehead of the newly born. This padded wood has a strap that goes around the back of the head. The board is left on the forehead for approximately three months and is tightened periodically, producing a round face and slanted forehead.

This practice was discouraged by missionaries, but pressure from the mestizos has also contributed to its disappearance (Eaken *et al*. 1986). Men in focus groups pointed out that older people with slanted foreheads were made fun of by mestizos, which led them to no longer practice this custom. In addition, the older women who once enforced and encouraged their daughters to put the padded wood on their babies have died. New generations only remember head deformation as a cultural practice from the past.

Community Economic Organization

The Shipibo-Konibo have a mostly subsistence economy, but there are some people who engage in production for cash. Most people obtain their daily food by fishing, hunting, and farming their *chacras.* They fish once a day or sometimes twice or three times a week, if there is surplus from previous fishing trips. Fishing hooks, as well as bows and arrows with single and multiple harpoons, are utilized for these activities. The food menu includes piranha, turtles, alligators, manatees, and catfish. They generally also hunt at least once a week. The game animals are pacas, squirrels, monkeys, deer, parrots, wild pigs, and armadillos. The hunting devices are bows and arrows, blow guns, hunting dogs and pit falls with sharpened stakes in the bottom (Meggers 1971; Eaken, Lauriault and Boonsstra 1986; Field Notes, 2006). In this regards, Steward (1963: 556) pointed out that:

> Subsistence is based on sweet manioc, but turtles and river mammals are taken in some numbers with harpoons and spear throwers and with harpoon arrows. The blowgun, spear and bow and arrows are used for hunting.

Each Shipibo-Konibo family has their own garden or *chacra*, where they grow most of their daily food. They apply a slash-and-burn method with machete and ax. Then, "after the underbrush is cut, the trees felled and when they dry, the field is burned, which prepares the soil for the crops" (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986: 8). The *chacras* are

located both on *terra firme* and, between flood seasons, *varzea*.[5] Rice, corn, and beans are grown in both types of soil for cash crops and home consumption. However, plantains are only grown in *varzea*, which is currently the main cash provider, as there is great demand in Pucallpa, and they grow all year long. Moreover, the Shipibo-Konibo today plant small plots of manioc roots, pumpkins, papayas and sweet potatoes, peanuts, squash, water melon, and sugar cane both in *terra firme* and *varzea*, etc (Field Notes, 2005).

Currently, food scarcity is visible in Shipibo-Konibo communities.[6] Men are forced to migrate to mestizo towns to seek work as *peones* or laborers in order to buy tuna fish, rice and pasta for their families; meanwhile, their *chacras* are often abandoned and they no longer have time to go fishing (Field Notes 2006). When men go to town, they find other distractions such as alcohol, which was introduced by *patrones* in the 1890s (Tournon 2002). Traditionally, *chicha* (a fermented corn juice) and *masato* (a fermented manioc root) were the typical alcoholic beverages, but were only used in festivities and on special occasions. However, the *aguardiente* (an especially strong alcohol drink, made from sugar cane) has replaced traditional controlled alcoholic substances and is available in almost every village. For instance, my research assistant and I showed up at one village for interviews, but they had a drinking party the day before, and almost all of them were drunk. We returned the following day. Not every village has a communal party such as this, but the problem of alcoholism is evident (Field Notes 2006).

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[5] For detailed study of Shipibo-Konibo soil classification, see Clifford A. Behrens. The Scientific Basis for Shipibo Soil Classification and Land Use: Changes in Soil-Plant Association with Cash Cropping. American Anthropologist. Pp 90-91. 1989.
[6] For detailed study on this topic, see Clifford A. Behrens. "The Cultural Ecology of Dietary Change Accompanying Activity Patterns Among the Shipibo". Human Ecology, Vol.14, No.4, 1986.

Thus, alcohol has altered the traditional economic functions of individuals in the community. Some men only work as laborers for local *mestizos* and spend their pay in alcoholic consumption which is all too often bought from the employer. This dependency is slowly eroding the barter and subsistence economy of native communities (Field Notes 2006). Furthermore, the migration of young people who go to Pucallpa, Lima, or other cities to seek work has had egregious effects on community health. Several men have died of AIDS in the communities, acquired as a result of their sexual contact with prostitutes in the towns (Jeizer Suares, Personal Interview, 2006).

Community Political Organization

The political organization of the Shipibo-Konibo is characterized by a decentralization of leadership: that is, each community has its own chief and is independent of other communities in conducting their own affairs and development. The community chief exercises his authority informally in the village. Three generations ago, circumstances and personality were the deciding factors in obtaining leadership. Traditionally, a founder of the village would naturally become the chief. Alternatively, community members would put their trust on somebody who had great ideas in solving community problems. However, he could easily lose his leadership and authority and step down if the people lost trust in him (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986; Tournon 2002).

Today there are new criteria to elect a chief as they face new challenges in dealing with *mestizos*. For instance, a good candidate for chiefship now is somebody who is over 30 years of age, a hard worker, an exemplary man, and a Spanish speaker. The traditional chief is not ruled out by these new needs, for he still plays an important, although mostly symbolic role in the village. Nevertheless, these changes reflect the political impact of the

mestizo majority group on the Shipibo-Konibos, thereby putting pressure on the communities to choose younger men who have attended school as opposed to keeping the old ones. The success of a leader is measured by the projects he is able to bring for the community, for instance, the establishment of a school or health care center, and other types of economic development (Eaken, Lauriault and Boonstra 1986). Moreover, the leader is judged by whether he puts community interest first when he is dealing with loggers, oil explorers, and commercial fisherman (Field Notes 2006).

The elected chief obtains his credential from the Ministry of Agriculture. He calls and conducts meetings, and represents the community in legal battles or in making contracts with logging corporations that are interested in harvesting timber in community territories. Furthermore, the chief cannot make unilateral decisions since the decisions are collective in a formal community meeting (Community Leaders, Personal Interview 2006). A failure to honor this agreement assures him an immediate dismissal. For instance, one young chief had obtained cash from a *mestizo* logger without community consent, with the promise to persuade his community to let him log in community's territory. Upon hearing this news, the community elected a new chief, and the young man lost his job immediately (Field Notes 2006).

In addition to the chief, there are two more local authorities elected by popular vote: an *Agente Municipal* (Municipal Agent) and *Teniente Gobernador* (Lieutenant Governor). The newly elected community authorities obtain their credentials from the Municipality and Ministry of Justice respectively. Each authority has his/her own duties and does not interfere or usurps the other's functions (Personal Interview, Local Leaders 2006). All these changes in community politics are stirred and encouraged by the

integrationist policy of the Peruvian government, which only recognizes leaders elected by popular elections, while rejecting the traditional chiefs, who are often monolingual and illiterate elders.

Religious Beliefs

Central to the Shipibo-Konibos' religion is "the belief that both animate and inanimate objects have spirits that initiate and govern most natural phenomena" (Roe 1982). They believe in the power of plants and animals that can be used by shamans to harm people or to help cure illnesses. Shamans are classified into two types. The *mërayas* are healers, while the *jovës* are bewitchers. These two specialists use two different kinds of hallucinogenic plants. The *ayahusca,* or *nishi,* is taken by the good shaman, through which he calls upon the spirits to come to help him cure the ill. Conversely, the bewitcher uses another type of hallucinogenic, which is called *toe*— a poisonous plant in the Solanaceae family. While *ayahuasca,* or *nishi,* is boiled in the form of tea by a good shaman; a bewitcher, however, drinks the *toe* raw—this allows him to mutate into a poisonous snake or anaconda to harm his enemies, using wasps, maggots and sharp *chonta* thorns as his arrows. The sensation of *ayahuasca* is described as if one was floating in the blackness of the night. As the vision deepens, animal figures appear, such as large snakes and jaguars. Simultaneously, there is the feeling that one's body is "flying," a vehicle that shamans use to ascend to heaven (Roe 1982; Girard 1958).

Once the shaman has felt the full effect of *ayahuasca,* he begins the healing process by chanting, accompanied by junior shamans who help him by doing duets or alternating the leads. This chanting activity is accompanied by smoking tobacco over the patient's head or body. The illness could be caused by either a spell, or by a random

attack by spirits; thus, the shaman will cure him accordingly. For instance, if the illness is caused by a spell, then the good shaman would use the sucking out technique from the top of the head, which, if successful, would be thrown out of his body through vomiting (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975; Roe 1982).

Furthermore, illness and death can be caused not only by bewitchers (or evil shamans), but also by "demons of death" themselves independently from the power of shamans. This is known as the *yoshiman caya tsëcanana*—the demons' capture of man's soul. These death demons are more dangerous than the shamans' spells, because such spells could be taken out through a song or sucking practices. However, if the attacks are straight from these death entities, they may be more difficult to cure (Hilario 1999). Children tend to be more vulnerable than adults; that is why, children are never left alone and *nanë*—genipa juice— is used to paint the body of the new-born and young children to protect them from demons' random attacks. These attacks are not curable, which can cause the sudden death of an adult or child; however, precautions can be taken. For instance, a shaman may smoke his tobacco in a rectangular pattern around his house to create a temporary 'safe haven' for his family (Eakin *et al.* 1986).

In sum, the Shipibo-Konibos are active believers in the supernatural. Animism and shamanism have traditionally been the explanatory variable for many of the daily events in life, such as the cause of illness, death, as well as the power of plants and *mëraya* to cure. This began to change when the Jesuits, Franciscans and, later on, the Protestant missionaries arrived in the Amazon.

New Belief System: Jesuits, Franciscans, Protestants

The Shipibo and Konibos resisted their first contact with the Spanish Crown in the 17th century when Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries entered their territory. The missionaries lack of respect for their cultural heritage undoubtedly contributed to their resistance. On this, Stocks (1984: 40) pointed out, "[I]n those days, according to a priest, the recognized method was to make men out of the beasts [the indigenous peoples] and from men to Christians. The work was considered a necessary aspect to convert the beast into a man" (Author's translation). From this perspective, the Jesuits and the Franciscans saw the Amazonians as savages whose souls had to be saved as the first step towards helping them to become citizens. To achieve these goals, they begin to forcefully settle the "savages" into *reducciones*, that is, grouping the different ethnic Amazonians into one mission to Christianize them. Often, the Spanish soldiers went on raids to seek the natives who had fled from the missions. Later, the converted "savages" were used in raids to seek other "tribes" to bring them to the mission (Faron 1958; Santos Granero 1982 & 1992; Block 1994; Tournon 2002).

The Konibo's initial resistance weakened into openness with time, mainly due to the offer of iron tools from the missionaries, reflecting a pragmatic relational approach with outsiders (Tournon 2002). Jesuits and Franciscans used this opportunity to advance their agenda. Iron tools were bait to temporarily appease the Amazonians for Christianization. However, as a result of ignoring native culture, Catholic missionaries had minimal long-term impact on the Shipibos and Konibos. They currently do not have a mission in the area, although the Franciscan and Jesuit orders changed their method of

missionization in the twentieth century by putting greater emphasis on education and poverty reduction (http://www.jesuitmission.org).

In contrast, four Protestant missions arrived in the Peruvian Amazon in the late 1930s: (1) the South American Mission (SAM), (2) the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL); (3) the Swiss Indian Mission (SIM)[7]; and (4) the Seventh Day Adventist Church Missions. Each of these Missions has some objectives that converge with native people. SAM arrived in the late 1930s and had a visible impact among the Shipibo-Konibo. SAM's first missionary among the Shipibo-Konibo was George Baker, who lived among them and learned their language and culture in order to 'help' them spiritually and educationally. Baker founded the first school in Colonia del Caco.[8] He and his wife, Maria (a nurse), also established a small health care center to attend the medical needs of native people (Hilario 1999).

Chashna, a resident of Colonia del Caco, witnessed the work of this missionary: "He accepted and liked us even though we were *ina* [savage] and he also made us feel good inside...he even used to eat with us...our food" (Hilario 1999). This *in situ* evangelization perhaps warmed the hearts of many Shipibo-Konibos, as there are currently more Protestant churches than Catholic churches. That's why Shipibo-Konibos value Jesus Christ more than religious figures such as Virgin Mary or the Catholic saints (Hilario 1999). Yet, there is also a religious dualism, as local healers or shamans read the Bible when they drank *ayahuasca* to cure sick patients (Field Notes: 2006). Along with the entrance of religious doctrines, new western philosophies, such as atheism,

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[7] The work of SIM is not very publicized; they still work with the Shipibo-Konibo by providing biblical training, and occasional sponsorship of agricultural and avicultural projects.
[8] Most of the Shipibo-Konibo leaders, either politicians or religious leaders, have come from this community.

communism, materialism, humanism, and agnosticism, have influenced young people who attended Peruvian universities and teachers colleges.

SIL arrived in 1946 among the Shipibo-Konibos. SIL's primary mission is linguistic research to translate the Bible and promote literacy among different ethnic groups in the world (Harrington 1992). SIL's approach was similar to that of SAM. The missionaries lived in a village to learn the language for the purpose of phonetic and syntactic analysis. Once completed, they translated the New Testaments, edited a native dictionary and printed educational materials in the native languages. They also promoted literacy by promoting *capacitación* to train selected community leaders (reading, writing and arithmetic) from Yarina-Cocha, a town near the city of Pucallpa, to become bilingual teachers (Harrington 1992).[9]

The Seventh Day Adventist church arrived in the Amazon around 1920s with a primary goal "to proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel." Besides their mission of saving people spiritually worldwide, they also engage in humanitarian work, such as promoting education, economic development, and providing healthcare to remote rural areas through Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) (www.adventist.org).This particular mission has few churches among the Shipibo-Konibos. In the past, they were known to condition them to wear only western clothing in exchange for material aid. This was the case in the case of the community of Amaqueria (Tournon 2002). This mission had been silent for many years, but in the last seven years, they have increased their proselytizing activities by installing churches, and providing

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[9] The *capacitación* was carried out at *Centro Ocupacional Bilinguë* in Yarinacocha, which later became *Instituto Superior Pedagogico Bilinguë* (ISPB). SIL initially financed the program and provided infrastructure; however, in the early 1970s, the Ministry of Education absorbed the project. ISPB is a five years Teachers' College that specializes in elementary and secondary schools (Hilario 1999).

humanitarian aid. As a result, some communities have two types of churches; one is Christian evangelical that worships on Sunday, and the other is Seventh Day Adventist that worships on Saturday. In many cases, the Sunday Christians have converted to Saturday Christians, "mainly to receive aid such as medicine and clothing" (Anonymous Interview, 2006). This religious dualism has brought conflict among family members who dispute religiously and cannot talk to each other (Field Notes, 2006).

Many missionizing groups such as SIL are controversial among anthropologists and indigenous activists, who argue that western educational and religious projects alter the traditional life of indigenous communities. Elmer S. Miller writes: "Western missionaries are purely agents of secularization, changing the economic and educational traditions of the Indians" (Lyon 1974: 391; Soren Hvolkof 1981; Colby 1995). However, in context, not all missionizing activities undermine local cultures, and bilingual education, literacy programs, and written language can reinforce pride in local language and culture, regardless of the intention of these programs by the missionaries. On this, Tournon (2002: 125) writes: "ILV's [SIL] politics was not ethnocide", since its literacy program enhanced and strengthened the cultural and linguistic survival of Amazonians.

There is no doubt today that education is the cornerstone for indigenous people to defend themselves, regardless of whether its orientation is religious or secular. Currently, native peoples of the Amazon are facing massive deforestation of their lands, economic exploitation from colonizers, destruction of their culture, and violations of their human rights (Brown 1991; Chirif 1991; Stocks 1992; Santos Granero 1992; Leslie 1995). The need for educated indigenous leaders is increasingly becoming a key factor in defending their interests (Hilario 1999).

POLITICO/LEGAL CO-OPTATION: RESISTANCE TO EUROPEANS

A brief look at history will reveal that there are historical roots that underpin the ostensible current weakness, or *derrota,* of the Amazonians. This apparent *derrota* is understandable, because in the absence of an equal distribution of power relations within the larger society, the ill-equipped entities tend to lose. From the arrival of Spaniards onward, Native Amazonians have had a comparative disadvantage militarily, organizationally, economically, and technologically.

Nonetheless, the Amazonian people did not peacefully surrender to Europeans. They fought back, sometimes with significant success, as will be further discussed in this chapter. Despite this initial strong resistance, they now appear to be giving up after five hundred years, and cannot fully gain enough strength to consolidate their resistance due to the comparative advantage of the conquerors.

The first co-optation in my analysis is a politico/legal one, which came from two reactions: from the initial resistance and later submission to the Spanish Crown, and from the initial exclusion and later inclusion by Peru as an independent nation-state. The first reaction consists of the initial encounter and how the institutional seeds sown by the conquest developed to shape current internal social organization of Shipibo-Konibo communities, and secondly how the recognition of native Amazonians by the state ironically ties them even deeper.

Initial Resistance and Later Submission to the Spanish Crown

The Shipibos and Konibos resisted contact with whites beginning in the mid-1600s, the year when the Jesuit missionaries entered their territory. The missionaries entered the

indigenous world not only with the Bible, but also with Spanish soldiers in charge of bringing the 'savage souls" to civilization and Christianization (Tournon 2002). In 1657, the Shipibos killed a number of missionaries, and in 1660, the Shipibo joined the Cocama to lead a military incursion against the Huallaga River Mission. Ten years later, in 1670, another attack occurred against Patanahua Mission (Steward 1963). The Konibo's contact with "whites" was similar. In the 1680s, Franciscan and Jesuit Missionaries competed to establish the first mission among the Konibos. The Jesuits succeeded in this competition, due to their provision of iron tools immensely valued by the Konibos. However, in 1695, the Konibo rebelled against the missionaries to retaliate against the Spanish assault on the Jivaro (Shuar) Indians (Tournon 2002).

Then, in 1698, a tripartite force of Konibos, Shipibos and Shetebos repelled Spanish punitive forces. As a result, the missionaries halted their Christianizing projects until the 1740s, and were attacked again by the same tripartite forces after they built a new mission in 1767. Despite these setbacks, the Jesuit mission reorganized and continued their projects in 1790 (Steward 1963).

This recorded resistance to missionary efforts by the Shipibos and Konibos in the 17th and 18th centuries dramatically decreased in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is mainly because after Peru's independence in 1821, both Jesuits and Franciscans were expelled (Tournon 2002). Most likely there were other confrontations with the *criollos* after 1821 but, since native Amazonians did not have their own historians, such resistance was never recorded. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that Catholic missionaries initiated the encounter with native "warriors," and paved the way for a less

confrontational encounter between native Amazonians and the Protestant missionaries who arrived in the 1930s.

As the religious invasion of the Amazon by Jesuits and Franciscans waned, the economic conquest began, namely the 19th century slave trade and rubber boom. Although the extraction of rubber, or "black gold" in the Peruvian Amazon began in 1860, it took 20 years for this extractive economy to boom in 1880. The boom then collapsed in 1920, when *Hevea* seeds were planted in Malaysia, spurring a plantation rubber industry that eventually out-competed wild Amazonian rubber (Barham 1994; Larrabure y Correa 1905, in Tournon 2002).

The human rights of Amazonian indigenous people were flagrantly violated by the rubber economy, starting during the height of the boom, and continuing well beyond 1920 when the market diminished. Jorge M. Von Hassel (a German citizen) noted how defenseless native people were hunted and captured, and then were sold as merchandise. The rubber boom had created a great demand for native people's knowledge and hand labor, given their expertise in harvesting *Hevea* trees and their enduring capacity to live in the jungle (Stanfield 1998; Hassel 1905, in Tournon 2002). Another witness, H. Fuentes (a local authority from the lower Amazon) wrote:

> With the purpose of dispersing, they [*mestizos*] periodically organized raids on the Indian in the worst way; if he is captured alive he is taken far away, and forced into labor as a slave and then was often sold as such. If he resisted and defended his household and children as objects of rapacity of the assailants, he found death without mercy. Truthfully, the main objective of these undignified raids was to pick up women and young boys, then sell them at good price. A boy that was between 10-12 was worth 500 soles, if he was Campa, it was much more. A girl from the same age range was 300 soles, a bit less for a woman that was over 20 years old (Author's translation). ([H. Fuentes II:141 quoted by San Roman 1975:144], in Tournon 2002:103).

This enslavement of Amazonian indigenous people was first made public by an Englishman, Mr. Basement, in a 1912 publication, but systematic and structured

exploitation continued well beyond this time. On the bottom were the "*cauchero*

workers" who extracted the rubber, followed by "*patron caucheros*" who supplied the

workers and amassed the rubber they collected. The next level up consisted of the

"Houses of Iquitos," which were well-to-do rubber-trading businesses, and on top were

the great consuming societies (Tournon 2002). The Shipibo and Konibos were absorbed

into this system via *enganche* with *patrones*. Under this system they were charged

exorbitant interest rates for food and other equipment for the journey to harvest *caucho*.

Consequently, they were trapped into an endless debt bondage. They were given a

machete, an ax, *aguardiente* (alcohol made of sugar cane), *fariña* (food made of manioc),

a fishing net, and a shot gun. They were required to pay their debt in *caucho*. The

patrones, when they left the country, would sell the account to another person. Native

people would only change their *patrones,* but the debt continued sometimes for life

(Ordinaire 1887, in Tournin 2002).

The foreign *patrones*, Spanish and Portuguese, not content with current slaves,

'contracted' Shipibo-Konibos to go on raids to capture Amahuacas and Ashaninkas.

Thus, the *caucho* trade opened up human trade among Amazonians, as they provided

slaves to *patrones.* The Shipibo-Konibos did this despite the fact that they too had been

victims of *caucho* mercantilism. For instance, a Spanish *cauchero*, Maximo Rodriguez

(1873-1943), obtained a concession to 4,000 km^2 in southeastern Peru near the border

with Bolivia. The concession included workers in three social categories: 20 Spaniards

who managed the land and people; more than a hundred "free" workers or *shiringuireros*

from Brazil, Bolivia, and Loreto; and around 200 Shipibos who were treated as slaves

(Tournon 2002).

Tournon (2002) reports that, in 1930, these 200 Shipibo men, women, and children were required to work from 4 am to 6 pm, six days a week. Their day off was supposed to be used to work on their fields for self-subsistence. They were prohibited from leaving the compound or from having contact with foreigners. Corporal punishment, such as beating, abusing women, and jailing, was common including the death penalty. This system lasted until 1943, when Americans interested in wild *caucho* bought the *fundo*; the Shipibos were freed and were assisted in returning to their home communities, but some stayed in the area (Tournon 2002). The existence of one Shipibo village in the Madre de Dios region near the Ese'eja indigenous people is evidence of this period.

Worthy of note is the lack of concern by the state as the slavery of Amazonian indigenous people was taking place. On this, Maria Remy writes:

> …No protective legislation, and in particular no state office, protected the Indians of the Amazon region, not even in the early years of this century when rubber, a jungle resource, fetched very high prices on the international market, and its extraction produced one of the century's most terrible episodes of slavery and genocide in Peru... (quoted in Lee Van Cott 1995: 117).

Following the start of colonization of the Peruvian Amazon, the population of non-indigenous people rose more than six-fold from 18,000 in 1876 to 120,000 in 1920. They were mostly from the valley of Huallaga, as well as from the coast; some were foreigners. The oldest town in Ucayali was Masisea (a *mestizo* town). Although Masisea's population never increased, Pucallpa's population skyrocketed after the highway from Lima to Pucallpa was built in 1943. In 1963 and again in the 1980s, President Fernando Belaunte Terry ordered a formal "internal colonization" of the Amazon. He pointed out that there were vast resources in the Amazon, and urged

Peruvians to go there to take advantage for the development of the nation. These efforts were part of his policy to promote poverty eradication and to solve the crowding of towns in the highlands (Grey 1997; Harrington 1992). This push from above clearly had an impact in the Amazon, as thousands of people flowed to the fast growing cities of the jungle.

Initial Exclusion and Later Inclusion: The Shipibo-Konibos in Independent Nation-State

Peru's independence from the Spanish crown in 1821 should have given freedom to all peoples existing in the geographical region called Peru, but it did not do so. However, the new nation-state promoted assimilation and integration of people who were not whites or of European descent. From the beginning, there was a clear distinction between Andeans and Amazonian peoples. The former were considered *Indios*, capable of producing surplus for the state, while the latter were called *Salvajes*, lacking productive skills given their "state of nature" (Remy 1995). This difference was conspicuous in the Constitutions of 1828, 1920, and 1933, where the lands of the *Indios* were deemed imprescribable and inalienable, but there was no mention of the rights of the *Salvajes* (Roldan & Tamayo 1999).

Within this ideological framework, the Peruvian state, in 1893, under Ramon Castilla, adopted the doctrine of *terra nullius* to justify the colonization of indigenous territories in the Amazon (Grey 1997). Under *terra nullius*, the state declared indigenous lands to be empty or uninhabited, leading the way for their appropriation. This policy was strengthened by Law 1220 in 1909, which granted all territorial sovereignty to the state including the right to lease to anyone to colonize it, along with its inhabitants

(Roldan & Tamayo 1999). Amazonians were far from being recognized as citizens or as a collective group under this Law. This ideological base and legal maneuver by Castilla paved the way for the initial adjudication of the Amazon region. Accordingly, the *Salvajes* did not have any voice. They had lost the ideological, political, and legal battle without knowing it; the "white anaconda" of the Peruvian state had absorbed them, legally erasing their rights as a group.

Their historical vulnerability and the legal exclusion changed completely in 1974 when, for the first time, the Peruvian state under President Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, recognized Amazonian indigenous peoples. He promulgated the Law of Native Communities with Legislative Decree No. 20653, which gave them certain rights and obligations. After that, Amazonian peoples had a juridical and legal existence (Roldan and Tamayo 1999), and established a formal relation with the state as individual citizens and as collective groups in the form of "native communities" (*comunidades nativas*). The 1979 Constitution reaffirmed the 1974 recognition of Amazonians.

Law 20653 was very significant for two reasons. First, the Law enabled the Amazonians to have collective land ownership, and these lands were inalienable (cannot be sold), unmortgageable (cannot be used as a security for a loan), and imprescribable (cannot be claimed by a third party) (Grey 1997). Secondly, on the basis of their legal existence, the indigenous people as "native communities" now could demand titling of their lands. Paradoxically, although the Law of Native Communities recognized the legal existence of Amazonians, it also shattered them into many small units and distinct communities.

The term "native community" alienated the specific ethnicity of Amazonian peoples. Concomitantly, the territories used and possessed historically by indigenous peoples ceased to exist, because with Law 20653 one "tribal group" was subdivided into communities. This remains today the current status of native Amazonians. On this, Grey (1997: 78) writes: "The consequence of this [Law of Native Communities] is that islands of indigenous communities appear throughout the rainforest which do not reflect the territory of any people as a whole." (see Map 3). Despite the flaws of the Law, it enabled the Amazonians to secure lands via land demarcations, however small the lands may have been. During Velasco's administration, the Law of Natural Resources was promulgated, which was inextricably related to the communal lands. Ownership of lands in the Peruvian Constitution is not associated with subsoil, much as in other Latin American states. This was evident in Article 118, which stated:

> The natural resources, renewable and non-renewable are patrimony of the Nation. The minerals, lands, forest, water and in general all the resources and sources of energy belong to the State. The law fixes the condition of its utilization and granting to particulars (Roldan & Tamayo 1999:146).

This meant that natural resources could not be private property, nor could they be for the exclusive use of a particular people (Constitution 1979 in Rubio Cabrera 1994). However, with regard to the access and use of renewable resources in indigenous lands, there were articles with clear provisions for consumption and commercialization without paying taxes to the state (Grey 1997). In fact, the government encouraged these extractive activities by giving preferential loans to the natives for the benefit of their communities (Roldan & Tamayo 1999).

Map 3: Land Titling Status of Native Communities of the Peruvian Amazon. Source: Instituto del Bien Común. Lima, Peru. This map shows that the vast ancestral territories of Amazonian peoples have been reduced to island of lands in the form of native communities.

In sum, while the state recognized the legal and juridical existence of Amazonian indigenous peoples, it also put another layer of entanglement upon Amazonians by grouping them as "native communities" rather than recognizing them as "ethnic groups" with their own territories and their own forms of social and political organization. The Amazonians had become completely absorbed by the state. The 1974 law and 1979 Constitution were effectively a new wave of invasion.

But both pieces of legislation became ineffective when President Fujimori abolished the Constitution of 1979 through a self-styled *coup d'etat,* in 1992. A new Constitution was drafted and approved in 1993. Indigenous people were far from consulted on its elaboration and approval through a controversial plebiscite. Unofficial data showed that only 51% of Peruvians approved the new Constitution (Grey 1997). Other important clauses that guaranteed indigenous lands, such as the earlier guarantees that they would be inalienable, and unmortgageable were not included. The only remaining clause vis-à-vis indigenous land was the "imprescriptibility" clause, which is found in Article 89 (Rubio Cabrera 1994). This was definitely a setback for Peruvian Amazonians.

Furthermore, in 1995, additional laws were approved, especially the Land Law No. 26505, which stated that indigenous lands that were not in use could be leased or sold by the state (Villapolo & Vasquez 1999). This amendment was the last blow for the indigenous people because in most areas they mainly practice a subsistence economy—fishing, hunting and gathering. With the amendment, they were being coerced to engage in "productive" activities. This meant that they had to enter into extractive activities, such as timber harvesting and cattle raising, to be in compliance with

the new regulations, if they wanted to keep their lands. Most Shipibo-Konibos communities have engaged in extractive activities or projects through a term "*contrato*" with illegal *mestizo* loggers to gain access to fast cash. They need cash to buy fuel for generators or school materials. So, they often refer to local *madereros* (timber extractivists) to ask for loans. The loan is always paid by giving the *madereros* permission to extract timber from their lands (Field Notes, 2006).

Analysis of Politico/Legal Co-optation

The Shipibo-Konibo's relation with the modern nation state began through their contact with Spanish soldiers and Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries in the 17th century as we have seen. They moved widely through the upper Amazon, either in warfare or in search of better agricultural lands, before they were put into *reducciones* by the colonizers in order to be "civilized" and "Christianized". This marked the first geographical constraint and forced settlement of Native Amazonians in the region.   If they fled from the *reducciones,* the Spanish soldiers, aided by other "civilized tribes" would find them and bring them back where, records show, they were lucky if they survived epidemics. Thus, the religious *reducciones* became the first mechanism to fragment the Amazonian indigenous societies in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Shipibo-Konibo were again displaced from their territory in the late 19th century and concentrated in settlements during the rubber boom. However, this time the motive was economic as capitalism began swallowing them physically, socially, culturally, and economically. They were involuntarily displaced from their local places as slaves, servants, and workers. The slavery of the Shipibos in the Spanish *fundos* in Southern Peru provides one example of this process.

After Peru's independence, the Amazon was opened for wider colonization under Ramos Castilla's *terra nullius* doctrine. Fernando Belaunde followed the same paradigm by promoting the "colonization of the Amazon by Peruvians" when the highway from Lima to Pucallpa was opened. The flux of migrants from the highlands surged into the city of Pucallpa, which put enormous pressure on the resources available, especially the commercial fishing in the Ucayali River. The demand for forest concessions from timber industries aimed at both local and national markets also encroached and collided with Shipibo-Konibo territories.

The Peruvian Amazon today constitutes 60% of the territory but has only 17% of the population (Grey 1997). This land ratio is misleading, since between 75 and 80% of the territory has been given in concessions to transnational companies for oil and gas and for timber (Kelly 2007: 1) (See Map 4). From this perspective, while *mestizo* colonization is certainly an issue, the greatest threat comes from transnational companies who possess rights to this huge chunk of Amazonian lands. In many cases, the native peoples can no longer go hunting in the forest or fishing in some lakes, because they are now private property (*Documento de Informe* ORAU-AIDESEP 2004).
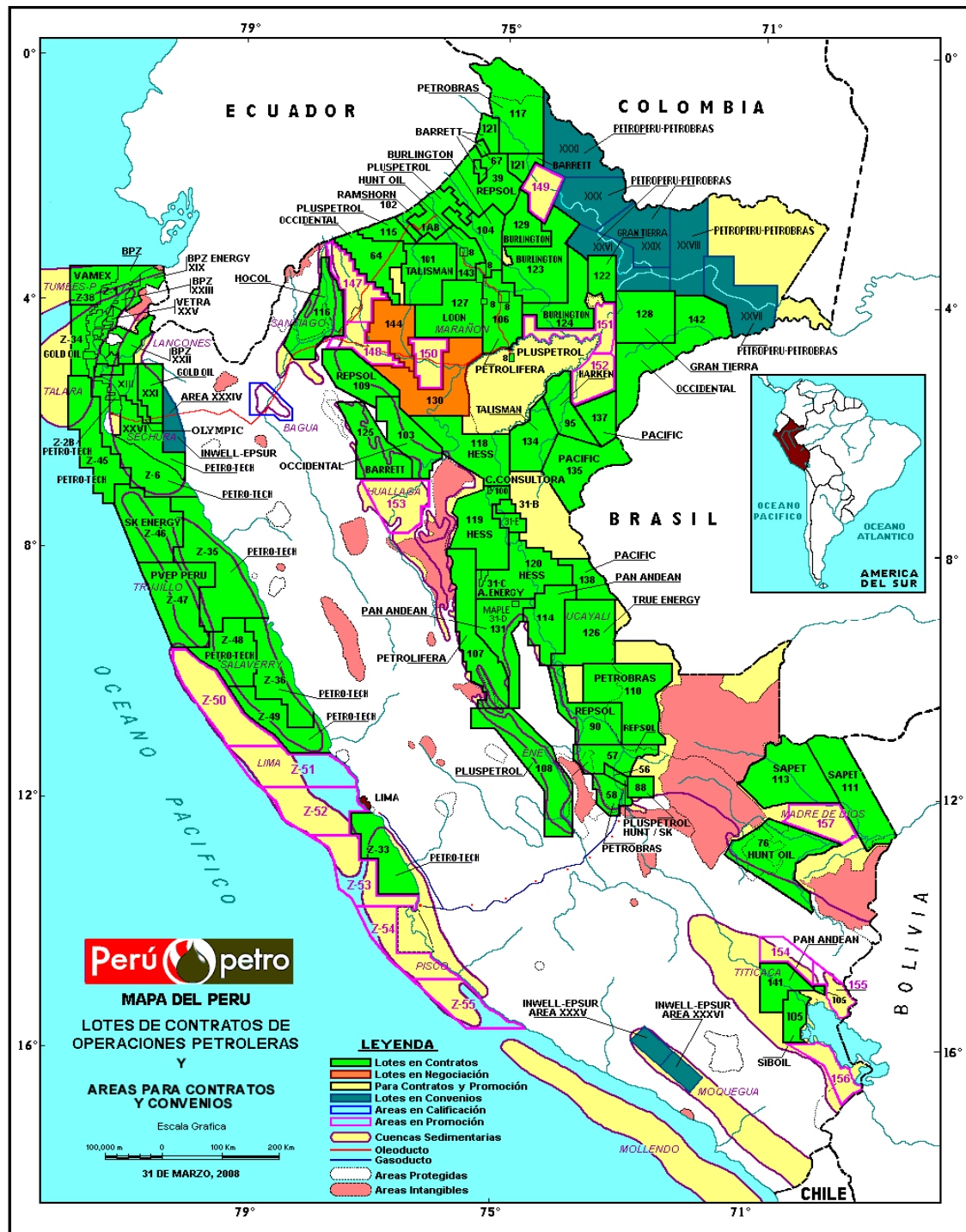
Map 4: Petroleum Concessions Under Contract, in Negotiation, and in Development in Peru. Source: courtesy of AIDESEP. This map shows that how the island of lands of native communities overlaps with oil concession given by the Peruvian state to international firms, which physically and socio-culturally threaten indigenous Amazonians. Shipibo-Konibo land is largely under contract, depicted in green such as Hess lot 120, Pan Andino lot 114, True Energy lot 126, Mapple 131,and Pluspetrol lot 151 and 152.

In addition to the government's policy of forest concession, "green" NGOs have become less friendly to indigenous interests as well, coming in loaded with political influence and cash to lobby the government to create national parks and nature reserves. They too come with an agenda to establish parks on indigenous territories without meaningful and significant indigenous consultation. Notable scholars such as Chapin (2004) has arrived to similar conclusion where he pointed out that indigenous peoples' fate and territorial rights are in the hands of orthodox conservationists. Since 1961, nine National Parks and nine Natural Reserves (encompassing 2.27% and 2.29% of all national territory, respectively) have been established despite the objections of indigenous organizations (Kelly 2007). Sometimes renegade indigenous leaders and local federations have supported their establishment, however (Anonymous Interview 2006). Hence, so-called "double greens" (who combine environmental ideology with access to money) now apply modern-day *reducciones* to native Amazonians, who must now live in the reduced lands between protected areas. Both the green ideology and green money promoting protected areas on indigenous territories are whittling away the possibility of Amazonians ever owning or recuperating their ancestral territories. Every time the president signs a Supreme Resolution or signs a bill sent by the Congress to declare a national park and natural reserve, or the government signs a concession treaty with multinationals, their signature legalizes a new boundary between the state and native Amazonians.

As a result of this long string of politico-legal co-optation, groups such as the Shipibo-Konibo that once dominated a vast territory lost the dominion of their territories and resources, and were obliged to settle in the 20th century *reducciones*. They are now

considered but long-term lease holders of the lands where they currently live. An "island" of lands is titled to the community and has a map that shows its demarcation (See Map 3). However, they are only long-term tenants, according the laws and the constitution. They could even lose the lease, if they do not use it, or if they attempt to use it as a loan guarantee. Furthermore, many community authorities are imposed by the national government; hence, the communities are even politically co-opted by state to accept new authorities that are not part of the traditional political system.

SOCIO/CULTURAL CO-OPTATION: CURRENT STATE OF THE SHIPIBO KONIBO PEOPLE

Having discussed the politico-legal aspects of co-optation, let me now turn to examine the ways that the Shipibo-Konibos have also been culturally absorbed by Peruvian national culture. They are being changed, and their cultural practices and rituals are being eroded. Hence, their *ashë* (culture) and identity are diminishing, especially among young people as will be shown below. As I will argue, the people who once dominated the Ucayali basin are now reduced to citizens and native communities. Of course, it is not unusual that a defeated society or people will often tend to adopt the system of the victor's culture. The Shipibo-Konibos are geographically, institutionally, organizationally, and socio-culturally co-opted by the Peruvian culture and society. This is the second layer of "socio-cultural co-optation."

Exact statistics are lacking for Shipibo-Konibo communities and populations. The number increases or decreases depending upon who one asks. According to the Peruvian census of 1993, there were officially 116 communities and 20,178 Shipibo-Konibos (*Atlas de la Amazonia Peruana* 1997). Shipibo-Konibo leaders assert, however, that there

are over 150 communities and over 35,000 peoples (Personal Interview, Marcial

Vasquez, 2006). Some of the discrepancy is the result of lapsed time, and some is also

from the fact that government census takers do not reach the furthest village and outlying

fields (Personal Interview, Marcial Vasquez, 2006). These Shipibo-Konibo communities,

whether legally recognized or not, are widely dispersed along the Ucayali River, mainly

in the Departments of Ucayali, Loreto, and Huanuco (though a few communities also

exist in Madre de Dios). They occupy 12 districts in 7 provinces, but they are not the only

communities in these districts. They make up the majority of the population in only three

districts (Iparia, Padre Marquez, and Tahuania).[10]

Table 1. Geographical Location

DEPARTMENT	PROVINCE	DISTRICT	UNOFFICAL Population of Shipibo-Konibo
Huanuco	Puerto Inca	Honoria	?
Loreto	Ucayali	Contamana	?
Loreto	Ucayali	Pampa Hermosa	?
Loreto	Ucayali	Padre Marquez	65%
Madre de Dios	Tambopata	Tambopata	?
Ucayali	Coronel Portillo	Calleria	?
Ucayali	Coronel Portillo	Campo Verde	?
Ucayali	Coronel Portillo	Iparia	90%
Ucayali	Coronel Portillo	Masisea	?
Ucayali	Padre Abad	Padre Abad	?
Ucayali	Atalaya	Tahuania	60%
Ucayali	Coronel Portillo	Yarinacocha	?

Source: *Atlas de la Amazonia Peruana,* 1997.

This deliberate boxing of the Shipibo-Konibos into Departments, Provinces, and

Districts is part of the geopolitical co-optation orchestrated by the State. The Shipibo-

Konibos do not have their own territory as a collective group or nation. In fact, from the

perspective of the state there are only small, isolated "native communities," which can be

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[10] The official population in each district is not aggregated by ethnicity; thus, it is hard to calculate accurately the percentage of mestizos and Shipibo-Konibos. I claim they are the majority based on the outcome of the elections thus far.

found (with magnifying lenses) in districts throughout the Amazonia region. Thus, the

state does not recognize them as a people with a distinct society and it ignores their

traditional territory along the Ucayali River.[11] There are approximately 210 miles from

the last Shipibo village north of Pucallpa, to the last Konibo village south of Pucallpa.[12]

As a result, the Shipibo-Konibos are depicted on the map (see Map 2) as a string

of native communities along the Ucayali River with some patches of lands, ranging from

as small as 1,000 has to as large as18,000 ha (Community Leaders, Personal Interviews,

2006). Indigenous leaders often identify themselves when they are in cities such as

Pucallpa or Lima in this geographic order: "I am so and so, from the community of X,

district of Y, and department of Z" (Field Notes, 2006). The reason why they identify this

way is because their community (whether legally recorded in the public registry or not) is

not easily identifiable on Peruvian political maps; only the districts and departments are.

Hence, their personal and community identification is referenced to national territorial

divisions.

The current settlement pattern of the Shipibo-Konibo is the direct result of their

1974 recognition under the Velasco regime. They now largely live in groupings of clans

along the River that range in size from 10 to 80 clans and *padres de familias.* These are

the groupings legally known as *Comunidad Nativas*. Traditionally, a *jëma,* pueblo or

township, was founded by a *kuraca* who was also by default the chief. This title was only

given to a founder, and the title was only maintained until his death. Nowadays, the

kurakas have passed away and no new communities are being established. The traditional

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[11] There are not official maps that show the traditional territories occupied by Shipibo-Konibo prior to their 1974 recognition as communities with rights.

[12] This measurement is not scientific, but based on the distance traveled in a cessna plane from the city of Pucallpa to Contamana (north) and from Pucallpa to Atalaya (south) (Interview with SAM missionary pilot, July 2008).

term, *kuraka*, has been replaced by *koshi,* which is a generic term that means somebody who has been elected by the community. Hence, a *koshi's* leadership ends when his/her term ends. From this perspective, the use of the terms "traditional" and "modern" is a way to argue the dynamic nature of the Shipibo-Konibo as a people and a society. In this sense, traditional does not refer to an "old" (frozen in time) political status of a leader; rather, it reflects the linguistic transition from a *kuraka* (designated for life) to a *koshi* (elected for a brief term). Today the most common term used for leaders is *apo*, which refers to the highest chief, and was applied in the past to the President of the Republic. Nowadays, mayors are called *apo* (Field Notes, Conference of the Shipibo-Konibos, 2005).

Since the 1974 recognition of Peruvian Amazonian peoples by the state as native communities, the state imposed additional authorities in the villages besides the chief, thereby absorbing the traditional political system of *jëma.* The *Agente Municipal* legally represents the District mayor; his/her main task is to oversee the cleaning of the streets of the community and general public work, such as building a new school or health post, and preparing community festivities. Another state-designated leader is the *Teniente Gobernador*, who legally acts as a representative of the Minister of Justice and solves internal problems and administers communal justice. They are both elected by nomination and universal direct vote just like the chief (Personal Interview, Community Leaders, 2005, 2006).

The Constitution of 1979 mentions that a native community is "autonomous in its internal organization" and has "legal capacity" (*personería jurídica)*, that is, they are a legal entity that can subscribe to agreements with private and public institutions to

enhance their communities, economically and institutionally. For instance, community authorities can sign agreements of cooperation with a social development program, or sign a contract with an economic firm for timber and or gold extractions from their communities. The legal entity also carries legal responsibility. If the community does not honor the agreements, it can be sued or their lands can be confiscated according to the Constitution of 1993. Every community as an autonomous entity keeps their registry of community members, and has their own internal land demarcations and land title.

Furthermore, there are more recent civic authorities in the community established during the 1990s by the state, but they are in charge of dealing with matters exclusively to their competence. The *Asociación de Padres de Familia* (APAFA) is an entity that supervises the proper functioning of schools and teachers, which is required by the Ministry of Education in order to make schools more accountable to local citizens. The *Club de Madres* is also a national organization that promotes the nutrition and well being of children. This club prepares breakfasts and lunches for school-age children. Religious leaders also play an important role in the communities. They are often called to preside over official ceremonies and bless the authorities (Personal Interview, Marcelo Picota, 2006).

Despite this geographical, institutional, and organizational co-optation by the state, the Shipibo-Konibos do not cohesively and collectively reject the "boxing" of their ethnicity, territories, and new types of authorities. They have passively accepted those additional authorities. In fact, these newly "imposed" authorities such as the *Agente Municipal* and the *Teniente Governador*, are accepted as any other traditional chief. Although, some leaders occasionally lament how the state has undermined them as

Shipibo-Konibo, they have not attempted to change that status. In the last five years, though, national organizations such as AIDESEP and CONAP have lobbied or proposed a *Ley de Communidades Nativas* under which they be recognized as peoples with full autonomy, access, and control of natural resources (CONAPA-Reforma Constitutional, 2002). However, this proposal was dead on arrival at the Congress, as lawmakers did not have political will to reform the Constitution.

National Culture and Citizenship

In short, the history of the Shipibo-Konibos as well as the cultural politics of land rights all support the hypothesis that the Shipibo-Konibos have been socio-culturally co-opted by the national culture and society. The identity of being a Peruvian and having citizenship are promoted by authorities through education and appeals to patriotism. This is aptly exemplified by an event I witnessed during my research. A Shipibo-Konibo mayor had arrived in a community to inaugurate a community project, and a high school marching band was receiving him with drums and trumpets. A potable water system had been built that reached to every home for the first time in this community's history. All the people from the community were gathered to listen to the mayor, who was sitting alongside other dignitaries. The table where they were sitting was covered with the Peruvian flag. The master of ceremony asked everybody to stand up and sing the national anthem (Field Notes, 2005).

The older people barely uttered some words of the song, while the younger people sang the hymn without difficulty. Singing the national anthem has become a normal ceremonial activity in all official community and school activities (Field Notes, 2005). In fact, all schools, from elementary to high schools, initiate their day by singing the

national anthem on Monday and Friday. This is part of the curriculum in civic education that is required in all national schools (Marcelo Picota, Personal Interview, 2006). The fact that young people know the words of the anthem means, at least theoretically, that their consciousness of being a Peruvian has been raised. The state, by promoting these types of patriotic events, is creating citizens committed to the values of national culture. By singing the anthem, the young people affirm they are Peruvians; by saluting the flag, they show respect to the homeland. Conversely, the older people could not sing because they did not know the words; however that does not mean from the perspective of the state that they are less Peruvian. In the views of the state, they are merely illiterate (*anafalbetos*).

The Shipibo-Konibos see little or nothing wrong with the state promoting consciousness of being a Peruvian or being patriotic. In fact, the Shipibo-Konibos are proud to be Peruvians. In the focus groups, I found that they often said: "we, too, are Peruvians and we want the respect of *mestizos* and the state to give us more attention" (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2005). The fact of being a patriotic Peruvian should go hand in hand with rights and duties that go along with it, including rights to a dignified life, and rights to have his/her own language and culture in addition to a Peruvian culture. This is what Kymlicka calls "multicultural citizenship" (Kymlicka 1995) and Iris M. Young's terms "differentiated citizenship" (Young 1990). The Shipibo-Konibo should not be considered less Peruvian or antipatriotic, if they affirm their indigenous citizenship and identity and maintain their own cultural symbols. Rather, they might more readily accept the state, if given the liberty to be different, to be Shipibo-Konibo, while pursuing their Peruvian citizenship.

The ceremony described above also testifies to the strong presence of the state authority in the community. Peru's political division goes from district, province, department and region, to central government. The mayor is the highest authority in the district; as explained earlier, his representative in the community is the *agente municipal*. Thus, this mayor's arrival not only marked the inauguration of the project, but celebrated a dignitary who represents the Peruvian state through the municipal government of Padre Marquez. In this case, the mayor happened to be a Shipibo-Konibo. The community of Alfonso Ugarte did not choose to be in this district, rather it was delimited by geographers in their mapping of Peru's political division. The only choice they had in this was to select their mayor.

Moreover, the Shipibo-Konibos were in a ceremony that celebrated a government representative, and singing the national anthem affirmed their Peruvianness. However, many of them, including the young people whose Spanish is not very sophisticated, cannot understand the deep meaning of the hymn, which contains the most poetic and touching words as it proclaims: "we are free for ever",…" the long oppression of Peruvian"…"chains of oppression have been broken" (see text of the whole anthem at www1.inei.gob.pe/web/Himno4.asp) (Field Notes, 2005). The Shipibo-Konibos might not understand conceptually the full and true meaning of their national anthem now, but the message and words might begin to make sense when the state decisively promotes policies that recognize them as being different and able to maintain their society and culture within the Peruvian state.

Nevertheless, the component that was missing in this event was the celebration of Shipibo-Koniboness, a celebration of who they are as distinct people, with their own

language, tradition, and culture. Without their own symbols of citizenship that would acknowledge these aspects, they are left with the system imposed by the state, and they have no choice but to stay where they are without the power to change the *status quo*. This situation will remain until they have their own consciousness that they are different and embrace the notion of multicultural citizenship. Every culture has its own set of symbols and icons that bring all people together spiritually and consciously; however, the Shipibo-Konibo do not yet have such symbols, except for their pottery and geometrically patterned clothing.

The fact that Shipibo-Konibos are singing the Peruvian national anthem shows another of the ways that they have become Peruvian, at least nominally. To become a formal citizen, one has to be born in Peru, and prior to 1993, there was a mandatory military service for men except for medical conditions. After two years of service, a *Libreta Militar* (military card) was issued; then and only then, could a man apply for the *Libreta Electoral* (electoral card), which is the only valid card to be eligible to vote in local, regional, and national elections. For a Shipibo-Konibo man to become a citizen, he has to go through this process to gain his formal citizenship. For women it is different, as they are not obliged to serve in the military. However, as they often want to avoid the hassles and expenses involved to travel to Pucallpa, women frequently do not file the paperwork to obtain their IDs (Field Notes, 2005). Consequently, they are disenfranchised from the political system as citizens.

In sum, the Shipibo-Konibos do not have formalized cultural symbols, such as flags or a national anthem. The only cultural identifiers are their community land, their language, and distinctive geometrically designed materials. They have to go through an

expensive and time-consuming process to be worthy of citizenship, in order to be eligible to vote. They also live in a native community, which is divided from other Shipibo-Konibo communities and whose territorial dimension is established by the state. The community has to be registered in the National Public Registry in order to have rights and obligation. Hence, the Shipibo-Konibos are fully absorbed by the national system, from their identity to their community.

Analysis of Socio-Cultural Co-optation

The culture, or *ashë*, of the Shipibo-Konibos people is manifested in different forms. First, in their traditional culture, I discussed their appearance (dress and ornaments), survival system (fishing, hunting, farming, and economy), technology (canoe making, bow and arrows, geometrical design painting, and pottery), and social system (marriage, community, leaders). Second, I discussed their belief system, namely animism and shamanism, and later on, the God of the Jesuits, Franciscans and Protestant missionaries.

As admitted by virtually all members of focus groups (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion), the Shipibo-Konibos are today peeling off their *ashë* with the adoption of Western clothing. Men exclusively wear pants and t-shirts regardless of age, while their *tari* is left only for ceremonial occasions. Conversely, older women, no matter where they are (community, Pucallpa, or Lima), wear traditional clothing, while younger women are embarrassed to do that. On this example, a woman from the focus group noted:

> So, we, the women do not stop wearing our [traditional] skirts, and when we ask our young women to wear the [traditional] clothing, they often do not obey [us] because they want to wear western pants. When we die those young women will cease to have and wear the traditional skirt. (Author's Translation; Women Focus Group, 2005)

Dress and ornaments become the first cultural marker besides physical features. The adoption of western clothing by the Shipibo-Konibos has implications for their

collective identity. The personal preference for clothing, at first glance, is not harmful because it is an individual choice. However, collectively, these personal preferences damage the group's identity; then, there is a social pressure to abide by the implicit cultural expectation. In this case, not wearing the traditional clothing means disassociation and voluntary exit from the group's identity. The fact that the young women "do not obey" the women elders' request shows their lack of interest in maintaining their *ashë*, and their feeling of embarrassment in associating with the cultural group puts at risk the group's cultural survival. Hence, the prediction of the woman quoted above is likely to happen, if the children of those young women or themselves do not learn how to make the traditional clothing, much less wear them. Then, that would mark the end of their *ashë*, as feared by the elderly women. Currently, the *ashë* is kept by the older women; thus, *ashë* does not exist in a vacuum, it is passed through an agent. As one woman explained:

> We, the women, are the ones who do not abandon our *ashe* (culture and customs). We always wear our traditional skirt, but the men are not like that. The women who live in *mestizos* towns have also abandoned our *ashë* and only speak their kids in Spanish. We will never erode our *ashë,* we are not like them here. They talk on the radio and say: let's not erode our *ashë,* yet their children have abandoned it, but we who live here will never abandon it. (Author's Translation; Women Focus Group, 2005]

The transfer of the know-how is essential for cultural survival, which does not mean to freeze their culture, but adapt and be flexible without losing their distinctiveness. However, this is only possible if there is a genuine interest and commitment from younger people to learn it and pass on to their children and grand-children. In the absence of this transference of know-how, the cultural elements will surely cease to exist, thereby threatening their cultural survival.

The second cultural marker is language. In Peru, Spanish is the official language constitutionally; that is, all Peruvians are assumed and expected to be Spanish speakers. In order to meet this requirement, native people assume that they have to negate their own language and embrace the language of the majority. However, even if one can speak Spanish, their accent will remain since it is not their mother tongue. From this perspective, if a Shipibo-Konibo person speaks Spanish with an accent, then regardless, of how he/she dresses, he or she is not going to be part of the society where they want to be included since they will be discriminated against for their ethnicity. The attempt to adopt a new identity by learning the language and wearing clothing like the majority then constitute a process of losing a collective identity and cultural membership. On this, a community member noted:

> The young women do not talk with us [in *mestizo* towns]. They are embarrassed of us. When they see us [on the street], they turn the other way and run from us. They do this because they are *nawä* [*mestizos*]; thus, when they see us with traditional skirt, they hide or sometimes they just say "*hola*" as they pass by. (Author's Translation; Women Focus Group, 2005)

Similarly other woman commented:

> My young woman is not like that when she goes to the city with me, she is not embarrassed of me and talks in our language and walks with me even when I wear traditional skirt. But other young women put on *mestizo* clothing and want to be *mestizo*, even though it is so obvious that they are not. (Author's Translation; Women Focus Group, 2005)

The external identity of the Shipibo-Konibos in the form of customs and attire are becoming extinct. Moreover, the language is slowly being lost. The young people are not wholeheartedly committed to maintain their linguistic and cultural tradition. They are rather embarrassed to be Shipibo-Konibos, as one elder explained:

> Even worse because we are carrying a bag [a cargo bag rather than a suitcase] they are embarrassed of us. Young men [Shipibo-Konibo] when we are riding in the same car [public transportation in Pucallpa] when whey see us, they get out of the car and take a

different car because they don't want to associate with us, there are many young people like that here. (Author's Translation; Women Focus Group, 2005)

A bilingual-intercultural education could be the bridge between this rapidly disappearing Shipibo-Konibo society and the dominant society. The bilingualism might empower them to maintain their language while speaking the "official" Spanish language. On this topic, a woman argued: "We are Shipibos, that's why we have to speak in our language, and we don't need to pretend to be *mestizos*" (Women Focus Group, 2005). Intercultural education might enable them to survive individually in the dominant society by obtaining marketable skills, so they could work as private and state employees. However, for collective survival, they need to have a consciousness and manifestation of their Shipibo-Koniboness, besides their education.

In order to obtain individual survival skills for life in the Peruvian state, young people leave their communities, at the risk of losing their identity and community membership. This can be so if they leave their community for two years according to national legislation (Documento ORAU, 2000). Thus, for the state, they would no longer be a Shipibo-Konibo within the positivist legal interpretation unless they return to their communities. The people more likely to stay in their community are older people, or the young people who returned to their communities after they failed to achieve success in the cities. The educated young people are not likely return to their villages to work unless they are bilingual teachers; instead, they will seek work and settle in the closest city, or the capital, or even overseas. From this perspective, the more educated the young people are, the less likely they are to return to their communities. Hence, a dilemma arises: after the older village residents have died, who is going to defend the village from intrusion?

Moreover, the Shipibo-Konibos are co-opted even in the most intimate part of identity. Names and last names are often the most basic element of who one is. The last names reflect the lineage and the socio-economic condition of that individual. As explained in Chapter 3, official names of the Shipibo-Konibo people are in Spanish with borrowed last names. They traditionally had only one name in their own language and culture, which nowadays is rarely used, as reflected in the focus groups when they were asked their names. The Shipibo-Konibos are obliged to have paternal and maternal last names. If a couple request that their newborn baby be registered traditionally with only one name, the officials would reject them as ignorant, and would make up the last names. This process has occurred since Peruvian Amazonians were first in direct contact with the Spaniards and Portuguese. They have obtained their paternal and maternal last names from former *patrones,* as shown in Chapter 3.

From this background we may now ask, how is identity and culture maintained or transformed? A Shipibo-Konibo man or woman does not wear their traditional attire, does not use their traditional name, speaks only in Spanish, and uses western technology for survival (fishing net, shot gun, metal cooking pot, canned food). Moreover, they marry a non-Shipibo-Konibo, become a Christian, work as an employee, do not know how to use traditional technology, and do not live in their community. Is this person still a Shipibo-Konibo? Who decides? Why would this person engage in or support an organization that seeks *reinvidicación* of their culture? The answer to questions like these elucidates the degree to which an ethnic group will get involved in social movements, and its strength will be demonstrated by how strong their identity is and how committed they are to maintaining their culture. In Chapter 3, I will show how identity is intertwined

with social movements and how this explains the relatively weak social movement of the Shipibo-Konibos.

In sum, the culture of the Shipibo-Konibos is in danger of being lost, and we may ask who is responsible? Certainly, the national culture and society is directly and indirectly pushing the Shipibo-Konibo to become more like them, which leads Shipibo-Konibo to abandon their indigenous identity, especially the young people who disassociate with their community by ignoring their ethnicity, language, and *ashë*. Yet, after this cultural disassociation, when they go in the cities they are recognized as different and rejected. However, as this chapter shows, the loss of personal and collective identity is a choice, amply confirmed by the older women who choose to keep wearing their traditional clothing and speak their language. Men and young people have the choice to follow, or not, the determination of the women so as to survive culturally.

CHAPTER 3

THE SHIPIBO-KONIBOS EMERGING AS NEW ACTORS: IDENTITY, ORGANIZATION, AND MOVEMENTS

In Chapter 2, I argued that the Shipibo Konibos, once a strong and unyielding people in the eastern Amazon, have been systematically weakened by the Peruvian state at different levels. The Peruvian state has proven to be very successful at co-opting the Shipibo-Konibo people both in their cultural ideology and their political behavior. This chapter builds on that argument to show that SINAMOS epitomized this co-optation by promoting a top down social mobilization. After SINAMOS became defunct, the Shipibo-Konibos began a bottom up social mobilization, but a mobilization with its own troubles due to political schism. Specifically, this chapter tests the hypothesis that, in several decades of political activity, the Shipibo-Konibo have not achieved a bona fide social movement that is, at once, continuous and systematic. Instead, I will show that Shipibo-Konibo have engaged in repeated discrete campaigns or "waves" of social mobilization. Because of its central role in the argument of this chapter, I begin with a review of Shipibo-Konibo identity and its implications for social movement.

IDENTITY: SELF-PERCEPTION VIS-A-VIS *MESTIZOS*

An identity becomes relevant when one encounters the 'other'. Hence, identity is relationally constructed, but this construction can often be top-down, not just bottom-up (For further discussion on identity see Toon 2008). In an asymmetrical power relation, as a general rule, the stronger group tends to give names to the weaker group. Often the

names or terminologies given are offensive, patronizing, or plainly xenophobic. Yet, these names are often appropriated, believed, and used by the named group, thereby perpetuating the prejudice associated with the terms.

A leading dictionary defines "identity" as:

> The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known; or the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group (Oxford English Dictionary).

According to the above definition, *characteristics* and *behaviors* are external identifiers of a person or a group. The dominant group as qualifier uses those identifiers to name the other, based on their negative perception. Hence, identity is often not self-ascribed, but imposed, and the naming may then lead to behavioral change in a group. This is the case with the Shipibo-Konibos. There are physical *characteristics* that make the Shipibo-Konibos distinct from other "Peruvians," *inter alia* a flattened head (traditionally achieved by "deforming" the head), face painting, language, and dress codes. Based on these characteristics, the national culture has seen them as "backwards, savages, and uncivilized" (Tournon 2002; 109; Remy 1995:117). This "set of characteristics" that makes them distinguishable from others plays a key role in identity formation or identity fading. That is, while the dominant society creates a new identity for the small group, the small group's self-perception and characteristics begin to be less differentiable and finally fade away.

However, the fading or losing of identity can be temporary, given that identity is not static and can be adjusted. In other words, people may put on an identity "coat" as they please, or they may simply fade back in the crowd. While on one hand, the Shipibo-Konibo reject pejorative terms imposed by the *mestizos*; on the other hand, they *behave*

in such a way that recognizes those terms as bad and consequently they may no longer want to be part of their 'backward' society. Instead they may want to melt away into the 'civilized' society. Hence, the pejorative terms used by the *mestizos* towards the Shipibo-Konibo can trigger a behavioral change, evidenced by the wish to become *mestizos*.

The Shipibo-Konibos are often associated nationally with their highly regarded, geometrically-designed pottery and cloth painting. Yet, the local *mestizos* pejoratively have named them *chama*, and *cumpa,* and nationally they are derided as *chuncho* or *selvatico*. *Chama* should not be semantically and hermeneutically offensive because it emanates from a phrase *"jë chama"*. This expression was often used by Shipibo-Konibo warriors and is still used in a fight, though less frequently. In a provocative context it means, "don't challenge me" or "come on fight me" (Personal Interview, Shipibo-Konibo Leader, 2006). The use of the term by *mestizos* is offensive to Shipibo-Konibos because of its meaning as a hostile challenge, but mostly because the *mestizos* use it with a tone of racism and rejection of them as being different. *Cumpa* perhaps comes from the fact that the natives pronounce *compadre* as *cumpadre*; hence *cumpa* is pejorative terms that connotes ignorance and often are referred to different groups locally. The term *chuncho or selvatico*, which means jungle man, is used for all Amazonians indigenous peoples in general by the national society.

Most people, men and women, who participated in my focus groups shared their experiences of being called *chama* at one point in their lives—as they were walking in the streets of Pucallpa, for example, or in *mestizo* towns near their villages. Shipibo-Konibos have sometimes responded to *mestizos'* verbal aggression by physically attacking the people uttering those phrases. I heard about two such attacks during my

focus groups. On one occasion, a young man got tired of being called *chama* by a *mestizo*

and decided to beat him up. He proudly said, "before, I beat him up, I told him, this is

what *chama* means" (Focus Groups, Alfonso Ugarte 2005). One Shipibo- Konibo leader

also shared his experience:

> One day, we got out of a meeting and were heading to a restaurant. We stopped a
> *mototaxi* in Pucallpa and we all got in. As we left, a *mestizo* yelled *chama*. I ordered the
> taxi driver to return. We all got out, grabbed the guy and beat him up, and later told him:
> 'This is what *chama* means' [as they were beating him up] (Personal Interview, Shipibo-
> Konibo leader, Yarinacocha 2005).

The Shipibo-Konibo's physical response to the *mestizos* in rejection of their

pejorative term does not change the effect the naming has on them, especially on the

younger generations who are now embarrassed about their ethnicity. Consequently, they

are slowly losing their Shipibo-Konibo identity and instead want to become more like the

mestizos. This proclivity to attain *mestizo* identity is conspicuously to avoid racial and

ethnic discrimination. Current leaders such as mayor Juan Maldonado of Padre Marquez

acknowledge that many leaders have felt this way before: he reports that when he was

younger he was embarrassed to be Shipibo-Konibo given the hostile environment in his

high school in Pucallpa (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006). While some

acknowledge this trend, other influential Shipibo-Konibo leaders point out that they are

not embarrassed about who they are, but ironically, they often speak in Spanish on the

street rather than their own language, and pass as any other *mestizo* in town.

The behavior of many young Shipibo-Konibo people to hide their identity is

because they reject the indigenous identity "coat" imposed by the *mestizos*; instead, they

now want to be *mestizos* in order to be like "them" (*mestizos civilizados*). I call this

voluntary identity transformation "*amestizandose*". A majority of the total of 55 Shipibo-

Konibo young women and 47 young men who participated in focus groups, admit that they are embarrassed about who they are when they are in *mestizo* town. A least one person in each of the 12 focus groups admitted that they, or somebody they knew who went to Pucallpa to study, ignored their own parents when they passed them on the street. Many Shipibo-Konibo parents, either from the villages or from Pucallpa, charge that the young people are terminating the culture (*këyoi*) because they are not speaking the language, not interested in learning how to make canoes, spears, potteries, or geometrical designs, pretending to be *mestizos*, and marrying *mestizos*.[1]

Within the four types of focus groups (young males and females and adult males and females), the charges went back and fourth in terms of who has more responsibility in eroding their culture. However, there was a consensus when asked who among the four groups have maintained the culture and are keeping it alive. This pattern was similar in the four Districts where I conducted my fieldwork. The majority admitted that the women who still wear their traditional attire, and are still involved in making traditional pottery and painting clothing with traditional designs, are culture maintainers (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2006).

Nevertheless, there were comments that even in the villages some women are putting on *mestizo* attire such as blouse and dress. Many Shipibo-Konibo women, especially those who reside in Pucallpa, do wear western blouses and skirts instead of their traditional clothing. When asked why they do it, they responded that to make their *chitonti (*skirt*)* and *cotton (*blouse*)* is labor intensive. In the absence of sewing machines, all clothing is handmade, and it takes around one week to make the blouse, and for the

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[1] Intermarriage is becoming common between the Shipibo-Konibo and *mestizos*. Although not statistically significant, there is also a trend (perhaps around 15 couples total) for Shipibo-Konibo to marry European men and women.

skirt around two weeks (Focus Group, Women 2006). A parallel thing happens with children, who suffer collateral damage in the identity crisis of the Shipibo-Konibo. Many parents work as laborers to buy already made clothing rather than buying fabric to make the traditional clothing. This is easier than starting from scratch. Thus, it is very rare to see children with traditional clothing. In my focus groups, I learned that cultural identity for the Shipibo-Konibo is necessarily associated with physical objects, such as attire and the products that mark them as members of a group. That is, the less they make Shipibo-Konibo products and the less they wear Shipibo-Konibo dress and ornaments, the less Shipibo-Konibo they become.

From this perspective, all Shipibo-Konibo people (including adult men and women, young people and children) have lost their identity a long time ago, because they have 'abandoned' their *kushma* – a long tunic (in the case of men) and *chitonti/koton* – skirt/blouse (in the case of women). Most men did not know when they stopped wearing the traditional attire, but some earlier pictures taken by missionaries reveal that the *kushma* was replaced by jeans and shirts around the 1950s, but this new clothing had Shipibo-Konibo designs. The Shipibo-Konibo men defend the charge that they have lost their identity by arguing that the *kushma* (a long tunic that covers from neck to toe, which is hand-made of pure cotton) is too hot and impractical to use. Hence, their lack of use is not due to lack of interest, but due to adverse weather conditions.

Furthermore, men pointed out that the Shipibo-Konibo identity is not based on the way they dress, but on having the 'know-how' to make Shipibo-Konibo artifacts and speak the language. The majority of the 69 men who participated in focus groups said that when they are in *mestizo* towns they proudly speak their language. "Why should we

be embarrassed to be Shipibo-Konibo?" many asked themselves (Focus Groups, 2006 Male Adults). This claim puts the young people in a difficult position, because many of them do not have the 'know-how' to make things, and are embarrassed to speak Shipibo-Konibo in *mestizo* towns. A majority of young people in focus groups also pointed out that language is the key element in identity. One participant succinctly summarized the group's feeling on this subject:

> Despite the fact that we are Shipibos, sometimes when we go to the city, we want to be *mestizo* because we abandon our *ashë* (custom and attire). But we as Shipibo must always practice our language (Focus Groups, Young People, Alfonso Ugarte 2006)

So, is the Shipibo-Konibo's identity in crisis? There seems not to be an identity crisis *per se*, but there is clearly a difference in self-perception and self-evaluation among the four subgroups who participated in my focus groups. The strength of their identity varies with gender and generational factors. Older women have the strongest identity, followed by older men. The identity of young people, however, seems to be weak. One thing is certainly clear; the Shipibo-Konibo people have only 'stealth identity' in the town of Pucallpa, except the women, who wear their traditional *customes*. Many men, and women and young people look like *mestizos*, and some even speak only in Spanish. A federation leader estimated that Shipibo-Konibo identity, on a scale of 1-10 for strength, would be 6 (Personal Interview, Robert Guimaraez, 2005), which is surprising since there is not much difference between *mestizos* and Shipibo-Konibos in Pucallpa. If physical characteristics are not the determinants, then it is hard to distinguish them because they all dress the same way and speak the same language. If a Shipibo-Konibo does not reveal who she/he is, she/he can fully pass as a *mestizo*, thereby becoming a voluntary *amestizado(a)*. As part of the process, they admit they no longer have the

fiercely resistance spirit that their ancestors had when faced with an invasion from outsiders.

If cultural identity is measured as a system of artificial attire and the frequency of how much those are used, then Shipibo-Konibo identity is very low. However, the Shipibo-Konibos' 'stealth identity' can be detected by using three elements: (1) self-identity, that is, when she/he publicly reveals his/her ethnic affiliation and claims to be part of that group; (2) language, that is, when publicly she/he speaks in his/her own language regardless of how that individual dresses or looks like; (3) being a member of a native community, which means, being tied to a legal group membership and land or being registered in a community as being from that community.

Moreover, even their legal names are like the *mestizos*. The Peruvian state imposed paternal and maternal mestizo-style names upon indigenous people during the fifties, in order for them to do paper work or to obtain national identity cards. Many people got their first names, paternal, and maternal names from local *patrones* or local *mestizos* that they knew. Thus, we have Shipibo-Konibo with last names of Garcia, Rengifo, Escobar, Diaz, Lima, etc, etc. (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006). Participants in my focus groups were asked their name at the beginning of the dialogue. There was not a single time when the participants said their name first in Shipibo-Konibo. They all gave me their legal and formal name, including older people. Only when asked what their traditional name was, did they gave me their Shipibo-Konibo name.

SHIPIBO-KONIBO IDENTITY AND CONCEPTUAL COMPLEXITY

Having discussed the different degrees of Shipibo-Konibo identity based on their

physical characteristics and the effects of naming, I will now show how different lexicons

based on their cultural perception *qua* group play a role in identity formation. These

terminologies vary according to the social groups, the context, and the audience. This is

significant because on one hand, it reveals their low acceptance; on the other hand, it

reveals their determination to change the status of their conceptual subjugation. During

my fieldwork among the 12 Shipibo-Konibo communities, I encountered four phrases,

sometimes used interchangeably, which have strong political and cultural connotations.

The first term is *ina*, which literally means "savage," "pet," and "property" of

somebody in Shipibo-Konibo. I found this term commonly used in my interviews with

federation leaders (national, regional, and local leaders), indigenous politicians (mayors,

vice-mayors, city councilmen), and community leaders. They interchangeably used "we

the indigenous people" and *noa inabo,* or we the savages. When I asked them what does

ina mean and why they used it? The frequent answer was "wow, *ina* means a pet" and

"we should not use it, but we used it anyway without even thinking about it" (Personal

Interview, Indigenous Leaders, 2006). I found similar usage by generation and gender

(young people and adults). Why would a group use a very demeaning term when

referring to themselves?

The use of the term *ina* by the Shipibo-Konibo is culturally and contextually

bound. Thus, it is not used for self-definition or self-identity vis-à-vis the outside world,

but rather as an internal reference. *Ina* is utilized only in making a historical reference,

which I call "historical and conceptual trauma". That is, the term *ina* is a domestic matter

that allows Shipibo-Konibo to think retrospectively about their inhuman treatment by the colonizers who arrived in their territories. It is also a sub-conscious reflection of their low self-esteem, and a lamentation of their current economic condition. Hence, I argue that *ina* is a internal reference and external remembrance of oppression.

The second term, *joninko,* is generally used by community members and less frequently by indigenous leaders and politicians. *Joninko* literally means "the true people", and unlike *ina* it is an external reference; thus, it is employed when they are comparing themselves with 'the other'. As many other Amazonians, they claim to be "true people" because they have 'better values, advanced knowledge and greater skills' and any other human beings are not. From this referential context, the non-Shipibo-Konibo peoples specifically other Amazonian groups and Andean Quechuas and Aymaras, are ironically called *ina* or savages by the Shipibo-Konibo. And the non-indigenous people are called *nahuas* for *mestizos*, and *kirinko* for white people. The use of *ina* for other indigenous peoples is interesting to take into account. The connotation is that they are not civilized and still in the stage of savage. From this socio-linguistic context, the expression *ponte 'ina' bires* describes somebody's behavior that lacks mannerism or etiquette that are acceptable in a specific social context. For instance, an indigenous person who speaks poor Spanish or walks in the streets of Pucallpa barefoot is *ina.*

In contrast to *ina* or *ponte inabires*, the common expression among the focus groups that I found was *noara joninkobo iki Shipibo-Konibo ikash,* or "we are true people because we are Shipibo-Konibo." However, this spirit of 'true people' seemed to be dying down as their identity that would make them true people is rapidly eroding. It was

not certain what makes them true. But it was sure that the use of comparative expressions shows they are still resilient despite the pejorative terms put on them by the dominant society, such as *chama* or *cumpa*. No leader, however, seemed to push the agenda of appropriating the term, *joninko,* in order to enhance their self-esteem, and as a possible identity *reinvidicación* for their movement. A question remains: Why does the term *ina* still linger on their internal referential language, if they have other self-pride terms such as *joninko*?

While *ina* and *joninko* are Shipibo-Konibo terms, they also have borrowed terms to describe who they are. "Shipibo-Konibo Nation" is found primarily in the discourse of religious leaders who were trained by Protestant missionaries during the 1950s and 1960s, and less frequently by secular leaders. A Shipibo-Konibo Christian pastor first learned the term, 'nation', from an American missionary, and ironically also learned the term 'tribe' from other missionaries. But he remembers vividly when "tribes" was replaced by "nation" during the 1960s. When I asked him what "nation" meant for him. He responded: "we are distinct *joni* or people. God made us a distinct nation, he gave us different language, and we are equal before God and before everybody" (Personal Interview, Antonio Fasanando, 2006).

Shipibo-Konibo leaders, either religious or secular, are the driving force in reviving the decaying nature of Shipibo-Konibo identity. In this process, western terminologies, such as 'nation' are borrowed to make their claim. Although this term is used in a small circle of indigenous intellectuals, it still is important to take into account for our analysis. Here, the term, 'nation' has tremendous political and philosophical implication as "[N]ation means a historical [intergenerational] community, more or less

institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture [history]. A nation, in this sociological sense is closely related to the idea of a people or a culture" (Kymlicka 1995: 11-18).

Using this definition, then Shipibo-Konibo is a nation, as described in Chapter 2; they have occupied the territories where they are currently settled, but with less extension than 500 years ago. Although they are currently co-opted by the state and national culture politically, legally, and socio-culturally as shown in Chapter 2, they still maintain some of their cultural institutions such as chiefship, *ashë* or culture, and language (although in the process of eroding), and a homeland (although reduced to communities).

However, the term "nation" is legally and politically charged, because colloquially it is understood as equivalent and synonymous to country. Although this colloquial meaning is technically erroneous, it is still the cause of great misunderstanding. For example, many government officials do not accept it as applicable to indigenous people such as the Shipibo-Konibo. If government officials cannot accept such a term, then common Peruvians are yet farther away from accepting it. Regardless of their objection, sociologically the term encapsulates the Shipibo-Konibo as distinct people.

The fourth term used by Shipibo-Konibo leaders is *pueblos indigenas*, which is most commonly found in indigenous organizations' documents, declarations, and public policy papers. This term is often used by local, regional, and national indigenous leaders. The use of *pueblos indigenas*, or indigenous peoples, is the most challenging phrase by native people worldwide because "peoples" in international law have the right to self-determination. As pointed out in Chapter 1, self-determination encompasses the demand

of indigenous people for cultural, political, economic, and social autonomy. Given that this term is technically the most sophisticated, it is rarely used by community members. In my focus groups, I found there is a huge conceptual and definitional gulf between the commoners and their leaders and *dirigentes*. This is due, in part, to the fact that village members' level of Spanish is limited to basic communication and interaction with *mestizos*. However, in the case of the federation leaders, they are reading books and articles about indigenous rights, attend workshops, in the towns of Pucallpa, Lima and often overseas. Thus, they acquire the idiom or jargon of "rights."

The system whereby indigenous leaders acquire the jargon of indigenous rights, also explains why village members have not. Federations conduct workshops in communities whenever they have funding provided by human rights NGOs, or private persons. Often, only the local authorities are invited to these workshops due to budget constraints and geographical factors. The villages are far from each other, approximately 3-5 hours apart by boat. Workshop participants are supposed to inform or teach the community members upon return to their villages. But often, the information and teaching acquired are not imparted to the local people. Hence, only a few people in the village have the information, and the majority lack access. Consequently, the term "*indigenous peoples*" is not a common term among the community members. Nevertheless, the fact that there is a conceptual gap between the communities and their *dirigentes* does not alter how Shipibo-Konibos mostly view and identity themselves as *joninko*.

There are several implications to the terms used by the Shipibo-Konibo. The combination of the phrases "Shipibo-Konibo nation" and "*pueblos indigenas*" are

political statements that reject the homogenizing and assimilationist policies of the Peruvian state and the western world. Paradoxically, these terms come from the west. As with many indigenous peoples in the world, the Shipibo-Konibos adopt western legal phraseology and political concepts to defend their rights, while rejecting many western cultural, economic, and political models that affect them and threaten their survival. In Peru, public officials are less inclined to use the term 'nation' given the international legal implication that its use would have, and the recognition that using this term would impart when referring to Native Amazonians. Peruvian state officials, especially from the Ministry of Foreign Relations, are more comfortable using the term *pueblos indigenas*. This is because they are familiar with the development of indigenous rights at the UN Commission on Human Rights, and OAS Working Group on Indigenous Peoples Rights. As pointed out earlier, '*pueblos indigenas*' are now part of the Peruvian legal system. So, is there progress in Peru in terms of advancing indigenous rights? Conceptually and definitionally, yes, but in real terms, there is much work to be done.

In contrast to the terms used by the Shipibo-Konibo, the state too has its own discourse and phrases. On the one hand, as pointed out elsewhere, in the Constitutions of 1828, 1920, 1930, respectively, indigenous people from the highlands had *de jure* recognition with inalienable rights to their lands. On the other hand, very little or nothing was said about Amazonian indigenous people until the 1950s, and more specifically not until 1974. Since then, several terms have been used and are currently employed in official discourse and policies in the Peruvian government vis-à-vis Amazonian indigenous peoples: (1) "*Tribus Selvicolas*" Jungle Tribes (used in 1958); (2) The "*Tribus Selvicolas*" became known as "Native Communities" (Law No. 22175- 1974 and

Constitution of 1979, Article 79); (3) *Grupos Etnicos* or *Grupos Etnolinguisticos* (1960s

onwards, mainly in education discourse and policies); (4) "*Pueblos Indígenas*" y

"*Originarios*" are used in the Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights Law (1990s and

2000s), CONAPA (2001), INDEPA (2005).

In the last five years, many high ranking public officials, including the President

of the Republic, have been using the term *pueblos indigenas*. It is evident here that there

is a quite an evolutionary change, conceptually and definitionally as to how native

peoples are referred to by 'authorities'.

In sum, the use of four terms by the Shipibo-Konibo community members and

leaders in self-reference shows the lack of conceptual cohesion, including who they are as

people. That is, they are mostly Shipibo-Konibo, then they are *joninko*, or *ina*, and rarely

"indigenous peoples', which is mainly used by the federation in public discourse, formal

documents, and dialogue with government officials. This may partly explain why they do

not have a well coordinated social movement, much less a strong identity. Let us now

look more closely at the question of a Shipibo-Konibo social movement.

ORGANIZING PROCESS: SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND MOVEMENTS

Socio-political organizations do not, of course, arise in a vacuum: there are always

internal and external elements that contribute to their creation. Accordingly, the earliest

attempt to organize by the Shipibo-Konibos dates back to 1973, when *Padre* Gaston (a

Spanish nurse and priest) planned an *ani tsinkiti*, or congress, in the community of

Dinamarca where Teobaldo Ochavano was elected *apo,* or chief. A few months later,

another *ani tsinkiti* was held in Puerto Nuevo, sponsored again by Paëribo (Catholic

priests), where a workshop was held on the importance of organizing and the procedure

of electing leaders and *dirigentes*[2] (Personal Interview, German Zavaleta 2006). I found

no record of formal organizing schemes or plans prior to this by the Shipibo-Konibos.

The young people also took initiatives to organize. In 1976, Cecilio Soria founded

Juventud Nativas de Ucayali-JNU (Native Youth of Ucayali) to bring young people's

voice to the mobilization. As JNU founder, Cecilio participated in the founding of *Frente*

de Defensa de la Comunidades Nativas (FREDECONA) in 1978 (Personal Interview,

Cecilio Soria, 2006). This earlier attempt to create their own organization shows that they

were not all satisfied with government efforts at organization underway at the same time

they were seeking independence from the government-run mobilization.

Organizing under Velasco's SINAMOS Program, 1974

This early effort to organize at the communal level, promoted by *Paeribo,* did not

succeed because there was no follow-up to the *ani tsinkiti.* There was another reason as

well: the Velasco government (1968-1975) launched a program at the national level in

1969 called SINAMOS (*Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Mobilización Social),* which

triggered waves of organizing among Peruvian Amazonians indigenous people during the

1970s. SINAMOS was the conduit for the implementation of the state's policies of "legal

inclusion," that is, of bringing indigenous groups into the national system of governance.

Hence, SINAMOS played a key role in the first organization of the Shipibo-Konibo

people. An interview with a Shipibo-Konibo leader who became the first Amazonian

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[2] In the Amazonia context, there is a conceptual difference between leaders and *dirigentes*. The former is someone who is born to fight for his/her people regardless of whether he/she is elected or not, while the latter is someone who holds a temporary position at the federations, such as president or general secretary, etc. (Personal Interview, Manuel Gomez 2006).

president of *Confederaión Nacional Agraria* (CNA)[3] clearly reveals the root of

SINAMOS in Shipibo-Konibo organization:

> The government established an organization [SINAMOS] in order to train us "*inabo*" [or "ignorant ones"] — to help us [on different levels] because we did not have even have Identification Cards then. SINAMOS helped us with paperwork to get land title, to fight against land appropriation, and revealed or showed all our rights. There was a powerful movement then at the level of communities. When we had the laws, we expelled *madereros* and *pescadores*. We literally closed our river. This is how, we began to organize. I called for a meeting of all people. They also called me because they have heard that in my community we had confiscated the timber from *mestizo madereros*. During that time, our elders were loyal, decisive, carried out plans, more united, and trustworthy. We [the leaders] carried out what people decided in the meeting. We assisted a lot of communities. We expelled a lot of *mestizos* from our lands, who had deceived us for a long time. At that time with the "*poder popular*" ["popular power"] nobody dared to enter our communities without prior notification (Author's translation, Personal Interview, Milton Silva Bautista, 2006).

This statement reveals that the Shipibo-Konibo organizing process centers on two

centripetal stages under the auspices of SINAMOS. The first stage occurred at a micro

communal level. Charismatic leaders were trained by SINAMOS functionaries, including

Milton Silva, Saul Rojas, Gilberto Silvano, and others, who then arranged inter-

community gatherings to discuss their problems with *mestizos*. Along the way, ideology

was imparted through teachings of the native people's law which was also decreed at this

time. At the beginning of this phase, the art of consensus making and discipline was

established, as reflected in the phrase "during that time, our elders were loyal, decisive,

carried out plans, more united, and trustworthy" (Personal Interview, Milton Silva, 2006).

In due course, actions were taken by community members against the *mestizos* by

confiscating and expelling them from their communities. This method, then, was adopted

as a model and used by all Shipibo-Konibos who catalyzed the creation of *Ligas Agrarias*

(Agrarian Leagues, discussed below).

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[3] CNA was created by the Velasco government in order to counterbalance CCP (Confederation De Campesinos del Peru), which was run by the Peruvian Communist Party and was the leading anti-Velasco movement.

The nature of this first Shipibo-Konibo's organization reflects the military government model that started it: strong individual *dirigentes* arose that represented or symbolized the mobilization. They were educated at a basic level, spoke Spanish, and trained along the way. The monolingual and illiterate communities relied on them. As Milton Silva explained: "Then [community people] used to come to me and other *dirigentes* such as Saul Rojas, Gilberto Silvano, Pedro Juaquin, because they were harassed by *mestizos* on issues or *manocopi* (soil on the shore of the river for rice plantations), and lands. We helped them a lot." (Author's translation, Personal Interview, Milton Silva 2006).

This first organizing phase of the Shipibo-Konibos under the SINAMOS program was in 1975, when they created three *Ligas Agrarias* in accordance with Law 19400, that ordered the creation of *ligas* in native communities. *Ligas Agrarias* were an Andean model of peasants' organization that fought for their lands, for prices for their agricultural production, and for access to credit. The first *liga,* called *Juan Santos Atahualpa Revolución* was created at the first Congress in the community of Utucuro, which represented the Districts of Iparia and Tahuania (in the upper Ucayali). The headquarters was in the community of Colonia del Caco, whose *dirigentes* were Saul Rojas and Milton Silva. The second *liga,* led by Mateo Arevalo, was called *Mapo Revolución* (Head Revolution), and included the Districts of Calleria and Masisea (in the middle Ucayali). The third *liga* was *Tapon Revolución* (Root Revolution), and represented communities from the Districts of Contamana and Padre Marquez (in the lower Ucayali), under the *dirigente,* Julio Urquia (Personal Interviews, Saul Rojas; Milton Silva Bautista; German Zavaleta, 2006). These three *ligas* were autonomous, but coordinated to help each other

when one region needed reinforcement. The Congresses of the *ligas* took place in any of the associated communities. During the meetings, major issues affecting the communities were discussed and plans of actions delineated along with *capacitación* of the *dirigentes* on indigenous rights, based on the *Ley de Comunidades Nativas,* which was also passed by the Velasco regime at this time. The effects of these *Ligas Agrarias* were felt by the local *mestizos*. As one ex-SINAMOS *dirigente* explained:

> We made many *mestizos* cry because we were [fighting] for our lands and *manos* [soil on the river bank]. Then, the *mestizos* caused us a lot of problems. They had us arrested and took us to local court. A priest, Father Gaston helped us immensely. (Author's translation, Personal Interview, Milton Silva 2006).

In the second stage of activity, SINAMOS presented four key macro-organizational elements. First, SINAMOS brought systematic training through promoters (*mestizos* working for the Peruvian government) all over the Amazon. They recruited the best and most capable indigenous leaders and trained them as *lideres sindicatos.* German Zavaleta described his experience during this time: "SINAMOS trained us to defend our territories, [and to see] how things should not be, the way *nahuas* [*mestizos*] should not treat us, and how communities should live by organizing themselves" (Personal Interview, 2006).

Second, SINAMOS brought with it increasing consciousness of citizenship. After the law was signed by President Velasco, all Amazonian indigenous people became *de jure* citizens. This 'good news" was taught to indigenous leaders, and they, in turn, shared it with community members, which made them aware of their Peruvian citizenship. As evidence of this newly acquired citizenship, all Amazonian indigenous people had to have an Identification Card (ID).

Thirdly, SINAMOS became an institutional conduit for the Amazonians. Whereas before there was no formal relationship between the state and indigenous Amazonians, now there was a mechanism for local groups to interact with the state. Indigenous leaders brought their grievances to the state through SINAMOS and pressured public offices to speed up their paper work, such as land titling and obtaining of ID, and so forth.

Fourthly, SINAMOS brought the Native Law to the hands of Amazonians. With their law in hand, they now had a legal weapon to defend their rights. This is why the Shipibo-Konibo leaders said [SINAMOS] "reveal[ed] our rights". The law underpins an ideological cohesion and was decisive as evidenced by the statement that "then our elders were loyal, decisive, carried out plans, more united, and trustworthy" (Personal Interview, Milton Silva, 2006). Interestingly, the term *poder popular* appears here: "with *poder popular* nobody dared to enter our communities," which overwhelmingly shows the initial organizing stages were connected to Velasco's leftist revolutionary ideology. The *poder popular* and the ideology of revolution seemed to be the driving force of Shipibo-Konibo mobilization, as opposed to their identity.

These four organizational elements catalyzed the mobilization of the Shipibo-Konibo communities and empowered them to utilize the law. The SINAMOS assistance came at a good time, enabling communities to take action and expel certain timbering operations and fishermen and confiscate timber extracted without the communities' permission as well as fish from their lakes.

Despite SINAMOS' initial key role in Shipibo-Konibo's organizing, the Shipibo-Konibo themselves were the protagonists of their own mobilization, as even ex-SINAMOS leader, Milton Silva, pointed out. On this, he stated:

More than the work of SINAMOS, it was the law that the government gave us to cover the [legal] vacuum and the needs. We relied on that law and demanded that the law would be abided by [public workers]. We forced them to follow the laws. When the laws were not obeyed locally, we went to Lima. Then we were given the right treatment and we were very important [before public workers]. Therefore, the role of SINAMOS was secondary. Although, it must be pointed out that there was a definite position [in favor of native peoples] from the State. Thus, that position was favorable to us - we the indigenous [people]. Then, there was a strong movement. *Noara ika iki onsa onsa shamani, ani banderayabo, ainbobo y yosibo* (we were full of passion, fearless, and powerful covered with flags [Peruvian]all [men] women and older people [reclaiming their rights]). (Personal Interview, Milton Silva 2006)

In my view, Milton Silva is right, in the sense that SINAMOS was not fighting for them; it was just facilitating the process for mobilization. From this perspective, the Native Community Law promulgated by President Velasco literally opened political doors and enabled Amazonian indigenous people to start their mobilization. There was not a massive uprising, or a mobilization of Amazon indigenous people to ask the Velasco government to write and promulgate the Law of Native Communities. The Law came about as a result of government initiative. Once the Law was passed, the indigenous peoples appropriated it and, by mobilizing, pressed for the laws to be respected and complied with. Hence, I argue that the Shipibo-Konibo's initial organizing was an enforcement of the existing laws. But they also became key agents in enforcing the laws, as illustrated in the expulsion of *mestizos* from their villages and territories.

It is also interesting to note that, from the start, the mobilization under SINAMOS was attempted from a cultural and identity base, but this never materialized because the Shipibo-Konibos did not originate and "own" the mobilization. It was owned by the state. From early on, there was a definite ideology of *reinvidicacion*. As Milton Silva explains:

Our [*mobilizacion*] was for cultural, political, social, and economic *revindicación.* It was a holistic issue. First, we showed our own form of organization. Secondly, we had the right to organize economically and socially. Furthermore, we have a culture, which was our identity as *noa inabo* (we native people) that dates back to ancient times. We wanted

to have this [culture] but we were never allowed. We were intimidated by them [*mestizos*] (Personal Interview, Milton Silva Bautista, 2006).

From the Shipibo-Konibo perspective, the three *Ligas Agrarias* were a conduit for reclaiming their cultural, political, social and economic rights. However, their vehicle of mobilization was temporarily borrowed from the state. Hence, they could achieve only what was allowed by the government. Rather than using their culture and identity as elements of organization, *Ligas Agrarias,* such as Juan Santos Atahulpa, *Tapon* and *Mapo* Revolutions were the underlying *lucha* or struggle in the first organizing process of the Shipibo-Konibo.

Notwithstanding the lack of identity and culture in the mobilization of the Shipibo-Konibo, it is fair to recognize that Velasco's military government promoted indigenous cultures through *Encuentros Culturales* such as Rimanacuy and Inkari, which often took place in Pucallpa and Lima where all ethnic groups participated. The Shipibo-Konibos became very noticeable in those festivals, as they performed their traditional dances and songs (Personal Interview, Saul Rojas, 2006). Space was not provided by the dominant society in the past due to prejudice and discrimination, but now the state was opening the door for an Amazonian culture to flourish and develop. Quechua became the second official language in Peru during this time, and the term "Indio" (Indian), a colonial term for discrimination, was terminated from official discourse and documents. Now, there were only peasants (Andes), and natives (Amazon). However, for a culture and identity to be fully *reinvidicado*, it has to be pushed by the people themselves, rather than promoted from above. In the case of the Shipibo-Konibo, they were barely a legal entity, having only recently been recognized as people and as native communities with

personería juridica (an Organizational Registration Number, which is required for an institution to be legal and represent constituents).

Second Phase: From Ligas Agrarias (SINAMOS) to Federations-1980s

The second organizing phase of the Shipibo-Konibos took place right after the collapse of SINAMOS in 1975.[4] Many Shipibo-Konibo leaders and thinkers proposed to have a more inclusive all Shipibo-Konibo organization. The idea of creating a sole macro-communal federation was born, borrowing on the concept of gremios or labor unions which Shipibo-Konibo leaders learned about in Pucallpa and Lima as they participated in workshops and conferences. An organizing commission was formed, which met in the community of Utucuro (upper Ucayali). There, it was agreed to have an *ani tsinkiti,* or Congress, in the community of Panaillo (down river). In 1979 the first Shipibo-Konibo federation was established *Federacion de Comunicades Nativas y Afluentes de Ucayali* (FECONAU) that represented 106 communities. This new federation was utilized to raise awareness about the conditions under which Shipibo-Konibo were living, emphasizing how the *patrons* and *mestizos* have historically treated them and what rights they now had under Law 20653 (Personal Interview, Jaime Lopez, Saul Rojas, German Zavaleta, 2006).

FECONAU took the organizational place of the three *Ligas Agrarias* and became a centralized organization with headquarters in Pucallpa. The mission and purpose of the federation was similar to the *Ligas Agrarias* but with an ethnic mission, that is, to defend communal lands, lakes, and rivers, natural resources, and to make sure that community lands were titled (Personal Interviews, Juan Lopez, Cecilio Soria, Manuel Gomez, 2006). Because the federation model had been borrowed from *gremios,* or unions, it had a board

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[4] General Velasco Alvarado became ill and was overthrown by another General Morales Bermudez in 1975 who began to "dismantle" the social reforms initiated by Velasco (Varese 2004:16).

of directors, general secretary, treasurer, and *vocales*. Gilberto Silvano was elected as the

first secretary general. The federation took over the role of spreading the 'good news'

(about the Native Law) that was first propagated by SINAMOS. On the importance of the

Law, one of the leaders explained:

> That Law was meant to teach how to defend our rights because we were being oppressed and insulted. We had our *personería jurídica* [legal capacity to organize]; we were official finally. *Nahuabo* or *mestizos* could not just come in [to villages]. With that law in our hand, the *mestizos* could not insult us calling us *chama*. So, many people, once they knew about that Law, physically attacked the *mestizos* who were disrespecting them. We confiscated *nahuabo's* properties which were in our villages. We made the *nahuabo* cry (Personal Interview, German Zavaleta 2006)

The Shipibo-Konibo *dirigentes* saw the "Law" as a psychological empowerment

to reject *mestizos'* oppression and racial insults. The "Law" brought consciousness of

their re-birth with new rights, evidenced by having *personería juridica*. They now had a

legal weapon at their disposal to fight for their rights and make the laws stand. With this

legal and psychological empowerment, the training of *dirigentes,* confiscation of lands

and properties continued under FECONAU. The former *dirigentes* of SINAMOS had just

transferred to the new organization. The ideology had not changed, nor the methodology

for advancing their rights mainly through force. People were not afraid of going to jail,

and asserted their pride in being Shipibo-Konibo by not being cowardly and being strong

enough to face the *mestizos* (Personal Interview, Juan Lopez 2005). The initial

effectiveness of FECONAU is described by German Zavaleta:

> Then, the federation along with the communities was very powerful. When one community had a problem, all people would join in unity and solidarity in order to solve the problem [with the *nahuas*]. Because of these fights and the laws in our hands protecting us nobody dared to touch us. We were fighting as people [all communities]; the unity was very visible. From that unification we began to work by sector or decentralized by district, and other federations arose (Personal Interview, German Zavaleta 2006)

FECONAU had the potential to advance the mobilization to have a broader impact later on, by capitalizing on the groundwork provided by SINAMOS. The initial unity, solidarity, common consciousness, and laws at hand were key elements that could have made FECONAU as strong as *Ligas Agrarias*. Nevertheless, as time passed, and a new generation of *dirigentes* came in, the mobilization began to dwindle as explained below.

The creation of FECONAU in 1979 marks the first creation in Peru of indigenous federations *per se,* as opposed to government sponsored organizations, *sindicatos* or unions during Velasco's regime in 1975. FECONAU was initially strong due to some funding received from European NGOs. Then, when 'mismanagement' of funds was discovered, financial aid evaporated and consequently the federation itself was 'weakened' (Anonymous Interview, 2006). Right after the creation of FECONAU, community members were committed to it, they had personalized it, and the federation was theirs. Financial constraints did not limit them to attend *congresos*; thus, the efforts to advance their rights were very visible. People used their own canoes to come to meetings and brought their own dried fish, plantains, and yucas (manioc). But nowadays, the federations and their leaders are dependent on NGOs to provide boxes of rice, beans, noodles, bread, and fuel (Anonymous Interview, 2006). This is what I call the politics of *solicitud*, because a letter of request of these items is often distributed to many government agencies and NGOs to organize an event. Often today, if these products are not provided, then the *congresos* are not carried out.

This more recent dependency of the federations on NGOs has multiple effects on communities. They no longer see the *congresos* as their own gathering to discuss their

problems. Communities expect their *dirigentes* to provide food and full transportation to attend the meetings. There are stories where many *dirigentes* end up with huge debts after *congresos,* because they took financial responsibilities on themselves in order to protect their personal credibility. Hence, the organizational weakness is both because of communities' sole reliance on *dirigentes,* and the *dirigentes'* dependency on NGOs for financial assistance.

During the decade of the 1990s, FECONAU began to decentralize, because the federation had become stagnant and detached from its base. A proliferation of new, more-localized federations within the Shipibo-Konibo nation further contributed towards its weakening as they competed for resources and credibility. Five districtal Federations emerged among the Shipibo-Konibo: (1) *Federacion de Comunidades Nativas de Distrito de Iparia* (FECONADID) was founded in 1995, and represents 43 native communities; (2) *Federacion de Comunidades Nativas del Distrito de Masisea* (FECONADIM) was created in 1998, and represents 24 Native communities; (3) *Organización de Desarrollo de Masisea* (ORDIM) was established in 1996, and also represents 24 communities; (4) *Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Distrito de Tahuania* (FECONAT) was founded in 1997, and represents 29 communities; (5) *Federación de Comunidades Nativa de Bajo Ucayali* (FECONBU), represents 40 native communities and was established in 1996. [5] In German Zavaleta's view: "this is how we became weak [i.e., through decentralization]; I think if we had one sole federation we still would be very powerful (Personal Interview, 2006).

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[5] FECONADIM and ORDIM are competing organizations in the same district. FECONADIM is affiliated with CONAP, while ORDIM is affiliated with AIDESEP.

The goals and objectives of these new decentralized federations did not much change from FECONAU. Within their agendas were the *reinvidicacion* of the right of indigenous peoples, institutional strengthening, promoting bilingual intercultural education, health, and an indigenous women's program. Most urgently, they worked on physically and legally securing the territories of the native communities (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo 2006).

However, the federations have become ineffective, and the communities have lost interest in their organizations. The current Presidents of ORDIM, FECONADID, FECONBU, and FECONAT emerged when the decentralized federations were dormant and inactive. Four of the five new decentralized federations never obtained *personeria juridica*, due to the long process of paperwork and their lack of resources to pay the legal fees. FECONBU's president, Javier Macedo, elected in 2003, summarizes the time when the new *dirigentes* arose to reactivate the moribund organizations:

> We undertook the leadership position when our communities were no longer interested in the organization [federation] for fault of previous leaders. The assumption from people was and is that the leaders obtain funds in the name of the communities. It is during this time, we took over the organization, and we are showing them [the communities] our capacity of working with new values for the Shipibo-Konibo. We are also showing the result or products of our work. Currently, those previous assumptions of the communities are being changed. We are retaking the trust of the communities through our constant fights in defense of indigenous rights (Personal Interview, 2006).

Besides communities losing interest in the federations, public institutions had lost faith and trust in the federations, due to mismanagement of resources given previously. Thus, the new leadership of FECONBU, under President Javier Macedo, had to work hard to restore the federation's credibility with both native communities and public institutions. This effort was carried out through a careful public relations campaign with state public officials where a new agenda had been set with clear specific goals and

objectives. Consequently, and ironically, the federation's best ally became local governments, such as the Municipality of Contamana, and Sub-management of the Regional Government of Loreto. These agencies have been funding the federation *dirigentes'* travel on to field trips to monitor illegal logging, and leadership training workshops (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo 2006).

Despite the federations' efforts to reclaim credibility with its constituents, there is still a long way to go, as accomplishments by federations vary according to Districts and the productivity of each *dirigente*. FECONBU's accomplishments have been limited to obtaining institutional support materials, such as ham-radios, and building an office or headquarters in Contamana where community leaders can stay when they come to town to do their paperwork. FECONADID is involved in obtaining free IDs for their District constituents, and assisting communities whose lakes have been contaminated by *mestizo* fishing boats. They are also leading the defense of a Shipibo-Konibo mayor from Iparia, who is being charged with misuse of funds and murder.[6] FECONADID has depended on their indigenous mayor for logistical and financial support. ORDIM is working on solving the land dispute between *mestizos* and native communities, as well as defending a couple of communities whose lands have been appropriated by an international timber company (Personal Interview, Marcos Rojas, Humberto Zampayo, 2006). ORDIM, too, has received some aid (food and fuel) from a *mestizo* mayor to organize an event. While these federations' alliance (in the case of ORDIM, FECONBU, and FECONADID) with the non-indigenous regional and municipal governments could be construed as progress

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[6] FECONADID's president insists that the *mestizos* are doing the current mayor injustice because they cannot adjust to the fact that the *mestizos* have been out of power in Iparia for the last 16 years; the only way they can intimidate is to send the indigenous mayor to jail. (I will discuss this situation more in Chapter 4).

towards using the state's resources to advance native people's rights, it leaves them once again dependent, which constrains the federations rather than frees them.

Although these federations have achieved other less visible or less tangible goals, such as filing paperwork for the legal and physical securing of native communities' lands, their accomplishments are not widely appreciated by the communities. That is why president Javier Macedo expressed his frustration by saying: "[Alas] the papers are not publicly posted where everybody can see. Many communities do not know the accomplishment; that is why they badmouth the federations" (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo 2006).

The new decentralized federation *dirigentes* such as Javier Macedo, Marcos Rojas, and Humberto Zampallo, seemed wholeheartedly committed to working to solve their communities' problems; however, they are often alone in Pucallpa without the support of their board of directors, who are not present due to geographical distance and lack of resources. Thus, the *dirigentes* often must play different roles, from secretary, to public relations, treasurer, and *vocal* – running from meeting to meeting, and from NGO offices to government agencies, to work on behalf of their people. A lone *dirigente* fighting against the government and international corporations is like David against Goliath. The problem is that this modern David does not have a stone to use as a weapon – that is, finances to mobilize people, and to create the unity and solidarity necessary for the federations to be effective.

The fact that presidents of federations are tackling major problems alone is exacerbated by the lack of coordination among the *dirigentes* to push a common issue, which is often due to each *dirigente's* desire to shine. If a problem is solved, then he and

his federation would receive the credit. This was very clear in 2005, when a community in the jurisdiction of FECONBU took over the oil fields of Maple Gas and Plus Petrol that were contaminating their land and river. A couple of neighboring communities went to help, but the rest did not go. Other communities and Shipibo-Konibo federations were not called for assistance. Thus, this oil field take over was hardly the mobilization or uprising of the Shipibo-Konibo as people per se, rather an isolated community-based mobilization.[7]

The institutional and leadership problems of federations are due to the kind of *dirigentes* who conduct the federations. Thus, federations often work and fight alone. As one leader explains, "the strength of the movement depends on the type of leaders. One leader goes very high, then he goes down again; it all depends on the leadership of each *dirigente*. There is not the *convocatoria* of all people" (Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa 2006). The apparent individualistic nature of the federation leadership lies in the fact that the *dirigentes* cannot afford to bring their board of directors to Pucallpa to coordinate and execute their plans, and each decentralized federation is autonomous; that is, it does not need permission from other federations to achieve its objectives. Hence, the lack of *convocatoria* (meeting of all federations) to resolve important matters seems another reason for the federations' weaknesses.

Creation of Amazonian National Organization

Back at the end of the decade of the 1970s, two other indigenous federations besides FECONAU were formed in other, non-Shipibo-Konibo parts of the Peruvian Amazon, the *Consejo Aguaruna–Huambisa* (CAH), and the *Central de Comunidades Nativa de la*

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[7] For more information on this take over see: Soria, G. "*Indigenas Retoman Pozos de Maple en Contamana*". AHORA. Pucallpa, Viernes, 22 de Julio, 2005.

Selva Central (CECONSEC), and they worked towards creating a national confederation to unite different ethnic groups. The international NGO, Oxfam America, sponsored many forums where young *dirigentes,* such as Evaristo Nunkuag (an Awajun native) debated with anthropologists A. Chirif and C. Mora about the content and scope of the organization (Cecilio Soria, Personal Interview, 2007). In 1978, Amazonian delegates established the *Confederación de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Peruana* (COCCNASEP), but they could not agree on the final name of the confederation, which was soon renamed.

There were two proposals on the table. Evaristo Nunkuag proposed the *Asociación Interétnica de la Selva Peruana* (AIDESEP), while Cecilio Soria suggested the *Confederación Indígena de la Selva Peruana* (COISP). FECONAU, CAH, and CECONSEC chose and thus created the *Asociación Interétnica para el Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDESEP) in 1980. AIDESEP's general objectives were to: (1) represent the immediate and historical interest of Amazonian indigenous peoples; (2) guarantee the conservation and development of cultural identity, territory, and the values of each peoples of the Amazonia; (3) make the exercise of self-determination of Amazonian peoples viable within the framework of Peruvian national legislation and international law; (4) promote sustainable and human development of indigenous peoples (www.aidesep.org.pe).

The initial promoters of AIDESEP were Manuel Huaya, Alejandro Calderon, Evaristo Nunkuag, Alcides Calderon, and Milton Silva. AIDESEP created its communication branch called *Voz Indígena*, which was designed to inform its constituents about progress towards defending their rights. *Voz Indígena* was led by

Cecilio Soria as Director (Personal Interview, Cecilio Soria 2006)). Currently, AIDESEP claims to represent 57 federations, 1,350 native communities, and 350,000 Amazonians. AIDESEP has several programs that organize its work, such as Indigenous Women, Indigenous Territories, Bilingual and Intercultural Education, and Indigenous Health. It has a *Consejo Nacional* composed of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and *vocal.* These representatives are elected every three years. Every six months they hold a *Consejo Ampliado* where all regional presidents or representatives meet in order to decide the major *lineas politicas* (ideological and political platform) (www.aidesep.org.pe).

AIDESEP went through a decentralization process during the 1990s, from which six regional AIDESEPs were established. Shipibo-Konibos were represented by the *Organización* AIDESEP *Regional Ucayali* (ORAU), which represents twelve federations, from three ethnics groups (Shipibo-Konibo, Ashaninka, and Amahuaca). These regional organizations are autonomous from the central AIDESEP and have their own *personaria juridica*, but they work in coordination with the national AIDESEP.

In 1986, a competing confederation, *Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazonicas del Peruana* (CONAP), was established by a group of indigenous dissenters and anthropologists, who were specifically disenchanted with AIDESEP's leadership due to personal differences, jobs, and distribution of funds. CONAP works toward *reinvidicacion* of Amazonian indigenous peoples by defending lands and natural resources, consolidating organizational bases, strengthening cultural identity, and participating in national, regional, and local political space. CONAP also promotes sustainable and economic development in order to guarantee a dignified quality of life, and believe that the unity of Amazonian nationalities and their organizations is a

necessary condition to secure their future life, culture, and own economies. CONAP has

five *Sedes Regionales* (Regional Offices), 24 federation members, and represents 200,000

Amazonian indigenous peoples. The maximum authority is the *Asamblea General*

(General Assembly)*,* where all accredited members participate with rights to vote. Its

national executive council is elected every four years, including the president, vice-

president, treasurer, and program secretariats, such as women's programs, culture, and

economy. The *Asamblea General* meets every four years, and an ordinary session is

convened every year. An extraordinary session can be held at any time upon a request of

a member (www.conap.org.pe).

As is evident in the mission of each confederation, they share similar noble

objectives – that is, to work towards implementing the self-determination rights of their

peoples. However, since the creation of both indigenous organizations, there has been a

tense relation between them. They have had serious personal and organizational disputes,

publicly accusing each other of selling out to their financial supporters, whether

governments, oil corporations or NGOs. They both claim to be the legitimate

representative of the Amazonian indigenous peoples. One of the issues of contention has

been the origin of resources. While AIDESEP receives funding from human rights and

environmental NGOs, and European governments, CONAP has been assisted by the

Ministry of Energy and Mines, and international oil companies operating in indigenous

territories. An example of this public dispute was in 2003, when CONAP published a

pronunciamiento (public declaration) in a national paper where it accused AIDESEP

leaders of being antipatriotic, and working for the interest of international green NGOs.

Besides the dispute over sources of finances, there is also a dispute about each

organization's accomplishments. AIDESEP leaders claim that they have titled more than 10 million has of indigenous lands, and that CONAP has done very little in terms of community land titling (Haroldo Salazar, Personal Interview, 2007).

Nevertheless, recently, there was an informal talk among the top *dirigentes* about the possibility of uniting those two federations into one single entity; however, beyond this meeting, there has not been serious, ongoing dialogue working towards this goal. On this, Cesar Sarasara, President of CONAP stated: "I would like see in the near future the unity of all Amazonian indigenous people in one sole organization (Personal Interview, Cesar Sarasara, 2006). Ex-president of AIDESEP Haroldo Salazar expressed similar views: "The unity of the Amazon indigenous people is vital in order to bring change in Peru; if we fight alone, we are not going to achieve anything." (Personal Interview, Haroldo Salazar, 2006).

Despite the interest and vision of both federations to consolidate into one Amazonian organization, this is not likely to happen any time soon, as nobody is willing to give up what they have worked for. But mostly, there is not an overwhelming reason why this should happen, and there are so many interest groups playing off of [or benefiting from] the two federations.

Women's Voice in Shipibo-Konibo Organizations

During most of this process of Shipibo-Konibo organizing through federations, the public voice of women has been silent, despite the fact anthropologists have described this society as matrilineal and matriarchal. Perhaps as men became exposed to *mestizo's machismo*, they acquired that modality of leadership and thus they did not include women

in top leadership position in the federations. In response to this public silence, a bilingual

teacher, Segundina Cumapa, rose in an attempt to fill the gap. She first heard about

women's rights, and international indigenous agendas and organizations at a conference

she attended in Holland, where the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America was

being celebrated in 1992. Upon returning from the conference, she summoned

Amazonian indigenous women together and proposed the creation of a women's

indigenous organization. In 1993, *Organizacion de Mujeres de la Amazonia Peruana*

(OMIAP) was born, and was initially funded by International Working Group of

Indigenous Peoples (IWGIA), based in Denmark (Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa

2006).

Segundina Cumapa became an influential leader in international organizations

such as *Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas,* where she was elected a board member,

and gained international leadership experiences. Segundina and other Shipibo-Konibo

women created this organization because she wanted women to participate in the fight for

indigenous rights, and in order to prevent how men had been "putting them down"

(Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa, 2006). Other female *dirigentes*, such as Priscila

Maynas, said they wanted to stop "the marginalization of women by men in the

communities and federations" (Personal Interview, Priscila Maynas, 2006). Then, the

objectives of MIAP were to train Amazonian indigenous women in different topics such

as self-esteem, leadership, human and women's rights, and awareness about the role of

[indigenous] women in families and native communities, and women's self-development

(Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa 2006; Celia Yui 2006).

The emergence of a women's organization in a matrilineal and matrilocal society should have been received with admiration and satisfaction. But instead, it became a competitive and threatening organization in the view of the men's organizations. Segundina Cumapa and Celia Yui, another womens' leader, were attacked for imposing a western concept of women's rights by men who opposed their activities. Men also complained that because of this organization, women did not want to do laundry, cook, or take care of the children anymore. Furthermore, they were criticized for bringing up social problems, such as conflict in marriages (Anonymous interviewer, 2006). For instance, in a community of upper Ucayali, a husband was reported to ask his wife to prepare him a drink, but she replied "Now, I too have rights, you can make your own drink" (Personal Interview, Celia Yui, 2006).

Nevertheless, many men also recognized the importance of their work. Segundina and Celia strategically began to invite those men who were already there accompanying their spouses, to participate in their congresses, which were held in the villages. After this inclusion, things began to improve. On this Segundina, reflects: "We are gaining or making a road for women. So far, I believe we have leveled the capacities of women in comparison with men" (Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa, 2006). Now, some villages have women chiefs, *teniente governadores*, police officers, and other authorities. In 2003, Priscila Maynas was elected vice-president of FECONAU, and now is currently interim president   (Personal Interview, Celia Yui; Priscila Maynas, 2006). These advances are significant, compared to how women used to be in community meetings prior to OMIAP. They often sat in the back of the building or on the sides. They were self-conscious about their condition, they felt that they were not credible, and were too

embarrassed to talk or give their opinion. But they are now found sitting in the front rows of the meetings and they participate more actively in community meetings. However, the women point out that there is still a lot of work to do (Personal Interview, Celia Yui, 2006).

One of the reasons why organizations such as OMIAP arose is that there are not leadership opportunities for women, often due to indigenous *machismo*, which is believed to be a "natural issue with some people" (Personal Inteview, Segundina Cumapa, Priscila Maynas, 2006). Some believe that men will not change their views about women, but there is hope that the new generation of young men acquires new values and beliefs. On this optimist side, Segundina sees that men are beginning to change:

> But what I see is that many men do not really think that way anymore, that is, women can only take care of children, wash the clothes, and cook. We as women went through very difficult times. For instance, [the men used to say], let's not take the women [to the village for a soccer match] because they are bad luck. Then, as a way of joking with men we told them, how come the women are not back luck at night. It was very difficult, but we have accomplished many things (Personal Interview, 2006).

Unfortunately, OMIAP, once a prominent indigenous women's organization is now weakened due to lack of cash inflows from sponsoring NGOs. Currently, it does not have a headquarters; the two cars that they used to have are sold, and there are not office supplies. The founder of OMIAP is being charged with misusing the funds. According to Segundina, an accountant that she trusted had robbed them using phony invoices for many years. Now, she is legally responsible to OMIAP to personally refute the charges (Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa 2006). This pattern of accountants taking advantage of people with no accountant training is very typical, not just in indigenous organizations, but also in public institutions. Whatever the fate of OMIAP, important

strides have been made and it is likely that women's organizations will play and increasingly important role.

Having reviewed the history of mens' and women's organizations, let me now turn to Shipibo-Konibos relations with their federation. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will argue that the indigenous federation became weakened, discredited, and divorced from the native communities they represent. I will also posit that the Shipibo-Konibo did not have bona fide social movement but instead had waves of social mobilization.

SHIPIBO-KONIBO PEOPLE AND FEDERATIONS: CONCEPTUAL AND PHYSICAL DIVORCE

Thirty-two years after the Shipibo-Konibos began to organize through *Ligas Agrarias* and then federations, the situation looks dim at the time of this writing (summer 2009). Recent experience only confirms what I learned in 48 focus groups in 12 communities, with 229 people in the course of this research: that there is a strong conceptual and physical divorce between the people who are represented (the native communities) and the federations, local, regional, and national, that purportedly represent them. Participants in my focus groups (men, women, young men and young women) were asked what they knew of their local, regional and national federations and *dirigentes*. If they did not know anything, they were given the acronym of the federation, and asked how they valued their work in the communities. Many Shipibo-Konibos in focus groups charged: "they (federations) do not represent us" and "they (federations) are after their own interest" or "living well in our name" (Focus Groups, 2005, 2006). In a focus group of 20 participants

in a given community, only two knew anything significant about the local federations and only one knew something about the national federation, either CONAP or AIDESEP. In some communities, they have never heard about their regional and national organizations. These community members' views are supported by current indigenous politicians, and former and current indigenous federation leaders. In an opinion of a prominent leader, the current federations are:

> For me [the federations] always had weaknesses, the problem is that there is so much manipulation going on. The group of people [federation leaders] are after their own interests. If we see who the leaders are, we see that they are people who hang out in Yarina [a district adjacent to the city of Pucallpa], and do not have ethics…. They are corrupt, hypocrite, fake and opportunists just like any other person from the western society [*mestizo*]. When there is an election, they go upon previous agreement with the delegates to be nominated and get elected as federation leader just like any other corrupt westerner. In terms of funds, let's not even talk about it, they squeeze out completely, there is no financial accountability (Personal Interview, Cecilio Soria, 2006).

According to this statement, there are several factors that undermine current indigenous federations. The federations are controlled by a small group that leads one way or another. Secondly, the elected leaders are from Yarina District, and not from the communities proper. Yarina is a town adjunct to Pucallpa. Although it is not by any means, an indigenous district, unofficially, there are 4000 Shipibo-Konibos living in Yarina (Personal Interview, Priscila Maynas 2006). Thirdly, these *dirigentes* are westernized because they behave like any other politician, manipulating federation elections. There are reports that candidates took delegates to dinner and drank beer in order to persuade them to vote their way. Fourth, federation leaders are not accountable for the little money they get from NGOs to organize their events.

There is a difference in scope, vision, and spirit between the old federations and the new decentralized federations, which contributes to the distancing between the

communities and federations. While FECONAU previously worked for and represented all communities from the region of Loreto and Ucayali, now communities are represented by their own district federation. All these decentralized federations were expected to deliver more than FECONAU; however, currently they are seen as not producing visible results, due to lack of funding. Consequently, projects are not carried out for the communities (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, 2006). Because federations cannot deliver services to communities, with project such as aviculture, aquaculture, and agriculture, the communities are disillusioned, and thus see them as having no utilitarian value.

Furthermore, the decentralized federations seem to have lost their previous fighting spirit. As one leader laments: "But when the federation was established for the first time, they fought for lands, lakes, *barrizales* [stream banks which are good for rice plantations], and against the loggers. Nowadays, we do not hear about those types of fights" (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, 2006). Put differently, if the federations are not fighting for the communities' interests and causes, then, it seems logical that the federations do not have much utility for the communities. Hence, they do not care about their federations. Most communities' lands are titled now, which may explain in part the communities' disinterest in federations.

In response to the communities' dismay of federations, caused by negative perceptions, lack of results, and internal bickering, former *dirigentes* appeal for unity and urge building a consensus to guide the "*junta*" [in the federations] who want to lead in their own way (Anonymous Interview, 2006). This "*junta*" is blamed for the federations' weakness due to lack of consensus building and cooperation, and their monopoly of the

organizations. Furthermore, the common perception among native community members is that the federations are out of touch with them, distant institutionally, and seeking self-economic benefit (Personal Interview, Manuel Gomez, 2006). One of the founders of AIDESEP bluntly put it:

> I think [AIDESEP], is distant or divorced from its bases [native communities]. There are no bases [organizational roots]. If an organization is strong, one can feel it. The *dirigentes* are only interested in traveling to cities [for conferences] while the base[communities] are waiting for delivery of services, that's why there are resentments against the *dirigentes*, and there is even infighting among themselves for the trips. There is a lack of presence of the federations, including AIDESEP. They do not go to visit the communities; therefore, they are only names (Personal Interview, Cecilio Soria 2006).

The federations' *dirigentes* are charged with solely promoting *talleres* (workshops) in communities, and themselves attending *talleres* in Lima, because there is a travel stipend. Furthermore, the *dirigentes* are accused of staying in their positions beyond their term by not calling for elections (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, 2006). The workshops are essential in training the leaders in different subjects such as economy, agriculture, and indigenous rights. However, former *dirigentes* agree with community members that workshops alone are not going to solve community problems, and this adds to the dissatisfaction with the federations. A female *dirigente* succinctly points out this dissatisfaction:

> The federations that are here [Pucallpa] are not obeyed or paid attention to by the communities. The people [community members] talk about the *dirigentes* as people who are only hanging out in Pucallpa and lying to them. The federations have to be in the districts to help the people there. If there is a serious problem, or if there is big project to be presented then they have to come to Pucallpa. Right now, the communities are very distant from the federations (Personal Interview, Segundina Cumapa 2006).

Many federation *dirigentes* have shared their sadness and disappointments at the lack of understanding from community members, leaders, and ex-*dirigentes* about the charges. They do not receive salary, except for the *dirigentes* and staff from central

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AIDESEP. They have to find their own way to survive while they are in Pucallpa to *gestionar*, or deal with, governments' bureaucracy to advance their communities' cause. They are with their families in Pucallpa. They admit that when some funding comes from the central AIDESEP, they legally share some of the budget to cover their personal expenses. On this, Humberto Zampallo, president of ORDIM expressed his frustrations: "Our people don't understand that we often walk long distances, and our stomachs are growling all day long because we don't even have a sole (30 cents) to buy some food; the same goes for our family" (Personal Interview, 2006). This *dirigente* view is understood by an ex-dirigente:

> Our *dirigentes* are not valued very well, sure they [community members] elect their *dirigentes* in congresses. The federations do not handle finances or do not have a budget. It might be a good idea for the communities to contribute to their federations, so they can complain and make them [*dirigentes*] accountable, but it does not work that way. The *dirigentes* want to travel to visit their bases [communities], but they cannot; so, they have no choice, but to run to the NGOs to request financial aid. Then, the communities criticize or charge that the *dirigentes* whom they have elected are obtaining money in the name of the communities (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, 2006).

Moreover, the federations' *dirigentes*, besides being distant from their bases, are charged with not promoting the economic needs of the communities. It is recommended that micro business must be promoted in order to make the communities less dependent on social aids (Personal Interview, Cecilio Soria, 2006). Hence, former federation *dirigentes* and indigenous politicians are pushing for the federations to play a different role, that is, to move away from traditional defense of lands and resources to material-based struggles in the face of expanding poverty. This is because there are some communities that are literally exchanging chicken heads at the market in Pucallpa for

their rice, beans, and bananas.[8] Social and economic problems such as this are what some argue that federations are not tackling, and they [federations] are instead:

> [Doing] little workshops here and there with the help of some NGOs, which are ok, but they have to do other tasks such as confronting our crude reality. This crude reality is that we are killing our own economy. We are [communities] engaged in working banana fields, but barter with chicken heads (Personal Interview, Marcial Vasquez 2006)

As the federations' *dirigentes* face new demands, they can barely cover these increasing demands for 'miracles' and delivery of services. From this perspective, federation support for assistance to the communities seems important in any reconfiguration of federations, if they choose that path. However, some federations do not even have an office and often borrow printing paper to write a letter to government entities. Hence, federations' *dirigentes,* working on their own, cannot bear the onerous responsibilities put on them by the communities, and cannot deliver the tremendous expectations that people have of them.

Furthermore, many ex *dirigentes* point out that federations should find more concrete causes to fight for, rather than solely focusing on small issues that do not address the big picture. This would help in reconnecting the federations and the communities. For instance, Marcial Vasquez explains that while he was in charge of ORAU, he worked on educational initiatives, as evidenced by the creation of the Intercultural University (Personal Interview, Marcial Vasquez 2006). That is one reason why he is very frustrated about the current situation of the federations:

> There are many issues to fight for, a lot of big problems to solve such as economy and education, but nobody is concerned about the economy and education. The things that were tied before are now loosened. The d*irigentes* have become conformist and they could be strengthening what we worked for [education and communities]. Had they worked on these issues, we would be strong (Personal Interview, Marcial Vasquez 2006).

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[8] In Pucallpa or in Peru in general there is market for chicken heads, feet, and internal organs. Usually, the poorest of the poor are the ones who buy these products.

In sum, there seems to be a clear conceptual and physical divorce between the federations and native communities that they represent, caused by negative perceptions, internal bickering, and lack of concrete project results. Thus, the future of the federations depends on how important the indigenous communities see and value them. If they have utilitarian value, the people will support, strengthen, and own them. Otherwise, the federations will continue to weaken, and so will its movement. Some leaders believe that it is essential for indigenous people to be organized through federations in order to defend their interests when they face problems. However, they recommend that it has to be,

> "…one solid organization that is really representative, that really takes care of the need of the bases, that gives alternative solutions about many problems that are emerging, not just be engaged in workshops that lasts two or three days or any other meager projects" (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, 2006).

There is a consensus among former *dirigentes* that communities do value their federations, but "often, they do not give serious importance to their *dirigentes* for their attitudes, and lack of accountability" (Personal Interview, Leoncio Silvano, Marcial Vasquez, Manuel Gomez, 2006).

Besides the institutional and personal issues that distance the federations and the communities, there is another variable that may explain the distancing. The election of the federations is by delegates, and not by popular vote. For instance, to elect a local or districtal federation, one or two people from a community participate as delegates (usually the community chief and *teniente governador*). Those delegates vote to elect new *dirigentes*, and once they return to their communities, they rarely even inform their communities. Thus, most community members, aside from their leaders, do not know that the election took place or even who their *dirigentes* are. Now, for the elections of higher-level, regional federations, such as ORAU (*Organizacion Regional AIDESEP-*

Ucayali), only the members of the *consejo directivo* (Board of Directors) of the 12 member federation participate as delegates to vote. These only 12 delegates choose the *consejo directivo* of ORAU. Similarly, for the election of the central AIDESEP, the members of ORAU's *consejo directivo* are only allowed to participate as delegates to elect new national *dirigentes.* As is evident here, from the election of the local, regional, and national elections, the community members who are the *raison d'être* of the federation do not have a direct vote in any of the three elections. This explains why they do not know their local *dirigentes*, or their activities, much less their regional and national *dirigentes.* Hence, the physical and conceptual divorce of the federation from their bases – the communities – is created and consistently maintained.

Having analyzed the conceptual and physical "divorce" of federation leaders and their communities, let me now turn to the analysis of Shipibo-Konibo social mobilization and movement.

SHIPIBO-KONIBO SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND MOVEMENT

Theorists have emphasized for years the difference between "social movement" and "social mobilization." The former is described as a well-organized and sustained group process that remains active after its objectives have been achieved, while the latter is a temporary movement that dies down after accomplishing its (relatively) short term mission (Ibarra 1987). As discussed in Chapter 1, many scholars have argued that the indigenous social movement in Peru is not significant, and that it is weaker or non-existent compared to other countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia. Peru's indigenous scholars have given three reasons why this is the case: (1) Velasco's

corporatist policies; (2) Peru's civil war for 13 years, (3) the activism of indigenous

mestizos [9] are not viewed as an ethnic movement. So what can the case of the Shipibo-

Konibo tell us about Amazonian indigenous social movements? Did the Shipibo-Konibos

organize a genuine social movement or were their actions mainly social mobilization?

Drawing on the analysis above of the Shipibo-Konibo organizing process, let me

now return to the first hypothesis of this dissertation,

> **H1. In several decades of political activity, the Shipibo-Konibo have not achieved a bona fide social movement (that is both continuous and systematic), but rather have engaged in repeated campaigns or "waves" of social mobilization.**

My analysis shows that, despite many efforts at political organization, the Shipibo-

Konibo have not been able to move beyond social mobilization to build a strong and

sustained social movement. Instead, Shipibo-Konibo political organizing is best viewed

as diverse "waves" of social mobilization, each prompted by different social and political

circumstances. The first wave of social mobilization was sponsored by the state through

SINAMOS. I call this a "top-down social mobilization." The government provided an

initial opening, creating not only political opportunity but also resources for collective

mobilization (top-down phase). The first wave was followed by a number of "bottom-up

social mobilizations" as federations formed and reformed. But even here, the bottom-up

process has not successfully consolidated into a sustained movement because of lack of

resources, group cohesion, credibility of *dirigentes,* and weakened organizations.

Social movement theorists often use a collective action model to analyze

"collective behavior" and argue that identity plays a key role in this process. In one

widely-used formulation, there are four conditions or steps for collective action: (1)

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[9] Indigenous Mestizos are those Quechua speaking urban and educated indigenous people according to Marisol de la Cadena, 2000.

discontent and common grievances, (2) belief and ideology about justice and injustice, (3) resource and capacity to mobilize collectively, and (4) political opportunity for collective action (A. Obershchall 63:1993).

Looked at from this perspective, it is interesting that the Shipibo-Konibos' social mobilization had the four elements of collective action, but without a strong identity component. As argued above, the initial organizing process under Revolutionary central government through SINAMOS was based on gremial or union-based organization which undermined opportunity for a cultural-identity-based mobilization. Paradoxically, however, it did empower local indigenous communities to recognize and act on their rights. This was very clear in the rhetoric of the Shipibo-Konibo leaders. As one ex-SINAMOS leader explained: "at that time, with the new *poder popular* [popular power], nobody dared to enter our communities without prior notification" (Personal Interview, Milton Silva, 2006). This discourse of *poder popular* was also reflected in the name of the organizations (*Mapo, Tapon*, and Juan Santos Atahualpa Revolutions). The Shipibo-Konibos were part of, and identified with, the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces under Velasco's leadership. From this perspective, Shipibo-Konibos identity was not an organizing principle [or force] in this period of political mobilization.

The Shipibo-Konibos were, I emphasize, fully cognizant of their long suffering from historic slavery, economic exploitation, mistreatment from mestizos and *patrones*, and lower than citizen status before the national society. But they were beyond discontent and grievances; they were angry. This anger and anguish were evident in the way they became the enforcers of the Law 20653. They expelled mestizos and confiscated their properties. Moreover, their own local belief and ideology about justice

and injustice were ingrained in their daily life, given their constant confrontation with oppression and discrimination. By signing the 1974 Law, the Velasco government simply gave legal expression to long-held sentiments, which is why the liberating and revolutionizing ideology was embraced without any hesitance by Shipibo-Konibos leaders. Expressions such as "we too are Peruvians and have rights" and the "law was *reinvidicando* of the oppressed" are testimonial of the idea of justice and injustice. These views and sentiments were expressed by the *dirigentes* and by focus group participants. Within this context, they obviously supported the government in reversing the injustice through promulgation of the *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas.* They worked for *reinvidicación* of their rights and pressured the state agencies and *mestizos* to obey those laws. To be sure, the government also put forth an ideology of justice, as the basis for passing favorable laws.

The other two elements of collective behavior were also initiated by the government in power, and not by local grass root organizations. The resource to mobilize was given by the government itself—not so much money as logistics and organizational support. On this, the former official of the National Office of Agrarian Reform, Stefano Varese writes:

> "..With very scarce resources and a few friends and colleagues from the University we initiated a process of demographic and ethnic survey, territorial and resource evaluation, and consultation and political mobilization of the "tribal peoples" of the Amazon (Varese 2004: 5).

The human resource provided by the revolutionary government played a key role in the organization of the Shipibo-Konibo people as they became the focal points of networking by the community and its leaders. This SINAMOS network, for instance, was used as conduit to the higher offices of the government when local officials were paying no

attention to their needs and requests. On this an ex-SINAMOS leader explained "during that time, if a low ranking official did not pay attention to us, we would go directly to Lima and our issues were given priority" (Personal Interview, Milton Silva, 2006). Moreover, the information and knowledge provided by SINAMOS studies empowered them to have not only legal arguments for their case, but also quantitative and scientific bases to their rights. In short, the government gave them the opportunity to mobilize by granting them the Law. For once the central government did not repress them; rather, the goal of the government was to bring social justice and *reinvidicar* all people.

In the long-run, however, this 'top-down social mobilization' of the Shipibo-Konibo was not sustainable because it depended on the government, and the government was replaced by a right-wing dictatorship in 1975. In fact, the new government reversed many of the progressive laws promulgated by Velasco's revolutionary regime. So again I conclude that the SINAMOS-based organizing process of the Shipibo-Konibos was not a social movement, but rather a social mobilization. The *Ligas Agrarias* died out when the government changed and SINAMOS collapsed.

Following the SINAMOS period, I argue that the Shipibo-Konibo tried repeatedly to mobilize from the bottom-up. However, their mobilization efforts did not take off nor did they become a consolidated movement, in terms of normal social movement theory. The Shipibo-Konibo confederations were only able to mobilize for short periods, in contrast to the more enduring indigenous movements in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador. Repeated efforts to mobilize through a federation structure have faltered, for a variety of reasons, such as the lack of ownership of federations by the communities, lack

of credibility of the federations, as well as the decentralization and proliferation of district-level federations.

So why did mobilization not take off in Peru generally, and specifically among the Shipibo-Konibos, although it did in other Amazonian countries? Under the federations, the Shipibo-Konibo people still had common discontents and grievances about how the dominant society and the government were treating them. They still had a common ideology and belief that the government should treat them as any other Peruvian and there should be no discrimination. The difference must lie in the other factors.

In terms of resources to mobilize, with FECONAU and other decentralized federations, resources for organizing grew scarce. There continued to be a lack of community support for provisioning the mobilization, and eventually NGO funding ran out as well. Without a strong base, the leaders were unable to secure the resources needed to sustain their organizing efforts, and they fell into dependency. The communities had the capacity to provide those resources I believe, but they chose not to.

Moreover, I concur with other analysts that during the civil war in Peru, from 1980 to 1993, it was impossible for social movements to emerge given the institutional and political constraints from the civil dictatorship of Fujimori. There was simply no political opportunity for social movements to emerge and consolidate, especially movements for *reinvidicación*. In 2003, the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (CVR) found that 75 percent of the victims of the 13 years civil war were indigenous people (www.cverdad.org.pe). The Shipibo-Konibo communities also suffered from the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA) and *Sendero Luminoso* (SL). Many young people were forced to join them and were killed in

confrontation with the Peruvian Army. The government of Fujimori often declared

Toques de Queda (states of siege; temporary suspension of constitutional rights such as

the right to meet publicly) in areas where guerrillas' presence where strong such as

Ucayali, Huanuco, Junin, and Ayacucho. Other indigenous peoples in the greater

Amazon region, including those with successful movements, did not have this political

climate. I conclude that political violence in Peru is part of the reason why indigenous

mobilizations did not consolidate.

While identity has been a key element in social movement formation in countries

such as Bolivia and Ecuador, Shipibo-Konibo identity has been diminishing due to

absorption by national culture and state. Today, they want to interact with outsiders

within a framework of mutual respect or what I call "politics of interaction," rather than

promoting parallel societies. "Politics of interaction" is a term I use when indigenous

peoples have access to state power and resources on an equal basis; in contrast, "identity

politics" refers to situations where indigenous peoples use their indigenous identity as an

emblem to demand state recognition of their rights through local, national marches and

road blockades (This will be discussed further in chapter 5).

During my interviews with the Shipibo-Konibo *dirigentes*, I found that they used

the terms "social mobilization" and "social movement" to mean the same thing. This

apparent interchangeability of concepts seems to me indicative of the weak conceptual

foundations of their quest for being respected and included in Peruvian society. They

generally use the term "indigenous movement" in reference to the local indigenous party

called MIAP (*Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia Peruana*). On the one hand, this is

understandable, since in the Peruvian context, the term *movimiento* only has a political

party connotation. During the decade of the 1990s (during Fujomori's civil dictatorship), many new political parties emerged with the term *movimiento*, such as *Movimiento Cambio 90*, and *Moviento Regional de Ucayali,* etc.

On the other hand, the implied confusion of terms is also a constraining factor in strengthening Shipibo-Konibo indigenous mobilization. Lacking the distinction, indigenous leaders do not fully articulate their political/organizational objectives. The period of organizing through federations from 1979 to 2006—the "bottom up social mobilization" phase—lacked concrete effectiveness and regional or national visibility. As pointed out earlier, this is because the grass root native communities do not own the process and the struggles are mainly conducted by the *dirigentes*. Shipibo-Konibo and national Amazonian *dirigentes* pride themselves in stating that unlike their Ecuadorian and Bolivian counterparts, they do not block the roads or participate in massive marches to demand a change from the government. Rather, they fight with national governments through proposals, either in national laws or regulations.

In sum, my research reveals a key reason why there is not a strong and sustained Amazonian social movement among the Shipibo-Konibo. There is a conceptual and physical divorce between local, regional, and national federations and native community members. These federations exist to represent native communities with the understanding that the people have given the federations the power to speak on their behalf. However, most community members do not even know the name of their local federations, much less their national organizations. Hence, the Amazonian national organizations were not able to lead a concerted social movement supported by their bases so as to have a major impact on national policies.

CHAPTER 4

THE SHIPIBO-KONIBO IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT:
THE PARADOX OF POWER

In chapter 3, I argued that Shipibo-Konibo's identity has been weakened by different forces acting over time, especially as they have affected young people, and that this weakening explains, in part, why they did not advance from mobilization to genuine movement in pursuit of political goals. I also showed that after the top-down social mobilization initiated by SINAMOS reached its dead end, the Shipibo-Konibos organized themselves as a bottom-up social mobilization. But even this bottom-up mobilization did not convert into a bona fide social movement. Against this background, the current chapter examines the new political process of Shipibo-Konibos—namely, their participation in municipal elections. It also analyzes the positive and negative effects of municipal power, looking for similarities and differences in how the processes unfolded in different municipalities. Finally, it discusses the cultural and socio-economic implications of attaining municipal power.

ON REACHING POWER AND ITS EFFECTS

In this section, I argue that the euphoria that the Shipibo-Konibo people felt once they took municipal power slowly wound down as internal dynamics began to change in their communities and the expectations of the people were not met. I also show that the attainment of municipal power by the Shipibo-Konibos in the districts of Iparia and Tahuania, and to a lesser extent in Padre Marquez, divided and created antagonism among close family members. The net result of this political process has been the

breakdown of Shipibo-Konibo kinship and alliance through political party membership.

In this section, I will discuss the similarities and differences of these dynamics in each

municipal district.

District of Iparia

> *Election and Political Schism*

The political and educational situation during the 1980s was completely different from

today. Shipibo-Konibos were less university educated, less experienced in political

matters, and the federations had not yet decentralized. All this changed in 1989. Gabino

Muñoz Rengifo from the community of Colonia del Caco, a teacher, a former Peruvian

Marine, and a university student, decided to run for the mayorship of Iparia through the

Izquierda Unida (IU) party. He said he "felt the need of people, and wanted to be rid of

the humiliation and exploitation of his people by meztizo patrones" (Personal Interviews,

Gabino Muñoz, 2003; Salomon Franco, 2006). As a university student, he learned

different types of ideologies, and he felt that the IU party was closest to his beliefs. He

adamantly rejected "the exploitation of man by man;" thus, he chose to fight against the

right-wing ideology that promoted exploitative capitalism. Furthermore, he wanted to end

the misery of the social condition in which he saw his people (Personal Interview, Gabino

Muñoz, 2003). When he decided to run, there was no federation support, only the

individual backing of his fellow indigenous people, nor there was a nominating process;

that is, the Shipibo-Konibos had not collectively preselected him to be their candidate. He

was pioneering in the political field through a national party.

The District of Iparia was created in 1943 and has 57 communities and three

ethnic groups: Shipibo-Konibo, Ashaninka and mestizo. The Shipibo-Konibos are the

majority in the district. Since 1943, mayors have either been appointed or elected as procedures within the Peruvian political system changed historically. Gabino competed against the incumbent Hecer Cardenas Gonzales (a *mestizo* member of the ruling party APRA). He had cleverly recruited influential Shipibo-Konibo leaders, such as Saul Rojas (ex SINAMOS employee) as his vice-mayor, and Pedro Venancino as one of the *regidores.* Thus, Gabino's decision to run was not only against *mestizo* Hecer, but also against his fellow Shipibo-Konibos. Nevertheless, he had an overwhelming victory given that Shipibo-Konibos were the majority, and he became the first indigenous mayor. His lieutenant governor or vice-mayor was his first blood cousin, Roberto Silvano Rengifo, and all of the *regidores* were *mestizo* (Personal Interviews, Roberto Silvano, 2003; Gabino Muñoz 2003; Salomon Franco, 2006).

Despite Gabino's victory in 1989, the losing mayor, Hecer Cardenas Gonzales, managed to annul the election's result through political and legal maneuvering. However, Gabino ran again in 1990 in a complementary special election (after the mayor was impeached) through *Movimiento Democratico de Izquierda* (MDI). He won again, and this time was able to take office on August 18, 1991 and governed until 1992. Gabino's government made plans to build schools, health posts, community centers, provide social assistance, and promote agricultural development through international cooperation (Personal Interview, Gabino Muñoz, 2003).

As the 1992 election approached, Gabino Muñoz talked with Elias Diaz Hoyos, also from the community of Colonia del Caco, a college educated teacher, ex director of IRDECON (*Instituto Regional de Desarrollo de Comunidades Nativas*), ex provincial *regidor* with APRA, and the grandson of the late chief Rosendo Diaz. He had agreed to

run with Gabino; however, Gabino had already had signed with ONPE (*Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales*) to run with *Movimiento Democratico de Izquierda (MDI),* while Elias was collecting signatures in the communities to form their new party. Hecer Cardenas took advantage of this internal crisis by recruiting Elias to help him campaign against Gabino, who had distanced themselves from each other by this time. The first Shipibo-Konibo political split had begun. As Elias was campaigning for the *mestizo* candidate, some community members told him, "Why, don't you run yourself rather than helping the *mestizo*" (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006). He decided to run against two *mestizos* and his fellow Shipibo, Gabino, with the party *Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia (MIAP).*

MIAP was created in 1990 with the objective to elect Shipibo-Konibo leaders to municipal power, and from there to take economic power from the *mestizo* and better distribute the resources for the native communities (Personal Interviews, Cecilio Soria 2006; Elias Diaz, 2006; Milton Silva, 2006). There has been debate about who initiated its organization. Informants recall that it was established by Shipibo-Konibo leaders at a congress at the *Instituto Superior Pedagico Bilingue* in Yarinacocha, Pucallpa, and not by an indigenous organization (Personal Interviews, Cecilio Soria, 2006; Elias Diaz, 2006). The first president was Mauro Cairuna, and vice president was Milton Silva. The initial promoters were Marcos Sanchez Sivano, Cecilio Soria, and Elias Diaz (Personal Interviews, Milton Silva 2006; Efraín Inuma, 2006; Elias Diaz, 2006).

Diaz's platform did not vary from Gabino's plans, which were to improve communities' infrastructure, execute public works, build schools and health posts, install electrification, provide social aid (especially to help patients to buy medicines), and

assist community leaders when they were in Pucallpa to do paperwork. He entered

politics through MIAP because:

> [O]ur problems are immense as indigenous people. Other people do not talk and work in our behalf, but they rather just generalize us as being part of the poor sector. Thus, we have to be actors so that we can work together in collectivity and solve our own problems (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006)

Unlike the first election of Gabino, who ran through an established national party,

now there was a mechanism for the communities to nominate and support Shipibo-

Konibo candidates. Nominating candidates is not opposed to running through an

established national party. Thus, an inter-district conference was assembled in the

community of Pachitea where the participants agreed that candidates should be

nominated for each district. Elias Diaz was nominated for Iparia, Efrain Inuma for

Tahuania, and Juan Maldonado for Padre Marquez, respectively. But there was also a

tendency by 1992 for the candidates to run with local parties – so Gabino was no longer

running on a national party platform. On November 18, 1992, Gabino lost his reelection

bid, and Elias Diaz Hoyos became the second Shipibo-Konibo mayor in Iparia and

governed from 1993 to 1995. The whole council, or *regidores*, were indigenous: Cesar

Lopez, Teofilo Rojas, Juan Esteban, and Roberto Silvano, who was from the opposition

party that supported Gabino Muñoz. On this Elias Diaz reflected:

> First he won (Gabino Muñoz), then, I won. Thereafter, when I went for reelection he won over me again. We were like this, two brothers from the same community, between our own race or people in the same District. Then, our supporters and between families hated each other, they even had physical fights among close kin, and become fierce enemies socially despite the fact our discrepancies were only ideological, not physical. Fortunately, these types of feelings are cooling down. Thus, we are politically very strong, but culturally and socially we are *rasika* (destroyed or demolished), these things are awful. However, we did not really go to the extreme as opposition. When he was elected, I was not working on *revocatoria* to kick him out, and when I was elected he respected the outcome. Lastly, he [Gabino Muñoz] told us, if you win, we are ready to assist in any way because we have experience in municipal government (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006).

The process for nominating and supporting Shipibo-Konibo candidates through MIAP did not institutionalize as more Shipibo-Konibo candidates emerged with their own ambitions. When they did not succeed in being selected as the nominee, they chose to create their own local parties or run with existing regional and national parties. This lack of respecting the established process through MIAP contributed partly to the eventual demise of MIAP; that is, the individual egocentric ambition of each candidate overrode the potential consolidation of the first indigenous party and the internal bickering had began which exacerbated throughout time.

In the election of 1995, there was a new political scenario as more Shipibo-Konibo candidates emerged, such as Celia Vasquez who ran through *Accion Popular.* Elias Diaz ran for reelection (MIAP), and Gabino Muñoz (MDI) entered the field in an attempt to recuperate his municipal seat, which he did easily, and governed until 1998. A similar scenario occurred in the election of 1998 in which more relatives entered the electoral field (See Table 2). Roberto Silvano Rengifo (Gabino Muñoz's cousin and his ex- vice-mayor) came into the picture with his recently created local party, *Movimiento de Integracion y Campecino (MINCA).*

Furthermore, Alejandro Vargas Rios (Roberto Silvano's brother-in-law) also participated through a national party called *Somos Peru,* and won comfortably, and became the third indigenous mayor in Iparia. He ran on a Christian platform and promised to restore morality at the municipality. His campaign promised among other things to assist the communities in building churches, providing social aid, and promoting agricultural projects through international cooperation (Anonymous Interview, 2006). However, his government fell apart after only a year, as his vice-mayor (Alejandro's

brother- in-law) called for *vacancia,* which is a political and legal mechanism to impeach and oust an elected authority from office. Thus, David Savedra became the 4th indigenous mayor of Iparia. David driven by his own ambition and following the advice of his mestizo advisors proceed to call for Alejandro's impeachment so he can become the mayor. This was the first case in Shipibo-Konibo culture where a trusted relative kicked out his boss and brother-in-law for political power.

Moreover, in the election of 2002, there were even more Shipibo-Konibo candidates, including Elias Diaz, Nicodemo Perez, Celia Vasquez, Juan Chavez, and Roberto Silvano. Gabino Muñoz ran again to win the municipal seat for the third time (See Table 2). However, his term was cut short when he was tragically murdered on March 14, 2004, in Pucallpa. He had publicly declared his intention to have an audience with the president of the Superior Court of Pucallpa to denounce the abuse and corruption in the municipality of Iparia by previous indigenous mayors. Gabino's vice-mayor Oscar Rios Silvano replaced him and became the 5th indigenous mayor. The investigation of Gabino's death was inconclusive regarding the "intellectual author" of the assassination (i.e., who planned it). The person who pulled the trigger and his accomplices has been captured and are in jail. They are all mestizos. Oscar Rios (the Shipibo-Konibo vice-mayor) has been arrested on charges of being one of the intellectual authors. However, it is widely known that there is a mestizo mafia in Pucallpa that provided loans to the previous mayors in Iparia at an outrageous interest rate; because Gabino Muñoz refused to pay this municipal debt, he was murdered. Gabino had filed lawsuit against this mafia at the court in Pucallpa. The loans were for election campaigns, and public works, but were misused by the previous mayors (Anonymous Interview, 2006). Given the

sensitivity of the crime, official records were not available to verify the claim by the informants as well as an inquiry abut the mestizo mafia.

Gabino's death has further divided family members and Shipibo-Konibo in general in the district of Iparia. In April of 2006, at a court hearing in Pucallpa, two Shipibo-Konibo groups gathered. One group supported Gabino's family, while the other groups supported Oscar Rios because he is accused of being part of the group that assassinated Gabino. In this process, the federation of Iparia, FECONADID has been a strong supporter of Oscar. In the words of the FECONADID president: "these *mestizos* have killed our brother Gabino and are shamelessly blaming our mayor. In our culture we do not kill for political ambition, but the *mestizos* do" (Personal Interview, Marcos Rojas, 2006). Federation leaders opened a proverbial can of worms by seeking justice for the current mayor, and thereby alienated Gabino's relatives. As Salomon Franco, (Gabino's nephew) stated: "the federation is supposed to seek justice for us, the family, but they are instead focusing on other things such as supporting the accused" (Personal Interview, Salomon Franco, 2006). This is the situation in which the Shipibo-Konibos are living 19 years after they came to power.

In sum, a lack of respect for the established political nomination process through MIAP, and the egocentric ambition of individuals proliferated candidates in Iparia, which contributed to dividing families. The division began when a close kin (first cousin, uncle, or brother in law) of the mayor decided to challenge the authority of the current mayor. As revealed by the indigenous politicians, the root cause was envy, rancor and belief that they too can become a mayor. There may have been existing issues within families that led kin to run against each other, but my focus groups did not reveal that conclusively.

The fact that certain families and communities produce more candidates is not correlated with traditional chiefly structure; there is now a modern system for electing chiefs through popular communal vote. Instead over representation is related to the fact that some individuals from some families had post-secondary education and leadership experience outside of the community such as in the Peruvian army, and student union activism. Thus, they feel also felt competent at being mayor.

Candidates also proliferate because of competition for personal aggrandizement. Underneath, this external kinship antagonism and division due to political alliances, there are traditional cultural values and social organization that produce an undercurrent. The Shipibo-Konibo value of reciprocity by leaders has been declining since the indigenous politicians are abiding by the new western legal framework; For instance, traditionally, a chief, a leader or a commoner when successful in hunting and fishing shares food with the neighbor or with the whole village when possible. This type of leadership is called *jakon joni* (a "good man"). Community members create their sense of togetherness and belonging through sharing. By this tradition, a mayor who does not meet this expectation he becomes a *jakoma joni* (a bad man or leader). Then, an educated person either from his family or other communities challenges his leadership and authority in election.

This proliferation of candidates caused by envy, rancor and ambition has also contributed to dividing family members from each side. There were headaches for many close family members who were from the same village, Colonia del Caco. The antagonism was so high that, when MINCA's headquarter was burned down in 2000, the accusation went straight to Gabinos's supporters. Similar antagonisms among family and community members were found in the villages of Vista Alegre de Iparia and Curiaca.

Close relatives would not speak to each other because they were supporting another candidate from the same family. As one member of the focus groups reflected: "See, where the power has taken us: now we hate each other even among close kin" (Focus Groups, Men, Women, 2006). In Shipibo-Konibo cultural, social and linguistic context, there is not a concept of forgiveness; consequently, there is less chance for a closure. In part, this may explain why families, relatives and community members cannot move on after the election is over. The rancor and resentment lingers in the absence of this mechanism that would allow these indigenous citizens to overcome their political alliance to a specific family member (a candidate) and reconcile the kinship. That is, there is not a valve to escape political bickering: they become imprisoned by cultural, social and linguistic walls.

In the election 2006, which took place on November 18, there were seven Shipibo-Konibo candidates (See Tables 2 & 3). Elias Diaz (APRA), Josue Faquin (MAPU), Oscar Rios (UP), Celia Vasquez (PNP), Salomon Franco (IU), Guillermo Pezo (UN), and Roberto Silvano (MINCA). There was only one *mestizo* candidate, Pedro Saldaña. Roberto Silvano won the election with 771 votes, and thus, he became the 6th indigenous mayor in Iparia (www.onpe.gob.pe).

Besides the kinship division due to proliferation of candidates, another effect of municipal power on the Shipibo-Konibos is the rise of political groups within a village, often leading to community schism by political party. This schism was more visible in the focus groups conducted in three communities of the District of Iparia, than in those conducted in Tahuania and Padre Marquez. As pointed out earlier, one only needs 2.5% of a petition or signatures from the total population to create one's own district party. For

instance, Iparia had 4,368 eligible voters in 1998, and one only needs 109 signatures to create a local party (www.onpe.gob.pe). That is why many people are tempted to create their own party rather than consolidating an existing indigenous party, which in theory may curb the proliferation of candidates that causes divisions among kin and communities. Potential candidates, after collecting the signatures, and registering at the *Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales* (ONPE), run from village to village to create a committee to support their candidacy. For instance, in Iparia, as Table 2 shows, there were four Shipibo-Konibo candidates in 1998; and in 2002, the numbers increased to six. In 2006, there were seven indigenous candidates. Consequently, there were seven committees in each of the 50 villages. This internal division often shows up in communal parties when people become drunk. There are reports that supporters of each candidate have physically attacked committee members from other candidates (Anonymous Interview, 2006).

Table 2. Result of Election: District of Iparia, 1998, 2002, 2006

Political Parties	Votes 1998	Votes 2002	Votes 2006	Ethnicity
Somos Peru	786			Shipibo-Konibo
Vamos Vecino	735			Shipibo-Konibo
Integrando Ucayali			524	Mestizo
Agrario Popular Ucayalino			119	Mestizo
L.I. Mov. Indígena de la Amazonia Peruana (MIAP)	148			Shipibo-Konibo
Ucayali Dignidad			89	Mestizo
Esfuerzos Unidos			703	Mestizo
L.I. Mov. de Integración Indígena y Campecina (MINCA)	145	457	771	Shipibo-Konibo
Movimiento Independiente Salvemos Iparia (MISI)		646		Shipibo-Konibo
Movimiento Indígena de Desarrollo de Iparia (MIDI)		310		Shipibo-Konibo
Movimiento Independiente Nueva Amazonia (MINA)		300		Shipibo-Konibo
Mov. Independiente Renacimiento Amazonico (MIRA)		174		Shipibo-Konibo
Mov. Civico Regional Todo por Ucayali		?		Shipibo-Konibo
Cambio en Ucayali		603		Mestizo
L.I Mov. Ind. Pucallpa 2000	330			Mestizo
L.I. Mov. Ind. del Pueblo y para el Pueblo	28			Mestizo
Alianza Electoral Unidad Nacional		222	163	Mestizo
Partido Peru Posible		40		Mestizo
Partido Democratico Somos Peru		35		Mestizo
Fuerza Democratica		28		Mestizo
Partido Accion Popular		21	8	Mestizo
Partido Aprista Peruano		15	479	Mestizo
Frente Regional Acuerdo Popular		6		Mestizo
Partido Nacionalista				
Subtotal of Votes	2172	2857	2856	
Votes for Shipibo-Konibo parties	1814	1887	771	
Votes for Mestizo parties	358	970	2085	
Valid Votes	2,172	2857	2856	
Blank Votes	169	125	417	
Total Null Votes	150	71	79	

Source: Jurado Nacional de Elecciones: Resultados Generales, 1998. Lima, Peru.
Note: The section on ethnicity has been added by the author for purposes of analysis. 6 parties in 1998 (4 Shipibo/ 2 Mestizo) vs. 13-14 parties in 2002 (5-6 Shipibo/ 8 Mestizo). In 2002 a Mestizo party got second largest number of votes, despite the proliferation of Mestizo parties.

Table 3: Shipibo-Konibo Candidates in the District of Iparia, 1989 – 2006

Candidates	Community Origin	Kinship	1989	1990	1992	1995	1998	1999	2002	2004	2006
Gabino Muñoz Rengifo	Colonia del Caco	R. Silvano's first blood cousin	IU Annulled	MIDI	MIDI	MIDI			MISI		
Elias Días Hoyos	Colonia del Caco	R. Silvano's distant cousin			MIAP	MIAP			x		APRA
Celia Vasquez Yui	Macaya	R. Silvano's Distant Aunt				AP					PNP
Roberto Silvano Rengifo	Colonia del Caco	G. Muñoz's first blood cousin					MINCA		MINCA		MINCA
Alejandro Vargas Rios	Colonia del Caco	R.Silvano's distant uncle					**Somos Peru**				
David Savedra	Ahuaipa educated in Caco	A. Vargas' brother-in-law & Vice Mayor						Vacates/ Installed			
Nicodemo Perez Perez	Belen-educated in Caco	R. silvano's distant cousin							x		
Juan Chavez Muñoz	Colonia del Caco	G. Muñoz's first blood cousin							x		
Oscar Rios Silvano	Macaya-educated in Caco	R. Silvano's close cousin. Gabino's Vice Mayor/ accused of murder								Installed after Gabino's death	UP
Josue Faquin	Amaqueria	R. Silvano's close cousin									MAPU
Salomon Franco Muñoz	Colonia del Caco	G. Muñoz and R. Silvano's close nephew									IU
Guillermo Pezo	Macaya-educated in Caco	R. Silvano's distant nephew									UN

IU (Izquierda Unida); MIDI (Movimiento Independiente de Izquierda); MISI (Movimiento Independiente Salvemos Iparia), MIAP (Movimiento Indígena de la Amazonia Peruana; APRA (Alianza Para la Revolución Americana); AP (Accion Popular); PNP (Partido Nacional); MINCA (Movimiento Indígena y Campesino); UP (Union Peruana..); MAPU (Movimiento Amazonico por Ucayali; UN (Unidad Nacional)

Perhaps one of the most negative effects of municipal power in Iparia in the context of *reinvidicación* is the perception that indigenous mayors do not have "real power" due to *mestizos'* dominance as treasurer or town manager. The mestizos are perceived as actually having the "real power" and they tell the mayor what to do. This was stated both by Shipibo-Konibo and *mestizos* in focus groups in three communities of Iparia. This perception arises because the mayors do not have formal training in accounting, and town administration, etc. Thus, they often have to rely on the knowledge and experience of *mestizos*. When I asked one mayor about this issue, he responded: "I want to hire indigenous people, but there are not qualified people to hire" (Personal Interview, Gabino Munoz, 2003). In Iparia, all the mayors elected are bilingual teachers and do not have enough experience in public administration, but some are savvier to navigate in the complex bureaucratic system of the state. The perception of the voters does not necessarily translate into a strong indictment against indigenous mayors because it really depends on each individual mayor. For instance, one mestizo informant stated: "All mestizo staff had a deferential attitude towards the mayor, generally people did not argue with his orders. Sometimes, he was too bossy with the mestizos and would yell at them if they did not act on his orders fast enough. He was truly in charge" (Anonymous Interview, 2006). This statement shows that the perceptions from indigenous voters are not applicable to all indigenous mayors, only some of them.

One of the tragedies of reaching municipal power in the district of Iparia is that two Shipibo-Konibo mayors have gone to jail for misuse of public funds. Alejandro Vargas, who was elected as the reformist with Christian values, was the victim of his own success because he did not have training or the experience in management. He was

charged with misuse of public funds and was jailed for several months. The second

mayor was Oscar Rios. He, too, has been accused of mismanaging state resources. Again

the mestizo political mafia[1] comes into play: organized mestizos seek potential

candidates with the possibility of winning districtal elections. These people persuade the

candidates that they want to "invest" in their campaigns, as indigenous candidates are

always short of cash. They often give in to these temptations. However, once, they have

won the elections, the political investors (who charge horrendous interest rates of 40% -

50%) return to collect on their investments (Anonymous Interview, 2006).

These political investors summon the mayor elect and tell him: "by the way, here

is John Doe #1 and #2 who are going to be your treasurer and town manager". The mayor

elect does not generally have qualified indigenous professionals to appoint for key

positions; thus, they often opt to go along with the recommendation or rather imposition

of the mestizo political investors (Anonymous Interview, 2005). Furthermore,

anonymous interviewers pointed out that these *funcionarios publicos* (treasurer or town

managers) made mayor Alejandro Vargas in Iparia sign a blank check, and the treasurer

would write whatever amount he/she wanted. According the Peruvian municipal law, the

mayors are *Titular del Pliego,* meaning they bear the ultimate legal and financial

responsibility for the municipality. If illegal financial transactions are done by public

workers, the mayor would be responsible criminally. In other words, even if he/she did

not illegally take or misuse the public funds, then he/she would go to jail. So, this is the

risk of becoming mayor, if one does not have the proper training or if one is not "street

smart." On this Elias Diaz reflects:

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[1] Given the risk involved in further inquiring about this group during the field work, I decided not to ask more questions about this topic to my informants.

A mayor is responsible for *pliego presupuestal*, taking care of state's money, and managing for its good distribution and executing [community] projects. I was there because the people trusted in me. I see two things: 1) a mayor without experience delegates his manager and treasurer because he does not want to go to jail, and they do what they please; consequently, the major does not manage the budget. 2) I [on the other hand] as mayor, controlled the state resources by registering my signature at the bank, and thus closed the door for unauthorized people to make illegal transactions. Nobody took any money without my signature. During my administration, I did not get any bank loans nor money from *usureros* (loan sharks). After I left, other mayors got many types of loans (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006).

Not all mayors succumbed to the pressures from mestizo loan sharks. In the case of Elias Diaz, his treasurer and staff were mostly indigenous, which allowed him to have the upper hand and direct the municipality according the national laws (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006). In the case of Gabino Muñoz, his own statements to me and those of other informants confirm that he did not get loans from *usureros*, only from the legitimate national banks. On several occasions, his treasurer was a mestizo, but no evidence supports the argument that he was manipulated into illegal lending.

For the Shipibo-Konibos in the district of Iparia, the use of national political parties as vehicles to participate in municipal election is logical, as that was the only way of being competitive when they first entered into municipal politics. However, as municipal laws changed, they took advantage of this opportunity by creating *Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia Peruana (MIAP)* in 1990, *Movimiento Independiente Salvemos Iparia (MISI)* in 1995, and *Movimiento de Integracion Indigena y Campecino* (MINCA) in 1998.

Among these three indigenous parties, MIAP only governed for 3 years, then its candidates lost in 1995, and 1998. Since then, nobody has ever used MIAP again. MISI is also a local party established by an indigenous person, but it is not explicitly indigenous in its acronyms or political platform, and governed only one term (Gabino in 2002). In the election of 2006, nobody used or ran under MISI. In contrast, MINCA has been

consistently presenting candidates since its creation in 1998. Its work bore fruit in the 2006 election. MINCA will govern for four years, and its future is too early to judge. The remaining indigenous candidates have used local and national parties to run, which shows that although they were indigenous, they were not promoting an indigenous agenda. Since 1980, national political parties, such as APRA, IU, Somos Peru, Vamos Vecino, and many regional and local parties have entered the District of Iparia, and contributed to creating political divisions among the Shipibo-Konibos.

However, this division is not because of the entrance of political ideologies *per se,* but rather because of personal loyalties. Put differently, the voting pattern of the Shipibo-Konibos does not follow political parties from local-to-national, but rather individual candidates, which I call personality politics. The Shipibo-Konibos who have been elected are chosen primarily because of who they are, as opposed to what party or ideology they represent. The voters vote for a candidate because he/she is Shipibo-Konibo, the type of person he/she is, and what he/she promises. However, among more informed citizens such as *dirigentes*, teachers and students, they know the ideological background of each candidate. Some candidates have pointed out that they are really interested in ideological parties, but they only use them as "vehicle or canoe to go from side to the other side of the river, so that once they reach power, they bring the indigenous agenda" (Anonymous Interview, 2006). This utilitarian approach to parties in part explains the voting pattern of the Shipibo-Konibos in Iparia.

District of Tahuania:

The First Election of an Indigenous Mayor

The district of Tahuania was created in 1943. There are 41 native communities, of which approximately 29 are Shipibo-Konibos and 12 are Ashaninkas. It is estimated that 70 percent in Tahuania are indigenous population, and 30 percent are *mestizos*, although this number could not be corroborated with official documents (Personal Interview, Efrain Inuma Torino, 2006). The first indigenous mayor was elected in 1995 and was reelected in 1999 and governed for seven years, but has not been able to maintain power since then because of internal divisions. Initially, the comparative population advantage in the district helped the Shipibo-Konibos to win municipal power.

Efraín Inuma, the first elected indigenous mayor, remarked on their initial electoral success, "we won cleanly because we are the majority, and above all because we were united" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma Torino, 2006). The process of nominating the first indigenous candidate was through a consensus, internal elections and under a federation institutional framework. Efraín Inuma was proposed and nominated by the native communities organized though *Organizacion de Desarrollo de Comunidades Nativas del Distrito de Tahuania* (ORDECONADIT), which had a congress in 1995. The congress analyzed how to take power over the municipality because the *mestizos* "[H]ave been governing us year after year and they have been the only ones as chief [of the municipality]; now, let's elect our own kind" (Personal Interview, Francisco Mangin, 2006). In the congress, people talked about how the *mestizos* mistreated them or did not help them. Thus, they decided to choose the right person for nomination. There were

three proposals, all whom were teachers (Daniel Maynas Unuma, Tomas Sanchez Rodruiguez, and Efraín Inuma Torino).

These candidates each spoke about their plans and through an internal election, Efraín Inuma was nominated to represent the indigenous people. Efraín was involved with politics since he was in high school; he had often attended APRISTA party conferences where his political aspiration took form. People took into account this type of training for his nomination and he won with 90% of the local votes in 1995. As Efraín humbly explained: "I did not grow up thinking about becoming a mayor [though he was interested in politics since he was a young man], but I thank the native communities who nominated me through ORDECONADIT" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). However, Efraín Inuma always had the idea of serving his community, because "our elders were always exploited and I wanted to defend our people" (Efraín Inuma 2006). This commitment to service and defending his people probably helped him to overcome the many difficulties that arose after his election. By this time, there was already the indigenous party, MIAP; ORDECONADIT and Efraín chose this party as a vehicle to run as a candidate.

On November 18, 1995, Efraín Inuma Torino became the first Shipibo-Konibo mayor in the district of Tahuania, and was accompanied by four indigenous and two *mestizo regidores*. Among the Shipibo-Konibos were Francisco Mangin, and among the Ashaninka was Andres Encinas. Upon receiving this news, the people expressed joy and shock, but were also scared. They thought, "we elected our mayor but now, by electing him, we are going to make the *mestizos* kill him, but the Shipibo-Konibo felt very proud" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). The mayor elect now had to fulfill the demand

of the people who elected him. Some commented, "With that man we can talk any time when there is a need because when there is a *mestizo* we can not talk directly, now we have elected our own" (Focus Groups, Men, 2006). Efraín raised a high expectation from his fellow indigenous citizens not just in terms of delivering campaign promises, but conducting himself according the cultural values of the Shipibo-Konibo.

Reelection and Political Schism

After Efraín Inuma governed the district of Tahuania for three years, he ran for reelection because the communities had asked him to go for a second term. However, the political honeymoon was over. There was a strong electoral competition from fellow Shipibo-Konibos and from the *mestizos*. He had a record now, which worked for him, but also against him. During that time, as in all politics, people gossiped and accused him of many things, from womanizing to stealing. He was also accused of serious felonies such as misuse of public funds, which Inuma rejected as charges orchestrated by *mestizos* in order to damage his administration during elections. Apparently, those accusations did not work, as he prevailed by easily winning the second term in 1998. Andres Encinas became his *teniente alcalde,* or vice mayor, and the *regidores* were Emiliano Camacho (Ashaninka), Juana Shuñaki (Ashaninka), Moises Maynas (Shipibo-Konibo), and Wicler Garcia (Shipibo-Konibo) (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

Focus groups in Tahuania, including both men and women in the communities of Betijai, Shahuaya, and Tumbuya, revealed that surrogates for mestizo candidates often came to the Shipibo-Konibos communities and told them: "*your paisano* mayor is not capable of succeeding in public administration" (Focus Groups, Men, Women, 2006). These campaigns in native communities and negative attacks may have had effects in the

second term election results (1998), as Efraín did not get the full support of his people, whereas in the election of 1995, he had an overwhelming victory. Efraín Inuma claimed that this is because "there are always people who are discontent not matter what one does or does" (Personal Interview, 2006). This decrease in support may have been due to negative campaigning as well as by the disillusion of voters who were not fully satisfied with his performance.

The consequences of the political division in the district of Tahuania are reflected in the election of 2002 (See Table 4).

The Shipibo-Konibo lost power in 2002, due to political division and bickering among themselves that dates back to the1998 election. Wilfredo Torino (Efraín's first blood cousin) associated with *Frente Indigena y Campecina* Tahuania (FINCA), had been aspiring to be mayor since 1998, and thus ran again in 2002. In 1998, Efraín asked him to withdraw his candidacy on the basis that it was Efraín's last run; then, in the next election, he would support his cousin's candidacy. Wilfredo did not accept this offer and ran with another party. He lost, while Efraín won his reelection comfortably, which is why Efraín believes his cousin has personal resentment against him.

In 2001, Efraín again approached Wilfredo and offered to support his nomination and said: "Brother, family is always family. We are different in politics, but let's work together." However, Wilfredo did not accept the offer, which further contributed to their distancing. Efraín then proposed a young man from Sempaya, Raul Zavaleta, without coordinating and consulting with the local federation. For the 2002 election, Efraín helped Raul logistically in order to prevent that municipality's return to the hands of *mestizos*. Raul Zavaleta narrowly won the election. Nevertheless, there was already a

huge resentment against Efraín by many people who did not want him to have a "surrogate administration". On this, Efraín indignantly commented, "Egoism and envy reigned in our people." In this circumstance, *mestizo* candidates sought Wilfredo's support to annul the elections result's from two voting tables, on the basis that Raul Zavaleta had brought voters from Pucallpa who were not residents of Tahuania. Wilfredo thought he could become mayor with this petition since he came in second place. However, this move was a colossal mistake, as the *mestizo* who came in third place became the mayor. The annulment of the voting table put Raul in third place and Wilfredo stayed in second place (*Jurado Nacional de Elecciones-Atalaya, Resolucion* 1, 2002).

Community members stated that this type of family bickering cost them the election; thus, they deplore the political division and kinship rupture. Focus group participants from the communities of Tumbuya, Betijai and Runuya expressed disillusionment about how municipal politics divided communities and families.

There is a desire and often an illusion, that since one of their own had become a mayor, everyone could become one. From this perspective, Efraín reflects, "So my cousin probably thought, if my cousin was able to make it, then why can't I?" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). That's how political aspiration was born. There were close and distant relatives, and people who followed and supported each candidate. However, it is recommended that there has to be a political culture where candidates can advise their followers not to badmouth each other, engage in verbal fights, or take their political passions into physical fights. In the absence of this value, personal hatred will develop (Anonymous Interview, 2006). On this topic, Efraín pointed out:

Yes, municipal politics divide our people, our closest relatives speak on our behalf, and so the families have mutual rancor; for instance, there is a community that is in my favor, and there is always a community that is against me, our closest relatives the same, there is really a political division among the indigenous people.

Many constituents, including federation leaders, accused Efraín of working very well with them in the early years, but then distancing from them. However, the distancing came from both sides, as Francisco Manjin, President of ORDECONADIT, ran as an opposition party candidate in 1998, despite the fact he was Efraín's *regidor*. By this time, Efraín had already been nominated for reelection. It is claimed that opposition candidates arose as a result of personal resentment due to unmet favors (Personal Interview, Efrain Torino, 2006).

For the 2006 election, ORDECONADIT's president personally helped Wilfredo who was charged with not valuing and reviving MIAP, but instead ran through a regional party called *Integrando Ucayali.* Consequently, MIAP has been erased from the political map of Tahuania after it ruled for seven years under Efraín Inuma. The fact that candidates are no longer using MIAP as a political vehicle implies that community members are no longer interested in their own party; there are other possibilities and options, due to the entrance of more local, regional and national political parties. Nevertheless, just like in Iparia, the Shipibo-Konibos do not generally vote for party ideology, but instead voted by personality politics; that is, if there three Shipibo-Konibos candidates, they will choose the person best fitted to meet their needs, rather than voting for an ideology.

Interestingly, unlike in Iparia where municipal candidates proliferated since 1995, there is not such a strong pattern in Tahuania. In 1998, as Table 4 shows, there were three Shipibo-Konibo candidates, whereas in Iparia there were six. Yet, Efraín was able to pull

off his reelection comfortably with 411 votes, despite competition from *Frente Indigena*

de la Region Ucayali (FIRU), and *Frente Indigena y Campecino Tahuania* (FINCA). In

the election of 2002, the Shipibo-Konibos would have easily won with 608 votes (50%

more than the mestizo who won) despite the annulment of the two voting tables;

however, as they were divided, the ostensible victory in their hands just slipped away.

Table 4. Result of Election: District of Tahuania, 1998 – 2002– 2006

Political Parties	Votes 1998	Votes 2002	Votes 2006	Ethnicity
L.I. Mov. Indígena de la Amazonia Peruana (MIAP)	441			Shipibo-Konibo
L.I. Frente Indígena y Campesino Tahuania (FINCA)	187	362		Shipibo-Konibo
L.I. Frente Indígena de la Region Ucayali (FIRU)	67			Shipibo-Konibo
Movimiento Independiente Renacimiento Amazonico (MIRA)		246		Shipibo-Konibo
Vamos Vecino	280			*Mestizo*
Somos Peru	141			Mestizo
LI. Mov. Ind. Unidos Por Tahuania	27			Mestizo
Partido Peru Posible		369	40	Mestizo
Partido Democratico Somos Peru		189		Mestizo
Partido Aprista Peruano		171	459	Mestizo
Movimiento Independiente Nueva Amazonia (MINA)		10		Mestizo
Alianza Electoral Unidad Nacional		2		Mestizo
Integrando Ucayali			466	Shipibo-Konibo
Mov. Agrario Popular Ucayalino (MAPU)			44	Shipibo-Konibo
Ucayali Dignidad			41	Mestizo
Agrupación Si Cumple			24	Mestizo
Avanza Pais			56	Mestizo
Restauración Nacional			37	Mestizo
Partido Nacionalista Peruano			216	Mestizo
Subtotal of Votes	**1143**	**1349**	**1383**	
Votes for Shipibo-Konibo parties	695	608	510	
Votes for Mestizo parties	448	741	873	
Valid Votes	1,113	1,349	1,383	
Blank Votes	34	211	664	
Total Null Votes	93	369	115	

Source: www.onpe.gob.pe

Table 5: Shipibo-Konibo Candidates in the District of Tahuania, 1995 – 2006

Candidates	Comm Origin	Kinship	1995	1998	2001	2006
Efraín Inuma Torino	Shahuaya		MIAP	MIAP		
Raul Zavaleta	Sempaya	Efraín's uncle			FINCA	
Wilfredo Torino	Shahuaya	Efraín 1st cousin		FINCA	MIRA	IU
Francisco Manjin	Shahuaya	Efraim distant uncle		FIRU		
?	?	?				MAPU

MIAP: Movimiento Indígena de la Amazonia Peruana
FINCA: Frente Indigena y Campecino Tahuania
FIRU: Frente Indigena de la Region Ucayali
IU: Integrando Ucayali
MIRA: Movimiento Independiente Renacimiento Amazonico
MAPU: Movimiento Agrario Popular de Ucayali

District of Padre Marquez:

The Election and the Take over of Municipality in Padre Marquez

The indigenous take over of municipal power in the district of Padre Marquez was not easy; it not only took elections, but also physical occupation of the municipality. The Shipibo-Konibos, in alliance with a *mestizo* village, went on strike for 21 days in 2001, because they could not evict a "corrupt" *mestizo* mayor. During this confrontation, one Shipibo-Konibo and one *mestizo* were injured by shot guns by residents of Tiruntan, who some claimed had been hired by the ousted mayor (Anonymous Interview, 2006). They brought in National Auditing Office authorities, *Defensoria del Pueblo*, the Public Prosecutor, and a Judge to investigate the ousted mayor who has been accused of misuse of public funds. Later, after these communities had taken these actions, regional and national AIDESEP helped them with legal assistance, and the local federation FECONBU *dirigentes* sympathized with them.

The Shipibo-Konibos in the District of Padre Marquez have formed two political organizations, or mini-political parties. MIRCASH (*Movimiento Indigena Regional Campecino Shipibo)* was founded in the community of Paoian in 1992, and was led by Aroldo Rojas (see Table 7). FIDU (*Fuerza Indigena Democratico de Unificado*) was also founded in Paoian, in 2000. Both MIRCASH and FIDU's objectives are to "seek the development of peoples through the system of government at the district, provincial and regional level" (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006; Juan Maldonado, 2006).

In the election of 1992, Aroldo Rojas (MIRCASH) lost the mayorship by only 30 votes, due to *mestizos'* maneuvering of the political and legal system. The vote that has been cast for Aroldo was annulled on the ground that the votes marked were no clear

enough. The election of 1995, brought a new Shipibo-Konibo candidate, Juan

Maldonado. Thus, Shipibos-Konibos' votes were divided between Juan Maldonado and

Aroldo Rojas, who are actual first cousins. Juan Maldonado was associated with MIAP

(*Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia Peruana*), and Aroldo Rojas with APRA. After

they both were defeated, they sought an alliance, and unity. They settled their differences

in a Shipibo-Konibo congress (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006).

The political amalgamation between Juan and his cousin Aroldo was evident in

2002 (See Table 6). On January 2002, Juan Maldonado became the first Shipibo-Konibo

mayor in that district, and Aroldo Rojas was elected as town council, or *regidor.* This

political victory was through UNIPOL (*Union Independiente Por Loreto*), a regional

party with which FIDU made an alliance for strategic purposes (Personal Interview,

Aroldo Rojas, 2006). The people were euphoric upon receiving the news that Juan was

elected mayor. In Juan Maldonado's words:

> It was a great time of joy and tears [emotions out of unexplainable joy of victory] because
> we had victory after three defeats and thus we begin to gain new experience. Our women,
> men, we all cried because we accomplished our goal, and things were about to change.
> Winning the municipality was not easy; we had to employ public force to get what we
> historically deserved and what corresponds to us by right. We will never forget this
> historic achievement. During this struggle, I showed my people my capacity to fight and
> for leadership. The fruit of this struggle is that I was charged with a criminal offense
> (*procesado penalmente),* I arrived at the tribunals (court), but thanks to God, I was
> absolved fully of all charges by the Superior Court of Loreto the 25th of May, 2005
> (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

FIDU is not a legally registered political party, but was created by the Shipibo-

Konibo as a *de facto* local party as a negotiating mechanism with regional parties.

However, they are in the process of institutionalizing; that is, they plan to have a formal

political philosophy, principles, and platform in order to make a political pact or

negotiate with other parties, which will enable them to send other indigenous candidates

as *regidores* provincials, and *consejeoros regionales*. These political organizations, or

parties, do not seek to absorb the indigenous federations. On this, Juan Maldonado states:

> Everybody knows that FECONBU is a federation that sees the issues of development and promotes the solution of land/territorial disputes. FIDU is mainly a political organization, but there is coordination with FECONBU (Personal Interview, 2006).

The first six months of Juan Maldonado's administration was not easy. Both by

Shipibo-Konibos and *mestizos* rejected him because they expected him to immediately

perform miracles by executing all community projects. Not only was this an

overwhelming task from a technical and financial standpoint, but his efforts were further

complicated because the losing mayor had left an administrative mess. He did not leave

any municipal documents, such as accounting books, book keeping or annual municipal

reports. This mess forced the new mayor to declare a 60-day period of administrative

reorganization in order to reinitiate the ROF (*Reglas y Operaciones Financieros*), MOF

(*Manual de Operaciones Financieros*), CAF (*Calendario de Actividades Financieros*),

and TUPA (*Tratado Unico de Proceso Administrativo*), which are the essential

administrative tools a public institution needs in order to function (Personal Interview,

Juan Maldonado 2006). The system of public investment is complex. For instance, before

a project is executed, it has to have a technical expedient, it has to be approved by a

national system of project viability; then, it goes to public auction for bidding. After all

these bureaucratic steps, the project can be executed, which takes several months

(www.mef.gob.pe).

The election of Juan Maldonado was not through an indigenous federation as was

the case in Tahuania, but rather through a local political party called FIDU. Regarding

this election, he explained:

No, I did not get any type of help from FECONBU or other federations because our downriver federation is not strong; that is why even though they wanted to help me they could not. For this type of political work [i.e., municipal campaign], we need economic resources. I did this political work with my own salary (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

This statement is corroborated by the current FECONBU president, who pointed out that Juan Maldonado reached power alone with "much suffering with the help of 10 communities without the direct support of the federation." Nevertheless, FECONBU and the mayor now coordinate in order to retain municipal power, because they are "now witnessing a lot [good] changes in both the native communities and *mestizos* caserios" (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo, 2006). Federation *dirigentes* believe that an indigenous mayor should strengthen FECONBU once he reaches municipal power. FECONBU is working well both with provincial and districtal mayors in order to strengthen the organization institutionally and financially (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo, 2006).

The municipality of Padre Marquez maintains good communication and supports FECONBU at a very small scale by providing office supplies, and food in small quantity. However, they cannot do more because "scarcity of resources and the organic law of municipalities prohibit them" (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006). The mayor's coordination with the federation now contrast with the situation in 2001, when there was no coordination between the federations and Shipibo-Konibos candidate; hence, the mayors have reached power without their institutional support. This detachment and legal constraints confirms the lack of "indigenous agenda" in municipal politics in the case of Padre Marquez; however, in the case of Tahuania, it was more explicit than in Iparia.

The political division of the Shipibo-Konibos has been exacerbated by the local *mestizos'* plan to divide and conquer. Indigenous politicians believe *mestizos* often just want to use them politically, or get their votes during election time, and then forget about them. It is claimed that the *mestizos* tell them: "you, too, are capable, and why do you only see others becoming mayor, you can become one too" (Focus Groups, Men, 2006) thereby, enticing and promoting divisionism. Besides this enticement, Shipibo-Konibo men also have their own ambition to become mayors just like in Iparia and Tahuania. Consequently, families in the communities begin to hate each other because some want their relatives to have a turn, while others help *mestizo* candidates, rather than Shipibo-Konibos (Personal Interview, Javier Macedo, 2006).

However, one of the keys in overcoming this barrier is to enter into the political field by saying *atashai* (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006). Juan Maldonado entered the municipality just to do that and consolidate indigenous peoples, but some Shipibo-Konibos do not loyally follow the vision. *Atashai* is a term used in the context of challenging oneself—for instance, "why can't I do this, or I can do this." It conveys self-reflection and inner power to make a decision to take an action. Paradoxically, some indigenous candidates use the same phrase to enter into political race that contributes in internal division as opposed to strategic cooperation. By entering into municipal politics, Shipibo-Konibo want to interact with the *mestizos* on equal terms. (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006). As Juan Maldonado explains:

> I took the *batuta* or torch for our people and *mestizo* communities, thus, we all achieved this thanks to our struggle. The political achievement was not free, blood was shed in the struggle. It showed one more time that all changes are accompanied by a negative story. I tell my people and the *mestizos* that to obtain our objectives we have to fight; now that we have the municipal government, we must ensure that it works for everybody, without distinction of race and social class (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

Table 6. Results of Elections: District of Padre Marquez   1995, 2002, 2006

Political Parties	Votes 1995[2]	Votes 1998	Votes 2002	Votes 2006	Ethnicity
MIRCASH in alliance with APRA					Shipibo-Konibo
MOV INDIGENA MIAP		296			Shipibo-Konibo
UNIPOL (FIDU)			773	1009	Shipibo-Konibo
FUERZA LORETANA				653	Mestizo
MOV. IND. MOTOR DEL DESARROLLO				2	*Mestizo*
MOV UNION REGIONALISTA MURI		3	65		*Mestizo*
VAMOS VECINOS		545			*Mestizo*
TRABAJO Y PRODUCCION		366			*Mestizo*
BLOQUE POPULAR AMAZONICO				5	*Mestizo*
FRENTE INDEPENDIENTE DE LORETO				2	*Mestizo*
ACCION POPULAR			362	536	*Mestizo*
NUEVA AMAZONIA			54		*Mestizo*
PERU POSIBLE			8		*Mestizo*
TRABAJANDO POR NUESTRA TIERRA			179		*Mestizo*
FRENTE POPULAR AGRICOLA				1	*Mestizo*
UNION POR EL PERU				19	*Mestizo*
RESTAURACION NACIONAL				65	*Mestizo*
ALIANZA UNIDAD NACIONAL			9		*Mestizo*
PARTIDO NACIONALISTA PERUANO				115	*Mestizo*
PARTIDO APRISTA PERUANO		316	542	42	*Mestizo*
Subtotal of Votes		**1526**	**1992**		
Votes for Shipibo-Konibo parties		296	773	1009	
Votes for Mestizo parties		1230	1219	1440	
Valid Votes		1526	1992	2449	
Blank Votes		46	64	96	
Total Null Votes		63	23	81	

Source: www.onpe.gob.pe

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[2] Data no available

Table 7: Shipibo-Konibo Candidates in the District of Padre Marquez, 1992 – 2006

Candidates	Comm. Origin	Kinship	1992	1995	1998	2002	2006
Aroldo Rojas	Paoian	First cousin to Maldonado	MIRCASH	APRA			
J. Maldonado	Paoian	First cousin to Rojas		MIAP	MIAP	UNIPOL FIDU	UNIPOL FIDU

APRA: Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana
FIDU: Fuerza Indigena Democratico de Unifcado
MIAP: Movimiento Indigena de la Amazonia Peruana
MIRCASH: Moviemiento Indigena Regional Campecino Shipibo
UNIPOL: Union Independiente por Loreto

Reelection and Political Schisms in Padre Marquez

The political schism that occurred in Iparia and Tahuania repeated itself in Padre

Marquez. Juan Maldonado's nephew became the vocal critic of his uncle. Juan's

supporters complained that these criticisms from the nephew and other people occurred

despite the fact that the mayor and his team were "working responsibly and there are

visible public works" (Focus Groups, Men, Women, 2005). This criticism from families

and relatives arose because of political ambitions, which often occur during election time.

On this, Juan sadly reflects:

> It was really bad and sad, I did not understand why my own nephew, the son of my sister
> and my own first cousin were going against me, why? Then, I understood it was all
> because of personal issues, but despite all these I don't hate them, I always talk with
> them. I think they realize that the deeper issue is not only to enter into municipal power,
> but continue to show that all is possible and to struggle to work in favor of the people
> **(**Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

This type of conflict arises in almost all political environments, and those of the Shipibo-

Konibo are not any different. The mayor Juan Maldonado claimed that it is hard to unite

100% of the people, but only around 90-95%, and the remaining 5% are the dissenters

who support the *mestizos*. Public projects have materialized in communities;

nevertheless, some people remain unhappy because they want personal benefits. These

people are informed about the process for making decisions to adopt projects and the

mechanism for funding in council. Yet, they seem not to be satisfied, and their

resentment is used by *mestizos* to garner support for their candidacies (Personal

Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006). Yet, Juan Maldonado is optimistic about overcoming

these differences. He reflects:

> But I personally see that we are overcoming these difficulties, and I believe there is a
> consensus. Right now, they are discussing who is going to run [for office] as
> representative of Paoian as *regidor.* All these difficulties we are overcoming with

dialogue, and we often helped them to understand. I know all my relatives are not in agreement with me. So, I tell them, do not do it for Juan Maldonado, let's do it for the administration of an indigenous government (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

Political clientelism has historically been the norm, and not the exception in Peru. In this respect, the cases of Iparia, Tahuania, and Padre Marquez are not any different. As a result, the election and the voting process are very expensive. Among the Shipibo-Konibos, people used to travel in canoes or in community boats to vote in the 1980s because they had civic responsibility. But beginning in early 1990s, candidates provide their supporters with boats and motors, so they can travel to vote for him/her. Moreover, once the voters arrive in town, the candidates also provide them with food and lodging. One voter shared a story that he witnessed in the election of 2001 in the district of Iparia, where Shipibo-Konibo and *mestizo* candidates were competing. One day, during lunch time, the candidates were providing food for their supporters, the quality of the food reflecting the amount of resources that each person had. At one end of town, the Shipibo-Konibo candidates were serving fish, and at the other end, the *mestizo* candidate was providing beef. Upon hearing this news, many Shipibo-Konibo supporters went to eat the beef. Then, later on, a Shipibo-Konibo from a *mestizo* camp said: "I am pretending to support this *mestizo* guy only because he provides free and good food" (Anonymous Interview, 2005).

The Reaction from the Mestizos in Iparia, Tahuania, and Padre Marquez

Looking back upon the political histories of Iparia, Tahuania, and Padre Marquez, it becomes clear that when Shipibo-Konibo gained power, they still did not achieve respect from the *mestizos*.   Instead, rancor and hatred generally increased when the *mestizos* lost

prestige and power. In Iparia, it is reported that when the indigenous mayor was walking in town, some *mestizos* sarcastically commented, "Here comes your mayor" (Anonymous Interview, 2005), while others, simply greeted the mayor with respect because to do otherwise would be to show lack of culture and education. On this, Saul Rojas reflected: "I think they call me Señor Alcalde out of respect despite the fact they might feel differently in their hearts" (Personal Interview, Saul Rojas, 2006). Similarly, Elias Diaz commented that the mestizos had "external courtesy" with him because he was an authority elected by democracy, and he was mayor, whether they wanted or not. Gabino Muñoz (elected three times) explained that meztizos got used to having a Shipibo-Konibo mayor and what mestizo voters wanted was to see public works being executed. Hence, it seems that the initial rejection by mestizos later turned into expectations for good performance for the district as opposed to full rejection for their ethnicity.

However, in Tahuania, the reaction from the *mestizos* was more marked. There was understandably a strong reaction when the Shipibo-Konibos took the political power in municipality for the first time. As Efraín explains:

> When I first became mayor, the *mestizos* made fun of me, [saying] that *ina* (savage) does not know anything, he is too young, and does not have a vision. There was a lot of mistrust; people thought that I was not going to do anything because of my age. Suddenly, we beat the *mestizos*. When they were in power [the office], they were sure about their reelection, but they did not take into account our determination, strengths and decision [to win the municipal office]. I was treated very badly as savage (*inakan*), but I did not respond to them at all so they can realize themselves that despite being a savage (*inashoko ikashbi*) I have education. Then, after seven years in government, we were sociologically victorious over them (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

The Shipibo-Konibos viewed this power take over as a political "big punch", as if someone physically pushed and punched a person in the chin. While others commented, "we practically took away their political and economic power. They never wanted the

inabos to govern them because they perceive us as politically ignorant" (Focus Groups, Men, 2005).

The perception of the *mestizos* began to change as the indigenous mayors began to show their *gestion* or results of their work. In the case of Tahuania, the mayor performed better than expected by executing public works, and in Padre Marquez, the mayor also exceeded expectations. However, in Iparia, opinion varies for each individual mayor. The deceased mayor, Gabino Muñoz, and Elias Diaz are mostly remembered for having done some "*obras*" in the district. On this, a former *regidor* explains, "I believe there is a huge impact in their hearts and minds, and yet they really don't want to be governed by the Shipibos" (Anonymous Interview, 2005).

Similarly, when the Shipibo-Konibo won the municipality in the district of Padre Marquez, the *mestizos* understandably did not react positively. They were in shock and awe in Tiruntan, the capital of Padre Marquez. As Juan Maldonado explained:

> The *mestizos* from Tiruntan (capital) were desperate and angry because they were always governed by a mayor who was from Tiruntan. When we took away their power, they were in a big shock, even more because we were Shipibo-Konibo people (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006). .

Not all *mestizos* felt this way; in some other *mestizos* communities, such as Roaboya Mestiza struggled together with the Shipibo-Konibos. Thus, they too rejoiced when a Shipibo-Konibo was elected mayor, and some *mestizos* communities are happy with the current administration because they did not get any help from previous *mestizo* mayors. However, Tiruntan residents were used to receiving handouts, such as food and other living expenses, financed with municipal resources. They were dependent on the municipality to take care of their personal needs (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006). On this, Juan Maldonado stated:

> Thus, when we took the power from them, all these aids were gone, and they were very desperate, but other *nahuas* [mestizos] were happy because they had not received all these municipal food hand outs. These *mestizos*, as they see the new administration, they are excited because they are seeing a bit of development, and the prospect of more development (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006).

The indigenous politicians in Padre Marquez point out that relations with *mestizos* in the district and the province of Contamana "are not very good." However, they are hopeful that things will improve as they are making inroads in politics and power (Personal Interview, Aroldo Rojas, 2006). On this, Juan Maldonado expanded: "we were marginalized as Shipibo mayors; in the beginning, I was not given all the facilities. But slowly, they are realizing that I am working responsibly, they still criticize me in the newspaper, but with less frequency" (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado 2006).

EXPECTATIONS OF SHIPIBO-KONIBO CONSTITUENTS AND THE DELIVERY OF INDIGENOUS MAYORS

When the first Shipibo-Konibo people were elected as mayors in the districts of Iparia, Tahuania, and Padre Marquez, community members saw them as economic "messiahs". They expected them to hand out goods and money to their constituents. Such expectations of the Shipibo-Konibo mayors in those districts were not fully fulfilled, of course, and some mayors were perceived as being "selfish and betrayers" (Focus Group, Women, 2006). But this perception is often due to the lack of funding plus government laws and regulations. In the district of Padre Marquez, a similar perception occurred, but as people to begin to see *obras,* or public works in their communities, these negative opinions switched to more positive commentaries.

Legal Constraints and Cultural Demand in Iparia

At the same time as the mayors are pressured culturally to be generous with money, they have no option but to be strict in observation of state regulations. The monthly budget of the municipality from Diaz's administration was around 70,000 soles from FONCOMUN *(Fondo Comunal Municipal)*, and from the *Vaso de Leche* program (Milk Program for Kids). There was no income from the municipality itself. As Diaz meticulously followed the state regulation in financial management, the *Contraloría de La Republica* (State Auditor) recognized him for showing a capacity for governing and transparency, and he also obtained the *Palmera de Oro* Certificate for good governance. On this, Elias Diaz reflects:

> By winning the election, I conquered a [political] space with the people, but to really bring a change was difficult because of norms and legal disposition, or to give more economic aid to the communities. The laws contradicted our social programs as indigenous government. The laws were made in Lima without taking into account the reality of the provinces; thus, I clung to obeying the norms of the municipal organic law and accounting norms (Personal Interview, Eliaz Diaz, 2006).

The community members do not understand that the responsibility of the mayor is to go by specific norms established by the government, and that the Municipal Council is only in charge of creating city ordinances to solve community problems, and investing in the infrastructure of the town (Personal Interview, Roberto Silvano 2003; Elias Diaz, 2006).

Legal Constraints and Cultural Demands in Tahuania

Efraín Inuma ran on the platform of helping the Shipibo-Konibo "because *mestizos* did not help them in education, health, and agriculture." By promoting those projects, they wanted to counter the abandonment and marginalization by previous *mestizo* mayors under the assumption that Shipibo-Konibos are lazy and do not have any necessities (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). However, once they reached power, just like in

Iparia, they found different legal strains and a low budget that did not allow them to do what they promised. The municipality of Tahuania received between 180,000 and 190,000 soles a month from the central government during Inuma's administration. The mayor's promises could not be fulfilled according to Shipibo-Konibo cultural norms – that is, the promise and spirit of generosity it is expected to be fulfilled. However, in the case of municipal government, there are specific guidelines for funds' disbursement. For instance, for a public project to be executed, it has to be approved by the municipal council with *expediente tecnico* (technical document) and also the council has to authorize the funds' disbursement for the project (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

State resources were invested in building schools and community communications system through ham radios. Satellite TVs were also installed in many communities in order to empower them to have news from the nation and the world. These materials were effectively wasted in the view of many, as "our people do not know how to value these items" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). Electrification projects were also promoted by giving generators to the majority of communities. The ex-mayor could not provide the exact number of projects executed or how many communities received electrification, but he stated that he fulfilled around 65% of his promises, and the difference could not be fulfilled due to economic factors such as "low budget or finances did not arrive on time" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

Legal Constraints and Cultural Demands in Padre Marquez

The municipality of Padre Marquez's monthly budget was 150,000 soles. Within this budget, the municipality built elementary schools in 17 out of 21 communities. In

addition, the eight high schools in the District were provided with musical instruments

and communication tools (amplifiers, speakers, and microphones). The instruments were

provided "so that the students and teachers can value our culture, play national hymns in

holidays and other festivities" (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado, 2006). Health is the

major problem for municipalities because the central government does not provide

funding for this type of social aid. However, efforts are being made at the municipal level

in order to assist both *mestizo* and indigenous citizens with medical care, even when this

humanitarian help is against the national spending law. As Juan Maldonado explained:

> [To] provide health care aid is against the norms of the ministry of economy and
> finances, but as authority, I have responsibilities; thus, I cannot just ignore the need of the
> people. I know that poor people include our people and *mestizos*, and they do not have
> any income. The only government institution that is closest to them is the municipality
> where they come to seek aid (Personal Interview, Juan Maldonado 2006).

In order to ameliorate the health problems, the municipality has invested in the system of

potable water (sub-ground, 85 meters of depth) with an elevated tank, and distribution at

homes, which the indigenous mayor sees as the most significant achievement of his

administration as the previous mayors did not pay attention to these needs. As a direct

result of this clean water, it is believed that there is a decrease of intestinal diseases such

as diarrhea, because community members no longer drink water from the river (Informe

Trimestral del Distrito de Padre Marquez, 2006)

The municipality of Padre Marquez under mayor Juan Maldonado is also

promoting economic development. Since 2005, the municipality has given two sawmills

to two communities, so they can process their wood. This type of economic investment is

good for the communities, because "before our people were exploited by *mestizo*

patrones who would get their timber and jaguar skins practically for nothing. For a long

and thick mahogany log they were paid 20 soles before; now with their small sawing

mill, they get 5,000 soles for the same log" (Personal Interviews, Aroldo Rojas, 2006; Juan Maldonado, 2006). The vision is that once these types of investments are launched by the municipality, both Shipibo-Konibos and *mestizos* are going to have an income that will enable them to buy medicine, and support their kids going to school.

In Padre Marquez, the mayor believes in the importance of modern communication. Hence, he has provided all communities with a ham radio communications system in order to help them communicate locally, regionally and nationally. A modern digitalized FM radio station has been established for the 21 communities, and other communities that are in the radius of the frequency. The radio station is designed to keep the communities informed about the work of local and regional authorities, as well as the President of the Republic. In addition, four internet stations are planned to be installed in four communities (Roaboya Mestiza, Tiruntan, Paoian and Alfonso Ugarte), which will be possible through satellite communication. With these modern communication systems, the mayor seeks to empower the communities to access information as well as opportunities for international communication (Personal Interviews, Aroldo Rojas, 2006; Juan Maldonado, 2006). Juan is proud of his accomplishments in his first term. As he reflected:

> My three years of administration is compared both by *mestizos* and Shipibos with ten years of *mestizo* mayors who did nothing. The people are seeing now a change. The communities now have their potable water, electricity, high schools, and elementary schools have been built, and have marching band instruments. So, when the *mestizos* see these results they are shocked. This is how the *mestizos* and Shipibo-Konibo people realize that when there is good management of the money, there are public works.

In order to legally provide social aid in terms of health care, the mayor and *regidores* discussed and adopted a resolution to help patients only in the case of emergencies. However, he is conscious of the legal implications of his politico-moral decision:

Thus, I think when I am no longer a mayor, I might have legal problems because the guidelines from the minister of economy are clear, and explicitly prohibit all types of social aid. But I do have my defense if I am facing charges on those things someday: I will tell them directly. I effectively helped my people and the *mestizos* because, as the authority, I am not going to allow a person to die; they perhaps see a number as cold law, but I see it from the sentimental aspect. Thus, before God, I am happy because God is watching how we are working, saving lives and curing the sick. I think these social programs are important even though they may be prohibited by laws.

Traditionally, the Shipibo-Konibos have practiced reciprocal exchange. If a stranger visits a community, there was a cultural obligation to give him/her hospitality. So, if someone passes through his/her village, he/she may have the same treatment. It is culturally acceptable also, if they need something, to ask or trade. It is from this cultural context that the Shipibo-Konibo generosity emerges. The Shipibo-Konibo people come to the mayor to ask for a sole, 10 soles or 100 soles. Regular district citizens come to ask for money to buy medicine for the sick children. Some come to ask him to pay for hospital bills. Some come to ask to be the *padrinos* (godfather or sponsor events) and pay for birthday parties. The local authorities, when they are in Pucallpa, come and express their problems to the mayor requiring him to provide food and lodging, and fuel to return to their communities (Personal Interviews, Juan Maldonado, 2006; Roberto Silvano, 2003; Elias Diaz, 2006).

When all these innumerable requests are not fulfilled, the community members began to badmouth the mayor:

[T]he mayor is "*sobrado*" [arrogant], he does not care about us even though he became mayor with our votes. They come to us and tell us how they want our votes, but once they are elected, they don't want to do anything with us. When we request something, he always tell us, "there is no money", "I don't have money", or "there is no budget for that" (Focus Group, Men, 2006).

To be a mayor among the Shipibo-Konibo is thus to break the cultural norms of reciprocity. That is, the Shipibo-Konibo voters gave their votes to the Shipibo-Konibo

candidates; once they are elected, the indigenous mayors are culturally obliged to return the favors, meaning if the constituents are in financial need, the mayor is supposed to meet these needs. If this cultural contract is broken, then one is a cultural outcast. One immediately is seen as a bad and stingy person. This is what the Shipibo-Konibo mayors have become in the eyes of their Shipibo-Konibo communities. So, what do the indigenous mayors do in this cultural conundrum?

The political power obtained by an indigenous mayor comes with immense moral and cultural commitment, as the people who elect him have vast and diverse expectations. Many Shipibo-Konibo constituents confuse the municipal government and their cultural expectation of the mayor to be generous. A municipal government is a political division of the state, and the mayor manages only state resources. The role of the mayor is to make sure that public works are executed according to plans and a budget provided by the state. It is for this reason that the mayors are constrained to govern culturally. As Efraín Inuma explains:

> As mayor, I go by the *Ley Organica de Municipalidades;* we cannot do what we see fit. I thought that we do what is right for the people, but it is not like that. We have to respect the laws because in there we are told to do only public works with the funds from canon [petroleum royalties] and funds for municipal compensation. For instance, 80% of this fund is for public works, and 20 percent is for the current account with which we pay our staff and other social aid for the communities. We have to execute public works. If we don't fulfill those works, then we are seen as a bad administration (*mala gestion*) (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

Under these legal constraints, the mayor often has to choose between the municipal laws and their human commitment to help their people who have elected them. The Shipibo-Konibo choose their mayor not only because they are obliged by law to vote, but also because they see their fellow Shipibo-Konibo mayoral candidate as their hope to help them in their personal needs. Hence, their resentment when those needs are

not met. This was a challenge for all the mayors, because on one hand, there were huge demand from the populations, and on the other hand, their hands were tied by the *Ley Organica Municipal.*

There was a huge gap between what the mayor could do legally according to municipal law and what the communities wanted. Often, the community members suggested that the mayor do certain projects for their communities and families, but they were not legally viable, although they were culturally acceptable. The failure to meet these demands resulted in people's mistrust and they complained that the mayor just does not have the will to serve his people. For instance, "I could give a man a motor to work with, that is good as social aid, but the law does not say to give that type of help" (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006). If a mayor is providing this type of social aid, he is legally committing a misuse of public funds, punishable by several years in prison. Often, people think that misuse of public funds is stealing or using the money for personal enrichment; however, misuse of funds is not only stealing, it is also using the money for things or areas that were not meant to be used. When the people see that the mayors are not meeting these expectations; then, they say: "This man that we elected is selfish. The things that we asked or requested, he does not fulfill, he does not give us what we asked" (Anonymous Interview, 2006). On this criticism, Efraín Inuma responded:

> Generally our people are used to asking for cash – "help me with 50, or 100 soles or 500 soles." I gave voluntarily from my own pocket, and many times I have given that type of help, then people believe "ah, the municipality has helped me." For the government, no matter if you give one sole (of government money) to a person, then you are committing misuse of public funds (Personal Interview, Efraín Inuma, 2006).

Community members have these expectations of their mayor because they do not know the laws and regulations about how municipalities are run. They just have their needs and

have one of their own being powerful, having been elected mayor. Indigenous politicians

charge, "our people sometimes do not think about working hard and only want some

money from somebody, that's why, they say, let's elect him as the mayor, so he can give

us money" (Anonymous Interview, 2006). Thus, when mayors do not give the people

money, or do not give them jobs, they become resentful. On this, Efraín states: "I think

that the population has to have some understanding of the mayor's situation; often,

because of these types of requests, the people make their mayors commit felonies"

(Efraín Inuma, Personal Interview, 2006).

SIGNIFICANCE OF REACHING MUNICIPAL POWER: CULTURAL REVIVAL/POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT VS. SELF INTEREST POLITICS

In conclusion, let me summarize the lessons of Chapter 4. First, the Shipibo-Konibo

people, who had been known pejoratively as *cumpas* or *chamas* by local *mestizos*,

became *Señores Alcaldes* during the decade of the 1990s. Just as depreciative names had

cultural, social and political meaning, so does calling them *Señor Alcalde* have

tremendous socio-political meaning. Titles are not only important in Peru, but required

for a person to be 'somebody' in a society. It is in this hierarchical society that Shipibo-

Konibos emerged as politicians and *Señores Alcaldes.*

In 1990, the Shipibo-Konibos made history in the district of Iparia when Gabino

Muñoz Rengifo was elected for the first time as mayor. The statistical chance for him to

win was high since the Shipibo-Konibos were the majority. The same path was followed

by Efraín Inuma Torino who was elected mayor, in 1995, in the district of Tahuania, and

most recently Juan Maldonado Urquia was elected for the first time, in 2002. Both

Gabino Muñoz and Efraín Inuma and subsequent mayors are trained bilingual educators,

while Juan Maldonado is trained in administration. All the indigenous politicians, mayors, vice-mayors, and city councilmen stated that they entered into municipal politics in order to seek cultural and political *reinvidicación* of the Shipibo-Konibo, and show the *mestizos* their capacity to govern. The *mestizos* have historically considered the former as ignorant savages; thus, one of the ways of showing them that they, too, were intelligent and capable of governing a district was by entering into districtal government (Personal Interviews, Gabino Muñoz 2003, Elias Diaz, 2006; Juan Maldonado, 2006; Efraín Inuma, 2006).

This historic election of Shipibo-Konibos as mayors in Iparia, Tahuania, and Padre Marquez sent shock waves through the *mestizos*. On one hand, a mestizo explained: "we knew that someday they [the Shipibo-Konibos] will govern us, but we did not know it was that soon. Many of my *paisanos* [fellow mestizos] could not accept a native mayor, but as the time passed we become used to it". On the other hand, many indigenous community members described this event as:

> We were full of joy, happiness, we cried when ONPE declared that of our own was declared the winner. We did not know how to celebrate. We felt like we uncrowned and dethroned the *mestizos* who ruled for many years (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2006).

This "un-crowning or dethroning" of the *mestizos* had several cultural, social and political implications. The majority of focus groups participants, if not all, expressed that they believed the first time they took power from the *mestizos* was a moment of cultural *reinvidicación*. Here, as pointed out in chapter 3, although there is a considerable distance between the community members and the indigenous politicians, it is clear that the message and the meaning of reaching municipal power is the same. From this

perspective, uncrowning and dethroning the *mestizos* meant getting up from having been *pisoteado, or* stepped on, for a long time.

The claim by indigenous mayors that they entered into municipal government to "show" the *mestizos* that they too are capable of governing reflects the low self-esteem that they had for a long time. From this perspective, the *revindicación* means taking their honor as distinct people and equal to *mestizos*. In this sense, they were disentangling their forced identity as *cumpa* or *chama,* and becoming Shipibo-Konibo or *joninko* (true people). This process of regaining their *joninko* identity implies both rejection of the stereotypes from *mestizos*, and appropriating their own identity; that is, when they became *Señores Alcaldes,* they were *reinvindicando* their identity. However, it was not achieved through identity politics, that is, indigenous candidates did not campaign as Shipibo-Konibo; they did not use ethnic attire or other *maquillaje de identidad* identity "makeup". This was because the Shipibo-Konibos are the majority, and to campaign using symbols of their identity would have been awkward.

The campaigning of Gabino Muños was based on the ideology of the left, while that of Efraín Inuma, Elias Diaz and Juan Maldonado was rooted in political pragmatism, that is, to solve native communities' problems and execute *obras.* This generation of leaders rose as the product of bilingual education and relations with *mestizos*. In the case of Gabino, he went to serve in the Peruvian military, and studied nursing at the national university of Pucallpa. Efraín has a degree in education, while Juan studied administration at a local technical school, and traveled extensively as director of an indigenous NGO. The attaining of municipal power by these three leaders was a prophesy

fulfilled, since the elders had dreamed someday the new generations would replace the *mestizos* from domination (Focus Groups, Men and Women, 2006).

Despite the initial euphoria and seeing the municipal take over as cultural and political empowerment, now the local people see indigenous people in government as self-interested politicians – specifically, the mayoral candidates are seen as political opportunists (Focus Groups, Men, and Women, 2006). This is more marked in the district of Iparia, where the Shipibo-Konibos have been governing for 19 years but also have an arguably worse record. The opinion of the three communities in that district (Colonia del Caco, Utucuro, and Vista Alegre de Iparia) was consistent. The first mayor was highly rated; then, opinion decreases dramatically until 2006, as Table 7 shows.

Table 8. Opinion of Focus Groups about indigenous mayors in Iparia: Colonia del Caco, Utucuro, and Vista Alegre de Iparia.

MAYORS	ACCEPTANCE	PERFORMANCE	YEARS IN GOVERNMENT
Gabino Munoz	A	1	4 1/2
Elias Diaz	B	2	3
Alejandro Vargas	C	4	2
David Saavedra	C	4	1
Oscar Rios	C	2	2004-current=3 years

Opinion on acceptance (A): High; (B) Medium; (C) Low; (1); Opinion on job performance: (1) More *Obras*; (2) *Obras*; (3) Little *Obras*; (4) Little *Obras* or None

Put differently, there has been a rapid loss of hope from the Shipibo-Konibo constituents about their own mayors. The focus groups in the three aforementioned communities named the best mayor Gabino Muñoz, and the second best Elias Diaz, according to the result of their administration. The mayors who were perceived to have brought shame to Shipibo-Konibos are Alejandro Vargas, and David Savedra. On the matter of *reinvidicación*, Elias Diaz reflects:

Logically, it was a matter of *reinvidicacion* for us the indigenous people, but later the hope of the indigenous people and the trust they had in their brother [mayors] got lost when the ruler [mayors] did not give them social aid. They care less about the building of public works: what our people want is direct help each one, above all they want money and other types of aid. Thus, we help them with 10, 20, 30 soles, but they wanted more of these types of aid, and wanted less in infrastructure. There needs to be a correction and consciousness building among our people. Because I gave direct aid, I was punished for more than 10 years; that was my political cost. I wanted to be mayor again, but I did not get their trust. All because I did not give them social aid, or sometimes they want alcohol. We want things easily, we fall into paternalism. Now I have to think what kind of alternative [social development] I have to provide. I recognize in the politics I failed, my people did not give another opportunity, but I did not have resentment, I tolerated it. I never talked bad about the people, as I like politics. I just keep moving (Personal Interview, Elias Diaz, 2006).

My 27 focus groups in nine Shipibo-Konibos communities in the districts of Iparia, Tahuania and Padre Marquez reveal how the reach of municipal power by the Shipibo-Konibo is paradoxical. On one hand, it symbolizes the 'take over' of power from the *mestizos*; hence, *reinvidicación;* on the other hand, it is counter-productive because it has divided families and communities due to ideology or preferences of mayoral candidates.

On the subject of indigenous political participation and governance, the focus groups reveal that *la toma del poder* at the municipal level has brought disillusion to the Shipibo-Konibo people due to 'poor performance' and few economic benefits in the district of Iparia and Tahuania, and better results in the district of Padre Marquez. Put differently, in some cases, the longer the power is in the hands of the Shipibo-Konibo mayors, the more chance there is to become 'inefficient and 'corrupt; thereby, 'betraying' the people who elected them. However, a mayor with personal ability and administration training such as Juan Maldonado can better manage to navigate in the world of gift economy. Gabino Muñoz also, who was elected three times, understood how to handle cultural demand and abide by national laws simultaneously; thus, he received the respect from his constituents. Nevertheless, the Shipibo-Konibo mayors hands are tied because

they cannot use the traditional customs to govern, but abide by national municipal laws – hence their being perceived as 'selfish' and 'bad mayors' (Focus Groups, Men, Women, 2005).

The Shipibo-Konibo's rise to municipal power and the significance of attaining municipal level of government is due to the change of national political regime and progressive local electoral laws, and only secondarily to the strength of indigenous organizations or indigenous social movement. In other words, it seems that "*toma del poder municipal"* is an isolated event, not a part of a conscious, organized, social movement seeking self-determination as illustrated by Amazon national federations. This conclusion is fully evident in the District of Iparia when Gabino Munoz was elected under *Izquierda Unida*, without the support of the local federations. Similarly, the subsequent mayors were elected with either local or national parties, except Elias Diaz who was elected under MIAP. Furthermore, my data point out that, with some variation, access to and holding of municipal power in these locations (Padre Marquez, Iparia) is seen as 'an indigenous mayor with *mestizos* workers,' hence not an 'indigenous government.' On this, the mayor Juan Maldonado agreed that his municipality is not necessarily an indigenous government. While in Tahuania, the seven years of government by Efraín Inuma in Tahuania under MIAP was seen as indigenous government because most of the workers were indigenous people.

From this perspective, then, for the Shipibo-Konibos, an indigenous government means that the mayor, the council members, the municipal administrators, and the general staff are all Shipibo-Konibo, with perhaps some *mestizo* workers. But perhaps this is too much to ask of a mayor, that is, to solely govern for the native people and to

institutionally marginalize the *mestizo* minority. Strategically, indigenous mayors have often included *mestizos* in their staff and have reserved one or two council seats for *mestizos* as well. All mayors who have been interviewed commented that when they are elected mayor, they are elected to be the mayor for the whole district not just for the native people. Hence, they try to be equitable in programming public works in native communities and *caserios* (*mestizo* villages).

Another conclusion in this chapter is that there is a repeating pattern in all districts where kinship and the gift economy have either made it difficult for Shipibo-Konibos mayors to govern or have contributed to their downfall in various ways with accusations of corruption. This tension has led to a divisive pattern where Shipibo-Konibo candidates have proliferated with especial interest, where kin have run against kin, dividing families and communities. This has brought a loss of power in Tahuania, but in the case of Iparia, the Shipibo-Konibos continue to be a majority, which gives them the luxury to keep diving votes and still win with small margins every election.

The underlying cultural pattern seems to be a product of internal and external issues. Regarding internal issues, there is often envy, bitterness and lack of a spirit of forgiveness. For sure, envy and bitterness are ubiquitous in all human beings, but not having the word "forgiveness" in their language may complicate the matter further, not allowing people to move on after the election. With regard to the latter (the external), the demands of a gift economy are most intense among close kin, who expect a mayor related to them to be more generous. However, the mayors are unable to meet these demands leading some to feel personally neglected and disillusioned. The mayors are overstretched

as they help their immediate family, relatives and everybody from their districts that come to seek their help.

Moreover, the fact that some candidates tend to come from particular families does not correlate with traditional leadership structure because there is a new way of electing leaders at the community. Traditionally, community authorities were chosen through a process of nominations and proclamation. In contrast, mayors are self nominated in most cases and voted by all citizens from the same electoral district. In the new context, a mayor brings monetary benefit as well as status; thus a close kin feels that he/she too can benefit his/her families in ways that their cousins/ brothers-in-laws did not. The status is self-evident, the candidates want to become a *Senor Alcalde*; thus get the respect from his fellow indigenous citizens as well as from the *mestizos* and in the process attain material and economic benefits.

With regard to mayors' performance in their respective administrations, while the pressures are similar in all three districts, the pattern varies among the districts, and over time. Some mayors' good results are related to the types of leadership and personality they hold, to their training in administration, if any, and to their skills to deal with the demand of the people. For instance, in the case of Madre Marquez compared to most mayors in Iparia and Tahuania, the mayor had training in administration, and followed procedures, while balancing the gift economy with the state-imposed municipal system. In Iparia, earlier mayors are rated higher than later ones in part because they were better able to navigate the tensions between government regulations, cultural norms of reciprocity and gift economy.

Finally, the relationship of Shipibo-Konibos mayors with *mestizos* varies from each district, but there is one common pattern—they call them *Señor Alcalde* regardless what they might be feeling inside. *Mestizo* candidates' surrogates have contributed to divisiveness in the Shipibo-Konibo communities, resulting in the proliferation of candidates. Moreover, *mestizo* voters are not uniform in their reaction to indigenous mayors: some have received more benefit than from *mestizo* mayors. Making a further inquiry on the matter of the *mestizo* mafia was delicate; thus, I am not certain that the *mestizo* candidates from the districts are members of that "mafia." Nevertheless, in Iparia, the powerful *mestizos* are well to do individuals from Pucallpa who allegedly made their profits from illegal business. They are now presumed to be financially supporting indigenous candidates with potential to win to use them in order to empty it out the last remaining municipality's limited resources.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I began this study by placing issues of indigenous rights in an international context. I pointed out that, since the 1990s, indigenous social movements surged locally, nationally, and internationally, aided by human rights and environmental NGOs. This movement triggered constitutional changes that recognized the multiethnic and multicultural nature of many states in Latin America. The umbrella of this worldwide movement centers on the quest to be recognized as peoples with the right for self-determination.

To analyze this socio-political phenomenon in Latin America, scholars, almost by consensus, have used social movement theory and identity politics as a means of explaining its strength and impact in respective countries. However, Peru is an exception to this general trend and there the story differs immensely. Scholars have consistently argued that Peru's indigenous social movement is either "non-existent" or "too weak" unlike their Bolivian, Colombian and Ecuadorian counterparts (Remy 1995; Van Cott 2005; Mayberry-Lewis 2002; Yashar 1998, etc). The arguments previously presented by scholars to explain Peru's exceptionalism revolve around three historical facts: (1) Velasco's promotion of corporativist citizenship (2); 10-years of civil war; and (3) activism by acculturated "indigenous *mestizos"* does not qualify as an ethnic movement.

However, recent waves of scholars argue differently, such as De la Cadena (2003), who posits that political activism of such indigenous *mestizos* must be seen as a part of a social movement. From this perspective, conventional social movement theory does not appear to track different variables that are at play in the indigenous movement of Peru, leading scholars to wrong conclusions. Similarly, Garcia and Lucero (2004) have

pointed out that Peru's indigenous movement exists and it is converging and diverging locally, regionally, and transnationally. This movement can be seen in the rise of such indigenous organizations as CONACAMI, AIDESEP, CONAP, and the newly created COPPIP, as well as COICA. My research takes place in this scholarly debate and context, where surprisingly, little or no scholarly inquiry has been conducted about the political participation of local-level Amazonian indigenous people in Peru. I undertook my research in the regions of Ucayali and Loreto in the districts of Iparia, Tahuania and Padre Marquez in part to fill this gap.

In my research, I sought to answer four major questions: (1) What does the Shipibo-Konibo's participation in municipal government tell us about Peru's indigenous social movement, their demand for self-determination, and their overall relationship with the state? (2)What was the motivation for Shipibo-Konibo participation in municipal elections, and under what agenda did they rise to power? (3) How successful or unsuccessful have their experiences in "self-government" been politically, economically, socially and culturally?; (4) How does the Shipibo-Konibo's municipal political participation affect their already existing local and regional indigenous organizations and their movements?

Chapter 2 presented a short ethnographic sketch of the Shipibo-Konibo people. First, I described their inter-ethnic relations, encounter with the European missionaries, later on with Protestants missions, and how each one impacted their livelihoods. I also described their trials as they became entities or commodities in the market themselves, and suffered slavery during the rubber boom. Chapter 2 argued that the Shipibo-Konibos have been co-opted by the state; that is, they are under the state's politico-legal system

during the conquest. They first resisted the Jesuits and Franciscans through military confrontations, and they often succeeded in their battles. However, later they were put into *reducciones* as they became defeated or *derrotado*, thereby, surrendering themselves to the missionaries who offered them iron tools, which were much needed and appreciated.

During the republican period or after Peru's independence, indigenous peoples were politically excluded for 154 years. Finally, in 1975, they were included in the Peruvian legal system as they become entities with legal personality under the umbrella of native communities. They also became *de jure* citizens with nominal rights as Peruvians. I argued that this process of recognition paradoxically co-opted them into becoming fragmented societies without their traditional territories, and without sovereignty over their natural resources.

Secondly, I posited that the Shipibo-Konibo people are socially, culturally, geographically, and institutionally co-opted by the national culture. They are made invisible in the process of national mapping as native communities that are divided among districts, provinces, and departments. They no longer have traditional authorities, as they are replaced by the authorities imposed by the state; yet the Shipibo-Konibos are not collectively resisting the state's co-optation. Moreover, their *ashë* or culture as the framework for who they are as distinct people is being diluted. On the one hand, this is both the direct and indirect result of the xenophobia that exists against them; on the other hand, they are specifically choosing this path as the young people are shedding their identity, as they try to fit into the majority society. Moreover, I posited that this co-optation goes beyond fragmentation as distinct people, but it also goes to the most

intimate areas of their identity, such as, being required to have a Spanish name, and to have paternal and maternal last names. Finally, this chapter concludes that the Shipibo-Konibo people cannot have a strong and coordinated social movement because of this politico-legal and socio-cultural co-optation – that is, they are so ingrained or entangled in the Peruvian system, as the anaconda entangles its prey, which does not let it go.

Chapter 3 looked at the rise of the Shipibo-Konibo as new political actors in the midst of ethnic hostilities. I posited that the Shipibo-Konibo identity forms from within their world vision and historical trajectory, as well as from outside influences in a top-down process. That is, their identity is formed by the external description of the majority *mestizos*, who give them pejorative names such as *chama,* and *cumpas* that describe their inferiority vis-à-vis the *mestizos*. While Shipibo-Konibo reject those appellatives, they still internalize the sense of inferiority, which is manifest in their behavior, especially among young people. Federations and native communities are not institutionally working to make their self-identity stand, such as *jonikon* and Shipibo-Konibo besides physically attacking the *mestizos* on some occasions.

As shown in Chapter 3, my data revealed that their identity varies in each social group (young people, men, and women). Young people are becoming voluntary *amestizado*, by not speaking their language, ignoring their parents on the street, and not learning the traditional technology. Both Shipibo-Konibo men and women asserted that the young people are eroding their culture (*ashë*). Men are also charged with contributing to cultural erosion as they have stopped wearing traditional attire (*cushma*). They counter argued that their identity is manifested by speaking the language, and maintaining traditional know-how (canoe, arrow, bow making, etc), and that their traditional *cushma*

is too impractical. There is consensus, however, that Shipibo-Konibos' identity is sustained by the women, who wear the traditional clothing, speak the language, and maintain the technology (pottery making and geometrically designed painted clothing).

In sum, the Shipibo-Konibos recognize that their *ashë* or culture is eroding due to internal lack of cohesion and pride, except for the women. This is manifested by their external identity; consequently, that identity is far from uniform. Some Shipibo-Konibos have what I have called "stealth identity" – they act, wear clothing, and talk like *mestizos* when in public, while others' self-identity lies in speaking their language publicly, and wearing traditional attire. I argue that because of this identity fluctuation and lack of uniformity and strength, they were not able to maintain a strong social mobilization and movement. Hence, their relation with the state since the Velasco period has been minimal in terms of engaging the state to promote changes in behalf of the native communities.

Chapter 3 also covered the evolution of their organizations, from SINAMOS's *Ligas Agrarias* to the Federation of Native Communities - FECONAU. Velasco's inclusive social policies played a pivotal role in the early organization of the Shipibo-Konibo people, especially the promulgation of the Law of the Native Communities and its subsequent creation of *Ligas Agrarias*. These changes fueled local collective action by the communities to take the law into their own hands by evicting and confiscating products obtained from the villages by the *mestizos*. Moreover, the return of democracy to Peru in 1980 opened more political opportunities for all civil societies to form NGOs or *asociaciones gremials*. FECONAU was established in 1979 as the first ethnically based federation, which was strong and powerful initially, as it was supported by indigenous communities. However, as funds stopped flowing due to mismanagement and

misuse, its influence and power also diminished. In the early 1990s, FECONAU began to decentralize, which resulted in the creation of five federations. However, they weakened rather than strengthened, as they competed against each other for resources and influence.

As a result, many federations existed only in name for few years, until a new wave of *dirigentes* emerged in FECONBU, ORDECONADIT, FECONADI, and ORDIM who have helped to recreate these moribund organizations. Despite these efforts, the federations are still weak, because their constituents do not respect them; they are mistrusted on the basis that the *dirigentes* misuse the money that comes in the communities' name. Conversely, the elected *dirigentes* argue that they do not have financial support from native communities, and national or international NGOs. Thus, they are always in a constant financial crisis. They do admit, however, that some local research NGOs give them small grants for workshops and meetings in the communities. Despite these financial constraints, they seem committed to advance the agenda of the communities to the best of their abilities.

During the Shipibo-Konibo organizing process, indigenous women have been institutionally marginalized from most federative organizations. To change this internal exclusion, MIAP was founded to work for the rights of indigenous women and contribute to indigenous social mobilization. Nevertheless, MIAP too has been plagued by financial constraints and charges of misuse of funds.

In sum, the Shipibo-Konibo's initial organization was rooted in SINAMOS, namely the *Ligas Agrarias*. I called this process a 'top-down social mobilization' because it was initiated by external forces (the state) and only carried out by the people (Shipibo-Konibo). However, this process died out after achieving its purpose, which was their first

organizational stage. The *Ligas* were followed by the so-called federation model.

Unfortunately, this second process was not sustainable, due to lack of funding,

decentralization, and mistrust from constituents. Consequently, the resulting federation

began to detach from the communities, and by default it began to divorce from its

grassroots. I call this second stage a weak and 'unconsolidated bottom up social

mobilization', due to several factors such as political violence in Peru, lack of resources,

lack of ideological, political and organizational, and identity cohesion, and an

organizational divorce from its base. All local, regional, and national federations are in

the same condition, as revealed by data collected from focus groups in this study—people

in Shipibo-Konibo villages do not recognize their federations by name and do not know

what they do.

I expected that federations would play a major role in municipal politics;

however, my data reveal that they were mostly absent, except in Tahuania. Hence,

indigenous federations as independent variables were not affected in either way because

they were already weak. This weakness permitted the rise of individual Shipibo-Konibo

leaders with their own local parties that enabled them to amalgamate the native

communities and win the election without support or resistance from indigenous

organizations. Currently, the native communities depend on the municipalities to solve

their socio-economic problems, and they are not necessarily seeking out federations, as

they do not trust them.

Chapter 4 looked at the Shipibo-Konibos in municipal government. I argued that

there is a paradox—the blessings of attaining power have often become their own curse

in the districts (although the impact varies in important ways among districts). The

common pattern found in the districts is that there is a political and kinship schism. Iparia leads the way in terms of degree of division, followed by Tahuania and Padre Marquez. In Iparia, the entrance of close relatives into mayoral elections has created antagonism among close kin and communities; while in Tahuania, the division between two related indigenous candidates divided the indigenous vote and lead to electoral loss. However, in Padre Marquez, two cousins who were political rivals put aside their differences aside and selected a sole candidate, which led them to municipal victory. Later on, the rise of kinship antagonism was well-managed politically, which led the re-election of the current mayor. In addition, the traditional kinship system and gift economy have been a major thorn in the public administration of state resources by the mayors—kin groups have challenged mayors in order to bring financial benefit to their own families. Similar conclusions have been found in the context of the Peruvian Amazonia with regard to gift economies such as the work by Richard Smith.

I also pointed out in Chapter 4 that the reasons why the Shipibo-Konibos entered into municipal politics were not uniform. The initial unity and *reinvidicativo* spirit and agenda (dethroning *mestizos* from power) changed towards pragmatism in all three districts. In Iparia, the first two elections of indigenous mayors were perceived as having the quality of *reinvidicación,* but the rest were seen as power hungry and self-serving individual politicians – that is, the longer they stay in power, the more chance there was for their spirit of *reinvidicación* to diminish. In Tahuania, the perception of electoral victory was as if they were getting up after having been suppressed; however, this too changed when the two cousins began to dispute for the same job. Hence, their *reinvidicación* politics disappeared, and personal politics emerged. In Padre Marquez,

they are still in the euphoric stage as they just won the second term. Furthermore the current mayor has successfully negotiated kinship politics to bring real benefit to the communities. The transformation from political *reinvidicación* to socio-economic *reinvidicación* was the result of the administrative talents of a mayor who provided them services that they did not have access to before, and who promoted community economic development.

The method of reaching municipal power also differs by district. Indigenous mayors in Iparia and Padre Marquez gained municipal power without the support of the federations. This means that the municipal take over was not a well organized political event in which the communities, along with their federations and political leaders, decided to launch a political collective action. There is an exception to this, in the case of Tahuania, where the federations led the way in terms of nominating the candidates and electoral victory.

In terms of performance, in Iparia, we could have expected a better outcome, due to the fact indigenous mayors have been governing there for 19 years. However, the focus groups revealed that only two indigenous administrations (those of Gabino Muñoz and Elias Diaz) were rated highly, and that the subsequent mayors diminished the reputation of the municipality and accumulated debts. This implies that the personal capacity of a mayor to negotiate kinship politics and gift economy plays a key factor in a good outcome for the communities. Two mayors have been jailed for misuse of public funds. In Tahuania, the indigenous mayor governed for seven years and, according the focus groups, performance was good in the first few years. However, as the *obras,* or public works, begin to dwindle, they began to lose faith in him. Perhaps, the most

successful district is Padre Marquez, where the mayor was very successful in sharing his accomplishments in terms of building schools, promoting economic development and improving sanitation. In all three districts, I found that the expectation of communities had not been fulfilled by the indigenous mayors due to cultural misunderstanding of municipal politics, rather than from the legal and budget-constraints perspective. This has led to disillusion because they were expecting the mayors to hand out goods and money in exchange for their votes.

Importance and Implication for Indigenous Politics in Latin America

This thesis has clear implications for indigenous politics in Latin America in four main areas. First, the thesis shows the diverse, non-monolithic nature of the greater indigenous movement in Latin America, especially in contrast to other studies that argue that strong indigenous social movements necessarily lead them to attain local, regional, and national 'power'. In the Amazonia of Peru, specifically among the Shipibo-Konibo, we do not find a similar pattern – that is, there is not a strong social, cultural, and ideological cohesion. The federations could have played a major role in strengthening the existing movement to demand collective rights (for social inclusion, resources, autonomy, etc.) and new lands or at least territorial delimitation from the state. However, this did not happen, in part due to the fact that federations have distanced themselves from the communities, and the communities, in turn, see them as no longer having a utility component.

Secondly, my research has an important implication for indigenous peoples regarding the consequences of disunity and lack of cohesion. It suggests that they might be better off in strengthening their communities and federations and bringing ideological

unity through *concientización* (consciousness raising) of the people before launching a national movement. They have to overcome economic challenges by financially empowering federation *dirigentes*. They must also work towards consolidating their financial and economic base in order to avoid the same weaknesses of the federations and *dirigentes* in the Amazonia of Peru. For instance, funds previously awarded by European NGOs to local federations have been rerouted to the national organization AIDESEP; thus, they are at the mercy of their national organization. Moreover, a fair sharing mechanism of international fund or grants must be established, so that local federations are not marginalized by the national organization, as is the case in Peru. There also has to be economic and financial transparency, where federations from local to national levels are held accountable financially.

Third, the passive and diplomatic relational model employed by Shipibo-Konibos in dealing with the state might not be the most optimal for other indigenous people. My research shows that Shipibo-Konibos have pursued politics of equal interactions without visible resistance through a social movement. So far, this seems not to be a good strategy as governments do not benevolently change laws for the good of their citizens. Hence, there is a need to reconsider their tactics. Strong diplomacy must be followed by a strong policy proposal and orderly mobilization if the democratic state does not, on its own, advance the rights of their indigenous citizens.

Fourth, the Shipibo-Konibo study in municipal politics shows other indigenous peoples that although power and resources are essential for native communities, these things might be a source of dissention, quarrel, and schism that disunites people and

community. Hence, there is a need to revise the strategy of how to use state resources without being co-opted by the social problems that this might bring the people.

Importance for Anthropology and Other Social Sciences

My study contributes to understanding indigenous society, culture and identity in the specific, challenging case of the Shipibo-Konibo peoples of Peru. The interlink between society, culture and identity in this case study reveals some of the internal dynamics of change in so-called 'traditional" societies─change caused both by internal and external forces. Moreover, the Shipibo-Konibo found their own pathways to survival along three routes to political cohesion despite not having a strong indigenous movement: (1) in native communities recognized by the state; (2) in indigenous leaders and *dirigentes* working through federations; (3) in participating in municipal politics.

Secondly, my thesis offers an Amazonian political ethnography. Anthropologists too rarely engage in studying political processes, such as social movements or political participation, that lead a community to enter into collective action. My research has generated such an ethnographic account of how the Shipibo-Konibo organized, of the elements that triggered their mobilization, and of the internal and external variables that led them to municipal politics. It also has analyzed the implications of those political actions in terms of their social movement and self-determination rights.

Thirdly, I looked at the question of indigenous rights through anthropological lenses. Legal scholars have extensively studied the case of indigenous rights from national and international law perspectives. However, not many anthropologists have studied the legal and political issues from anthropological perspectives. Hence, this thesis

is unusual in going beyond the scope of both political science and anthropology: it looks at the Shipibo-Konibos through both socio-cultural and politico-legal lenses.

Fourth, my thesis opens an opportunity for cultural revisionism by bringing back the question of what are culture and identity. In this case study, I attempted to understand culture and identity both from a scholarly and an indigenous point of view, as well as the role that they played in the Shipibo-Konibo's movement and municipal politics. What really is a culture? Can we, the scholars, go into a new society and evaluate the cultural dimension they find through our parameters and our all-too-uniform cultural model? Whose identity compass do we use to decide whether an indigenous person is too westernized? For instance, Shipibo-Konibo men argue that their identity is not based on wearing traditional attire, but on their language use and technology. Yet, they admit that traditional attire is an important component of identity; that is why, the focus groups (young people, men and women) agreed that women are the cornerstone of their identity and culture. From this perspective, the external markers that form their identity consist of language, technology, and physical attire. Accordingly, a Shipibo-Konibo who does not exhibit those markers ceases to be a Shipibo-Konibo. However, if another component of a cultural membership is added, such as self-identity and community affiliation, then one does not cease to be a Shipibo-Konibo in this view. Similarly, identity has also a temporal dimension: anyone can give up their indigenousness voluntarily at any time.

So, what is the story with Shipibo-Konibo identity? In my research, I found they recognize that they are losing their identity and culture, especially young people, men, and even some women who are beginning to wear western clothing. That is why the older generations are consciously working towards reviving their cultural practices, such as *ani*

sheati (inter community gathering for cultural festivities), *mashaiti* (traditional dance in groups), ani *tsinkiti* (traditional inter community conventions). Currently, the Shipibo-Konibos do not have procedures or mechanisms with a legal, biological, or cultural basis to classify who is a member of a cultural group and who is not. Thus, there is freedom to go in and out of their identity and culture. However, if and when they formalize their society with one central political figure and legislative body, they might eventually impose criteria of cultural membership by legislation.

My thesis also has implications and importance for other social sciences, such as political sciences and sociology. It contributes to the literature on the effects of decentralization as well as consolidation of democracy in Peru. First, it looks at how this process happened and how it affects remote districts. It also seeks to understand what democracy means for average citizens, who are seldom asked in a national survey sample about their views of politics and democracy. In addition, as noted earlier, my study contributes to the already rich literature on indigenous social movements in Latin America. It specifically analyzes local indigenous electoral politics to determine whether this is a new type social movement.

Thirdly, my study contributes to opening a national dialogue on participative governance and decentralization, a process which Peru is going through at this time. Since 2001, nine new Regions have been created, and municipalities, as pointed out earlier, have increased autonomy (administrative, legislative, taxing power) and can engage in productive economic practices, not just provide services to its citizens. My study analyzes how indigenous Shipibo-Konibos are becoming part of this process, and are not simply bystanders looking on. Hence, it can be argued that Shipibo-Konibos

really do not have good incentives to engage in local, regional, and national protests to change laws and regulations that affect them. They seem to have taken the safe approach of utilizing the state resources to benefit the communities in infrastructure investments (health clinics, schools, electrification).

Policy Debate: Autonomy and Self-Determination

As pointed out in Chapter 1, indigenous peoples worldwide demand the right of self-determination. This international legal term underlies and encapsulates several component rights of indigenous peoples. One component is autonomy, meaning self governance in political, economic and territorial dimensions. Within this framework, I wanted to find out whether Shipibo-Konibo people were seeking autonomy by capturing indigenous municipalities and thus establishing an indigenous government. Data reviewed in Chapter 4 from community leaders, community members, indigenous politicians and *dirigentes* reveal that what they have achieved in municipalities is less than autonomy. The Shipibo-Konibos do not generally see the municipal government as a type of indigenous autonomy.

The implication here is the indigenous right of autonomy cannot necessarily be implemented at the municipality-level in Peru, because there are not grassroots and federative support for this type of self-government. Autonomy at this level is complicated by the fact that Peru's indigenous people do not live alone in a given municipality. A mixture of peoples coexist, from indigenous Shipibo-Konibo and Ashaninkas to *mestizos*, especially in the districts of Iparia and Tahuania. Hence, even in the best case of a favorable legal and political environment, it is very unlikely that an indigenous district would be created. Now hypothetically speaking, what would be the outcome if the state

legislated a new category of territorial division such as an indigenous district? On the one hand, this might be seen as a progressive policy; on the other hand, however, it could result in a geographical ghetto, which could mean fewer resources from the regional and central government by the mere fact of being indigenous. Consequently, there is not strong incentive for Shipibo-Konibos to seek this type of autonomy by lobbying the state through social mobilization. Even if they envision getting that type of right, this is not coming any time soon in Peru, at least not through a national uprising. One could even say that the changes in the Constitution of 1989 and 2001, that promoted decentralization and municipal autonomy, allowed a political opening for native communities and further undermined their motivation to engage in a visible and strong social movement.

Furthermore, there is a huge gap between international, national, regional, and local leaders' political philosophies and the agenda they represent within local communities. Organizationally, there is also a gap between the federation's agenda and the needs and demands of the communities. This becomes very clear with the quest for self-determination rights as understood by indigenous scholars and leaders. During focus groups conducted for this study, I found that the concept of self-determination does not yet resonate with the average community member, nor even with community leaders. The implication for this ideological and philosophical deficit is that there is a lot of ground work to be done by the organizations to *concientizar,* or raise consciousness about the short, medium, and long terms goals of this right. That is, the leaders and *dirigentes* have to help the community members understand what that right means to them in terms of political, social, cultural, and economic benefits.

As part of consciousness raising about their Shipibo-Konibo nationality, the communities, *dirigentes* and leaders will surely rediscover that native communities are product of geo-political and legal fragmentation from a previous traditional ethnic cohesion and unity. This discussion may help them reawaken the view of themselves as one unified nation, as one indigenous religious leader recently argued. The concept that the Shipibo-Konibo are a distinct, evolving people with their own unique language, history, culture, and technology might be imparted to the young people, who are losing their conceptual identity as well as their language and technology.

As of today, there are no discussions on topics such as these in the communities or among their leaders. The *dirigentes* are instead attempting to revive their moribund organizations, and seeking meager funding to hold their *congresos* and promote workshops related to agricultural production, rather than creating a political consciousness of a new path to embark upon. In the words of an ex-*dirigente:* "They are not fighting for big issues; they are rather picking small fights" (Marcial Vasquez, Personal Interview, 2006). The work pursued by local federations is worthy of being applauded, but given the magnitude of community problems, their approach seems like a band-aid for an injury that needs surgery.

The concept of self-determination is well understood and used by indigenous leaders and *dirigentes.* However, there was not a correlation between leaders' discourse and their constituents. Focus groups' participants often responded, "no, I don't know the term", or "I have never heard that term" to the question, What does "self-determination" mean to you? The lack of understanding of self-determination as an international principle by the average indigenous citizen does not mean that they do not know what

they want from the state. The focus group participants pointed out consistently that they want to live in peace, have good relations with *mestizos*, educate their children, and send their young people to universities. Put differently, they want to live without a lot of interference from outsiders; however, with the ones already there, they want interactions within the framework of respect and peace.

In the last 10 years, the presence of ENGOs in Peru is very visible. ENGOs, such as Conservation International, WWF, and *FondeBosque*, are lobbying the state to create national parks and are consequently competing with indigenous people to have their own lands demarcated and to establish an indigenous reserve. For instance, in 2006, the above- mentioned ENGOs lobbied the government to create a *Zona de Reserva,* instead of a *Reserva Territorial Indigena* as proposed by federations. Indigenous leaders have pointed out that often community leaders and even federation leaders are co-opted by economic incentives from NGOs, so they will support park efforts (Anonymous Interview, 2006). In Chapter 3, I discussed how federations are approaching ENGOs to seek financial support for their federation—hence the danger of being co-opted.

Recommendations

Using the case example of the Shipibo-Konibos, this dissertation has shown *inter alia* the challenges facing indigenous federations, movements and political parties. My research shows ways in which indigenous organizations have been fragmented, have lost credibility, legitimacy, and authority, and wound up lacking representation and funding. Thus, my research highlights the need for organizational innovation. One possible path is that the Shipibo-Konibos could work towards establishing a new entity and begin the institutionalization of their society. To achieve this institutionalization - the existing five

Shipibo-Konibo federations could seek to restore legitimacy, authority and power from their constituents - the native communities. This could be the first step towards helping them to own the process as well as rebuilding trust in their leaders and *dirigentes.* They might need to clearly state a vision (where they want to lead the communities), a mission (why they want to lead them there) and a methodology (how to get there), as well as the plan of action that would help them achieve their new goals. In this process, I recommend that the communities take part in every step so that the federations act primarily as facilitators.

In this stage, I recommend working toward creating one solid institution, which means going beyond the *gremial* or federative status. The new institution might be in the form of a unified indigenous government that would amalgamate the 155 Shipibo-Konibo communitie. Among it's tasks would be to defend indigenous rights (lands, resources, social services); propose an indigenous agenda nationally; promote economic development locally; and invest in indigenous citizens' social welfare. In order to achieve those goals, the indigenous government might find it appropriate to have different centers or working groups in such areas as statistics, sustainable economic development, economic and finances, education, social services, women's office, research, information and technology, natural resources management and production, public relations, ecotourism, banking systems, project elaboration and execution, and auditing office.

Currently, many federations have the aforementioned components in their organizations in the form of secretariats. However, they have become basically reactive departments, often without a budget to carry out their plans of action – that is, they only defend their rights rhetorically rather than proactively finding ways to use their resources

to empower themselves economically and improve their quality of life. This means that the federations as we know them would do well to evolve into becoming a governing body, not just a *gremial*, or union-like organization, that only confronts the national state. Well-trained indigenous professionals and international volunteers could work towards creating the institutional and financial corpus of this new governing body. This corpus would help open a new path for the betterment of indigenous people. The indigenous government might be formed by one ethnic group or multiple groups if they so desire, and it might be decentralized. These features could contribute towards making the government accountable to local people and initiate and maintain direct contact with the constituents. Such actions would help resolve the current divorce that exists between the native communities and their respective federations, both locally and nationally.

In the second reorganizational stage, I would recommend building consensus through a grassroots dialogue. An inter-community congress, or *any tsinkiti*, could be organized by the five federations where each community will be represented, including women and young leaders. This method was employed in the initial organization of SINAMOS and FECONAU, which had a tremendous success at the community level. In this process, the various participants must be committed – from technical teams, indigenous mayors and politicians, to communities – but I would recommend that the major responsibility fall on the communities. The entire logistical task, including food provision and lodging, could be coordinated and provided by the communities and federations. External support and assistance could be sought to complement already existing local resources. This endogenous approach might help communities to "own" the

process, and thus be committed to it and to any resulting proposals in order to have a lasting impact organizationally.

The content of *ani tsinkiti* might well have the following components: (1) New Pact and Agenda. A new agenda could be designed by federation leaders to share with community delegates about the importance and advantages of reorganizing, with a new mission and vision in order to better meet and solve their current needs and problems; (2) Upon the understanding and approval of the vision and mission by the delegates, an Electoral Commission might be established with authority to call for elections. This Commission could establish the basic guidelines and electoral rules, for election of the chief and the governing council (in charge of codifying the verbal rules and laws). All the leaders (chief and governing council), as future community representatives, might be universally elected. This universal election could be a pillar of legitimizing, authenticating, empowering and restoring credibility from grassroots to the leaders. This, in part, would solve the problems that federations have had from the community members in terms of their absence and lack of recognition. Currently, federation leaders are not universally elected, but elected only by few delegates. Under this proposal, all indigenous citizens, young people (age 16), men, women, and able senior citizens would be eligible to vote.

The Electoral Commission may sponsor debates among the candidates which could take place both in the community or in Pucallpa, where they have access to FM radio. Many communities also have ham-radios with amplifiers that can broadcast the debates live. The debates would give each citizen the opportunity to choose their next chief on an informed basis (knowing the candidates and their proposals). Currently, for

the municipal elections, each candidate only campaigns in the communities where their plans are outlined, but there has never been a debate among mayoral candidates. Hence, the proposal for a debate among Shipibo-Konibo chief candidates is new and will give the voters a new political environment in which to make their decision. Since legitimacy and transparency is key in election results, the Electoral Commission may invite indigenous observers from other regions or countries to monitor the elections.

The establishment of an indigenous government is not a new idea. In fact, many First Nations in Canada and tribes in the United States are organized as tribal governments and follow the model herein proposed. As of today, all the indigenous federations are registered as NGOs with the Peruvian government, which makes them eligible to obtain donations and tax-exemption, but they are not eligible for government funding. The federations as NGOs are far from becoming self-governing entities; they are subject to NGOs regulations. Only the native communities are constitutionally recognized as indigenous entities with juridical personality and are registered with the National Institute of Public Registry, as well with the Ministry of Agriculture, since they oversee rivers and forests, which native Amazonians have inhabited since time immemorial. Given this archaic relation with the state, they must negotiate in order to be recognized as indigenous peoples *per se,* or as an ethnic group, rather than merely as native communities.

The indigenous government as a new institution with operating and executing capacity might be eligible to obtain loans from national and international financial institutions. For instance, currently the Inter American Development Bank lends to private sector or non-sovereign entities. This new approach of indigenous development

might cut off their current dependency on NGOs, to whom the leaders often have to beg for funding for their projects or workshops. This new indigenous government would then become proactive and a promoter of economic development and social welfare. In contrast to current federations who are under suspicion from native communities for their lack of financial accountability, this new government would have to be transparent financially in order to be accountable to its constituents. After legislative changes, the national government could give a share of the budget to each ethnic group, which might be complemented by loans and international development aid. Currently, the municipalities alone obtain a share of the national budget.

Moreover, the new indigenous government should have an Office of External Auditing that is independent from the indigenous government. This is essential, as it has been pointed out in this dissertation that one of the major weaknesses of the federations is the lack of financial accountability. With regard to elected municipal officials, there is already a national auditing office in place and public prosecutor to take actions against the elected officials, if they incur in corruption. The officers for the Office of External Auditing of the indigenous government might be elected separately at the *anitsinkiti* or congress in order to guarantee that it will not be influenced by elected indigenous officials. This institution will oversee the quality of projects executed, as well as account for the financial and economic assets of the indigenous government. It will also make the elected indigenous government officers accountable not just financially but ethically for their performance during the office.

In sum, building on the results of my analysis here, I would recommend that the Shipibo-Konibos establish an indigenous government as a modern way of organizing,

composed of a principal chief (president) and governing council (legislators) to lead their people in this new era in order to solve their old problems. This indigenous government may fulfill the new demand of the communities to improve their quality of life, rather than solely fighting as they did in the early late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, the adoption of a new pact and agenda by the communities, and a fair election conducted by the Electoral Commission, may begin to solve some of the problems of legitimacy, representation, and organizational divorce that the current federations are facing.

Secondly, I propose that the Shipibo-Konibo people begin to negotiate with regional and national governments to retain the ancestral territories they had historically occupied before the establishment of the Peruvian state. This negotiation could be carried out in the form of a treaty. The invasion of native people by Spain was not conducted through the courtesy of treaties, as England has done with only some native peoples in New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. A treaty has a political and legal significance, as it is a negotiation between equals. The new modern and democratic states in Latin America may not follow the unilateral and arrogant approach of the colonizers; rather, they could now abide by the international laws that indigenous peoples are protected by. The treaty would be the beginning of new relations between the state and indigenous people. A new relation such as proposed above is in the best interest of nation-states, as the more recognized indigenous people are, the more contributions they will make in consolidating democracy and integrating into the national economy.

Currently, the existing federations are only working on land demarcation and fighting with INRENA about the overlapping of forest concessions with community lands. The Shipibo-Konibos should start thinking of themselves as a whole or as a nation,

rather than as communities. The underpinning of the negotiation might be within the framework of international law, such as the ILO, Convention 169, which stipulates that indigenous peoples have the right to territory. Peru is a signatory of this Convention. However, this is a daunting task and a difficult road to embark upon, given the current geographical delimitation, the limited resources of the federation, as well as its lack of support and recognition by the communities. The geographical delimitation, such as district or any other type of geo-political division, is approved by the Congress of the Republic, and signed by the President. Therefore, negotiation could be at those two levels, accompanied by social and international pressure. Besides, the legal and geo-political challenges, the Shipibo-Konibos could accommodate their recent neighbors. They are no longer alone in the area, as there are many colonizers established in the form of *caserios*, and they keep arriving from the highlands. Many of the land and border conflicts have been with those *caserios*. Thus, any type of territorial negotiation would also involve the human rights of the non-indigenous people currently occupying the ancestral territory of the Shipibo-Konibos.

Perhaps the second worst wave of devastation for the native Amazonians, besides the policy of colonization of the Amazon promoted by Belaunde Terry (1980-1985), has been the Toledo's administration politics of forest concession (2001-2006). Under his presidency, hundreds of thousands of hectares were given in forest concessions, which have overlapped with indigenous lands and territories. Currently, many of the problem areas have not been demarcated or titled. The Shipibo-Konibos specifically have suffered less directly from these policies, but their major problem is the influx of colonizers in the Ucayali River. As pointed out in Chapter 2, the Shipibo-Konibos have historically settled

along the Ucayali River, which extends approximately 400 miles. However, currently titled communities and territories are not contiguous. They are distributed in each district and province and region; hence, I argue that they are completely absorbed by the state geo-politically. Despite this fragmented status of their society, the Shipibo-Konibos are not planning to go to the streets and strike, to demand that the state change its geographical dimension in the form of creating indigenous territories and municipalities as in Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia.

The Shipibo-Konibos seem to have only have two options here –
either to continue the *status quo* and hope the state modernizes itself and creates indigenous districts, or push for a major Constitutional reform to incorporate their modern collective rights. However, this is not coming any time soon, as the national legislators do not have an interest in pursuing changes that are not their priority. Perhaps the golden opportunity has already passed during Toledo's administration. The First Lady, along with several indigenous organizations, presented a Constitutional Proposal which had provisions for indigenous autonomy and districts.

However, neither this proposal nor any other constitutional proposal for indigenous rights was enacted during Toledo's five years in office. In Garcia's administration at the time of this writing, the indigenous agenda is off the table completely. Ironically, while the federations and their respective organizations were pushing these Constitutional Reforms in the Congress in 2002, the leaders of the village of Colonia del Caco, from the District of Iparia, were lobbying the Congress to make Caco the capital of a new District, which would have made Iparia (the current District) a provincial District. This uncoordinated approach, both by the federations and the

communities to the Congress, shows once again how the federations and their constituent native communities are distanced. They are each promoting different national agendas.

As noted earlier, the prospect for a strong Shipibo-Konibos social movement is not very promising, since federations and communities are simultaneously pursuing very different avenues. During focus groups, representatives admitted that they no longer have the fighting spirit of their ancestor; instead, they are only "fighting with paper," diplomatically. It is too early to decide whether this approach will work for them in the long run in a country where an indigenous agenda does not have enough attention, and where changes have historically come from the government itself, such as Velasco's revolution. Indigenous peoples need to be aware that there is very little chance that governments like Velasco's will arrive any time soon to promote a sweeping legislation to benefit them.

Recommendations to solve the kinship schism due to political alliances is a more challenging task given that those issues arise because of internal competition (envy, ego, and personality). However, there are some steps that they can take in order to build a better political climate, which would be advantageous in the long run. First, I would recommend that Shipibo-Konibos work towards creating their own party to represent them in the four Districts where they compete. Under this scenario, the communities would own and lead the process of party creation, as they are directly affected positively or negatively by the mayors. Thus, the party might be discussed and created in another *ani tsinkiti*. Upon its creation, a Technical Committee (TC) could work on party philosophy, ideology and public policy platform. The rules of the party could include: (1) an internal primary election, which would eliminate the dozens of candidates; (2) internal

election observers who would assure that the election has been fair and just. The TC might consider socially and culturally acceptable negative incentive, for those dissenters who have not been nominated, but still decide to run. This could curtail the proliferation of candidates which contributes towards kinship and community schism; (3) making a requirement for pre-candidates to be trained in public administration, finances, budgeting and municipal laws; (4) the electorate need to be informed and educated about the legal implications of imposing on the mayors the expectations of the gift economy.

The creation of an all-Shipibo-Konibo party is not new; as pointed out in Chapter 4, local parties have been created in Iparia, Tahuania and Padre Marquez. Thus, the recommendation here is to create a supra-communal or supra-districtal party that would represent the native communities as a whole. Thus far, districtal parties have been created from the top-down by individuals who run for the mayorship, and the communities never owned the process. Perhaps, the Shipibo-Konibos in the district of Padre Marquez are already practicing this methodology at the micro level, where communities in a congress have nominated one sole candidate in the election of 2001 and 2006. The decision paid off, as they elected indigenous mayors consecutively. Similarly, the native communities in the District of Tahuania were successful twice; however, as they abandoned this model, they lost the election. Besides the party creation, and consolidating the communities, the party commission could teach the electorate that they are better off supporting one candidate than dividing their vote between many Shipibo-Konibos candidates by citing specific examples of Iparia and Tahuania.

Future research on the Amazonian indigenous peoples, specifically on the Shipibo-Konibos' politics, economy, culture, and identity, could be done employing a

quantitative method to disprove or confirm my qualitative findings in the Districts. For instance, it would be interesting to ascertain what percentage of Shipibo-Konibos identifies themselves as such based on the three criteria that they informally established in Chapter 3. Moreover, it would be advisable to measure categorically by year and district how many resources have been invested in the areas of schools, health posts, community development, and social services by municipalities. Such a study would give us an econometric account of how the communities have improved or have not improved by having indigenous mayors.

The study most urgently needed today is a socio-demographic one, which would allow a base line for further quantitative analysis. To gather data for this study, a whole team of researchers is needed, since the Shipibo-Konibos are spread out geographically, which makes concentrated research difficult. Political anthropologists or other social scientists could take a poll to understand their view of citizenship, and what political participation and democracy means to them. Along these lines, more research about the role of Native Amazonians in the consolidation of democracy in Peru is greatly needed. Economic anthropologists could measure the wealth of the Shipibo-Konibos, based on the cultural as well as western models.

While in the field, I began to notice that many of the communities are already living in a dual economic model, between the market and barter systems. In the last 5 years, many men are working as laborers in local papaya and rice fields owned by mestizos: thus, they no longer fishing/hunting but purchasing tuna and pasta for their families. Women who are textile artists are leaving their villages to come to Pucallpa, Lima, Cuzco and other major cities in the country to sell their products. These new social

and economic patterns in the villages warrant research about the incomes, commodities and community's gross domestic products in order to comparatively understand their evolving concepts of wealth, accumulations and development. Understanding this new social and economic dynamism may shed light in what type of development they as individuals and their communities require. This might have tremendous implications for indigenous leaders, indigenous mayors, and overall policy makers to design a culturally appropriate economic projects and economic models.

In sum, my analysis of political participation by the Shipibo-Konibo in the Peruvian Amazon has shown that, far from converging different elements to consolidate their nationhood as distinct people, they continue diverging today at different levels from kinship and community schism, weak and uncoordinated federations, struggling identity specifically young people to mayorship candidates proliferation. On top of this situation, the state has systematically and historically co-opted them, which brings them upstream challenges to someday be on the equal footing with the state perhaps through a consolidated social movement. Yet despite this entanglement, they continue to work towards surviving in their own way from communities, federations and municipal government levels with the purpose of being included in the state system while being recognized as people with their own territories, different cultures, and languages.

Peru's current political horizon does not show the state being more compassionate and gentle with its millennias-old Amazonian indigenous citizens. In this midst, the Shipibo-Konibo people alone have destiny in their hands, either to amalgamate all levels of their organizations in order to seek a new path of coordinated and collective survival, or face collective demise. To reverse this possible outcome, they may all say at unison

atashay (to challenge one self to do something or saying, "yes, I or we can do this") and begin to put aside their personal, intra- and inter-community and organizational differences and build a future together as one nation and continue their distinctness within the larger Peruvian society.

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