Healing the Past: Historical Consciousness among the Pume People of Venezuela

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the question of how the Pume people of Venezuela remember. While describing different modes of historical consciousness that coexist among the Pume, it deals with issues of temporality, agency and personhood. Drawing on theoretical insights from anthropology of the senses and phenomenological analysis, it demonstrates how a deep understanding of the use of metaphors is central to comprehending native processes of historical representation. Like most native Lowland South American societies, the Pume understand social change and social reproduction as processes that are brought about by powerful others that are human as well as nonhuman agencies. The Pume become aware of the dynamics of such processes while sleeping or while going through other kinds of altered states of consciousness that are associated with certain diseases or that are attained while singing. I provide ethnographic examples to conclude that, in general, the Pume value dreaming experiences, the experiences of being ill and the experiences of singing as significant sources of knowledge. Likewise, this study shows how dreams, states of illness and the action of singing are particularly significant means by which the Pume experience, gain understanding and become knowledgeable of their past and current relations to alterity.

ABSTRACT

Diese Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie sich das Volk der Pume in Venezuela erinnert. Sie beschreibt verschiedene Formen des Geschichtsbewusstseins, die bei den Pume koexistieren, und befasst sich mit Fragen der Zeitlichkeit, der Handlungsfähigkeit und der Persönlichkeit. Auf der Grundlage theoretischer Erkenntnisse aus der Anthropologie der Sinne und der phänomenologischen Analyse wird gezeigt, dass ein tiefes Verständnis der Verwendung von Metaphern von zentraler Bedeutung ist, um indigene Prozesse der Geschichtsdarstellung zu verstehen. Wie die meisten indigenen Gesellschaften des südamerikanischen Tieflands verstehen die Pume sozialen Wandel und soziale Reproduktion als Prozesse, die von mächtigen anderen, sowohl menschlichen als auch nicht-menschlichen Akteuren hervorgerufen werden. Die Pume werden sich der Dynamik solcher Prozesse bewusst, während sie schlafen oder andere Arten von veränderten Bewusstseinszuständen durchlaufen, die mit bestimmten Krankheiten verbunden sind oder beim Singen erreicht werden. Anhand von ethnografischen Beispielen komme ich zu dem Schluss, dass die Pume im Allgemeinen die Erfahrungen des Träumens, des Krankseins und des Singens als bedeutende Wissensquellen schätzen. Ebenso zeigt diese Studie, wie Träume, Krankheitszustände und das Singen besonders wichtige Mittel sind, mit denen die Pume ihre vergangenen und gegenwärtigen Beziehungen zur Alterität erfahren, verstehen und kennen lernen.

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the first time I was among the Pume, I have realized we were different. Beyond the linguistic distance that separates us, I can tell there is something about the quality of their movements and their bodily skills that is at odds with mine. Most of the time around them I simply feel clumsy. Their gaits have a combination of lightness and grace they maintain even after long walks. Not to mention the fluidity with which women spin palm fibers or weave. The examples are countless. Like every other society, then, the Pume have particular ways of knowing "how to use their bodies" (Mauss, 1973, p. 70).

Inspired by Mauss, I would say that the Pume have their "own special habits" (ibid. pp. 70-72) that are transmitted via imitation or verbal communication (ibid. pp. 72-73). Or, in other words, their bodies are the material expression of their distinct "techniques of the body." This research study focuses on practices that are conducive to habits, and in particular on those involved in, or related to, healing practices. By inquiring into such practices, the aim is to give an account of how the Pume people remember. This is, therefore, an ethnography of historical consciousness. Covering a time frame that goes from colonial time to the present, it concentrates on how the Pume people have dealt with and integrated social change.

My line of argument is as follows: History, the discipline, as part of the Western tradition, draws primarily on the sense of sight and the use of visual metaphors in the construction of facts. This, however, is not necessarily the case for other societies. Therefore, in order to understand how history is made among non-Westerners, it is important to inquire into how they perceive, know and feel the world.

So, one might ask, do the Pume people base their ideas on what is verifiable truth or visual imagery? Or do they draw on other senses? Is the scheme of the five senses sufficient

to give a detailed account of Pume epistemology and, consequently, their history? Or is their epistemology based on particular notions of personhood that entail richer relations between the body and the world than those implied in the common definition of the five senses? The preliminary answer to these questions is that the Pume I have worked with understand perception and the acquisition of knowledge as phenomena characterized by the integration of multiple sensory modalities. Furthermore, they value dreaming experiences, the experiences of being ill and singing experiences as significant ways of perceiving and knowing this and other worlds and their inhabitants, as well as of understanding and experiencing the past.

Since dreams, the experiences of illness and the healing process are conceived by the Pume as interrelated experiences that involve the transformation of the person and their body, the analysis of such experiences is vital to understand how habits are shaped among them. Habits are the outcome of practices that transform the body. Acknowledging the plasticity of the body allows me to perceive it as being simultaneously "'universally given' and 'socio-culturally construed' and constructive" (Devisch, 1985, p. 410). Likewise, I see the body as belonging to the material world. Because the body is at the same time biology and culture, I understand matter and meaning as shaping one another. Therefore, my analysis implicitly addresses the question of how subjects and the world are mutually fabricated. Or, as Ingold (2007, p. 4) put it, "If I and my body are one and the same, and if my body indeed partakes of the material world, then how can the body-that-I-am engage with that world?" Furthermore, how is it that the individual subject engages with others and the physical world to experience it together or to recognize they feel different?

Based on the aforementioned assumptions about the body, my approach to historical consciousness is meant to bypass any form of cultural relativism or dispassionate

universalism. In this sense, I draw on the idea that an ethnographic understanding of history must consider not only discourses and narratives about the past but also how the past becomes materialized. That is to say, it should be an ethnography that considers the culturally mediated relationships between materials and people, bodies and subjects (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, pp. 35, 40). I conceive of these relationships as the ground where metaphors emerge. As I will show, such relationships are fundamental to Pume creativity and to their processes of meaning making. This is true in everyday life but it is particularly illustrated by the practices of Pume healers.

Although I cover healing practices broadly, I give particular attention to the *tõhe* ritual. Meant to be a healing ritual, the *tõhe* is the center of the Pume social life. Male singers gather from dusk to dawn to perform songs as they heal a number of ailments. Throughout the night, singers are assisted by their ancestors who come to this realm to sing through them: *Ĉhiakoeã arẽkhea bedobeda, bedobe*—sounds come from far away, awakening [us], sings one of the *tõhe* performers as the *tio* (the Pume ancestors) come[1]. He goes on, *görecîakhea ŋoabeda, hirare hudiro*—they bring bustle singing, *they are many.*

The ancestors are many; they come to reunite with the living as Pume men and women sing. When one hears this multitude of ancestors, one cannot help but think that, although the history of the native peoples of Lowland South America is fairly unknown, one thing is unmistakable: Since the arrival of Europeans, these peoples have been savagely persecuted, repressed and massacred. Is singing, then, the practice by which the Pume re-member their world (cf. Hill, 2020)?

[1] The label "*tio*" refers to both ancestors from a distant past and spirits of the dead—people they have met or ancestors from a near past such as grandparents or great-grandparents. When talking about *tio* from a distant past, their names refer to a shamanic activity they can facilitate, mediate or simply make possible. For example, *ĉuiphuratio* is the spiritual being that confers on people the ability to blow noxious objects from the body of a sick person. The name of this *tio* comes from a combination of the sounds he makes when coming to the ritual space—a kind of whistle that the Pume represent as *ĉui*—and the verb *phura*, to blow (see other names below in this chapter).

Rapid social and cultural transformations are entailed in colonial situations, and in the expansion of market economy, cattle ranching and plantation agriculture. Such transformations invite us to reflect on how meanings, categories, signs and metaphors are constantly being revalued and revisited in practice (Sahlins, 1985, pp. vii, x). In the case of the Pume people, healing practices, dreaming experiences and the experiences of being ill belong to the same semantic field. It is by means of such practices and experiences, I argue, that meanings are reassessed to accommodate social change.

Therefore, I believe that any ethnographic study that seeks to shed light on a society's historical consciousness must inquire into the relationship between structure and agency, tradition and innovation, continuity and change. In this study, I draw from the premise that continuity and change are not two strictly opposed phenomena. They are, in fact, so thoroughly intertwined that the most arduous task of an ethnographer of historical consciousness is to untie the entanglements between the two so as to understand how "meaningful structures" blend with "creative action" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993, p. xiv). But what is the role of ritual in this?

Ritual actions are rich in tropes that are composed of dense and deep meanings and understandings of the world. Such actions exploit "the poetic properties of the signs to the fullest" (ibid., p. xxi). Therefore, although ritual is meant to ensure cultural and social continuity, ritual actions are creative: They are "a fecund medium for making new meanings, new ways of knowing the world and its workings" (ibid.). But how is it then possible that ritual creates new meanings yet preserves cultural continuity? This is so, it seems, because the new meanings that emerge in ritual actions are not completely innovative in the sense that "ritual symbols are not free-floating signifiers or arbitrary symbols" but are "at least partially iconic" (Sutton, 2004, p. 94).

In Chapter 1, I present a literature review of the theoretical approaches—anthropology of the senses and phenomenological analysis—that inform my analysis. Furthermore, I pose the main research questions and explain how I deal with them. This chapter discusses the main assumptions of Western historiography while providing theoretical tools for inquiring into the assumptions of native historiography.

Chapter 2 introduces Pume society and the context of my field research. This is followed by an overview of the Pume life cycle and the *tõhe* ritual and other healing practices. Like any other Lowland South American indigenous people, the Pume have undergone a long history of relationships with other societies. In this chapter I also present an overview of written sources to give the reader a sense of how these relationships have changed over time.

In *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, David Howes (1991, p. 6) asks the question "What is the world like to a culture that takes actuality in less visual, more auditory or olfactory, gustatory or tactile, terms than those to which we are accustomed?" Chapter 3 addresses this question[2]. It contains an analysis of Pume ways of perceiving and knowing the world, focusing on how reality is experienced subjectively. Therefore, it takes seriously the question of how the Pume define personhood.

While Chapter 3 focuses on perception and knowledge from the subjective perspective, Chapter 4 introduces the question of materiality. The analysis of how the Pume understand water draws on the idea that perception is not only socially constructed but also entangled in the dialectics between the qualities of the material world and socially and culturally transmitted values and understandings. My focus on water is intended to address

[2] I quote Howes's question because it sums up Chapter 3; however, as will become clear in the following pages, I avoid the use of the word "culture" because it means relapsing into the kind of essentialisms I try to overcome.

the issue of how the Pume understand time. This chapter also differs from the previous one in that it takes narratives as the main source of ethnographic information.

The main conclusion of Chapter 3 is that the Pume understand dreaming experiences, the experiences of being ill and the experiences of singing as fundamental ways of perceiving and knowing. Accordingly, Chapter 5 shows how these privileged ways of knowing constitute significant means of acquiring knowledge of the past. Because social change is comprehended as transformations triggered by interactions with powerful spiritual beings, this chapter focuses on how the Pume think about and experience such interactions.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Defining historical consciousness

I would like to begin by succinctly defining historical consciousness as the ways people understand and experience how past, present and future are connected. This simple definition is flexible enough to encompass a wide range of ways in which societies represent their past. Defined as such, historical consciousness is a synonym for historicity: "the cultural patterned way or ways of experiencing and understanding history" (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1990, p. 4). Ohnuki-Tierney (1990, p. 4) has pointed out that the term "historicity" is a better choice than "historical consciousness" to account for those ways of thinking about or experiencing history that are not conscious (see also Stewart, 2016, p. 82). The problem with this kind of statement is that it takes for granted what consciousness is.

The main problem with defining consciousness is that it asks us the (so far) unanswerable question: "[W]hy there is something it is like to be us." (Chalmers, 2018, p. 49). While this is a question that philosophers have unsuccessfully tried to answer, ethnographers have been concerned with the "particularly and perennially anthropological question" of "what-is-it-like-to-be-a" (Fernandez, 1992, p. 125): a Nuer, a Trobriander, a Pume. Given our common inability to know what someone else is thinking, let alone feeling, this question urges us to be empathetic. However, while in the field and, later, when writing ethnography, we tend to assume that a person's consciousness is seamlessly reflected in what they can articulate in verbal or written speech in texts. Articulation and speech are the most obvious means we have of getting a sense of what another person is experiencing or thinking, but explicitness conveys as much as it conceals. Questions then start to arise: What about those meanings and social values that remain implicit? Do they not also speak loudly about others'

experience of the world and their histories? These questions are also "particular and perennial" among anthropologists. For decades, they have been posed and have been addressed by ethnographers working in different cultural contexts.

In an article originally published in 1993 and later reprinted as a chapter in his book *How We Think They Think* (1998), for example, Maurice Bloch describes the multiplicity of ways in which the past is represented among the Zafimaniry of Madagascar. His argument—namely that in the same society the past can be variously experienced and remembered—involves the kind of reflection upon textualist understandings of historical consciousness suggested above. In this piece, Bloch describes how an event—a massacre that took place in 1947—is depicted in divergent ways among the Zafimaniry. Drawing on this ethnographic material, he draws attention to the fact that accounts of the past could be very different and, sometimes, they could deviate from the kind of narrative that conforms to the standard of what in any given society is considered to be truthful, but that does not mean that they should be disregarded as ethnographic data. On the contrary, according to Bloch, such narratives, "what would best be called gossip," or any other type of "factual accounts of events" (1998, p. 109), are extremely valuable for understanding people's relations to their past, in spite (or because) of being so diverse in content.

Later in the same text, and central to the purposes of this research study, Bloch goes a step further to claim that whereas narratives tell much about how people relate to their past, we can also find "many evocations of the past in the most mundane of actions" (ibid., p. 109). In other words, how the past is experienced in everyday life through practices is as important as how the past is represented in narratives. Bloch shows, for example, how, while making hats, women commented on the designs as being "valuable things passed on from previous generations" (ibid., p. 109). Through the action of weaving, they were, then, "evoking the

past and continuing it in the present" (ibid., p. 109). In another example, he points out that Zafimaniry households are the material expression of the union of two people. He then goes on to say that as people make their lives and generate the space they call home, they are being conscious of the past that engendered it, "[a] consciousness which manifests itself verbally but is…also present when not commented upon" (ibid., p. 109).

Implicit in Bloch's argument is an understanding of consciousness as subjective experience. I also use the word "consciousness" in this sense to refer to any sort of subjective experience: sensory experiences, bodily sensations, mental images, emotions, feelings and thoughts. I use the term "consciousness" to refer to what philosophers of mind define as "phenomenal consciousness" (Chalmers, 2018). Reflective thinking that finds expression through speech of any sort is, therefore, just one of the many ways in which consciousness becomes apparent. The term "subjective experience," however, is not intended to imply a radical separation among individuals, nor between subjects and objects, for I understand *mind* as a phenomenon that involves the brain but does not exclusively occur in the confinement of people's heads. Mind is understood here as stemming from "loops" that go "through the body and the environment, [and] most crucially through a social world that is culturally constructed" (Kirmayer, 2008, p. 364, see also Howes, 2014, p. 227)[3]. Thus, I use the word "mind" as a synonym of *consciousness* as defined by Antonio Damasio. For Damasio (1999), consciousness resides in the interactions between the "organism"—human beings, their bodies, including the brain—and "objects," i.e., things, people, places, memories. On this basis, I turn to discuss the implications that defining consciousness as such has for my understanding of historical consciousness.

[3] Laurence J. Kirmayer is a cultural psychiatrist. For similar understandings of mind in philosophy of mind see Clark and Chalmers (1998), and in anthropology see Bateson (1979).

In the introduction to the edited volume *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, Peter Seixas (2004, p. 9) critically comments that early definitions of the terms "historical consciousness" and "collective memory" assumed them to be mutually exclusive forms of how societies relate to the past. The term "historical consciousness" was initially used to describe a specific kind of relation to the past that implied "pastness"—the existence of a reified past or the idea that the past is an immutable and well-bounded set of no longer existing circumstances. Since this is one of the assumptions of Western historiography (Stewart, 2016, p. 81), it was believed that Western societies, or those societies that had adopted the assumptions of Western historicism, had historical consciousness while (most) non-Western societies did not. The past always remains in the lives of the members of the latter. By denying the passage of time, non-Western societies were said to have "collective memory" instead of historical consciousness (Seixas, 2004, p. 9).

In relation to this distinction, Seixas points out that the strict separation between the two terms, and their use in classifying societies, prevented researchers from exploring the relations between history and memory, explorations that, according to him, would be potentially beneficial for rethinking history as a discipline. Seixas, then, proposes to talk of *types of historical consciousness*, in order to elucidate how memory and historical consciousness are related and include the variety of ways of understanding and representing the past that had been typically labeled as collective memory.

In anthropology, Renato Rosaldo had already advanced a similar idea. In *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History*, he argues that societies exhibit a multiplicity of ways of relating to the past. Therefore, instead of talking of historical consciousness in the singular, Rosaldo (1980, p. 4) adopts the phrase "forms of historical consciousness" to refer to "cultural conceptions of history." He also points to the fact that

such conceptions can vary cross-culturally "in their degree of symbolic elaboration, their ability to pervade multiple contexts and their capacity to capture people's imaginations" (ibid.). In a similar vein, based on his ethnographic research on spirit possession, Lambek pointed out that societies experience and represent the past in such creative ways that they challenge the long-assumed "opposition between history (the dispassionate representation of the past) and memory (the subjective continuity with it)" (1998, p. 111). Although these ethnographic observations were meant to account for non-Western historiographies, nowadays even professional historians have also recognized that "accounts of the past, and therefore 'facts' of the past, are subject to change," allowing space for creativity in the writing of history (Stewart, 2016, p. 83). However, they have opted to maintain the existence of "pastness" as one of their theoretical cornerstones.

Speaking of multiple ways of understanding and experiencing the past—or multiple types of historical consciousness—makes it possible not only to compare Western with non-Western kinds of historical consciousness but also to draw attention to the variety of possible forms of historical consciousness within the same society. Using the term "historical consciousness" in the plural has, moreover, the advantage of preventing us from falling into the temptation of conducting reductionist analyses, that is, analyses that potentially boil down the variety of conceptualizations and experiences of the past into dichotomies: historical versus mythical consciousness; and a linear versus cyclical sense of time (Sutton, 1998, pp. 2, 31). Likewise, drawing from an understanding of the multiple connections between social memory and history, anthropologists have found that there are many ways in which historical consciousness manifests: in the landscape (Gordillo, 2004; Santos-Granero, 1998, 2004); in bodily practices (Lambek, 1998; Palmié, 2013; Stoller, 1994); in fireworks (Sutton, 1998); through dreams (Stewart, 2012); and in objects (Ferme, 2001).

In sum, social memory—what people remember and, more importantly, how they remember—is not opposite to historical consciousness but indicative of a society's type or types of historical consciousness. In particular, *how* people remember tells of how they conceive history. These insights are useful when it comes to understanding native conceptions of history in relation to Western historiography. Historical thinking has been defined in the West as a particular kind of thinking with its own assumptions. In what follows, I explore what these assumptions are while reflecting on a long-standing dichotomy in anthropological theory: cold and hot societies. The starting point of my discussion is that historical knowledge is a type of knowledge that, although placed in a hegemonic position in the West, is not the only way of knowing the past.

1.2. Historical knowledge is just one form of knowledge

In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss (1966, pp. 233-234) suggests that societies can be grouped together into two categories on the basis of how they deal with social change. "Cold" societies are those that privilege traditions by erasing the effects of change so as to promote a sense of continuity over time. "Hot" societies, on the other hand, embrace social change and see themselves as thriving because of it (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, pp. 233-234).

Since native Lowland South American societies were supposed to be the ones to best exemplify cold societies, this notion has been a source of great inspiration and theoretical debate among ethnographers working in the area. Over time, a series of edited volumes have addressed this topic while focusing on interrelated yet different aspects: conceptions of time (Kaplan, 1977); the relation between myth and history (Hill, 1988); native understandings of cause and action (Whitehead, 2003); and social memory and the relations between social

reproduction and transformation, structure and agency (Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007)[4]. These collections have stimulated my reflection on these issues and have informed my comprehension of them.

In particular, I rely on Fausto and Heckenberger's contention that we should "respect the 'Otherness' of 'Indian History'" (2007, p. 13). According to them, the recognition of this otherness lies in understanding the differences between indigenous and Western forms of social memory as well as native conceptions of agency and action. Since Amazonian societies have animist ontologies, they maintain, historical agency is not restricted to the human domain but is also a capacity of nonhuman beings. Consequently, Fausto and Heckenberger claim that among native South Americans, historical action is "shamanic action on the world." This implies that "transformative action is not limited to those cases in which human praxis is recognized as a condition, in and by itself, for social transformation" (Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007, p. 13). Amazonian indigenous history is, then, the result of transformative actions of persons—human or nonhuman—through ritual practices (ibid., p. 14). Because these transformative actions have taken place as a *longue durée* process (which is still ongoing), ritual practices are actions by which Amazonian societies remember as they bring together a community of primordial gods, spiritual beings and spirits of the dead (Hill, 1999; see also Hill, 2020). In the chapters that make up this thesis, I touch upon native conceptions of agency and action, but my analysis is primordially an inquiry into Pume regimes of social memory.

[4] Another important contribution to current understandings of Lévi-Strauss's "cold societies" is Peter Gow's *An Amazonian History and its Myth*. In this monograph, Gow argues that myths are highly mutable, a quality that, paradoxically, confers on them the opportunity to remain stable, unaffected by world changes. According to him, Lévi-Strauss maintains that cold, mythical societies are characterized by their timelessness, without being ahistorical. Gow maintains that, since myths are subject to never-ending transformations, they are, for Lévi-Strauss, "historical objects whose purpose is to deny history" (Gow, 2001, p. 11). As will become apparent in the following paragraphs, even though I also discuss and reflect upon Lévi-Strauss's definition of cold societies, Gow's ethnographihc materials and theoretical considerations and my own are incommensurable.

At first, the Pume seem to be exemplary of a cold society. They seem to have forgotten their past and, in turn, to have obliterated time. However, a deeper understanding of their language, their models of perception and cognition, and the practices they use to deal and negotiate with alterity—human and nonhuman—in the present give profounder insight into their particular ways of remembering and processing social change. The focus of this research study is on how knowledge of the past is created among the Pume: which are the assumptions, the heuristic devices, and the metaphors that are ingrained in the generation of such knowledge. While I shall not dwell on theories of social value, Pume notions of what kind of knowledge is valuable permeate my ethnography. In this sense, my analysis aligns with what, to me, is Lévi-Strauss's major contribution in *The Savage Mind*, namely the claim that "whatever its value (which is indisputable), historical knowledge has no claim to be opposed to other forms of knowledge as a supremely privileged one" (1966, pp. 262-263).

After claiming that historical knowledge is not more valuable than other kinds of knowledge, Lévi-Strauss goes on to assert that historical knowledge is "rooted in the savage mind," but "it does not come to fruition there" (ibid., p. 263). By historical knowledge, Lévi-Strauss is referring to the kind of knowledge produced according to the premises of history as a discipline. Such a knowledge supposes a particular kind of rationality, what Lévi-Strauss calls "domesticated thought," and a specific construction and recognition of what is "real." Then, one might ask, what kind of rationality are we talking about? How is it different to the kind of rationality constitutive of Pume historical consciousness? Or, more generally, if not historical knowledge, what kind of knowledge of the past and of the processes of change materializes in the "savage mind"?

Since the 1990s, it has become clear among historians that while claims such as "[a] madman's narrative is not history" make sense to most of them, these types of claims are no

more than a reflection of "an ideology, a moral choice, [and/or] a political philosophy" (Chakrabarty, 1998, p. 15); and, more importantly, that "the investment in a certain kind of rationality and in a particular understanding of the 'real' means that history's exclusions [that is, those of the discipline] are ultimately epistemological" (ibid.).

If nowadays many practicing historians recognize that the knowledge of the past they generate responds to specific epistemological assumptions, one might also ask what assumptions underlie native history. Here, again, my concern is not different from that of Lévi-Strauss. In *The Savage Mind*, he is dealing with an epistemological issue as well. He is not questioning the assumptions of history as a discipline, but reflecting on how plausibility and meaning are fabricated among "primitive" societies. His conclusion is that the reason why historical knowledge fails to develop in these societies is the timelessness intrinsic to their analogical thinking:

> The characteristic feature of the savage mind is its timelessness; its object is to grasp the world as both a synchronic and a diachronic totality and the knowledge which it draws therefrom is like that afforded of a room by mirrors fixed on opposite walls, which reflect each other (as well as objects in the intervening space) without being strictly parallel. A multitude of images forms simultaneously, none exactly like any other, so that no single one furnishes more than a partial knowledge of the decoration and furniture but the group is characterized by invariant properties expressing the truth. The savage mind deepens its knowledge with the help of *imagines mundi*. It builds mental structures which facilitate an understanding of the world in as much as they resemble it. (Ibid., p. 263)

Incomplete reflections of objects come together to forge a kind of knowledge of the world and (mythical) symbols fill the gaps in between the sketchy mirror images, giving the sensation of a complete perception of a reality that is partially "figurative," partially "literal." This excerpt shows a basic assumption of Western models of cognition: Visual perception is synonymous with knowledge (a point I will return to). For the moment, I want to draw attention to two other assumptions that this paragraph includes and that I intend to dispute throughout this thesis.

The first one concerns the clear-cut distinction between "reality" and "representation." According to Lévi-Strauss, the sense of timelessness is attained among cold societies by approaching the world in a way that ideas emerge as partial truths, as figurations. These ideas are not detached, abstract understandings of the world but mental images that share similarities with it. Among Lowland South American peoples, these figurations are to be found in mythical narratives as well as in the experiences of dreams, diseases, shamanic healings and visions in which human beings, plants, spirits and animals share the same ontological status. Under the logic that underlies the discipline of history, mythical narratives and accounts of such experiences are typically deemed fictional. Unlike historical narratives, which are "factual" accounts of events, these narratives are figurative representations of reality. But what constitutes factuality for indigenous South Americans? Is it different than for historians or anthropologists?

As the Comaroffs (1987, p. 193) point out, accepted conceptions of history in the West are based on the separation of "the actual making of history" (reality) from "the terms in which its story is told and acted on" (representation), a divorce of text from context. This distinction, in turn, involves another one, namely the split between realistic representations and rhetorical ones. Representations are considered realist when they are presented as

accurate impressions of the world. These are the kinds of representations that are usually accepted as historical narratives. Rhetorical representations of the world, on the other hand, describe the world through the lenses of particular sets of values. This is the kind of representation entailed in analogical thinking, by which people understand as they resemble the world (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 263). Metaphors are constitutive of this type of representation. Lévi-Strauss's postulate is thus rooted in the idea that poetic forms of representation are not as truthful as the realistic representations of the past that are said to be at the core of the discipline of history. He is, then, making the case that, as the Comaroffs would have it, "there can be no poetics of history" (ibid., p. 193).

Criticizing this idea, the Comaroffs argue that if we assume this separation to be true, or at least a useful analytical tool, we might fail to understand people's historical consciousness. Drawing on their ethnography of the Tshidi-Barolong, a South African Tswana people, and in particular on their analysis of the metaphors used by a migrant and a madman to express their understandings of the past, they conclude that "history and its representation are not nicely distinguishable" (ibid., p. 205). They continue by saying that if we, as ethnographers, insist on looking for "a narrative of events, or an account of past relations, we may be led to conclude that [people] lack all such consciousness; we may even be tempted to speak of theirs as a 'cold' [timeless] society. But the conclusion would be false" (ibid., p. 205). The falseness of this conclusion, they go on to claim, lies in the fact that:

> [h]istory lies in its representation; for representation is as much the making of history as it is consciousness speaking out...[t]he poetry of representation, in short, is not an aesthetic embellishment of a 'truth' that lies elsewhere. Its puns and metaphors, jokes and irreverencies, are the stuff of everyday thought and action of the human

consciousness through which culture and history construct each other.

(p. 205)

On the other hand, metaphors, which are the core of subjective experience, are not only based on visual similarities but on a blend and fusion of sensual stimuli. This brings us to the second assumption that I want to discuss, which has to do with what Taussig (1993, p. 57) calls "the tyranny of the visual notion of the image." As already suggested, in the quoted paragraph from *The Savage Mind* the sense of sight is privileged as the medium for knowledge. The metaphor of the world reflecting in the mirrors is meant to describe how cold societies perceive their relations to others and to the world. In regard to relations to alterity, this would imply that, by reflecting otherness in themselves, change is erased from people's imaginations and difference is incorporated as endogenous, an idea Taussig would endorse.

As will become clear, I do as well. In fact, one of my interests is showing how, through ritual practices, "the exogenous become indigenous" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993, p. xxii). What I find problematic is that the metaphor of the mirrors implies an understanding of resemblance (or mimesis) as exclusively visual. This assumption contradicts a fundamental characteristic of Lowland South American healing rituals, conceived as the ultimate means of expressing and acquiring valuable knowledge of the past and alterity. This characteristic is that their efficacy is grounded in "nonvisual imagery conveyed by nausea, sound, smell, and the changing cadence of chanting, not to mention less tangible qualities of presence, atmosphere, and movement," and in images resulting from blended sensory modalities, so that people "feel redness…see music" (Taussig, 1993, p. 57).

Instead of seeing images, native South Americans *resonate* in imagery (cf. Métraux, 1953). That is to say, they perceive images not as isolated units of visual information but as consistently standing in relationships with other images "within and among different [sensory]

modalities—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and so on" (ibid., p. 351). This combination, juxtaposition and overlapping of sensory modalities that takes place in ritual contexts is illustrative of the *body thoughts* (cf. Strathern, 1996) of indigenous Lowland South American minds. What are the consequences of this fusion of sensory modalities for our understanding of native epistemologies and, ultimately, of "Indian histories"?

1.3. The Thinking Body

As previously noted, Lévi-Strauss's use of a visual metaphor to describe the "primitive mind" aligns with Western models of cognition more generally. However, as we will go on to see, native South American epistemologies draw upon a wider range of sensory metaphors. Since this is the case, one might expect such metaphors to be embedded in the epistemological assumptions intrinsic to South American indigenous histories.

As Stewart warns, one of the dangers posed by anthropological research for the kind of relationship that people establish with the past is to assume "that ideas such as chronology, temporal progression, and pastness must be human universals" (2016, p. 81). As I show in this and the following sections, these ideas are substantiated in what Johannes Fabian calls "visual and spatial root metaphors of knowledge" (1983, p. 109). These metaphors are not exclusive to the discipline of history but also shape anthropological theory.

I would like to start with the notion of pastness. As previously noted, pastness involves the creation of an analytical unit encompassing a set of circumstances and social situations that do not exist in the present. It is a heuristic device that allows historians to feel separated from the past in order to give them a sense of objectivity when approaching it. The passage of time inevitably makes it possible to create this separation but, as Phillips (2004, pp.

89, 91-95) argues, historical distance is, in the end, constructed[5]. In anthropology, we also have the same sort of heuristic devices to create distance, the most potent of which has always been—and still is—the "timeless primitive"[6] (cf. Rosaldo, 1980). In history, what emerges with the creation of distance is the possibility of perceiving the "past as a realm of detached observation" (Phillips, 2004, p. 92). In anthropology, alleged "detached observation" is also possible by means of the notion of a "primitive" who is placed away from the anthropologist, who is imagined to be more "civilized." The creation of such a distance, as Fabian argues (1983, p. 16), has been made possible by temporal tools like, for example, the naturalization of time: the idea that time is a universal variable in every process of natural change. The classification of human societies within an evolutionary spectrum presupposes naturalized time. And although social evolutionism has been in disuse for over a century, categories such as civilization, development, acculturation, modernity, primitive and savage still make sense. These terms are meaningful because anthropological thinking has retained the idea that time always goes in one direction, the direction of progress (Fabian, 1983, p. 146). In fact, time as progression has remained constitutional to the discipline of anthropology to this day (Stewart, 2016, p. 84).

From this it follows that primitive societies are timeless whereas civilized ones are moved by time. That is to say, they live in different times; they are not coeval (Fabian, 1983, p. 31). I will come back to the topic of time and temporality in Section 1.5, where I will deal

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5 Although I focus here on the creation of distance in historical representation as a way to give a sense of objectivity to history as a discipline, Phillips (2004) explores how historical distance is constructed in order to generate in the audience particular forms that create detachment or engagement that could be ideological, formal, affective or cognitive.

6 This is the legacy of functionalist anthropologists who believed that any assertion on change among primitive societies was speculative. Therefore, they looked for synchronic laws or commonalities among structures that they thought possible on the basis of verifiable data. Their research was directed at establishing patterns between different societies in present time—the ethnographer's present time. Likewise, the functionalist perspective attempted to formulate universal laws rather than particularist explanations in order to make of anthropology a scientific discipline in contrast to history, considered part of the humanities (Evans-Pritchard, 1962; Lévi-Strauss, 1963).

with the assumptions of chronology and temporal progression. In that section, I will address the subject of temporalities—or how people relate to time. In this section, however, I want to explore the ideas of "distance" and "observation."

By denying coevalness to their subjects of research, anthropology has crafted the illusion of detached observation. The distance created between anthropologists and the timeless Other grants the former the possibility of believing that they are *observing* the latter. By doing so, Fabian (1983, p. 62) argues, anthropologists have succeeded in turning "denial of coevalness into a positive tool of scientific knowledge." But visualism—which in anthropology is reflected in the tendency to believe that "the ability to 'visualize' a culture or a society almost becomes synonymous for understanding it" (Fabian, 1983, p. 106)—has been fundamental to Western thought more generally. The visualist bias is rooted in the belief that "vision is the noblest, most comprehensive and most reliable of the senses," an assumption that has been "an article of faith since the beginning of...[the Western] philosophical tradition" (Fabian, 1983, p. 120). The predominance of this bias in anthropological research is undeniable. It becomes apparent in the multiple visual metaphors used to describe our practice: "[E]thnographers have been participant *observers* who *reflect* on their *visual* experiences and then write *texts* that *represent* the Other's *pattern* of kinship, exchange, or religion" (Stoller, 1994, p. 637).

Thus, the preeminence of sight over other sensory modalities is at the root of Western epistemology. The sense of vision is fundamental to the way we conceptualize knowledge, thought and understanding. However, a look at the history of Western thought shows that the number of different sensual modalities and the importance conferred on them have undergone changes over time (Vinge, 2009). Constance Classen (1993), for example, has demonstrated that in the Classical West there was no consensus on how many senses there were. Based on

this, Vinge (2009, p. 107) has argued that listing the senses in the way we typically do in the West has nothing to do with their natural capacity to be more reliable or informative, but rather it is ultimately arbitrary. If this is the case, one may ask, is it possible to find other sensory metaphors for knowledge and cognition among non-Westerners? In order to answer this question, I resort to the insightful remarks on the subject made by Howes, Classen and others who have contributed to conceptualizing an "anthropology of the senses."

The anthropological concern with the human sensorium arises from the hypothesis that "by developing a rigorous awareness of the visual and textual biases of the Western episteme...we can hope to make sense of how life is lived in other cultural settings" (Howes, 1991, p. 3). Building on this premise, anthropology of the senses brings to the forefront the idea that, rather than being a passive act intrinsic to the human body and, therefore, invariable from one cultural context to another, sensory perception shapes and is shaped by social and cultural practices and values (Classen, 1993). Or, as Howes (1991, p. 3) put it, "anthropology of the senses is primarily concerned with how the patterning of sense experience varies from one culture to the next in accordance with the meaning and emphasis attached to each of the modalities of perception."

The Songhay of West Africa, for example, understand words as actions in their own right, not so much for the meaning they convey as for the sounds they are made of. When conveyed, the sounds entailed in words not only render the world understandable but transform it. Thus, rather than stressing sight as the medium for cognition, the Songhay have "a musical view of the external world" (Stoller, 1984, p. 563) or, one might say, they hear and speak to the external world. This begs the question: If Fabian were a Songhay, would he have taken it for granted that the metaphor of distance implied the possibility of *observing*, instead

of *hearing* from afar, in a world that is made up of aural rather than visual space?[7] With this comment, I do not intend to fall into obscurantism (another visual metaphor), but the subject can become rather complex. While reflecting on the preeminence of visual metaphors in the way that anthropologists make their objects, Fabian is reproducing another assumption in the West, namely that the world is made of visual space in which tangible objects are perceived by sight. Among the Pume, however—and I imagine also among the Songhay—distance is not a visual-spatial measurement but an aural one. The Pume can tell when a singer is in a distant place in the spiritual world by listening to their pitch and volume. What does this aural distance look like? Do the Pume also "create distance" to "objectively" hear (not observe) Others and their worlds? Would this emphasis on hearing tell us something about how the Pume understand perception and cognition? Or, to be more specific, if these "Others" are their ancestors, how can this emphasis on aural perception help us to understand how they, the Pume people, remember?

For quite some time, the visualist bias that underlies the way in which both history and anthropology create their objects has shaped the interest of anthropologists working on memory. This has been the case, in particular, among ethnographers interested in the sensuous aspects of remembering. Stoller (1994), for example, has argued that spirit possession rituals among the Songhay are recreations of memories through the experience of scents, sounds and movement. He has pointed out that most previous analyses of spirit possession have given attention to the symbolic transformation of the medium as well as the words—"texts"—it conveys, leaving aside the sensual experience. Another example is the work of Sutton (2001, p. 4) on social memory and historical consciousness in Kalymnos, Greece, which lays emphasis on the mnemonic role of food. Reflecting on memory studies,

[7] See also Howes (1991, pp. 9-10). The idea that the world is made of sounds is also to be found among the Kalapalo of central Brazil (Basso, 1985) and the Aivilik Eskimo (Inuit) of the Canadian Arctic (Carpenter, 1973 in Ingold, 2000, p. 249).

Sutton has indicated that food has been ignored as a site of memory because, being related to the senses of taste and smell, it has not been perceived "as conducive to thought."

Both Stoller (1994) and Sutton (2001) draw on Paul Connerton's book *How Societies Remember* to address their questions on social memory. With its main question being "how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained?" (1989, p. 1), Connerton's book focuses on understanding social and cultural continuity. In the first chapter, Connerton distinguishes three types of memory: personal, cognitive and habit memory. Personal memory refers to recollections of personal past experiences; such recollections are normally contextualized in relation to particular life circumstances and dates. Cognitive memory includes knowledge of "the meaning of words, or jokes, or stories, or the lay-out of a city, or mathematical equations, or truths of logic, or facts about the future" (ibid., p. 22). Unlike personal memory, this kind of memory is (generally) stripped of context. And, finally, habitual memory is the type of memory that allows us to recreate a performance. Examples of this kind of memory are abilities such as reading, writing, riding a bicycle, walking, dancing and so on. Habits are for Connerton the ways by which "the past is…sedimented in the body" (ibid., p. 72), a phrase that mirrors Bourdieu's definition of habitus as "history turned into nature" (1977, p. 78).

Connerton draws attention to the fact that while personal memory has been the object of inquiry of psychoanalysis and cognitive memory of psychology, habit memory has been widely neglected (ibid., p. 25). This has to do, he claims, with a bias in Western philosophy that considers "memory proper" to be the ability to recall events, while habit is perceived as just "the retention of a 'motor mechanism'" (ibid., p. 23). Connerton's argument is influenced by Maurice Halbwachs's work on collective memory. Drawing on Halbwachs, his starting point is that memory is inherently social. However, he points out that Halbwachs fails to realize that "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and

sustained by (more or less) ritual performances" (ibid., p. 38). In other words, Connerton argues that, although Halbwachs rightly asserts that remembering is fundamentally social, he fails to answer the question "how are…collective memories passed on within the same group from one generation to the next?" (ibid., p. 38).

Connerton proposes that the answer to this question is that collective memories are passed on through practices that can be classified into two different groups: *incorporating* practices and *inscribing* practices (ibid., pp. 72-73). Incorporating practices are performed intentionally or unintentionally, and the subjects must be present in order to ensure the process of knowledge transmission. This kind of practice includes gestures, table manners, postures, body movements and any practice that socially shapes the body. Inscribing practices, on the other hand, are usually intentional, and they ensure knowledge transmission even when the subjects involved in the process of inscription are no longer present. These encompass any act of recording or restoring information by means of devices such as "print, encyclopedias, indexes, photographs, sound tapes, [and] computers" (ibid., p. 73).

Without placing much importance on inscribing practices, Connerton chooses to emphasize the significance of incorporating practices for social memory. He does so because, as he claims, such practices, although recognized as available for analysis, have been highly neglected as objects of hermeneutical analysis, which in practice "has taken inscription as its privileged object" (ibid., pp. 95-96). In a similar vein, in the piece mentioned above, Bloch (1998) has drawn attention to the fact that, following the German hermeneutics tradition, anthropologists, historians and social scientists in general have made the analysis of narratives and texts the means by which they grasp the epistemologies of other societies. The argument behind this approach is the idea that "there is nothing beyond the reality created in the narratives" (Bloch, 1998, p. 101). One of the main examples of this kind of thinking is

reflected in Lévi-Strauss's definition of cold societies as "people [who] live in a world entirely constructed by their coherent and exhaustive historical narratives which not only affect their representations but consequently their actions" (Bloch, 1998, p. 101). Drawing on his ethnographic material, Bloch concludes that, contrary to what is assumed by Lévi-Strauss, societies tend not to have one consistent narrative of the past but many, potentially contrasting versions of it. Or, as he puts it, "[n]arratives talk in different ways about what is known. They are not knowledge itself" (1998, p. 110). But, most importantly, as shown before, Bloch makes the case that in many ways the past is embodied in people and things and not necessarily talked about through narratives.

Incorporating practices are, then, those that shape habits. I explore these practices through the premises proposed by "anthropology of the senses" explored above. Recognizing that perception is both defined by, and revealing of, social values provides a good starting point in understanding the ways people conceptualize cognition.

My analysis is also indebted to phenomenological analysis. It is particularly inspired by the kind of analysis to be found in the work of Michael Jackson and Tim Ingold. Phenomenological analysis converges in many ways with analysis based on the premises of anthropology of the senses. Specifically, I rely on Michael Jackson's enriching observation that "the people we [anthropologists] study often privilege sensory modes other than sight as foundational to social knowledge" (1989, p. 11). This is the reason why he urges us to "desist from taking notes, to listen, watch, smell, touch, dance, learn to cook, make mats, light a fire, farm" (ibid., p. 9). Likewise, my analysis draws upon Ingold's (2000, p. 268) emphasis on movement within an environment and the wholeness of the human body—as opposed to its separation into discrete sensory organs—as intrinsic aspects of the phenomenon of perception.

Before going forward, I believe it is imperative to make two clarifications. First, I would like to acknowledge that tapping into how indigenous peoples sense the world could be perceived as a way of widening the gap between We and They, a gap that could lead to essentializing people. In early anthropological research on the sensory faculties among non-Western societies, the focus was on establishing associations between the acuteness of the senses and racial or environmental particularities (Howes, 2003, p. 10). Still today, I think there is a general tendency to believe that natives, "because they live closer to nature," have a more refined sensorium. These images could easily fuel stereotypes of primitiveness and timelessness. But, as Howes has claimed, "[a]ll cultures are equally distant from nature in that the experience of nature is always mediated by a given culture's cosmology or 'world view,' and by the social organization of labor and the sensorium" (2009, p. 13, emphasis in original). My particular position is that the differences in sensual capacities I have found between the Pume people I have lived with and me are the result of distinct sensory training related to specific social values and practices. And, in fact, the way people relate to different senses can tell us much about how they conceive history and time.

Second, it is important to note that, despite critically reflecting on the preeminence of textualism—"the idea that there is nothing outside of texts" (Jackson, 1989, p. 8)—in anthropology, the authors I have referred to above to do not discard narratives and texts as ethnographic materials. They simply try to complement their analysis of such texts with the ways people experience the world. In a similar way, while my analysis focuses on incorporating practices, I do not minimize the importance of texts, as the narratives available to me still constitute valuable ethnographic material.

1.4. Dreaming, being ill and singing as ways of perceiving and knowing

In the previous sections I have shown the implications of reconsidering the visual root metaphors for knowledge that configure our understanding of history and anthropology. So far, my argument has focused on the traditional "five senses." But what about the "sixth sense"? As Howes (2009, p. 1) has indicated, rather than being a mere figure of speech, the "sixth sense" is a label that encompasses a long list of ways of experiencing the world whose content has changed throughout Western history and across cultures. Thus, we find that in the West this list has gone from enumerating speech as one of the senses in Antiquity, to clairvoyance and psychic powers, and memory[8] and intuition in recent times (Howes, 2009[9]). Cross-culturally, we find a wide variety of classifications of the sensorium: Thai Buddhists, for example, view thought and breathing as senses; among the Tzotzil, the sense of temperature is vital to their experience of the environment and social life; the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana consider the sense of balance to be significant to how they conceptualize existence, to name just a few (Howes, 2009, pp. 27, 33). Native Lowland South Americans emphasize the importance of different sensory modalities as vehicles for acquiring different kinds of knowledge. As I will show, these sensory modalities exceed the "five senses" in both number and complexity. Intimately related to this is the idea that the entire body is the receptacle where knowledge is accumulated (see, for example, Kensinger, 1995; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1968, 1978; Seeger, 1981).

Among the Cashinahua of eastern Peru, for example, people perceive the whole body as the medium through which knowledge is acquired as well as the place where it resides. For them, "[t]he whole body thinks and knows" (Kensinger, 1995, p. 244). In particular, "the skin, the hands, the ears, the genitals, the liver, and the eyes have knowledge" (ibid., p. 239).

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8 For memory as a sense see Korsmeyer and Sutton (2011).

9 The list is longer. It includes: kinesthesia, proprioception, moral sense, common sense, sense of humor, the sense of beauty and so on (see Howes, 2009).

Knowledge of the sun, wind, water and rain is acquired via the skin "through the sensations they produce on the surface of the body" (ibid., p. 240). Through the hands people learn physical skills such as hunting, fishing, cooking, gardening, weaving, pottery and so on. By learning, the hands are, in turn, transformed, so that knowledge is said to be contained in the hands (ibid., p. 239). People acquire social knowledge through the ears, where this kind of knowledge is also said to be found. For this reason, people who behave in ways that are not socially acceptable are described as deaf or as having "hard ears" (ibid., pp. 241-42). Knowledge about mortality and immortality, as well as about vitality, is to be found in the genitals (ibid., p. 243). Emotional knowledge is produced and stored in the liver. Thus, for example, "a person who is generous, pleasant and happy" is said to have "a sweet liver," or it might be said that "her liver knows a lot" (ibid., p. 243). Finally, eye knowledge is obtained through the journeys of one of the person's components, the eye or true spirit, to the spiritual realm during induced hallucinogenic or near-death experiences (ibid., p. 240).

Similarly to the Cashinahua, among the Suyá of Brazil hearing is related to sociability and moral sense: "[T]he ear…is the receiver and holder of social codes" (Seeger, 1981, p. 84). For them, the verbs "to hear," "to understand" and "to know" are one and the same (ibid., pp. 83-84). Therefore, "to not hear-understand-know well" is synonymous with not conforming to socially acceptable behaviors, like refusing to share, or violating sexual and dietary proscriptions (ibid., p. 84). As a counterpart to hearing, speaking—and not speaking—is a modality by which people acquire and display knowledge as well as hinting at the quality of their relations to others. Seeger indicates that, unlike Westerners, Suyá people learn by means of verbal communication rather than visual demonstration, and knowledge is said to be located in the ears (ibid., p. 85)[10]. Likewise, orality is fundamental for Suyá healing

[10] This is neither the case for the Cashinahua (McCallum, 1996) nor the Pume (Chapter 4).

endeavors, among whom “incantations are thought to be more effective, and curers who blow on their patients are believed to be the most effective” (ibid., p. 85); songs are the pinnacle of oral articulation (ibid., p. 86). With regard to the sensory modality of sight, we see as well some similitude with the Cashinahua: Vision is related to the mystical. While everyday vision poses no concern for the Suyá, nor is it a source of symbolic elaboration, the idea of “having extraordinary vision” is an attribution of witches, animals and powerful others (ibid., p. 87). On the other hand, the olfactory sense plays a central role in the identification and classification of animals and plants. Likewise, smell allows people to identify beings as human or animal. Stench is associated with animality, while human beings are said to be odorless or to have almost imperceptible odor (ibid., p. 88). Although closely related to smell, taste is of lesser importance and, along with touch and other perceptual modalities, is not involved in the process of meaning making (ibid., p. 89).

I have presented these examples because they are two of the few ethnographies that explicitly focus on the variety of Amazonian modes of knowing and perceiving the world[11]. However, there is another reason why I find them relevant to this research study. In native Lowland South America, there are two major approaches to anthropological theorizing of the knowledge and perception of nonhumans and their realms. Understanding these models of cognition of the nonhuman worlds is fundamental to comprehending indigenous histories, which, as already noted, may be set in motion by the transformational actions of nonhuman agencies. One of those models stresses the importance of vision to the recognition of, and interaction with, animals and spiritual beings (Viveiros de Castro, 1998, 2007). The other one emphasizes the sense of hearing—and the ability to sing—as the privileged medium for such

[11] Other examples are Reichel-Dolmatoff’s ethnographic description of the Desana people (1968, 1978) and Santos-Granero’s (2006) analysis of Yanesha modes of sensing the world (see Chapter 3).

interactions (Basso, 1985; Brabec de Mori and Seeger, 2013; Brown, 1985b; Hill, 1993)[12]. However, proponents of both approaches would agree that spiritual domains and their inhabitants are not perceptible to the naked eye, nor to the untrained ear. So-called "altered states of consciousness" associated with hallucinogenic-induced visions, dreams, severe illness and singing are the means of perceiving and acquiring knowledge of such worlds. Taking this into account, I proceed to suggest that the cases of the Cashinahua and the Suyá could provide insight into how the two perspectives that I have just outlined may reconcile.

Among the Suyá, "[h]earing, speaking, and vision…form an interrelated system of faculties" (Seeger, 1981, p. 90). Suyá (as well as Pume) healers are potential witches. In Suyá, the word *wayanga* means both "curer" and "witch" (ibid., p. 87). A person with healing skills is potentially damaging, and therefore healers are never beyond suspicion. They belong to a category of beings that, given their particular faculties, cannot be categorized as fully human. This is so because they have acquired "extraordinary vision," a powerful condition, residing in their eyes. Suyá healers and witches can see the different nonhuman realms that, under normal circumstances, are invisible to humans (ibid., pp. 87-88). This ability is only acquired when a person fails to "to hear-understand-know" properly, that is, when her behavior goes against proper sociality. To become healers, Suyá people must have behaved asocially and consequently attained extraordinary vision, but then eventually have overcome this separation from society by learning how to hear. Good healers are those who, by having had the experience of not being able to hear, have become good listeners and who have mastered the art of singing. On the other hand, despite having exceptional vision like healers, witches "speak bad speech, do not hear well" (ibid., p. 89). In Suyá healing rituals, "song is stressed,

[12] Ingold (2000, pp. 249-53, 266-69) has suggested that the idea that hearing and vision are opposed, although axiomatic in the Western tradition, is not necessarily to be found among non-Westerners.

vision is unimportant, and the audience listens rather than watches during the night hours" (ibid.).

Among the Cashinahua, one can see a similar relationship between hearing and sight. Generally speaking, hearing is related to social knowledge and vision to knowledge of the spiritual world (Kensinger, 1995, pp. 242, 245). Cashinahua women acquire visual knowledge, such as knowledge of designs, during the eye spirit's travels and also while dreaming, although the ability to weave such designs is hand knowledge (ibid., p. 240). Dreaming, however, is not an activity related to the eye spirit but to another component of the person, the dream spirit (ibid., p. 240; McCallum, 1996, p. 361). The Cashinahua say that people have many kinds of souls or spirits, each performing particular activities and related to matter, the body and social life in specific ways (McCallum, 1996, p. 359). For the sake of simplicity, I will not go into details as to what constitutes their nature, but I will focus on the true spirit, also known as the "eye spirit." The true spirit is inherent to the person from the moment they are conceived. It is immortal and, at the moment of death, it flies to the land of the dead. It is also called the "eye spirit" because it is said to live in people's eyes (ibid., pp. 359-360). The true spirit is fairly erratic, tending to detach from the body when people experience illness or undergo near-death experiences. By way of these experiences, people become aware of the existence of the true spirit (ibid., p. 359). Upon death, the true spirit leaves the person's eyes, turns into a beetle or a bird and starts flying away, following the voices of the spirits of the dead. At that moment, the kin start crying and calling the moribund to prevent the true spirit from leaving for good. The kin's voices are the first resource used to heal a dying person, because they are said to allure their true spirit back to the realm of the living. However, songs are the most effective way to revive a person: "[B]y means of the chant the curer seeks the retransformation of the beetle back to the eye spirit located in the

‘dead’ person’s eye” (ibid., p. 360). These songs typically speak of “prayers” as “paths” back to this realm and are composed of “metaphors of matter linked to travel on the one hand and flight on the other to describe the voice and the thinking” (ibid.).

What the examples of the Suyá and the Cashinahua show is an intimate connection, or rather an amalgamation, between the senses of sight and hearing. This blend is, I would say, characteristic of Amazonian people’s experiences of the spiritual world: People “feel redness…see music” (Taussig, 1993, p. 57). However, the conjugation or union of sensory modalities, also known as “synesthesia,” although emphasized during these experiences, is a better explanation than the model of five isolated, independent senses for the way in which perceptual processes take place in general (Howes, 2009, p. 226). An example that illustrates this claim is that of the Desana people of Brazil, for whom “all sensory phenomena are interconnected” (ibid., p. 228). For the Desana, the cosmos is by nature synesthetic, such that “one sensory phenomenon readily suggests another phenomenon in a different perceptual field, if not a whole train of sensations” (ibid., p. 229). This fusion of sensory modalities is characteristic of perception in general, but the nature of the Desana cosmos is confirmed through ritual experiences in which “heightened perception” is attained by healers through the “ingestion of hallucinogenic plants” (ibid., p. 228). The consumption of hallucinogenics and the use of special rocks allow Desana healers to sharpen their perceptual capacities, thus becoming aware of the conjugation of sensory faculties inherent to all humans (ibid.).

I would say that such a “heightened perception” is attained not only by the ingestion of hallucinogenic plants but also during dreams, which is the reason why they are typically considered to be valuable learning experiences among Lowland South Americans. In the case of the Pume people, oneiric experiences are intimately connected to the experience of being ill. My understanding of dreams relies on an anthropological perspective that seeks to

understand them within their cultural contexts, rather than by drawing on universalist schema or formulae (Tedlock, 1987). In this sense, I subscribe to the idea of moving on from a restricted interest in interpreting dreams from a Freudian perspective to a broader concern with the relationship between dream content, social values, dream experience and the act of sharing a dream. In other words, I join other anthropologists of dreams who "no longer set out to elicit dream reports as ethnographic objects to be used as raw data for comparative hypothesis," but rather understand dreams as parts of particular epistemes to which the ethnographer has access after long periods of fieldwork (Tedlock, 2001, p. 250).

Dreams are typically considered multitemporal (Stewart, 2012). They are often interpreted as warnings or premonitions but are made up of images and feelings that evoke present and past situations. In Lowland South America, however, dreams are usually the medium of experiencing the mythic past of undifferentiated humans and nonhumans. In the case of the Pume, other than dreams that bring the past to the present, we find a multiplicity of ways to relate to time (see Chapter 4). How can one grasp these relations to time? How do they contrast with the temporality traditionally related to Western historiography?

1.5. Temporalities and the landscape

In the previous sections I have dealt with one of the assumptions of Western historiography, namely pastness or the idea that the past can be reified. I have proposed that by examining the sensory metaphors people use to account for time and space, we can make sense of how non-Western societies, and, in particular, the Pume people, understand the relationships between past, present and future. In this section, I deal with three other assumptions of Western historiography: chronology, temporal progression and the linearity of time. My intention is to overcome the idea that time and space are abstract categories

disengaged from experience. Therefore, I propose to talk of temporality or temporalities—the relations that people, through actions, establish with time—instead of time, and landscape instead of space.

As will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5, different modes of historical consciousness account for different ways to establish relationships with time. Granting coevalness to non-Western societies means being aware of, and acknowledging, the multiple ways in which people from these societies relate to time, their temporalities. It means accepting that while chronology and its counterparts, temporal progression and linearity of time, are basic tenets of Western historiography, they are not human universals. Chronology is "the idea that events can be ordered and dated according to a fixed criterion external to the event itself" (Cohn, 1980, p. 219). This idea not only presupposes causality but also that time is objectively quantifiable and that events can be flawlessly circumscribed within a period of time. This, however, has proven to not accurately describe how people interact with time and the past. For one, societies are not fully unified and social practices can change disparately within the same group (Cohn, 1980). And also, as previously stated, societies are continuously creative in the ways they reenact or reexperience the past in the present as they remember—a creativity that often blurs the borders separating past, present and future.

That being the case, exploring forms of historical consciousness ethnographically entails being open to the possibility that people do not perceive past, present and future as bounded sets of events arranged in a line. How they perceive the connections between the three is, in fact, one of the major questions of an ethnography of historical consciousness. As Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart have claimed, these connections must be understood in context, because one of the main tasks of an ethnographer of historicity (or historical

consciousness) “is to know the relevant ways in which (social) pasts and futures are implicated in present circumstances” (2005, pp. 262-3).

Among the Pume, as is the case with other Lowland South American indigenous peoples (e.g., Halbmayer, 2004), people’s relations to the environment and materialized in the landscape reveal a great deal of the multiple entanglements between past, present and future. It is self-evident that the past manifests in the landscape in the form of houses, trees, monuments, artifacts and human remains. Or, to rephrase Connerton’s aphorism, “the past is sedimented in the landscape.” Therefore, when people move around places, elements of the landscape bring up memories. Yet there is dynamism to this as well, because, as Bender has asserted, “landscapes, like time, never stand still”; they are not “time materialized” but “materializing” (2002, p. 103). The impermanence of landscapes allows people to remember the past, to experience and reflect on the present, and to imagine the future.

In rephrasing Connerton, I have also meant to emphasize that landscape and body, as I understand them, share the quality of transcending the culture-nature dualism. Analogies between the micro- and macrocosms seem to be cross-culturally ubiquitous. This means that questions about time, space and the body overlap. For example, Munn (1977) shows how, through processes of fabrication, decoration and exchange—that is to say, through transformations of the material world by means of both mechanical and symbolic human actions—characteristics that are associated with certain time spaces are reversed. According to Munn, the process of fabrication of canoes in Gawa, a small island off the southeast coast of mainland Papua New Guinea, is illustrative of how body, time and spatial domains are conceived as amalgamated dimensions of subjective experience. Making canoes is the action of transforming materials that come from a land that is described as “stable and heavy,”

characteristics associated with old age, into artifacts that are light and fast, characteristics that describe the sea and youth (Munn, 1977, p. 41).

Bourdieu's analysis of the distribution of areas and tasks within the Kabyle household, as well as of the movements in and out of the house, is another example of how conceptions of bodies, time and space overlap. According to Bourdieu, the space inside the Kabyle house is arranged in a way that metaphorically expresses the actions associated with female and male bodies: night and day (1977, pp. 90-92). Bourdieu argues that the space circumscribed by the house is arranged in "homologous oppositions—fire: water :: cooked: raw :: high: low :: light: shade :: day: night :: male: female ::…fertilizing :: able to be fertilized"—that are suggestive of an integration of body, time and space (ibid., p. 90). Likewise, he points out that, at another level, the movements from indoor space (the house, women's work) to outdoor space (the field, the market, men's work) are expressive of the complementarity and opposition between "the division of sexual work and the sexual division of work" (ibid., p. 91).

While I do not give a structural account like the one offered by Munn and Bourdieu, my analysis is inspired by them in the sense that I understand the relations between people and time as emerging in actions and situated in space. My understanding of temporalities, then, corresponds to what Munn calls "action- or practice-based models of time" (1992, p. 105). The type of analysis based on these models is intended to subvert the idea that time is an abstraction outside human action such that the subject must be detached from the social and physical world in order to conceptualize it. It is rather assumed that the subject is "situated within time and space" and is "constructing the time and space he/she is in" (Munn, 1992, p. 105).

Although I have used the word "space" to keep some continuity with this type of analysis, the term "landscape" seems to me to be a better fit. I use the term "landscape" to refer to the relations that, over time, people establish with the material world by means of practices. Landscape, unlike space, is a concept that considers the intricate relations between nature and culture. It is the material expression of the mutually influenced relations between people and the environment over time (Balée, 1998; Crumley, 1994). In sum, instead of "space," I have opted for the concept of landscape because, like time, space is an abstract category that entails people's detachment from the world (Ingold, 2011)[13].

When we look at the relationships people establish with the physical world through practices, then, we are witnessing how such relationships become materialized in the landscape. Unlike spaces, which are idealizations, or places, which are already made, landscapes are materializations of practices, always in the making. They are processes of negotiation between actuality—the signs and stimuli that emerge out of the physical world—and potentiality, or human imaginations (and actions) (Hirsch, 1995, pp. 22, 23)[14]. Because this negotiation is constantly taking place, landscapes are not permanent but "are always temporal" (Bender, 2002, p. 103). Landscapes are dynamic in that they are always changing and, at the same time, they are places of memory, "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora, 1989, p. 7).

Certainty in the existence of the world permeates my understanding of landscape and time. This certainty is, I think, the actuality to which Hirsch (1995) refers (see above). However, my certitude is not synonymous with positivism, since the actuality of which I speak is not intended to be predicated on scientific knowledge but on how meaning is socially

[13] Ingold (2011) proposes to use the term "place," instead of "space," to capture the essence of the idea that the world is shaped by human beings as they move around. While I agree with Ingold that human movement leaves traces that shape places—the world people inhabit—I find the term "landscape" a better choice than "place" to account for the interactions between human beings and the material world.

[14] See Halbmayer (2004) for an illustration of this idea among the Yukpa.

constructed as people engage with the world. In sum, following Whitehead (2003), my interest is not in time but in the intersections between temporality, materiality and memory. Unlike recent visual-centered explorations of such intersections in Lowland South America and elsewhere (Fortis and Küchler, 2021; Severi, 2007), my analysis highlights the multisensuous quality of experiences of the passage of time.

Finally, an interest in understanding the role of metaphors as vehicles to express people's embodied experiences is transversal to all the analytical chapters (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). Drawing on different ethnographic materials, in each of them I provide insights into the nature of metaphors in Pume healing practices. I would like to conclude this introductory chapter by presenting a general theoretical background that brings to the fore how metaphors can be means to convey preconceptual understandings of the world as well as to redefine subjective identity in situations of crisis.

1.6. Metaphors

Drawing on the work of German feminist scholar Silvia Boveschen, Taussig suggests that the religious (and political) repression of native South American societies brought about by European colonization triggered a process whereby the experience of coercion and suffering became "unblocked, animated and conscious, by means of myths and mythic images" (1984, pp. 87-88). In her analysis of the discourse and actions of feminist activists in Europe in the 1970s, Boveschen points out that their self-designation as "witches" did not have much to do with the witches of the Late Middle Ages. For her, there is a "more direct preconceptual relationship…between the word [witch] on the one hand and the personal experience of…women on the other" (1978, p. 84). She describes this phenomenon as an "experiential appropriation of the past." Such an experiential appropriation, she says, has

nothing to do with the way historians understand the past through archival data, because "[i]n it are incorporated elements of historical and social fantasy which are sensitive to the underground existence of forbidden images; it is anarchical and rebellious in its rejection of chronology and historical accuracy" (ibid., p. 84).

My analysis of the everyday life of the Pume people and how it is connected to their ritual practices—particularly the *tõhe*—is illustrative of the creative process involved in such an appropriation of the past. It concerns, then, the "poetics of history" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987, p. 204). Or, in other words, it focuses on how the Pume become agents of their "collective poiesis of history" (Lambek, 1998, p. 107).

Since life is so profuse in emotions, feelings, images and meanings, this type of analysis is methodologically challenging. One wonders, what should I look at? Where, within this endless body of data, could one shed light on the preconceptual relationships between signs and subjective experience? Or, as Taussig might ask, where and how does "social implicit knowledge" (1987, p. 360) become articulated?

Looking at the metaphors that shape people's experience of the world is a good way to meet such a challenge. It is in the interstices between reality and fiction, those spaces where meaning seems to go beyond this dualism, where it is possible to understand how people experience and represent the past and position themselves in relation to others. Although I focus on subjective experience of the world, I imply neither that experience is purely individual nor that it is entirely socially constructed. I rather want to explore how subjective experience is socially shaped, as well as how the properties of the material world—including the human body—allow people to have a sense of who they are, to shape them as subjects. Rather than imposing ideas on the constitution of the self, I inquire into how the Pume conceive of personhood. In this sense, I echo the claim that autobiographical and

biographical narratives and narrative practices like dreaming and sharing of dream experiences and visions as well as the experiences related to shamanism are fundamental to the creation of historical consciousness among Lowland South American indigenous peoples (Oakdale and Course, 2014, p. 6).

Amidst experiences of illness, perceived by the Pume as liminal states in which uncomfortable and undesired processes of transformation of the self take place, metaphors emerge to give meaning to an undetermined identity. Metaphors are, in such situations, "the predication of a sign-image upon an inchoate subject," to whom they grant identity (Fernandez, 1974, p. 120). As James Fernandez (1974; see also 1965) points out, the same expression can take on different communicative purposes depending on the circumstances. It could be a sign-image, a signal or a symbol. My analysis focuses on sign-images—those "token[s] of communication" that "are pregnant with felt but unconceptualized meanings" (Fernandez, 1974, p. 120). Sign-images, then, account for those preconceptualized relationships that conceivably emerge between a word and a subjective experience I referred to above. They give people a sense of identity that they otherwise find difficult to have in situations of indeterminacy or crisis, like the experiences of illness. Sign-images can remain over time and yet tell much about similar experiences that are, however, engendered in disparate situations that emerge in a world that is continuously changing.

The identity obtained by the predication of sign-images onto the subject is, nonetheless, circumstantial. Healing is possible through the predication of other metaphors upon the subject, a task that, as I will show, Pume singers can efficaciously undertake. Drawing on Fernandez, I argue that such metaphors that singers convey in ritual discourses and practices "move inchoate subjects into an optimum position in quality space" (ibid., p. 124). This movement, attained by metaphors, relocates the subject from an indefinite state—

are they an animal?—to a certain mode of being, a person, more content, wiser. In sum, metaphors resituate us—they change the tropes by which we experience the world—and are ultimately based on sensory experience. When making sense of others' experiences, the task is to find the multiple pathways possible between perception and poiesis. As the experiences of the Pume singers will show, this is not an easy undertaking, but it is a vital one.

CHAPTER 2

THE PUME PEOPLE

2.1. The Pume people

The Pume are an egalitarian society that inhabits the Venezuelan Llanos, in the state of Apure. They live in small communities located on the riverbanks of, and the interfluvial areas between, the Arauca, Cunaviche, Capanaparo, Riecito, Meta and Cinaruco rivers (Figure 1). The last population census in Venezuela took place in 2011. According to this census, the Pume have a population of around 9,840 people, constituting 85 percent of the indigenous population of the state of Apure. Their language—pume maĕ—has been classified as isolated (Adelaar and Muysken, 2004), although it has been suggested that it might be related to the Chocoan language family (Pache, 2016).

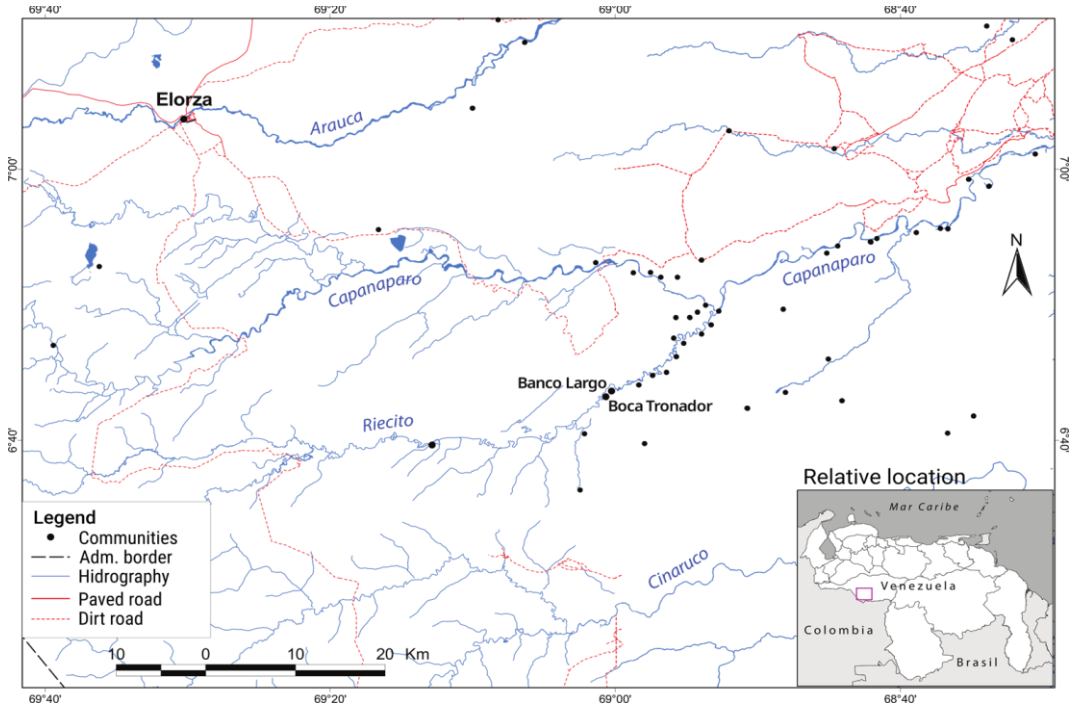

Figure 1. Location of the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, Riecito river, Venezuela (originally published in Saturno and Zent, 2016)

The historical written sources indicate that the Pume have traditionally inhabited the area delineated above. In the seventeenth century, the Dominican priest Jacinto Carvajal (1956, p. 177), in his account of the Spanish Captain Miguel de Ochogavia who carried out an expedition along the Apure River until reaching the Orinoco, mentions the Pume as one of the peoples that inhabited the riverbanks of the Arauca River. Later, in the eighteenth century, the Jesuit priest Agustín de Vega located Pume territory between the Meta and Cinaruco Rivers. As he wrote, "[t]he Yaruro [Pume] nation populate the banks of the Meta River, from the mouth of the Casanare, to the north, until it reaches the Cinaruco River, which runs into the Orinoco a day downstream from the mouth of the Meta, and Apure" (P. Agustin de Vega, 1750, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 91).

The Pume people have a very mobile way of living. Nevertheless, in the second half of the twentieth century, they became more sedentary than they had previously been. Mitrani (1975), who did field research among the Pume in the 1970s, estimated that around 30 years prior to his visit, the Pume who were living along the Capanapaparo and Riecito Rivers had gone through a process of sedentarization. Orobitg (2014) believes that such a process of sedentarization actually started with the foundation of the Pume community of Riecito on the Riecito River in 1959.

Nowadays, the Pume live in independent, sedentary communities (see also Leeds, 1960). The majority of those communities are small, constituted by one to three extended families, but there are also larger communities located on the banks of the Arauca, Capanaparo and Riecito rivers. Production and consumption of foodstuffs and goods are organized within the extended family, with all members contributing equally. Reciprocity between extended families living in the same community is expected. Unfulfilled expectations in this sense are normally the cause of illness experienced as pain by the person

who is perceived as greedy. Most of the communities, although not all, have a captain, an authority inherited from colonial time, whose current role is to be spokesman in interactions with members of the state, such as local authorities and military men. Captains have, however, no particular leadership in everyday life affairs inside the community. Social status differentiation is tenuous. Status ranking becomes apparent only in situations of crisis, whether social or individual, when people seek guidance from experienced—usually elderly—singers (*ĉiaŋoame* [masc.] or *ĉiaŋoañi* [fem.]).

Relations between communities are primarily based on kinship. Members of the same kinship group living in different communities pay frequent visits to each other. As Leeds (1960, pp. 3-4) points out, kinship ties are not a matter of consanguinity or marriage only, but are also assigned by choice. Bonds between Pume communities are further reinforced by the regular travels of singers. Some singers are well-known in different communities, where they are invited to perform healing rituals (*tõhe*).

2.2. Field research

The ethnographic materials that constitute this research were collected in the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, Riecito River, between December 2018 and October 2019. However, I first became familiar with the Pume people in 2009 through a young Pume man, Victor Abreu, while I was working for a conservation project funded by the Venezuelan Ministry for Agriculture and Lands. Out of my acquaintance with Victor grew a long-lasting friendship, not only with him but also with other Pume young men that worked with me on this project. These relationships awakened my curiosity about the Pume, their language and their ways of living.

The project we were working on was intended to restore endangered populations of *Podocnemis expansa* (En. Arrau turtle) and *Crododylus intermedius* (En. Orinoco crocodile) living in the major tributaries of the Orinoco River in the Venezuelan state of Apure. I had just completed a degree in biology and had been employed in this project to take care of the turtle and crocodile specimens, from their early stages of life until they were ready to be reintroduced into the rivers, and Victor was my assistant. Victor not only collaborated with me but had also taken over many responsibilities in other projects. One of them was aimed at audiovisually documenting agricultural and craft practices among the Pume. Victor's job was to translate into Spanish what Pume men and women in the recordings were saying. I became immediately fascinated with the Pume language, mostly because this was my first close experience with an indigenous language. As time passed, Victor and I got to share many stories of our lives. I grew eager to know his community and family, to participate in the lives of the Pume people, and to learn their language. After six months working with Victor, I went back to Caracas resolved to pursue postgraduate studies in anthropology in order to be able to go to his community, Boca Tronador.

I went for the first time to Boca Tronador and Banco Largo in August 2010, staying there for just one week. My purpose was to meet the captain of the community, José Romero. Once there, I realized that there was another Pume community located in the vicinity, Banco Largo (see Figure 1), and I decided to meet people from this community as well. During this first visit, I met Julio César Díaz and his father, Hipólito Bello, who were to become important collaborators.

With José Romero's help, I was able to meet many of the families of Boca Tronador with whom I became acquainted later on. During this first visit, I met Danny Ratia Flores and Carelys Sánchez Zuñiga, a young couple with three children, who would become my hosts in

subsequent visits to the community while I carried out the field research for my master's thesis. My master's thesis focused on Pume ethnoecology and historical ecology, and I was particularly concerned with understanding their agricultural practices. Between 2010 and 2014, I would spend a total of six months in the community. During this time, I conducted ethnographic research through participant observation. I mainly engaged in the tasks of gardening—from slashing to burning to sowing—and gathering fruits and tubers.

Predictably, soon enough my experience among the Pume made me rethink many of my assumptions. I went there assuming that there was something that could be called "the material conditions of life" that all humans share independently of culture. My interest in agriculture was, in fact, due to my desire for the Pume to have better nutrition. What became clear to me after sharing time with them in their gardens was that manioc plants were as important as tobacco plants. I understood, then, that food does not only nourish Pume bodies. In fact, if you were to estimate the importance of a cultigen for an indigenous group based on the attention it receives, I would say tobacco is the most important cultigen for the Pume. The best places in the garden—the most irrigated ones—are invariably reserved for tobacco plants. These plants receive gentle care from when they are just small seedlings up until their harvesting. The reason why these plants are so important to the Pume is that they are indispensable when it comes to establishing communication with spiritual beings—*tio* (healers' auxiliary spirits) and *otę* (creator gods)—who come to this realm to smoke tobacco. Having good relationships with spiritual beings is something that the Pume value, because on these relationships depend their good health and proper sociality.

During my stays among the Pume, it also became clear that they had a particular understanding of dream experiences. For them, dreams were not just compilations of images in people's heads without any relevant consequences for their waking lives. They were, rather,

experiences in themselves, as vivid and significant as those people have when awake. Most importantly, I got to hear for the first time of the idea—widespread in the Amazonian Basin—that people could become sick while dreaming, and that healing is promoted by singers who serve as mediators in the spiritual world to restore the health of the sick person. Fascinated with this idea, during my stays among the Pume I started attending many healing rituals. This research study grew out of this first interest I had in healing practices among the Pume. Although my focus is mainly on the *tõhe* ritual, a male ritual, my ethnography is also informed by my experience of participation in a female ritual called *añikui barahe* (see Chapter 3).

The data I present here have been collected through different methods. I carried out participant observation and documented my impressions in notes. My field notes proved to be a valuable source of information throughout the writing process. Another method of documentation was the recording of songs during the *tõhe* ritual. Also, I was able to record a considerable number of prayers (*ñõto*) (see Chapter 4) with the help of Samuel Elis Romero (Korobay), who was interested in preserving such recordings for himself. I conducted in-depth interviews with singers of different ages and levels of expertise: Luis Ojeda, Hipólito Bello, Carmen Teresa Romero (henceforth referred to as Doña Teresa), Dregelio Romero, Arbelys Romero, Jesús Oliveros, José Manuel Estrada, Delia Rodríguez and Juan Ramón Rojas (Maracucho). Although it is impossible to be certain how old they are, I estimate that their ages cover a range that goes from their late twenties to their seventies.

All the interviews were conducted with the help of Kenny Farfán, who assisted me and helped me to pose the questions in the best way possible. His inputs were one of the most valuable resources I had during my field research. All recordings were transcribed in the

field[15]. I checked the orthography not only with the help of Kenny but also Korobay and Luis Ostos. Being a school teacher, Luis Ostos was incredibly supportive during the early phases of my research when I was learning the language. We navigated together the intricate process of making sense of Pume grammar. In order to do so, I relied not only on Luis's own knowledge of the language but also on Esteban Emilio Mosonyi's book, *Morfología del Verbo Yaruro* (1966) ("Morphology of the Yaruro Language"). As I was participating in the everyday lives of the people of the Pume community of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, I engaged in many conversations. Although they were not recorded, such exchanges have shaped my understanding of Pume cosmology and ways of knowing. While I had conversations with many people, the talks with Marina Ruiz, daughter of the deceased Pume singer Panchita, and his son, Milian Ruiz, as well as with Korobay, Danny, Julio César Díaz and Hipólito Bello, were the most enlightening.

Although constituting today what we could identify as three different extended families, the inhabitants of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo are all related. According to Hipólito Bello1, the first inhabitants of the lands where these communities are located today were four men and their families. These men—Diegoreãdi, Ĉhetegoreãdi, Geronimoreãdi and Pedritoreãdi—were relatives. However, it is not clear how they were related. As shown in the next section, kinship ties for the Pume are not biologically determined but constructed through relationships. Thus, these four men are described by Hipólito as "pumemarã" (pume-, people, -marã, all). The Pume would translate into Spanish this articulation by using the Venezuelan localism "pura familia," which translates loosely into English as "they were all family." It is hard to know, however, their degree of consanguinity or affinity. What is important is that Ĉhetegoreãdi was Hipólito's father, Pedritoreãdi was José Manuel Estrada's

[15] An exception was the prayer shown in Chapter 4. I translated this prayer while already in Marburg. Milian Ruiz helped me to correct it and also gave me valuable insights to understand it.

father and Geronimoreãdi's was Felipe's (another important singer from Boca Tronador) father.

It is hard to say when exactly they settled in the lands currently occupied by the Pume of these communities; I infer it was during the 1960s. People remember this event as being related to, or a consequence of, the formation of the Pume community of Riecito in 1959 (see above). These four men are remembered as powerful singers. People attribute to them the abundance of fish and turtles that characterized the time when they were alive, as a result of the good relations they maintain with the water spirits (*ui nive;* see Chapter 4).

2.3. Birth, kin, affines and death

As already suggested, like other Amerindian societies, the Pume have loose kinship ties. They do not assume that kin relationships are biologically determined, but that they are rather actively fabricated throughout their life courses (see also Leeds, 1960, p. 3). Sometimes kin ties are imputed to members of other communities or extended families due to long-term reciprocal exchange of food and other resources. It is my impression that people are constantly exploring the possibility of being related to others, and that they do not have any trouble in seeing other people as "family." In sum, among the Pume, people consider kin those with whom the sharing of substances has proved to be long-term (see Conklin and Morgan, 1996; Overing and Passes, 2000; Rivière, 1984 and Seeger *et al.*, 1979 for similar assertions about Amerindian societies).

Marriages are often uxorilocal and take place between cross-cousins (see also Leeds, 1960, p. 3). Men usually work for their wives' families. They help their fathers-in-law with the male tasks related to gardening: slashing and burning. Fishing and hunting are also the responsibility of men and they usually go in parties of three to four brothers-in-law or their

unmarried children. The biggest portion of what has been fished or hunted belongs to the organizer of the party. The rest is distributed equally between the households that make up the extended family. However, more often than not, all nuclear families gather around the grandparents' kitchen, where all women cook together. Although the ethnographic record is not clear, it is possible that, in the past, the extended family used to share the same house. In the more "traditional" communities I have visited, the members of extended families live all together in the same house. In Boca Tronador, the only extended family in which members share the same house is the one of Jesus Oliveros and his wife, Amelia. Today, most extended families share a common space in the community, but each nuclear family has an independent house with kitchen.

Couples usually engage in courtship when people gather to perform the *tõhe* ritual (see next section). There are no marriage rituals; a marriage is consolidated when the man moves to his wife's parents' household. Later on, they build their own house to move into together with their children. Conceiving children is explained in rather physical terms. I have never heard of a metaphysical account for conception. Men and women engage in sexual intercourse as often as possible because it is said that penetration is meant to open a mouth inside a woman's womb (*bokhoreyö*). If, after some time, a child has not yet been conceived, the couple keep trying until this mouth is open so the sperm (*ĉuañëkü*) can enter. In contrast to what is customary in the Western world, during pregnancy Pume women are encouraged to lift and carry heavy objects because it is said that heavy lifting makes babies grow stronger.

After childbirth, both parents and the newborn should remain secluded. The couvade lasts until the mother's vaginal discharge, known in Western medicine as "lochia," is completed. During this time, the couple and child are said to be in a state of *nüri*, which is the same term used to refer to the state of menstruating women and men who have pierced their

penis[16]. Once the newborn's umbilical cord stump has fallen off, they may start having contact with the rest of the extended family. However, it is only when the woman has stopped bleeding that they can go outside and resume their normal activities. The phase of *nüri* is aimed at preventing the vital essence of the baby or its parents from being kidnapped by spiritual entities. Another precaution taken in this sense is that the baby usually wears armbands made of jet beads and tiny jet sculptures on both arms so as to prevent the vital essence from leaving the baby. These armbands are typically given by one of the women of the baby's kin, often an aunt. Unlike among other Amazonian societies (Londoño Sulkin, 2017), babies are considered among the Pume people to be human beings from birth[17]. Nevertheless, there are cases in which newborns show bodily signs that do not conform to the expectations of how a human should look. In these cases, the family looks to the services of a healing specialist. The common procedure is that the specialist pierces her tongue with a stingray's sting and spits blood all over the body of the newborn. This healing ritual usually takes place in the context of the *tõhe*. Once children start walking, it is customary for their parents to give them small shots of manioc beer, which is said to make them strong. Both blood and manioc beer are substances that make the Pume people who they are—humans[18].

A child sleeps with their mother until weaning. Once they are weaned, they receive their first hammock and start sleeping alone. Upon their first menses, girls are secluded. At this point, the phase of *nüri* is experienced for the first time. The time of seclusion is meant to be dedicated to learning prayers that protect the menstruating woman from becoming the target of evil spirits that crave for blood. Since the stench of blood, like other smells (see Chapter 3), remains for a long time in the air or on objects, menstruating women should avoid

[16] As I will show later, men tend to pierce their penis when they are having a bad time hunting or fishing, or when they are feeling despair.
[17] This is also the case among the Yukpa people (Halbmayer, 2020).
[18] On manioc beer, see Gow (2001) and Uzendoski (2004) for similar assertions in other Amazonian societies.

any contact with men. In the past, they remained secluded, but this is becoming more and more rare. What women still do is have a special hammock in which they sleep only when they are menstruating. In this way, they prevent their husbands from sleeping in a hammock that is impregnated with the smell of blood. Likewise, in those houses where there are chairs, menstruating women avoid sitting on them. Instead, they sit on the floor until they stop bleeding completely.

Women help their mothers with the chores of sowing, weeding and harvesting in the garden. They are also in charge of food processing and cooking as well as weaving and making beadwork. Beadwork is an important part of the Pume artistic repertoire. Women commonly make and give away necklaces and armbands. There is a rough correlation between age and the number of necklaces a woman wears. A significant aspect of beadwork is the sculpting of tiny figures out of jet. It seems that this was women's labor in the past, but today men also sculpt jet to make animals and geometric forms[19]. As I will explain in Chapter 3, the passage to adulthood for men is marked by dreaming experiences with *Iĉiai*, the trickster creator god. Such dreaming experiences are associated with a sickness that manifests as despair and sadness in waking life. Once men, with the help of a healing specialist, have overcome this disease, they are considered to be prepared to sing in the *tõhe* ritual. This is the moment when they receive the rattle they will use to perform in this ritual (see also Orobitg, 2016, p. 181). Normally, the father of the young man fabricates the rattle he will use throughout his life. An uncle or an unrelated experienced singer may also make the rattle (Orobitg, 2016, p. 189). In other instances, the rattles can be inherited. This is the case for

[19] The shapes of these sculptures are very versatile. Although they are usually shaped in the form of animals, they seem to adjust to people's tastes. Once, for example, I encountered the captainess of the Pume community of Las Maravillas wearing a necklace with tiny black sculptures in the shape of guns.

highly respected singers who, when approaching death, usually select a singer to inherit their rattle.

Both men and women are buried with some of their personal belongings: their rattles, in the case of the former, and their hammocks in both cases. Today, in the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, people are buried inside coffins, normally bought by the regional government. However, in the past, and as is also said to be the case in other Pume communities, people would dig a hole where they stuck two poles from which to hang the hammock of the deceased. They would place the corpse as if the person were sleeping. Then, they would cover the top with branches so the soil would not drop on the corpse.

Unlike most Amazonian societies, the Pume people do maintain relations with the dead through their rituals (see below). However, as is the case in most Amazonian societies, in order to ease grief they seek to forget the images of the deceased while the memories are still fresh. Upon death, the person's vital essence (*pumetho*), which resembles the person's body, travels to the land of the dead (*ãdeĉiadabu*) where *Kumañi* (the creator goddess) and the *tio* live. Once there, Kuma rearranges this body-shaped vitality into a smaller version so as to make it look similar to the other inhabitants of her land. All spiritual beings (*tio*) and spirits of the dead look similar. They are short, the size of a child, but with adult features[20].

The dead usually form strong attachments to the living and try to come back by showing up in their living relatives' dreams. Given that they cannot be brought back to life, the risk is that the living may be dragged to the land of the dead. To avoid this, the Pume pierce their tongues, letting the blood flow out so as to forget the deceased so that they will not show up in their dreams. Likewise, after a couple of months or years, the graves are

[20] This is the case for those people who have died a natural death. Those who have been murdered go to a different realm (*thone*). While in *ãdeĉiadabu* spirits of the dead are beautiful, but in *thone* the *pumetho* takes hideous shapes. For example, when a person has been decapitated, their eyes could be located on the chest. Also, the spirits of the dead living in *thone* feed off blood while in *ãdeĉiadabu* they eat sweet, tasty food.

reopened to see what it is inside. People say that, by looking at the remains, they can have a new picture of the deceased to help them forget how they used to look. In spite of the efforts to forget, people can sometimes dream of the dead, even if they have been long gone. When conflicts that involve the dead arise in dreams, the living can communicate with them to try to solve the problem. This is possible with the mediation of singers as they perform the *tõhe*, and other rituals.

As already noted, the *tõhe* ritual is the focus of this research. Through this ritual, the Pume relate to, and negotiate with, alterity: the dead, the spirits and the gods. In the next section, I present a brief description of the *tõhe*. Since my main aim is to look at the way the Pume people remember, this is followed by a description of the Pume in written sources. The remaining sections of this chapter focus on the relations between the Pume and Others, past and present. By presenting these accounts of their historical relations to otherness that are based on written sources, I am not attempting to establish any standard of verifiability. My purpose is to provide the reader with a general context in order to allow them to make sense of the hypotheses I propose throughout this text.

2.4. The tõhe ritual and other healing practices

The *tõhe* is the most important ritual for the Pume people and it seems to have remained predominately unaltered over the last century (Leeds, 1960; Mitrani, 1973, 1975, 2011; Orobitg, 1994, 1998, 2001; Petrullo, 1969). Nowadays, as in the past, this ritual is performed frequently. In the Pume community of Boca Tronador, hardly two days go by without the *tõhe* being performed. The ritual is often intended to heal one or more persons, but sometimes it is performed only to restore the health of the main singer. Both Leeds (1960, p. 7) and Orobitg (2001, p. 224) pointed out that the high frequency with which this ritual is

performed shows its centrality to the social life of the Pume people. Leeds describes it as "the foremost way of reinforcing social relations and communal values" (1960, p. 7), and Orobitg states that "during the *tõhe* not only are sick people healed but also conflicts, problems and everyday issues are solved" (2001, p. 224).

Over the course of a night, a lead singer (*tõheŋoame*) improvises verses that convey the conversations they hold with spiritual beings (*tio*). As they sing, the participants—women, men and children—sing backup, repeating what the main singer has already sung. The lead singer is accompanied by other singers who, sitting to their right, alternate with them in taking the lead.

Singing is stimulated by the consumption of plants with hallucinogenic properties. Men, led by the main singer, share tobacco cigars (*karãba*). The assistant of the main singer, usually his wife, lights the first cigar. After she and her husband have smoked, she passes the cigar to the next singer seated to the right. Singers also inhale *nanü* (Ven. Span. *yopo*, a powder obtained from the seeds of *Anadenanthera peregrina* (Vell.) Brennan, En. Calcium tree) and chew *hayo* (Ven. Span. *caapi*, bark of the vines of *Banisteriopsis caapi* (Spruce Ex Griseb.) C.V. Morton, En. ayahuasca, caapi or yagé). While women prepare the cigars by rolling dried tobacco leaves (*ŋãbi*) onto the leaves of *Byrsonima verbascifolia* (L.) DC. (Ven. Span. *chaparro*, En. Murici do campo), men are responsible for the preparation of both *nanü* and *hayo*[21]. By means of a communication technology consisting of a set of cords (*ĉerekaĩ*) that only singers can see, spiritual beings come to this realm (*daeĉiri*) and situate themselves above the singers. The *ĉerekaĩ* (*ĉere-* gold, money; *-kaĩ*, cord) connects the realm of the spiritual beings and the dead to the realm of the living. It is through this set of cords that the voices of spiritual beings (*tio*) are transmitted to the singer; they are connected to his mouth,

[21] The consumption of these two stimulants is mostly restricted to men. However, from time to time, women chew *hayo*. All *tõhe p*articipants, including kids and teenagers, smoke tobacco cigars. Likewise, women often gather in the afternoon to smoke tobacco cigars and to share anecdotes.

enabling the *tio* to place their own words there. It is also through the cord that the *tio* are able to drink manioc beer and smoke tobacco directly out of the mouth of the singer. It is through the *ĉerekaĩ*, then, that communication and commensality between human and spiritual beings is possible.

As previously mentioned, the *tõhe* ritual is often not explicitly intended to heal a person. Sometimes it is performed in order to reanimate a singer. When singers have not performed a *tõhe* for a while, they start feeling downhearted: "*goederĩkheakede*[22]" ("I am feeling spiritless"), they usually say. This emotional state could be better translated as "discouragement." It is characterized by a combination of tiredness, scarce interest or motivation to work in the garden, longing for relatives that are away or have already died, and/or trouble sleeping. *Iĉiai*—the trickster creator-god—is associated with these feelings of despair among singers. The relationship that exists between *Iĉiai* and singers is always explained in terms of debt and payment: *Iĉiai* punishes a singer because he has not sung in a while. Thus, the singer must sing to pay him with his song. In principle, any man could become a leading singer and, once they have reached adulthood, most men participate as singers in the *tõhe*. It is individual experience, however, that marks their different paths. Some men become more experienced in the art of improvising songs and can thereby lead a ritual, while others remain as accompanists to the main singer throughout their lifetime.

Experienced singers are recognized by people on their own and other communities not only because they are good healers but also because their performances are enjoyable. There are diverse opinions on what it means to be a good singer. It is widely accepted, however, that those singers who have gone through multiple experiences of being ill, those who have

[22] *Goe-* blood, *-de-* negative particle, *-rĩ-* adjective derivational suffix, *-kheakede* verb ending in the first person singular.

dreamed a lot and those who have often sung in the *tõhe* are the most experienced ones. They are referred to as *habeĉiahudi* (masc. sing.)[23].

Although I focus mainly on the *tõhe*, the Pume preform other healing practices. This is the case, for example, with *ñõto.* This practice involves the utterance of a prayer that could be aimed at healing and negotiating with spiritual Others but also at controlling meteorological phenomena, or witchcraft. The utterance of a prayer is always done while smoking tobacco. There are prayers of many sorts and with different purposes, and practically everyone knows and utters them. They are a form of chanted formalized speech that the performer normally articulates quietly, almost imperceptibly. In some cases, this practice takes place within the confines of the house: when women are menstruating or men have pierced their penis, or after childbirth, for example. In other cases, such as when hunting or fishing, the Pume speak prayers but they are spoken so softly as to be inaudible. Unlike the words sung during the *tõhe*, the words of the *ñõto* are not meant to be shared with others. Because of this, my knowledge of these prayers is somewhat limited. I have recorded 15 of them, but I suspect there may be countless more. In Chapter 4, I present just a fragment of one of them, and it is the only one I have transcribed and translated so far. As I understand it, prayers should not be uttered outside the context of a situation in which they are useful, whether for the purpose for which they are intended or when they are taught to younger people; otherwise, they would lose efficacy.

[23] Mitrani (1973, p. 43) defines the term *havetcha* as "[t]he one who masters…the song and is able to establish every time appropriate contact with the 'gods.'" The Pume people use another word to name singers who have attained the experience necessary to heal people (shamans). In Venezuelan Spanish, these people are known as *piache*. In *Pume maẽ*, a *piache* is known as *ĉhiaŋoame* (masc. sing.). Those men who are called *habeĉiahudi* (masc. sing.) have reached a level of expertise such that they are highly respected men.

2.5. The Pume in colonial written sources

Unfortunately, the information about the Pume in written sources is scarce in comparison to groups such as, for example, the Achagua, Saliva, Otomaco, Guamo or Guahibo. In the colonial chronicles the Pume were called Yaruro, Saruro or Yuapin[24]. They were said to have inhabited the mouth of the Cinaruco River and the plains located between the Meta and Apure Rivers (Carvajal, 1892; Fajardo, 1974, p. 329; Fajardo, 1975, p. 153; Rivero, 1883, p. 237; see also Morey, 1975, pp. 28, 29). Back then, the Pume shared territory with many groups, but their closest neighbors were the Saliva, Otomaco, Guamo, Guahibo and Chiricoa, Taparita, Amaiba, Guayquerí and Ature. Their population was numerous, although smaller than that of peoples like the Saliva and Otomaco. It is possible that, during this period of time, the Pume, Guahibo and Chiricoa together amounted to a total population of 5,000 people (Fajardo, 1975, p. 153; Humboldt, 1956, p. 234; Rivero, 1883, p. 46).

There is no direct reference to the Pume before the seventeenth century, when they were mentioned by Dominican Jacinto Carvajal (1956, p. 177) as one of the indigenous societies living along the riverbanks of the Arauca and Apure Rivers. Carvajal unfortunately does not present any detailed information on the Pume. However, he refers to two aspects of their life that are noteworthy. First, he includes the Pume in a list of groups who had cultivated fields along the riverbanks of the Apure River (1956, p. 155; 1892, pp. 203, 204); and second, downriver, when the expedition reached the Arauca River close to the Orinoco, Carvajal reported a group of Pume people engaged in their "regular walks" along the riverbanks (1892, p. 238)[25]. During the eighteenth century, the Pume were principally described as fishermen (Rivero, 1883, pp. 19-20). Although their principal trade product was

[24] The name Yaruro was apparently given to the Pume by other indigenous groups (see below).

[25] After reading the foreword by Miguel Acosta Saignes to the 1956 edition of this publication, I assume that, on the referenced page, Carvajal refers to the Arauca River and not to the Apure River (Acosta Saignes, in Carvajal, 1956, p. 17).

fish, they also traded honey, hammocks and palm oil[26] (Fajardo, 1966, pp. 320, 323-4 Rivero, 1883). By the end of that century, they were manufacturing shell money—*quiripa*[27]—like the Otomaco (Bueno, 1965, pp. 139-140), and hy were known as being knowledgeable about plants that they said had healing purposes (Bueno, 1965, p. 140). In the nineteenth century, the Pume started hunting jaguars to sell fur to the Spaniards (Humboldt, 1956, p. 233; see also Morey, 1975, p. 214). During this time, they also crafted mats and hammocks made of *moriche*[28] and arrows that they exchanged with other groups that inhabited the Meta River (Cortes de Madariaga, 1964, p. 515). As suggested by Carvajal, the Pume had a nomadic lifestyle during the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, they were described as being very mobile (Rivero, 1883, p. 20). As Morey (1975, p. 213) points out, they were comparable to the Guahibo in wandering more than other groups. One reason to believe that the Pume were very mobile before the Europeans' arrival is that they resolutely resisted living in the Catholic missions.

Catholic missions were an important component of the colonial penetration in the Llanos (Mitrani, 1988, p. 161). There were attempts to establish Capuchin and Jesuit missions early on in the seventeenth century, but their consolidation was possible only in the early eighteenth century. In particular, it has been known that Jesuit missionaries finally settled in this area between 1717 and 1730 (Mitrani, 1988, p. 159). Even though it is clear that Pume were in the missions, it is also certain that they resolutely resisted living there owing to the repression they felt toward their rituals (P. Agustin de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, pp. 91-92)[29].

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[26] Possibly from *Elaeis oleifera* (Kunth) Cortes ex Prain (Arecaceae).

[27] *Quiripa* was the name of shell beads that indigenous peoples wore on necklaces to express social status or wealth. They became a medium of exchange with Europeans in colonial times across the Orinoco Basin (Gassón, 2000).

[28] *Mauritia flexuosa* L. f. (Arecaceae), En. Buriti.

[29] It is reported in historical sources that Pume were present in the Jesuit missions of Burari (founded in 1739) and Yurepe (founded in 1742), located on the riverbanks of the Meta River; Atavaje (founded in 1765) near Carichana, also near the Meta River; Raudal de Atures, La Urbana, Encararmada and Carichana (founded in the 1750s) and San Borja (founded in 1738), all of them located along the riverbanks of the Orinoco River.

Additionally, because they were accustomed to a nomadic lifestyle, living in one place for a long time was something they could not manage well, and it has been reported that they were constantly running away from the missions (P. Agustin de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 325; Gilij, 1965b, p. 104; Gumilla, 1970, p. 132; Lodares, 1929, pp. 211-2). According to Morey (1975, p. 231), it was not until the nineteenth century that the Pume consistently resided in villages (see below). By the end of the eighteenth century, the Llanos missions had been abandoned, leaving behind a decimation of indigenous populations. This becomes apparent in the chronicles written by European explorers during the nineteenth century. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, Humboldt (1956, pp. 233, 234) refers to some groups of Pume people who lived along the riverbanks of the Apure River. Some were living in small communities composed of a few houses made of reed and thatched roofs, while others were living in small towns located in decaying Capuchin missions. Missionary activity declined dramatically shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century. Around this same time, the figure of the *caudillo* emerged in the Llanos. Caudillos were men that had attained power and wealth during the tumultuous times of the independence wars in Venezuela, when they commanded armed groups with different political purposes.

Humboldt (1956, p. 315) visited a small village on the riverbank of the Orinoco inhabited by Pume and Otomaco peoples. As he wrote, this village had been founded by a caudillo, Don Felix Rolichón, to recruit people to fight in the war, although it is not clear on which side. Later, in 1811, Cortes de Madariaga navigated the Negro, Meta and Orinoco Rivers in order to sign an agreement between the Venezuelan Confederation and the State of Cundinamarca. On his way along the Meta River, he found another village of Pume people that had been founded by the same caudillo, Don Rolichón. As Cortes de Madariaga said, “I found a great number of Yaruros, they were crafting arrows to defend the cause of Caracas

and their caudillo Rolichón against the supporters of the tyranny" (1964, p. 515). It becomes clear in this passage by Cortes de Madariaga that the Pume that Humboldt had met before were part of the pro-independence forces. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Pume were described by French explorer Jean Chaffanjon (1986, p. 123) as small groups of nomads inhabiting one tributary of the Orinoco River, a stream called Mina located at a point close to the mouth of the Meta. According to Chaffanjon, the Pume had a population of around 100 people living in this area at that time (1986, p. 156). What he saw was a camping site they used during the rainy season; during the dry season they would move constantly, hunting and fishing. Apparently, they did live in houses like those described by Humboldt, but they also used to improvise rooves made of *moriche* that allowed them just to protect themselves from the sun[30] (ibid., pp. 156-157). As Chaffanjon described them, the Pume were hiding, keeping away from the riverbanks of the Orinoco because they were afraid of being enslaved by the *criollos* that inhabited this region: "From this point on [in the Orinoco River], the Yaruros dare to go closer to the riverbanks and even navigate. Further downriver they draw away to go inland. Some villagers, under the pretext of being civilized—strange pretension—appropriate the savages, they make them build huts, cut down [trees to sow] a garden, giving them just food and paying them with ill treatment. It is not, then, odd that the *indio* flee from everything that remotely looks like civilization" (Chaffanjon, 1986, p. 156).

What Chaffanjon describes as the relationship between the Pume and the nonindigenous inhabitants of the Llanos region by the end of the nineteenth century has remained pretty much unaltered to this day. The nature of this relationship is encapsulated in the label "*irracionales*" (irrationals), used by *criollos* to refer to the Pume and the Cuiva–the other indigenous people living nowadays in this region–while they call themselves

[30] Today, I have seen that this type of construction is common among the Capuruchanos (the Pume people that live away from the riverbanks, in the savanna).

"*racionales*" (rationals). It is to the Others with whom the Pume have historically interacted to which I turn in the next section. I will describe past and present relations to those Others as they are portrayed in written sources.

2.6. Others in the past

In this section I present an overview of the relations the Pume have had over time with other groups. Some of the groups with whom the Pume interacted in the past were numerous and powerful. I particularly focus on their relationship with the Otomaco, an agriculturalist group with whom they shared territory and were grouped together in the same missions during the eighteenth century. It is difficult to tell whether the Pume called them *nive* rather than their ethnonym, but I would venture to say that they did. As my argument unfolds, it will become clear that this hypothesis is necessary to understand how the Pume people remember. From these Others—the Otomaco—I will turn to describe the present-day relationships with *criollos*. Although, as noted above, these relations have remained intact since the nineteenth century, the actors have changed. While the asymmetrical nature of these relations has prevailed, the consolidation of Venezuela as an independent state has certainly meant that the relationship has taken on different nuances throughout the twentieth century.

Given the scarcity of data, and of archaeological research that has been carried out in the Llanos (Gassón, 2008), it is hard to know about the situation and social dynamics in this region during pre-Columbian or early colonial times. Notwithstanding, the colonial sources indicate that before the arrival of German explorers in the Colombian-Venezuelan Llanos in the sixteenth century and Spanish colonizers between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this region was populated by different peoples with diverse forms of social organization and economies, forming a complex network of relationships of exchange, conflict and theft (Cassani, 1967, p. 86; Leeds, 1964; Lodares, 1929, pp. 71-76; Morey, 1975,

pp. 1, 3; Morey and Morey, 1973). I have already mentioned those indigenous groups who were the closest neighbors of the Pume. I repeat their names here in order to include other groups that inhabited the Llanos in the past. The most notorious were the Guamo, Achagua, Guaranao, Amayvo, Otomaco, Guayba, Taparita, Guahibo, Guire, Coyamo, Cherrechena, Saliva, Caquetio, Adole and Chriricoa (Carvajal, 1956, p. 155; Fajardo, 1975, pp. 97, 98; Federmann, 1916; Lodares, 1929, p. 73; Rivero, 1883, pp. 18-19, 237;). However, there were many more: The list of groups encountered by Carvajal in the seventeenth century included 105 nations (Carvajal, 1892, pp. 301-5). Furthermore, after contact, Carib groups also wandered the banks of the Meta, Cinaruco and Middle Orinoco Rivers searching for goods and slaves to exchange with Dutch and French merchants (Morey, 1975, p. 261).

When the Europeans arrived in the Llanos, the groups that inhabited the region were, then, highly interdependent. They were distributed in areas with different availability of resources and also had very different subsistence economies (ibid., 1976). Those groups whose economies focused on the collection of wild-plant edibles, hunting and fishing also obtained, by means of exchange or robbery, foodstuffs and other plant resources from groups more dedicated to agriculture. In turn, agriculturalists exchanged their crops for fish, meat and wild-plant products with other groups (Cassani, 1967, p. 172). The existence of this interdependence between groups was verifiable in their shared use of languages, religious and ritual similarities and marriage alliances (Morey, 1975, p. 303). The people that inhabited the Llanos at the time could speak up to five different languages and, in particular, there existed languages that were conventionally used only to ensure trading operations. For example, in the context of exchange relations in the Middle Orinoco, the use of the Saliva language was common, while between the Guaviare and Vichada Rivers—today, Colombian Llanos—it was common to speak the Achagua language (Morey, 1975, p. 275).

This situation changed drastically after the arrival of colonizers. Diseases from the Old World, conflicts, settlements that entailed the displacement of entire indigenous populations, the process of enslavement and missionary activity and other factors brought about a general depopulation of the Llanos. It is possible that Carib groups were also responsible for this depopulation, given their active participation in slaving. Groups that were numerous and sedentary like the Achaguas and Saliva were the most affected (Fajardo, 1974, pp. 97-98; Morey, 1975, pp. 295, 297, 299).

As mentioned in the previous section, many passages of colonial sources describe how the Pume preferred to wander instead of remaining in the missions. This was also the case for the Guahibo who, feeling compelled to return to their wanderings, remained in the missions for shorter periods of time than more sedentary groups (Morey and Morey, 1973, pp. 238, 241). On the other hand, sedentary groups like the Achaguas who used to live along the riverbanks were the most affected by enslavement (ibid., pp. 236-7). Decimated as they were by slave raids and disease, they became highly dependent on the missions to procure food (ibid., 241). But, at the same time, because they were living in the missions, they were the most afflicted by diseases. The Achaguas' population suffered such a decline that, during the nineteenth century, they were described as small bands who were gradually assimilated into Guahibo groups or mestizos (*criollos*). The Guahibo came to control the territory that had once been the lands populated by Achaguas—the basins of the Casanare and Meta Rivers. Some of them adopted a seasonal lifestyle, living in settlements during the rainy season when they relied heavily upon the cultivation of plants, and wandering around the savanna during the dry season depending on hunting, gathering and fishing. The Guahibo-speaking groups who adopted this lifestyle continue to be known as Guahibo. Other Guahibo-speaking groups

adopted a completely nomadic way of living and came to be known as Cuiva (Morey and Morey, 1973, pp. 239-40).

Summarizing, what Morey and Morey (1973) suggest is that the Achaguas were affected by enslavement and diseases brought by colonization earlier than other groups. The reason for this is not only that they inhabited the riverbanks and were therefore easily accessible to the Spanish and Carib, but also because their dependency on agriculture prevented them from fleeing. The Guahibo, being nomads, could survive by hiding in a vast land that they knew well but that was unknown to the newcomers. Once the Achaguas' population had collapsed, the Guahibo could settle in the areas the Achaguas had inhabited and also control most of the river transit, such that they became famous for their raids.

Morey and Morey's analysis of how colonization affected these two groups differently has been introduced because their hypothesis could also explain what happened to the Otomaco and the Pume. I will explore this hypothesis by giving a brief explanation of how the Otomaco lived in the past and how they were related to the Pume. The importance of this relationship will become apparent in the sections on the experiences of dreaming and being ill as ways of remembering the past (Chapter 5).

One of the reasons why Morey and Morey wrote about the Achaguas and Guahibo instead of the other Llanos groups is that their early contact with the Spanish is well documented. As they point out, both groups were very numerous in comparison to other groups. The affluence of the Achaguas and the tendency of the Guahibo to cause trouble for the Europeans earned them careful consideration in colonial written sources (Morey and Morey, 1973, p. 229). This is not the case for the Otomaco and far less so for the Pume. In fact, the oldest of the edited sources in which both groups are described is the one written by Dominican Jacinto Carvajal between 1647 and 1648 (mentioned above). Carvajal was

accompanied Captain Miguel Ochogavia in the first exploration of the Apure River. My understanding of the Otomaco and also of the Europeans' activities in this area comes in large part from Carvajal's account of this voyage along the Apure River, passing by the Arauca River just before the former flows into the Orinoco.

Before I proceed, however, I should clarify something. Morey and Morey's analysis is based on the assumption that subsistence economy and settlement patterns strictly correlate. As noted earlier, these two aspects, although intimately related, do not fully explain each other. On the other hand, even though their analysis is enlightening regarding how social and economic dynamics were reshaped during colonial times, it does not show how indigenous cosmologies were affected by those changes.

According to Morey (1975), the Otomaco were one of the most numerous peoples of the Llanos and occupied one of the largest territories. They were sedentary and had a strong agricultural vocation (Morey, 1975, p. 29), living in large settlements along rivers and streams. However, their large villages were not permanent; they had the habit of changing the location of their settlements often (ibid., p. 97).

In general, the missionaries described the groups of the Llanos as having strong tendencies towards warfare (ibid., pp. 281-2). With regard to interethnic relations, it seems that most of the confrontations were in the form of surprise raids, in which the attackers would normally come by water (ibid., p. 283). The Otomaco were notorious in early colonial times because of their bellicosity against missionaries and travelers along the Orinoco River, as well as by being the only people capable of overthrowing the Carib. They finally accepted settlement in missions during the eighteenth century. Yet given their propensity to move their settlements, they were in constant dispute with the missionaries because they wanted to move

the missions. On the other hand, the Carib started using guns, making it almost impossible for the Otomaco to confront them (ibid., pp. 285, 286).

In any case, it seems that the Otomaco were powerful warriors, and that they also had a stratified society that included slaves who had been war captives and were made to work in their gardens (ibid., p. 121). Slavery was characteristic of the Llanos in general. Children would be taken by the victorious group and put to work as another group member. These slaves would ultimately marry someone in the family of the capturer (ibid., p. 106). All activities in Otomaco settlements were highly controlled (ibid., p. 119). The villages were made up of different "capitanías," probably extended families (ibid., p. 117). Every day, men would present in front of the leader of the unit where they lived to receive their daily tasks. Most of the foodstuffs were destined to trade, and those that were for consumption of the settlement unit were distributed by the leader (ibid., p. 120). These leaders were in turn subordinated to a chief (ibid., p. 121).

Carvajal (1892, p. 222) tells of a multiethnic village led by an Otomaco chief where there were at least 3,000 male warriors (see also Morey, 1975, pp. 117-8). Carvajal seems astonished at the sight of this Otomaco chief, not only by his power but also by his physicality. As he explains, his name was Tavacare and he had many Otomaco captains as his subalterns. The village was an example of his dominance over people from many nations, not only Otomaco, which was why Carvajal called him "Emperor" (1892, p. 221). Carvajal's fascination with the chief's physical attributes is captured in a long description of his body and ornaments:

> He had a gigantic body…slim waist, perfectly shaped big thighs,
> legs and feet, well-carved nose, exquisite face, small mouth, big and
> black eyes, wide forehead matching the perfection of all his body

> parts; his hair was so long that I myself saw how his voluminous mane extended below his waist…it was braided with threads of various colors… he was completely naked, as he wore no clothes [like] any of the nations that dominate the Llanos of Apure [river] and wander around its riverbanks and those of the arrogant Orinoco[31] (Carvajal, 1892, p. 219).

He continues by describing a headdress made of varicolored feathers that he compares to a tiara because the feathers were arranged to form a triangular shape placed right in the middle of the crown. Tavacare's body was further adorned with several necklaces and wristbands made of shell beads that were worn as a symbol of social status in the Llanos region (Gassón, 2000). Carvajal also asserts that his long hair was indicative of having many subalterns and, especially, slaves working in his gardens (1892, pp. 220-1).

Through an interpreter, the Otomaco Chief let the Spanish Captain Ochogavia know that he and his crew could camp on the opposite bank of the river (Carvajal, 1892, p. 222). Tavacare retired to his village to return later alongside many people. They offered shell bead necklaces as gifts to the Spanish captain, an action that Carvajal interpreted as a sign that peace was sealed (1892, p. 223). The peace was further ensured when Tavacare recognized his own sister as one of the members of the Spanish crew; she had been captured by the Spanish and he had thought her dead (1892, pp. 224-225).

Notwithstanding the admiration aroused by Tavacare's body and ornaments, the next day the Spanish decided to dress him with such clothing that he looked like he was "in the

[31] Era de cuerpo ajigantado… delgado de çintura, formados con perfecçion grande muslos, piernas y pies, lindo rostro, nariz bien labrada, primorosso encaje de rostro, pequeña boca, ojos grandes y negros, la frente ancha y correspondiente a lo perfectissimo de el todo el cuerpo suio y partes por parejo; el cabello tan creçido que yo mismo hiçe la experiencia y vi que se explayaua y tendia el gruesso maço de ellos por bajo de la çintura… tejido con hilos de varios colores y matiçes... Venia en biuos cueros, por no ussar ningun genero de ropaje ninguna de las naciones que dominan los llanos de Apúre y passean los marjenes suios y los de el arrgoante Orinoco (Carvajal, 1892, p. 219).

royal court of our Supreme Monarch" (Carvajal, 1892, p. 230). The clothing included accessories of golden fibers and a brooch made of gold, details that Carvajal proudly emphasizes (1892, p. 230).

Social stratification and the probable existence of private property were characteristics of the Otomaco in the accounts of the missionaries (Morey, 1975, p. 120). In early colonial times, they inhabited the area that today corresponds to the states of Apure and Guárico in Venezuela and the right margin of today's Department of Vichada, Colombia (ibid., pp. 28-29). The same area was inhabited by the Pume people. In the eighteenth century, missionary activity had led the Otomaco to disperse to the south. Consequently, by the nineteenth century, they had come to occupy the lands along the margins of the Meta River (Cassani, 1967, p. 382; Morey, 1975, p. 37). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rosenblat (1964) reported having met people who claimed to be Otomaco. They practiced slash-and-burn agriculture along the riverbanks during the dry season and also relied upon fishing. Rosenblat (1964, pp. 283-6) suggested that the Otomaco became assimilated into the *criollo* population of the Llanos. However, he also mentioned that in his expedition in search of the last Otomaco in the middle of the twentieth century, he had access to notebooks belonging to Antonio Jose Torrealba, grandson of an Otomaco woman. Curiously enough, Torrealba's notes showed dialogues between Otomaco women and men speaking the language of the Pume people (Rosenblat, 1964, p. 285).

From the narratives written by Carvajal, one can gather that in the seventeenth century the Pume inhabited the territories neighboring those of the Otomaco. As the journey along the Apure River advanced toward the Orinoco, the Spanish found yet another group of Otomaco with whom they hunted. At this point in Carvajal's account, he claims that a group of Pume people were living on the shores right across the river. His description of the Pume people is

by no means detailed; the only aspect of their lives he stresses is that they used to take walks (1892, p. 238, see above)

The relationship between Otomaco and Pume was particularly close during colonial times. In missionary accounts written a century after Carvajal's journey, they are said to have shared many similarities. Franciscan priest Ramón Bueno described the two groups as having similar physical traits and habits. They shared some terms; they both made *quiripa*; they were both consumers and traders of *yopo* (*Anadenanthera peregrina*), and they also had in common the habit of piercing their tongues with stingray stings to shower their newborns with blood[32] (Bueno, 1965, pp. 138-140; see also Gilij, 1965b, p. 175; Rosenblat, 1964, pp. 254, 271). Like the Pume (Chapter 4), they also used to cultivate a variety of corn (Gumilla, 1944, p. 204) that bore fruits within a time span of two months. In an anecdote written by missionary Agustin Vega, he recounts how a group of Otomaco would pretend to be Pume just to promote confusion among the missionaries (P. Agustin de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, pp. 111-2). These characteristics indicate that the groups were close not only geographically but also culturally and, possibly, in terms of cohabitation and socioeconomic integration.

2.7. Others in the present

Today, the Pume share territory only with the Cuiva—the Guahibo-speaking group I referred to above—and nonindigenous settlers known in Venezuelan Spanish as *criollos*. As discussed in the previous section, the Pume shared territory with many other indigenous groups in the past. Furthermore, they interacted sporadically with indigenous Others who inhabited the Llanos of Venezuela and Colombia in Pre-Columbian time.. Out of all those

[32] This is still a practice among the Pume. However, people say it is less and less frequent. In general, this practice of showering people in blood is not only aimed at newborns but at every person in a state where their ontological status as human is being questioned. Showering people in blood is a way to promote sameness, to make others kin.

indigenous groups, only the Cuiva and the Pume have preserved their language and indigenous identity.

The Cuiva are known among the Pume for coming to their gardens to steal the harvest. According to the Pume, this relationship with the Cuiva changed during the time of the Bolivarian Revolution (1999-2013). During this time, the Cuiva became the center of many welfare policies through which they received processed food on a regular basis as well as healthcare and housing. This is now changing again, but it is still too soon to tell how these changes are going to be reflected in the relationship between the Cuiva and the Pume. The Pume see the Cuiva people as sharing an ontological status with animals. This is entailed in their idea that, when assuming ontological status as humans, the *ui nive*—spiritual inhabitants of the underwater, owners of the river fauna—see the *uitaperãdirõ* (giant otters, *Pteronura brasiliensis*) as Cuiva people. The *ui nive* are said to have cultivated fields of yams and corn that the Pume perceive as small fish and *yaĉoedirõ* (coporo, *Prochilodus mariae*), respectively. The idea that the *ui nive* see themselves as humans—capable of cultivating plants that the Pume perceive as animals—while perceiving the Cuiva as animals is suggestive of how the Pume perceive themselves in relation to the Cuiva people. On the other hand, no supernatural power is imputed to the Cuiva by the Pume, while the Cuiva perceive the Pume as powerful sorcerers. Some Pume men have told me that the word "Yaruro"—the name given to the Pume people by missionaries and explorers during colonial times and by ethnographers until the 1990s—is a word used by the Cuiva that means "sorcerer." I have not been able to confirm this in the ethnographic record of the Cuiva people, but Mitrani (1988, p. 160) has indicated that the name "Yaruro" was given to the Pume people by their indigenous neighbors. Furthermore, in an ethnographic study about the notions of health and disease among the Cuiva, Sumabila (2005, pp. 65-6) has claimed that the Cuiva perceive the Pume

people as potential threats to their health by means of witchcraft. She points out that, "[t]he Cuiva believe that most of the Yaruro (Pume) rituals entail some form of witchcraft that can hurt them. By contrast, the Yaruro do not believe that the Cuiva are able to practice sorcery, though as they pass they can leave diseases in the air" (ibid., p. 65).[33] Unfortunately, apart from these comments, my ethnographic data do not allow me to reach a deeper understanding of the relations between the Pume and the Cuiva as perceived by the former. In this section, I focus instead on the relations to the other Others—the *criollos*. My interest in these relationships reflects the interest of the Pume in speaking about them. Such relationships, as I will show, tell us much about relations with powerful beings in a general sense.

Criollos is a label that people from the Venezuelan Llanos and the Pume, when speaking in Spanish, use to refer to a rather heterogeneous group. It roughly encompasses: colonial settlers (referred to in Spanish as *criollos* or *racionales* (rationals); Pume maẽ: *nive*); "*blancos*" or "*catires*" (white people, normally from Caracas or abroad; Pume maẽ: *nive berebẹrea*); "*guates*" (Colombian citizens; Pume maẽ: *guate*); "guerrillos" (members of FARC or ELN; Pume maẽ: *hoai khorõhirĩdirõ*); and "la guardia" (the army; Pume maẽ: *guardia*). Because this group is so diverse, the relationships between *criollos* and the Pume people have many nuances, and understanding them would imply a monograph-length study in itself.

I focus here mostly on the relationships with colonial settlers for two reasons. First, they are the nonindigenous others with whom the Pume from the community of Boca Tronador interact on a daily basis. And second, the label the Pume use to refer to them—*nive*—is the word to denote alterity in general, as opposed to *pume*, the word used to denote

[33] Los Cuiva creen que la mayoria de los rituales Yaruro (Pume) conllevan alguna forma de brujeria que los puede danar. Por el contrario, los Yaruro no creen que los Cuiva practiquen la brujeria, sino que algunas veces pasan y dejan enfermedades en el aire (Sumabila, 2005, p. 65).

sameness[34]. *Nive* refers to any kind of other. It is commonly used to refer to nonindigenous others as well as spiritual beings–*tio nive*. In the case of white people—*nive berebęrea—nive* denotes Otherness and *berebęrea* —literally white—refers to the color of the skin. The other nonindigenous Others mentioned above are sometimes called *nive*, but that is not the only label attached to them. The closest group of *criollos* or *nive* to the Pume are the peasants who have settled in their territory to raise cattle in spaces called *fundos*, an area of a few hundred hectares, normally fenced, where cattle are grazed. They also include a house where a family lives, a milking pen and a garden. The *criollos* practice a small-scale agriculture that resembles very much the one practiced by the Pume. They are mostly illiterate and come from families of many generations of peasantry. As noted, they call themselves "*racionales*" (rationals), as opposed to indigenous people who are called "*irracionales*" (irrationals). They are called *llaneros* by other national citizens, who view them as a group with their own identity, dialect and lifestyle. It is a widespread idea in the Venezuelan imagination that they are descendants of the indigenous peoples that populated this region before colonization, and who progressively became assimilated into the national state. However, the Pume consider them recent settlers that have taken their lands without permission, which is the reason why I refer to them as "colonial settlers."

The spatial reconfiguration provoked by cattle ranching has been a long process that started in colonial times. Such a reconfiguration has meant that the Pume are nowadays constrained in certain areas, unable to move freely in their lands. They have often been violently coerced by the landowners themselves and also by members of the National Guard. Unfortunately, the participation of the latter and their alliances with landowners have not

[34] People from other indigenous groups are usually referred to either by using their ethnonym or as *pume*, with the exception of the Cuiva people, who are always referred to as "*cuiva*."

been documented in written sources, but their images are present in Pume understanding of powerful cosmological beings, both benevolent and evil.

It is very likely that in early colonial times, cattle were brought to America from Europe with the purpose of feeding the expeditionary troops (Armas, 1974, p. 34). Since it was transported by land, much of that livestock remained pasturing and wandering around, reaching lands that had not even yet been visited by the Europeans. Over time, this livestock came to constitute what is known today in Venezuelan Spanish as *cimarroneras*—wild flocks of beef cattle. Wild livestock has inhabited the Llanos region at least since the seventeenth century (Carvajal, 1956, 1892, p. 153; Rodríguez, 2007; Santamaría, 1968). As observed by Petrullo in 1939 (1969, p. 63), the Pume territory was filled with feral livestock. He pointed out that Pume people had grown accustomed to hunting cows;[35] therefore, they represented a major threat to cattle ranchers' interests, whose attacks had constrained their opportunities to hunt terrestrial animals of all kinds (ibid., 65). It is plausible that conflicts related to cattle hunting between nonindigenous and indigenous inhabitants of the Llanos date back to the eighteenth century, when the *hatos*—livestock farming spaces—were established in the area (Izard, 1986). The *hatos* are cattle ranches of tens of thousands of hectares divided into different lots of land, which are administered independently by a nuclear family of peasants. Each lot is known as a *fundo*. During the eighteenth century, besides the nuclear family that was in charge of administering the small lots of land, there were also many peons working in the *hatos*. According to Brito Figueroa (1975, p. 72), they included free black men, indigenous men and a small minority of black slaves. This continued to be the case during the nineteenth century, although with fewer and fewer slaves[36] (Brito Figueroa, 1975, pp. 290, 293). In some cases, the nuclear family would also become *arrendatarios* (leaseholders).

[35] In a narrative recorded by Gragson (n.d.), Kumañi – the creator goddess – is said to have a small box full of cows where they reproduce themselves ceaselessy (Wilbert and Simoneau, 1990, pp. 83-84).

[36] Slavery was abolished in 1854.

They would use the lands to cultivate different crops and produce meat, milk and leather, paying the owner of the lands with money, a share of their products or manual work (ibid., 291). During the twentieth century, peons were not remunerated with money but with vouchers they could exchange for products inside the *hato* (ibid., pp. 391, 487). According to Acosta Saignes (2009, pp. 97-8), laborers working in *hatos* suffered from undernourishment and chronic hunger. This century was characterized by a major depopulation related to the poor work conditions in the *hatos*. Estrada (1966, p. 19) points out, for example, that between 1956 and 1957, the actions of landowners against the Pume were characterized by "great brutality." He also indicates that, during the decade of the 1960s, Pume families worked as wage laborers in cattle ranches (Figure 2).

As noted earlier, the Pume have become accustomed over centuries to hunting cattle. Cattle hunting is the main reason for conflict between them and the landowners. These relationships have not been studied in depth by ethnographers working in the area, nor have they received thorough attention by scholars of Venezuelan social and economic history. However, Venezuelan literature provides eloquent depictions of their nature. This is the case, for example, for the well-known novel *Cantaclaro* written by Venezuelan author Rómulo Gallegos. The novel is based on the Venezuelan fable of *Florentino y el Diablo* (Florentino and the Devil). Gallegos's version of the fable portrays Florentino as a white man, the last generation of the Coronado family, owners of the *hato El Aposento*, located in the Arauca River Basin. His enigmatic antagonist, the Devil, also portrayed as a white man, becomes a mystery throughout the entire story. One is tempted to think, however, that the figure of the Devil is a reference to Juan Crisóstomo Payara, also a landowner. Payara is of the last generation of the Payara family, owners of *Hato Viejo Payareño*, a large tract of land in

Cunaviche, close to the Capanaparo River. Yet the mystery of the identity of the Devil is really never solved.

Nonetheless, Juan Crisóstomo Payara's character tells us much about power relations and race in the Venezuela of the twentieth century. Unlike Florentino, who was raised in the Llanos and probably illiterate, Juan Crisóstomo Payara was raised in Caracas, the capital city, where he became a doctor. He goes to the Llanos to escape the embarrassment of a failed love story. In the Llanos, he is regarded by his peons as almost a supernatural being, capable of healing the incurable. Doctor Payara is a man of high moral standards—so high as to turn him into a merciless avenger against those who betray his values. A victim of his own obstinacy, his character becomes tarnished with murder: His desire for revenge leads him to force the man who dishonored his name to hang himself from a tree.

Florentino, like many *criollos* of the Llanos, spends his days composing couplets in which he speaks of the beauty of the Llanos landscape and the comings and goings of its inhabitants. In one of his famous couplets, he tells the story of the manslaughter that occurred in *Hato Viejo*. Not knowing who has been murdered, but certain that a dark history surrounds Doctor Payara, Florentino's couplets describe how a Pume man, accused of being a rustler, was forced to hang himself. Although the murderer turned out to be another landowner, the fact that Florentino thinks without doubt that a Pume man was the victim says much about how the relations between landowners and the Pume were at the beginning of the twentieth century.

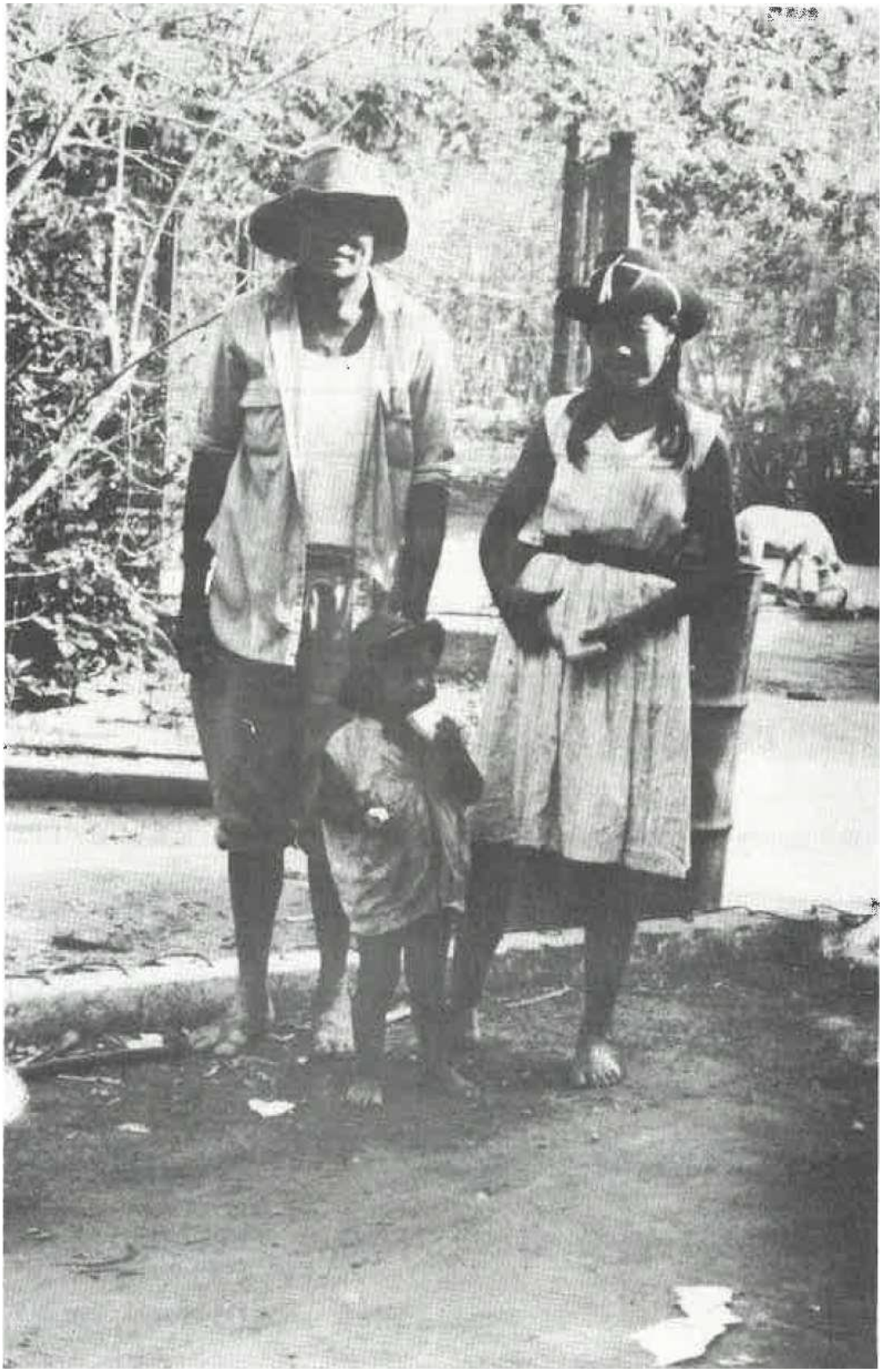

Figure 2. Pume family working in a *hato* (source Estrada, 1966, p. 18)

Even after democracy had finally been established in Venezuela in 1958, the power relations remained inextricably linked to land ownership. The propensity for violence against the Pume people on the part of the landowners during this period is portrayed in a film called *Séptimo Paralelo (Seventh Parallel)*, shot between 1960 and 1962 in *Trinidad del Arauca*, a *hato* located on the banks of the Arauca River. Based on the literary work of Venezuelan writer José Natalio Estrada Torres, the film tells the story of an unconventional friendship between two boys, one *criollo* and the other Pume. Their relationship begins when the *criollo* boy, Enrique, hears a group of Pume singing aboard their canoes along a river that runs inside the *hato*. Aparicio, the Pume boy, is traveling with them. At first, Enrique is scared to approach Aparicio, but soon he realizes that they can be friends. As soon as the owner of the *hato* becomes aware of the presence of the Pume families, he approaches them. He tells them that he is a good man and that, unlike the other landowners of the area, he will allow them to camp on his land. The story unfolds with descriptive images of the lives of the people of the Llanos: Skillful horsemen herd cattle and celebrate at the end of chores with a barbecue in which couples dance, as is customary in the region.

The narrative reaches a peak when a white-skinned man with a strong accent crashes the party. People call him "*el musiu*," an adaptation of the French word "*monsieur*"; this word is commonly used in Venezuela to refer to a foreigner. The man has come to talk to one of the peons with whom he has a deal: The peon has promised him to sell him some cows under the table at a good price. Enrique, the *criollo* boy, hears the men negotiating. The white man tells the peon that he is not willing to seal the deal unless he burns the Pume camp, and the peon realizes that the boy has heard everything. Fearing he could tell the landowner, the peon ties Enrique and threatens to kill him if he gives him away. Enrique escapes and heads to the Pume camp, finding Aparicio on his way there. The two boys take a canoe and paddle as fast

as they can to arrive at the camp before the white man and his peons. They inform the Pume people so they can run away along the river, but some Pume remain hiding in the vicinity of the camp. The *musiu* and his men arrive and burn the Pume huts, and the film ends when the white man and his lackeys are shot with arrows by the Pume.

Cantaclaro was written in 1934 during the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez that spanned from 1908 until 1935. As a strong advocate of democracy, the literary work of Rómulo Gallegos is read as a critique of Gómez. Political and economic power have been so inextricably linked in Venezuelan history that it is important to make some comments on this point, especially because the idea of the state and its institutions informs the explanations that the Pume give of their cosmologies.

One reason why large territories were amassed by one person or family is that by accumulating land they would also have a larger herd of cattle. Since the livestock was dispersed all over the Llanos lands, some landowners founded their cattle ranches in a way that when they were granted larger plots of land, they would also enlarge their herds of cows (Brito Figueroa, 1975, p. 72). From the sixteenth century and right up until the eighteenth century, the *Cabildo* was the colonial institution in charge of granting lands to establish cattle ranches (*hatos*) and plantations. The allocation of lands was conditional on the petitioner's political influence and was hereditary (Armas, 1974, p. 63; Brito Figueroa, 1975, p. 71; Carvallo, 1985, p. 19). During this time, landowners not only benefited from the sale of livestock but also exploited wild resources, with the sale of caiman skins, heron feathers, capybara meat and fish benefiting them economically (Carvallo, 1985, p. 23).

During the nineteenth century, cattle ranching in the Llanos continued to flourish. Between 1830 and 1930, extensive stock farming was the main economic activity of this region (Carvallo, 1995). After the wars of independence, many lands were expropriated by

the nascent state and allocated to the independence leaders. Although this meant a change in the composition of the group of landowners, the lands remained in the hands of a few (Brito Figueroa, 1975, p. 210; Carvallo, 1995, p. 17). According to Brito Figueroa (1985, p. 156), this was the cause of the class conflict in the nineteenth century that led to the Federal War in Venezuela (1859-1863). The disputes that took place during this time, however, only contributed to changing once again the surnames of the landowners, but not the fact that land was distributed among a small minority (Brito Figueroa, 1975, p. 295).

Further south of the Arauca River, where the Capanapaparo and Riecito Rivers are located, places like *hatos* have never existed, but most of the men with whom I have talked have been laborers in these places (see Figure 2). It is still very common for Pume men, once they marry, to spend between two and three months each year working as peons for landowners, either in Venezuela or Colombia. Since they are not skilled in livestock farming, they are often employed to help with maintenance work or crop cultivation and harvest. However, the ethnographies of the Pume written throughout the twentieth century are not very descriptive of their relationships with landowners.

CHAPTER 3

PUME WAYS OF PERCEIVING, LEARNING AND KNOWING

Drawing on historical written sources and Venezuelan literature, in the previous chapter I have described the nature of the relationships between the Pume people and other indigenous societies in Colonial time as well as of the current relations between the Pume and the Venezuelan national society. These sources depict such relationships as perceived by Catholic Missionaries and Venezuelan nonindigenous people. In this chapter I want to offer a description of how the Pume perceive alterity. This description ultimately allows me to reflect on and discuss Pume notions of personhood and the body. This time, alterity presents as powerful spiritual beings, *Iĉiai*—the trickster-god, and the *tio*—the ancestors of the Pume people and healers' auxiliary spirits. As will become clearer further on in this chapter and in Chapter 5, the engagement with these powerful others reflects native understandings of their relations to others—humans and nonhumans—in the past as well as in the present.

The general idea I want to convey is that historical consciousness not only alludes to how people situate themselves in time but it also suggests how they build a sense of belonging to a community of people with a shared history[37]. In other words, I want to prove the hypothesis that the way people perceive and approach others says much about how they conceive history. In fact, the discipline of history (and anthropology) is concerned with studying the "Other"—people from a different time (or place) (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 16). Pume understandings of who they are in relation to alterity are central to my analysis. I address the issue of social identity and difference in two distinct yet complementary ways: by

[37] The sharing of a common past as an element in the construction of national identities, as understood by Anderson (1991), has been central to much anthropological research on memory and historical consciousness.

showing how the Pume attach sensory characteristics to themselves and to others and, following a Maussian perspective, by exploring how they define personhood.

Since anthropologists have found that there is a "continual interplay between sensuality and sociality" in different cultural contexts, Howes emphasizes the importance of delving into "the social, as well as the conceptual, dimensions of perception" (2003, p. 56). Howes's assertion proves to be useful for understanding how the Pume make sense of their relations to others, both humans and nonhumans. How is it, for example, that certain sensory modalities are more revealing than others when it comes to knowing and understanding social sameness and otherness? But also, how is that a conjugation of sensual modalities is the only way through which certain kinds of social relations become possible? On the other hand, how do the Pume conceive of personhood? How do they deal with the crisis of identity often associated with illness among Amazonian indigenous people? What do such crises tell us about transformation, social change and historical consciousness?

Besides the assumptions of Western historiography discussed in Chapter 1—a reified past, the linearity of time, chronology and temporal progression—the existence of only one verifiable reality is constitutive of the discipline of history. In this chapter, I will approach the issue of factuality among the Pume, while in the next two I deal with their notions of time. In order to do so, I will provide an ethnography of the ways in which the Pume people perceive, learn and know. The processes of perceiving, acquiring and producing knowledge among them are as much individual as they are collective. Like other Amerindian societies, the Pume understand knowledge as a mixture of practical skills acquired through practice and insightful understanding of the world that is attained during dreams and altered states of consciousness (Brown, 1985b, p. 735).

The experiences of dreaming, singing and being ill are seen as valuable sources of knowledge (see also Orobitg, 1994, 2001). According to Orobitg (2004a, p. 258), this is so because the Pume notion of reality is expanded—compared to the Western notion of reality—by the actions that take place while experiencing a disease, while singing or while dreaming. As the examples in this chapter will show, these experiences are closely connected and they all imply a dissolution of the self (*pumaia*) into its constituents: *ikhara* (*i-*,skin; *khara-*,empty) and *pumetho*. People who have gone through several such experiences may become *habeĉiahudi* (masc.) or *habeĉiahini* (fem.), that is to say, they may become exceptionally wise.

These experiences are, for the Pume people, what McCallum defined for the Cashinahua people as "epistemological states": experiences that alter "the way a body knows" (1996, p. 359). Although, for a lack of better terms, *pumetho* can be translated as spirit and *ikhara* as body, among the Pume the notion of personhood does not assume a radical separation between body and spirit or body and mind. Both *ikhara* and *pumetho* refer to the body. Therefore, the experiences of dreaming, singing and being ill transform the way by which a *person* knows. They are liminal processes of learning in which a circumstantial dissolution of the person occurs. As with other Amerindian societies, for the Pume people, cognition and affects are deeply rooted in the body, and proper sociability depends on permanent integration between body and mind (Overing and Passes, 2000, p. 19). Therefore, experiences in which a split between the *pumetho* and the *ikhara* occurs are seen as situations where a person is not considered fully human and, consequently, is unable to maintain proper social relations with other fellow humans. Yet at the same time, such experiences represent an opportunity to (re)learn social values and to (re)establish proper social relations.

This chapter is organized into five sections that explore the ways in which the Pume people perceive the world and produce and attain knowledge. Emphasis is given to the role of dreaming experiences as well as the experiences of being ill and singing in the process of acquiring and producing knowledge. My intention is to provide an ethnographic analysis of the ways in which the Pume people become aware of, and understand, the "reality" around them, thereby approaching the issue of reality not from an ontological perspective but from an epistemological one. In the first section, I describe the notion of self and person among the Pume in relation to their understanding of consciousness, memory, agency and intentionality. In the second section, I provide a description of how the Pume perceive this and other realms. By means of examples, the third section presents detailed descriptions of the experiences of dreaming and being ill, as well as an introductory account of the experience of singing, to be expanded upon in Chapter 5. The fourth section is a reflection on materiality based on the examples presented to that point. Finally, by way of conclusion, the fifth section briefly discusses understandings of the body in Amazonian societies generally.

3.1. "Self" according to the Pume

As noted above, a person or a self (*pume*/*pumaia*) is made up of two interpenetrated parts: *ikhara* and *pumetho*. The word *ikhara* is formed by the noun *i*, which means "skin," and the adjective *khara,* which means "empty." This word literally refers to the external surface of the body, an envelope that covers the being. *Pumetho* refers to the internal self, the vital force. Orobitg defined *pumetho* as the "spiritual body or vital essence" and the *ikhara* as the "physical body" (2004a, p. 253). When detached from the physical body, the *pumetho* still looks exactly like it. So, for example, the immortalized image of a person in a photo is called "*pumethokĩdo*"—*pumetho*-, soul, -*kĩdo*, placed in. Pume people see photos as treasured

presents, especially those that show deceased relatives. As Orobitg (2004a, p. 253) pointed out, the ideas that Pume have of health and disease refer to the spiritual body as much as to the physical body. A person is always defined by the interpenetration between *pumetho* and *ikhara*.

The *pumetho* can circumstantially abandon the *ikhara*. This normally occurs while people are sleeping, while they are sick or while they sing. As I will show further on in this chapter, when a person is sleeping, their *pumetho* is capable of carrying out meaningful yet unintended actions. In this case, it is said that the person is not thinking (*kenãde-, kenã- to think, -de-* negation particle). *Kenã-* is the verb root that denotes conscious thinking, intended action and planning. The same verb in its negative form is used to describe the experience of singing. Therefore, it is difficult for people to make explicit accounts of their memories of dreaming or singing experiences, even though their transformative potential makes them very significant. The ability to put together a detailed account of what is experienced while the *pumetho* has left the *ikhara* becomes more refined as the person goes through more and more meaningful experiences of dreaming, disease and/or singing. The *pumetho* of experienced singers develops intentionality with time, such that it becomes able to give detailed narratives of their experiences in the mythic lands. Aging plays an important role, but it is not always defining of a person's ability to elaborate a narrative of such experiences, nor of their skills in intentionally acting in mythic lands.

Ailments are always associated either with the absence of the *pumetho* or with the presence of objects inside a person. The vital force of a person can be kidnapped and trapped by *Iĉiai*, the trickster. In such situations, the *pumetho* remains in the hands of *Iĉiai* and is subject to his desires until it is rescued by a singer. When this occurs, one, many or all of these symptoms are present in waking life: (1) permanent tiredness; (2) abrupt loss of weight;

(3) localized pain; (4) lack of motivation to engage in sexual intercourse or to work; (5) behaviors that disrupt harmonious social life, like shouting uncontrollably or running away from home; and/or (6) troubled sleep and emotionally intense dreams. In these cases, the person is said to be sick (*hãboa*), or it can also be said that they have been transformed into an animal, or that they are simply crazy (*petara*).

Equivalent notions to mind and body are absent among the Pume. Thinking and knowing depend on the relationship that exists between the spiritual body and the physical body. This relationship can be altered, but it is never understood in terms of opposition. This is common among other Amazonian societies. For example, among the Cashinahua, the so-called "body soul" corresponds to our ideas of "consciousness, memory, thought, feeling, and individuality" (McCallum, 1996, p. 358). Loss of consciousness is always related to a momentary detachment of the spiritual body from the physical body (McCallum, 1996, p. 359)

In a similar vein, Gemma Orobitg (2004b, p. 404) has explained how the Pume people understand memory and forgetting in terms of the relationship between *pumetho* and *ikhara*. As she has pointed out, their notion of memory is closely related to the ways they understand life and death. As she clearly explains, among the Pume people the verb "to forget" (*horentade-*) only exists as a negation of the verb "to remember" (*horenta-*). She goes further to indicate that:

> The accurate translation of *horenta* would be "to be home" (ho: "home", -re (rëpë): suffix that means "in" or "to", - ta: suffix that when added to a name indicates a state). "Go or be home." That is what it is expected the *pumetho* (vital essence) will do by the end of the *Tõhe* or when an individual wakes up. That is to say, it is

expected of the vital essence to be normally into its *ikhara* (body).

Actually, each and every journey of the *pumetho* to the mythic lands during sleep, disease or singing resembles death. This would occur if the *pumetho* stayed in the mythic realm and never returned.

Horentadé (to not remember) is an experience related to death.

Horenta (to remember) is synonym of life (2004b, 404)[38].

As the examples further on in this chapter will show, the Pume people tend to use the word "house" as an equivalent for *ikhara*. When a person dies her house is destroyed. This is another way to encourage the deceased to remain in *ãdeĉiadabu*, the land of spiritual beings (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). Second burials are another way to be certain that the body has been transformed by *Kumañi*—the creator goddess—into proper beings who live in *ãdeĉiadabu*, the land of *Kumañi*, the *tio* and the dead[39]. Pume people are very afraid of ghosts (*ianãbo*[40]). Or, to be more precise, they are afraid of misplaced beings. As the next section will show, there are two different ways to perceive among the Pume. One of them refers to the perception of this realm—*daeĉiri*, or the land that can be perceived by the eyes. The other one is related to the experiences of the *pumetho* in *ãdeĉiadabu* and *dodedabu* (the land of *Iĉiai*, the trickster god). Misplaced beings, then, are those beings that should normally be perceived by the *pumetho*, but that, on occasion, are perceived by a person. The overlapping of these two modes of perception can lead to uncomfortable emotional states. The perception of spiritual beings such as the *yarukha*—evil spirits who inhabit the forest—for example, who,

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38 … la traducción precisa de horenta sería "estar en casa" (ho: "casa, -re (rëpë) sufijo aglutinador para significar "en" o "hacia" y -ta: sufijo añadido a un nombre para indicar un estado). ""Volver o estar en casa". Esto es lo que se espera que el pumethó (esencia vital) hhaga al final del Tôhé o cuando el individuo despierta. Es decir, se espera que la esencia vital esté normalmente en su *ikhará* (cuerpo). En realidad, cada viaje del *pumethó* a las tierras míticas durante el sueño, la enfermedad o el canto evoca la muerte. La que tendría lugar si el *pumethó* se quedara para siempre en la dimensión mítica y nunca regresara. *Horentadé* (no recordar) es una experiencia relacionada con la muerte. *Horenta* (recordar) es sinónimo de vivir.

39 In Chapter 4 I provide Pume narratives that explain how and why this land was created.

40 Orobitg has used the word *ianambo* to translate "person." As far as I could understand, this word is used to refer to human beings that although already dead may be perceived by the living.

in normal conditions, should be imperceptible to human beings, leads to a state of confusion such that the person can no longer distinguish between dream reality and waking reality (see Chapter 5).

3.2. Perceiving

Drawing on Howes (1991), Fernando Santos-Granero advocates a "renewed anthropology of the senses in Amazonian studies" (2006, p. 2). On the basis of his ethnographic research, he points out that the Yanesha people have two ways of perceiving. They perceive by means of the senses that belong to the physical body, what he calls *corporeal senses*, and they can also perceive by means of the senses that belong to a person's "vitality," or what he calls *noncorporeal senses* (2006, p. 59).

His analysis of sensory perception and modes of knowing among the Yanesha people of eastern Peru is based on two general aspects. On the one hand, Santos-Granero emphasizes the importance of understanding the way in which people give significance or attribute an order of importance to the sensorium, that is, how sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste are arranged into a scale of importance as sources of knowledge. He goes on to describe how the senses are ranked in each of the two parts of the self (2006, pp. 62-64, 69-71). On the other hand, Santos-Granero also asserts that (physical) bodies are infused with the ability to perceive and, somehow, sensorially tuned by the noncorporeal senses. Consequently, he concludes that "from an Amerindian perspective, instead of being the cause of knowledge, bodies are caused by knowledge and knowledge is always acquired by their sensual vitalities" (2006, p. 78).

I consider the analysis presented by Santos-Granero both necessary and inspiring. However, I propose three considerations when trying to understand the modes of perceiving

and knowing among the Pume. First, since, as noted above, the Pume do not have equivalent concepts of body and mind/spirit, instead of talking of corporeal and noncorporeal senses I propose talking about perception of this realm (*daecîri*) and perception of the realms where the *tio* and *Icîai* live, *ãdecîadabu* and *dodedabu*, respectively. Second, compartmentalizing the sensorium does not seem a particularly useful approach to understand how the perception of any of these worlds operates. In particular, both dreaming of *Icîai*—or any dream for that matter—and singing imply a multimodal perception (Howes, 2014). As the examples in this chapter and Chapter 5 will show, these experiences involve a kind of perception characterized by the fusion of sensory modalities. For this reason, the narratives that describe them are usually made up of dense compositions of acoustic, visual, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, synesthetic and kinesthetic metaphors. Likewise, not only sensory stimuli but also emotions play an important role in the process of becoming aware of what is *really* happening. Emotions mediate these experiences, leading to particular trains of thought and enforcing (re)actions. Third, by concluding that the noncorporeal part of the self forges the corporeal part and that bodies are always a consequence of knowledge, Santos-Granero reproduces a dualism that separates mind from body, culture from biology, ideal from material, spirit from matter and real (what is perceived by the five senses) from unreal. This idea resonates with classical approaches in anthropology of the body that understand bodies as only culturally and socially constructed. At the end of this chapter I reflect on this idea but, for now, it is important to remember that Santos-Granero (2012) himself, as well as many other Amazonists (e.g., Chaumeil, 1983; McCallum, 1996) have pointed out that Amazonian understandings of personhood presuppose an interpenetration rather than an opposition between what we define as body and what we define as mind/spirit.

Based on the above, I argue that an analysis of notions of personhood and self as well as of perception and knowledge among Amazonian societies, in particular, and among indigenous Lowland South Americans, more generally, should assume that bodies are as much physical as they are symbolic, that they are as much naturally as they are culturally and historically produced (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987, p. 7).

The Pume people understand the physicality of the person as having voice in itself. However, this voice is not an outcome of biology alone but also of cultural and social construction. They are very aware that their "bodies" are *in substance* different from those of the nonindigenous people. The following example—along with others presented in this chapter—illustrates this idea. It is said among the Pume that when a person is suffering from twitching eyes it means that a relative will soon die, and so she will cry. Likewise, involuntary spasms in the left upper arm mean either that a conflict with a close person will arise or that something bad is about to happen. Involuntary spasms in the right upper arm, on the other hand, mean that something good is going to happen soon. One day, my left upper arm had been twitching the whole morning. So I started to get anxious. I decided to tell my friend Milián just to seek consolation or maybe to find advice to prevent the inevitable. To my surprise, he just laughed and said, "You are not Pume. You do not have to worry." His answer was certainly bewildering, bringing a peak of anxiety followed by full relief. This shows that Pume people consider themselves to be different from others, and that this difference lies not only in ideas, thoughts and beliefs but also in the material constitution of their bodies. In this sense, they are not different from other Amazonian societies that understand "bodies as material expression of the sociality that produces them" (Santos-Granero, 2012, p. 183).

3.2.1. Perception of daecîri—or the land that can be perceived by the eyes

This type of perception takes place when a person finds themself in a state where *pumetho* and *ikhara* are fully amalgamated. It is the typical perception of everyday life. As in most oral societies, hearing is a very refined sense among the Pume people. This is also the case for other Lowland South American societies such as the Suyá (Seeger, 1981), the Wakuenai (Hill, 1993), the Yanesha (Santos-Granero, 2006) and the Cashinahua (Kensinger, 1995; McCallum, 1996, p. 357). The Pume word *tãre* means "to hear" as well as "to understand."

The Llanos of Venezuela and Colombia are characterized by vast, sparsely populated extensions of savanna where the wind blows freely, especially during the dry season. When walking across the savanna, the wind constantly hums in the ears, something I have not experienced anywhere else. While for me the sound of the wind made it impossible to hear anything else, for my companions that was not the case. They could hear other people calling us from very long distances, potential prey, or birds they wanted to show me. Even from far away, people could recognize from their houses the sound of outboard motors crossing the river. Sometimes, they could even identify the owner of the boat by the sound the motor made.

In everyday life, there is not much talking. Women, for example, gather daily to prepare food, to weave, to sew or to work in their gardens. Such gatherings are very much filled with silence. From time to time, a person shares a story, an anecdote of the day. This can take a long time, while the others just listen, carefully. When the person is done sharing, a long silent pause follows. Likewise, when not fishing, hunting or working in their gardens, men spend a great deal of time in their hammocks. They are either getting some rest after a hunting or fishing night or they are recovering from a night up singing. In such idle periods of time, men remain quiet, plunged in their thoughts.

I would say that listening carefully to what others are saying is a sign of being social. One of the characteristics that people often attribute to *Iĉiai*, the trickster, is his tendency not to listen to others. In general, *Iĉiai* stands out for being contrary to a proper sociality in which listening is an important part. According to Pume mythology, he is as much a poor listener as he is a bad singer (see Wilbert and Simoneau, 1990, pp. 23-25). Those who have experienced encounters with him also emphasize as one of his characteristics his lack of willingness to listening. For example, amidst recounting a dreaming experience, Luis Ojeda would say, "*Iĉiai* is evil, he speaks too much, he does not listen, you just have to listen to him[41]." Hearing is also a valuable source of information in activities such as fishing and hunting, in which the sense of sight is as important. Nowadays, fishing often takes place during the night. Some men possess a flashlight that they use not only to find fish but also to induce them to move to places where it is easier to catch them. Flashlights are highly valued goods among men. Those who own one only lend it to close relatives and friends. Just a few Pume men own and use fishing nets; most of them fish by throwing arrows, one fish at a time. I have always had the impression that their sense of sight is significantly more refined than mine. Fish move fast and, due to the change of speed of the light entering the water and its consequent refraction, fish always seemed to me to be in a different place to where they actually were. Although obviously much finer than mine, the sense of sight among Pume men is far from being flawless, and so hearing also plays an important role in fishing. Pume men sense and follow the sound of shoals of fish. This sound is commonly presented in narratives with the onomatopoeic "*durudurudurudu*."

[41] Luis Ojeda, March 27 2019.

If “to hear” and “to understand” are denoted by the same word, “to see” (*da*) and “to know” (*daba*) share the same root[42] (see also Orobitg, 2015). Terence Turner (2012, pp. 490, 491) has pointed out that for the Kayapo people of the southern part of the Amazon forest, there are two different modes of knowing: passive and active. On the one hand, the passive mode of knowing is associated with the development of hearing and understanding spoken and chanted speech, which is consequently related to the development of skills as public speakers among men. Active knowing, on the other hand, is related to the sense of sight. Seeing is a way of knowing (or learning) “how to make and do things” (Turner, 2012, p. 490). I think we can make the same distinction in the case of the Pume people. Eyes are media through which people actively acquire important knowledge. I would say that Pume people are very observant. I shared a considerable amount of time with a 14-year-old girl who was assigned to take care of me, day and night. At the beginning, she was pretty scared of me. Since her knowledge of Spanish was scarce and my fluency in Pume maẽ is precarious, we were both very shy about talking. However, she got to know me very well. She would watch me closely and quickly knew my routine. Moreover, she could easily tell when I was having a hard time trying to perform any of the activities an adult woman is supposed to master—especially, lightning a fire. So, she would step in at the precise moment when I was in need of more help.

As is the case among Amazonian societies, the Pume people do not seem to rely on verbally conveyed teachings. They place more importance on demonstration (e.g., McCallum, 1996) and practice. Weaving and beadwork, for example, are initially learned by Pume women through prolonged observation as their mothers and grandmothers perform their tasks. Likewise, both men and women learn how to carve figurines out of black jet by observing

[42] Other words with the root *da* are: *daecĥo*, “eye” (*da-*, to see; *-e-* noun particle; *-ĉho*, seed); *daecĥiri*, material world (*da-*, to see; *-e-*, noun particle; *-ĉiri*, savanna, land).

their parents or other older relatives. This process of prolonged observation is followed by practice. Mastering these arts is possible only through continuous practice.

Eyes, on the other hand, are not only passive receptors of stimuli. They are active and can also be a source of harm to others. It is said that evil spirits (*yarukha*) are able to inflict damage upon people by looking at them with the intention of hurting them (verb stem, *kuĩtöda*-). This is also said about people. However, among people there is no intentionality involved; it can happen that a person unintentionally casts an evil eye on another person. Consequently, people prevent their newborns or small children from being exposed to the looks of so many people. As already explained, newborns, along with their parents, should remain secluded. Likewise, the eyes of menstruating women, and women who have just given birth, are potentially harmful, especially to singers, both male and female. Therefore, singers always avoid making eye contact with women in these circumstances. Looking at their eyes would make them uncreative and their songs boring.

Although I have started by describing some of the situations in which the senses of hearing and sight seem to be essential, as already noted I do not think that it is possible or meaningful to attribute a hierarchy to the senses. In most situations, all the senses are important. In subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and collecting, in which it might be expected that sight and hearing are the most important senses, the sense of smell is vital. As described by Santos-Granero (2006, p. 63), the Yanesha people rely on the sense of smell for hunting and foraging. Like them, the Pume people rely on the sense of smell to recognize when fruits are ripe enough to be collected, or to detect the presence of possible predators or prey while in the forest patches that are dispersed throughout the savanna. Furthermore, Pume people find a connection between smell and social identity. It is said that not only evil spirits but also some animals have a soft spot for the bodies of Pume people because of their

subtle scent. Caimans, for example, prefer the flesh of Pume people because of their pleasant odor, unlike the bodies of *nive* people whose diets make them stinky.

The Pume ascribe the strong smell of nonindigenous people to the way they season their food. In contrast, the Pume do not habitually add spices to their food. Also, salt is a very scarce resource, only used when available[43]. So Pume cuisine is more characterized by slight nuances in texture, consistency and subtle tastes than by intense or explosive flavors. At first glance, then, it seems that taste is the least important sense among the Pume, but more careful consideration reveals meanings that are hidden in sensory and bodily metaphors. When sharing a meal, people do not say much about their food, but they always make sure to ask *goe?* ("is it tasty?"). If a person does not find their food tasty, the answer will be *goede* (goe-, "tasty" (or sweet); -de, negative particle). *Goe* also means blood, so *goede* also means "bloodless." If a person feels disheartened or spiritless they will say *goederĩkheakede*. This utterance could be literally translated as "I feel as if I have not blood," but it actually means "I feel spiritless." Feeling discouraged is one of several reasons why a singer might feel the need to perform a *tõhe* ritual. This emotional state could be better translated as discouragement. As already said (see Section 2.4), people in this state are constantly tired; they can also experience a lack of interest or motivation to work in their gardens. Likewise, they could become mournful for relatives that have died some time ago, and/or they can experience insomnia or intense, disturbing dreams.

Another common use of the root *goede-* is in the word *goededa. Goededa* is an utterance that people commonly use to let their interlocutors know that they think what they are saying is just "nonsense." Moreover, as far as I am aware, the Pume people distinguish

[43] Nowadays, however, some people do grow chili pepper plants (*Capsicum* sp., *hurarea mererea to*, lit. "plant that is added to food") and oregano (*Origanon vulgare*, *phũda goerĩpea*, lit. "the leaf that has flavor"). They have also started to use wild coriander (*Eryngium foetidum*) when they found some while visiting the nearest town. Therefore, some people have started to buy and use these and other seasoning, such as garlic.

two other flavors besides sweet (*goe*): bitter (*ẹkara*, normally associated with the type of manioc they use to make manioc bread, *ẹkara paẹ*) and acidic/salty (*ĉorõpa*, where *ĉo-* is also the root of the word *ĉoame*, "angry"). I would say that subtlety characterizes the Pume's taste as much as their dispositions. It is not common to witness displays of effervescent or volatile emotionality; their characters are rather steady.

Finally, women rely on the sense of touch to properly select plants that they use to weave hammocks, mats, small bags, baskets and fans. Example of such plants are *baito* (Ven. Span. *macanilla*, *Astrocaryum jauari* cf. Mart., Arecaceae, En. Palm tree) and *thoto* (*moriche*, *Mauritia flexuosa*, L. Arecaceae, En. Buriti). Likewise, touch is a medium for obtaining important information during the process of extracting fibers and spinning threads. Both *A. jauari* and *M. flexuosa* are used among the Pume people to obtain fibers, though extraction of fiber entails different processes for each of them. In the case of *A. jauari*, fibers are extracted from the leaflets by beating them with a wooden mallet until the surface is completely removed. In this way, the smooth and flexible fibers are extracted out of the firm chitinous surface of the leaflet. In the case of *M. flexuosa*, it is the cuticle that is used to weave. The leaves are dried in the sun until it is possible to separate the cuticle from the rest. Normally, Pume people—as well as nonindigenous people—prefer hammocks that are made of *A. jauari* over those made of *M. flexuosa*, as those made from *A. jauari* are smoother (see also Gragson, 1992).

Hammocks are very personal objects (Figure 3). Among the Pume, people do not often hug or touch each other. Normally, women show affection to their children by touching them until weaning, around the age of two. Once they are weaned, children acquire their first hammock and stop spending the night with their mothers. From this time on, children become more independent from their mothers and do not spend the day in their laps or arms. The skin

(*i*) is what is left of a person while sleeping, singing or being ill. As I will show later, the skin is important in defining subjectivity. It is the most external surface of an individual and, therefore, the most susceptible to being transformed or affected through interaction with others, human and nonhuman. For this reason, I suggest the skin is, for the Pume, a sort of canvas where experiences are inscribed (see also Chapter 5).

In general, the perception of this world, although susceptible to being fine-tuned through experience, is by no means infallible. Therefore, Pume fishers always carry tobacco with them to share with the inhabitants of the depths (*tarēkhorõme, ui nive* or *eterihirĩdirõ*), the owners of fish. Before a fishing night, women prepare cigars and men utter prayers. In order to guarantee a successful fishing night, they must engage in communication with these beings. The interaction with them is mediated, however, by the senses of the *pumetho*, because it does not take place in this realm.

Figure 3. Marielis (Doña Teresa's granddaughter) relaxing on her hammock.

3.2.2. Perception of the ãdeĉiadabu and dodedabu

While sleeping or being ill, any person is able to undergo a dissociation between her *pumetho* and her *ikhara*. In such situations, the *pumetho* can abandon the *ikhara*, going through a myriad of experiences in the mythical lands. When this happens, the *pumetho* is endowed with agency, but its actions are not shaped by intentionality and are only vaguely remembered. While singing, both inexperienced and experienced singers go through a separation of their self into its two components. Notwithstanding, unlike inexperienced singers, the *pumetho* of experienced singers do possess intention and purpose, and they are able to recall joyful events as well as ordeals in the mythical lands. In this section, I describe how perception operates in these realms. While singing, singers emulate the life of spiritual beings. Experienced singers, in particular, over time develop perceptive capacities similar to those of the *tio*. For this reason, I also describe how these beings are said to perceive, as it helps to understand perception among experienced singers.

As noted, I find it difficult to establish a hierarchy among the senses of the *pumetho*. The richness of the experiences that the *pumetho* undergoes when traveling is only perceptible by a combination of all the senses. Furthermore, proprioception and the sense of motion play a significant role (see Chapter 5), and it is ultimately intuition and emotions that endow such experiences with meaning.

As described earlier (Chapter 2), dreaming of *Iĉiai* marks the passage to adulthood among men. It is precisely *Iĉiai*'s highly visual mutability—with the experience of facing him being the main source of knowledge for a singer—that brings into question whether sight could be considered the most important sense for perceiving the mythical lands and their inhabitants. During the initial stages of their development as singers, men can hear the *tio* and

also, to some extent, feel their presence[44], but their ability to see them is limited. The sense of sight of the *pumetho* develops with time. Only experienced singers can reproduce through engravings in their rattles (*ɲ̃oe*) what they have seen during their journeys to the mythical lands (see Chapter 5).

It is plausible to say that like other Amerindian societies, the Pume people give a central role to aural perception of the nonhuman realms. Communication between the *pumetho* and *tio* always takes place in either sung speech, spoken speech or spoken-and-chanted speech (see Hill, 1993 for a similar assertion about communication with spiritual beings among the Wakuenai)[45]. In particular, being able to hear the *tio* during the *tõhe* ritual and therefore to reproduce their songs is a clear sign of being knowledgeable about the nonhuman realms. Unlike among other Lowland South American societies (see, for example, Gow, 1991, p. 236), however, the Pume do not learn songs from particular spiritual beings while sleeping or while in other altered states of consciousness[46]. As far as I understand, when people explicitly say "the *tio* gave me the song," they are referring not to the lyrics of the song but to the ability to sing. This ability is given to people in two different ways: (1) by learning with experienced singers who, by means of visionary dreams or other altered states of consciousness, become entrusted by the *tio* with instructing someone in the art of singing; and (2) through personal experiences of intense dreams/diseases. In both cases, in the early phases of learning, apprentices normally have to deal with intense fear inasmuch as performing a *tõhe* ritual entails the disintegration of the self, with the ever-present risk of

[44] In this part I am considering only the experience of men, because it is the most common. Women also go through similar experiences of being punished by *Iĉiai*. But, unlike men—who go through such experiences when they are young—women enter into contact with *Iĉiai* in old age. The process that leads to women eventually becoming singers starts when they are menopausal.

[45] By spoken-and-chanted speech I refer to the prayers described in Chapter 4.

[46] People do learn prayers by heart. Prayers are a form of chanted speech and they are known by most people, not only singers (see Chapters 2 and 4).

being unable to restore its unity. This feeling fades away with time and practice, as singers learn how to move, communicate and negotiate with the *tio*.

The journeys to the mythic lands are normally characterized by aesthetic pleasure, both visual and aural. One of the qualities that singers often attribute to the mythic lands is that they are filled with pleasant sounds. When singers arrive at the mythic lands they can hear the *tio* singing, but also their houses are said to talk or to emit enjoyable sounds. The sounds that singers perceive in these lands are described as very pleasant. A typical description would be:

> The houses of the *otẹti* [most powerful spiritual beings] look beautiful, there are pleasant sounds there. When the sun rises, it is very bright there. When the sun rises, there are many sounds. That is the land where singers sing. While singing, singers can imagine (*hãdikheaŋoadirõ*) how everything sounds as they come back [from the mythic lands][47].

Old, experienced singers say that everything is able to talk in the mythic lands. They especially make reference to the parts that make up the houses. According to them, the wood slats that serve as pillars of the houses can talk. Orobitg (2015, p. 137) makes the same point when she describes the experience of female singers while performing *añikui barehë*, a female healing ritual. In this ritual the travel of the *pumetho* is catalyzed by the continuous movement back and forth of the hammock that is promoted by the singer's assistant (masc. *ñomereriĉiame, fem. ñomereriĉiañi*) (see also Orobitg, 2015, p. 137). Orobitg quotes the testimony of an experienced Pume female singer that illustrates how visual and aural pleasure

[47] Juan Ramón Rojas, "Maracucho," June 28 2019. "Otẹtiha bedi khürĩdi arẽkheadi. Ĉhaimima ĉhia bedodi. Ea arẽkhea bedodi dabudi. Tõhe ŋoarẽã be dabudi. Ĉhinĩ bore görekheabedodi manahuĩo huĩ. Hãdikhea ŋoadirõ tõhe ŋoahirĩdirõ."

as well as movement and synesthetic perception are characteristic of the experience of singing among the Pume:

> Here (in this land), we are lying in the hammock as we are
> performing the song of the little sister, as we swing we (our *pumetho*)
> arrive there where a very beautiful voice is heard. The houses swing
> there. The house has a beautiful voice as it swings. (Florencia,
> Riecito, 1993) (Orobitg, 2015, p. 137, my translation)[48].

Besides this fusion of sounds, visions and movements, the sense of smell also plays an important role in the relationship between spiritual beings and human beings. According to the Pume, blood has a strong smell whose traces remain perceptible on bodies and places for a long time. Spiritual beings have a highly attuned sense of smell. They can, for example, sense the smell of blood in places where there has been a menstruating woman, on objects that have been touched by a menstruating woman, or on people who have been in contact with a menstruating woman, even if the woman's presence in the place or her contact with the people or objects happened some time ago. While some spiritual beings avoid contact with the smell of blood, others—especially the *eterihirĩdirõ*—seem to crave for it. Nonindigenous people are also said to be avoided by spiritual beings because of their strong smell. As previously mentioned, our strong, undesirable smell is said to come from our routinized consumption of seasoned food. Such a smell, therefore, prevents us from establishing communication with spiritual beings as well as from being harmed by them.

The *tio* also have an aversion to the smell of digested fish. According to Pume people, there are heavy foods and light foods. Heaviness is related to the strength of the odor that is released when food is decomposed, as well as to how quickly this odor dissipates (see also

[48] Aquí (en esta tierra) estamos acostadas en la hamaca cuando hacemos el canto de la hermana menor, y meciéndonos llegamos (nuestros pumethó) allá donde se oye esta voz tan bonita. Las casas allá se mecen. La casa tiene una voz muy bonita mientras se mece (Orobitg, 2015, p. 137).

Mitrani, 1973, p. 47). Fish is considered to be "heavy." When digested, a fish is said to develop an unpleasant odor that does not go away easily. Prior to performing a *tõhe* ritual, the main singer should avoid consuming fish because digesting it would make him dreadfully smelly; he would therefore be rejected by the *tio* and be unable to travel to their lands. When this happens, the participants of the ritual usually describe the singer as being "heavy." That is to say, he is boring, not very creative and does not encourage people to dance or sing along. This food proscription must be well followed by women who are menstruating and parents who have just had a child. As I will show, pork also belongs to the category of heavy food. However, beef, game meat, certain species of turtle and caiman (Ven. Spanish *babo, Caiman crocodilus*) are considered to be "light." The main singers usually fast on the day leading up to their performances and, during the preceding days, they only consume foods that are considered light.

As noted, in order to be inspired and to endure during the *tõhe*, as well as to entertain the audience, the singer must follow a special diet. For a period of time—from several months in the case of learners to a single day in the case of experienced singers—fatty, salty or hot foods must be avoided. When a singer is learning how to suck or blow pathogenic objects out of a person, it is also necessary to follow this regimen, as well as maintain sexual abstinence, for a period of months to years at a time. If a person is already skilled in healing, they must avoid these foods just the day beforehand in order to perform these treatments. This is so, people say, because spiritual beings that help the singer to remove the objects from the body of the diseased person live in a cold land. They are normally cold and avoid hot environments and foods. *Tio* do not cook; all of their food is already prepared. As Rigoberto Rodriguez says, "in *ãdecîadabu*…food is already done, they [the *tio*] do not have to cook[49]."

[49] Rigoberto Manuel Rodriguiez, "Gocho," March 23 2019.

People often claim that *tio* eat processed and packed food like cookies, cakes and bread, since they are cold, already done and sweet (*goe*).

Lastly, smell has the ability to influence and transform people (see Pollock, 1996, p. 325 for a similar assertion). *Toguererîpea* is the name of a group of plants that are characterized by their strong and pungent odor. A person interested in someone falling in love with them must go to a specialist. The specialist crushes leaves of three different plants to produce a liquid substance. While doing so, the person must utter a prayer in order to activate the substance's agency[50]. Such a prayer normally contains the name of the desired person. The liquid that is produced is used as a perfume that, although repulsive to people, appeals to the desired person's *pumetho*. The person who has succumbed to the power of the substance feels love and passion for the one who is wearing it. In many cases, it is said that the person under the effects of this odor acts unintentionally. On occasion, people use these substances to play a trick on someone.

3.3. Learning and knowing

As I have shown in the previous sections, it does not seem useful to establish a hierarchy of the senses to understand the experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing. As noted earlier, "to see" (*da-*) and "to know" (*daba-*) share the same root. As the examples have shown, sight is valued among the Pume as a vehicle of acquiring knowledge both of this and the nonhuman worlds. Not surprisingly, then, "learning" (*dabapea-*) is a process mediated by the sense of sight. However, for two reasons I do not think that placing this sense at the top of the sensorium leads to a proper understanding of Pume epistemology. First, the Pume consider dreams to be important sources of knowledge. Therefore, what is experienced in

[50] For similar examples of how, among the Shipibo-Konibo, sung speech is used to activate substances, see Brabec de Mori (2015).

dreams is treasured as valuable apprenticeships. As I will show later, sight is but one of the ways to experience dreams. This leads to the second reason, namely that senses other than sight are important vehicles for acquiring knowledge during dreaming experiences. What is more, a deeper understanding of such experiences is only attainable through a combination of sensory perception, intuition, and emotional and affective awareness, as well as a process of collective interpretation.

On the other hand, while a person can be "wise" (*dabame*, masc., *dabañi*, fem.), this does not necessary imply that they are "the wisest one" (*habeĉiahudi*, masc., *habeĉiahini*, fem.). When a person is described as *habeĉia* it literally means that this person has become light. Figuratively, this word is used to describe a person who can perform an activity with such skill that they never seem to stumble: the creative process just flows smoothly. This word is not only used to refer to singers whose performances demonstrate mastery but also to people whose ways of weaving or making beadwork, for example, look seamless. In these cases, it is not only that product that appears seamless but also the creative process itself. As the Pume explain, becoming *habeĉia* is a process that implies experience and practice. In the case of Pume singers, the experiences of dreaming and being ill, as well as the experience of singing in itself, are what allow them to become "the wisest one" (*habeĉia*-). This is not the case for other creative processes, such as weaving and making beadwork necklaces. As far as I can tell, the only two creative processes other than singing that are closely connected to the experiences of dreaming and being ill are rattle carving (Chapter 5) and storytelling (Chapter 4).

3.3.1. Dreaming

Among the Pume, there is no clear sign or stimulus that makes it possible to recognize whether what a person is experiencing during a dream has a specific meaning. As far as I know, they do not give meaning to dreams by means of using a formula; instead, there is a collective hermeneutics of dreams. When a person suspects they have dreamed of a spiritual being, for example, it takes a long process to make sure that this is the case. Such a process involves conversations with their family, with other people in the community and, in the case that consequences of the dream manifest into a disease, conversations with a healing specialist. Additionally, dreams of a spiritual being may become recurrent, especially in the case of dreaming of *Iĉiai*. In such situations, the process of interpretation is normally much longer and complex. Nevertheless, as already noted, it is indispensable for a person to go through such a process in order to become a specialist themself.

When I started asking questions about *Iĉiai*, I had a visualist focus: I insisted on asking people what he looked like. I thought that it would be easier to know what he looks like, in case I could dream of him myself. My interlocutors, however, consistently explained to me that he looks different every time, because he can disguise himself as he wishes. When *Iĉiai* comes to them, the person "just knows." After a while, I realized that this is sometimes the case; the person immediately knows that they are the subject of a punishment imposed by *Iĉiai*. In the majority of cases, however, people do not know what is happening. After experiencing the symptoms mentioned above and discussing their dream experiences with others, people develop an idea of what is happening. As a person goes through similar experiences over time, they become wiser. Becoming wiser means developing acuity for future dreaming experiences. Wiser people are able to help others to understand dream experiences and, in some cases, to heal them. In this sense, dreams are epistemological states.

My first example is a dream experience of a young man who was craving for pork. My friend Milián told me that once, when he was a teenager, he got sick because his sister had dreamed he had turned into a pig. According to common advice, women who have recently given birth should not eat pork since it is considered a heavy foodstuff. A violation of this proscription potentially entails undesired consequences for the mother, the child or any other member of the family. In this case, Isolina, Milián's older sister, had just given birth. Their mother advised everyone at home not to talk about pork or any kind of heavy meat around her. She also asked them to hide when they were eating any kind of "heavy" foods, so that she would not start craving them. If she had such a craving, she could possibly cause unwilling harm to others by means of her visceral desires, usually manifested through dreams. At some point, however, Milián could not help but tell his mother that he was craving for pork. Isolina overheard this comment and later dreamt that Milián had turned into a pig. The next day, Milián was sick. He was experiencing itching all over his body. As he said, he realized he had turned into a pig because he was always scratching his skin, just as pigs do. Their grandmother, Doña Pancha, decided to perform a *tõhe* ritual and to blow over Milián's body, so he could turn into a human being again. Before doing so, Doña Pancha asked Isolina to pierce her tongue and spit blood over Milián's body, a procedure typically aimed at rehumanizing people.

The word "*kanehö*" has two different meanings: It refers to the action of dreaming and it also refers to the action of unwillingly harming others by means of thoughts or dreams. In its second sense, this verb is most commonly used to refer to the negative effects caused by thoughts or dreams of women who have just given birth to a child. As explained in Chapter 2, after birth the newborn and its parents should avoid contact with other people until the mother stops bleeding completely, a phase known as *nüri*. Seclusion is intended to protect the

pumetho of the couple and their baby from harmful actions by spiritual beings. However, the potentially damaging thoughts and dreams of women who have just given birth are another reason why they remain isolated. Yet this is not always possible. In the past, women who had just given birth were secluded along with menstruating women in small huts that were built for this purpose. Nowadays, since the introduction of modern housing, most families do not possess these huts, and women in these states share the same space with other family members in the household. However, people are very careful to neither interact with nor disturb them, since their thoughts and dreams are potentially harmful.

Pume people perceive dreams as experiences in themselves, rather than as omens. In Chapter 5, I will return to this point when I explain one of the many ways in which the Pume people relate to time. In this section, it is important to emphasize that people's actions and their interactions with others in dreams are considered by the Pume to be as "real" as the ones that take place in waking life. There is, in fact, an interconnection or, better, a continuum between dreaming experiences and the experiences of waking life. The example presented above illustrates this by showing how bodily states lead to certain thoughts, feelings and desires as much as they are caused by them. The mother's advice suggests that among the Pume there is an awareness of the influence of waking experiences on the content of dreams. Or, using Freudian jargon, they are aware that dreams are partially made up of "days' residues." Milián was craving for pork, and could not control himself[51], leading his sister to dream of him because she herself had started craving. As a result of her dream, Milián became the object of her appetite.

The next example shows how dreams are also a way of becoming aware of existing relationships with nonhuman beings and objects. I explain how healing stones—*tio tõde*—are

[51] Research on personhood in Lowland South America has shown that bodies are made through practices by which people learn how to control orifices (Overing and Passes, 2000).

acquired by singers in dreams. *Tio tõde* (*tio*, spiritual beings; *tõde*, stones) are the embodiment of spiritual beings that help Pume singers to heal people. Maracucho, a young singer, told me how a *tio* presented itself to him while he was asleep, in order to show him where to find a stone that contained the *tio*'s vital essence:

> The *tio* showed up. They told me they would show up there. I used to dream that they talked to me. They used to talk to me while I was sleeping, I would look at their *ikhara*—bodies. This is not a lie. Aha, another one, a *tio*, he used to talk to me. So, [I decided] I would grab him while he was lying in the savanna. He was lying over a clear place. He was in a very tidy house[52]. After I took them, I placed all of them in my bag, where the other *tio* are. These [the stones] do not come [to me] just like that. They come because the *tio* allow me to imagine them. They can also come to my house, not to the savanna. Those who are not *tio*, demons[53], those who are evil, do not come to your house. If a *tio* comes to your house, you must grab him. When they come, they come in their bodies. When they are in my house, I grab them. I do not do so just because. I have to ask them first, because what if it is a demon? I have heard this has happened in other communities, that is why I do not take him

[52] Here, he uses the word *bero*—house—to refer to the place where the stone was. As he explained, the stone was lying in a place in the savanna where there was no grass around. This stone was easily noticeable, as he suspected it would be after having dreamt.

[53] He uses the word *thabeti*, normally translated as *demonio* (demon). The *thabeti* are said to be *Iĉiai*'s soldiers (*los soldados de Iĉiai*).

without asking first. I grab him only after listening to what he has to say[54].

In this example, the stones are referred to as the *ikhara* (envelopes) that contain the vitality of the spiritual beings, or as houses in which the spiritual beings live. A person's certainty that the *tio tõde* are the material expression of the *tio* is closely related to the experience of the dream. There is no consensus, however, among the Pume I have talked to, on whether these stones are *actually* the manifestations of spiritual beings in this realm. While for the owners of these stones it is clear that they are *in fact* spiritual beings, for other people they are just stones. Milián, for example, the young man to whom I referred before, once asked me if I actually believed those stones were *tio*. He said to me, "I do not understand why my grandmother [Doña Pancha] used to say these stones are *tio*. All I see is stones."

I have to confess that, when I saw them for the first time, I was struck by their simplicity. Singers are commonly very protective of their *tio tõde*, and it took a while before they allowed me to see them. A great deal of suspense preceded the first time a man showed them to me. Given they are spiritual beings, as they have told me, I expected to see carved stones, maybe representing an anthropomorphic character like *Kumañi*. When I saw them, I thought exactly what Milián would tell me later on: "These are just stones, what is special about them?"

[54] Maracucho, 27, June 28 2019. Tiodirõ yudero tiodirõ idapeadirõkoe. Kenaharẽ nüta koa ñomi hurĩpe ideyorome, adodekhia kode kanahö kanahöarö nĩboa, moahuĩo nĩboaha, dakini ikharahã maiĉhadede khürima. Aha kharemoa nüta kenaharẽ yude tiodi nüta ĉhamehẽ mitędekini, hodopaete ĉhamehẽ, be hodopaete ĉhamehẽ, kenaharẽ mitękini tiohõ. Adode gatekami tiodirõ. yudero terakoa manade khürima. heã hãdikheatinemi mana ŋõdonarã tiotidirõ, bero nüta ĉhiriropẽde khürima. Bero thabedirõ ŋõdonarãtara tiodetara thabedirõ aitĩdirõ? habo nüta beroha mitępẽĉhia tiodi. aha tiodirõ ŋõdonarãtara ŋõdonarãdirõ ikhararope ŋõdonarãmedi. Ado berope huĩ mitękini kode tiohõ habo nüta terakoa bade peahãdi ñoetarete thabetĩ gatekeãĉhiaha. Ado hãdi thaberope tarẽretara kharemorope hãditara kode tiohõ terakoa gateküa ñodemeke orẽde mitędareodeme kenaharĩ mitękinida habo tarẽte gatekamerẽ aha hurĩdi.

Another way to obtain these stones is by inheriting them from a deceased singer. They could be affines or relatives; I did not find a pattern in this sense. A typical narrative of this case would be:

> My wife's dad, the deceased, gave me these pebbles for me to have them. Then, he passed away. I took them for them to take care of my wife and my children. The *tio tõde* take care of us. Now, they belong to me. Thus, I have the *tio tõde* so they can take care of all the sick people. They heal and take away the pain from them. They take care of people in this world [*daeĉhiriro*]. A long time ago, they [*tio tõde*] materialized in this world to take care of us. The bodies of the *tio* materialize in order to take care of us. I pray and smoke tobacco to the *tio* [the pebbles] when there are many sick people. When children are sick but also when old people are sick. I do this so they [the *tio*] can look at them and take the pain away from them. They are able to take away the pain so we can live well here in this world. Everyone, those who were sick. If they did not take care of us, we would die, children and old people as well[55].

Normally, experienced singers have either inherited them from already deceased singers or have obtained them by following the instructions given by the stones themselves in dreams. As far as I could understand, since they are *tio* these stones can talk in dreams. The

[55] Rigoberto Manuel Rodríguez "Gocho", around 40, March 30 2019. Tõdehe dyorodikoa höhadi tio tõdehẽ koa kode goapeãha hudi hãboaha. Hãdeaha hudi hãboaha kode mitẹakini hidapamea. Kode ebahĩ hĩ ado urĩbo hirĩ hidapamea peahãdi. Aha, tio tõde, hidapahirĩhia ibe hidapahirĩa yoẽpe kheaya koayo. Hãdeaha, kode goakihirĩ tio tõde hirĩ hidapa hirĩa ĉhinĩ boa pume hirĩ hãbohirĩ hirĩ, hoamere hidapahirĩ yoayio daeĉhiriro. Hidapahirĩa tiodirõ idapeã daeĉhiriro pearödi heã hidato ikharaha tiodirõ. Hãdeaha, ñomerẽpeaba ŋãbi ĉhia hirĩrã tioti hãborodi, urĩne hãborodi. Ado otẹtirẽ otẹti hãborodi hudirõ hoaremere dapeãba. Hãdeaha, hudi hoaremererodi ãrõrẽ daekhearo ĉhinĩ bore hãboremẽdi daekhea hudirõ. Hidaderodi hãbodirõ Pumeboridirõ ado urĩbodirõ otẹtidirõ peahãdi.

idea that otherwise inanimate entities can talk is ubiquitous in narratives of dreams and altered states of consciousness among the Pume. The physical characteristics of these stones are never explicitly mentioned as indicating their nature as incarnations of spiritual beings. Only the circumstances and the experience of their procurement matter in ensuring what they really are.

However, I think a consideration of their physical particularities could shed some light on my analysis on Pume materialities (Ingold, 2007). All the *tio tõde* I have seen so far are very similar to each other. They are small, smooth, rounded stones. Their flat oval shape suggests that they have not been a product of human intervention, but rather that they have been transformed by the river over a long period of time (Melissa Litschi, personal communication, August 12 2020). They are old quartzites of different red and brown tonalities, and they are as simple as they are rare. The area inhabited by the Pume people corresponds to what is known as alluvial and wind plains, with the presence of dunes. This area is fairly new geologically, and its composition is the result of a process of accumulation of sediments (Huber *et al*., 2006). It is characterized by the almost exclusive presence of sandstone and sedimentary rocks (Sarmiento and Pinillos, 2001). The *tio tõde*, on the other hand, are metamorphic stones, very rare in the area.

Their rareness, predicated on their visual characteristics, is a common trait of these stones, which may explain why the Pume always identify this kind of stone as the *ikhara* of spiritual beings. However, Pume singers never refer to visual characteristics when describing the nature of such stones. Other than the way they have been procured, the only physical characteristic they emphasize as a proof that the stones embody the *tio* is that they are always cold, a characteristic not only of the *tio* but also of the land they inhabit. The Pume, then, do not find the visual features important and, other than coldness, there are no uniform physical

criteria to recognize and identify the *tio tõde*. What determines their nature is the way they have been procured: through dreams or by inheritance. Brown (1985a) made similar observations regarding the identification of magical stones among the Aguaruna, concluding that “perception is,” for them, “organized by a set of cultural conventions rather than by an objective order existing in nature” (ibid., p. 383). This is also the case for the Pume people. Furthermore, as the following sections will show, for them, dreams constitute an important mode of perceiving the reality of the world outside as much as the world inside, the macrocosm and the microcosm.

3.3.2. Being ill

The perceptions of both this and the spiritual world are prone to delusion. The most typical case of delusion takes place when a person perceives spiritual beings in the material world (*daecîri*). As previously noted, the most common examples of this type of sensorial deception are the encounters with *yarukha* (see also Chapter 5). Even though there is awareness among all people of the existence of these two ways of perceiving, as well as the existence of other realms and the possibility of their overlapping, their collapse or confusion is perceived as a source of disease. Moreover, the overlapping of realms is normally typified as insanity. It is very common for a person who is suffering or who has suffered from a split between *pumetho* and *ikhara* to be described as *petara* (crazy). This description is usually associated with the manifestation of symptoms like a propensity for violence and conflict or a disposition to insult relatives or affines. Punishments imposed by *Icîai*, which are a *sine qua non* cause of this split, are also very frequently related to uncontrolled libidinous energies that find expression in marriage issues, adultery and promiscuity.

As already shown, diseases and dreams are intimately connected to the Pume understandings of the self, personhood and health. To the best of my knowledge, from the point of view of the Pume, diseases do not precede certain types of dreams, but there are certain dreams in which the *pumetho* of a person undergoes experiences that manifest in waking life as illness. Diseases, then, are treated among the Pume as simultaneously physical and spiritual ailments. Orobitg (2004a, p. 253) has explained this approach to disease as being intimately associated with the notion of the self among the Pume.

> [T]he idea they have of personhood does not establish a clear boundary between the physical body and the vital substance. Within the Pume context, the understanding of illness, the type of care associated with it, and its healing refer both to the pumethó ("spiritual body or vital substance") and to the pume ikhara ("physical body"), to both the eventualities of the physical and "spiritual" causes. The individual (ianambo) is defined as the necessary union of the pumethó and the pumé ikhara, and illness as the manifestation of a disorder at the level of both the physical body and the spiritual body. This representation of disease suggests a very "embodied" conception of the person[56].

Just like dreams, which are socially interpreted, diseases are diagnosed by means of a social process. In such a process, not only are physical symptoms taken into consideration but also the existing state of relations between the afflicted person and other human and

[56] ... la idea que ellos tienen de la persona no establece una barrera clara entre el cuerpo físico y la esencia vital. En el contexto Pumé, la explicación de la enfermedad, el tipo de cuidados que se le asocian y su curación remiten tanto al pumethó ("cuerpo espiritual o esencia vital") como al pumé ikhará ("cuerpo físico"), tanto a la eventualidad de las causas físicas como "espirituales". El individuo (ianambo) se define como la suma necesaria del pumethó y del pumé ikhará, y la enfermedad como la manifestación de un desorden tanto al nivel del cuerpo físico como del cuerpo espiritual. Esta representación de la enfermedad participa de una concepción muy "corporeizada" de la persona.

nonhuman beings. In this sense, Orobitg (2004a, p. 254) points out that, among the Pume, the interpretation and choice of a particular healing practice is a highly contextual process.

As noted above, even though for the Pume people the notion of the self is explained by the existence of two dissociable parts (*pumetho* and *ikhara*), a dissociation of one from the other unavoidably implies disease or death. Furthermore, when one of these parts is afflicted, both of them suffer the consequences. It is only through the union and well-being of both that a person is considered to be healthy. By contrast, it is said that a person is ill when either their *pumetho* is absent (*hãbota*) or when they are experiencing pain (*gito*) in any part of their body (see also Orobitg, 2004a, pp. 253-4). Pain is always associated with the presence of an alien object: a shard of glass, a stingray's sting. As Orobitg (2004a, p. 253) points out, the terms *gito* and *hãbota* are used in everyday life to express abundance or excess and absence or loss, respectively. For example, when tasting tobacco, a common question is "*gito*?" This rhetorical question is used to evoke the excess of flavor as well as the strong agency of certain tobacco leaves. On the other hand, the word *hãboa* is used to say that a person is dead, absent. The following examples illustrate these two types of disease identified by the Pume.

One night, as I was sleeping, a friend came to the house where I was staying. He wanted to let me know that Dregelio was unconscious. That night, he was performing as the main singer in a *tõhe* ritual. As usual, he, along with the other male singers, had inhaled *nanü* (yopo, Venezuelan Spanish; *Anadenanthera peregrina* L. Speg). After having been unconscious for some minutes, Dregelio became aware and energetic once again and even returned to his performance, finishing at sunrise. The effects of this incident, however, lasted some weeks more. It is not common for people to become unconscious because of *nanü*. In fact, this was the only time I had heard of it. After this incident, two interpretations circulated throughout the community. While some young men, familiar with the use of non-Pume

psychotropic substances like cocaine, attributed Dregelio's incident to the effects of overdose, his mother saw it as a consequence of the usual risk that is entailed in performing a *tõhe*. Given that the *pumetho* of the singer is traveling, it might not be strong enough to prevent itself from being kidnapped by *Iĉiai*. The events that took place from the time of the incident and Dregelio's final recovery illustrate how a split between *pumetho* and *ikhara* becomes apparent, how it is diagnosed and how it is treated.

Dregelio is considered by people of different Pume communities along the Riecito River to be one of the most skilled singers of the Pume community of Boca Tronador. He usually performs as the leader, being a very enthusiastic, amusing main singer. When his father is absent, Dregelio also performs as a companion (*ñõmereriĉiame*) to his mother, Doña Teresa. Usually, male singers are assisted by their wives. The relationship between a singer and their companion is strong and intimate, given that the development of the singer's abilities depends on the quality of this relationship.

In fact, the relationship between the main singer and their companion is so important that old men, once they are widowed, stop performing as leading singers. Dregelio is married to one of his cross-cousins and they have ten children. According to his relatives, he could be more skillful if it was not for his wife who, being a converted Evangelical Christian, never accompanies him to perform, which is why his mother has had to take on this role.

After initiation, the next time Dregelio was severely ill was while harvesting cotton as a wage laborer on a large plantation located in Achaguas, in the Venezuelan state of Apure. His brother said that, back then, Dregelio suffered with vomiting blood[57]. According to Dregelio, at that time he was infected with tuberculosis. He was hospitalized and received treatment. When he felt better, he went to work on a cattle ranch. After some weeks, he

[57] Fieldnotes, February 27 2019.

started feeling weak, low-spirited. As he recounts, he was also experiencing pain throughout his body, and so he decided to go back to his community. After two nights of *tõhe*, he recovered. As he recounts:… "I dreamed I was working. I was sowing pasture grasses. I would ask, 'Why am I here?' 'So you can learn. You still have a long way to go,' he would say to me. Back then, I used to tell my dreams to the old ones. 'That one is Satan himself, that one is *Iĉiai*, he is punishing you, he is training you,' they would tell me. I used to dream that I was not capable, that I still had a long way to go, that... How could I explain to you? I do not know how to explain. [I used to think] that I still had a long way to go, that I was not going to endure his religion because he had so much power… [He had] so much strength that my body was always weak[58]."

He continues:

> I got sick… That disease made me dumb, like that. I could never hurry up… Well, it started like headache, weakness. I took treatment but I never healed. They sucked me, they cast a prayer on me but I never healed… That is his [*Iĉiai*'s] disease… that happens when he is punishing you, that Satan. You cannot treat that with medicaments. You have to find a singer that is able to go and talk to him. [He goes there] along with the spirits [the *tio*] and brings back the person. "I brought him back, my manual worker, now he will heal" [*Iĉiai* would say through the singer]. He came back at 5 AM and he taught me, "Look, you must pierce your penis, do not do this nor that" [he

[58] Interview with Dregelio Romero, aged around 40, on February 25 2019. Yo me enfermé una vez, soñaba que, que yo estaba trabajando, que estaba en una laguna sembrando pasto, yo preguntaba que por qué yo estaba... no... pa que tu aprendas, todavía te falta, me decía. Entonces, yo le contaba a los, a los mayores, verdad? "no, ese es el mismo satanás, ese es Ichiai, que te está castigando, te está entrenando", me decían. Y tuve un sueño también que todo, que todavía me falta a mi, que... cómo te digo? No se explicar... que todavía me falta, que yo no aguantaba la religión de él, porque tenía mucho poder, mucho fuerza, que el cuerpo todavía estaba débil.

would prescribe]. The next day, I was healed, healed. I felt encouraged.[59]

Since then, Dregelio has gone through multiple similar experiences. Through such experiences he has acquired knowledge of the spiritual world. He has learnt how to move in the mythical lands and how to communicate with spiritual beings. He uses his knowledge not only to heal himself but also to diagnose and to heal others. People associate his ability to communicate the content of what the spiritual beings say with the poetical richness of his songs as well as his always energizing performance. These characteristics are usually expressed by the Pume by using the adjective "*goerĩ*" (goe-, blood, -rĩ, adjective suffix). According to most of the people in Boca Tronador, his song is always *goerĩ*; that is to say, it is tasty, it is sweet—it is like blood.

Although knowledgeable, Dregelio's interpretation of his experiences of disease is always enriched by others' perceptions of them. Uncertainty is characteristic of the processes of diagnosis and healing in Lowland South America (see, for example, Gow, 1991, p. 237). As stated in his account, Dregelio turned to the old ones for an explanation of what was happening to him. After his intoxication with *nanü* there followed a period of time, lasting around one month, in which he constantly recreated this experience in dreams. As noted earlier, among the Pume, the root *hãbo-* implies loss. It is used to describe the experience of illness related to loss of the *pumetho*, the state of being unconscious and of being dead. This is also true among other Lowland South American societies (McCallum, 1996, p. 360). Over

[59] Me enfermé de... de una enfermedad que me puso así bobo, así, que nunca me afanaba... bueno, me comenzó el dolor de cabeza, esmayamiento, tomaba tratamiento y nunca me curaba, me chupaba, me hacían oración, nunca me curaba.... esa es la enfermedad de él... cuando lo tiene castigado ese satanás, eso no se cura así nada mas con medicamento sino que tiene que buscar un músico que, que vaya allá a hablar con él y lo baja, con los espíritus y ahí mismo... dicen, he escuchado yo, trae a la persona [habla *Iĉiai*] "no, yo lo traje, al obrero mío, ahora sí, se va a sanar mañana"... si ya, a las 5 de la mañana llegó y lo enseña [habla *Iĉiai*]"mira, corta el pipi, no haga esto, así y asao" y a ese otro día, la persona y que está sana, sana, se alentó

the time that followed his loss of consciousness, Dregelio was continually, especially during the night, having the sensation of losing his *pumetho*, of dying.

Prior to the intoxication, he was feeling *goederĩkhea*, disheartened or spiritless, which was one of the reasons why he decided to perform the *tõhe*. His wife and most of his children had been gone for some time. Carmen, Dregelio's wife, had decided to go to Elorza—the closest town (see Figure 1)—in order to buy salt, matches and soap, among other things. As she had told me, she missed eating bread and drinking coke. Because of the economic crisis in Venezuela and the shortages of gasoline it involved, they could not return as soon as they expected. Dregelio and his wife used to have a small business in their house where they would sell bread, candy and coke as well as rice, cornmeal, refined sugar and so on. Around 2008, Dregelio had participated in a government program to train indigenous people as nurses. He had obtained his diploma and was in charge of the health post of the community as nonindigenous doctors were coming and going. He used to earn a salary that he invested as capital for his small business. During this time, he and his family had access to processed food and other nonindigenous goods, a situation that radically changed around 2015 as the economic crisis in Venezuela unfolded.

Given Dregelio's condition, his mother, Doña Teresa, decided to spend the nights with him. He was having a recurrent dream that, although not clear, was loaded with fear. According to some people, everything seemed to indicate that he was suffering from a punishment from *Iĉiai*. He was having trouble sleeping and was waking up more tired than the night before. Nor was he able to work in his garden, as he was experiencing a major lack of energy. In his dream, however, he never spoke to *Iĉiai*, as in his previous experiences. This made people, particularly experienced singers, wonder whether his *pumetho* was in fact being captured and punished by *Iĉiai*.

According to Dregelio, in his recurrent dream he was recreating what happened when he had the blackout: In the dream he was on a cattle ranch surrounded by *nive*—nonindigenous people—and was the only Pume there. The *nive* people proposed disguising themselves as jaguars and wandering together around the savanna. At first, Dregelio refused, for fear of being mistaken for a real jaguar by the jaguars themselves and not being able to return to his human condition. But finally, he agreed. They put on jaguar fur coats and started walking on all fours. As he said, he felt like a real jaguar[60]. This dream repeated itself every night, and he was becoming more fearful during the nights and more tired and disheartened during the days.

After a few days, Doña Teresa decided to perform *añikui barañi*—literally, "the little sister that lies in a hammock." During this dusk-to-dawn ritual, a woman sings alone while she lies in her hammock. Her purpose is to establish communication with the *tio* in order to expose a problem and to obtain some sort of explanation (see Orobitg, 2015[61]). While the woman sings, people lie in their hammocks around her, and the affected person lies close to her. As Dregelio recounts, he fell asleep while his mom was singing. He dreamed that Doña Pancha—Milián's grandmother, a deceased singer—was singing, and he was lying down in his hammock while she performed the ritual instead of his mother. After this ritual, although Dregelio was feeling better he was not fully recovered, and so his father performed a *tõhe*. Although Dregelio felt better after all of his family's attempts to rescue his *pumetho*, he was still not fully well. So his brother started proposing to go to Elorza to see a *brujo* (nonindigenous sorcerer). According to Dregelio's brother, it seemed that Dregelio's problem

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60 Field notes, July 9 2019.

61 Orobitg (2015, p. 127) distinguishes two types of female rituals: *añikui barehë*, which she translates as "the little sister who swings in the hammock," and *tió taré bareñí* ("the woman who hears the *tio* while seated in her hammock"). According to her, the latter has emerged recently among the inhabitants of the Pume community of Riecito as a response to the increasing violence that characterizes their relations with nonindigenous inhabitants of this area. *Añikui barehë (Añi-*, sister*; -kui*, little, small, youngest; *bare- swing in a hammock, -hë* suffix of the imperative form).

was not associated with *Iĉiai* or Pume sorcery but was rather an effect of *nive* (nonindigenous) sorcery. Among the Pume, it is believed that spiritual diseases that cannot be cured by means of performing a *tõhe*, sucking or blowing are effected by nonindigenous sorcerers, who are considered to be more powerful than Pume healers.

Around two weeks went by before Dregelio, Korobay, their mother and I could go to Elorza. Dregelio had still not completely recovered and his family had started to lose hope, since a proper diagnosis had not yet been obtained. As we arrived in Elorza, Dregelio and his brother were determined to seek help from a *brujo*, while their mother remained reluctant about the idea. A few days passed in Elorza while the men were searching for a way to travel to San Fernando, the capital city of the Venezuelan state of Apure, in search of the *brujo*. Meanwhile, Dregelio had been reunited with his family. He had also had the chance to participate in a couple of *tõhe* rituals in town, where other Pume singers had blown tobacco over him and sucked objects out of his body.

After a few weeks of this, Dregelio was back to normal. His mother attributed his recovery to his participation in the *tõhe* and his return to proper social life, although a clear explanation of the causes of Dregelio's disease was never reached. This lack of certainty in the diagnosis-healing process is similar to that among other Amazonian peoples. For example, Chaumeil (1983, p. 269) suggested that, for the Yagua of the Peruvian Amazon, both disease and its healing are seen as related parts of the same process. Recovery, then, is never fully attained. The disappearance of symptoms and the reintegration of the diseased person into social life are often attributed to a temporary neutralization of the problem.

So far I have described a case of dissociation between *pumetho* and *ikhara*. In what remains of this section, I describe briefly another other type of affliction typically referred to by the Pume: localized pain. People describe localized pain as an excess of matter inside their

bodies (*gito*: pain, excess). To remove pain, singers blow tobacco over the body of the diseased person so they can blow away the excess, which is normally caused by the presence of alien objects. They can also suck the objects out of the patient's body. In other cases, these objects have been shot into the affected person by a *yarukha* or a Pume sorcerer.

The following example is a typical case. Danny Flores had told me that he normally turns to a healer when experiencing acute pain in his body. He remembers that once he was having strong pain in his chest. His mother talked to one of the women of the community, who is known for her abilities to blow objects away from people's bodies. Danny said that he could not fully understand her diagnosis, due to his lack of vocabulary when it comes to spiritual matters. However, he does remember that she suggested that the objects she had blown away had possibly come from his neighbors. He says that it made sense to him since, at the time, their relationships were tense. Around that time, Danny and his extended family shared a big garden. They had been really very successful that year and had harvested huge amounts of manioc, plantain and corn. His neighbors expected him to share the harvest with them. But, although he was aware of such an expectation, he explained to me that, given that he had so many children, it was impossible for him to share it all. He concluded the conversation by justifying himself, saying: "When they were in my home I never denied them a meal, but I was not able to give them food on a daily basis[62]."

3.3.3. Singing

Singing is the most common healing practice. One of the most salient characteristics of the experience of singing is that the perception of this realm fades away while the perception of the nonhuman realms sharpens. I remember the first time I was seated at a *tõhe*

[62] Field notes, April 4 2019.

ritual beside my friend Korobay. He was explaining everything to me, patiently replying to my many questions. At some point, he told me that his turn to sing was about to come, and he was not going to be able to talk to me anymore. His mother came and took a seat in front of me. At that time, because he was not married it was his mother's duty to take care of him while he was singing, as singers become unaware of the sensations that otherwise would be perceived by their bodies. They are not able to feel when mosquitoes bite them or if they have the urge to urinate. Normally, it is their assistants who must make sure that bodily processes and the contact with this world do not put their performance in jeopardy.

One of the first and clearest signs that a singer is in the presence of spiritual beings is that she begins to feel cold. Performing a *tõhe* implies the journey of the singer to *ãdeĉiadabu* as much as it implies the journey of *tio* to this realm. Through sung speech the singers shorten the distance that separates them from their ancestors, the *tio*. When the *tio* come to this land, they place themselves over the heads of the singers, who notice their presence because their bodies tremble. Once they are placed there, each singer is able to sing their words during their turn.

During their turn, the companion then raises the cigar they are sharing with the singer in their right hand so that the *tio* is able to smoke. The vibrations throughout the singer's body (*ĉurĩ*) become more and more intense as the words flow from the spiritual being to their mouth. The ability to feel and recognize this trembling is a sign of being inspired. The perception of *ãdeĉiadabu* becomes increasingly attuned as the night progresses. Singers become more and more sensitive to the transcendent worlds and their inhabitants, as their voices become louder and their songs richer. As the events in the spiritual world unfold, the singer becomes more creative, being able to improvise songs that amuse and inspire the audience. Likewise, the perception of the nonhuman realm sharpens with practice, such that

not every singer is equally skilled in perceiving spiritual realities. As shown, this type of perception is typically characterized by a combination of different sensory modalities.

3.4. When the body speaks...

... All else is hollow

Depeche Mode

I began this chapter by saying that, from the perspective of the Pume people, the experiences of dreaming, singing and being ill are akin sources of knowledge. For them, the similarity of these experiences lies in the fact that they all involve a separation between the internal (*pumetho*) and the external (*ikhara*) components of the self. Such a separation is a condition for a person to be able to perceive the mythical lands and their inhabitants, whereas this realm—*daeĉiri*—is only perceived when these two parts of the self are fully integrated. I then went on to give some examples of how the perception of these different domains operates. These examples were followed by phenomenological descriptions of the experiences of dreaming, singing and being ill.

In this section, I would like to revisit the question of what the experiences of dreaming, singing and being ill have in common. This time, however, I will not try to answer this question from the perspective of the Pume people but from the point of view of the anthropologist. The approach I follow here is informed by anthropological reflections on the body, disease and health, and (im)materiality.

Medical anthropology has contributed significantly to our understanding of disease and the body. In analyzing the experiences of pain and illness, medical anthropologists have made

the argument that through these experiences, people become aware of the existence of the physical body, which is normally taken for granted. This awareness of the body in its materiality leads to a comprehension of its dual nature as an object, which belongs to a person, and as a subject, which, by being "out of control," is able to create meaning.

In the search for diagnoses and healing, our perception of these two dimensions of the body becomes even more accentuated. The body is reified not only by the person to whom it belongs, whose distress permanently reminds them that they *have* a body, but it also becomes an object of analysis for the physician—or the healer, in the case of the Pume. At the same time, its creative potential reaches its peak as disease manifests in multiple ways (Devisch, 1985, pp. 401-3). I would say that by stressing the subject/object dualism the experience of pain and disease transcends it. Being a seemingly paradoxical state is what, I suggest, diseases, dreams and singing have in common.

My argument is further supported by anthropological research on the relationship between dreams and diseases. Research on this subject has shown that for people from different cultural contexts, certain dreams are perceived as alluding to the prospect of disease even prior to medical diagnosis (Hollan, 2004). Drawing on cases from Indonesia, New Guinea and the United States, Hollan (2003, p. 61; 2004, p. 170) has proposed that such dreams—which he calls "selfscape dreams"—are a vehicle to perceive existing relationships with our own body, objects and other people. In the case of the Pume people, dreams that are related to illness could be labeled as selfscape dreams: vivid dreams that provoke sensations, feelings, emotions and images that remain in the mind/body of the dreamer for a long time. Through this kind of dream, people acquire knowledge of existing relationships with other people and objects, as well as a deep understanding of the self in relation to their body.

Dreams are, then, media (cf. Chidester, 2009). But how, while dreaming and singing, is the subject/object dualism transcended? While sleeping, bodies remain immobile, insensitive and deprived of intentionality. And yet they are also the source of meaning that is expressed through dream content, feelings and emotions. As the examples of Pume people's dreams have shown, bodies, although deprived of intentionality, are endowed with agency, an agency that manifests even in other people's dreams. We can also say the same about singing. While singing, the body of the singer, deprived of sensitivity, becomes the object of care of their assistant. However, this same body has a voice, agency and, in this case, also intentionality: It is a subject.

This dual nature of the body can shed light on our understanding of the materiality of religious experiences more generally. Daniel Miller (2005, p. 1) has pointed out that most religious beliefs rest on the premise of the existence of an ultimate reality that lies underneath what is apparent. He also shows, however, that this "belief in the ultimate truth as a form of immateriality" (Miller, 2005, p. 7) is often expressed in explicit (sometimes grandiose) material forms. As I have shown, similarly to most Lowland South American societies, for the Pume people there is a reality that cannot be perceived by the five senses we know, that is, a reality that is not apparent. However, I would not use the word "immaterial" to name this reality. I think this reality is better considered as another form of materiality.

Research on Amazonian societies has shown the material nature of knowledge attained through dreams and the experiences of illness (McCallum, 1996). And, curiously enough, in the case of the Pume, the word *dabame* (knowledgeable) is also an adjective that people use to describe a room that is full of objects. Or, to be more precise, this adjective is frequently used by the Pume people to describe a place or a person who has everything that is required to perform an activity. The example that first comes to mind is when they talk about

kitchens they have seen in Elorza. The Pume people are fascinated by the technology of storing and cooking. When they see well-equipped kitchens with a fridge and a gas stove, they use the adjective *dabame* to describe them. Somehow paradoxical, however, is the fact that they describe an exceptionally wise person as being light, not heavy. While the adjective *dabame* is used to describe a person who knows a lot about this realm (*daecîri*), the realm that is perceived by the eyes, the adjective *habecîame* (light, *not heavy*) describes a person who has a lot of practical knowledge, especially knowledge of the mythical realms that is attained through dreams, shamanic journeys and illness.

Based on the above, I would argue that the materiality of the nonhuman world is not based on the perception of the qualities of the external world but upon the perception of an internal, intimate reality that takes place in the experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing: the materiality of the body. Therefore, shamanic knowledge enables the development of individuality: "…the shamanic experience does not imply the constitution of a 'kind of knowledge,' uniform for all shamans, but various levels of knowledge and understanding of the world, ultimately of themselves" (Chaumeil, 1983, p. 44). In Amazonian societies, however, individuality, or the uniqueness of each person, is not perceived only as an output of the biological constitution of the person but also as emerging from an intricate web of social relations that materialize through the sharing of substances between human and nonhuman beings (Santos-Granero, 2012, p. 202).

3.5. The body in Lowland South America: final remarks

The materialization of social relationships into the body defines how bodies are formed and transformed among native Lowland South American societies. The examples of the Pume people confirm this assumption. However, to conclude this chapter, I would like to

make the point that, although this understanding of the body acknowledges that it belongs to the flows of matter that constitute social relationships, it still denies the materiality of the body as such. And, I think, it is in this materiality that the potential capacity of bodies to be subjects lies. My reflection relies on Csordas (1994, pp. 8-9) when he indicates that:

> For anthropology, to understand the body as the biological raw material on which culture operates has the effect of excluding the body from original or primordial participation in the domain of culture, making the body in effect a "precultural" substrate. Mind is then invariably the subject and body is an object either "in itself" or one that is "good to think." Little space remains to problematize the alternative formulation of the body as the source of subjectivity, and mind as the locus of objectification.

Over the last 40 years, anthropological understandings of personhood in Lowland South America have been shaped by the seminal work of Seeger *et al.* (1979). In this article, the authors present the thesis that the native societies of South America have developed original ideas on the notion of the person that are highly shaped by the symbolic centrality of the body. According to them, most of the native cosmologies in the area have been conceived as reflections on corporality (1979, p. 3). As a corollary of this thesis, they propose understanding the body not as existing a priori but always as a product of social relations (1979, p. 4). In anthropological research on native Amazonia inspired by these authors, this corollary has gained more strength than the thesis itself. As Fernando Santos-Granero (2012, p. 185) states, both constructional and perspectival approaches to personhood in native Amazonia that developed from the aforementioned article "reject the notion of body as 'a material substrate on which meaning can be encode' (Conklin, 1996, 373)." In an attempt to

understand how societies in Lowland South America "see things differently," these approaches have been based on the premise that "[for them] bodies are viewed as fundamentally social products" (Conklin, 1996, p. 373).

These approaches, however, have partially recognized the materiality of the body. Santos-Granero has pointed out that the constructional approach to notions of personhood in Amazonian societies understands bodies as the "material expression of the sociality that produces them" (2012, p. 185). Likewise, he says that for many Amazonian societies, "the composite character of personhood is not a root metaphor but a physical actuality" (2012, p. 183). Similarly, Viveiros de Castro (1998, p. 478) has acknowledged the "substantial materiality of organisms" as one of the dimensions of the person that, in relationship with the "formal subjectivity of souls," generates a third dimension constituted by *habitus* or body dispositions that are the locus of perspectives. These ideas are substantiated in multiple ethnographic examples that show how bodies are made through social relations and cultural practices, becoming amalgamations of shared substances and embodied/ensouled objects (Santos-Granero, 2009), or a "bundle of affects and capacities" (Viveiros de Castro, ibid.)

Notwithstanding, somehow at odds with native notions of personhood, the constructional and perspectival approaches have replicated mind/body dualism. So, for example, as previously mentioned, after discussing Yanesha modes of perceiving and knowing, Santos-Granero concludes that "… bodies are caused by knowledge ..." (2006, p. 78). This statement not only assumes a separation between body and mind but also a hierarchy in which the mind is at the top, ultimately denying the body its place in the process of meaning making. I suspect this kind of idealism is rooted in the fear of falling back into stereotypes that position the "primitive" as guided by emotions, the body and nature, and the "Westerner" as guided by reason and the mind. Yet one only has to remember that, as

anthropological research on this subject and the examples presented in this chapter have shown, in non-Western societies emotions are not perceived as confined to the body—as belonging to an individual—but rather they are seen as states of socialized bodies, bodies in action (Overing and Passes, 2000; Rosaldo, 1984).

This emphasis on society (and culture) as the force that shapes bodies (McCallum, 1996; Santos-Granero, 2006), however, still implies a "denial of the somatic" (Jackson, 1983a, p. 328), entailing an understanding of meaning as being always imposed onto bodies rather than emerging from them. One of the problems with these approaches is the underlying assumption that bodies as sources of meaning and bodies as fabricated are mutually exclusive ideas. In the case of the Pume, as previously noted, bodies are produced through cultural practices and social relations, just as much as their inherent processes and transformations shape cultural practices and ensure social relations. Among the Pume, bodies go through processes of transformation that are socially stimulated. Yet people also go through bodily processes related to pregnancy, birth, childhood, adulthood and old age, and experience bodily states involved in, or related to, illness, pain and desire that stimulate imagination and creativity. I would say, then, that, from the perspective of the Pume, meaning is not imposed onto the body but that it emerges within "an inescapable circularity between the order of the body and the order of the text" (Kirmayer, 1992, p. 324).

As the examples in this and the following chapters show, metaphors emerge to account for the experiences of disease and pain, as well as for allowing singers to transform matter and to heal people. As Kirmayer (1992, p. 333) explains, metaphor, either perceptual—with synesthesia being its simplest form—or enacted—expressed in actions that, by taking an object for something else, transfom it—finds its root in bodily experience. Meaning, then, not only finds grounds in the connections we establish between ideas but also in the relationships

our ideas have with our bodies and the experiences we have gone through. As Kirmayer puts it, "[m]eaning emerges from the capacity to use bodily experience (including socially embodied experience) to think with metaphorically" (1992, p. 334). Jackson (1983b, p. 132) goes a step further, claiming:

> My argument is that metaphor must be apprehended non-dualistically and that the idea or sensation and its bodily complements (social, mechanical, physiological, geographical etc.) betoken, not an arbitrary or rhetorical synthesis of two terms– subject and object, tenor and vehicle–which can be defined more realistically apart from each other, but a true interdependency of mind and body, Self and World.

What this reflection on the nature of metaphors tells us is that there is not a clear-cut distinction between mind and body, spirit and matter, subjects and objects. Among the Pume, tiredness, pain, sickness and desire, which in the West are typically associated with the body, shape the experiences of dreaming and singing, which Westerners typically associate with the mind, and vice versa. In presenting the examples in this chapter, I have tried to "emancipate" the body from the "tyranny of the subject" (Holbraad, 2011; Miller, 2005). Dreams and songs are ways to perceive how this tyranny is overthrown, not only to emancipate the body but also the physical world more generally. Because, as the dreams of the stones show, things not only "talk back" but also have "their own voice" (Pels, 1998, p. 94).

CHAPTER 4

WATER AS HISTORICITY

In the previous chapter I argued that dreams, diseases and singing are means through which the Pume people acquire knowledge and shape their understandings of this and other realms and their inhabitants. These three types of experience are particularly salient in the process of constituting shamanic knowledge. In this chapter, I explore the ideas the Pume people have of time, change, continuity and history. The aim of this chapter is twofold: On the one hand, it expands on the insights offered in the previous chapter on Pume perception to show other sensual ways to engage with the world, in particular with water; on the other hand, it describes one of the modes of historical consciousness among the Pume people. This mode of historical consciousness reveals how for the Pume, past, present and future shape one another.

Based on Pume narratives of the past, I explore the hypothesis that understanding the Pume engagements with water and the changes it brings about in the landscape can be illustrative of one of the multiple ways the Pume people relate to time. In order to do so, I address the following questions: How can the cyclical recurrence of floods and droughts give a sense of the passage of time? How does the presence of water and all the responses it triggers in living organisms contribute to Pume understandings of processes of change and continuity among both humans and nonhumans? Is water a metaphor for change? Or is it for continuity? How do present relations with water and its inhabitants shape images of the future of the Pume as a society? Lastly, following up from the conclusions of the previous chapter and drawing on ethnographic materials descriptive of the relationships the Pume develop with water, I argue that metaphors can be healing because they uncover an existing unity between the body and the world.

Like other Amazonian societies, the Pume people do not have precise ways of accounting for time. Such a lack of precision is particularly salient when talking about events that took place in the distant past. Normally, old times stories are called *maẽ duri* (literally, "old words"): an expression the Pume use to refer to the words used by singers during the *tõhe* or other singing rituals as well as to mythical narratives. Sometimes, speakers neither label their stories in a particular way nor use any kind of adverb related to time, although at some point of the story they may say, *nĩbocĥoahirĩ otẹtirẽã hãdibede* ("That is what the ancient people used to say"). On other occasions, speakers let the audience know they are referring to a story of past times because they begin by saying, *pearödi* ("once upon a time").

Notwithstanding their lack of temporal precision, unlike other Amazonian societies (see, for example, Cormier, 2003, on the Guajá; Taylor, 1993, on the Shuar and Achuar; Viveiros de Castro, 1992, on the Araweté) the Pume people do remember their family members of generations past. This becomes very clear if one asks for the story of the community, in which case people demonstrate very clear knowledge of the first ones to have settled in the territory they occupy today. In addition, it is very common that, when walking through the savanna, one will, from time to time, stumble into a patch of mango trees, at which point people immediately start guessing the name of the person who planted the trees. Most of the time they will come up with a name everyone agrees with and establish genealogical connections. The names of people who have passed away are made up of the name the person had in life followed by the particle *-rẽa*. This particle is also used to form the past tense.

The fact that the Pume do not have clear ways of accounting for time does not imply that they do not have clear ways of conveying their experience of the passage of time in their daily lives. In everyday life, people constantly use time markers while chatting: to recount an

anecdote, to share their plans, to gossip and so on. Stories and plans are normally situated in time by using the adverbs “yesterday” *pedi*, “today” *bãmẽa*, “tomorrow” *hako*, “after tomorrow” *hako dopẽarö*, “earlier” *nomedi* and “later” *bãdi.* Moreover, the idea that the Pume experience the pressure of the passage of time becomes unequivocal in the slightly louder than normal vocalization *Harepa*! (Hurry up!), an expression that mothers often aim at their children while involved in the whirlwind of household chores. Time, then, is experienced in action; it is not conceptualized or reflected upon as an abstract category outside of human action (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987, p. 199).

Another way to account for time is by counting the wet seasons (*uitho*). Wet-season reckoning is especially salient in agricultural practices. The Pume people usually replant manioc in their gardens for three to four wet seasons before they are left fallow. Mothers also keep track of how many wet seasons have passed since their children were born. Of course, this is so only during the early years of childhood. To estimate how old a small child is, one could ask, *napaĩ ui goane hini*?, literally, “How many waters does she have?”

The lack of an accurate measuring of time corresponds with stories of the past being very diverse and hardly/not organized in a cohesive corpus. The narratives of the past are strongly shaped by present experiences. They are made up of stories from before and after a turning point when the Pume’s way of being in the world radically changed. When telling these stories, the Pume usually compare past ways of being with present circumstances. As I will show later in this chapter, historical turning points are always associated with the transformative power of water and its inhabitants.

In the first section, I present a series of narratives of the past that emphasize the transformations that led to the coming into being of the Pume people as they are today. This section is followed by an ethnographic description of the changes the Pume lifestyles go

through as a consequence of the presence, excess and absence of water. In the third section, I provide an example of a prayer (*ñõto*) aimed at transforming water into a healing substance. I conclude by discussing the idea that water is a metaphor for history.

4.1. The past

In this section I present one version of the past[63]. I draw on my ethnographic material to present a coherent and unique sequence of events that corresponds to the mythological past as the Pume understand it, based on assembling narratives collected in the field. In order to do so, I have gathered many narratives I have collected in the field. Given that the Pume are an egalitarian society (Leeds, 1960, 1969), they do not seem to have a coherent and fixed version of what happened in the past. Instead, there are an amazing number of different versions of it. This is, in fact, a characteristic of the Pume people that has struck previous ethnographers (Leeds, 1960, p. 5; Mitrani, 1973, p. 38; Petrullo, 1969, p. 110). For analytical purposes, I have synthetically arranged the sequence of events presented here. I must stress that this account of "how things happened" has by no means been told to me by just one person. This storyline is, then, a bricolage of fragments of stories told by different people at different moments. As previously stated, I focus on a theme that is recurrent among the Pume: water and its inhabitants. This motif comes up when talking about the present circumstances and especially about the future, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter. The Pume people do not usually tell stories of the past, unless they seek to explain present circumstances or to contemplate what the future might bring. Such accounts normally arise when talking about something else. For example, someone can be talking about being tired,

[63] There are many more stories concerning the past or the times of creation. For example, there are narratives about the origin of the stars, some particular species, and the white men and their objects. For the sake of this chapter's argument, I will omit all of them here.

or hungry, and suddenly someone else—normally old wise men or women—will start explaining why it is that people experience these bodily states. The experiences of pain, suffering, hunger and disease are commonly explained as a consequence of events that took place in the past.

The Pume past is made up of three cycles. The discontinuities between one era and the next are marked either by water or by the advent of the inhabitants of water. This is not to say that the Pume have a cyclical view of time in contrast to our linear and progressive understanding of time, as everyday life and aging are experienced and explained assuming linear time. It is only during the experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing that the primordial past emerges in the present (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, although there is a recurrence of events in the larger picture of Pume history, Pume neither think nor wish to go back to how things were in the primordial past. Rather than a circle, a spiral would better represent their idea of time. The idea of a spiral is consonant with Gell's claim that "the notion of cyclical recurrence is logically dependent on the idea of linear time, because only in linear time can cyclical event sequences be said to recur" (1992, p. 74). As previously noted, the only possible way to experience how things were in the primordial past is by dying or in dreams, illnesses or while singing, which, as previously shown, always involve the risk of becoming Other. It seems to me that those who are most confident in narrating events from the past are those who have themselves experienced the past during such altered states of consciousness. The Pume people value these experiences, but that is not to say that, in the moment, they are always welcome.

As the story goes, in primordial times, before anything existed, there was only coldness and darkness. Out of this vacuum, *Kumañi*, the first woman, a *Pumeñi*[64], *Poana* (the

[64] Pume woman.

big snake) and *Iĉiai* (the trickster) came into being out of the force of their own willpower. Poana created the land and gave shape to it. I have heard two versions of how he created everything. In one of them, Poana was supposed to have shiny objects in his tongue that shed light over places: a river, a dune, a savanna. In this way, these places were created[65]. In another version, Poana created everything by naming it. As Luis Ojeda explains[66], "[a]t the beginning of times, he created everything. At the beginning of time, when there was no savanna, he was the creator. He gave names to everything, to the savanna, to the plants, to the streams, to the rivers, to the lakes, to everything, every plant, everything. Back then, he named them."

Kumañi created human-like beings, the *tio Pume*, who were like her children. She taught them how to make arrows and how to weave and make pottery[67]. The *tio Pume* were powerful beings, who experienced neither pain nor suffering. They were jaguar-humans. Some people refer to them in Spanish as *santo tigre*—holy jaguar. Back when they were in this realm (*daeĉiri*—the land that can be seen through the eyes), where the Pume live today, there was no time. These jaguar-like humans neither aged nor died. While pregnant in her thumb, bearing a *tio Pume*, *Kumañi* had a daydream of the sun, such that the sun came into being and it was always there. There was no alternation of day and night. It was always day, that is, until *Kuma* bought a piece of night-land:

> A *pumesa*, an *india*, the first one. The first to be born, the first to be born. The one who was born when there was nothing, you see? She was very poor, very poor, poor, poor, poor. She did not have anything to eat. Well, she did have, right? Fruits, everything that plants can bear. Everything she could find growing underground,

[65] Field notes, June 21 2019. Story told by Kenny Farfán.
[66] Luis Ojeda, aged around 70, June 14 2019.
[67] Luis Ojeda, aged around 70, March 27 2019.

what we call, *guapo*[68]. She was always unearthing [tubers]. Yet another one, the so-called *para*. We also call it *jayo* because we use it to poison fish. We also eat it, we can eat it. Then, she was always unearthing. She was always doing so because she was poor. She did not have anything else to eat. It was only her and her son. She had a son, a son. I think he is called *tio pume*. Her son, *pume tio*, *santo tigre*, her son. Then, she was wandering around with her son, they were looking for something to eat. Then, he was very playful, you see? He had a small bow, he was always shooting arrows. He was always hunting small birds, anything. Well, it was like that, right? He was there when he saw a man. The man was sleeping, a man. The old woman was unearthing *guapo*, you see? The little boy was wandering around. So, he saw the man. It was in this land, the land we are standing in now. The man was sleeping. He was sleeping. That is how it was. Then, he [the son] told his mom. "Look mom, over there there is a man, there is a man sleeping, he is snoring." "Is it true son?" [answered his mom]. "It is a little bit dark there, a little bit dark" [said the boy]. "Is that true son? Let's go there, let's go to see him, let's talk to him." Then, she headed there. So, she told him, "Hi *primo*, I want to talk to you, look, there, where you sleep...Is it good there? Is it good to sleep?" "Oh yes! It is good. I sleep tight. Look, if you sleep there, you will dream of people, you will dream of your mom...well, you will dream of your family, of people, of

68 *Myrosma cannifolia* L. f. Pume maẽ *ĉokui*.

people, you see? You will dream of everything." "Look, I would like to know...." [said] the old woman. She was an old woman, but she turned into a young one. You see? So, she slept for a little bit there. She snored, just like he did. You see? She slept there. "Oh look, this is very good, it is very good. Sell me a piece of this land, just a small piece. I always walk all day long. I would like to have a piece of night to sleep, to get some rest" [said the woman]. "Of course, I will sell you a piece" [answered the man]. The old woman have a ball of [yarn of] *macanilla*[69]. She had not woven it yet, it was just spun. So, she gave the ball to the man to buy darkness, to buy darkness. Just a piece, just a piece, not a lot, just a piece. If she had bought a lot, it would be always night. There would be no dawn, so no, she bought just a piece. There was dusk, there was dawn, then...just like here. I have heard that people say so. The story is like this. I do not know any more...[The woman was called] *pareapañi*, *Kumañi*, india Rosa, india Rosa. The first one, the first woman to be born in this land[70].

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69 Pume maẽ: *baito, Astrocaryum jauari* cf. Mart., Arecaceae (see Chapter 3).

70 Jesus Oliveros, March 20 2019. Una india. La primera. La que primera nació, la que nació. La que nació cuando no había mundo, ve? Ajá, entonces, ella y que es muy pobre, muy pobre pues, pobre, pobre. Que no tenía de que comer. Bueno, tenía de que comé, verdad? La vaina, el fruto, o lo que cargaba los palos y lo que nacía, lo que había en la tierra. Eso que decimos chokui y guapo. Ella se la pasaba sacando. Y otro que llamaban para. Ese es el mismo que llaman jayo, verdad? Aja.. nosotros le decimos jayo porque ese es de embarbascar pescado. sí. Pero uno lo come. sí. Entonces ella estaba sacando eso. Aja, vivía sacando. Se la pasaba sacando, como ella era pobre, no tenía de qué comer. Ve? Ella, ella con un hijo. Con el hijo, con un hijo. Aja, creo que se llama pume tio. El hijo. Pume tio. No ve? Aja... pume y tio. Aja, santo tigre. El hijo de ella, aja. Entonces, ella anduvo con el hijo, buscando de que comer. Entonces, el y que era muy juguetón, ve? Que usaba arquito pequeñito, se la pasaba flechandito. Pajaritos, cualquier cosita. Bueno, así verdad? Estaba como allí y que vido a un hombre. Estaba durmiendo. Un hombre. Aja, entonces la viejita estaba sacando guapo, allá. Ve? El muchachito andando poray. Entonces, vieron al hombre, estaba dormido, en un mosquitero. Ajá, como decí aquí, verdad? El que quiera un pedazo de este lado, es que queda esta tierra, esta tierra que estamos pisando. Por aquí que queda otra tierra, pa llá. El hombre estaba aquí. Aja, dormido. "ah, pero no jo." Ah, aja, así y que era. Entonces, él le contó a la mama. "Mira mamá, ahí está un hombre, ahí

Thereafter, there was day and night. However, that did not mean that the *tio pume* aged. Although there was alternation between day and night, they did not experience the passing of days. *Kumañi* and her children stayed in *daeĉiri* until one day when the *tio pume* were confronted by the *ui nive*—the beings who (still) live underwater—and were defeated:

> The *ui nive* live underwater. Well, there, where the old man[71] lives. There, the *tio pume* dug a hole so they could ward off when they confronted the *ui nive*. They dug this hole so they could confront them. They dug a hole, there. They dug a hole with a tiny door, so they could confront the *ui nive*. They were on the other side [of the river]. They [*tio pume*] wanted to shoot arrows at them. You see? That is what people say. Then, the *ui nive* killed them [the *tio pume*]. If that had not happened, we would be *tio pume*. We would be *tio pume*. That is what happened, they killed them. If it was not for that, we would be *tio*[72].

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está un hombre durmiendo, está roncando" "verdad hijo?" "Ahí se ve un poquito oscuro, ahí... un poquito oscuro". "verdad hijo? Vamos allá, vamos allá a ver, vamos a hablar con él". Entonces, que fue allá, ella. Y que le dijo, "eje, primo, quiero hablar con usted, mira, este, allí adonde usted duerme, ese es bueno pa dormir?" "ah digame, sí, eso es bueno. Ahí yo duermo sabroso. Mire, durmiendo usted allí, usted va a soñar, con una persona, va a soñar con su mamá, con su... bueno, familia pues, con gente, con gente, ve? Con cualquier, con todo, va a soñar" "bueno, mire, yo quiero saber eso que..." la viejita, aja. Es ique era una viejita pero que se volvía muchacha, jovencita. Ve? Aja, entonces, y que echó un sueñito. Ve? Ella ique roncaba, igualito a él. Ve? Que durmió ahí. "ah, mira, eso es muy bueno, muy bueno, véndame un pedacito, un pedazo, que yo mire, yo me la paso caminando poray de día que, yo quiero tener un pedacito de noche pa yo dormí, pa yo descansar" "no, como no, sí te voy a vender un pedazo" mire, y entonces y que ella, la viejita que tenía pelota de macanilla, sin tejerlo, sino que torcido nada más, ah bueno, mire, umjum, y que le dio la pelota de chinchorro al hombre, pa comprá la oscuridad, no ve. Pa comprá lo oscuro. Un pedazo, un pedazo, no bastante sino un pedazo. Aja, porque si fuera comprao bastante y que hubiera sido más noche, que no se iba a aclarar, de día. Bueno, así no porque así compró ella un poquito. Se oscurecía, amanecía, volvía día, así, así como aquí. Ve? He escuchado decí yo. Esa historia así. Sí. Ajá, de ahí no se más… [la mujer se llamaba] pareapañi, kumañi, india Rosa, india Rosa. La primera, la que nació primero en el mundo, en este mundo.

[71] The old man he is referring to is a *criollo* known as "viejo la lata." He lives on the riverbanks of Riecito in a *fundo* close to the Pume community, "Las Maravillas."

[72] Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019. Ui nive ui khorõhirĩbederẽ. Hãdeahuĩ oaiyo viejitodi khorõme oaiyo puehue. Tarẽhirĩbederẽ hurĩ huerehirĩbederẽ tio pume hudirõ hibe ui nive hirĩ aekheapahirĩrẽ. Hueteãhirĩbederẽ. hãbeĉhi hudiri eropahirĩrẽ hoayakirĩ apahirĩrẽ. Pehudiri apahirĩrẽ. Dane? Ñorehirĩbederẽ. Hãdeahuĩ

After the *ui nive* overcame the *tio pume*, *Kumañi* decided to make a whole new world for her and her children. This world is called *ãdecîadabu*—the land where you are reborn. *Kumañi* moved there and she was never again seen in this realm. *Ãdecîadabu* is all made of gold. There are houses made of gold and she dresses in gold. It is like a big city, like Caracas—the capital of Venezuela—but where everything is made of gold. In *ãdecîadabu*, just as it was after *Kuma* bought the nighttime, there is day-night alternation. However, in the same way, that did not mean that days accumulate, so to speak. The *tio pume* living in *ãdecîadabu* do not age. They are adults the size of children.

When it is daytime in *daecîri*, it is nighttime in *ãdecîadabu* and vice versa. This is the reason why *tõhe* singers can replicate the state of affairs of primordial times. Riding the sun, as if it were a canoe, they navigate *ui kãbo*, a river that connects this realm with the realm of *Kuma* (west), and from there all the way to the east and back to this realm (Figure 4). As a result, singers do not experience the day/night cycle. For them, as it was for *tio pume* at the very beginning of times, it is always daytime.

unanobederẽ ui nive hirĩ ui nive hudirõ. ãrõrẽ tio pume törehirĩberẽ, tio pume törehirĩ hãdide unanohirĩ ibe erotöreha.

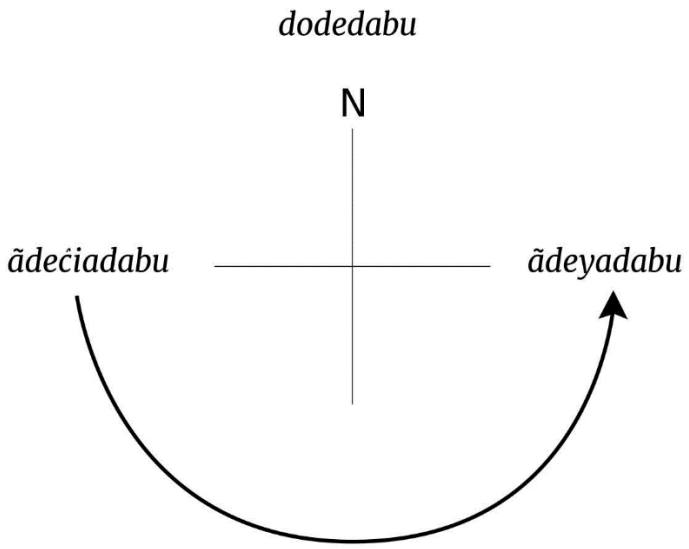

Figure 4. *Tõhe* singers' journey. *Dodedabu* is where *Iĉiai* lives. *Kumañi* lives in *ãdeĉiadabu* and her sister, *Dohareroñi* (the one who brings the sun back), lives in *ãdeyadabu*.

Back when *Kumañi* was still in this realm, everything was able to speak: the plants, the fruits, the animals, the water, the stones. Along with *Poana*, she created them by addressing them by their names[73]. In *ãdeĉiadabu* everything is still able to speak. Singers who have gone there say that this is the case. After *Kuma* left for good, *daeĉiri* remained populated by human-like animals: the Pume people. Like most Amerindian accounts of the primordial past, the Pume speak of a past where there was not a clear differentiation between humans and animals. As Descola points out, Amerindian narratives about primordial times tell of a time when "animals and plants were masters of all the skills of civilization, communicated with one another with no difficulty, and abided by the major principles of social etiquette" (2013, p. 131). This is also the case among the Pume. As Hipólito Bello[74] explains, for example, "[a] long time ago, she [a white-lipped peccary] was a person. These

[73] Luis Ojeda, aged around 70, March 27 2019, and Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019.

[74] Hipólito Bello, June 26 2019. This and other similar stories were told to me by Hipólito as he was explaining how *yakoto* (the ursa minor) was a Pume man who lost his foot and ended up becoming a constellation.

days, she is not, she turned into a white-lipped peccary. A long time ago, she was a person. They all turned into white-lipped peccary, mice, every kind of animals. [Back then, however] they used to get married with the Pume and live together." Most of the stories about primordial times are about troubled marriages between humans and animals, or between different kinds of animals. As the following story shows, problems related to interspecies marriages were mostly a consequence of both different habits and mismatched anatomies. There are many stories of these troubled marriages. An example is the following, in which Hipólito tells of a female white-lipped peccary who married a man:

> I am going to tell you about the female white-lipped peccary. A long time ago, she was a person. The ones who were the chiefs of the white-lipped peccaries were people. A man married her and he was always hungry. They [the white-lipped peccaries] used to eat *bai ĉhorõpa*[75]. A long time ago, *bai ĉhorõpa* was like corn for the white-lipped peccary, because that is what they eat. Then, the Pume man said: "Damn it! I am hungry, I am starving!" "Mom, he is hungry, so he says" [said the female white-lipped peccary to her mother]. "Then, take him where the corn is, the corn that you planted" [answered her mother]. Then, she took him there. "So…this is our corn" [said the female white-lipped peccary to her husband]. "This is not corn, it is *bai ĉhorõpa*, *bai ĉhorõpa*!" [said the man]. "This is not *bai ĉhorõpa*, it is the corn we eat." The white-lipped peccary did eat her corn but the Pume man did not eat that *bai ĉhorõpa*. He left without eating, he did not eat. He was always hungry. Then, [one

[75] This is a plant that the Pume say is similar to *caña fístula* (Ven Spa) (*Cassia fistula* L.), but with thorns. The Pume say that the white-lipped peccaries eat them.

day as] they went away, he said, “I used to sleep in a hammock.” “Mom, that is what he said, that he wants to lie in a hammock” [said the female white-lipped peccary]. “Take your hammock so he can lie in it” [answered her mother]. So, she took him to a bush so he could lie in there. “This is not a hammock! It is a vine!” [said the Pume man]. “But this is our hammock” [answered the female white-lipped peccary]. He did not lie down but remained seated, while she, laying down [in the hammock], swung back and forth. He did not lie down and left. Later, he opened her legs and wanted to make love to her. “Mom, my husband was opening my legs while I was facing him” [said the female white-lipped peccary]. “No, my mother used to tell me that my dad made love to her from behind” [answered her mom]. “You know that white-lipped peccaries make love from behind, that is how they make love[76].”

This time, in which human and animals could communicate, came to an end with the advent of the Flood. According to the Pume, the Flood was caused by *Kumañi*. When she left, she told everyone, the animal-humans, that they should sing to go and visit her and the *tio pume* in *ãdeĉiadabu*. Time passed and people started to forget about *Kumañi* and did not sing

[76] Chacharoñi habo huĩ ñohakede. chacharoñi pumerẽhinibederẽ pearödi. Habo hirĩha otẹtirẽãdirõ chácharo otẹtidirõ ebaremebede pumerẽ. Hãdeahuĩ erorebede tameĉho hãborebede pumedihĩ ebaha. Yoa hurapabederẽ bai ĉhorõpa ado kharemo huramebede kharemo huramebede. Ero muĩde ida habo hibea edẹ hurame hudi yude chacharore phuebedehẽ ode bai. Ode bai ĉhorõpa eamide baidirõ pearödi hirĩha phuebede chácharo ero huramẽtara. Hãdeaha ñobede pumedi tameĉho hãbobede. “Hakhürĩ tameĉho hãbobede tameĉho hãboke” “aiyo tameĉho hãbobedi, hãdi ñoredikoa.”“Ĉhanate eba höhirĩdobo phuehẽ mene narã phuehẽ.” Hãdeaha eba höbenehẽ. “Hãdeaha yudede phuedi ibea phuedi,” “yude phuedeida ode baĩ ĉhorõpa, baĩĉhorõpa,” “yude baĩ ĉhorõpadede phuede ãrõrẽ hurarẽã”. Pehudi hini hurarebeda phuedihãda hudi hurarebedi hãbeĉhi ĉhana hurapade ĉhorõpaha hurade hãbeĉhi tarabede. Hãdeaha böabede ado ñorebedehẽ. “Barebararemerẽ tarare bare.” “Aĩ hãdi ñoredikoa barebarathumiĉhiabedi.” “Ĉhãdi eba barehẽ nãẽã barerope”. Hoairope hoairope yudede baredi barabö. “Yude baredeida tokaĩ,” “yude ibea bare pehudidime”. Yude barire baradebede hãbeĉhi ĉhiabede, yokheabene ini barehurĩ ibea barerö baradeabede hãbeĉhi yoabede ĉhini. Hãdeahuĩ deberi aragoeabemebedehẽ yairi hapapamerẽ. Hãdeaha ĉhini da “aĩ yo hãdi ara aragoea hearedikoa yaihĩ deberi.” “Khürima aĩhĩ duriri erore ñohõ ñohõ.” Ĉhãte aboeadirõ duriri erohirĩdirõda. Hãdipatö ñohoroda parereme horoda pearödi. Hapapẽĉhiadi hĩda huĩ ñorerehirĩ dãdi.

anymore. Therefore, *Kumañi* grew bitter and thought of punishing people. However, those who used to sing could talk to her and she warned them. There are two versions of how some Pume survived the Flood, becoming the human ancestors of the Pume people that live today. One of them seems to be a version of the Christian story of Noah's Ark. According to this version, a group of singers talked to *Kumañi* and became aware that the Flood was coming. In a version told by Hipólito Bello, this is what happened:

> They [the Pume who used to sing] fixed a big canoe and went to a high dune. They spent the time of the Flood there. They all went to *ĉhukuape* [as this place is today known]. They had everything they could eat. They had carried with them cows, hens, everything they needed. Since then, we have everything we have now. That is what they used to say. Now, there are snakes and tigers. There are all kinds of animals. They became many. Since then, there are animals in this land. That is what I have heard people tell[77].

According to many people, one can still find the remains of pottery in *ĉhukuape*, as the people who survived the Flood knew how to make pottery. The Pume say that these people were wiser than they are today; they were skilled weavers, pottery makers and powerful singers. Another common comment about the Flood is in reference to the origin of howler monkeys. According to many stories, the howler monkeys were among the animal-humans that forgot about *Kumañi* and did not know the Flood was coming. Although they found high ground to save themselves from drowning, they had not brought food and were

[77] Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019. Ĉhiara ana hodopeãbederẽ odede baraĉhiadibede ui ana ĉhotaduridi. ode pedebe peahãdi ĉhukuape. Hurĩpe böde hinibederẽ pumerehiniderõ pearörehiniderõ. Habeĉhi hurerehinibederẽ ĉhinĩ boa. Mitębederẽ vaka, okararo, eami irã daeĉhiri khorõhini irã yaba goapeã irã. Hudiri irã papeaha ãrõrẽ goaodero ĉhiri khorõhini. Irã ñorehiniderẽ böaha peahãdi po, parẽme hudirõ. Aki böremedeherẽ hudiri hirãpeãbede. Hirãpatineaderẽ daeĉhiri khorõhinihini pua hini. Tarẽremekede nĩbo ĉhohinia.

forced to eat leaves and rotten pieces of bark. As this was not appropriate food for humans, they turned into howler monkeys[78].

Besides this version that seems to be of Christian origin, there is another story that circulates around in the communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo. In this version, *Poana*, who remained in *daeĉiri*, helped Pume singers to go to *ãdeĉiadabu* (where *Kuma* lives) before the Flood started. People say that *Kumañi* asked him to swallow these singers without harming them. He did so, and they were able to spend the journey to *ãdeĉiadabu* there, living inside the big snake's body. Inside *Poana* was a place, like a house, where people could spend time while they waited to arrive at *ãdeĉiadabu*. Once they had arrived there, they became *tio pume*, jaguar-like humans. This is the story as told by Luis Ojeda:

> Then, he swallowed him and his older brother as well. He took them very far always, inside his belly. He took them very far away in his belly. There, he would sunbathe. He went there and he laid down to take sunlight. He [the oldest brother] used to say to his youngest brother that it was late, he could see [the sunset] clearly. They were lying down inside *Poana*. They were well, they were okay, inside Poana. Then, he [Poana] would go once and again to the same place to sunbathe. Thus, he [the youngest brother] would ask again to his oldest brother, "Where are we?" He would answer to his youngest brother, "We are far away." Time passed by and their hair fell out, they became bald. They spent a lot of time inside Poana's body. Then, they found a little knife inside Poana's body. "Look at this little knife!" said the oldest brother. "We could cut his flesh and go

[78] The origins of other species are attributed to various different causes but are not directly related to this story.

out" [he continued]. They had been inside his body for a long time, they found the little knife where he used to take sunbaths. So, they cut Poana's body. The oldest brother said, "Little brother, get out first." He told him to go in the opposite direction to Poana. That is how I have heard when they used to tell this story. I do not know it well, though. Thus, they left, they went far away, they went upwards. They were starving. The youngest brother said, "brother, I am starving." He answered, "Hold on!" There, they found a duck sleeping. He said to his youngest brother, "Look at that duck that is sleeping. I will make an arrow out of a stick." So, he made an arrow from a wood stick. Then, it was late already. The oldest brother said, "Sit here. When I shoot him, you will grab him, do not let him go. You should grab him at once." So, the duck descended from where he was sleeping. So, he shot it, the duck fell down. He had killed it. Immediately after, another duck came and he also shot it. They plucked and roasted them. The oldest brother said [to his brother], "You should eat first because you are hungry." So, they lit a fire. They collected dried grass and logs to light a fire. They roasted the ducks and ate them. Once they finished, they went far away. The oldest brother said, "Little brother, I will try to call out your sister-in-law. She might be nearby." He started roaring like a jaguar, but she did not hear him. Then, he said, "We are still too far." Later [he said], "I will try to call her out one more time because I can hear her voice. We might be halfway there." They kept walking. The oldest

brother said, “I will call her out one more time.” This time she answered, so he said, “We are close. We are almost there.” She was on her way to meet them. She would roar from afar and her husband would answer her in the same way. When they were very close, they called out to her again. They were about to run into each other [when the oldest brother said], “Do not panic when your sister-in-law caresses you.” So, they finally arrived. She caressed him, she touched him as if she were about to tear him [because she had claws]. He panicked and his brother told him one more time not to do so. She caressed his head because he was bald. Our oldest brother was like a *tio*[79].

What is not clear from this story is how they repopulated *daecîri*. However, this version is important for understanding the future, as we shall see in the concluding section of

[79] Luis Ojeda, March 28 2019. Hãdeahuĩ hibea ome bo mairemebedehẽ hibea ayimai hudi peahãdi. Haĉhia maiböremebedeherẽ haĉhia maikhaneremebedeherẽ. Hurĩpe ĉhiaicanete manarebedeherẽ haĉhi ĉhiaikhaneremebedeherẽ. Añimai dodi hĩtodibe ñoremebedehẽ ĉhademaĩ dae. Arẽkhearehinibederẽ Poanadi. Ĉhadeibedehẽ akörohurĩ kharamaibedehẽ. Habeĉhi ĉhadeĩ arẽkaröbederẽ Poanahuĩha aköro. Hãdeahuĩ, ado maibörebedeherẽ pehurĩpe ĉhiakhanedebedeherẽ. Hãdeahuĩ, ĉhiamanabedeherẽ ado ñoetarebedehẽ ayimai yoẽperẽ. Hiderẽ ñomebedehẽ hibea añimaihuĩ. Hãdeahuĩ, hapĩtepeabederẽ thobe kündeĉhiabederẽ thobe takaĩpebederẽ. hapĩtepeabederẽ akörohurĩdabederẽ. Conereã bui aköthoro arẽmea daneñia conereã buia hinirã khakharekoa pabederẽ akühuĩ Poanahuĩ hẽnerõ ŋõdopeãhuĩ. Hãdeahuĩ ĉhiaböbedeherẽ nomepeabederẽ ĉhiaikhanerõpe dabederẽ conereã. Khikhirikoabederẽ Poanahuĩ aköhuĩ. ñobedehẽ añimai ŋõdobö meneboĉhĩre. Nütarãde böbederẽ hudi Poanadi nütarãde böbede. Hãdiñoa tarẽdemekede haderĩde tarẽdemekede. Hãdeahuĩ böbederẽ haĉhia böbederẽ ĉhiaropomo böbederẽ. tãmeĉho hãbobederẽ. Ayimai tãmeĉho hãbokede. Tãmeĉho ĉhuabö ñobedehẽ haĉhi arẽ hurĩpe pua ana moabede. Hãdeahuĩ ñobedehẽ añimai “dane pu ana huĩ moade. tokorireã hodo patökede.” Hãdeahuĩ tokorireãhuĩ hodopeãbede. Hãdeaha do hudi hĩtobede “ĉhakheabo yoaio,” ñobedehẽ .“Yabãdi aiarödi idabö ĉhode idabö,” ñobedehẽ. Kharemo idabö,” ñobedehẽ. Hãdeahuĩ pua ana hudi ĉhanarãbede hene moareãrõpe. Hãdeahuĩ aiabedehẽ khatorĩ unẽnobede. Adohuĩ duria manabedehẽ aenobede ado Pua ana. Hãdeahuĩ khuĩnobede hãdite güekhĩdenobederẽ. Goheke yaba tãmeĉho hãboareãhuĩ. Hãdeaha cõde pamehuĩ ĉhoabederẽ ĉhoeba. Hãdeaha corörã ãdeĉhoabederẽ toki khitetineabederẽ cõdehuĩ. Hãdeaha güekhĩde ĉhenõbederẽ eba hurabedehẽ pua ana ŋoahuĩ huretehuĩ. Eba böbedehẽ haĉhia. Aratĩkheabö ñobedehẽ yabahudi hurapeaoã. Böbederẽ ĉhiabakere yödebederẽ. Hãdeahuĩ haĉhi peãbederẽ. Ina tarẽtökede derañihi añimai derani pihi pẽpañine. Hãdeahuĩ coabede tarẽdebede. “Hidea horöre,” ñobedehẽ. “Ado hãdeahuĩ ado ine taretö kode buiĉhi debepeãbenehẽ habothoromerẽ buiĉhi debepeãnikoę.” Hãdeahuĩ böbederẽ. “Ado ine tarẽtökode,” ñobedehẽ. Hãdeahuĩ debekoabenehẽ “pihipẽrẽ,” ñobedehẽ. “Kereyorẽ,” ñobedehẽ. Debe hanañire debe koaröbenehẽ henerõ debe böbederẽ. Haĉhia baetekoa bede pihiperẽ haĉhiderẽ ue habodehẽ derañihi mea maĉhiaderödi. Hãdeaha managurenãrẽte mãĉhiadebenehẽ ide ĉhobenehẽ corĩdarĩ pabenehẽ ida ĉhoñirẽ. Hãdeahuĩ ue hãbobede ue hãbodehẽ. Maĉhiodebenime thobe tarĩeãbederẽ. Tiopumeremebede ibea ayimai hudi.

this chapter. For now, it is important to say that, in the middle of a crisis both environmental and social, the Pume people are expecting a new Flood, one that will bring about social renewal as it has done in the past. This idea of the recurrence of water as a transformative yet reproductive force stems from, I think, the close relationships the Pume have with water.

The Pume live in a hyper-seasonal savanna ecosystem, in which the land cyclically floods and the landscape goes through deep transformations every six months. Close relationships with these transformations brought about by water stimulate the imagination and are a source of creativity. In the next section, I present some examples of how the Pume understand and conceive of water as entangled in relationships with plants and animals. Although I consider water to be part of the physical world, I do not assume any universalist notion in defining it but rather appeal to water's ability to inspire multiple explanations for its nature.

4.2. Water and the changing landscape

As previously stated, the Pume people inhabit a hyper-seasonal ecosystem. One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Llanos is the presence of two distinct seasons: a dry season that runs from November to April or May and a wet season that goes from April or May to October (Duno de Stefano *et al.*, 2007; Huber *et al.*, 2006). During the wet season, an important part of the land—possibly around 70 percent—is flooded (Huber *et al.*, 2006; Pereira and Sarmiento, 1997). This phenomenon is especially palpable in the savanna lands located between the channels of the Capanaro and Riecito-Cinaruco Rivers (Aymard and González, 2007), where most of the Pume communities are located. For a person who is not familiar with this hyper-seasonality, it is striking to see the changes the landscape goes through. The first times I visited the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, I

marveled at this change; it felt as if one were in two completely different places. The Pume actually adopt a particular lifestyle depending on each season.

During the rainy season, the Pume spend a lot of time in their gardens. It is the time when they start to sow in a new garden, which they will have prepared during the final months of the dry season. As previously noted, they keep track of the age of their gardens by counting how many wet seasons they have sown manioc in the same garden. Thus, for example, a garden in which they have sown manioc a second time is usually called *õaríuigoaĉado*—literally, "garden that has two wet seasons." They normally resow manioc for three or four years until they consider the garden to be old (*otamaĩĉado*), at which point they leave it to fallow.

During the dry season, they spend more time hunting, fishing and collecting turtle eggs. Fishing and collecting eggs are activities that take place on the riverbanks. Collecting turtle eggs is a nocturnal activity. Normally, people go with their spouses to collect the eggs. The verb "*damena*" (Ven. Spanish: terecayar, verb root. *dame*- terecay) is the verb used to denote the act of collecting turtle eggs, whether those from terecay ("*dame*," *Podocnemis unifilis*, En. Yellow-spotted river turtle) or galápago (*ĉirĩ dame*, *Podocnemis vogli*, En. Savanna side-necked turtle). It is said that people use these moments to engage in sexual intercourse. For that reason, this same verb (*damena*) is usually used when joking around to refer to having sexual relations. During this season, the sandy riverbanks, now exposed once the water has withdrawn, are also important places for the social life of the community. Every afternoon, women and children gather there to take long baths in the river. Women also go there to wash clothes. These are enjoyable times in which women chat and children play, and there is usually a lot of laughter.

Access to sources of animal protein during the rainy season is considerably reduced in comparison to the dry season. Because of this scarcity, it is during the rainy season that Pume men normally hunt cows. During the dry season, on the other hand, the Pume rely to a great extent on fishing and hunting animals that live in the river: turtles and caimans, as well as many kinds of large birds. Among the birds they hunt, *gabán* (Ven. Sp.) (*hõe*, *Mycteria americana*, En. Wood stork) is really important, and these birds mostly disappear during the wet season. The Pume say this is because they go to heaven, where it is the dry season while on earth it is wet. Because it is the dry season in heaven (*ãdei*), the wood stork go there so they can eat fish that are normally available only during this season. The Pume associate the scarcity of fish with the excess of water. When it is the dry season—that is to say, when the water goes to heaven—the wood stork make their return from heaven to earth. Being on earth, they can enjoy eating fish while they are available here and scarce in heaven, where everything is now flooded. The presence of birds and fish, then, is indicative of the absence of water.

Agricultural practices are also influenced by the flux of water from scarcity to excess. The Pume, then, are constantly interacting with the presence of water or its absence. This is not only evident in the visible changes of the landscape but is also involved in the decisions they make when wanting to start planting a new garden, or when carrying out maintenance on an old one. As noted above, they normally plant their gardens during the rainy season. Temperature and humidity are very much related in how they conceive of the types of soils they prefer to use to sow. Those patches of land with wet, cold, clay soil (*dabu hĩĉha*) are considered to be the most suitable for agriculture, and they are usually found near streams where the soil remains extremely wet. However, the Pume are constantly negotiating with water. Manioc plants need water at the beginning of their development, when they are still

cuttings. Once manioc roots have started to flesh out, the Pume do not weed their gardens. They allow weeds to grow around the manioc plants. According to them, the weeds can take the excess of water so the tubers do not become watery and therefore insipid and mushy. So, in the case of soils, characteristics such as coldness, humidity and pastiness indicate the presence of water. Likewise, if manioc roots display mushiness it suggests there is an excess of water. Relying on these tactile properties, the Pume try to maintain a water balance so that their crops mature optimally.

Besides manioc, corn is also an important crop. According to Morey, sources from colonial times show that the Pume, as well as Guamo and Otomaco, used to plant a particular kind of corn that grows in just two months "on flood lands from which the water had receded" (Morey, 1975, p. 214). This is particularly well illustrated by the Jesuit priest Joseph Gumilla (1686-1750) when he describes the type of agriculture that some of the peoples of the Llanos practiced in the eighteenth century:

> All the Indians that live close by lagoons, of which [the lagoons] there are many, and very big, when the [water level] is dropping, after the force of the waters [have diminished], they are sowing that cleared land, from which the water has withdrawn; here they do reap abundant fruit (as I said when speaking of the Otomaco Indians), because this idle and rotten land vents and breaks into copious fruits. Along the contours of these lagoons, the Otomacos, Guamos, Paos and *Saruros* [Pume] sow a particular species of maize that has not proliferated, and that I have not seen in other nations: they call it, in their language, two-months maize, because two months after it is sown, it grows, puts ear, and ripens: so that in the

cycle of the year, they take six crops of this corn... (Gumilla, 1944, p. 204, italics mine)[80].

Felipe Salvador Gilij, another Jesuit priest (1721-1789), also describes this practice. He stresses the fertility that is conferred on those lands that have been flooded during the rainy season:

> The month of December, that is to say, two months after the river has receded, the trees are cut down, as we said above; and by this season, after having burned them, no more is thought of them. In the long time from the month of May or June, when the flood begins, until that of September, when it descends, the ground thus prepared is continually under water, and between the ashes that have remained from burning it, and the silt carried by the flooding of the river, it becomes very fertile. Towards the end of September, or also at the beginning of October, that is, when the river has gone down completely and the land has dried up properly, it is thought to sow it and to put the grains, or the fruits or roots that can be born in the intermediate space, between one and another flood (Gilij, 1965a, p. 277, my translation)[81].

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80 Todos los indios que viven cerca de las lagunas, que las hay muchas, y muy grandes, a tiempo que estas van bajando, después de la fuerza de las aguas, van ellos sembrando toda aquella tierra limpia, de que se retira el agua; y aquí sí cogen abundante fruto (como dije hablando de los indios otomacos) porque desfoga, y prorrumpe aquella tierra holgazana, y podrida en copioso frutos. En el contorno de estas lagunas, siembran los dichos otomacos, guamos, paos, y *saruros* [Pume], una singular especie de maíz, que no se ha extendido, ni he visto en otras naciones: llamanle en su lenguaje maíz de los dos meses; porque a los dos meses de sembrado, crece, echa mazorca, y madura: de modo, que en el círculo del año, cogen seis cosechas de este maíz...

81 El mes de diciembre, es decir, dos meses despues de haberse retirado el rio, se cortan los arboles, como dijimos mas arriba; y por esta estacion, despues de haberlos quemado, no se piensa en mas. El largo tiempo que hay desde el mes de Mayo o de Junio, cuando comienza la inundacion, hasta el de septiembre, en que baja, el terreno asi preparado esta continuamente debajo del agua, y entre las cenizas que han quedado de quemarlo, y el cieno llevado por la inundacion del rio, se vuelve fecundisimo. Hacia el fin de septiembre, o

Today, the Pume people still grow the type of corn described by Gumilla. They call it *pume phue* (people's corn). The size of this plant is considerably smaller than commercial corn. The cob is also small and the grains are of different colors. They do not plant it, however—at least not to my knowledge—in areas from which the water has withdrawn. It is normally planted instead in patches of land that, because of their proximity to streams, remain extremely wet during the rainy season but do not become flooded. On the other hand, during the dry season they do use the riverbanks to plant manioc cuttings; these places are called *ŋave paę ĉado* (shore manioc gardens). As in the practices described by Gumilla and Gilij, the Pume use the shores of the river to plant these cuttings. Because these patches of land were flooded during the wet season, they have been replenished by nutrients transported in the water. In this way, these cuttings are preserved until the rainy season comes, when they are sown in big gardens in the margins of streams.

Based on the above, it is plausible to say that the Pume are in permanent negotiation with water. Its presence or absence gives rise to responses not only in humans but also in animals and plants. So, like the human body (see Chapter 3), water has agency, notwithstanding its lack of intentionality (Wagner, 2013, pp. 7-8)[82]. Unlike the human body, though, this agency is not mediated by a vital essence or "soul." This type of "unsouled" agency is something we are not used to talking about when referring to animism in Lowland South America. The kind of ontology in which water has action on its own goes along with Ingold's idea that "things are in life rather than life is in things" (2007, p. 12). As Ingold explains, the idea that things are animated because they have a spirit or soul goes back to Tylor, and this idea has permeated current understandings of animism in South America.

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tambien en los principios de octubre, esto es, cuando el rio ha bajado del todo y se ha secado convenientemente el terreno se piensa en sembrarlo y en poner los granos, o bien los frutos o raices que pueden nacer en el espacio intermedio entre una y otra inundacion (Gilij, 1965a, 277)

82 Wagner follows Latour (2005) when making this claim. Although I subscribe to Latour's plea to reassemble the social to include nonhuman actors, my analysis is not based on ANT.

However, as the ethnography of the Pume shows, water has agency; it is animated. Water is, in a way, alive, but it does not possess a spirit. In relation to water, one could say, then, that for the Pume, "[t]hings are alive and active not because they are possessed of spirit…but because the substances which they comprise continue to be swept up in circulations of the surrounding media that alternately portend their dissolution or…ensure their regeneration" (ibid., p. 12). The agency of water becomes apparent once again in a healing practice I present in the following section, in which I take up the idea of water as a metaphor for time and history.

4.3. Water as a metaphor for history

I started this chapter by giving an account of how the Pume explain their existence as a society as an outcome of a series of events that took place in the past. As the stories of the past have shown, instead of being literal accounts of events, Pume narratives of the past are rich in metaphors. Here, I focus particularly on the meanings and metaphors that emerge from their interaction with water. By focusing on the cultural mediated materiality of water as described in the previous section, I attempt to show how the Pume people recognize the passing of time and understand the interplay between continuity and change. My analysis resounds with Hill's (1988, p. 3) invitation to explore indigenous South American historical consciousness by looking at narratives as well as nonverbal formulations as ways in which indigenous societies make sense of their experience of history. As the narratives of this chapter and the accounts of how the Pume people remember presented in the next one show, Pume historiography challenges the typical Western conception of history "as an account of the 'real' events and processes" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987, p. 193).

In the previous section, I presented a description of how the Pume interact with water in their subsistence practices. My analysis of water as a metaphor for the interdependence between transformation and reproduction is illustrated further with an example of a Pume healing practice: *ñõto* (described in Chapter 2).

As stated in Chapter 2, *ñõto* is a form of chanted speech people perform as they smoke tobacco. The prayer presented in this section is intended to transform water (*ui*) into "golden water" (*ĉhereui*). Golden water is the best remedy for people experiencing stomach pain, nausea and/or vomiting. The sensation of not being able to keep food down is a sign of a distressed relation between *pumetho* and *ikhara*. This is particularly common among pregnant women experiencing morning sickness. In these cases, the person who is feeling sick could ask someone, normally a relative who knows the prayer, to say it. Whoever says the prayer does so while holding a container filled with water and utters:

(1) anoñi, ĉhereuigoebedika, anoñi, anoñi ĉhereuigoebedika	(1) owner of the golden, sweet water, owner, owner of the golden, sweet water
(2) anoñi, anoñi ĉhereuigoebedika	(2) owner, owner of the golden sweet water
(3) goabedome, goabedome ĉhereuigoebedika	(3) lively, invigorating, golden, sweet water
(4) goabedome, goabedome ĉhereuigoebedika	(4) lively, invigorating, golden, sweet water
(5) daeĉiriröpomo horẽtaeno ĉiname	(5) that makes the earth remember,
(6) anoñi ĉhereuigoebedika	(6) owner of the golden, sweet water
(7) kimapame, ĉhereuigoebedika	(7) sacred words, golden, sweet water

(8) kimapa, kimapa, kimapame ĉhereuigoebedika	(8) sacred words, sacred words, sacred words, golden, sweet water
(9) kimapame ĉhereuigoebedika	(9) sacred words, golden, sweet water
(10) pumaikhara nutatia, haremere ĉhereuigoebedika	(10) all over the body, healing, golden, sweet water
(11) pumaimo, pumaimo ĉhereui, ĉhereui	(11) throughout the whole being, throughout the whole being, golden water, golden water
(12) pumai hareryome, hareryome	(12) renewed being, renewed
(13) pumai goabedome, goabedome, ĉhereui, ĉhereui	(13) lively, lively being, golden water, golden water
(14) anoñi ĉhereuidi, ĉhereuidi	(14) owner of the golden water, golden water
(15) pumaimo ĉhereui, ĉhereuidi	(15) throughout the whole being, golden water, golden water
(16) pumaikharatimo, pumaikharatimo	(16) throughout the whole body, throughout the whole body
(17) haremere, haremere ĉhereuidi	(17) healing, healing golden water
(18) pumaimo ĉhereuidi	(18) throughout the whole being, golden water
(19) pumaimo, pumaimo ĉhereuidi, ĉhereuidi	(19) throughout the whole being, throughout the whole being, golden water, golden water
(20) madorana, madorana, madorana ĉhereuidi	(20) *madorana*, *madorana*, *madorana*,

	golden water
(21) daecîrirö horẽtaeno cîname, cîhereuidi, cîhereuidi	(21) that makes the earth remember, golden water
(22) pumaimo cîhereuidi	(22) throughout the whole being, golden water
(23) daecîrirö horẽtaeno cîname, cîhereuidi	(23) golden water that makes the earth remember
(24) pumaimo cîhereuidi, cîhereuidi	(24) throughout the whole being, golden water, golden water
(25) daecîrirö horẽtaeno cîname, cîhereuidi	(25) that makes the earth remember, golden water
(26) pumaikharaba haremere, haremere, goabedome cîhereui	(26) that the body heals, heals, invigorating golden water
(27) do ãdeyaröpẽ goabedororeme, cîhereuidi, cîhereui	(27) the sun is in *ãdeya* [the east] rising, golden water, golden water
(28) pumaimo, pumaimo cîhereui	(28) throughout the whole being, throughout the whole being, golden water
(29) pumai haremere cîhereuidi	(29) whole being, healing golden water
(30) pumai, haremere cîhereuidi	(30) whole being, healing golden water
(31) anoñi, anoñi, cîhereuidi	(31) owner, owner of the golden water
(32) pumaimo cîhereuidi	(32) throughout the whole being, golden water
(33) daecîrirö goabedome cîhereuidi	(33) that awakens the earth, golden water
(34) daecîrirö goabedome, cîhereuidi, cîhereuidi	(34) that awakens the earth, golden water,

	golden water
(35) pumai haremere ĉiname ĉhereuidi,	(35) that does heal being, golden water,
ĉhereuidi	golden water

Ĉhereuidi (golden water) is the water that exists in *ãdeĉiadabu*, where *Kumañi* lives and where everything is made of gold. When singers go to this land they are invited by the *tio* to drink this water, which is said to have intoxicating properties. *Tõhe* singers are eager to drink this water as much as the *tio* crave for manioc beer when they come to this realm. As the prayer says, *Kumañi* owns this water. She can send it to this realm to flood everything, as she has done in the past. This water promotes social renewal and, when drunk, it also brings renewal to the self. This kind of transformation of the self is understood in terms of a repositioning of the sick person from an indeterminate ontological status to their status as human.

The human body is treated here as corresponding to *daeĉiri*, which I have translated as "the earth," but it refers more accurately to everything that is visible. The earth-body correspondence suggests that in this case, rather than an animist ontology, we seem to be reaching the threshold of analogism. Or should we agree with Sahlins (2014) that analogism is just a form of animism? In any case, what I find important for the purpose of understanding water as a metaphor of social change is the idea that water makes "the earth" remember, just as it makes the body remember. It brings home the *pumetho* of the diseased person. As explained in the previous chapter, the verb root "*horẽta-*"—to remember (*ho-* home, *-rẽ-* in, *-ta* suffix that indicates state)—alludes to the idea of the vital essence (*pumetho*) as remaining inside the husk (*ikhara*), its home. The construction "*horẽtaeno ĉiname*" that I have translated as "to make remember" is normally used to refer to those situations in which a flashback is

triggered, a confluence of stimuli of all sorts—sounds, smells, sights, touch—that bring about a memory.

As explained in Chapter 1, metaphors move people from a place of uncertain identity to a space of identification (Fernandez, 1974). This idea is illustrated in this prayer, in which the predication of sign-images such as the golden water upon water allows the affected person to move from uncertainty to identification with other human beings.

The metaphor of the body as the earth is illustrative, likewise, of the idea proposed by Michael Jackson of understanding metaphors not as "merely… figure[s] of speech" (1983b, p. 131) but, rather, as revelations of the unity between Self and World, subject and object (ibid., p. 132). Drawing on ethnographic materials on Yurok people and the poetry of Dylan Thomas, he proposes understanding metaphor as situated action. Referring to Yurok cosmogony as implicit in a healer's experience as collected by ethnographer Erik Erickson, alongside the poem "In the White Giant's Thigh" (1950) by Dylan Thomas, he suggests that "the world of *things* is merged with the world of *Being,* and as a consequence 'things' ... assume the status of 'signs' whose decipherment mediates understanding and action in the human world" (Jackson, 1983b, p. 130, italics in original).

The use of metaphors in the healing practice described in this section suggests the idea that water transforms human beings, but this transformation implies reproduction because water brings humans back to their humanness. When the Pume explain social change in terms of a Flood, it seems to me, then, that they are not seeing change as a disruptive force that marks a "then and now." It is rather a change that restores them as a society, just as water is restorative of the human body and the self. It is also implied, as we will see further on, in their expectation that the social erosion they are experiencing now will be overcome with a new flood. This idea of change resonates with the suggestion that anthropologists should look

at “ambiguous processes” of change as being entailed in practices rather than at “contained acts or isolable incidents” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, p. 37). This claim presupposes that “social life is continuous activity–activity that, because it is always a product of complex experience and contradictory conditions, simultaneously reproduces and transforms the world” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, pp. 37-38).

4.4. The past in the future: final remarks

In this chapter I have shown how the Pume engage with water and the transformations it produces over the landscape. The presence of water is experienced as an abundance of animals, as a source of reproduction and fertility. Likewise, water is associated with drastic transformations of the landscape and, consequently, of people’s lifestyles. These experiences with water, I argue, are at the core of Pume understandings of water as the source of social transformation and reproduction. In Pume narratives of the past, then, water is a metaphor for history: a force that transforms and reproduces the Pume socially. This dual nature of water is further illustrated in its use as a substance that becomes healing because it transforms the body while restoring its health. It is important to note, however, that the healing capacity of water is activated only by the articulation of chanted speech that makes it possible to overcome the object-subject dichotomy (see final section of Chapter 3) so as to unveil the wholeness between people and the world.

I want to conclude this chapter by showing how, among the Pume, the past configures ideas of the future. Messianism and millenarianism tend to be common ideologies of the future among Lowland South American peoples (see, for example, Santos-Granero, 2007; Wright and Hill, 1986). This is not the case for the Pume, whose expectations of a better future depend on the coming of a new Flood. Old Pume women and men strongly believe that

a Flood will bring back the social renewal they long for. This renewal is, for them, a way to overcome two different yet connected situations they experience in the present. One of these is their awareness of the consequences entailed in fishing with nets, an activity normally carried out by nonindigenous people.

The following passage recounted by Hipólito Bello gives an idea of the problems the Pume are facing in relation to overfishing:

> They [*criollos*] came again. How are they [the fish] going to survive? They are doing away with them. How are they going to survive nowadays? They do not tell us that they are going to fish. Then, they talk [about us] but it is them who are exterminating them [the fish]. They don't tell me anything. I would have liked to be asked, [they should have asked] the old men. I used to see our fish and now, we do not have any more. They have cows, they are destroying us… What are we going to eat? When they fish with nets… How are they [the fish] going to get out of the net? They just take all of them out. Once, they did the same, they took them all out. They are decimated, what are we going to eat? Before there were many fish, now there is a lot of straw and fish are decimated. Only if they had given them [fish] to us, fish would be fine, only if they had given them to us. They are selling the fish and becoming rich. Fish are our food. They cannot do that, this is unacceptable. Everything that lives in the river is being decimated. They are also annihilating

the fish there, where Diego[83] lives. In the past, [our] people used to go hunting there. The ones who used to live here went there and from there all the way upstream. Your uncles used to go hunting upstream [addressing his grand-son]. We used to live and hunt in our territory. Nowadays, you do not see fish. How could there be? There is nothing you can hunt. We used to live [in our territory], they would not come down here. They [the old ones] used to hunt everything: *terecay*, fish. That is how it was. Nowadays, there is nothing. Hence, we have to go far away. Before, we used to hunt in our territory. [Nowadays] we do not see either *galapagos* nor armadillos. Before you could see *terecay* on the beach. When you were a child you used to see them. When you were a child, there was fish, they used to make noises, they went about leaving a trace [in the water] as if they were an outboard motor. Nowadays, you do not see that. Nowadays, I do not eat so much. The big lagoon is drying up, it became full of straw because there are no fish. In the one that is called *thakaĩ,* there were many fish, it was rich in fish. It dried up, there is just straw there, it became like that because there are no fish there anymore[84].

[83] Diego Salas is the owner of a *fundo* located on the other side of the river. This territory used to be an important source of land for gardening, and there is also a lake, which used to be a preferred spot for fishing.

[84] Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019. Hãdide hãdi tarẽmĩdaba ĉhõhõ hudiriha baeĉhinidirõbe nive hudirõ. Ŋõdonarakheahuĩ muĩderohue ñõdete ibe. Ado yabo muĩderohue huĩ ñone hurareã ãderapabederẽ, ĉhõhõ muĩhabederẽ ĉhere dyoropabederẽ huĩ. Hãbepaderẽ yudero pume hudirõ, hãbepaderẽ dyoropadeaba baderĩ, ĉheria dadepahiniderẽ. Thamo mitarerĩ nĩboa. Ado yabo muĩdaderohue hanaderẽ ĉhanakhoropade. Hãdeahuĩ bae ĉhiniadirõbe nivemare. Yaba ĉhana khorõpade. Hãdi muĩpare ĉhõhõ ñomãdide. Hãdipaete ñorederẽ pehenerõ ĉhinite. Hãdeahuĩ, kode otẹtine koa ñoe tarẽreã torehinida koa otẹti hini. Haremea ibeade ĉhõ hudi goadehinia hinirõ. Hãdidederẽ vaka goaderẽ baegorihodirõbe ĉhana hurapare gorihode. Barereã miteahuĩ ĉhanaha nütanopade barereã ĉhiahuĩ muiŋõdoderohue? Otẹ boa. Ado muirodi peahãdi. Yoropa, ĉhana huraparẽ? Ĉhõ khorõmerẽme huĩ pada mapeade ĉhõ dekhia peahuĩ. Hãdi damãdi ãrõrẽ ĉhõhõ dyorodedirõbe

The problem of people coming to fish without even asking permission from the Pume is a topic of conversation on a daily basis. Colombian and Venezuelan nonindigenous national citizens frequently go to fish in Pume territory. They go there mostly to fish *pavón* (Ven Spa) (Pume *Yakara, Cichla intermedia,* En. Royal peacock bass), an endemic species of the Orinoco basin. It is in fact prohibited to fish specimens of this species, but they are highly priced as they are sold as a delicacy in restaurants in the main cities around the border between Venezuela and Colombia. As Hipólito explains, for the Pume there is a connection between overfishing and the intense drought they have been facing over the last few years. This phenomenon is unavoidably affecting their relation to the *ui nive*, which brings us to the second current situation Pume elders find problematic. According to them, *Kumañi* will punish people again, as she did in the past, by sending a Flood because, nowadays, singers do not follow food prescriptions and nor do they sing as often as they should. This is the reason why, in the communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo, none of the singers is able to talk directly to the *ui nive* during the *tõhe*. Although, while fishing, Pume men do convey messages to the inhabitants of the water by praying, this type of communication is one-way, not a proper dialogue as would take place during the *tõhe.*

So, the relationships with the *ui nive* are tense at the moment, as they have been in the past. Also, the coming of a new Flood seems inevitable. However, as it has already happened

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ibę dyororodi ĉhadeturime, otę boa hãdima dyoromeãdi. Danehinirõ ĉhõhõ gatetinederẽ goahinipaderẽ. Ĉhõ hinirõ ibea hurareã hinirã. Hãdi pade torea hãdi pareadekhia. Beagorihaderobe. Adode dyoropeamaderohue yude beare Diegodi khorõme hudi. Nütarade oaio dyoro otętirã hudirõ? Taĩrẽreã. Hudiri taĩrehiniderẽ hudiri ĉhiaropomo yoaiyo khorõrehiniderõ. hademaireãderõ hudiri taĩhiniderẽ ĉhiaropomo. Khorõrehiniderõ ibęa ĉhiri dyoro taĩrerehiniderẽ. Yaba hãdiderẽ ĉhõhõ dadeahuĩ, ñoaderẽ ĉhana daha, darẽdeĉhiapihuĩ taĩderẽ. Hãdide dabö khorõmerẽme khurima ĉhotodere hini ibęa ĉhiriromo. Taĩrehini eami damehuĩ. Yaba hãdide khorõdede. Hãdeaha, pareãdeĉhiaha ĉhotoderẽ haĉhi, hãdido ibea ĉhiriromo taĩre hini. Dademãdideda dame igöro. Nĩŋeoa ŋõdo mea dameoa darereme mene. Adode otę ĉhiapamerẽ, Otę peamerẽ da habo ĉhaderĩ khorõreme ĉhõ ode habo duruma earemẽde ĉhõ hudi cõde ĉhiara ui mĩdarĩ böremẽde. Yaba hãdidarẽ deĉhiade. yaba hure mãdikheake. tha ana hudi gapeãde padamapeãde ĉhõrẽ khorõmãdikheadi. Ado thakaĩ ñoreãdi hudi hirãremẽde ĉhõ, goameremẽdi, nuĩderi khorõremẽde gapeãde pada khorõmapeãde, ĉhadede peaha ĉhõ deĉhia peahuĩ. Pearödi ĉhõdi khorõtara eroremẽde hãdida bã tarẽmẽda.

in the past, people are sure that some will survive to repopulate the Pume society. In July 2011, I asked a group of Pume young men to draw their communities (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Pume young men presenting the drawing of their communities they made (Boca Tronador and Banco Largo)

To my surprise, they drew *Poana* living in the dunes that are located to the south, on the way to the Cinaruco River (Figure 6). Poana lives there, and he is waiting for the Flood to come so that he can save some Pume women and men, as he did in the past. People have never seen him, but they know he lives there because there is a lagoon of clear and calm waters that they know is his house.

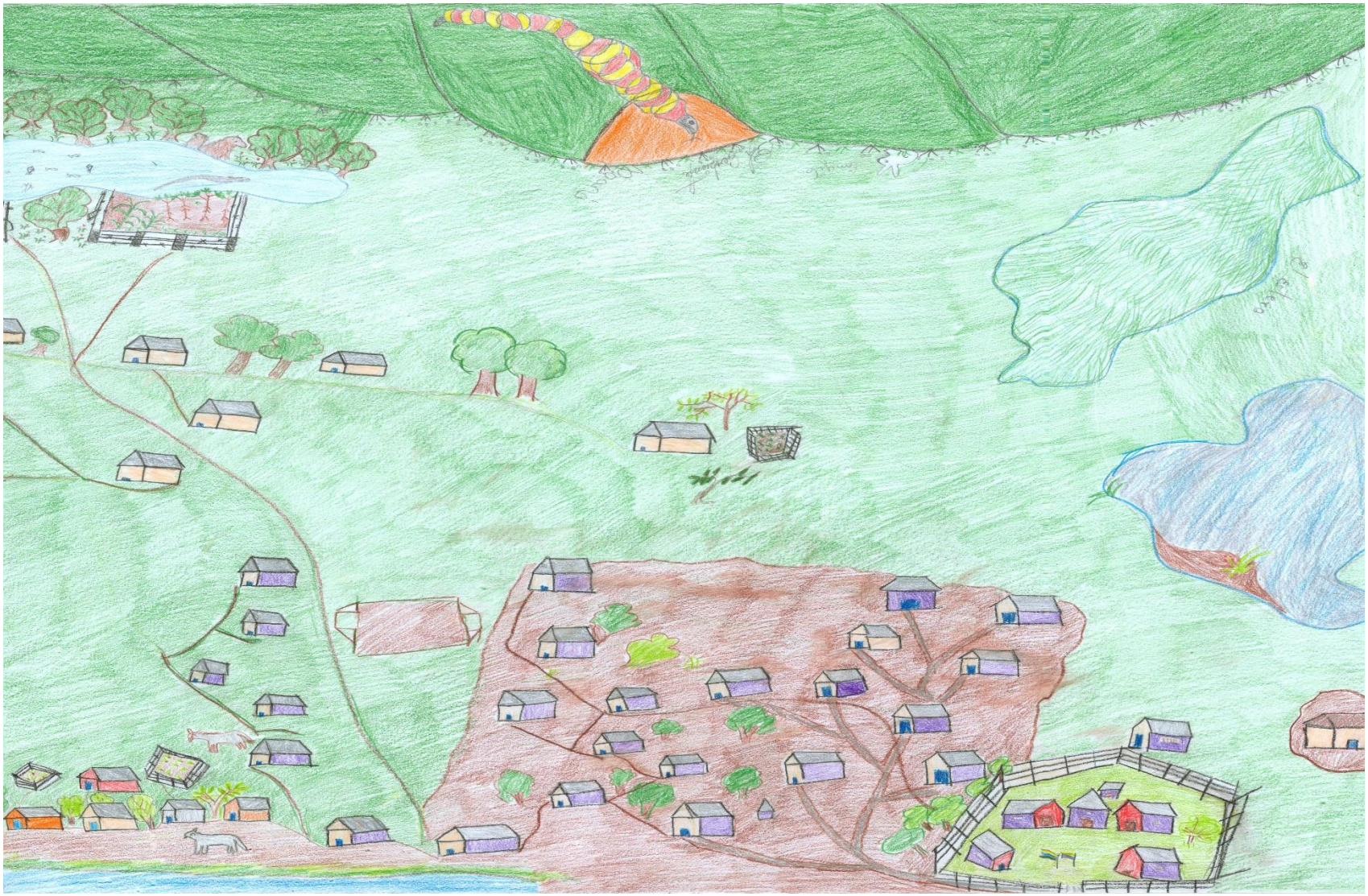

Figure 6. Drawing of the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo

CHAPTER 5

HEALING SONGS, HEALING PATHS

This chapter addresses the question of how the Pume people remember (cf. Connerton, 1989). The simple answer to this question is that they remember through the somatic experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing. These experiences, then, are modes of historical consciousness. This is in line with an epistemology in which these experiences are valued as important sources of knowledge (Chapter 3). In the previous chapter, I described one mode of historical consciousness by piecing together a Pume narrative of the past in which two turning points have marked three different eras. In that chapter, I argued that Pume temporality can be represented as a spiral. In this chapter I want to present another way of relating to time that coexists with the one described before. It is a relation with time in which the past is perceived as recurrently materializing in the present through dreams, diseases and ritual. Rather than being represented as a line that takes the shape of a spiral, as in the relation with time entailed in a Pume history made up of eras, this temporality is better described as points emerging in a continuum, with the points as instants in which the Pume experience the past.

While narratives of the past as made explicit by Pume people convey an idea of a seemingly static past (previous chapter), somatic experiences of the past are more dynamic. That is to say, the past is constantly reconfigured by such experiences. As I will show in this chapter, an example of this is the land of the dead—*ãdeĉiadabu*. When telling stories about the past, the Pume always represent this land—the land made by *Kuma* to live there with her children after this realm had been conquered by the *ui nive*—as all made of gold. Although the narratives of the past are not very descriptive of the ways of life of *ãdeĉiadabu*'s

inhabitants, they certainly are not made up of imagery of foreignness and modernity, as is the case when singers talk about their experience of being there. It is as if, in narratives of the past, the land of *Kuma* is changeless when this is actually not the case, as the experiences of dreaming, disease and singing presented in this chapter will show. *Ãdeĉiadabu* is not a place where time stands still, but a parallel realm in which history unfolds at the same pace as it does in this one.

What I argue in this chapter is, then, that the somatic experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing are (also) Pume historicities (see also Cormier, 2003, for the Guajá[85]). These experiences show that body transformations, and the bodily engagement with the landscape entailed in practices, allow the Pume to have an idea of the passing of time. In sum, by looking at these experiences, in this chapter I explore the idea that ways of perceiving or acquiring knowledge of the past are part of a wider epistemology in which dreaming, being ill and singing are considered learning experiences.

5.1. Forgetting or particular ways to remember?

In Amazonian ethnography there has been an emphasis on forgetting as a process that is actively sought out by people. This is especially the case for ethnographies that focus on the idea that in Amazonian societies, the living tend to detach themselves from the memories of the dead, which is the reason why genealogies in many cases lack temporal depth (see, for example, Erikson, 2007; Taylor, 1993, 2007). The issue of forgetting has also been addressed by Santos-Granero (2007), though his focus was not on the relation of the living to the dead but on forgetting as a choice made to reverse asymmetrical power relations.

[85] Cormier does not refer to diseases but only to dreams and ritual.

In the case of the Pume, I want to explore the hypothesis that we are not dealing with a process of intentional or unintentional forgetting but rather with a particular way of remembering that diverges from explicit, literal narratives of what happened in the past. One of the reasons why I find it important to pay attention to forms of memory that might otherwise look like forgetting is because, as noted previously, the Pume do not have a verb that one can translate as "to forget"; the only way to say that one has forgotten is by using the negative form of the verb "to remember." Furthermore, as pointed out in Chapter 3, the verb "to remember" (root *horẽta*-) suggests an understanding of the ability to recall as embodied action. To remember implies a (re)union of the envelope (*ikhara*) and the vital essence (*pumetho*), a coming back home of the soul. Yet it is the disunity of these two components of the person that makes it possible to conceptualize memory as conceived by the Pume.

I would like to introduce my argument by describing how the Pume speak about change. When doing so, the advent of colonial settlers (*criollos*, *nive*) frequently arises. This is something that old Pume men and women remember as their most significant experience of change. In fact, it is the only change they actively talk about. The Pume do not frequently share narratives of the mythical past, nor do they talk at all about the changes that took place in the distant (colonial) past.

The arrival of *criollos* has meant not only the Pume's displacement to unproductive soils, but also the prevention of free movement around their territory and the decimation of the fauna they used to hunt and fish. Pume often talk about how, before colonial settlement, it was possible to have gardens everywhere, while now it is only possible to have small gardens in a confined territory, which, in addition, they have to fence with barbed wire to protect their crops from the cattle of neighboring *criollos*. As Hipólito Bello recalls:

We used to live like that when there were no *nive*, there were only Pume. Along Capanaparo [river], in front of the riverbanks of the Capanaro River there is some sort of an island[86]. This river runs down here [Riecito] and out there runs another river [Arauca], down there [further south] there is another river where only Pume used to live. Along the riverbanks of Capanaparo only Pume used to live. Upstream [Riecito River] also, only Pume used to live there. After some time, they bought everything, they came. They bought the lands of *arüka* [Arauca river]. This side of the river and the other side too[87].

According to Hipólito, when the settlers came for the first time, they simply occupied the lands; they did not buy them from the Pume. According to him, the Pume territory also included the present-day site of Caracas. In fact, in the Pume imagination more generally Caracas was also part of their territory until *criollos*[88] settled there. After some time, the *criollos* started buying and selling lands, but when they first settled they simply invaded them. As the narrative above shows, Hipólito, who is around 70 years old, remembers the time when only Pume people lived along the riverbanks of the Capanaparo, Riecito and Cinaruco Rivers. He continues by describing how their lives changed after the settlement of *criollos*:

They are stingy with the land. We used to go hunting freely. Back then [when he was young], we used to go hunting to the other side of the river without restraint, we would spend the night there, we

[86] Hipólito is referring to the land located in between the intersection of the Capanaparo and Riecito Rivers.

[87] Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019. Hãdi khorõrehini nivedekhearehiniderẽ, Pumemarẽ khorõrehiniderẽ. Beana ĉhirioa, beanari toro ĉhiareãkarĩ manade. Y yude bea oamo beade arüka beadi pumemarehiniderẽ. Yude beana yurude haĉhi yoro pumemarehiniderẽ. Ĉhiarope Pumemare khorõrehiniderẽ. Hãdeaha, yude gatea ĉhiride yude manade. Arüka ĉhiride gatea ĉhiride. Peyuditararĩ uetaramo peahãdi.

[88] I use the word *criollos* to refer to nonindigenous people in general. In *Pume maẽ* the word *nive* translates as *criollos*. I presented an all-encompassing description of this category in Chapter 2.

would eat manioc bread, we would eat corn and leave some corn [plants] there. It was that way before the *nive* came. Nowadays, we are not allowed to go to the other side of the river. The savanna is off-limits, they tell us we cannot go there. They are stingy with the land, they do not want us there. They shoot us if we trespass…Back then, we had [gardens] everywhere…when there were no cows we could have gardens without fences, we did not have to buy wire[89].

As Hipólito's narrative shows, the Pume do recall that the territory they inhabit today has been just recently peopled by newcomers. Based on conversations with old Pume women and men, I estimate that cattle ranches as they exist today along the riverbanks of the Riecito River—where the Pume communities of Boca Tronador and Banco Largo are located—began to become common between the 1950s and 1960s. Orobitg (2014, p. 146) has pointed out that the establishment of the first sedentary community on the Riecito River took place in 1959. This community was founded by Francisco "El Flaco" Prada, a Venezuelan anthropologist (and, later, member of the 80s Venezuelan guerrillas) as part of his responsibilities as an employee of the then recently established Indigenist National Commission ("Comisión Indigenista Nacional"). According to Orobitg (2014, p. 146), this Commission aimed to reorganize the Pume communities by relocating people who had been displaced from the Capanaparo River as a consequence of *criollo* settlements. As shown in Chapter 2, the history of the displacement of Pume people as a result of the encroachment of cattle ranching along

[89] Hipólito Bello, April 1 2019. Tinaĉhiapeaba pume ĉhiriremede. Pearöhudi kenãde taĩrẽrẽã hãdi kenãdereреã dane uetaramo taĩrẽrẽã. Ado hurĩpe khorõrẽã tãbe huramerẽ phue huramerẽ ãde manarereã phuehuĩ. Hãdirereã nive ĉhirideĉhia huĩ. Yaba hãdirereã deĉhia uepe. Hudi tinaĉhiade ĉhiride ĉhotode ñorederẽ. Tinaĉhiapanederẽ otö eadebederẽ aekheapabederẽ khurima. Hãdide kenãde tarẽreã aetiaha. Oareãti goarereã dabane aine. Goemuĩdete goarereã vaka deĉhiaha, ĉhipararekaĩ gatenokheadereã. Ĉhaderĩ paema goarereã.

the Capanaparo and Arauca Rivers had begun possibly a century earlier. However, it became visible to the national society around the 1930s with the literary work of Rómulo Gallegos.

Besides the beginning of a process of sedentarization and the advent of colonial settlement on the Riecito River, the second half of the twentieth century was also marked by the return of Christianity to the lives of the Pume people. Notwithstanding its inherent transformative nature, the presence of Christian missionaries, unlike that of *criollos*, is not explicitly remembered as a trigger of social change. Their presence is, in fact, just mentioned in passing.

According to Rivas (2013), New Tribes missionaries settled along the Capanaparo River (and, I imagine, its tributaries) in 1975. Although they were expelled by the Venezuelan government in 2005, the missionaries keep visiting the community of Boca Tronador once a year in order to bring mobile dental care units. I am aware that the missionaries learned Pume maẽ and even tried, without success, to translate the Bible into the native language—omething they have been able to achieve for other indigenous languages in Venezuela. Nonetheless, there are still sporadic gatherings aimed at reading and interpreting biblical passages in Spanish. Given my declared interest in the *tõhe* ritual, I found that people who participated in such meetings did not show readiness to interact with me. For this reason, other than offering some comments, I am not able to delve into the nature of the interactions between the Pume and the New Tribes, either in the past or the present. This is a notable limitation of this study.

In any case, it is important to note that, in general, the Pume seldom speak about the time when the Evangelical missionaries lived in the community. From what I have been able to gather, they have mixed feelings toward them. On the one hand, people in the community expect the visits of the missionaries, because it is almost the only way to get treatment for

their dental health problems. On the other hand, they comment, with some shades of bitterness, that when they lived in the community, the missionaries used to ask for things or help as if they were entitled, while the reverse was not the case. The missionaries were not even willing to lend their things to the Pume. Some men have told me that they sensed that the missionaries considered them incapable of handling foreign things. Either way, for some men the most memorable outcome of the interaction with the missionaries is that they became literate. Literacy is highly valued among the Pume. As I will show further on in this chapter, reading and especially writing are perceived among the Pume as powerful skills usually attributed to gods, spiritual beings and wise singers. In this section, I will analyze what it means "to write" (verb root *ŋoe*-) and "to sing" (verb root *ŋoa*-). In the conclusion, this analysis will bring us back to understandings of the body and personhood among the Pume.

In sum, this chapter is intended to inquire into Pume "social implicit knowledge" (cf. Taussig, 1987). In what follows, I want to advance the thesis that what is typically understood as "forgetting" could also be rephrased in terms of forms of remembering that distance themselves from explicitness and narrative. Echoing Connerton, I argue that "memory is sedimented, or amassed, in the body" (1989, p. 72), finding expression through the somatic experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing. In this way, the past becomes so habituated that it "moves people without their knowing quite why or how...[it is] what makes the real real and the normal normal" (Taussig, 1987, p. 316).

5.2. Dreaming the past

In this section, I start by analyzing dream experiences among the Pume, based on the argument that dreams are ways in which they experience the past. Moreover, through these experiences the Pume not only glimpse the past but also recreate it, a recreation that is

possible because of the temporality associated with dreams. Unlike other Lowland South American peoples (e.g., Peluso, 2004, on the Ese Eja), the Pume do not perceive dreams as means to predict the future or as omens. Moreover, although the Pume are able to physically experience the life of their ancestors through dreams, these are perceived as actions taking place in the present moment rather than as memories of the past. This can be better understood when looking at the relationship between the experiences of dreaming and being ill. As explained in Chapter 3, dreams and diseases are intimately connected experiences. It is not that ill people have certain dreams, nor that dreams presage particular diseases. It is, rather, that whatever situation a person finds themself in in dreams is carried into waking life. The consequences of what a person has experienced in dreams are understood as symptoms of illness, most notably tiredness and demotivation. Such symptoms are the bodily manifestations that inevitably emerge after interacting with spiritual beings. The most familiar example of this is the experiences of dreaming with *Iĉiai* and the exhaustion people feel the next day. Tiredness, in this case, is usually explained as a consequence of the interaction with this god, which usually entails many physical demands on his part; it is the kind of tiredness any person could experience after being subjected to physical and emotional ordeals.

5.2.1. Dreams of troubled marriages and transformations

I have previously described in detail the experiences of dreaming of *Iĉiai*. In this section, I explore the idea that, among the Pume, dreams are windows into experiencing troubled relationships between different species. In Chapter 3, I told the story of Milián and how he was unintentionally turned into a pig by his sister. He dreamed he was a pig and, in the daytime, he began behaving like one. This may also occur when people are subjected to sorcery.

The most salient case in the community of Boca Tronador is Vásquez. He is in his forties and, according to everyone, was a hardworking, loving husband and good father before he was turned by a sorcerer into a dog. Ever since I met him in 2010, he has been in this canine way of being. As the story goes, in a fit of rage, Vásquez killed a dog who had been disturbing him for several days. The dog belonged to Marcelo, an old man on whom most accusations of sorcery fell. Vásquez started dreaming that he was a dog and in waking life he ate raw food, mostly the viscera of hunted game. He also started sleeping on the floor and was not willing to use his hammock anymore. As far as I know, back when his transformation began he would have dreams in which he would feel like a dog. As is most often the case, the transformation took quite some time. During this period, Vásquez would be perceived as out of his mind (*petara*), especially by his wife, who little by little started disengaging from him until he finally left his house to sleep wherever the night would find him. One of the things I find particularly curious about Vásquez is that he seems very aware of what is going on, yet he speaks of people who are no longer alive as if he had just met them.

Marriage troubles are also common during the transformation process of singers. As described in Chapter 3, for example, Dregelio's disease took place in the context of a marriage crisis. These stories are common, but it is hard to tell whether the marriage crisis triggers the transformation or if it is the other way around. In the case of Doña Teresa, who was neither expecting nor seeking to become a singer, her problems with her husband during the early phases of her transformation are described by her as the most difficult part of her experience of becoming a singer. With signs of embarrassment and unease, she explained to me:

I was wandering around there [*Iĉiai*'s land], I was sick, I went crazy, I would scream. I would talk about things I myself did not even understand. Later, I would not know who I was. I would only feel pain back then. Then, [I realized] I was sick. I would insult my husband and I did not even know why. He insulted me back. He did not understand why I was behaving like that, but it was because I was sick[90].

The story of Doña Teresa is an example of how the process of transformation among singers takes place. In the initial phases, singers disengage socially. Among men, since they are usually not married when they start becoming singers, the social disengagement manifests in other ways, such as laziness or violent speech (see Chapter 3). Marriage troubles occur later on in the lives of male singers when they experience a deeper transformation through dreams and diseases. In the case of women, the process of becoming singers usually starts later on in life, typically after the menopause, with some exceptions. In these cases, then, marriage problems manifest in the early phases of the process.

I think that expressing their concern toward troubled marriages is a way for Pume to express their ideas on consanguinity and affinity, identity and alterity. As I will explain later in this chapter, by singing *tõhe* singers seek to turn alterity into identity. In everyday life, people refer to singers' auxiliary spirits as others (*tio nive*). During the *tõhe*, these beings come to this realm to share food with the Pume, who call them by using kin terms that denote consanguinity rather than affinity. The *tio nive* (others) turn into *tio pume* (we). The same happens with the patient, a person whose ontological status as human is under question. The

[90] Carmen Teresa Romero, April 16th 2019. Hurĩpe ĉhotötĩkheañike hãboke petararĩkheake, inayokheahoroke, nĩbotarakheahoroke. Hãdipaete, hãdipaete hurĩpe. Horẽtaderĩkheake gitohöröke pearödi. Hãdeaha hãbokheake. Irĩ irĩhöke koa eba doyome hudi. Hãdi panĩda kenãdemerẽ erehödikoa. Hãdiparenĩda kenãde. Hãdiro hãboke hãbohoroke.

tõhe is a healing ritual in the sense that it restores the sense of identity—of belonging to the group—of the diseased person. The case of Dregelio, for whom his separation from his wife and children rendered an agony in which he found himself turning into a jaguar alongside *criollo* people in dreams (see Chapter 3), exemplifies that being ill is, for the Pume, to become Other. Restoring identity, becoming oneself, partaking of sociability is, by contrast, being healthy.

Another way to interpret the Pume accounts of interspecies marriages in the past is by looking at their interethnic relations. I focus here on their relation with the Otomaco people. Interethnic marriages were common in the Llanos before colonization and during early colonial times (Morey, 1975, p. 303). According to Morey (ibid., p. 119), for example, the Otomaco usually intermarried with other groups. Marriages between Guamo and Otomaco as well as between Saliva and Otomaco were typical (Gumilla, 1944, p. 163; Morey, 1975, pp. 119, 231). It is hard to know whether the Pume also intermarried with other peoples. I have not found any evidence in this regard. However, it is said that they used to live with Otomaco with (or for?) whom they would make shell money—*quiripa* (Bueno, 1965, p. 139; see Chapter 2). Although it is clear that both Otomaco and Pume people were close, it is hard to describe with certainty what kind of relationship they had. However, it is known that the Otomaco were a hierarchical society. It is also known that they used to enslave their war prisoners and make them work in their gardens (Morey, 1975, p. 121). The Pume, on the other hand, were highly mobile, and it is hard to know to what extent they participated in warfare. However, what is certain is that the Pume and Otomaco inhabited the riverbanks of the Apure and Arauca Rivers in early colonial times. Later on, they inhabited the same missions. As shown in Chapter 2, both Otomaco and Pume shared many religious practices and were also physically similar. These shared characteristics indicate that the groups were

not only geographically but also culturally close and that, after colonization, they possibly became integrated. This observation leads to a further suggestion about how the historical relationship between Otomaco and Pume people might have shaped current Pume cosmological thinking.

An examination of the written sources renders it clear that the Pume considered the Otomaco powerful Others. In a passage written by missionary Agustín de Vega, he describes a Pume ritual named *cacadi*[91] that, according to him, was aimed at predicting the future. In this particular account, Vega describes how a group of Pume people living in Burari, the same missionary town as the one mentioned above, performed this ritual to find out whether an Otomaco sorcerer—*piache*[92]—would come at night while transformed into a "tiger"[93].

> … one of such consultations let them know that a sorcerer of the Otomaco Nation would come to the town at night shaped as a tiger. He would frighten them, especially women. [They also found out] that they [Otomaco sorcerers] would leave tons of *mojan* in the houses, so they would die. They had to do *cacadi* during the whole night so they would make the poison inactive. So they would not all die as the Otomaco *piache* intended them to… (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, pp. 92-93)[94].

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91 The *cacadi* was a ritual performed by the Pume people in colonial times. It has only been described by Agustin Vega, who characterized it as a divination ritual. The *cacadi* was performed by a man who would smoke enormous amounts of tobacco. Placing his face over the mouth of a container, the performer would cover his face entirely to exhale tobacco smoke into the container. This smoke would be inhaled by him repeatedly until he went into a trance (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, pp. 92-93).

92 *Piache* is the name used in the colonial sources to refer to shamans (Morey, 1975, p. 142). This name is used among the Pume to refer to singers, but only when they are speaking in Spanish. While talking in Pume maẽ, they use the vernacular term *ĉhiaŋoame* (sing. masc.).

93 He is most probably referring here to a jaguar.

94 ….de una consulta de estas salio, que un Brujo de la Nacion Otomaca, se benia de noche al pueblo en forma de tigre, y que los espantaba mucho, especial a las mugeres, y que dejaban mucho mojan, para las casas, para que se murieran, y que les hera preciso hacer toda la noche el Cacadim para quitar la actibidad del veneno, no morir todos como pretendia. El Piache, Otomaco; assi llaman los Brujos….

Transformation into jaguars was a common characteristic among shamans all over the Llanos region during colonial times (Morey, 1975, p. 143). In particular, Morey (ibid., p. 157) notes that when people from other groups saw a group of jaguars, they most likely believed they were Otomaco or Guamo shamans who had come to hurt them. However, nowhere in colonial sources is it stated that transformation into jaguars was also common among the Pume. It is difficult to know whether this was the case or not, but I believe that it was probably not the case, and today, these transformations speak of their past relationships with Otomaco and Guamo people. This idea is sustained by the fact that, nowadays, transformations into jaguars are perceived as a sign of becoming other—*nive.* In the case of Dregelio's recurrent dream, it is particularly salient that the *nive—criollo* people and not Otomaco—are potentially able to turn into jaguars. What is not so easy to understand is whether the ability to turn into jaguars is something the Pume people attribute to others they consider powerful, or if it is the ability to transform into a jaguar in itself that makes them powerful.

In this sense, it is worth making a short comment on how the Pume people perceive the technology that *criollos* possess and use. One day, as I was talking to José Romero, the captain of the community of Boca Tronador, he expressed his fascination with watches. He is always wearing one, something that is not common among the Pume. In that conversation, he asked me how my watch worked, and I tried to explain to him the mechanism as I understand it. He, however, insisted that "my God" was a powerful one, and that he could not only make my watch work but also the outboard motor he usually uses to travel. I point out this conversation with José Romero not because it presents an exceptional approach to alien technology among the Pume, but because it has been the longest and deepest discussion of this topic I have ever had with a Pume person. Comments along these lines have been

common during my stays among the Pume. On these occasions, I have not, however, engaged in an exchange of ideas on the matter. This diversion from the topic of transformations into jaguars has been intended to show that the Pume perceive the *criollos* as having a mighty cosmological being on their side, one who guarantees that their objects work. The existence of such a powerful being—and his objects—is what makes the *criollos* (and their witchcraft; see Chapter 3) more powerful.

The positive correlation between being powerful and being able to transform into a jaguar says much about how Pume people conceive power as desirable yet potentially disturbing to sociability when attained. In general, transformations are never welcomed among the Pume; they are always related to, or understood as, processes of illness. As shown in Chapter 3, Dregelio's dream in which he was becoming a jaguar brought him a great deal of discomfort. His transformation was seen as a sign of illness whose symptoms were tiredness, as a consequence of restless sleep, and constant feelings of fear, associated with the idea that he could be mistaken for a jaguar by the jaguars.

Yet aside from that, Dregelio was also scared of the possibility of being in *Iĉiai*'s land. Being in *Iĉiai*'s land is always a frightening but necessary experience in order to attain shamanic knowledge. Singers, when they go along with the *tio* to retrieve the *pumetho* of a diseased person in *Iĉiai*'s land, must normally dress up as jaguars to deceive *Iĉiai* in the first place. As Luis Ojeda explains: "They [the singers] must disguise as jaguars…They wear painted clothes, with stripes all over. They wear striped clothes, like jaguars do. But they did not have to sew those clothes up[95]. They look like huge jaguars. They wear those clothes only to go out[96]." Since becoming a jaguar is so necessary to heal others, it is a terrifying yet desirable experience for those who want to become (better) singers. In the case of Dregelio,

[95] This idea refers to *tios*' ability to craft materials by using their sight and thoughts.
[96] Luis Ojeda, March 27 2019.

as the dream of turning into a jaguar became recurrent, he was not sure whether it meant that he was indeed in *Iĉiai*'s land—not something he wished for himself. On the other hand, becoming a jaguar in dreams also means that the person is developing knowledge of the spiritual world, something that is also desirable among men. This ambiguity toward transforming into a jaguar became clear to me when talking to Milián, who had moved to Caracas some years before. One day, when he visited me in the capital, he confessed that he used to dream he was a jaguar, but, some months after he started living in Caracas, it did not happen again. He says that, although it was always disturbing, he missed dreaming of becoming a jaguar. He explained to me that in his dream he could see, hear, smell, feel and taste like jaguars do. Although he did not explicitly explain the reason why he wanted to have these dreams, knowing him, I suspect that it has to do with his strong desire to become a great singer and healer.

Further on in this chapter I will come back to the topic of transformations among the Pume when I talk about the experience of illness. Before that, I present some other examples of how dreams are a means to experience the past.

5.2.2. Dreaming the land of the dead

Although it is more common among experienced singers when they sing, during dreams, ordinary people—not only experienced singers—can go to the land of the dead, *ãdeĉiadabu*, where *Kuma* lives. They know they are there because everything shines. *Kuma* is said to wear a shining dress, golden shoes and gold chains, and not only her garments but everything else is made of gold in *Kuma*'s land, so that it shimmers everywhere people look. As explained in Chapter 4, *Kuma* and the *tio pume*, once they had been defeated by the *ui nive*, went to this land. Those who are going through a process of healing are particularly

susceptible to having dreaming experiences in which they go to the land of the dead. Jesús Oliveros, aged around 60, for example, recalls that he was once seriously ill and, during his recovery, he went to *ãdeĉiadabu* while asleep. He remembers that many *tõhe* were performed in order to heal him, but all attempts seemed futile. He would dream he was *Iĉiai*'s prisoner, but at times he would feel himself going to the land of *Kuma*. As he dreamt of being there:

> I went there, where India Rosa[97] lives… I was there and I did not see him [*Iĉiai*] anymore. But he did not want me to be there, because that is a good place. "This one cannot be here," he would say. "He cannot be here. I am going to take him with me so he can get to know my land," he said. "He took me on a motorcycle[98]."
>
> When I asked him how *Kuma*'s land looked in his dream, he told me:
>
> "It is beautiful there, everything is made of gold. The floor is made of gold and the houses are made of gold. She [*Kuma*] wanted it to be like that: the houses made of gold, the walls, the ceiling… the posts talk, just as I do[99]."

The ethnographic record is extremely vague when it comes to descriptions of the land of *Kumañi*. Most striking is the fact that, with the notable exception of Leeds (1960, p. 5), none of the existent descriptions present any suggestion that *ãdeĉiadabu* is made of gold. During the first half of the twentieth century, Petrullo (1969) depicted the land of the dead as an idealized representation of the Pume's ecological context. Based on some mythical tales,

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97 Another name for *Kumañi*.

98 Jesús Oliveros, February 13 2019. Para alla, donde esta la india rosa, aja… fui pa lla pero yo no lo vi desde alla. Entonces el no quiso que yo estuviera pa lla, pa lla y que es bueno. El quería, el dijo alla, cuando llego, mira, este no, este no puede estar aquí. No puede estar aquí, mas bien me lo voy a llevar pa que el conozca mi tierra, dijo, aja. Pa que conozca mi tierra, dijo el. Entonces me llevo, en una moto, en una moto.

99 Jesús Oliveros, February 13 2019. Es bonito aquello, y que es hecho en oro. El piso de oro y las casas de oro. Ella quiso, ella quiso que aquello fuera asi, que las casas fueran de oro, las paredes, el techo de oro, si… y esto (señalando algo) y que hablan, los horcones, como uno mismo.

Petrullo indicated that “for each plant and animal species, there exists a giant duplicate in *Kuma*’s land” (1969, pp. 111-2, 114). Petrullo phrased his understanding of this land by using the tropes “paradise” or “promised land,” a place where the Pume people will find all the material things they ever needed or wanted. In this regard, Petrullo notes that “the land of Kuma is the perfect paradise for the Yaruros. There, they will be gifted with all of the comforts and liberties that are denied to them in this world” (1969, p. 108). Later, Mitrani (1973, p. 39) compared this realm with the land of the dead and pointed out that “everything that exists in this world also exists in the other, but in the latter everything is better: abundant game, an easy and happy life, absence of disease” (1973, p. 39). More recently, Orobitg (2014, p. 151) presented a testimony in which an old Pume man represented the world inhabited by the mythical beings as a city; more precisely, he refers to Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. Today, I have also often heard singers describe *ãdeĉiadabu* as a city that they compare to Caracas. This city, which is full of buildings, highways and cars, is entirely made of gold. Also, it is often mentioned—as in Mitrani’s description—that the inhabitants of this land are immune to diseases and spared from suffering.

Morey (1975, p. 252) suggests that prior to colonization and during colonial times, there might have been some form of direct interaction between the peoples from the Llanos and the Andes. The colonial sources show, she states, that the peoples inhabiting the Llanos obtained small amounts of gold from Chibcha groups (1975, p. 253). If the Pume and their neighbors had access to gold through Chibcha groups, it is also possible to believe that they had access to the stories about objects the Chibcha crafted from gold. Likewise, the native inhabitants of the Llanos were most likely aware of Chibcha highly hierarchical forms of sociopolitical organization, as well as of their technological development.

When looking at the descriptions of the land of *Kuma* as a city made of gold, it becomes almost impossible not to suggest that perhaps what the Pume perceive as a more powerful society—in terms of their opportunities to craft objects as well as their tendency to subjugate others—is what they imagine as the place where the most powerful beings, namely the *tio* and the *Otę*, live. In the case of the current representation of *ãdeĉiadabu*, it also stands out that the *tios*' taste in food is similar to the taste of *criollos*. As I show in Chapter 3, the *tio* not only live in a city like Caracas but they also eat what the Pume describe as *nive* food, the food of the *criollos*: bread, sweets and Coca-Cola. Likewise, the *tio*, like the *criollos*, own cars, motorcycles and planes. I will come back to this point later on when I discuss the issue of mimesis and Otherness.

I want to conclude this section by suggesting yet another hypothesis about the land of the dead. Contrary to what one might expect, this land is not changeless. In fact, the ethnographic record could be read as a history of changes of the mythical land. This world has certainly changed over time in Pume imagination: from ecological exuberance to (modern) opulence. This hypothesis is further supported by a description of *ãdeĉiadabu* given to me by Delia Rodriguez[100]. Delia was a renowned singer who was in her forties in 2019, when I conducted my last period of field research among the Pume. When we talked about *Kumañi*, she explained to me that she used to dream of her. In Delia's dreams, *Kuma* was fully dressed in gold, living in a golden world. As is typical of these dreams, everything shone. Delia's dream experiences of the land of the dead, however, stood out from other dream experiences of this sort because when she explained all of the shimmering, she attributed it not only to the light-reflective quality of gold but also to the presence of electrical lighting in the land of the

[100] Delia died while I have been writing this dissertation. May she rest in peace; we all will miss her.

spirits[101]. This description shows, once more, a characteristic that is normally associated with *criollo* settlements and Venezuelan cities.

The examples presented in this section illustrate the idea that foreign cultural elements have become integrated into native cosmologies in Lowland South America. This is not a characteristic exclusive to the Pume people as it has been pointed out by many ethnographers working on the region. The analyses of this assimilation of alien cultural elements into native cosmologies have explained this phenomenon as an expression of what Lévi-Strauss has called an "openness to the Other" that, according to him, is characteristic of Amerindian societies (Taylor, 2007, p. 134). In the following section, I present a critical analysis of this approach to social and cultural change. To do so, I draw in particular on Anne-Christine Taylor's (2007) piece on Shuar and Achuar historicity.

5.3. Diseases as historicity

Reflecting on the idea that Amazonian societies reproduce themselves by incorporating elements of others, particularly white people (Fausto, 2007; Londoño Sulkin, 2017; Santos-Granero, 2007; Vilaça, 2007;), Taylor (2007) claims that the Shuar and Achuar seem to show a desire to isolate themselves from others and tend to be forgetful of their interactions with outside societies. To understand their cultural insulation, Taylor argues, it is necessary to comprehend their shamanic practices vis-à-vis their notion of illness (2007, p. 152).

Among Shuar and Achuar—just as it is among the Pume—the state of being ill is perceived as the experience of pain and suffering per se related to a constant sense of tiredness that prevents a person from engaging socially. According to Taylor, "illness

[101] Delia Rodriguez, June 13 2019.

manifests itself by a more or less acute state of prostration, a brutal disengagement from the world and from others…[it] is rooted in a degradation of the relations linking a person to his social environment and shaping him as a subject" (2007, p. 152). Furthermore, being ill is the experience of an unpleasant change of selfhood, "an unwanted metamorphosis" (2007, p. 152). This type of undesired transformation of the self finds its cure in shamanic rituals in which, historically, the shaman appropriates elements of whiteness to find his power (2007, p. 152).

In order to understand why illness is conceptualized by Shuar and Achuar as a distressing process of transformation that is only healed by a person who is able to turn themself into a form of otherness—a white person—one must look at the "fact that the history of contacts with white men is itself conceptualized as a prolonged and painful process of transformation" (Taylor, 2007, p. 153). In sum, what Taylor seeks to emphasize is the fact that cultural elements of whiteness are perceived by Shuar and Achuar as sources of healing power that can be neither understood nor explained as independent from the fact that they understand disease as distressing transformation, a metaphor for the experience of painful and undesired transformation brought about by European colonialism.

The idea that diseases are unwanted transformations of the subject that, upon healing, lead the subject to have a new sense of self is not exclusive to Shuar and Achuar people, nor to the Pume, but is rather a widespread motif among Amazonian societies (see, for example, Chaumeil, 1983; McCallum, 1996; Pollock, 1996). Moreover, the idea that what defines present humans is their vulnerability to becoming sick, dying or experiencing suffering—as opposed to their ancestors who lived a life free of suffering and disease—is common in Amazonian accounts of the past (see, for example, Santos-Granero, 2007). Despite this, ethnographers working in the Amazon Basin have seldom suggested a connection between

colonialism and an understanding of illness as unpleasant transformation. Possibly the only one before Taylor to explicitly point out this relationship was Taussig, who defined illness in the colonial situation as "a bodily attempt at inscribing a history of otherness within the body that is the self" (1987, p. 168).

In this section I contribute to Taylor and Taussig's hypotheses. To do so, I present some ethnographic examples to illustrate how Pume experience colonialism in relation to their theory of disease. For analytical purposes, my argument unfolds following a linear progression of time that goes from a presentation of historical accounts written in colonial times to an analysis of the current colonial situation.

As explained before (Chapter 2), the historical written sources suggest that the Pume people mostly refused to live in Christian missions. The historical record shows that the Pume constantly fled from the missions, causing untold anxiety among the priests (see, for example, P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 325). Missionary accounts hint that they did so because they were accustomed to a more mobile lifestyle and found it unbearable to remain in one place for a long time (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 325; Gilij, 1965b, p. 104; Gumilla, 1970, p. 132; Lodares, 1929, p. 212). Another important reason why the Pume constantly ran away from the missions is that they were aware of the high risk of getting sick if they remained there (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, pp. 91-93). They opposed living in the missions not only because of the inherent religious restrictions it involved but also because when living there they were forced to adopt religious practices that they understood as the source of ailments (see below).

The spread of contagious diseases during colonial times was one of the main causes of the massive depopulation of the Llanos region (Morey, 1979). Smallpox, measles, dysentery, scarlet fever, pneumonia and malaria, among others, were, during this time, common causes

of death in this region (Morey, 1979). Likewise, in one passage it is described how a group of Pume living in the Jesuit mission of San Borja, Orinoco River, suffered from syphilis, a disease that had caused many deaths among other peoples living in the same mission (Fajardo, 1966, p. 322). In such a situation it is plausible to believe that the Pume attributed the cause of their high rate of contagious disease and mortality to the presence of the missionaries. In an excerpt written by Jesuit priest Agustín de Vega in 1744, he describes an episode in which a group of Pume, convinced that it was the priest and his practices that were causing them to fall ill, intended to kill him while at Mass:

> Once, they fell ill with catarrh. They consulted their diviners who told them they had fallen ill because they were going to the Church, to the Mass and Credo, the reason why there were so many diseases. Therefore, the Yaruro were determined to kill the Father while he was saying Mass. They came armed to execute him. The Father was surprised to see their willingness to come to Church. He asked the children who were in his house why those people were coming with such a disposition. The children said plainly that they wanted to kill him while he was Mass, to kill as well the disease they were all suffering, and that their diviners had sent them. The Father laughed a lot and, before Mass, he gave a speech saying that he knew they wanted to kill him and that they were deceived [into believing] that the Mass and Credo made them ill. On the contrary [he said], through the Mass and Credo one finds health. Even though they could not kill him, because they had been exposed, they

did not change their mind because, later, they tried again (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 91, my translation)[102].

This passage leaves no doubt that the Pume experienced European colonialism—or Christian practices as one of its multiple forms—as a threat to their health and well-being. It does not come as a surprise, then, that nowadays their theory of disease is shaped by their interaction with *criollo* settlers and the changes such an interaction have involved in the last few decades. As explained in Chapter 3, illnesses of the kind described by Taylor that are manifested as chronic fatigue and withdrawal from society are commonly explained among the Pume as an absence of the *pumetho* of the ill person. In these cases, the *pumetho* is said to have been abducted by *Iĉiai*. In Chapter 3, I presented an example to illustrate this kind of ailment. In that example, Dregelio dreamed of *Iĉiai* as a landowner who would make him work relentlessly. The representation of *Iĉiai* as a landowner and, more particularly, as a cattle rancher is very common among the Pume.

I began this chapter by explaining how the Pume speak of their experience of change. For them, the most important change is associated with an inability, imposed by colonial settlers, to move freely in their own lands. They attribute this change to a recent time, with old people explaining that they felt freer during their childhoods. However, this change did not begin in the twentieth century: What they perceive as the cause of their confinement is

[102] En una ocasion cayeron enfermos los mas de romadizo consultaron a sus adivinos y estos les dijeron que caian enfermos por que hivan a la Yglesia y a la Misa y Doctrina que por esto avia muchas enfermedades los Yaruros con esto determinaron matar al Padre quando estubiese diciendo missa y binieron prevenidos de sus armas para executarlo al Padre le causo novedad la disposicion como venian a la Yglesia les pregunto a los Niños que tenia en casa, por que venian de aquella manera aquella jente los niños con sencillez le dijeron que querian matarlo quando estubiese diciendo misa, para matar la enfermedad que tenia a todos muy malos, y que assi lo havian mandado sus adivinos, el Padre se riyo mucho, y antes de la missa les hizo una Platica, diciendoles como savia lo querian matar y que estaban engañados que en la misa, y Doctrina enfermasen antes, al contrario, en la missa y Doctrina, se alcanzaba la salud, aunque ellos no podian hazer la muerte, por que estaban descubiertos, no por eso mudaron de intento, porque despues de esto pretendieron lo mismo (P. Agustín de Vega, in Fajardo, 1974, p. 91).

just the latest chapter in a long process of land rearrangement that started in colonial times with the establishment of *hatos* and Christian missions in the Llanos region (see Chapter 2).

Livestock raising—and, to a lesser extent, open-field agriculture—has progressively changed social relations and the landscape in the Llanos since the eighteenth century, while always entailing displacement for the Pume people. Therefore, not surprisingly, *Iĉiai*, who is responsible for the experience of disease, is perceived by the Pume as a cattle rancher. What is perhaps not so obvious is how the image of *Iĉiai* in dreams accounts for this long process of change, a process that started with the missions and the ways of producing food associated with them, and has continued on from the formation of the Venezuelan state to the present day. To understand *Iĉiai*, it is necessary to look at the ways he behaves instead of just assessing his appearance. This is consonant with how the Pume conceive him in the first place: a shapeless being always able to change his image. In what follows, I suggest that it is not only the fact that *Iĉiai* forces Pume men to work relentlessly but also that he deprives them of free movement that accounts for how they experience their interactions with nonindigenous inhabitants of the Llanos. *Iĉiai*'s constant mutability permits him to continually adjust his image in accordance with the historical moment. Yet his tendencies to violently impose his wishes, to not listen and to prevent people from moving freely seem to mirror the actions of many of the powerful others with whom the Pume have historically interacted. He could, in other words, be conceptualized as a "changing continuity, in which practices may shift but the experience of continuity does not" (Sutton, 2004, p. 93). Drawing on Parkin (1992) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1993), Sutton argues that, since rituals involve "the body and other relatively durable objects in society" (2004, p. 94), they are filled with images that, although subject to constant change, retain some of their long-standing significations. This is not only the case with *Iĉiai* but, more generally, with any spiritual being that participates in the *tõhe*

ritual. All of these images constitute what Sutton calls the “poetic density” of this ritual (2004, p. 94). Being poetically dense, rituals are made up of symbols whose meanings are in constant flux, but these meanings are not entirely flexible, nor are they imposed arbitrarily, for such symbols are also partly traditional (Sutton, 2004, p. 94, see Chapter 1).

In what remains of this chapter, I explore the idea that restrictions on mobility have profoundly shaped Pume experiences of sickness. Constrained mobility has certainly been one of the major changes the Pume have been forced to deal with since colonial times. Since the late nineteenth century until today, Venezuelan peasants living in the Llanos have developed an economy based on the appropriation of large properties. More recently, guerrilla groups have also started to participate in this territorial arrangement. The Pume have conceptualized these alien powers as malevolent spiritual beings.

As suggested above, everything seems to indicate that the Pume people were a very mobile people in the past. According to Morey (1975, p. 231), it is possible that the Pume were nomads up until well into the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it was only around the 1950s that the first sedentary Pume community was founded on the Riecito River as part of a state program aimed at assimilating indigenous peoples (Orobitg, 2014). Today, even though the Pume live in so-called “sedentary” communities, they nevertheless move around regularly. Despite the restrictions imposed by landowners, the Pume are still able to garden on lands far away from their houses, and they spend long periods of time there during the rainy season. Additionally, during the dry season they frequently build temporary fishing camps at remote sites near streams located away from the riverbanks of the main tributaries of the Orinoco River.

If we delve back into the historical record, it becomes evident that in colonial times restrictions on mobility represented an important cause of mortality among the Pume. During

the seventeenth century, for example, as a consequence of being forced to remain in the missions, the Pume began to die. For instance, Rivero (1883, p. 19) wrote:

> Some years ago a considerable amount of these *indios* were taken, and they populated along with their *encomendero* [to the lands located] at a quarter of a league from Pauto; but, after that, they did not have the freedom they used to enjoy in their lands, to wander around rivers and savanna, in their adventures and fishing [activities], and [because] they lacked the skills to fell [trees] and sow, as others do, they were dying one by one, remaining just seven from the whole group[103].

In this excerpt, Jesuit priest Juan Rivero attributes the deathof the Pume to their inability to practice agriculture. Whether the Pume were horticulturalists or not is, as we will see, still up for debate, but his account allows me to propose two conjectures. On the one hand, it seems likely that the confinement of the Pume in the missions meant a change in their diets. It is logical that their movement throughout their territories allowed them to have a highly diverse diet, something that was not possible in the missions. On the other hand, other than the issue of subsistence, I want to argue that movement just for the sake of movement is something that the Pume find valuable. I will leave the first unexplored and dedicate the following paragraphs to substantiating the second conjecture.

A common theme that comes up when people are describing their experiences of being in *Iĉiai*'s land is the privation of movement as such. As Hipólito Bello, for example, explains, "[*Iĉiai*] has a prison…the prison is narrow, you cannot move, you cannot do

[103] En años pasados sacaron una porción considerable de estos indios, y se poblaron con su encomendero á un cuarto de legua de Pauto; pero como allí no tenían libertad de que gozaban en sus tierras, para andarse de río en río y de sabana en sabana, en sus aventuras y pesquerías, y les faltaba habilidad para rozar y sembrar, como hacen otros, se fueron muriendo de hambre poco á poco, quedando de toda la tropa sólo siete.

anything[104].” The idea of the prison and an inability to move are common tropes in the experiences of dreaming of *Iĉiai* that find their expression in waking life as lethargy and isolation. Another version of this sense of isolation while being in *Iĉiai*’s land is conveyed by Jesus Oliveros in one of his stories of disease. While being ill, Oliveros would dream as follows:

> He [*Iĉiai*] told me, “You are to remain here on this island.” On an island! There was no one else on the island, there was no forest, there was just water, the sea. I could hear the sound of the water. Then, he told me, “You are to remain here, yes, you are to remain here, you are not going anywhere, you are a prisoner now.” He told me that and left, I never saw him again. I was crying, I cried. I would say to myself, “How am I going to get out of here? I should craft a little canoe to escape,” I would tell myself. I could not find anyone else to talk to[105].”

As I have already said, *Iĉiai* never shows his “real” form, basically because he lacks a fixed shape; he can transform into whoever he wants. However, he typically presents himself as a landowner. The prison, then, I suggest, is a metaphor for the constraints on movement that the Pume face because of the presence of cattle ranchers on their lands. I will come back to this point in the final sections of this chapter. My line of argument will be that what the Pume experience as dream–disease–painful transformation and lack of movement finds its

[104] Hipolito Bello, April 1 2019.

[105] Jesus Oliveros, February 13 2019. Él me dijo, usted va a estar aquí en esta isla. En una isla, pero en una isla que no había nadie, que no había monte, no había nada sino pura agua, el mar. Esa bola de agua sonaba. Entonces me dijo, usted va a quedar aquí, ud. Va a quedar aquí, aja, no se va a salir ahorita, esta preso, me dijo. Entonces, el se perdió, no lo mire mas nunca. Yo llorando, yo lloraba. Decia, como hare yo para irme? Voy a hallarme una canoita para irme, decía yo por dentro de mi. Y no jallaba con quien hablar…

cure in the *tõhe* ritual where, through the singer's journey, the experience of movement or mobility is restored.

Before I go onto this, I want to expand on the Pume theory of disease that was outlined on Chapter 3. In doing so, I include other agents—the guerrillas—that the Pume perceive as threatening to their ability to move freely around their lands. As already noted, the Pume distinguish two types of disease: one is associated with the absence of the *pumetho*—or vital essence—and the other with the presence of an alien object that is interpreted as excess inside a person. These two types of disease are not always mutually exclusive. On occasions, they may arrive in tandem. The presence of an alien object inside the person manifests as pain in particular points inside the body. In the example I presented in Chapter 3, the cause of pain was identified as the impossibility for the afflicted person to meet the expectations of others in terms of sharing food. This kind of pain is often an expression of what others perceive as greediness. Given its material quality, pain is normally healed by a singer who is able to suck or blow it out, transmuting the pain into the object that is causing it.

There are other instances in which localized pain can be experienced. Besides being perceived as a consequence of an inner struggle when one does not conform to social expectations, excess can also be caused by an external agent. In such cases, the excess that is experienced by the afflicted person as pain comes from outside. It is the presence of an external object that has been shot into them by a *yarukha*—an evil spirit.

The *yarukha* live in a land that is located down a road leading to the north, which connects this realm and *Iĉiai*'s land (see Figure 4 in Chapter 4). Their land is dark like *Iĉiai*'s. There, one's skin crawls like it does in *Iĉiai*'s land. Although they have their own land, which is unreachable by people other than singers, *yarukha* also wander in the savanna and, in

particular, in the islands of forest that are scattered throughout the Llanos of Apure (Venezuelan Spanish *mata*, Pume maẽ *to hoai* and the gallery forests, *aętha hoai*, *doro hoai* or *bea hoai*). Therefore, they are sometimes called *hoai khorõhirĩdirõ*—the ones who live in the forest. They are normally aggressive and are potentially deadly to the Pume people. Although anyone can fall victim to their attacks, they are particularly responsible for the sudden and unexpected death of children. However, their assaults can also entail long periods of sickness among adults and, sometimes, among children. They are shapeless, but when the *yarukha* become visible in waking life or while dreaming, they always look like *criollos*. Moreover, it has become a habit among the Pume people to call guerrilla members *hoai khorõhirĩdirõ*.

As previously noted, they cause pain by shooting small objects into people's bodies. These objects could be nails, stingrays or tiny pieces of glass. That is why Pume women keep their households as tidy as possible. They are constantly removing any object that could possibly be used by a *yarukha* to hurt a person: wood chips, flecks of glass, nails and so on. Besides shooting objects into people's bodies, from time to time there are cases where a *yarukha* beats up a person. A person who has been hit by a *yarukha* cannot be healed. The experience of illness, which manifests as localized pain, lasts until the person inevitably dies. Touch, then, is a deadly matter when it comes to encounters with *yarukha*. This kind of attack is most commonly targeted at children, who are very often their victims. In these cases, the healing process tends to be very long, entailing the performance of several healing rituals, until people convince themselves that, since the person has not healed, they must have been touched by a *yarukha*.

The signs of an attack perpetrated by a *yarukha* are not visible right after the event. The person begins to present symptoms the next day after the aggression, after having slept.

For a while, they can experience recurrent dreams in which the *yarukha* is present. Sometimes, the experience of coming across them can be so unsettling that the person becomes unable to discern whether it was a dream or if it happened while they were awake. The memories become mixed images in dreamlike states of consciousness. For example, once, as I was taking Pume maẽ lessons with Luis Ostos, he told me his most potent experience of disease was not related to *Iĉiai*, as is normally the case when men reach adulthood, but to a *yarukha*. He said he had had a vivid dream of a fight with a *nive* who meant to stab him. The next day, he woke up feeling acute pain in his body. After consulting with some specialists, he agreed to be sucked by an experienced singer who finally healed him. While this may be the case with adults, children usually do not have any recollection of the event. In 2019, a friend of mine, Mauricio, whose children I have known since they were little, was grieving the loss of one of his youngest daughters, who had died as a result of encountering a *yarukha*. Mauricio explained to me that the girl had taken a trip, as most kids do, to visit a friend in the Pume community of Los Pozones. She came back two days later feeling pain in her right ankle. The very night of her return, Delia performed a *tõhe* ritual to try to heal her, but the girl did not survive the night.

In those cases when people are not able to survive in spite of healing rituals, people assume the illness was caused by *criollo* witchcraft or by a *yarukha*. They confirm the aggressor was a *yarukha* when the corpse presents multiple bruises. The *yarukha* is said to have beaten up the person during their encounter, leaving marks all over the body of the victim. People say that one can even tell that there are bruises in the shape of human hands. From time to time, the body of the victim can also show bruises around the neck area, since *yarukha* commonly strangle people.

In sum, diseases are understood as painful, undesired transformations of the self, or as localized pain. Since the Pume cosmos is populated by beings in constant conflict, ailments usually emerge as outcomes of the interactions people have with certain beings—*Iĉiai* and the *yarukha*, for example. As will be shown in the following sections, healing is mediated by other spiritual entities—the *tio*. Spiritual beings, whether potentially harmful or mediators in healing processes, resemble *criollos*, not only visually but also in their practices. While singing, singers go through a process of transformation whereby they are able to become *tio*, to experience their lives in the land of the dead. But other than resembling the *criollos* in their practices, a significant characteristic of the *tio*—as well as being experienced singers—is that they know many paths and places, something that the Pume think of as defining who they are as a people. This suggests a relationship between mobility and cosmology.

5.4. Singing to heal others and oneself: a comment on Mimesis and Alterity

Inspired by Taussig's influential book *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993), ethnographers of Lowland South American native societies have shown that powerful spiritual beings are commonly represented as looking like white people and possessing foreign objects. Their ethnographies have shown that, by becoming acquaintances with a community of spirits that mirrors white society, Amerindian shamans attain ritual power. In a previous section, I presented Taylor's (2007) critique of this approach, in which she argues that the use of elements of the White society with curative purposes only makes sense in the context of a disease when this is understood as unwelcome transformation. In this section, I present other critiques of Taussig's approach to mimesis and the relations to alterity. My aim is to enquire into what the Pume people consider as healing: Are the spiritual beings (*tio*) healing because they resemble White society? Or are there elements that the Pume see as defining their

identity that are also involved in the healing process? These questions give shape to my argument throughout this section in which I present an analysis of their relationships with spiritual beings and how such relationships shape men's inner bodies. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to give an account of Pume understandings of representation and history.

Taussig's treatise on mimesis is illustrated by an ethnographic example: the use, with healing purposes, of wooden figurines resembling White people—*nuchukana*—by shamans of the Kuna of Panama. His main question is "why these figures, so crucial to curing and thus to Cuna society, should be carved in the form of 'European types'" (Taussig, 1993, p. 7). Taussig finds the answer in Benjamin, arguing that it is the "mimetic faculty"—"the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other"—that underlies this aspect of Kuna society (1993, p. xiii). According to Taussig, the mimetic faculty is equivalent to what had been defined before as "sympathetic magic." That is to say, it is the process by which the copy is bestowed with "the character and power of the original" and "the representation" with "the power of the represented" (Taussig, 1993, p. xviii; see also Santos-Granero, 2007, p. 58).

Rather than fully agreeing with Taussig's statements, ethnographers working with the Kuna and other Amerindian societies have adopted critical stances. For example, Fernando Santos-Granero (2007, pp. 58-59) has pointed out that, although the Yanesha people's powerful spiritual others are mimetic with different powerful others such as the Incas and the Whites, when adding temporality to the analysis this could be seen as a way not only of borrowing the power of the other through mimesis but also of negating their power altogether.

Carlo Severi (2000), on the other hand, has brought attention to the fact that among the Kuna, not only good spiritual beings but also evil spiritual entities are represented by using imagery of White men. The ambiguity of such images is, according to Severi, their

strength if one considers that in Kuna cosmology, spirits—whether good or evil—are powerful beings because they can turn into many things, not just White people. As Severi puts it, "[t]o be white is but one of the possible transformations, and the spirits can do that while keeping their fundamental essence, which is to be continually engaged in a ritually oriented metamorphosis" (2000, p. 148)[106]. Severi thus argues that such images account for a twofold process of social memory of trauma. On the one hand, they conceal the presence of a powerful other by assimilating it into the native cosmology. On the other hand, their indeterminacy brings to the fore certain characteristics of White men that, from the Kuna perspective, are significant (Severi, 2000, p. 148).

More recently, Paolo Fortis (2016) has argued that Taussig's approach to representation, although potentially useful, lacks ethnographic depth in the sense that it assumes that "White people" is an a priori category that every society understands and experiences in the same way. In this regard, Fortis points out that "[b]y uncritically considering white people as a generally uniform category, we risk overlooking important features of indigenous critical engagement with alterity" (2016, p. 436). Based on his ethnographic research among the Kuna, Fortis (2012b) goes one step further to point out that it is the very idea of representation, as implied in Taussig's analysis of Kuna carved figures, that seems at odds with the ideas the Kuna have of their woodcarvings. Fortis argues that "it is by being the negation of the very possibility of representation that the *nuchukana* establish their own agency in the world" (2012b, p. 13). According to him, it is the fact that the Kuna perceive their carved figures as having a generic appearance that does not resemble any entity that confers on them their ritual power (2012b, pp. 180-7; 2016, p. 439).

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106 "Ser Branco é apenas uma das transformações possíveis, e os espíritos fazem isso mantendo sua essência fundamental, que é estarem continuamente engajados em uma metamorfose orientada ritualmente" (Severi, 2000, p. 148).

5.4.1. Healing mimesis

Given that in Pume cosmology elements of the White society and modernity are inherent to spiritual beings—whether benevolent or malevolent—one can agree with Severi (2000) that miming elements of alterity not only confers healing power to spiritual beings but can also grant them destructive power. On the other hand, in line with Fortis's (2016) observation, the Pume perception of White society is full of nuances (see also Chapter 1), something that is reflected in the multiple metaphors the Pume use to describe powerful spiritual beings and their relations with them.

For the Pume, as for the Yanesha and Kuna, then, powerful spiritual Others, whether good or bad, look like *criollos*—with the notable exception of *Kumañi* who, in most cases, appears in people's dreams as a Pume woman. *Iĉiai* and the *yarukha* are usually represented either as a cattle rancher and his peons, respectively, or as the president and the army. In this section, however, I focus only on the relationship between singers and their guardian spirits, the *tio*.

Pume singers develop their healing skills as they get to know different *tio* and strengthen their friendship with them. Although establishing relationships with these beings is a risky and potentially lethal activity, singers nevertheless rejoice in becoming acquainted with the *tio* because, after all, they are the ultimate mediators in processes of healing. One of the first steps in the singers' learning process is learning the names of the *tio*. This can happen through a dream or while they are singing. When talking about her own process of becoming a singer, for example, Delia Rodriguez explained to me that she gradually learned the names of different *tio*. As she met more and more *tio*, she became able to heal others: "[T]he *tio* gave me [power] to take care of the community. When someone calls me, I go fast to heal [people] and people wake up feeling better."

The *tio* are able to come to this realm—*daecîri*—and introduce themselves to a singer while they are singing or dreaming. As Delia explains, "[e]ach of the *tio* has his/her own name, each of them has his/her own name...when I sing, the *tio* tells me, 'I am called this way.' When he arrives, 'I am called this way, I have come to sing,' he tells me. He comes to sing in *daecîri.* 'I am called this way, I come to sing in *daecîri*,' he says to me. He comes to sing. All of the *tio* have their own names." Although singers propitiate their meeting with the *tio* by singing, they cannot pursue a friendship with any of them. It is always up to the *tio* to become friends with a singer.

The *tio* are normally portrayed as living in a city, driving cars and flying in planes. The female *tio—tio ib*—are said to own jewelry made of gold and shining long gowns. They are normally described as beautiful and *sifrinas* (Ven. Spa.) (*garĩpahirĩrẽ* (fem. Plural); posh)[107]. The male *tio—tio ori*—are usually described as having guns and wearing Western clothes and accessories like watches and hats. Both male and female *tio* are said to be literate and able to speak Spanish fluently. Occasionally, they are compared with the National Guard—*la guardia*—the police or the army. In addition, as noted above, in the context of those comparisons, the *yarukha* are likened to the guerrilla groups and the *tio* to the Venezuelan army. These comparisons are filled with descriptions of the outfits both groups wear. The *yarukha* are described as wearing black rubber boots with the logo of the Colombian brand "Venus," and the *tio* are described as wearing army-green clothes and hats.

Besides the allegories of contemporary lifestyles of White people, the representation of the *tio* also includes a metaphor of colonial times. As explained in the previous chapter, the *tõhe* is performed at the same time as the *tio* are performing this ritual in their land. Just like the *tio*, the Pume take out a cross (*kuru*, an obvious cognate with the Spanish term "*cruz*")

[107] Delia Rodriguez, June 13 2019.

that they stick in the middle of the *tõhe* plaza. This cross is said to mirror an exact replica the *tio* have in their plaza. Like the posts of the houses, the cross comes to life once the singer starts to sing. It has an independent life from humans. Just like in the land of the *tio*, from the perspective of the singer, the cross moves by itself to mark the path of the sun in the horizon from east to west. Someone actually moves the cross along this axis, signaling the passage of the sun through the faraway lands of the *tio* until its return to *daeĉiri* from the east. The cross is also the first place of contact for the *tio* when they come to this realm, before moving to their places over the heads of the singer. Given its important role, the cross has the status of a leader during the *tõhe*: "*Kurudi* is the chief of the singers. He listens to the songs, he is the boss, he is pretty. When the *tio* come to my land, they come to the *kuru* and listen to everything[108]." As previously noted, in the *tõhe* the Pume mirror a practice of the *tio*, who have a wooden cross hidden in their houses that they take out to perform the *tõhe*. This is very similar to Carvajal's descriptions of how mass was performed during his travels along the Apure River in the seventeenth century. As he describes in his account of this expedition, he and his crew had a cross in their craft that they would take out and stick into the soil to say mass, and they would do so in different indigenous settlements (1892, p. 155).

As Severi (2000) argues, the power of spiritual beings in the Pume cosmos comes not so much from their mimetic characteristics with powerful others but rather resides in their ability to transform. In the case of the Pume people, this becomes clearer when looking at the skills developed by singers as they become experienced. Experienced singers have the ability to transform into others. When in the land of *Kuma*, singers enjoy the lives the *tio* have there. They become *tio*. Therefore, other than only being helped by these powerful spiritual beings who resemble the *criollos*, singers also become like *criollos* themselves while singing. Their

[108] Carmen Teresa Romero, April 16 2019. "Tõhe maẽ tarẽkheame otẹbe kurube khurĩdibe. hãdi kãẽã daeĉhirirõ tõhe ŋoa hurĩ kuruhu kheamehe hurĩ kheabederõ peahãdi hurĩ khea ĉhotorobederõ tarẽreãdirõ tiotidirõ hudirõ. hãdeaha hudi tarẽkheamebedi otẹ kurudi hãdide tarẽda."

personas in the other world are defined by elements associated with *criollos*, such as wealth, skin color and the possession of Western goods. Luis Ojeda, a Pume elder and experienced singer, for example, explains that when he sings and goes to the land of the dead, he transforms himself into a *tio*: "I become a small *nive.* I wear a gun belt. I am rich, I have money. I know how to write[109]." But having Western goods and money is not singers' only way of attaining power. Power also comes from their ability to transform into others, to imitate others: the experience of feeling what others feel, to be others.

As shown in Chapter 3, *Iĉiai*, the trickster creator god, has the ability to transform at will. The *tio* also have transformative skills. They are able to come to this realm in four different ways: as *criollos* (above); as jaguars (see further on); as small stones—*tio tõde*; and as birds named *uĩuĩpareme* (*Pitangus sulphuratus*, En. *Great kiskadee*). All of these appearances are just external; it is only the *ikhara*—the envelope—that is different. Internally, they keep their vital essence intact no matter which *ikhara* they come in. Except for the transformation into pebbles, singers are able to turn into all the other forms adopted by the *tio*.

The *tio tõde*—spirit stones—are embodiments of the singer's auxiliary spirits[110]. The stones are said to be the *ikhara*–the envelope–that contains the agentive power of these spiritual beings. One *tio* can have as many *ikhara* as possible, each of them belonging to a singer. The *tio*, then, have "distributed personhood." For the Pume, these stones are "an index of the...[*tio*'s] spatio-temporal presence" (Gell, 1998, p. 98). As is usually the case with the *tio* in any of their forms, spirit stones speak for the first time to singers in dreams, telling them where to find them. They are found usually either inside the singers' own houses or in the savanna. As explained in Chapter 3, these stones take care of the community and prevent

[109] Luis Ojeda, March 27 2019. "Habe yudērõ eami hudirõ thabe peĩ tarerĩ tarēhabui tarerĩ nive buike kode. Pearödi, thurakhara ĉhiame 'faja' ĉhiame huĩ, ĉhiria goameke, ĉhere ĉhere. ĉhiame ŋoepame."

[110] I want to draw attention to the fact that the Otomaco people believed they were descendants of stones (Morey, 1975, p. 154).

people from getting sick. Singers usually keep a considerable number of them in a bag, which is stored close to the bag that contains their rattle in a safe, dark place inside the home.

In everyday life, *tio* are able to come to this realm, *daecîri*, in the shape of the birds called Cristofue in Venezuelan Spanish (see above). These birds are identified by two white lines on their heads. During the *tõhe* ritual, the main singer wears a white piece of cloth on his or her head to be recognized as *tio* when arriving in their land—*adecîadabu*. When *tio* are singing in their land, they are also wearing a white piece of cloth on their heads. Cristofue are messengers: They serve as messengers between the world of the Pume people and the world of the *tio*. When these birds are singing it means that good things will come. Likewise, when someone visits the community for the first time, the song of these birds means that this person comes in good faith. When someone is leaving to travel, the song of these birds is seen as a good omen.

Although the ability to adopt different appearances confers power on both singers and spiritual beings, in the next subsection I argue that transformation into others is only one way in which power is attained and embraced. Another way to attain power, and also to show that one has power, is by knowing and following paths. I suggest that from the perspective of the Pume, while transforming into others is a way of turning the power of alterity into one's own power, making, knowing and following paths is a way of transmuting one's own collective history into power.

5.4.2. Healing paths

In this subsection, I present the idea that Pume singers not only attain healing power through the appropriation of cultural elements of the White society but also by knowing paths through the mythical lands. In the previous subsection, I argued that mimesis of the White

society and modernity—as expressed in oral representations of the lives and appearances of spirit helpers, as well as in the lives of singers when in the land of the dead—does indeed confer Pume singers with the power to heal themselves and others. In what follows, I suggest that the mimetic faculty is but one of the ways by which Pume singers become powerful healers.

The Pume have been typically characterized as hunter, gatherers and fishers (Kirchhoff, 1948). As the historical record shows, they used to have a highly mobile lifestyle, a characteristic that is usually associated with this label. But, at the same time, the historical record is inconclusive as to whether the Pume cultivated plants. Both Gumilla (1944, p. 204) and Gilij (1965a, pp. 276, 277) described a number of agricultural practices among the Pume in the eighteenth century. But, in the same century, Rivero (1883, p. 19) reported that the group of Pume people he had met were incapable of growing crops. Based on these and other sources, whether the Pume did or did not have a strong agricultural vocation before colonization has inspired intense debate (see, for example, Leeds, 1964; Morey, 1975). After a thorough review of historical sources and the ethnographic record, including my own field experience (Saturno, 2014; Saturno and Zent, 2016), I am inclined to believe that the Pume were wanderers who relied heavily on wild plants but also practiced slash-and-burn agriculture before the arrival of the Europeans.

Nonetheless, their high mobility and their strong reliance on wild plants led to the idea that the Pume people represent an ideal type of hunter-gatherer. Based on an evolutionary perspective, for example, the Pume have been a case for ethno-archaeological research intended to demonstrate what life was like for Paleolithic societies (Greaves, 1997; Kramer, 2008; Kramer and Greaves, 2010; Kramer *et al.*, 2009). Other than being ahistorical, this kind of study assumes a radical separation between having a foraging economy and being

agriculturalists. This dichotomous classification based only on economic-ecological factors overlooks issues of religious life and identity associated with mobility (cf. Rival, 2002).

Another question is whether the high mobility that typifies Pume people in colonial sources was a preconquest characteristic or a consequence of the impact of colonization. William Balée (1992, pp. 38-39) has suggested that many forager nomadic societies of the Amazonian Basin have an agriculturalist past. According to him, the impact of colonization led these groups to go from a more agriculturalist and sedentary lifestyle to a highly mobile, foraging one[111]. Reflecting on the hypothesis of agricultural regression, Rival has argued that "[m]obility is not primarily determined by economic or ecological factors, but represents the historical development of a distinct mode of life that the notions of archaism and agricultural regression cannot explain satisfactorily" (2002, p. xiii). As she claims, "movement through space has a social and ritual value in itself quite apart from whatever economic-environmental or politico-historical benefits may be derived from it" (2002, p. xx). Rival's hypotheses are aimed at criticizing cultural ecologists for explaining high mobility as a consequence of environmental constraints. On the other hand, although she agrees with Balée that mobility might be a form of adaptation to historical processes and not to environmental conditions, Rival points out that Balée ignores historical dynamics prior to colonization among groups with different levels of mobility (2002, p. 13).

I agree with Rival in that movement through landscapes is significant in itself. In particular, mobility is a way of perceiving and knowing the world (cf. Ingold, 2000). These observations further support the idea that cognition is inherently related to how people interact with the physical world and, additionally, how mobility is integrated into Pume cosmology.

[111] It is important to note that Balée gives this regression a historical rather than evolutionary explanation.

There is a radical difference between how the *tio pume* were in the past and how the *tio nive* are today. As explained in the previous chapter, in primordial times the sons and daughters of *Kumañi*, the *tio pume,* populated *daecîri*—this realm. They were jaguar-humans. According to the narratives of the past, these beings as well as *Kuma* were very poor: nomadic hunters, fishers and gatherers. The representations of the *tio pume* are somehow a reflection of the current way of life of the Pume. After being defeated by the water beings, they went to live in *ãdecîadabu*, a land made of gold where everything shines. The beings who lived there, however, were not called *tio pume* anymore, but *tio nive*—Others. They are the singers' guardian spirits and their helpers in processes of healing. They are the ancestors of the Pume but, at the same time, they represent Otherness in its fullest sense[112]. When talking about them, sometimes, they are referred to as *khünahirĩdirõ*, a term that refers to affines[113]. Yet, paradoxically, when the *tio nive* come to the *tõhe* to sing, they are addressed by using kin terms that denote consanguinity. The *tõhe*, then, is a ritual through which alterity is transmuted into identity, Otherness is turned into sameness and illness into health.

When the *tio* come during the *tõhe*, they and the singers become alike not only in their looks and lifestyles but also in the fact that they wander. While the Pume perceive singers'

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[112] When I say that the *tio nive* represent Otherness in its fullest sense I want to imply that the designation "*tio nive*" denotes alterity in a general sense. This term is used as a general denomination to include a wide variety of beings who have individual characteristics and names. It includes spirits and the dead. Other "Others" are designated with categories that are specific to the group they belong to. Such categories are so specific to each group that little room for creativity remains. For example, "*yarukha*" is the denomination used to only designate the devils of the forest. And, as far as I can understand, neither do the *yarukha* have individual names nor do people ascribe to them individual characteristics. Beings labeled as "*tio nive*," on the other hand, are highly diverse and, it seems to me, have ever-changing attributes and ways of living. And also, as mentioned before, they possess individual names. These considerations are based on a taxonomic approach rather than on an analysis of kinship relations.
By saying that the *tio nive* represent Otherness in its fullest sense I am, therefore, not resorting to the "hierarchical opposition" that, according to Viveiros de Castro (2018, p. 369), "exists between consanguinity and affinity," sameness and otherness, in Amazonian societies. But, if I were to position the *tio nive* in this gradient, they would be "potential affines," "people who are 'more' affinal" than "cognatic affines" (Viveiros de Castro, ibid.). In fact, potential affinity is the kind of relationship that characteristically exists between the dead and the living, humans and spirits (Viveiros de Castro, 2018, p. 378)—that is to say, between humans and the *tio nive.*

[113] In the past, this term was commonly used to refer to parents-in-law, but it seems to have fallen into disuse.

ability to become Other as a source of their ritual power, and therefore their healing capacity, transformation into alterity is just one of the singers' abilities. The Pume people agree on the fact that good, knowledgeable singers are able to heal not only because they can metamorphose but also because, while performing the *tõhe* ritual, they can travel to places that are far way.

As we will see, Pume singers explain their learning process in terms of the acquisition of knowledge of places located in the supernatural realms. The knowledge singers attain through dreams and the action of singing is knowledge of paths to places, as well as the places themselves. Such knowledge, for example, allows singers to move properly in the land of *Iĉiai*, making it easier for them to find and rescue the *pumetho* of a patient. Likewise, knowing paths allows them to travel far away, to the land of the *tio*, while singing. A look at the morphology of the Pume language indicates that the word *ŋo* (path) is the root of the verb *ŋoa-* (to sing). When singers are describing how they travel from one place to another while singing, they draw a line in the air that goes from the west to the south, finishing in the east. As explained in Chapter 4, this line shows the path they take aboard the sun, which turns into a canoe and travels across *ui kãbo*, the river that runs through the mythic land.

The Pume model of cognition places high importance on the knowledge attained by the subject as her vital essence wanders about this and other (supernatural) worlds. It is an epistemology in which meaning intermingles with the material. For the Pume, then, cognition is not a set of operations happening inside people's heads but rather an interactive process between bodies and the world. This idea finds its fullest expression in the action of singing that the Pume conceive as journeying. While singing, just as while walking, Pume singers follow paths as well as tracing them. Although going along paths is an individual experience, like singing, we must not forget that "[f]or the path to appear along the ground as a

continuous line it must be walked many times, or by many people" (Ingold, 2010, p. 128). This points to the fact that paths are inherently historical and collective, as they become what they are only when many women and men have transited them over time[114].

Referring to a young singer who is very popular in the community, for example, Doña Teresa says:

> [He] sings just words, I would like to tell him that he is singing just words (*ŋoadi tõhe maẽma*[115]), I would like to tell him that he sings as if he were just here. He is singing just words. Yes, he goes to another place, to another place, but it is still close. He still has a long way to go. He is singing just words[116].

Doña Teresa's statement points to the importance of being able to go far away, to the land of the spiritual beings. To go far away, singers must know the paths.

The idea that singers attain knowledge as they visit places and traverse paths is further illustrated by Delia when she explains how she became a singer. After being ill many times, she was rescued by healing spiritual beings who showed her the many paths and places they knew:

> They [the *tio*] are going to come this way [pointing to the west]. I know all that out there, from end to end. A while ago, they took me there. I have traveled there from end to end. It is not an easy task, one tires. I had been sick many times before I became *tarẽbarañi*[117].

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[114] In the case of the Yaminahua, myths are called "*shidipaowo wai*, the paths of the old ones who went before" (Townsley, 1993, p. 454).

[115] *Tõhe maẽ* (the words of the *tõhe*) is the name of the language used in the context of the *tõhe* ritual. It is well known by Pume singers and contrasts with *Pume maẽ* (the words of the Pume, the words of the people). *-ma* adverbial particle.

[116] Doña Teresa, April 16 2019. "Ŋoadi tõhe maẽma ŋoadi, habo hãdearĩ huĩ ñoñire kharĩ, pihipereakharĩ nütarakharĩ ŋoadi tõhe maẽma. hãdi nütarope nütarope goakaiodiroho hãbediroho phoromedi. tõhe maẽma ŋoadi."

[117] Performer of the *añikui barañi*.

> When I am able to go far away it is when I sing. They [the *tio*] took me everywhere around the city, from end to end. Before, I would go there without knowing that land. I would go there without knowing anything. "This is called this, this is called that" [they would tell me]. In this way I was arriving there. In this way he [a *tio*] was arriving there. "That is what this is called," he would tell me. They [the *tio*] know [the paths] when they are arriving to *ãdeyadabu* [the east]. "Now you are returning while singing, look! It is close, the sun is rising in your land[118]," they would say at sunrise[119].

Singers are able to go to places that are far away because they know the paths that lead there. While dreaming, being ill and singing, people go to different realms and they acquire knowledge of places in those realms. Knowing new places and going along paths are the ways singers acquire knowledge while they sing. In order to be able to heal people, singers must know the right paths. They should know the paths that lead them to the *tio* as well as the paths that cross *Iĉiai*'s land. This knowledge is crucial for contacting the guardian spirits and also for being able to find the *pumetho* of the diseased in *Iĉiai*'s land. This understanding of healing power as coming from their knowledge of places and their ability to go to places mirrors how the Pume perceive themselves and their ancestors. The Pume see themselves above all as wanderers. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, they often talk about how the coming of the *criollos* to their lands has prevented them from moving freely.

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[118] *Nãeã ĉiri*, "your land," "your savanna."

[119] Delia Rodríguez, June 13 2019. "Ŋõdodoro yitamaĩ mãdi ŋõdodoro dabamake. Kode ĉhinĩbo yoroba. Goaĉhötörereãke koa pearö. Yoroba ĉhinĩbodoroba. Eĩdaba hörötĩdaba. gitoaha hörötökheate tarẽbara kode. Yoa kode ŋoa ĉhokeaha haĉhia. Yoroba goaĉhötörea bemarĩ yoroba. Kenãdeaba hãdi ĉhötökeda huĩ dabua. Ĉhötökeda kenãdeaba. Hudidi yude hãdi kẽmẽdi, yudedi hãdikẽmẽdi yude huĩ dabua ĉhötöke yoa. Hãdi daehöro. Hãdi daehöme huĩ. 'Hãdi kẽmẽdi yude,' ñoro. 'Eba daba hãdi daehöme ãdeyaha kereyome. adode hãdi daehö ŋoame dame kereyome, do bedodorome nãẽã ĉhiriropomo,' eba bedo doropeami mea nüta ño."

When singers are sick, that is to say, when their *pumetho* is in the hands of *Iĉiai*, they are deprived of movement, and yet they see this as an opportunity to learn paths in *dodedabu—Iĉiai*'s land. Dream narratives usually relate how *Iĉiai* shows the diseased person different places. The experience of illness is, then, necessary for amassing knowledge of places that are located in *Iĉiai*'s land. In the case of Delia, for example, she remembers that when she was sick, *Iĉiai* would point to a place and say, "This place is called this[120]." Likewise, one of Doña Teresa's narratives of an experience while she was sick shows how *Iĉiai* purposely revealed knowledge of places that are located in his land (*dodedabu*):

> He took me to a place I did not know, I got sick. He took me to a city, a place I did not know. A long time ago, he took me. He was punishing me. He did many bad things to me in a place I did not know. He took me to an unknown land. He told me many things. He had me. He took me to a land called hen. He took me to a land called *paratarureã*[121]. He told me there was a sacred land. It is a land that is very far away from the one he took me to. Then, I got tired while I was there, in *dodedabu*[122].

During the *tõhe*, the singer goes to *Iĉiai*'s land to retrieve the *pumetho* of the afflicted person, whether her own or someone else's. This time it is the *tio* who show the singer the places, the shortcuts and the paths along which she must travel in order to overcome the trickster. Delia claims that the *tio* took her everywhere so that she could sing: "They took me from end to end in the land of the *otę* [the creator gods]. I also traveled *Iĉiai*'s land from end

[120] Delia Rodriguez, June 13 2019.

[121] A land where *para* (a tuber, unidentified) grows.

[122] Doña Teresa, April 16 2019. Koa goakaiomẽdi dabaderĩ hãboke oereãde ĉhototikheake bemarĩrope, dabaderope. Eba ĉhototikheadikoa koa conerikheamẽdi ĉhini ĉhia dabaderope pearödi. Eba ĉhototikheaderokoa thabedaburope kemebedi. Ĉhini ĉhia ñodikoa. Koa eba goa ĉhototikheamẽdi okararo ĉhiribe. Paratarureã ĉhiribe goakaiodikoa. Koa ñomẽdi ĉhiri maüme ĉhiribedi. Ĉhiri hãĉhi arẽkheamẽdi ibe goakaiokadikoa. Hãdeaha hörötökheake haĉhiĉhia daburope dodedaburope.

to end. I went everywhere, that is why I sing." She reinforces this idea when she explains how Doña Teresa became a singer: "My sister [Doña Teresa] went through the same, that is why she is *tarẽbarañi*. They [the *tio*] took her [places] too. She went along the same paths."

The Pume, then, think of songs as paths. Moreover, rather than being particular to the Pume, the perception of songs as paths is something that they share with another Amazonian society, the Yaminahua[123]. As Townsley (1993, p. 452) has explained, among the Yaminahua of Peru, songs are conceived of as paths and techniques for acquiring knowledge, which is the reason why their shamanism "is not [a] constituted discourse but a way of constituting one" (1993, p. 452). Struck by the fact that Yaminahua shamanism has not only survived but blossomed in comparison to the erosion of other native social practices, Townsley shows how images of modernity have been absorbed into shamanic practices as a fundamental part of them (1993, p. 451). As discussed earlier, the incorporation of foreign imagery into shamanic meanings and discourses is a widespread characteristic of Amerindian societies, including that of the Pume. What is innovative in Townsley's approach to shamanism, however, is his proposal to understand it "as an ensemble of techniques for knowing" (ibid., p. 452). Townsley, then, focuses on understanding the native epistemology, rather than on documenting shamanic "standardized discourses of knowledge" like "mythology, the various categories and beings of the spirit world and cosmos" (ibid., pp. 449-50).

Based on a detailed account of how the Yaminahua conceive of personhood, Townsley describes how songs are the experiences of a shaman's vital essence as it interacts with the vital essences of nonhuman others. Vital essences of humans and nonhumans (*yoshi*) that are otherwise invisible become visible during dreams, when people's *yoshi* wander around an imperceptible domain (ibid., p. 453). This is also the case during induced trance

[123] The Cashinahua of the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon also deploy the metaphor of songs as paths. When trying to call a dead person back to life, "[t]he songs function as paths of return for the flown spirit" (McCallum, 1996, p. 360).

states associated with singing. However, unlike ordinary people whose *yoshi* are independent of their will, shamans "can control...[their *yoshi*'s] movements and perceptions" (ibid., p. 456). Because shamans can control their wanderings around the world of human and nonhuman vital essences, shamanic songs are conceived as "paths" (*wai*) (ibid., pp. 453-4)[124]. As Townsley puts it, "The song is the path which [the shaman] both makes and follows" (ibid., p. 460).

In Chapter 3, I described Pume ways of perceiving and knowing. In that chapter, I showed how the experiences of the *pumetho*—vital essence—during dreams, times of illness and while singing are understood by the Pume as significant learning experiences. Underlying the understanding of the *pumetho* as the ground of perception and knowledge of important truth is the idea that the Pume notion of personhood is not based on a clear differentiation between body and mind. As Townsley points out, the Yaminahua idea that, during dreams and altered states of consciousness, people can engage in close interactions with otherwise invisible entities questions the very idea of "mind" as conceived in the West. On the one hand, the fact that, from the Yaminahua perspective, the experiences attained during dreams and trance-like states are constitutive of the subject and her knowledge points to an absence of division between the "mental" or "imaginary" world and the "real" world (ibid., pp. 454-5). Richly metaphorical songs allow shamans to transform analogies between the macrocosm and the microcosm into a healing reality. It is because of this that shamans' words, as sung speech, are able to heal (ibid., p. 464). Under this paradigm, our conventional understanding of "mind" as "something interior to the person which leaves the material world unaffected" (ibid., p. 465) loses its meaning.

[124] This is also the case with myths: "*shidipaowo wai*, paths of the old ones who were before" (Townsley, 1993, p. 454).

In Chapter 3, I have shown how the experiences of the *pumetho* while a person is dreaming, sick or singing are understood by the Pume as significant ways of perceiving the world. Such experiences are infused with dense mixtures of acoustic, visual, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, synesthetic and kinesthetic metaphors. This is the case for everyone while their *pumetho* wanders around different realms. Like the Yaminahua, the Pume do not have control over their *pumetho*'s movements and perceptions; it is only experienced singers who are able to determine their *pumetho*'s experiences. As presented in Chapter 3, the narratives of the experiences of dreaming, being ill and singing are made up of metaphors that imply the transcendence of the subject/object dualism. The transcendence attained in these states allows experienced singers to, for example, transmute pain into objects. In Chapter 4, I presented another example, in which, through the use of chanted speech (a prayer), a metaphor between body and landscape becomes reality and the prayer's enunciator is able to transmute water (*ui*) into a healing substance (*ĉereui*).

What those examples demonstrate is that, in the context of shamanic healing, metaphors are not mere figures of speech through which the connections between two things are brought into attention but rather they show an existing relation between them. Therefore, ritual action should be understood as actual and not symbolic. Rather than "symbolic analysis," then, I am proposing "empathic understanding of others" (Jackson, 1983a, p. 340), specifically the actions that Pume singers undertake during the *tõhe*. In what remains of this chapter I present two metaphors that are vital to singers' actions: songs as paths and rattles as hearts. I argue that, through the action of singing, the analogies underlying such metaphors dissolve to give place to a true conjunction between the two objects. As in the case of Yaminahua shamans, whose visions allow them to unite "the two stands of [their analogies]

to make them one" (Townsley, 1993, p. 464), Pume singers are also able to turn these metaphors into their reality.

5.5. Drawing paths

The word *ŋo* (path) is not only the root of the verb *ŋoa*-, "to sing," but also of the verb *ŋoe*-, "to draw, to write." Furthermore, this verb root, which I translate as "to draw" or "to write," means more literally "to trace paths." Significantly for my analysis, Ingold has pointed out that wayfaring, as a way of moving and knowing, is comparable to drawing in the sense that "as the draughtsman traces a line with his pencil, so the wayfarer—walking along—paces a line with his feet" (2010, p. 127).

Drawings (*ŋoe*) are one of the first means of knowledge transmission for Pume people during their life course. Usually, grandmothers tell stories to their grandchildren as they draw figures over the surface of the earth with a wooden stick. These are the first *ŋoe* that a person learns; they are images of animals or geometric designs that come to illustrate the stories. Grandmothers know how to draw because they are knowledgeable. As previously stated, men, who are experienced in the art of singing—that is, who know many paths—are also able to draw. Therefore, their rattles are fully engraved with the images of the *tio* (spirits) and the *otę* (gods).

There is a positive correlation between knowing paths—and therefore being able to go to places, which is synonymous with singing—and tracing paths, that is, drawing or writing. The *tio*, because they know so many paths, also know how to write. They are said to have notebooks where they write down important information about the Pume people and their lives. Just by looking at the empty pages of their notebooks, they are able to draw golden letters—*ĉere ŋoe.* Moreover, when they go outside of their land—either to *Iĉiai*'s land or to

this realm—they disguise themselves as jaguars: *ŋoēĉia parēme*, literally, "tiger with drawings." The fact that *tio*—and experienced singers—are able to turn into jaguars, beings who are covered with drawings, implies that they are wise beings. Like the Piro people (Gow, 2001, p. 110) as well as the Kuna people (Fortis, 2012b, p. 97), the Pume perceive jaguar designs as an expression not only of wisdom but also of beauty. Being beautiful and being wise, then, go hand in hand in Pume aesthetics. This is confirmed by the fact that, when describing their guardian spirits, singers often place emphasis on their beauty. Referring to them, singers would often say, "*khürĩdarĩmarẽ, ĉhakhearĩma!*" (They are all beautiful, gorgeous!).

Both Gow (1989, 1999, 2001) and Fortis (2010, 2012a) have concerned themselves with the relationship between the creation of designs and the constitution of persons and bodies. Gow has shown, for example, how a Piro woman is someone who "transforms her interior bodily flow into children, transforms her children into adults through the bodily exterior flow of beer, [and] transforms her children's children into adults by manifesting designs she generates inside herself as the external appearance of another" (1999, p. 242). Gow emphasizes that Piro women's designs do not come to represent anything; that is, their value does not come from the meaning they are conveying. It is their mere presence that is meaningful and interesting to Piro people. Designs, then, are interesting because they are an expression of how women create kinship by controlling the economy of fluids between the inside and the outside of the body (Gow, 1999, pp. 235-6).

Drawing on the work of Gow and others, Fortis has argued that designs, for the Kuna people, are "part of the process of the fabrication of human bodies" (2010, p. 483). Like Gow, Fortis does not analyze Kuna designs by asking questions about meaning, whether iconic or symbolic; he focuses on what the presence (or absence) of designs indexes. For the Kuna

people, the presence of designs on the amniotic sac of newborns is indicative of children's capacity to develop dexterity in social practices, such as making designs (*mola*), carving wood, weaving baskets or learning ritual knowledge (Fortis, 2010, p. 487). Amniotic designs are associated with different types of predators (ibid., p. 486). They communicate the possibility of a person being open to relationships with such animals and, therefore, acquiring knowledge through these relationships (ibid., p. 487). On the other hand, the absence of amniotic designs is indicative of the newborn's potential to develop shamanic skills (ibid., p. 486).

Gow and Fortis have focused on the surface of bodies, human and otherwise. Their concern has been with the visual aesthetics in everyday life and how interiority finds expression in the exteriors of other beings who belong to the same group. What these studies stress is how the surfaces of bodies are shaped by knowledge that flows out of people's interiors and is imprinted on others' bodily surfaces. For them, kinship is not given but purposely brought about by the exteriorization, in the form of designs, of knowledge that resides internally. This relationship between interiority and exteriority is also involved in an idea that is common among Amazonian societies, namely that people's manners and bodily dispositions can reflect their inner vitalities' experiences (Santos-Granero, 2006, p. 21). It is habitus, then, that allows beings to recognize themselves and others as belonging to a group, whether it is humans, animals or spirits (Viveiros de Castro, 1998, pp. 470-1; see also Fortis, 2010, p. 483).

More generally, Amazonian ontologies are based on the idea that all beings are constituted by an internal, human essence that is covered by an external, potentially changeable, appearance that defines differentiation between species. Or, as Viveiros de Castro puts it, "the manifest form of each species is a mere envelope (a 'clothing') which conceals

an internal human form" (1998, pp. 470-1). In the case of Kuna people, humanity is defined by how people's envelopes are shaped by the interactions between "identity and alterity; respectively, human kinspeople and animal entities" (Fortis, 2016, p. 440). This definition of personhood as an ever-ongoing process of transformation propelled by the interactions between alterity and identity has also been Fortis's point of departure for analyzing Kuna woodcarvings—*nuchukana*: the shamans' auxiliary spirits. He compares these figurines to the dead in the sense that they lack identity. They are, according to Fortis (2016, p. 440), pure alterity. As he states, "*Nuchukana* are images of others, of persons stripped of identity that look to humans like self-identical images, deprived of any differentiation" (2012b, p. 202). Because they are not humans but dead, they lack individuality. Furthermore, they do not have bodies, the surface where sociality is imprinted, shaping persons and subjects. This train of reasoning allows Fortis to critique Taussig's idea that the ritual efficacy of Kuna woodcarvings comes from them being a representation of White people. Fortis (2012b, p. 202; see also 2016, p. 440) argues instead that their power actually stems from them having generic features. Likewise, Fortis (2012a, pp. 21-22) indicates that the absence of realism in Kuna woodcarvings has nothing to do with poor skills, nor with a disinterest in figurative art. He rather suggests that the similarities between dead people and woodcarvings of auxiliary spirits demonstrates that "for the Kuna, figurative art is not the representation of visual exterior forms, but rather is the instantiation of invisible interior forms" (2012a, p. 22). Here again it is implied that exterior appearances are an expression of an interior constitution.

I present Fortis's argument in detail because it sheds light on Pume drawings (*ŋoe*). First, I point out some similarities between Pume perceptions of these drawings and Gow and Fortis's understandings of designs among the Piro and Kuna people. Second, I reflect on the different shapes that singers' guardian spirits take in this realm. I suggest that, like Kuna

woodcarvings, the *tio* do not have particularities, and their power comes precisely from their mutability. This allows me to suggest a difference with the Kuna people for whom, according to Fortis, human agency is what confers the status of subjects on spirit carvings. Then, I reflect on yet another difference between the Pume and the Kuna peoples: that for the former, not only are people's external surfaces shaped by interactions with powerful others but also their interiors. This reflection allows me to argue that the Pume history of interactions with others has been embodied. Based on these considerations, I conclude by commenting on how I understand the Pume people to conceive of "representation."

The Pume people understand relationships with the body that are entailed in practices as constitutive of what people perceive as defining a group. They are constantly making associations between bodily practices and identity, such as, for example, the fact that dogs eat raw food while humans eat cooked food, or that pigs scratch their skin while humans do not. Spirits are able to transform—change their appearance—at will, while for humans transformation is uncomfortable and potentially lethal.

Likewise, we find among the Pume an understanding of the body's surface as a canvas on which social interactions with human and nonhuman beings find expression in the form of "drawings" (*ŋoe*). These drawings are understood as the exterior manifestation of a knowledge that resides in the interior of oneself or others. For example, after their first menstruation, women start wearing facial painting in ritual contexts. These are composed of geometric designs in shapes that resemble the skins of jaguars or anacondas (Figure 7) (see also Orobitg, 2016)[125]. Face painting is carried out by older women, using stamps fabricated by older men (see Petrullo, 1969, p. 139). Another example is their perception of white

[125] Where I conducted field research, face painting is no longer common. However, many people have memories of a recent past in which women used to wear facial painting to participate in the *tõhe* ritual. The designs presented in Figure 7 were drawn by Milian Ruiz at my request.

patches caused by vitiligo as a sign of sorcery. These patches are perceived as the exteriorization of a sorcerer's knowledge over the surface of someone else's body. The same logic applies to the assumption that the spots on jaguars' skin are an exteriorization of their knowledge—but, in this case, on the surface of their own bodies.

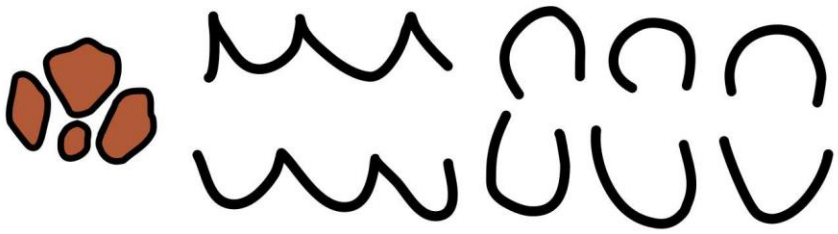

Figure 7. Examples of the drawings women used to wear on their face during the *tõhe* (drawn by Milián Ruiz)

Based on these examples, one can say that being able to draw is, for the Pume, a sign of being knowledgeable. Like tracing paths, the acquisition of knowledge is a permanent negotiation with the material world over the course of a person's lifetime. Given that drawings are conceived as paths, one can follow Ingold (2010) in stating that knowledge is embodied in a body that is intrinsically part of the world. Knowledge understood in this way implies its agentive nature, as it is not only stored inside bodies and brains but also engraved onto the world. There is yet another quality of the Pume model of cognition entailed in the metaphor of tracing and following paths as ways of knowing. As Ingold (2010, p. 125) points out, the relationship between the walker and the ground is perceived by the former only in movement. Movement is, then, a condition for learning. The privation of movement, as when people are punished by *Iĉiai*, for example, is a significant learning experience for the Pume

people because it brings an experiential understanding of the importance of movement for cognition and perception.

Another similarity between the Kuna case as presented by Fortis and that of the Pume is that the power of guardian spirits who help Pume singers in processes of healing does not come from particular visual characteristics. As with the Kuna people, Pume guardian spirits do not have individual visual features. For example, the most powerful form in which spirits choose to come to this realm is wearing the envelope of a stone. Although these stones have particularities—they are cold, small and reddish in color—that help people to identify them as actual spirit stones, they are not representational in the sense that they do not resemble anything visually. As noted in Chapter 3, it is ultimately the circumstances in which they are found that allow people to identify them.

That being said, Pume men do use figurative art to represent the images of their creator gods (*otę*) and their guardian spirits (*tio*) on the surfaces of their rattles (see also Orobitg, 2016, p. 193)[126]. Nevertheless, unlike the images of the gods, which present many individual details, the auxiliary spirits are carved as generic anthropomorphic silhouettes (see Figure 8). They are all the same, without particular characteristics. In fact, when talking about the *tio*, singers usually say, *hãdideĩmarĩ nütarĩma hãdikheame kode*[127], "I imagine them all the same."

Although the *tio*, according to singers, look all the same in *ãdecîadabu*, their most important attribute, and the one that actually accords them their healing power, is their transformative skill, a skill that, eventually, singers also attain. This aligns with a general characteristic of Amerindian societies, for whom powerful beings such as spirits and shamans

[126] As will become explicit further on, my analysis of the relationship between singers and their rattles differs greatly from Orobitg's (2016). She argues that Pume rattles are shaped through a process similar to the one that shapes human bodies, particularly female bodies.

[127] The verb root *hãdikhea-* is used to speak of the experience of being in the land of the *tio* while singing.

are able to transform themselves by changing their external appearance (Viveiros de Castro, 1998, p. 471). Unlike for the gods, spirits, the dead, experienced singers or shamans, transformation for regular human beings is always problematic, which is why it is perceived as a disease. Experienced singers are able to change their appearance and to acquire the perspective of other species. As previously noted, during the *tõhe* ritual, for example, lead singers wrap their heads in a white cloth to resemble the two white stripes that great kiskadee have on their heads. By doing so, they become these birds. Just like the singers go to the land of the *tio* looking like great kiskadees, the spirits come to this realm looking like these birds, although they can also come looking like jaguars or like stones.

Figure 8. The *tio* engraved over the surface of Kenny Farfán's rattle.

The multiple ways in which the *tio*, singers' guardian and helping spirits, present themselves in *daecîri*, the realm of everything that is visible, are an expression of their own

agency. This is different from the Kuna people for whom, for example, the earthly manifestation of the shamans' spirit helpers in the form of *nuchukana*—woodcarvings—is made possible through human agency. As Fortis points out, through the action of carving, Kuna men transform wood into an "individualized subject with whom human beings are able to communicate" (2012a, p. 19). Human agency is necessary for an auxiliary spirit to "acquire his or her own personality" and to be able "to appear in dreams as a specific person" (Fortis, 2012a, p. 19). This is not the case among the Pume, for whom the spirits who assist singers in shamanic pursuits willingly manifest in the form of stones or people in dreams.

Finally, there is a further difference between the cases presented by Gow and Fortis for the Piro and Kuna peoples, respectively, and the Pume. As previously stated, one of the fundamental conclusions of Gow and Fortis's analyses of these people's designs is that they are the expression of inner knowledge over others' external bodily surfaces. One can reach the same conclusion for the Pume who think of "designs" over the surfaces of human and nonhuman beings as the expression of others' knowledge. But, unlike the Piro and Kuna, for the Pume, the knowledge that is gained from their interactions with alterity——mostly spiritual beings, gods or the dead–also shapes people's physical interiors.

The hearts of experienced singers are (literally) shaped by their knowledge and experiences of their *pumetho* in the other world. That is why their rattles—*ĉĩyokode* (*ĉĩ-* "heart," *-yokode* "calabash" (*Crescentia cujete* L., En. Calabash tree)—show many carvings of images of the gods and the spirit helpers they have encountered while singing or dreaming. The idea that the heart is a central organ for cognition is widespread in the Amazon (Belaunde, 2006; Rosengren, 2006; Santos-Granero, 2006)[128]. While people like the Candoshi, for example, explicitly say "*magochino* 'my heart thinks'" (Surralles, 1999, p. 128,

[128] The Cashinahua also view the heart as an organ where knowledge resides; however, Kensinger (1995, p. 244) has pointed out that this is something recent and he attributes it to the introduction of Christianity.

cited in Belaunde, 2006, p. 132), the Pume do not have any similar expression, nor do they explicitly convey the idea that the heart is the place in which memories and thoughts reside. However, as Orobitg explains, the heart is considered by the Pume people to be "the seat of thought and consciousness" (2016, p. 187). It is the part of the body that ensures that the person remains alive, even if their vital essence is absent (ibid.).

The carvings on the rattles are not meant to beseen, let alone touched. Although people are aware of what others' rattles look like, thereby contributing to the recognition of their knowledge, rattles are meant to remain hidden inside people's houses. They are kept in the same bag that contains the *tio tõde* (spirit stones) so that the spirit helpers may take care of them. They are only publicly exposed once the sun has set. The only time of the day when they are exposed is at dawn, right after they have finished singing, while singers engrave the surface of their rattles. That the rattles are the singers' hearts is taken quite literally. People say that in destroying a rattle, its owner would suffer a sudden death; their heart would be crushed. This analogy between a singer's heart and their rattle has yet another implication. While men are usually buried along with their rattles, those singers who have attained significant power give their rattles away before dying, normally to a person they have chosen as their successor. This is the case, for example, with Doña Teresa's rattle, which had been inherited from Doña Pancha. For this reason, as the story presented in Chapter 3 shows, when Doña Teresa sings people might dream that Doña Pancha is the one who is singing. It is her heart, after all, that is beating.

5.6. Paths, images and representation: final remarks

Drawings, whether figurative or geometric, are for the Pume an expression of knowledge. Although they are visually perceptible, most drawings are not meant to be seen.

This is the case with the face painting that women used to wear in the context of the *tõhe*, and with the drawings that singers carve over the surface of their rattles. The drawings that powerful beings such as jaguars have on the surfaces of their bodies are certainly visible, but they are so because such beings are supposed to be *tio* who have traveled to this realm (*daeĉiri*, where visual characteristics matter). These *tio* have come while it is daylight here, but in their land it is night, suggesting that these drawings are not supposed to be seen in *ãdeĉiadabu*. The same goes for the drawings over the rattle; like hearts that remain unseen inside people's bodies, the rattles are not meant to be seen. Thus, rattles remain in the darkness of houses' interiors, exactly like hearts remain in the darkness of people's bodies.

Now, what does this tell us about how the Pume conceptualize "representation"? Both Gow (1999) and Fortis (2010) have argued that designs over the surface of people's bodies are not figurative, because it is not representation that is important. Their presence (or their absence) on a person's body is, according to them, what indexes knowledge—knowledge that can either come from inside one's own person or from another being's interior. Along these lines, Fortis (2012b) has argued that the fact that *nuchukana* are deprived of individual visual characteristics negates the idea of representation altogether among the Kuna people. This is an argument he has advanced in order to dispute Taussig's thesis that the resemblances between these woodcarvings and White men are what allow Kuna ritual specialists to attain healing power.

Fortis (2016) has based his observations on the argument that *nuchukana* are deprived of identity or individuality because they are dead. However, as Martínez Mauri (2020) has shown, the Kuna treat these anthropomorphic woodcarvings as people by taking care of them as they would do if they were living human beings. Among the Pume, the *tio* are equivalent to what for the Kuna are the shamans' auxiliary spirits that are embodied in the *nuchukana*.

Like the *nuchukana*, the *tio* all look the same. That is to say, they all share the same visual characteristics, as is expressed in the engravings on the rattles or in the fact that spirit stones look very similar to one another. However, that does not mean they lack individuality. The *tio*, again, although visually very similar, do possess individuality, and, what is more, they have proper names. For example, when Juan Ramón Rojas introduced his spirit stones to me, he did so by indicating each of their names: "*ñamikoetio, bedorinatio,... pẽkiritio, crispitio,... katibanatio, tiofatetio*[129]." This is not to imply that they are unique, for the same *tio* can come to this realm embodied in multiple stones such that they all have the same name. This is so, because, unlike humans, *tio* have distributed personhood. For example, I have known many singers who have close friendships with *tio* or possess *tio* stones that embody *dyorotio*—from the verb *dyoro*, to give; or *tãretio*—from the verb *tãre*, to hear, to understand.

What these observations indicate is that visual characteristics are not as significant to understanding Pume drawings or their notion of representation. In fact, I think Taussig is closer to providing a clue for making sense of Pume ideas of representations conveyed through images. After all, what Taussig intends in *Mimesis and Alterity* is to invite us to reconsider our definitions of representation, or more accurately, "the very notion of what it is to be an image of something" (1993, p. 57). For this purpose, he presents the example of Navaho sand-painting in order to illustrate the idea that the meanings of images do not lie in what they convey visually, but in how they are experienced by people: "[T]he Navaho sand-painting is said to cure not by patients' looking at the picture inscribed therein, but by their placing their body in the design itself" (ibid.). In South America, we find a similar example in the design songs used by the Shipibo-Conibo of eastern Peru, which are intended for healing purposes (see, for example, Brabec de Mori and Mori Silvano de Brabec, 2009). The healing

[129] Juan Ramón Rojas, 27 years old, June 28 2019.

properties of the design songs stem from the fact that both healer and patient experience them multisensorially. First, the healing specialist, in a plant-induced altered state of consciousness, approaches the designs, which start in a book and eventually come to hover in mid-air, before descending slowly towards the floor. As the designs move from this place to the mouth of the specialist, they sing them into songs. Then, when the designs finally reach the body of the sick person, they penetrate their body and heal them. Other than its visual, aural, kinesthetic and tactile properties, the design songs also have a particular "fragrance," where their healing power ultimately dwells (Howes, 1991, p. 5).

I infer that when the Pume use the verb *ŋoake*, "I sing," or "I follow a path," they are implying that songs not only have an aural dimension but involve a multisensory experience very much like any human being will have while walking along a path. It is not only when singing or walking that the Pume people follow paths, but also when they dream or are sick. All of these experiences allow them to generate memories; they are forms of remembering. Pume singers can transform their knowledge of the past into the drawings they engrave on the surface of their rattles, *ŋoe*, but again, they are tracing paths, not images that are only perceptible visually. *Ŋoe* are in fact not supposed to be seen in this realm but are to be displayed in the land of the dead, where the senses blend and fuse. The Otherness of Pume history lies in these multisensual representations.

FINAL REMARKS

FORGETTING TO REMEMBER: LIFE AND DEATH IN LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICA

Native Lowland South Americans understand memory and its counterpart, forgetting, as homeostatic processes between life and death (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro, 1985; Conklin, 1995; Oakdale, 2001; Taylor, 1993). How these peoples conceive of personhood in relation to their cosmologies is central to an outline of their models of cognition and, more particularly, their forms of historical consciousness.

Like other societies in the Amazon Basin, the Pume people promote and perceive forgetting in rather physical terms. Not only their kin relations but their social ties in general are materialized in shared corporeal substances. Therefore, to overcome the pain that the memory of a recent death brings, they pierce their tongues so as to let out the blood that quite literally connects them with the deceased. Likewise, upon death, the house where the departed used to live along with their belongings are burnt. After some months, the grave is reopened to confirm that the person has decomposed, a sign that the flesh has been used by *Kumañi* to build a new body for the deceased in the land of the dead.

Oakdale (2001, pp. 396-7) has suggested that for the Kayabi of the Brazilian Amazon, the promotion of forgetting a deceased one among the bereaved is a way not only of easing the pain but also of ensuring social reproduction and continuity. Kayabi never die a “natural death”; death is always caused by people (ibid., p. 395). The songs ritually performed so as to promote forgetting remind the living that both victim and aggressor are part of a larger cosmological web of relations in which balance is necessary to guarantee the Kayabi social reproduction (ibid., p. 396).

As Oakdale (ibid.) has pointed out, this is also the case among the Wari' of the Brazilian rainforest and the Achuar of eastern Ecuador, who see forgetting the dead as socially productive and reproductive. According to Wari' conceptions of the cosmos, human beings turn into game animals—particularly white-lipped peccaries (Conklin, 1995)—after death. Before its disappearance due to contact with the larger Brazilian national society, mortuary cannibalism was, then, intended to ease the pain of the loss of a loved one by confirming "the dead individual's eventual regeneration as an immortal animal" (Conklin, 1995, p. 93). Death was forgotten and pain was relieved by means of the act of dismembering and eating the dead so as to symbolically ensure the equilibrium of the human-animal exchange cycle. In a similar vein, the Achuar seek to forget the dead as individuals similar to living people, in order to allow for a new birth to happen (Taylor, 1993; see also Oakdale, 2001, p. 397). Instead of maintaining animal-human balance like the Wari', the Achuar must guarantee their social reproduction by erasing their memories of the recently dead, because they see humanity as a "finite collection of singularities" (Taylor, 1993, p. 659). Therefore, to allow a new person to be born, the visual and aural memories of a dead one must be transformed into images that are new, "particularized but unvisualized" representations of the deceased (Taylor, 1993, p. 655). These images of the dead (*arutam*), although deprived of visual characteristics and vague, are fundamental for social reproduction, because they are "the source of identity as well as the individual destiny of the living" (ibid.)

Among the Pume, we do not see the same transformations of the dead into animals in order to keep the human-animal exchange relations balanced, like among the Wari'. Nor is forgetting the recent dead encouraged in order to maintain the flow of life within a bounded circularity between the death and life of a humanity that is perceived as a limited set of beings, like among the Achuar. However, the Pume are similar to these groups in that, by

means of practices, they facilitate forgetting loved ones who have recently died and, also, in that this willingness to forget is framed within their cosmology and eschatology as well as in their notions of personhood.

Upon death, *Kumañi* dismembers the *pumetho*—the vital essence—of the deceased, and reassembles it as a new persona who will live in the land of the dead (*ãdeĉiadabu*). The living confirm that this process has taken place when, after some months, they open the graves to contemplate the changes the person they knew has gone through as the flesh has completely disintegrated. When people talk about this process, they usually say that, once they are dead, *Kuma* recreate them in her land as *nive*—other. The transformation of dead people into *nive* is perceived among the living as relieving, because it means their loved ones have joined their ancestors and will live in a land where they will not experience hunger, disease or suffering.

The word *nive* refers to others in general: nonindigenous national citizens, colonial settlers, military, Colombian guerrilla members. The land of the dead is as much a reflection of how the Pume perceive the lives of these present others as it is a representation of the lives of past others. At the same time, the inhabitants of this land are the Pume themselves, past and present. Unlike other Lowland South American societies, the Pume do not suffer genealogical amnesia. They are allowed to say the names of their dead relatives, and they also remember them, usually in relation to particular places, or when the dead decide to interact with their descendants in dreams. However, eventually, the dead turn into *tio nive*. The *tio nive* are the Pume ancestors, visually highly transformative beings that take care of the Pume by mediating between human beings and powerful, potentially harmful spiritual beings. In life, Pume singers are especially close to the *tio nive* because they help the former to heal the living. Unlike human beings, the personhood or individual identity of both the dead and the

tio nive is not predicated upon visual appearance. This is not to say that they cannot become visible, as usually happens in dreams or, in the case of singers, during the synesthetic experiences entailed in singing.

What the examples above and the case of the Pume are telling us is that forgetting is an active practice. Like any other practice, forgetting is an embodied action. This has the implication that memory is also corporeal. *Ãdecîadabu* is the land of the past. Past beings, which inhabit *ãdecîadabu*, have an existence independent of the living. The *tio nive*, and also the creator gods (*otę*) who live in *ãdecîadabu* and elsewhere, are indeed immortal, but they do not live in a timeless mythic past. These beings interact with the living while they are sick, dreaming or singing. In these situations, the *pumetho* of the living, a vital essence that is pure inner physicality as well as spiritual self, is able to travel to the land of the dead and the ancestors. Through the actions of their *pumetho*, the Pume have agency not only in this realm but also in the land of those who are remembered. The past is not static and unchangeable but rather a realm where ancestors and the living interact. The Pume, then, do not simply observe the past; they create it. The homeostasis between life and death not only ensures social reproduction but is how social change becomes embodied.

The life of the ancestors and the dead resembles the life of the nonindigenous others. *Ãdeciadabu* is a place where the aspects of nonindigenous lives that the Pume most desire and admire are magnified. The *tio nive* have endless food that they do not have to cook; they do not have to work but are constantly dancing and drinking; they travel in planes, cars and motorcycles; they carry firearms; and they are always healthy. At the same time, the lives of the *tio nive* are an expression of ethnocentrism. Like the Pume, they are powerful singers and are able to make beautiful sounds, and they are knowledgeable about places and paths. This is not an interiorization of difference in order to reverse or deny time. It is, to me, an expression

of the ambiguous abiding feelings and memories that their interactions with the nonindigenous society bring: a combination between curiosity about and aspiration for Western goods and technology, and fear and anxiety in the face of the violence that has always characterized such interactions. The uneasiness that characterizes their relationships with nonindigenous others is manifested in the tropes of *Iĉiaí* and the *Yarukha*, the beings responsible for causing diseases and pain.

As Cormier has indicated, the case of the Guajá of the Brazilian Amazon—and in particular how they create and transform past events through the somatic experiences of dreaming and ritual traveling to the past—is illustrative of the axiom that "historical representation is a selective process" (2003, p. 123). We tend to believe that this selective process is aimed at distinguishing who and what is remembered. However, as Cormier rightly observes, "the process itself of remembering the past"—how it is remembered—is just as significant. As such, she seeks to understand not only "the content of the encounter with the historical other…but also the form of that encounter" (ibid.). This is what I have attempted to do in this monograph. I hope I have succeeded in showing that understanding native metaphors is crucial for making sense of Pume historicity.

I think that the metaphor of rattles as hearts is revealing of one of the many Pume modes of historical consciousness. Rattles have the attribute of defying (not negating) time by bringing the dead, the ancestors and knowledge of ancient paths back to the present. These song paths shape singers' inner bodies, confirming that cognition is, for the Pume, a material transformation of a malleable body. This idea leads us back to the question of how the Pume people remember. For them, bodies and world are one and the same—as is manifested in the efficacy of metaphors in situations of crisis. Memory, then, is a process that takes place both inside and outside people. The Pume, as wanderers, know paths; they have been historically

tracing paths. Such paths have transformed the surface of the earth as much as people's interiors. Like the Huaorani people of Ecuador, the Pume have traced many paths on their territory leaving behind, for example, plant configurations that present people associate with past people. As Rival points out, trekking in the territory is for the Huaorani, as it is for the Pume, "like walking through a living history book in which natural history and human history merge seamlessly" (2002, p. 1). Likewise, for the Pume, paths change the internal configurations of people's bodies, so that history, and memory, are to be found in a place that is as much nature as it is culture. This is how I had imagined the history of an animist society to be.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF PHONEMES

Symbol	Phonetic Value	Example
a	Low front unrounded vowel	Spanish. Pan
e	Mid front unrounded vowel	Spanish. Pena
ę	Mid-low front unrounded vowel	Spanish. Cerdo
o	Mid back rounded vowel	Spanish. Copa
ǫ	Mid-low back unrounded vowel	Spanish. Norte
I	High front unrounded vowel	Spanish. Pino
u	High back rounded vowel	Spanish. Luna
ü	High mid-back unrounded vowel	Russian. Syr
ã	Low back unrounded nasalized vowel	French. Blanc
ẽ	Mid front unrounded nasalized vowel	French. Pain
ĩ	High front unrounded nasalized vowel	Portuguese. Fin
õ	Mid back rounded nasalized vowel	French. Bon
ʊ̃	High back rounded nasalized vowel	Portuguese. Um
y	High mid-back unrounded nasalized vowel	
p	Voiceless bilabial occlusive	Spanish. Pena
ph	Voiceless bilabial occlusive aspirated	English. Pencil
t	Voiceless dental occlusive	Spanish. Torta
th	Voiceless dental occlusive aspirated	English. Time
k	Voiceless velar occlusive	Spanish. Casa
kh	Voiceless velar occlusive aspirated	English. Car
b	Voiced bilabial occlusive	Spanish. Burro
v	Voiced bilabial fricative	Spanish. Sabe
d	Voiced dental occlusive	Spanish. Donde
g	Voiced velar occlusive	Spanish. Hongo
ĉ	Voiceless palatal occlusive	Spanish. Hacha
ĉh	Voiceless palatal occlusive aspirated	
ŷ	Voiced palatal fricative	Spanish. Yerno
m	Voiced bilabial occlusive	Spanish. Madre
n	Voiced dental occlusive nasal	Spanish. Nariz
ñ	Voiced palatal occlusive nasal	Spanish. Caña
ŋ	Voiced velar occlusive nasal	Spanish. Fango
r	Vibrant alveolar lax	Spanish. Cara
h	Voiceless glottal fricative	English. House

* Based on Castillo, Cleto; Hugo Obregón and Jorge Díaz, 2001.