



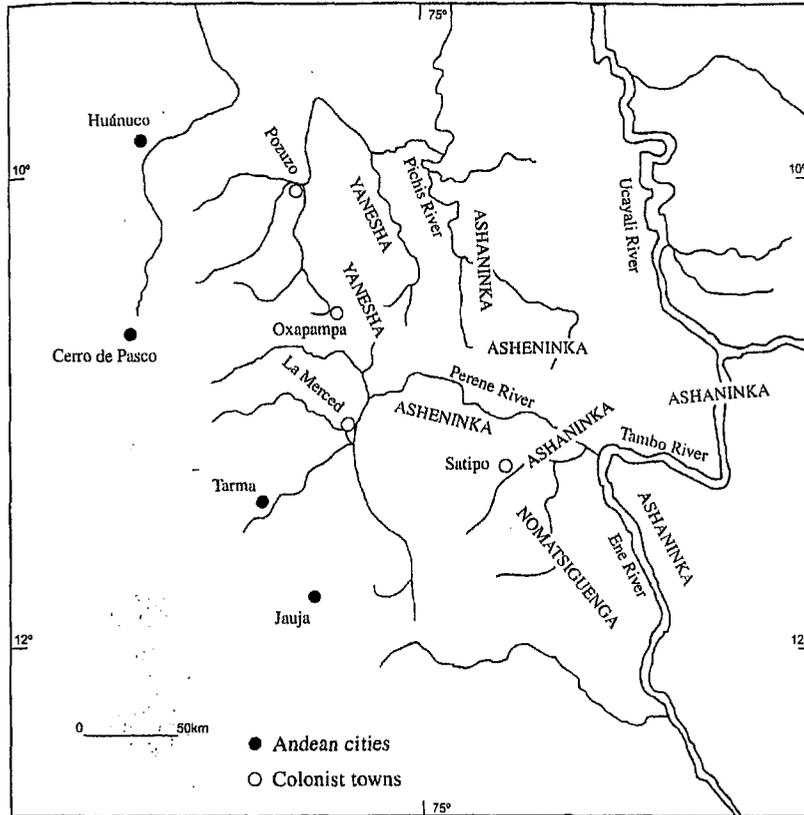
*The Enemy Within: Child Sorcery,
Revolution, and the Evils of
Modernization in Eastern Peru*

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Accusations of child sorcery, and the punishment and execution of child sorcerers, was common practice among four of the six Arawak-speaking peoples living in the Selva Central region of eastern Peru, including the Asháninka, Ashéninka, Nomatsiguenga, and Yanesha (see map).¹ Until very recently, however, the consensus opinion was that Peruvian Arawaks had abandoned these practices around the 1970s as a result of the mass conversion to Evangelism, Adventism and Catholicism, the rapid expansion of formal education and health services, and greater integration into a market economy. Confirming evidence of this opinion came from the fact that no actual cases of child witchcraft were reported in the literature after 1970.² It thus came as a surprise when, in the mid-1990s, several anthropologists and other professionals working with Peruvian Arawak communities involved in an armed struggle against the communist organization Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) began to report that accusations of child witchcraft had resurfaced.³

Most of this information was passed on by word of mouth among specialists working with these Arawak groups. It was (and still is) believed that if child witchcraft became public it would only reinforce existing prejudices about the "savagery" of Amazonian indigenous peoples. Similarly, the first (and until now the only) written references on the reemergence of this phenomenon were succinct and very cautiously worded (see Fabián Arias 1994:297, 1995:165; Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:62). Even serious international organizations working directly with or assessing the situation of the Asháninka in past years, such as UNICEF-Peru, Médecins sans Frontières, and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights,

In Neil L. Whitehead and Robin M. Wright (eds.), *In Darkness and Secrecy: Witchcraft and Sorcery in Native South America*, pp. 272-305. Durham: Duke University Press (2004).



Map 1. The Arawak-speaking peoples of eastern Peru. (Map compiled by author)

do not mention this practice in their public documents. Given their close knowledge of the region, it is difficult to believe that they have been unaware of this phenomenon.

Doubtless, this conspiracy of silence is well intentioned. It aims at averting bad publicity that could prevent Peruvian Arawaks from securing their civil rights in a context in which they have experienced the full impact of terrorist and counterterrorist violence for more than a decade. It is thus with great trepidation that I have decided to write this essay, and I do so with the conviction that it would be worse if this topic were to be exploited by sensationalist journalists. In an insightful essay on the creation of new cultural "traditions" by the Tukano of the Vaupés River basin, Jean Jackson asked the sensitive and very pressing question: "Is there a way to talk about making culture without making enemies?" (1989:127). The challenge for me, as well as for all of the contributors to this volume, is to find ways of talking about cultural practices that are odious to Western sensitivity without

either making enemies out of those who practice them or providing their enemies with arguments to deny them their rights.

In a previous essay I inquired into the possible origins of the belief in child sorcery among Peruvian Arawaks (Santos-Granero 2002). I argued there that the historical sources lacked all evidence suggesting that Peruvian Arawaks believed in child witchcraft in contact times or during the colonial era. And I proposed that this belief originated in the attempt by Peruvian Arawaks to appropriate mimetically the mystical powers that missionaries attributed to St. Christopher and the Christ child in preventing plagues and epidemics. In this essay, I explore the sociological rather than the ontological aspects of the practice of child sorcery.

Native Beliefs and Rationale

The first reference to Peruvian Arawak child sorcery appeared in 1880 in a report by Franciscan missionary Bernardino González on his sojourn among the Yanéscha. In the report he asserts that natives believe that illnesses and deaths are the result of witchcraft, and that they even attribute these afflictions to their own children and closest relatives (see Izaguirre 1922–29: vol. 10, 400). A decade later in 1893, Father Gabriel Sala (1975:438–39) expanded on these beliefs, offering a detailed description of the plight of Yanéscha child witches. Later, French diplomat and traveler Olivier Ordinaire, in an account of his 1885 trip from Peru to France through the Amazon, stated that the Asháninka and Ashéninka believe that child sorcerers are responsible for many diseases. Franciscan missionary Tomás Hernández reported similar beliefs in 1896 among the Nomatsiguenga of the Pangoa Valley. Whereas early accounts provide a more or less detailed depiction of the external or visible aspects of the practices surrounding child sorcery, they say very little about the rationale behind them. How do children become sorcerers? Why and how do they bewitch people? Why is it necessary to torture them? Why do accused children accept their fate without resistance? Why, instead of defending them, do their relatives join in the ritual torture and execution? And why are child witches killed and their bodies disposed of in such cruel ways? To answer these questions I shall resort to the scant and fragmentary literature on the subject, complementing it with my own field data on the Yanéscha.

The Asháninka and Ashéninka believe that child sorcerers (*matsi*, *máci*, or *machi*) are initiated in the art of witchcraft during their sleep (Weiss 1975:292). In their dreams, they are visited by any of a number of demonic teachers (*kamári máci*) who are under the orders of Korioshipiri, the “father” or “ruler” of all demons. These demonic teachers, which include

birds (cuckoos, nocturnal swallows), insects (grasshoppers, crickets), and the souls of other live or dead human sorcerers, appear to the sleeping child under human guise (Tessmann 1999:51; Weiss 1975:292). The evil spirits of the dead (*shiretzi*) are also reported as possible teachers of witchcraft (Rojas Zolezzi 1994:239). The visiting demons place animal or fish bones, palm-leaf slivers, or other small objects in the child's palm, and then knock them off so that they will get buried in the ground. Once buried, these objects cause somebody to fall ill. Demonic teachers urge the child to bewitch someone, likening victims to edible forest animals. They also give them human flesh to eat so that they develop a taste for it. After repeated visitations from demonic teachers, the targeted children begin to dream that they themselves bury these pathogenic objects. With the passage of time, they lose their human nature and become demonic witches.

The Nomatsiguenga also believe that children may learn witchcraft from a number of demonic teachers, particularly various kinds of birds (Shaver and Dodd 1990:103). Among the Yanasha, it is believed that a child becomes a sorcerer (*amaseñet*) when another adult or child sorcerer rubs her or him with a special plant (Smith 1977:103), or when children paint each other with the juice of the flower of the *ranquëch* tree (species not identified). These substances penetrate into the child's heart, endowing him or her with evil powers. If a shaman does not treat the affected children by sucking these substances out of their bodies, they will inevitably lose their humanity and become demonic sorcerers. I was told that children could also become sorcerers if *aseñac*, the curved-billed hummingbird, flies over them. This bird is considered to be an assistant of Yosoper, the chthonic ruler and master of all demonic beings, and thus it plays an important role in the dissemination of evil (Santos-Granero 1991: 113-14). In addition, both the Yanasha and Asháninka believe that children can learn sorcery directly from active children sorcerers.

What persons are most likely to become, or be accused of having become, *matsi* or *amaseñet*? Among the Palcazu and Pichis Asháninka, the accused were adult women or girls and only very rarely a boy (Ordinaire 1988:93; Elick 1970:212). Other sources claim that both girls and boys could be accused of being sorcerers, although more often than not the accused were little girls (Pérez Marcio 1953:166; Brown and Fernández 1991:152). This is also true for the Pajonal Ashéninka (Rett Bragg, personal communication). In general, sources on the Asháninka and Ashéninka coincide in that the accused was "the most defenseless member of the community, usually a girl child, especially if it is an orphan or captive taken in a raid" (Weiss 1975:292; see also Palomino Arana et al. 1936:513; Uriarte 1982:211). Orphan children accused of sorcery were generally fatherless rather than mother-

less (Navarro 1924: 24). Among adults, the most vulnerable to accusations of sorcery were women who did not have husbands to defend them (Navarro 1924:24; Torre López 1966:64; Weiss 1975:292).

Among the Yanesha, the accused were mostly "orphans, widows and destitutes" (Batlle 1905:248). One early source states that shamans generally blamed someone "weak and powerless, some poor orphan, who has nobody to defend him or look after him" (Navarro 1967:395). Sources on the Yanesha are not consistent as to gender preferences among children accused of sorcery: some suggest that boys and girls were equally accused (Sala 1975 [1893]:438); others that men, women, and children could be accused, but that more often than not the accused was a girl child (Smith 1977:103-4; Bullón Paucar 1976:152). I was told that both girls and boys could be accused, and the same was reported for the Nomatsiguenga (Shaver and Dodd 1990:103).

Bad-tempered, sulky children were primary targets for accusations of sorcery. Children who were disobedient or disrespectful of adults were also suspected of witchcraft. The same happened, however, with children who stood out because of their pleasantness or sagaciousness (Sala, 1975 [1893]:438). In all these cases the common theme is that these children do not behave as children are expected to do. Although the marked tendency is for children devoid of kinship relations (orphans, war captives) to be accused, one of the most astonishing aspects of Peruvian Arawak child sorcery is that quite often the accused children are close relatives of their victims and even members of their extended households, including biological and classificatory children, siblings and spouses (see Stahl 1932:36; Torre López 1966:64; Weiss 1975:294; Shaver and Dodd 1990:103).

Child witches may, for a certain time, be unconscious of their evil powers, and thus act as such unknowingly. However, most sources suggest that once children induced to learn sorcery become conscious of their powers, they use them purposefully. This is especially true when they become older. It is important to note in this regard that adult women and men accused of sorcery "are understood to have been witches since childhood who somehow escaped detection" (Weiss 1975:292). In other words, although they are adults they fall within the category of child sorcerers. It is also important to keep in mind that child sorcerers—whether actual children or adults—are considered to be different from "professional" sorcerers who have become so during their training as shamans.⁴

Child sorcerers who are still unconscious of their evil powers give vent to them when they become angry with someone. Once conscious of their powers, they can put them to work by reflecting angrily on their victim. For both the Asháninka and the Yanesha, anger, especially when expressed openly and violently toward a relative, is a dangerous feeling; it not only

disturbs the balance of power but it also leads to witchcraft (Elick 1970:213; Smith 1977:104; Santos-Granero 1991:101). When child witches are angry at someone, they instruct their demonic helpers to gather bodily secretions (mucus, hair, fingernails), scraps of leftover food (animal and fish bones, manioc fibers, chewed coca leaves), or other objects that have been in close contact with the victim (*chonta*-wood splinters, palm-leaf slivers, thorns, and more recently plastic bags, fishing lines, nails, bottlecaps, broken glass, or small pieces of metal), and bury them in the floor of the victim's house. Child sorcerers may also visit the house of their victims to rob a scrap of food refuse from them or search clandestinely among the garbage surrounding the house to gather a bit of leftover food (Tessmann 1999:51).

The Asháninka and Ashéninka insist that the objects excavated by accused children "are not simply discarded refuse, but rather are found tied or wrapped in a leaf, or otherwise showing evidence of being especially prepared" (Weiss 1975:293). Child witches ritually manipulate and bury these objects. Through notions of "contagious magic" (Frazer 1996:13) the buried objects are thought to enter into the body of the victims and make them ill. Also, the soul of child sorcerers can visit the victim while he or she is asleep and thrust the prepared charm into the victim's body (Tessmann 1999:51). These actions may be accompanied by singing and other ritual operations. Child sorcerers can also direct their "death wish" to cause a poisonous snake to strike the victim (Tessmann 1999: 51; Elick 1970:213).

When someone falls ill, the patient's relatives resort to a friendly shaman (*seripiari*, or *sheripiari* among the Asháninka in general; *pa'llerr* among the Yanasha) to cure him or her. Shamans use a variety of techniques to cure patients, including blowing tobacco smoke over the victims' bodies and sucking from their bodies the pathogenic objects that a variety of nonhuman agents (ants, termites, wasps, stone or salt spirits, demons, and erring shadows) might have introduced into them. If this therapy does not work it indicates that the illness is the product of human witchcraft, so shamans strive to identify the person responsible for sending the evil charm. They do this through divination, consultation with their mystical helpers in dreams and astral voyages, or interpretation of their patients' dreams (Elick 1970:214; Weiss 1975:293; Santos-Granero 1991:103-21). If the child witch belongs to the victim's household, they grab her or him immediately; if not, the victim's kinsmen or warriors designated by the acting shaman assail the household of the person identified as a witch and bring her or him to the patient's house (Elick 1970:214; Stahl 1932:35).

Once the child witch has been detained he or she is subjected to harsh punishments. Such punishments have two objectives: first, to force child sorcerers to reveal where they have hidden the evil charms that have made the patient ill, and, second, to make them cry, because it is believed that

by crying they will forget the evil arts they have learned (Weiss 1975:293; Rojas Zolezzi 1994:240). To achieve this hot peppers may be rubbed into their eyes, or they may be hung upside down over a smoking fire or tied on a smoking rack (Sala 1975 [1983]: 438; Eichenberger 1966:122; Shaver and Dodd 1990:103). Accused children are also confined to an attic above a smoking fire in order to make them cry, thus preventing their demonic teachers from finding and helping them. In addition, accused children are starved because they are believed to feed mystically on human flesh (Weiss 1975:293). From time to time the confined children are forced to search for the pathogenic objects they have purportedly buried, digging them out with a stick. While they do this they are beaten with sticks or vines, whipped with stinging nettles, or submerged in water until they almost drown (Torre Lopez 1966:64; Weiss 1975:293; Shaver and Dodd 1990:103). Peruvian Arawaks believe that child sorcerers "are invincible in the face of death, and . . . that tortures cannot kill them" (Shaver and Dodd 1990:103). It is precisely because child sorcerers are considered to be no longer human, in fact, that they are tortured in ways that would otherwise be regarded as extremely cruel.

Accused children generally submit without resistance to the demands of their accusers, a fact that has puzzled missionaries and scholars alike. This submission seems to be linked to the widespread belief that child sorcerers may, at least for a while, not be conscious of the powers they possess. In such cases, children accused of being sorcerers do not protest their innocence, for they feel "that the accusation itself constitutes proof that [they] must be what they say" (Elick 1970:214). In fact, neither the intentionality or lack of intentionality of alleged child sorcerers is important; both accusers and accused believe that child sorcerers are under the control of maleficent forces (Torre López 1966:64–65). If accused children do not offer resistance, as is often the case, it is because after repeated accusations they come to believe (and to dream) that they are sorcerers.

The life histories I collected of Yanesha men accused of being sorcerers when they were children indicate that, generally, accused children had already been singled out as potential sorcerers and had a record of minor accusations. Indeed, Yanesha shamans (*pa'llerr*) and priestly leaders (*cornesha'*) held periodic cleansing rituals for children who showed signs (such as hot temper, gloominess, disobedience, and disrespect) of having been introduced into the arts of witchcraft. These rituals included confinement, ingestion of tobacco concentrate and other herbal concoctions to induce vomiting, special diets based on cold, boiled, and saltless foods, vigils, sexual abstinence, and cleansing of the evil substances that turned them into witches.

Equally puzzling is the fact that parents of accused children rarely try to

defend them; they can even turn against them with unusual fury. I would argue that this is in part associated with the ideology of kinship. Bewitching someone from another lineage or extended household is a very grave misdemeanor that puts at risk the delicate balance of solidarities that hold together the different households composing a given settlement. But bewitching someone from one's own extended household, let alone one's own parents, is an even graver offense. If the transgressors dared to breach the norm of solidarity among close kin it means that they are, doubtless, under demonic control (Torre López 1966:64). Parents whose children are accused of bewitching someone from another extended family might try to defend him or her, but if the social pressure is too strong and they persist, they risk being killed themselves (Pérez Marcio 1953:168). In contrast, parents whose children are accused of bewitching them or a close relative often reacted violently against the accused.

If the victim improves, the accused child is beaten, ritually cleansed, and released. If the victim dies, the child witch is invariably condemned to death (Stahl 1932:36). The type of execution depends on the wishes of the victims, their relatives, and the acting shamans. Child sorcerers can be bludgeoned (Sala 1975 [1893]:439), garroted (Ordinaire 1988 [1885]:93; Stahl 1932:36), drowned (Pérez Marcio 1953:168), stoned (Bullón Paucar 1976:70), shot with arrows, or burned alive (Navarro 1967:395; Izaguirre 1922-29: vol. 12, 114). They can also be buried head first and face down into an armadillo hole (Weiss 1975: 293), left in the forest tied to a tree to be devoured by jaguars, or covered with honey and tied up naked to a tree close to an anthill (Pérez Marcio 1953:168). The corpses of dead children witches are generally burned and/or disposed of by throwing them into a river.

These extremely cruel and otherwise unusual forms of execution and body disposal are intended, first, to prevent the demonic teachers of the dead children sorcerers to revive them, and, second, to prevent the "shadow soul" of the dead child witch from staying in the area and teaching the art of witchcraft to other children. If the bodies of executed child witches were simply to be thrown into the bush, their mystical helpers could breathe life into them again (Weiss 1975:435). Their souls would join those of their demonic teachers, becoming one of them and eventually teaching other children the art of sorcery (Weiss 1975:293, 437). To destroy children witches in body and soul, the Asháninka not only burned and disposed of their bodies, but also destroyed and burned all their belongings (Uriarte 1982 [1938]:212).

Sources describe the execution of child sorcerers as carried out in the midst of a grand nocturnal celebration—in which large amounts of manioc beer is consumed—that is organized by the relatives of the deceased and the shaman who had treated him or her (Izaguirre 1922-29: vol. 12, 114; Navarro 1967:395; Palomino Arana et al. 1936:513). The objectives of these celebra-

tions are not clear, and the only source that discusses the subject asserts that they celebrate "the death of the innocent [child accused of sorcery], and that of the person who died" (Uriarte 1982:211). In other words, they seem simultaneously to have the traits of a funerary ritual in honor of the deceased and of a cleansing ritual on behalf of the community.

Child witches blamed for the death of a person were not always killed. As a result of increased missionary influence and state presence, beginning in the 1920s some Peruvian Arawaks began to hand over accused child sorcerers to white and Mestizo colonists or to traders in exchange for manufactured goods, such as cloth, pots, machetes, and shotguns (Weiss 1975:293; Brown and Fernández 1991:152). Although this custom saved many lives, it also led to an active trade in children who were treated by their owners as servants and slaves (Palomino Arana et al. 1936:513). To save accused children sorcerers from being executed or sold as slaves, Catholic and Adventist missionaries also became involved in this trade (Gridilla 1942:67; Pérez Marcio 1953:175).

Situating Child Sorcery

Most information on Peruvian Arawak child sorcery is generic; very few actual cases of child sorcery are reported in the literature and those few are quite sketchy. A review of these cases is indispensable, however, to situate this practice in social time and space. I present here three of the most detailed and reliable cases reported in the literature, together with a discussion on the historical circumstances in which each took place. As we shall see, most of these cases took place in contexts of external pressure, violence, epidemics, social disruption, and collective movements of resistance or evasion, often with messianic overtones.

Case 1: María Josefa León, Nomatsiguenga girl of Pangoa, 1896.

In 1896, Domingo, the brother of Churihuanti, chief of the Nomatsiguenga settlement of Pangoa, died of severe stomach pains. The local shaman was called in to identify the witch that was responsible for his death. He blamed María Josefa, a fatherless nine-year-old girl, and condemned her to be shot with arrows or burned alive. After passing this sentence, the relatives of the dead man organized a ritual drinking celebration. At night, while they were celebrating, María Josefa managed to untie herself and escape. She took refuge in the house of a Chinese man who had settled in the colony that had grown around the neighboring Franciscan mission. Alerted of María Josefa's escape, Churihuanti and his followers pursued her. However, the Chinese colonist took the girl to the missionaries, who,

in turn, turned her over to colony authorities. Three times Churihuanti, his relatives, and followers went to the colony to demand that the girl be returned to them or that the missionaries kill her. But each time their demands were rejected. This generated great resentment among the local natives. (Reported by Franciscan missionary Bernardino Izaguirre [1922-29: vol. 12, 114-40])

Two years before these events took place the Franciscans had founded a mission and colony close to the Nomatsiguenga settlement of Pangoa (Izaguirre 1922-29: vol. 12, 111-50). By then the Nomatsiguenga knew that, coming from the west, the white men (*viracochas*) had occupied most of the Chanchamayo and Chorobamba valleys, displacing the Ashéninka and Yanesha from their lands; destroying the native ironworks that had functioned since the Spanish were expelled from the region in 1742; taking over the salt mines of the famous Cerro de la Sal; and even removing the remains of Juan Santos Atahualpa, the charismatic leader of the 1742 uprising, from his tomb and shrine in the uplands of Metraró. They also knew that, from the east, white rubber extractors and their native allies were carrying out raids against the Ashéninka, Asháninka, and Yanesha to procure women and children in order to transform them into sexual slaves, domestic servants, and peons. Nonetheless, the craving for iron tools, firearms, and the mystical powers that had allowed the whites to create, or usurp all the fine things the natives possessed led Churihuanti, the settlement chief, to welcome the missionaries and the fifty Andean families that came with them to cultivate coca, sugar cane, and tropical fruits.

Peace between natives and foreigners lasted a short time. In 1895, the missionaries reprimanded Churihuanti and his people for killing and robbing an Irish miner who had entered the area with the aim of looking for gold. This engendered much resentment among Churihuanti's supporters, who from then onward began to harass the colonists by entering into their houses without invitation, stealing their possessions, and eating their food. The sudden death of Churihuanti's brother in early 1896 took place in this context of deep antagonism. The missionaries' decision to protect María Josefa, the alleged witch, from Churihuanti made matters even worse.

By then, the loyalties of the Nomatsiguenga were divided. The majority supported the aggrieved Churihuanti and his relatives; but a few families sided with the Franciscans. In subsequent weeks tensions mounted, and new conflicts arose between the local Nomatsiguenga and the foreign colonists. Some conflicts ended in killings. Churihuanti attempted to persuade the Nomatsiguenga families loyal to the missionaries to join him, but to no avail. As a result, Churihuanti threatened to kill them and their alien friends. After gathering a party of two hundred warriors from the Perené,

Ubiriqui, Yurinaki, and upper Tambo river valleys, Churihuanti attacked the missionaries and settlers, who together with a group of loyal Nomatsiguenga families had taken refuge in the mission house. The local shaman extended his mystical protection over the confederates, assuring them that the bullets of the foreigners would not injure them; they only had to blow in their direction to turn them into leaves. Although many indigenous warriors were killed in the confrontations that followed, the native alliance defeated the foreigners, forcing them to abandon the region. The fleeing missionaries took María Josefa with them.

The case of María Josefa was not isolated. Late-nineteenth-century sources are full of reports of children accused of being sorcerers. In 1893, Sala (1975 [1893]:439) suggested that epidemics and the killing of child witches were driving the Yanasha to extinction. Carranza (1894:31) noted that the practice of accusing children of causing disease through witchcraft was extensive among the Asháninka. And Izaguirre (1922-29: vol. 12, 146, 158) recounts several instances in which Franciscan missionaries rescued children accused of sorcery among the Asháninka and Ashéninka. Doubtless, then, the 1890s was a period when accusations of child sorcery were common.

Case 2: Conija, Ashéninka girl of Yurinaki, circa 1923.

Around 1923, Comabe, an Ashéninka man living in the settlement of Yurinaki on the confluence of the Yurinaki and Perené rivers, became ill. Comabe had converted to Adventism earlier that same year. When he fell sick, his nonconverted neighbors called Chollaco, the local shaman, to determine who had bewitched him. Chollaco went to Comabe's house and, after drinking manioc beer, chewing coca leaves, consuming tobacco concentrate, and invoking his spirit helpers, he accused Conija, Comabe's daughter, of being the guilty witch. Chollaco appointed the girl's older brother to punish her and force her to unbury the evil charms that had made her father ill. Conija was separated from the rest of the family and locked in the attic, where she was starved and subjected to smoke. From time to time she was forced to go down and dig up the dirt floor with a knife in search for the charms she had allegedly buried to bewitch her father. Throughout these searches she was constantly beaten and insulted. This went on for several days, but because her father increasingly got worse the shaman condemned her to death. By then Conija was extremely thin and weak. Her brother took her to the riverside, bludgeoned her, and threw her body into the river. Because Comabe still did not recover, the shaman repeated his detection ritual. This time he accused the sick man's wife. However, to avoid being tortured,

Comabe's wife hanged herself. Shortly after, during one of his visits to Yurinak, Adventist missionary Ferdinand Stahl cured Comabe, and the latter returned to the Adventist faith. (Reported by Adventist historian Alejandro Bullón Páucar [1976:96-97])

The 1920s was a period of great change and strain for the Yanasha and Ashéninka of the upper Perené River Valley. In 1891, Peru granted British holders of Peruvian bonds one million hectares in this area. By 1920, the British-owned Perené colony had planted 650 hectares of coffee along the left bank of the upper reaches of the Perené River, thus displacing many of the native families that lived there (Barclay 1989:112). Because local natives were considered to be unreliable, the colony depended until 1922 on immigrant Andean laborers (Barclay 1989:121). This situation began to change in 1922, when Adventist missionary Ferdinand Stahl obtained permission from the colony to establish a mission in Metraro.

Stahl was very successful in both attracting the Ashéninka to the mission and in persuading them to work for the colony (Barclay 1989:124). Part of his success was due to the fact that the messianic and apocalyptic elements of Adventist discourse coincided with similar "traditional" Peruvian Arawak beliefs. The site Stahl chose for his mission enhanced even more the messianic appeal of his discourse. Metraro was the place where Juan Santos Atahuallpa—the eighteenth-century messianic leader who, at the head of a multiethnic army, expelled the Spanish from the Selva Central region—established his headquarters. It was also the site where he was buried. His tomb, lodged in a large ceremonial building, had been the object of annual pilgrimages and celebrations until 1891, when his body was disinterred by Peruvian authorities and transferred to the highland town of Tarma (Santos Granero 1992:256).

By the time Stahl settled in Metraro, the Yanasha, Ashéninka, and Asháninka were experiencing strong external pressures. European and Andean colonists had displaced most of the native inhabitants from the valleys of Chanchamayo and Chorobamba and were now advancing downriver along the Perené Valley. Further havoc had been caused four years earlier in 1918 during the pandemics of influenza that swept the world. All these events were taken as signs of the impending end of the world, and Stahl's apocalyptic preaching could have only confirmed this perception. Soon, the Ashéninka identified the missionary as Pawa, the solar divinity, who had come to save them (Bullón Paucar 1976:74). The news that Pawa had arrived spread rapidly throughout the region, frequently preceding Stahl himself.

Stahl's presence and growing success generated conflicts with nonconverted local groups. Sarate, the chief of a large Ashéninka settlement close to the headquarters of the Perené colony and a man renowned for his brav-

ery, became a sworn enemy of Stahl, using his influence to hinder the latter's evangelical efforts (Stahl 1932:53; Bullón Paucar 1976:72-74, 141-47). People in several other settlements were also firmly opposed to his presence (Bullón Paucar 1976:83-85, 139). In fact, by curing Conija's father and persuading him and other settlement members to return to the Adventist faith, Stahl and the converted families gained the enmity of Chollaco, the local shaman, and of his supporters (Bullón Paucar 1976:99-103, 180-81) (see fig. 1).

Despite this opposition, by 1928 Stahl's fame and prophecies regarding Christ's second coming and the imminence of the Last Judgment had extended far beyond the area in which he preached, generating a mass religious transformative movement that, according to Bodley, "promised the total destruction of the White man and the return of a messiah (1970:111). All along the Perené and Tambo rivers, as well as in parts of Pangoa and the Gran Pajonal, the Ashéninka and Asháninka concentrated in large settlements modeled after the mission at Metraro. They stopped using liquor and tobacco and believed that Christ's coming would end in a cataclysmic event during which the earth would be burned and the unbelievers would die—a notion that must have intensified the conflict between converts and non-converts (Bodley 1970:111).

All these notions led to an increase in the accusations of child witchcraft, as becomes evident from reports by Adventist missionaries and historians (Stahl n.d., 1932; Herndon 1963:127-28). Franciscan missionaries operating in the region during this period also noted this phenomenon (Navarro 1967:391, 394-95; Gridilla 1942:67). In fact, accusations of child sorcery reached such a point at this time that, in 1922, the Catholic Church founded the mission of Puerto Ocopa in the lower Perené River region, with the specific purpose of "rescuing children and youngsters condemned to this sacrifice" (Torre López 1966:83; Ortiz 1978:208-8). By 1927, all thirty-five children in the charge of the Franciscan nuns of Puerto Ocopa were orphans who had been bought from their accusers (Gridilla 1942:67).

Case 3: Oijani, Asháninka girl of the Perené River, circa 1939.

Around 1939 a man died in an Asháninka settlement close to the Adventist mission of Sutziki on the Perené River. The local shaman identified Oijani, a seven-year-old girl, as the guilty witch. She was described as a beautiful girl whose large, black eyes have a deep gaze that captivates—a sure sign, according to native parameters, that she was a witch. The shaman determined that Oijani should be executed the next day and her body burned. Her father accepted the shaman's verdict. Her mother did not but pretended she did, for she had decided to escape with her daughter to the neighbor-

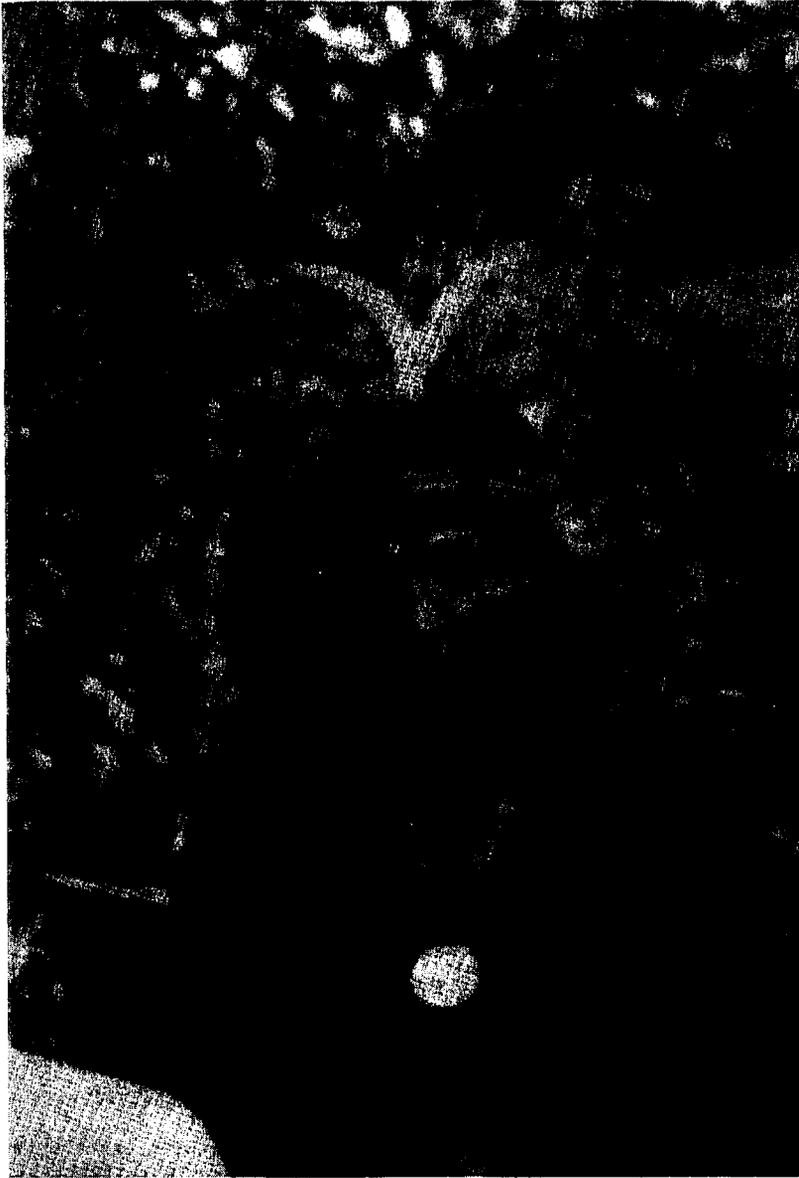


Figure 1. A photo of Chollaco, an Ashéninka shaman of the settlement of Yurinaki, 1920s. Chollaco was a sworn enemy of the Adventist missionary Ferdinand A. Stahl. He accused a young girl, Conija, of bewitching her father, Comabe, who had converted to Adventism shortly before falling ill. Eventually Chollaco also became Adventist. (Bullón Paucar 1976)

ing Adventist mission of Sutziki. She did not tell her plans to her husband because she was not sure that he would agree with her. That night, Oijani and her mother escaped in a canoe toward Sutziki, seven hours distant downriver by canoe. Shortly after, someone realized that they had escaped and alerted the kinsmen of the dead man. Led by the shaman, a party of forty men composed of the victim's relatives and other members of the settlement went after them. The pursuers overtook the two women when they were landing in the mission; they chased them but were intercepted by converted mission Indians. This allowed the mother to reach the mission house, where she entrusted Oijani to the care of the mission director (see fig. 2). The pursuers threatened the director with convoking a general Indian uprising and setting the mission on fire, but he did not give in, arguing that the child was now his. After two days of threats and negotiations, the pursuers left the mission promising they would come back to fetch Oijani, but they never did. (Reported by Adventist teacher Manuel F. Pérez Marcio [1953:168-75])

Oijani's plight took place during one of the worse periods of Peruvian Arak history; a period characterized by recurrent epidemics and the deaths of thousands of people. It all started in 1928, the year when Adventist missionary Ferdinand Stahl left the region (Bodley 1970:112). In previous years Stahl's teachings had disseminated by word of mouth throughout the Selva Central, generating a vast transformative movement that was beyond his control. Central to this movement was the spontaneous relocation in large settlements structured like the Adventist mission of Metraro. The most important among these was Las Cascadas, located on the upper Perené River (Bodley 1970:112). The high population density of these settlements favored the spread of measles epidemics and other illnesses (Bodley 1970:115), and in 1928 hundreds of people died along the Perené Valley and adjacent areas—often, entire families were wiped out. Fearful of epidemics and disappointed because “the anticipated transformation failed to occur” (Bodley 1970:114), followers of the movement deserted the messianic settlements.

Beginning in 1929, a new group of Adventist pastors founded three new missions along the Perené River, the largest of which was Sutziki, with the purpose of regrouping families that had been attracted to the 1928 messianic movement (Pérez Marcio 1953:116; Barclay 1989:125). The prosperity of these missions, however, was short-lived. In 1933 the region was again struck by an epidemic of measles that in Sutziki killed 120 out of the 300 inhabitants (Barclay 1989:126). The missionary of Sutziki reported that the Ashéninka and Asháninka believed that the epidemic had been brought by the white men to wipe out the Indians (Barclay 1989:127). A medical doc-



Figure 2. A photo of Oijani, an Asháninka girl of the Perené River, and the Adventist missionary who saved her, circa 1939. After being accused of having bewitched a man, Oijani was saved from execution by her mother, who took her to the neighboring Adventist mission of Sutziki. (Pérez Marcio 1953)

tor working in the area at the time reported that the epidemic killed many adults, and that following indigenous practices this resulted in an explosive increase in accusations of child sorcery (Pinto, cited in Ortiz 1978:197). Many accused children, he asserts, sought refuge in the mission of Sutziki.

The Ashéninka and Asháninka reacted in the face of the epidemic by mounting a violent nativist movement against the British settlers of the Perené colony, the Adventist missionaries, and the indigenous converts (Barclay 1989:127). Those in the Perené Valley simply stopped working for the British colony, and the missionary of Sutziki was forced to flee. The Ashéninka attacked the mission, killing many converts (Barclay 1989:127). They also threatened to attack the air base of San Ramón, built in 1928, presumably because they believed that the white men had brought the disease by plane. The killing of child witches spread like fire throughout the region. The missionary of Sutziki reported: "As a consequence of the epidemic, groups of savages kill the sick and the unprotected infants they find along the river banks" (Barclay 1989:127).

In 1937 new outbreaks of malaria affected the Chanchamayo Valley and the upper Perené region, resulting in extremely high mortality: 2,281 died in 1937 and 2,382 in 1938 (Ortiz 1969: vol. 1, 543). Many of the deceased were native people. In December of that same year a massive earthquake was felt throughout the entire region, causing many deaths and injuring many people (Ortiz 1967: vol. 1, 450). This catastrophe was followed by a new epidemic of measles in 1939 (Ortiz 1978: 196). The accusation of Oijani took place in this context. There is little information on the 1939 epidemic, but we know that accusations of child sorcery increased as on previous occasions. Not surprisingly, the Adventist mission of Sutziki and the Catholic mission of Puerto Ocopa became, in the early 1940s, a refuge for numerous accused children, who became known as *los salvados de la muerte*, or "those saved from death" (see fig. 3) (Pérez Marcio 1953: 175).

Child Sorcery at Present

The subject of present-day Peruvian Arawak child sorcery has been shrouded in silence, but a few cases have been reported by professionals working with Peruvian Arawak communities and some have appeared into the national press. I have chosen the following three cases because they depict very different situations. All took place among the Asháninka of the Tambo River area, but it must be noted that the rise in accusations of child witchcraft has also been reported among the Yanasha of the Palcazu basin, the Asháninka of the Pichis and Satipo valleys, and the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal uplands.⁵



Figure 3. *Los salvados de la muerte*, Peruvian Arawak children accused of being sorcerers, pose with Adventist missionaries in the 1940s. Children accused of being sorcerers sometimes sought refuge in Adventist missions; on other occasions Adventist missionaries saved them from execution by exchanging them for metal goods. (Pérez Marcio 1953)

Case 4: José and Isaías, Asháninka boys of P. [placename withheld], 1994.

In 1994 two “recovered” (*recuperados*) Asháninka boys who lived in P., a refuge community along the Tambo River valley, were accused of being sorcerers. They and their parents were under the control of Shining Path for eight years, then were rescued by the Asháninka self-defense forces and resettled in P. When they arrived in the community they took lodging with some relatives, but soon afterwards they quarreled with their hosts who accused their guests’ children of being witches. As a result, the family moved out and started living on its own. By then the word had spread that they were all *terrucos* (“terrorists”). One day, José, the eldest son who was twelve years old, and his eight-year-old brother, Isaías, were found in the central plaza of the community singing Shining Path revolutionary songs while drawing with a stick in the dirt the communist sickle-and-hammer emblem. They were doing this in the midst of a group of local children. The two boys were reported to the presi-

dent of the community and the lieutenant governor. Because they had been accused of sorcery in the past, and because their activities resembled the ritual operations of children sorcerers, who bury their evil charms in the dirt with a stick or draw magic symbols on the ground with sticks, the authorities accused them of bringing “bad habits” into the community—namely, teaching sorcery and “dirty politics” to the local children. The authorities handed over the boys to the local *ronda* (Self-defense Committee), and the *ronderos* beat the children and their parents. After doing so, they expelled the family from the community. (Compiled from reports in Fabián Arias 1995:165; Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:40; and Beatriz Fabián Arias, personal communication)

Case 5: Silverio Paredes Imposhito, Asháninka boy of M. [place-name withheld], 2000.

In October 15, 2000, Silverio Paredes Imposhito, a twelve-year-old Asháninka boy of the native community of M., on the Tambo River, was found guilty of stealing 300 soles (approximately US\$100) belonging to the community's health center. Silverio, his mother, his maternal grandfather, and his four younger siblings—each from a different father—had arrived in M. some years earlier, escaping from the violence that had afflicted their community. The boy was very bright and always said that he wanted to go to high school once he finished elementary school. Since his arrival, however, there had been several petty thefts. In three cases, the fatherless Silverio had been singled out as the thief and punished accordingly. Because of his recurrent misdeeds, people began to regard him as a possible child sorcerer. In October 14, when it was found out that the community's money was missing, the local authorities demanded in a public assembly that whoever had stolen the money should return it. Next day 200 soles appeared in the health center. The authorities suspected Silverio, who, they found out, had given 12 soles to a little boy, telling him that a third party had given him the money to deliver it to the little boy's mother. At dawn on October 16 the chief of the community, the lieutenant governor, and the health officer, together with the president and several members of the local Self-defense Committee, captured Silverio. He was pressed to confess. Because he refused, they tied him to a tree where there was a nest of *tangarana* stinging ants. Fifteen minutes later, Silverio confessed his crime, saying that he had robbed the money so as to be able to go to high school. The authorities untied him and took him to his home, where he said he had hidden the remaining missing

money. But after searching in vain, Silverio passed out and never regained consciousness. He died next morning, on October 17. (Compiled from accounts in *El Comercio*, November 3-4, 2000; Expediente 2000; and oral sources)

Case 6: Simón, Asháninka man of S. [placename withheld], 2001.

In 2001, Valerio, the chief of the community of S. on the Ene River, fell ill. He immediately suspected that the sorcerer responsible for his illness was his neighbor, Simón, with whom he had recently quarreled over land issues. The inhabitants of S. had asked the government to recognize their settlement as a "native community" and to provide them with communal land titles. Simón, who was a "displaced" (*desplazado*) man from a community along the Tambo River valley, opposed this move. He declared publicly that he did not want to "live in community," thus prompting suspicions that he sympathized with Shining Path, which had taken a similar political stance against the government-sponsored juridical figure of *comunidades nativas*. In order to determine who had bewitched him, Valerio sought the services of the local shaman. The latter confirmed his suspicions. He told him that Simón had made him ill by hiding an evil charm in a tree hole. The chief's relatives then abducted Simón. They believed that the Ministry of Agriculture, which was reluctant to grant land titles to the community, had persuaded Simón to bewitch the chief. They beat him and then submerged him in the river repeatedly to make him confess that this was the case. Because Simón did not confess, some proposed that they should kill him. However, to avoid reprisals from the police they decided instead to expel him from the community. (Reported by Santiago Concoricón, Asháninka mayor of the Río Tambo district, personal communication)

These three cases took place in the context of extreme violence created by several forces: the insurgent activities of Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, (MRTA), the counterinsurgent actions of police and military forces, and the illegal activities of powerful gangs of drug traffickers. Below, I offer an abridged account of the situation in the Ene and Tambo river valleys, where the cases given above took place. It should be noted, however, that similar conditions have held during the past fifteen years in other areas inhabited by Peruvian Arawaks.

The Communist Party of Peru, most commonly known as Shining Path, began its military activities in 1980 in the highland department of Ayacucho. When in 1982 the police and, later on the army, began to put pressure

on the insurgents in the Andes, they took refuge in the Asháninka territory along the Apurimac and Ene river valleys. At first they used the region as a temporary refuge area. Later on, they decided to settle more permanently and transform the region into a "liberated zone" where they could train recruits and provision themselves, and from where they could attack strategic targets in the rest of the country. They found support among the Andean colonists who in 1979 had begun to settle in these valleys, displacing the local Asháninka population from their lands.

In 1983 Colombian drug dealers also entered the area and began recruiting Andean colonists and local Asháninka to cultivate coca. To put an end to the opposition by the Franciscan missionary of Cutivireni, drug traffickers burned down the mission, including its church, in 1984 (Gagnon 1993:81). Shining Path took advantage of this situation and positioned itself as an intermediary between traffickers and local producers. This strategy succeeded. By 1985, Shining Path had struck an alliance with local drug dealers to secure permanent funding and arms (Hvalkof 1994:24). That same year, both groups consolidated their hold over the area and closed navigation along the Ene River. To increase their control, the insurgents forbade the local Asháninka to travel to the nearby valley of Satipo to work in the coffee plantations; they also forbade them to cultivate cash crops, such as coffee and fruit, and forced them to concentrate in the production of food staples. This created much resentment in some Asháninka communities, which saw their few sources of cash income disappear. In 1986, Shining Path began to expand its activities to the Asháninka settlements located along the Tambo River.

The modus operandi of Shining Path in the Ene/Tambo area was based on five steps: incursions to sack missions and projects promoted by non-governmental organizations or rich merchants; indoctrination of the native population through community meetings; recruitment through persuasion or force of young men and children to train them ideologically and militarily in "popular schools"; creation of dispersed military camps composed of native militia and support personnel under orders of Shining Path commanders; and establishment of "support bases" and "open popular committees" grouping people from several military camps and native communities (Espinosa de Rivero 1995:121).

At first, the revolutionary political discourse put forth by Shining Path attracted many Asháninka. By calling for the destruction of the exploitative "old order" and announcing the advent of a more-just "new order" in which the Asháninka were to become "millionaires," the discourse by Shining Path shared many elements with native messianic myths—particularly with that announcing the return of Itomi Pawá, the son of the solar divinity, to this earth to bring justice and welfare to the Asháninka (Rodríguez Vargas

1993:53). Members of Shining Path intentionally underlined these similarities and even adopted shamanistic practices reminiscent of previous nativist movements. Thus, for instance, native witnesses report that in Shining Path camps they were fed soup containing scraps of metal, and that they were told that this would make them impervious to the bullets of the army (Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:34).

Shining Path encouraged the dissolution of native communities (under the pretext that they were a remainder of the "old state") and their replacement by support bases. By 1989, the movement had managed to create fifty-seven support bases, each composed of two hundred to three hundred people, organized in five open popular committees (Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:33). Life in these bases was strictly structured and disciplined. Shining Path columns were divided into "leaders" (*mandos*) and "mass" (*masa*). The leaders, mostly individuals of Andean descent, made all decisions and determined what could or could not be done; the mass, composed mainly of natives, was supposed to carry out unquestioningly subsistence and military activities. Shining Path commissars distributed tasks, imposed schedules, organized meetings, and established vigilance turns. They ruled camp life under the model of "three self-criticisms and fourth execution." Those who manifested discontent, dared to dissent, or attempted to escape were punished; if they persisted, they were killed. As a result of war, malnutrition, epidemics, suppression of dissenters, and political purges, many native people died in Shining Path camps (Espinosa de Rivero 1994:16-17).

In 1989, the army began a large military offensive in Ayacucho against Shining Path. The insurgents retreated into the Ene and Tambo valleys. By then it had become apparent to Shining Path leaders that the Asháninka were not natural allies and had little revolutionary potential. Thus, they escalated the forced recruitment of Asháninka men, and increased suppression of those communities that were reluctant to cooperate. To crush all local opposition, Shining Path attacked the local Asháninka federations—the Organización Asháninka del Río Ene (OCARE) and the Central Asháninka del Río Tambo (CART)—which they had attempted, unsuccessfully, to infiltrate. In November 1989, they killed three leaders of OCARE, including its long-time president, Isaías Charete, and one of the victims was crucified.

By 1990, Shining Path had achieved control of the whole Apurímac-Ene-Tambo river axis. As a consequence, fifty-one out of the sixty-six native communities that existed in this area disappeared as such (Espinosa de Rivero 1994:4). By then, however, the movement's authoritarian ways had alienated the sympathies of most Asháninka. In July 1990, CART decided to organize its own self-defense forces. Shortly after, three of its leaders were kidnapped and killed by Shining Path, marking the beginning of a general

Tambo Asháninka uprising. In only two months the Asháninka managed to push the insurgents upriver, beyond the community of Poyeni, which then became the boundary between the upper Tambo River, controlled by Shining Path, and the lower Tambo, controlled by the Asháninka. The Tambo River communities agreed to contribute a fixed monthly quota of men to the garrison of Poyeni to keep watch over the border and raid Shining Path camps to liberate their brethren.

These actions were all carried out without intervention of the army. However, in taking advantage of the new situation the army established military bases from 1991 to 1994 in the communities of Puerto Prado, Otika and Poyeni (Tambo River), Cutivireni, Valle Esmeralda and Kiteni (Ene River), and Puerto Ocopa (Perené River). From 1991 onward, the Asháninka self-defense committees initiated a counteroffensive against Shining Path in coordination with the army. In three years, the Asháninka self-defense forces managed to liberate around four thousand of the ten thousand Asháninka that were thought to be under the direct control of Shining Path (Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:31). By 1995, the "displaced," "recovered," or "repentant" (*arrepentidos*) Asháninka population increased to around eight thousand.

Most displaced Asháninka sought refuge in the seven garrisoned communities or in the Tambo River communities that managed to retain their freedom. These refuge communities became heavily populated supercommunities known as *núcleos poblacionales*, or "population nuclei." Because many young and adult men had died in the armed struggle or were still under control of Shining Path, a large part of the population was made up of broken families: widows, single mothers, and children, often orphans under twelve, who together composed up to 80 percent of the population of refuge communities (Rodríguez Vargas 1993:100). High population densities generated conflicts over land and women, aggravating the depletion of local natural resources and malnutrition. Density has also favored the spread of contagious diseases (diarrhea, skin rashes, tuberculosis), as well as recurrent epidemics of cholera, measles, and dengue. The cholera epidemics of 1991-1992 killed dozens of people in refuge communities, thereby inducing entire families to flee deep into the forest.

Life in refuge communities is as highly regimented as in Shining Path camps, inspiring deep rejection among the displaced Asháninka who have managed to escape from Shining Path control. Other conflicts between local and refugee populations spring from the fact that refugees came mainly from remote interior communities, whereas local populations in refuge communities are among the most integrated. As a result, locals consider refugees as less "civilized" than themselves, whereas refugees dislike and reject the foreign "civilized" mores of the locals. But, above all, locals sus-

pect that refugees may be acting as spies for the insurgents. Consequently, refugees are constantly watched over, constrained in movement, discriminated against, insulted, and harassed.

The situation of violence in the region has decreased in recent years. Although the Asháninka and the army have not been able to totally suppress Shining Path, the number of attacks has been reduced to a minimum. However, the impact that two decades of violence has had over the Asháninka population is still discernible in the deep divisions that scar Asháninka society.

The Enemy Within

Accusations of child sorcery intensify during periods of great social disruption caused by external pressures over native lands, resources, labor, and bodies, but also over native cultural representations, values, and practices. These are times of violence and turmoil. Native people are displaced by force from their lands; they see their families separated, their landscape transformed by alien economic practices, their ironworks, health centers, and development projects destroyed; their shrines, sacred places, and churches desecrated; and their trading networks interrupted. These are also times of rapid economic change witnessed by the adoption of new tools and technologies, the prohibition to carry out certain productive activities, or the impossibility of practicing normal subsistence tasks. Changes in the sexual division of labor also occur as a result of new market activities, the demands of a war economy, or the adoption of new social mores. And changes in religious beliefs, political ideologies, and worldviews follow thereafter.

Above all, social disruption brings times of massive deaths, with entire families and even whole settlements wiped out by epidemics of influenza, malaria, measles, dengue, and cholera. Times when the sick are abandoned by their relatives with a little food to eat or are killed by locals fearing contagion when they escape to other communities; and when swarms of agonizing people crawl to the river banks in search for water to quench their thirst or cool down their bodies burning with fever. Times also when native people die in military confrontations with foreigners, often under very uneven conditions: bows and arrows against rifles, shotguns against machine guns. Times, in fact, when the dead are so numerous that it becomes impossible for survivors to bury them, and they end up being eaten by carrion birds or buried hastily in mass graves.

As unspeakable and disruptive as these externally induced circumstances are, however, they do not account fully for the escalation of accusations of child sorcery. Following Brown (1991), I suggest that Peruvian

Arawak child sorcery, like Amerindian millenarian movements, cannot be considered to be a simple response to external conditions—namely, colonial or neocolonial domination. Instead, child sorcery is intimately linked to the deep internal social fractures that develop when different positions and strategies are taken with respect to the presence of foreign agents.

A quick review of the cases I outlined above shows that accusations of child witchcraft always proliferate in contexts of internal conflicts between those who support and those who oppose the new faiths, dogmas, political ideologies, and forms of knowledge introduced by foreign, mostly white, “modernizing” agents.⁶ As different in aims, methods, and rationales as they are, the activities of Franciscan missionaries, Adventists pastors, Shining Path or MRTA commandos, and state officials all have the effect of polarizing native peoples into defenders and opponents of modernization and change. In fact, the written evidence suggests that reaction with respect to these agents of change has often been pendular, with an initial phase of receptiveness, hope, and acceptance followed by a phase of disappointment, hostility, and open rejection. This is clearly what happened to Churihuanti and his followers in the 1890s, to those who converted to Adventism in the 1920s, or to those who voluntarily joined Shining Path or the MRTA in the 1980s. In all these cases, the option to modernize and the hope for a better life promised by the new faiths, dogmas, orthodoxies, and forms of knowledge brought in by the foreigners was followed by “traditionalist” backlashes calling for the defense of the status quo.⁷

I put “traditionalist” in quotes because, in each occasion, the defended status quo is dangerously similar to the utopias promoted by foreigners in the immediately preceding period. Churihuanti and his allies were probably angered when Peruvian authorities removed Juan Santos Atahualpa’s remains from his Metraro shrine. But the eighteenth-century Juan Santos was himself a foreigner who advocated hybrid beliefs and cultural practices combining Christian, Andean, and Amazonian motifs. The Catholic Asháninka of the Ene River became furious when drug traffickers and Shining Path burned down the chapel of Cutivireni, crucifying one of their leaders and forbidding them to carry out salaried activities. But, in the past, their ancestors had burned down Franciscan mission posts and had resisted attempts at involving them in market activities. Similarly, the Adventist and Evangelical Asháninka of the Tambo, Perené, and Pichis rivers opposed Shining Path and the MRTA for their antireligious discourse, their attempts to dismember the native communities created in 1974, and their restrictions against growing cash crops. But their ancestors frequently opposed the Adventist and Evangelical missionaries and rejected the legal notion of native communities because it threatened the unity of their ethnic territory. In brief, elements that in each past era were conceived of as symbols of op-

pression and of threatening change become in subsequent eras symbols of identity, ethnic cohesion, political autonomy, and cultural pride.

Historical evidence shows that, confronted with new ideas and cultural practices, many Peruvian Arawaks embraced change in the belief that it would improve their lives. The cases discussed above also show that, frequently, the accused children belonged to families aligned with foreigners or manifested a personal inclination for all things foreign. María Josefa's family was probably one of the first to support the Franciscans. The fact that she had a Christian name and sought refuge among the foreigners suggests that at the time when she was accused she had already been baptized and was familiar with the foreigners. Conija's family had recently converted to Adventism. We are told, however, that the new faith was still not firmly implanted in Yurinaki, and that many—including Chollaco, the local shaman—opposed it. Finally, Oijani's mother seems to have been receptive to Adventist preaching; otherwise we cannot understand her decision to take her daughter to the mission of Sutziki in opposition to her husband's wishes and at the risk of her own life.

Contemporary instances of child sorcery accusations are no different. The two Tambo Asháninka boys were recovered children; children whose families had joined—we do not know whether voluntarily or forcefully—the Shining Path movement, and were still fond of guerrilla songs and symbols. Silverio was also a child displaced by violence; his constant thefts proved, in the eyes of community members, that he had been badly influenced by Shining Path. In addition, he manifested an excessive craving for Western formal education, a craving that led him to steal the 300 *soles* that led to his death. Finally, by refusing to incorporate himself into the community, the displaced Simón proved his neighbors right in suspecting that he was a supporter of Shining Path, with its adamant opposition to the legal construct of "native communities." By attempting to obtain individual titles for his lands, Simón was also seen to support the ministry of Agriculture. At the time, the Ministry advocated a modernizing neoliberal agenda that sought to impose private property as the main form of property in rural Peru.

Professionals working in refuge communities in the Tambo and Ene river valleys assert that children and adults accused of sorcery "were frequently refugees that had fled from Shining Path camps" (Fabián Arias and Espinosa de Rivero 1997:83). A leader of the Asháninka Emergency Commission told me that the Tambo and Ene Asháninka believe that most refugees became sorcerers while living in Shining Path camps deep in the forest, where the evil spirits of sorcery abound. Anthropologists, social workers, and other professionals working in the Pichis River valley have informed me that during the 1989 Asháninka uprising against the MRTA, people who supported the Asháninka Army took advantage of the situation by killing many women

and children reputed to be sorcerers—most of whom were widows and their daughters who sympathized with, or supported, the MRTA.

In contrast with the past, it is not necessary at present to actually bewitch someone to be accused of being a sorcerer. Other types of evil doings, such as stealing communal funds, teaching “dirty politics” to local children, or supporting anticommunity political initiatives are considered to be equally grave offenses. The common denominator of all these acts is that they are antisocial; they threaten the integrity of the bodies of individual Arawak men and women or that of the body politic as a whole. Child sorcerers infringe on the mandate that solidarity must exist among close kin; they bring in epidemics, they subvert the children of the collectivity by transmitting alien ideas, and they deprive the community of its resources. But above all they contaminate the collectivity by resorting to, passing on, and letting loose a wide range of evil powers. It is because of this that child sorcerers are perceived as the “enemy within,” the rotten apple that infects the crate. Accordingly, they must be cleansed; if this is impossible, or if it fails, they must be purged.⁸

In the past, only shamans—acting out their dark side—were entitled to identify child witches; at present they share this prerogative with other, more secular, authorities. Periods of intensification of accusations of child sorcery among Peruvian Arawaks resemble “witch-hunts” in the broad sense; that is, an intensive searching out and harassment of those who hold unpopular views. Witch-hunts take place in contexts of rapid social change, social disruption, and personal stress (Schoeneman 1996). In this context, accusations can be derived either from ideological conflicts affecting the society as a whole, or from interpersonal conflicts induced by social change. Witch-hunts are always aimed at maintaining the existing social order or power structure. They are led either by those who want to preserve the status quo and orthodoxy vis-à-vis threatening new ideologies and mores, or by those who, having imposed a new orthodoxy and status quo, want to eradicate all vestiges of the old, competing orthodoxy. The persecution of Christians accused of all kinds of crimes and misfortunes during Roman times exemplifies the former situation; the hounding out of pagans once the Roman emperors had become Christian, and Christianity became the state’s religion, exemplifies the latter situation.

In either case, the objective is to cleanse and purify society from individuals or groups that are perceived as polluting it: either “others” as specific subgroups that differ culturally from mainstream society or as categories of people who belong to mainstream society but who have become “others” in the eyes of their own people by virtue of their acts or thoughts. German and Russian Jews, Spanish Moors, central European Gypsies, and American Japanese exemplify, in different times and places, the first type

of situation; witches in sixteenth-century Europe, clerics during the Mexican Revolution, kulaks under Stalin, and communists in the United States in the 1950s exemplify the second type. These others are singled out as responsible for the social, cultural, economic, and political crises afflicting their societies, either because they champion new subversive ideas or because they cling to old values and beliefs. They are enemies within, not only because they are perceived as being essentially different—generally “less than human”—but, above all, because they embrace different ideas and ideologies. Let us remember that Hitler pursued Jews not only because he considered them to be the antithesis of the Aryan race but, more important, because they were supposed to be communists plotting the destruction of the German state.

Child sorcerers fall into the second, and worse, type of others: people like us who have become others in disguise, and who for this reason are all the more dangerous. The ritual execution, or expulsion, of child witches, and the ritual celebrations surrounding these acts, seek to purge society of undesirable subversives. On the one hand they are meant to destroy child sorcerers in body and soul, obliterating all trace of them from the face of the earth. On the other hand, they have the character of an expiatory sacrifice aimed at “controlling the evil” and “disarming the forces of chaos” let loose by them (Torre López 1966:83–84). In brief, the ritual executions of child sorcerers are what we could call “rituals of identity”; rituals aimed not only at eliminating the dangerous others and the evil powers that threaten society, but also at bridging the social fractures induced by social change and restoring a sense of uncontested self-identity.

Whereas witch-hunts in Cameroon (Geschiere 1997), South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), and Zambia (Colson 2000) are about occult economies and the mystical struggle between the old and the young to obtain the magical powers that will ensure them a portion of the riches promised by globalization, modernity, and millennial capitalism, Peruvian Arawak child sorcery is still about fighting revolutionary utopias and the evils of modernization. By directing their accusations toward children and women belonging to families that had embraced change, or who themselves manifested an inordinate interest in the new ideologies and modes of behavior, Peruvian Arawak shamans and leaders sought to contain change. Thus, selective accusations of child witchcraft can be seen as forms of social control and defense of existing power relations; namely those linking village headmen and local shamans to their constituencies or clientele.

This in no way means that I support an interpretation à la Gluckman (1955) or Douglas (1970), for whom witchcraft accusations act as conservative mechanisms ensuring the preservation and reproduction of the status quo. On the contrary, following Thomas Schoeneman, I suggest that witch-

hunts are self-defeating. As witch hunters “work to expunge the menace and maintain the incumbent power structure, [they] change the culture and its internal relationships” (Schoeneman 1996). Among Peruvian Arawaks, accusations of child sorcery seem to be aimed at families or kindred groups that, because they have little power within their settlements, ally themselves to foreign agents of change in an effort to gain leverage against current holders of political power. By concentrating their accusations on those who have embraced change, witch hunters deepen existing social and ideological fractures. They induce pendular reactions, with phases of witch-hunt and rejection of change followed by phases of openness to change and rejection of traditional values and practices. It is through this social and ideological historical dynamic that Peruvian Arawak child sorcery constantly engenders social change. As a consequence of these pendular changes, the defended status quo of today is exceedingly similar to the utopias promoted by foreigners in the immediately preceding period: the accused of today become the accusers of tomorrow; whereas the innovators of today become the diehard conservatives of tomorrow.⁹

Notes

I would not have been able to write this essay without the support of many persons who trusted me by providing information on the very sensitive issue of child sorcery. I particularly wish to thank Beatriz Fabián Arias, the first person to report the reappearance of accusations of child sorcery among the Tambo Asháninka, who was very generous with her time and information; Lucy Trapnell, who shared with me her extensive knowledge of the Perené Ashéninka and Pichis Asháninka, and took time to answer my many questions on the subject; and the Asháninka leaders—Jude Jumanga, Miqueas Sanchoma, and Sebastián Martínez of the Asháninka Emergency Commission, and Santiago Contoricón, mayor of the district of Río Tambo—who were extremely candid, sharing with me their concern about the recent intensification of accusations of child sorcery. I would also like to thank Frederica Barclay, Oscar Espinosa de Rivero, Leslie Villapolo, Blanca Reyna Izaguirre, Evangelical missionary Rett Bragg, Father Teodorico Castillo and Mother Leonilda and Mother Viviana of the mission of Puerto Ocopa, and Judges Carlos Leiva and Pedro Gonzalez of Satipo for their invaluable help. Finally, I would like to thank Olga F. Linares, who, as always, improved my English.

- 1 For practical reasons, I will refer to these four Arawak groups as Peruvian Arawaks. The two Peruvian Arawak peoples of eastern Peru among whom child sorcery has not been reported are the Machiguenga of the upper Urubamba River and the upper Madre de Dios River, and the Yiné, or Piro, of the lower Urubamba River.
- 2 Whether this lack of information indicates that the belief in child sorcery was abandoned, had simply subsided, or was concealed from the eyes of outsiders is now open to question. Anthropologist Lucy Trapnell (personal communication) told me that many years after she did fieldwork in an Ashéninka community located in the upper

Perené River she found out that, at the time that she lived there (1976), two boys had been accused of being sorcerers and were constantly harassed by their accusers. Similarly, many years after she worked in an Asháninka community in the Pichis River valley she was told that while she was there (1979) a boy accused of sorcery had been executed. Also, anthropologists Soren Hvalkof and Hanne Veber (personal communication) affirm that the practice of killing child witches has persisted among the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal during the past decades.

- 3 I use the terms "child sorcery" and "child witchcraft" interchangeably, for I argue that Evans-Pritchard's (1980:227–28) distinction between "sorcerer" and "witch," based on his Azande material, does not apply here.
- 4 Men (but not women) can also become sorcerers during their training as shamans, when in dreams they are drawn toward evil by a variety of demonic agents (see Santos-Granero 1991:114). Peruvian Arawaks distinguish this type of sorcerer from those initiated as children by asserting that the former are "professional" sorcerers; that is, specialists to whom one may resort to inflict mystical harm on one's enemies in exchange for some kind of payment.
- 5 Lucy Trapnell (personal communication) told me that accusations of child sorcery have greatly increased in the 1990s in the Pichis River valley. In 1995, in a community located in this area, a five-year-old girl was accused of bewitching her mother; when her mother died, she was executed and buried with her, with the consent of her father. Evangelical missionary Rett Bragg (personal communication) informed me that the notion that grave illnesses are caused by child sorcerers—mostly young girls—is widespread among the Pajonal Ashéninka. In 1996, an Ashéninka girl was accused of being a witch and was punished by having her eyes rubbed with hot-pepper juices. Anthropologist Frederica Barclay (personal communication) told me that accusations of child witchcraft have reappeared among the Yanesha in the past decade. In 2000, leaders of the Federación de Comunidades Nativas Yanesha (FECONAYA) were asked to mediate in at least two cases of child witchcraft.
- 6 This is valid for periods of intensification of accusations of child sorcery. During intermediate periods, when accusations decrease, the nature of the conflicts that give rise to them seems to differ substantially. I suspect that the differences in the kinds of persons accused during periods of intensification or decline in accusations is also related to the dominant mode of identifying child witches: whether through divination rituals in charge of shamans or through patient's dreams. I plan to examine these issues in a future essay.
- 7 In fact, whenever the activities of foreign agents have threatened the status quo, Peruvian Arawaks have rapidly coalesced into large military confederations to drive them out, as manifested in the uprisings against the Franciscans (1896), the Adventists (1933), the MRTA (1989), and the Shining Path (1990) (see, for example, Renard-Casevitz 2002).
- 8 At present, cases like that of Silverio are rare. Children accused of sorcery are mostly given away, as if they were orphans, to local nonnative families or to nongovernmental organizations devoted to the protection of orphans and other children displaced by situations of violence (Fabián 1995:165). In other cases, child witches have been given away to Catholic and Adventist missionaries or to the authorities of nearby military bases, again as if they were orphans. Most of the accused children are removed from their communities by native authorities or traditional leaders who are more ac-

quainted and have more contacts with members of the national society. Some of these authorities charge a certain amount of money for each child they hand to individual families in the cities of Satipo, La Merced, Huancayo, and Lima. Parents of accused children offer little resistance to the removal of their children, but in some cases they have joined efforts to inquire about the fate of their child among the missionary organizations and military authorities to whom they were handed. Some of the alleged children witches have returned to their communities after a few years. In general, however, returnees have had problems reincorporating into their communities both because community members are suspicious of their activities and because during the time they were away they adopted foreign mores and values. More often than not returnees end up moving to other communities where it is not known that they had been accused of sorcery.

- 9 This is certainly the case with the Adventist Asháninka and Yanesha. Whereas in the 1920s and 1930s they were the main targets of accusations of child witchcraft, at present they support the elimination or expulsion of children suspected of having become sorcerers while under the influence of Shining Path and the MRTA. To justify their position they cite the Bible precept that states "do not allow a sorceress to live" (Exodus 22:18).

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