

Dancing the newborns, becoming warriors, and subduing enemies: The children's dance as formation of vitality, strength and resistance among the Yukpa

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Abstract:

The Yukpa's childrens dance, the first ritual for the newborn Yukpa, intends to produce strong, fearless, and brave persons able to resist enemies' attacks. The paper scrutinizes this ritual in terms of its different phases and the specific forms of predation underlying its logics. It argues that the ritual enacts a form of predation distinct from Amazonian notions. Instead of focusing on the exo-practice of incorporating the Other, it enacts an endopractic formation of vitality, strength and resistance phrased in vegetal terms, life-giving fermentation of *tami*, the grounded maize-mass, and the overcoming of restrictions and vulnerability associated with couvade restrictions. At the same time symbolic enemies are ritually killed and violence mimicked and enacted among the participants of the ritual. This not only produces strong and fearless persons and ends the parents' seclusion but creates the conditions for attacking enemies.

Keywords: Yukpa; ritual; newborn; war; predation; Isthmo-Colombian area; maize; mangey; enemies.

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Placing *tamuja* to be cured and fermented
Ernst Halbmayer

Bailando recién nacidos, sometiendo enemigos, formando guerreros: el baile del niño como fuente de fuerza, vitalidad, y resistencia entre los yukpa

Resumen:

El baile de los niños yukpa, el primer ritual para los recién nacidos, tiene como fin formar personas fuertes, intrépidas y valientes, capaces de resistir los ataques de los enemigos. Este artículo analiza este ritual en términos de sus diferentes fases y las formas predatorias específicas que sustentan su lógica. Se argumenta que el ritual expresa una forma de depredación diferente a las nociones amazónicas. En lugar de centrarse en la exopráctica de incorporar al Otro, promulga una formación endopráctica de vitalidad, fuerza y resistencia expresada en términos vegetales, de fermentación vigorizante del *tami*, la masa del maíz molido, y la superación de las restricciones y la vulnerabilidad asociadas con las restricciones de la covada. Al mismo tiempo, los enemigos simbólicos son eliminados ritualmente y la violencia es mimetizada y representada entre los participantes del ritual. Esto no solo produce personas fuertes e intrépidas y acaba con la reclusión parental, sino que crea las condiciones para atacar a los enemigos.

Palabras clave: Yukpa, ritual, recién nacido, guerra, depredación, zona del istmo colombiano, maíz, mangey, enemigos.

Dança recém-nascidos, submeter inimigos, formar guerreiros: a dança da criança como fonte de força, vitalidade e resistência entre os yukpa

Resumo:

A dança das crianças Yukpa, o primeiro ritual para os recém-nascidos, tenta produzir pessoas fortes, corajosas e valentes, que possam resistir aos ataques dos inimigos. O artigo trata esse ritual a partir de suas diferentes fases e as formas específicas de predação que sustentam sua lógica. Argui-se que o ritual representa uma forma de predação distinta a aquela que considera as noções amazônicas. Em vez de focar-se na exo-prática da incorporação de Outrem, promulga uma formação endo-prática de vitalidade, força e resistência expressada em termos vegetais, a fermentação estimulante do *tami*, a massa de milho moída, a superação das restrições e da vulnerabilidade associadas às restrições da covade. Ao mesmo tempo, os inimigos simbólicos são eliminados ritualmente e a violência é mimetizada e representada entre os participantes do ritual. Isto não apenas produz pessoas fortes, ousadas e finaliza a reclusão dos pais, também cria as condições para atacar aos inimigos.

Palavras-chave: Yukpa, ritual, recém-nascidos, guerra, depredação, região istmo-colombiana, milho, maguey, inimigos.

The *matshukapash ewotpo*, the Yukpa “children’s dance”, is a ritual performed a few weeks after the birth of a child and the “first social ceremony for the new Yupa” (Wilbert 1974, p.53). While the whole ritual lasts for at least ten days, usually only two moments are described in the literature in varying, but generally limited detail: first, the collection of wasp larvae that are roasted and consumed with cooked *kuse* maize balls – which are, beside maize beer (*soya*), the child’s first solid food – provided on this occasion and second, a dance in which the newborn is carried on the dance leader’s back, while the men ritually kill either agave plants (*sapara*) or nettles (*masüría*) with their arrows. These ritual components are commonly related to the future courage and strength of the child.

In what follows I will provide a description of the ritual’s various sequences beyond these iconic moments and focus on the relations and practices enacted in its different stages. The following identification of the dance’s sequences relies on talks with Esneda Saavreda, *cabildo* governor of the Sokorpa *resguardo*, and Alfredo Peña, *cabildo* governor of the Iroka *resguardo*. One evening during their visit to the University of Marburg in 2015, we talked about the ritual’s details. This conversation, which I will quote from on the following pages, revealed central aspects of the ritual that I will contextualize with regard to general information I have collected among different Yukpa subgroups (Irapa, Iroka, Sokorpa, Japreria) during my fieldwork over the last three decades, as well as an especially valuable observation of the children’s dance of the Sokorpa Yukpa in 2016 provided by Anne Goletz.² This paper could not have been written without the exchanges with Esneda Saavreda Restrepo, Alfredo Peña Franco, and Anne Goletz. Conclusions and interpretations, however, are my own and informed by my understanding of Yukpa ethnography in the context of Carib-speaking Amerindians (Halbmayer 2010) and the Isthmo-Colombian area (Halbmayer 2020a).

The *matshukapash ewotpo*,³ the dancing of the human newborn, or *katcha pesosó*⁴, the children’s flowering, as it is also called in Irapa, has, as noted by Esneda Saavreda, two central functions: first, the raising of a warrior attitude in the child and second, the termination of the taboos the parents have to observe after their child’s birth. The ritual ensures that the child becomes *tetpe*, strong, fearless, and brave and imbues the children who undergo this ritual with a specific set of abilities and values.⁵ I ask

² I am grateful to Anne Goletz for sharing her data on this ritual.

³ There are significant dialectical differences among the Yukpa subgroups and different subgroup-specific forms of transcription have become established. When not noted otherwise I use the Sokorpa [sok] variant.

⁴ Irapa variant [ira].

⁵ Depending on various circumstances – for example, the availability of maize or conflicts the parents are involved in that might put the child in danger (see below) – the dance was not performed for every child. The ritual is rarely performed today, and no longer followed by ritualized war expeditions. The latter practice was discontinued in the 1960s with the establishment of formal leadership and the presence of missionaries. Whereas the literature stresses that the dance is only performed for males, in reality both female and male children are danced. The ritual is nevertheless regarded as more important for the latter.

if and how central principles of Amazonian sociality related to alterity, predation (Viveiros de Castro 1992), and familiarizing predation (Fausto 1999, 2012) are key features of this ritual complex. Finally, I will show that the ritual's central symbolism is not based on venatic relations with animals, but, as the term *katcha pesoso* indicates, phrased in vegetal terms. How then is the notion of blossoming associated with the transformation of the child, warfare, and enemies?

Notions of Warfare and Birth in Amazonia and Mesoamerica

The appropriation and incorporation of alterity as vital resources for the reproduction of the self are central to Amazonian warfare. Olivier has applied the same logic to the explanation of Aztec birth rituals (Olivier 2015) and refers to ethnographic studies of the Tupinambá and Arawaté (Viveiros de Castro 1992), the Shuar (Taylor 1993, 2006), and the Wari (Vilaça 2002). He sums up Viveiros de Castro's (1992, p.148-154, 240-250, 274; 1996, p.82, 92-95) depiction of the Arawaté warrior as being "subjected to seclusion wherein he remains silent, nude, and fasting" after having killed an enemy. The warrior "symbolically shares the death of his enemy, changes his name and takes on a new status, incorporates the supplementary soul energy of the victim. The warrior in some way assumes female qualities for having been possessed and even fertilized by the enemy that he killed. From there the need arises to perform rituals to transform the feminine condition of the killer into a masculine power to breed. After these rites, the killer receives from his victim's chants and names for newborn infants in his dreams. In this way capturing enemies from outside is associated with the power of producing children within the group" (Olivier 2014/15, p.65).

Carlos Fausto re-conceptualizes Amazonian indigenous warfare in terms of familiarizing predation that articulates the exterior with the interior and aims to capture people in order to transform them into relatives. Warfare among the Parakanã is "a form of consumption intended to appropriate the victim's capacities" (Fausto 2012, p. 231), whereby the "relation established between killer and victim is conceived as a bond of control and protection, modeled on the relation between master and pet, itself conceived as adoptive filiation" (ibid.). Such familiarizing predation creates kin and sociality out of others. "I suggested that the destruction of the enemy was a fertile negation, insofar as warfare enabled a productive process at a wider scale: production not of material goods, but of persons and capacities that, although subjective, are simultaneously objective" (ibid.).

Interestingly, Fausto also mentions the Parakanã's avoidance of cultigens and the absence of propitiatory ceremonies for horticulture and argues that "the aim is to transfer wild, untamed, and entirely other capacities to people (especially males) in order to transform them ontologically" (ibid, p. 233). "The jaguar is

the divinity and vice-versa, since both are figures of wild exteriority, ferocious enemies that must be familiarized in order to transform them into a source of fertility” (ibid, p. 248-249).

Mesoamerican specialist Guilhem Olivier raised the question: “Why give birth to enemies?” He investigates the “close connection between the warrior act par excellence – capturing an enemy for sacrifice – and the act of giving birth” (Olivier 2015, p.66) among the Aztecs. The enemy killed or sacrificed became the “son” of his captors, “a source of power and fertility for the group” and “the pregnant woman fought to capture a being from the underworld that was about to appear on earth.” (ibid). Olivier further states: “according to Nahua thought, giving birth to a newborn was comparable to taking a captive on the battlefield, as clearly stated by Sahagún’s informants: ‘And when the baby had arrived on earth, then the midwife shouted; she gave war cries, which meant that the little woman had fought a good battle, had become a brave warrior, had taken a captive, had captured a baby’ (Sahagún 1950-1982, p.6:1 67)” (Olivier 2015: 56).

I ask such a relationship between becoming a warrior, appropriating captive enemy warriors, and the newborn can also be found among the Yukpa - and if not, how the relationship between the newborn, its becoming a warrior and the enemies is conceptualized.

The Yukpa: Carib Speakers in the Isthmo-Colombian Area

The Yukpa are the only contemporary Carib-speaking group living in the Isthmo-Colombian area (Halbmayer 2020a) among Chibchan groups like the Kogi, Ika, Wiwa, Ette, and Barí. While the Chibcha groups of the Sierra Nevada or the Barí to the south of the Yukpa have a reputation for being internally peaceful, the Yukpa - like the Wayuu, their Arawak-speaking neighbors to the north - are known for their violent internal conflicts and their warlike ethos (Halbmayer 2001; Perrin 2003). Relations among the different Yukpa subgroups were marked by warfare and are still ambiguous today, characterized by avoidance that may easily turn to conflict. The subgroups considered each other as enemies and generally neither food was exchanged or shared, nor marriage relations established between them.⁶ In the following, I will inquire what kinds of relations are enacted in the ritual and, more generally, how acts of killing are considered life-sustaining.

The Yukpa’s warlike attitude does not manifest itself in transformability with regard to a predatory circle, that is, dead humans do not become animal prey for the living. Among the Yukpa there is a human-specific cycle of transformation

⁶There are a few notable exceptions. Relations between the southern Colombian Sokorpa and the Venezuelan Irapa Yukpa are generally peaceful and involve marriages across group boundaries, although their relations are characterized by a significant amount of distrust and likely to shift to hostility from time to time.

and the dead Yukpa join their relatives in the land of the dead rather than turning into animals or enemies. As Fausto elaborates, the Amazonian logic of the dead becoming enemies, animals, and Others differs from logics that propose particular cycles for each species. In the northwest of Amazonia, he notes, a “vertical transmission of identity” goes hand in hand with “an ideal of keeping each system closed, even at the level of the exogamic clans: human souls should return to their ancestors’ ‘houses’ and be reborn as the same type of person” (Fausto 2007, p.501).

In the Isthmo-Colombian area we encounter highly anthropocentric cosmologies (Halbmayer 2020b; Niño Vargas 2020). While, as stated by Viveiros de Castro, the Amazonian “horizontal shaman’s archetypal Other is *theriomorphic*, the Other of vertical shamanism (important in the Isthmo-Colombian area, E.H.) tends to assume the anthropomorphic traits of the ancestor” (Viveiros de Castro 2014, p.155, my emphasis). The dead and animals assume “two distinct positions of alterity” (ibid, p.156). The socio-cosmologies of the Isthmo-Colombian Area, where the continuous relationship to mythical ancestors is of the greatest cosmological importance at the expense of external relationship to theriomorphic others, concur with Viveiros de Castro’s argument that “once the split between the dead and animals was achieved, the former remained humans (or even became superhuman) and the latter slowly ceased to be, drifting into sub- or anti-humanity” (2014, p.156).

Among the Yukpa the dead meet their ancestors transform into animals or other beings (Halbmayer 2013b). Moreover, newborns are referred to as *machukapash* (newborn humans), not *ynepch* (animal children) or *yuko* (enemies). Yukpa cosmology is anthropocentric; the metamorphosis of humans into animals, if it occurs, is monstrous and irreversible. How is the relationship between enemies and Yukpa expressed in the ritual?

The dance establishes the future warlike ability of the child and reestablishes the parents’ predatory capacity while at the same time re-affirming the notion of a generalized and abstract enemy. To create a warrior it is necessary to enact enemies but not to incorporate them. To create a successful Yukpa warrior it is necessary to create a person who withstands enemy attacks and perseveres even if badly injured, but it is not necessary to familiarize an enemy. In contrast to Amazonian notions, the ritual enacts enemies to subdue and repel them but without incorporating or familiarizing them.

The first anthropologist to describe aspects of the children’s dance, which he erroneously called “baby naming feast”, was Gustaf Bolinder (1958, p.168). His description includes central aspects that are missing from all later references. Bolinder mentions the making of maize beer and the beginning of the dance before

the beer is ready. Only he mentions the stinging of the child with wasps, fights between men, whom the women try to separate, as well as “war games”, including staged attacks from a neighboring village and a battle with corn-cob-tipped arrows. While mentioning central aspects of the ritual Bolinder never presented a coherent picture of the procedure.

In fact the ritual comprises the following sequence of actions: an initial phase of deliberation, planning, and the provision of maize as the most important element for the ritual is followed by a second phase of at least eight days during which *tamuyash* maize balls are made and left to ferment. A third short preparatory phase is used for collecting agave and wasps before making another kind of maize ball, *yorhako*, and preparing the maize beer, which takes three days to ferment. During these three days, the dancing of the baby and the repeated killing of agave take place. The dance starts in the afternoon of the first day. On the second day a third kind of maize ball, *kuuse*, is made, the dance is resumed and climaxes in the morning of the third day, when the dancers clean the houses of the parents and the dance leader, open the covered *chicha* and start drinking. They enact war games, the maize ball dance, and the concluding *karhiso* dance.

From Couvade to the Logic of Maize – *mi, tami, tamipi, tamuya*

“It is always a third person who comes to talk to the parents, who must take care of the child. The father must be at home, he is practically unable to go to work, because if he goes to work, the spirit of the child goes with the father, and as a newborn, the spirit of the child, can be scared and the child starts to cry, may get sick and in case even may die. This is why the father must stay in the house [...] and has to be careful; it's like a diet as the watia [the whites] say, but here it is different” (Esneda Saavreda, 1.4.2015)

The initiative for holding the ritual thus does not originate with the parents but with a third person who approaches them. Armed with his weapons he visits the parents and suggests holding the ritual. Once the parents agree,⁷ he acts as leader of the dance.

During that time the parents have to observe numerous restrictions; they must not go hunting, leave the village and go out into the forest, they must not cook, go to the river, and so forth, because outside the village the parents would expose the still closely connected newborn to spiritual offences. The initiative to hold the ritual relates to the complex set of restrictions and avoidances during pregnancy and after childbirth, which is generally termed couvade in the anthropological literature.

That the child is spiritually attached and following⁸ corresponds to notions among other Carib-speaking groups like the Waiwai (Fock 1960, p.57-58.), the Trio (Rivière 1974, p.429), and the Akawaio (Butt Colson 1975, p.289–290) who

⁷ This is not always the case (see below).

⁸ For Yukpa notions of such attachment, see Goletz, this volume.

stress that the child's "soul", existent since birth, is not "permanently linked to its body, but frequently accompanies the parents independently, sometimes sitting on its father's back, at times in mother's arms or on her hip (direct references to the prevalent methods of carrying children), at other times walking at their heels" (Fock 1960, p.57). Menget (1982, p.631) claims that the spiritual qualities are subordinated "to a theory of substance and argues that the progressive separation of parental substance from the child's substance that is accomplished by *couvade* must not be undone through an incestual union. Laura Rival, by contrast, focuses on the placing of the child "within a field of social relations, ultimately leading to its successful incorporation within a specific social group" (Rival 1998, p.631), which, in terms of the Huaorani, refers to the transfer from the womb to the longhouse.

While such theory of substance and successful incorporation are important, among the Yukpa a child's incorporation into a network of social relations is not accomplished through *couvade* restrictions but by means of the children's dance and, as we will see, the logic of substance is expressed in terms of *maize*. The children's dance stands in contrast to *couvade* restrictions, ends the parents' seclusion and (re-)establishes normal social activities and relations, including predatory interventions that had to be strictly avoided during *couvade*. This re-establishment of predatory interventions constitutes the central dimension of the child's social incorporation and the parents' re-incorporation into the social group and the broader web of relations, including those with enemies. Would the parents refuse to perform the dance, they would remain in seclusion up to five more months, until the remnants of the wrapped placenta, placed under the roof or in under nearby trees, have disappeared.

In contrast to arguments advanced by Amazonian perspectivist theories (Vilaça 2002), the newborn among the Yukpa is not considered to be animal-like. The newborn *matshukapsh* is human from the very beginning, while animals' young are *ynech*. Like in many cosmologies of the Isthmo-Colombian area (Halbmayer 2020), there exists a conceptual and linguistic difference between human and animals. Among the Yukpa animals are considered to have been human-like at the beginning of time. This, however, is a thing from the past that may become relevant in singular cases (see Goletz, this volume) but does not form a common base out of which contemporary humans have to be specified.⁹ Amazonian logics of metamorphosis and transformation between humans and animals are generally absent and, when they occur, irreversible (Goletz 2020, this volume; Halbmayer 2019, 2020b; Niño Vargas 2020; Velásquez Runk et al. 2019).

⁹ When a Yukpa passes away, s/he is also not thought to transform into an animal; conversely such a transformation must be avoided (Halbmayer 2013b).

The ritual generally starts as soon as the navel of the newborn has fallen off. Concerning the parents' seclusion and dietary restrictions, Esneda Saavreda explained:

“Well, [...] they have this *tamipi*, they are in this state for what happened, because of the placenta. But only the mother and the father, [...] because the placenta is fresh, so that's why the mother can't cook, can't sweep, wash or go out. That's why, because the placenta is fresh, because it is something from the body, of the organism of the woman and the father.”

Tamipi is a general term for a special bodily state of vulnerability that implies a number of avoidances in terms of food, sexuality, and movement outside the settlement. It refers especially to predatory activities such as hunting, fishing, or the cutting/killing of plants. The parents are in this special vulnerable – *tamipi* – state as long as a part of their body – the fresh placenta – is rotting. The dance may start when the children's navel has healed. The *tamipi* state is a state of bodily transformation that is associated with wounds, the loss of blood, or the “putrefaction” of bodily substances.

The condition of *tamipi* goes beyond the couvade and applies also to whose close relative has died, while the corpse is in a state of transformation before the secondary burial (Halbmayer 2013b), to girls during their first (and to a smaller degree their following) menstruations, to warriors who have killed an enemy, and to individuals who have killed a snake. On all of these occasions, a person is in a *tamipi* state. The transformative physical condition is thus not restricted to the bodies of those who are *tamipi*. The transforming body may be the one of a close relative or the enemy killed. By killing a snake, for example, one must refrain from sexual relations and sharing food with one's partner until the snake's flesh has disappeared.¹⁰ An intimate relationship between persons in the *tamipi* state is thus established either by giving birth or by killing. In both instances normal relations with relatives in terms of commensality and sexuality are suspended.

The children's dance ends the parents' seclusion and their *tamipi* state and enables them to resume their normal duties and daily tasks. The dance restores the parents' capability to kill and cook. Most important, instead of being the object of predation and transformation, the dance empowers the parents and the child to act as predators and actively transform and intervene into the world. It is this re-establishment and restoration of predatory and transformative power that makes the ritual much more than a children's dance. Central parts, such as the killing of the agave or the war games (Halbmayer 2001, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1945, p.63), were general pre-warfare rituals that prepared the participants for a successful raid.

In etymological terms the word *tamipi* is related to *tami*, which refers to a mass of ground maize *cariaco* (*mi*). The bodily transformation is phrased in terms of the transformation of the mass of ground maize and based on a structural analogy

¹⁰ In order to speed up this process killed snakes are often burned.

of the bodies' flesh and the mass of maize *tami*. A central aspect of this notion is transformation, which is also contained in the expression *oway tamorhiya*¹¹ that refers to the original condition of the earth at the time of origin, which was a time of transformation. Transformation in terms of *tamipi* as conceptualized in terms of the mass of maize provides a blueprint for the understanding of physical-spiritual transformations. As we will see, physical-spiritual transformation is phrased in the vegetal terms of flowering or blossoming, *yiposo*, and the feast is called *katcha pisolso*, "the child's blossoming", among the Irapa Yukpa.

It is the parents' maize that is prepared for the children's dance - maize that is owned, cultivated, and cared for by the family, on fields they had cleared themselves. Consequently, the ritual's base is the transformation, processing, and consumption of their own *tami*. The ritual stresses transformation in vegetal terms and performs enemies, but references to hunting or game are completely absent. What is invoked through songs is the mythical role of animals as human-like beings in the time of origin.

"The father and the mother prepare the ritual, they bring the corn. The corn has to be from the father, everything has to be from the father, so the father is the one who is going to look for the corn, the mother is the one who grinds and makes the corn balls, the father brings the wood (for cooking), and the woman starts making the first cornballs, called tamuyash" (Esneda Saavreda).

Three kinds of maize balls are made for the feast: *tamuya*¹², *kuse*, and *yorbako*. The first are used in the production of fermented and "blooming" maize beer; *kuse* maize balls are eaten without having fermented but together with wasp larvae.



Foto 1: (Irapa Yukpa, Yurmutu), autor: Ernst Halbmayer.

¹¹ ira - Irapa Yukpa; sok - Sokorpa Yukpa; ira - tamorya

¹² tamu is the ferment or mould of maize.

The mother prepares the *tamuyash* maize balls with the help of other women. Maize balls are “made of ground maize wrapped and boiled in the husk, thus conserving the original shape of the cob” (Ruddle 1974, p.80). When preparing *tamuya* the women sit on mats (*apoto*), so that no maize crumbs or pieces from the leaves get lost or get eaten by ants.¹³ Unlike other maize balls *tamuyash* are not just cooked but undergo a more elaborated and lengthy process of transformation, including fermentation by the cultivation of a mold fungus (De Booy 1914, p. 202; Métraux and Kirchhoff 1948, p.366; Wilbert 1974, p.44;).¹⁴

The preparation of maize beer (*soya*) on the base on *tamuya* can be divided into three stages: (1) the preparation of maize balls, (2) a primary fermentation of the maize balls by means of an amyolytic mold (3) and a second fermentation of a different kinds of maize balls that are dissolved in water and sugar cane juice or today *panela*¹⁵ added.

Once cooked, the *tamuya* are placed in a row and in a row and the dance leader dances with his weapons and painted face into the parents' house, followed by others. The dance leader and other ritual specialists taste the *tamuya* after the dance and if considered good, the still hot maize balls are carefully unwrapped so that no piece gets lost. The *tamuya* and the carefully collected remains of *tami* are placed in a specially made basket that is lined with leaves. The basket is hung next to the kitchen fire in the parents' house so that the *tamuya* is smoked for about 8 to 10 days. During the preparation of *tamuya* neither pregnant women nor girls during their first menstruation are allowed to be present and or to look at the balls. This would have a negative effect on the moulding process and the cornballs would “awake cold” (*amancer frio*), as the Yukpa say.

The women who grind the corn for the *tamuya* or prepare the dried *tamuya* balls in the later stage of the ritual were in seclusion during the process. In Irapa in the 1990s these women were forbidden to have sexual relations or share food with their family and, as mentioned by de Wavrin, were isolated during the process: “She rarely says a word to one of her companions; never to a man. She stays alone at night too. She is not a widow. Her husband is even in the village. But the spouses do not seem to exist for each other”(Wavrin 1953, p.263). The grinding of *tamuya* is thus clearly distinguished from the usual grinding of maize, which is a communicative social event.

¹³ For the mythical meaning of this practice, see below.

¹⁴ A similar process has been described in detail for the preparation of *parakari* manioc beer from fermented manioc bread among the Carib-speaking Makushi (Daly, 2019, 2015, pp.196-197; Henkel, 2005) which supposedly “is unique among New World beverages because it involves the use of an amyolytic mold (*Rhizopus* sp., Mucoraceae, Zygomycota)” (Henkel, 2005, p.1, véase también Daly, 2015, p.199). Even if I have no information on the specific type of fungus cultivated, it is obvious that the Yukpa apply a quite similar procedure for processing cooked *tamuya* maize balls.

¹⁵ Dried sugar cane molasses.



Foto 2: (Sokorpa Yukpa), autor: Ernst Halbmayr.

While placed near the fire and cured the *tamuya* starts to mould or “ferment”. During this process the maize balls develop a green mold that turns reddish yellow and the maize mass turns hot because of the fermentation. The Yukpa say the balls are blossoming (*yipiso*). By blowing tobacco smoke into the basket with a deepened stick they may facilitate the fermentation process. The whole procedure displays the transforming of life: the blossoming *tamuya* produce heat and thus, their own vitality. In the past a corpse was smoked, dried, and mummified next to a fire for about ten days on a so-called *toromo*, a platform covered by a conical roof for depositing the dead (Halbmayer 2010, p.534-535; 2013b, p.113). As maize is associated with flesh, the dried, smoked, and mouldy balls resemble the flesh of the dead between the first and second burial. The blossoming of the maize balls and the heat created in the process are expressions of a transformative process that creates new forms of vitality.¹⁶

¹⁶ While the corpse lays on the *toromo*, the deceased’s spirit is believed to be on its way to the land of the dead. Both the dried *tamuya* and the dead are later watered/washed.

Tamuya is said to produce a particularly strong beer that is *owashpo* (strong, aching, fermented) rather than *anishi* (tasty, sweet). The mouldy *tamuya* are one of the basic ingredients in the production of maize beer. Together with water the flowering *tamuya* are put into the *kanoa*, a raised hollow log in which the maize beer is prepared, to soak and to be ground the next day. The ground *tamuya* mass forms the basic ingredient of maize beer, which is now left to ferment in the *kanoa* for about three days.

Collecting Wasp Larvae and Agave

On the same day that the *tamuya* is soaked in the *kanoa*, the dance leader and at least two other men leave the village to collect wasp larvae (see Ruddle 1973: 98). This is a painful procedure and the men that collect the wasps are often stung severely. In contrast to other ethnographic descriptions that stress the father's role in collecting the wasps, even just by himself and without the help of smoke and fire, the dance leader gathers the larvae with the help of other men. The newborn's parents are still under the *tamipi* restrictions. The father must neither leave the village to collect the larvae nor do the parents dance or drink beer in the course of the ritual. They provide the maize for the feast without collecting materials from outside and do not participate in the dance.

As I have noted elsewhere, wasps are linked in Yukpa belief to the sun and the Pleiades and conceptualized as a swarm and as bearers of life force that is released - as a myth explains - by the attack on their nest (Halbmayer 2017). Wasps are seen as potential enemies that may attack the Yukpa and even carry them to the sky, but killed in a direct confrontation and collectively consumed. It is stated in the literature that ability to endure the wasps' stings is transmitted to the child through the ritual. The wasps' predatory and foraging behavior provides an empirical model that not only shows several analogies to Yukpa behavior, but which is actually mimicked by the Yukpa (Halbmayer 2013a). In sum, the ritual use of wasps is not a means for transgression and alteration of individual capacities but re-establishes and reaffirms the distinction between enemies and Yukpa.

The next day the main dance starts, three days before the maize beer is ready for consumption. Before putting the other ingredients into the *kanoa* and starting the dance in the afternoon, people prepare by fixing their bows and arrows and gathering agave plants (*sapara* [ira], *saparha* [sok], *saparha* [iro]). The agave plants are stuck into the ground in a row in front of the parents' house (see below). As Ruddle specifies, the *sapara* plants used in the male birth celebration are only wild ones and not those replanted near the dwelling (Ruddle 1974, p.97).

I could not obtain information on the symbolism of the agave or maguey plant for Carib- or Chibcha-speaking groups. However, in Mesoamerica the importance of the maguey is widely documented. Among the Aztecs Mayahuel was known as lady Maguey, goddess of fertility (Quiñones-Keber, 1989). All parts of the plant were used, including the fermentation of pulque, the thorns for ritual bleeding and the sap as medicine. There are even interpretations that focus on a “strong connection between Mayahuel and Cinteotl,” the god of corn, and suggest “the possibility of the overlap in the representation of maguey and corn” (Lopez, 2017, p.46). Although among the Yukpa it would appear that maize and agaves are opposed, one is cultivated, associated with meat and consumed in the form of corn balls or chicha, while the other is brought in from outside and ritually killed without being consumed, both are associated with particular forms of vitality.

***Yorbako* and the Jaguar’s Threat**

Before the dance starts, a second kind of maize balls is made that are mixed with the fermented *tamuyash* in the *kanoa*. *Yorbako* is a freshly cooked big maize ball that is dropped still hot into the brew, where it decomposes. The name *yorbako* is derived from *yorha*, the remains, and the plural suffix *-ko*. As mentioned above, the Yukpa take great care that no remains or bits of corn or *tami* get lost. It would lead to the reproduction of the jaguar, as Esneda explained to me. She referred to the local version of the twin myth in which the jaguar kills his sister’s daughter, a girl in seclusion (*samayaba*), at her first menstruation, that had been promised to him as his wife (Halbmayer 2017, p. 69–76). The girl got pregnant during her seclusion by a beam of light from - depending on the myth’s version - the sun or the Pleiades. Consequently, her parents keep her in seclusion, try to hide her pregnancy and put the prospective groom off. The rejected young man turns into a jaguar, kills and eats the daughter. In return the Yukpa kill the jaguar by setting dry wood that they had piled around his den on fire.¹⁷ From the middle of the fire, the jaguar says: “If you don’t burn me, I’ll eat everyone.” He perishes and the Yukpa cut his remains into small pieces, which turn into ants. Esneda Saavreda explained:

“If he (the jaguar) would not have been burned, he would have finished off the whole samayaba family and we wouldn’t have Yukpa. Then right there he said: ‘I will always bother you, I will always be against you’, [...]. Every time a samayaba (menstruating girl) is secluded and they bring her food, he will

¹⁷ It is the den, or seclusion hut, the man had built for his prospective wife. These are small round sheds, like the *pishamtu* hunting hides. Today the seclusion huts are built on the ground. In the myth, however, the seclusion hut is located on an unspecified spot above ground, from where blood drips down on the grandmother as the Jaguar kills the girl. The basket in which the *tamuya* are smoked is also referred to as den and associated with a *pishamtu*; thus an analogy is drawn between the fermentation of the *tamuya* and the development of the girl during her first menstruation.

turn into what they had chopped him into – ant. He said: ‘When a secluded samaya drops crumbs and an ant eats them, I will kill her and she will die.’ Every time they dance a child, this will happen too. That is why (...) one has to - I know, because I did it - (...) mother and father have to, spread a lot of ashes all over the house and don’t drop a crumb of maize. (...) Yes, hot ashes around the house where the balls are, everywhere, it is because he (the jaguar) said like this and because of his singing. It was there that we learned what he is singing” (Esneda Saavreda).

The song of the jaguar recalls this story during the dance.

“When they chopped (the jaguar) up - they chopped him up well – (...) he became like ants - the shape of ants. (...) These ants are black and the most dangerous. They bite a lot. Shasah is black; that is the most dangerous (one). That is why there are fathers, who say no (we will not do the dance), that’s why he (the dance leader) talks to the father to have it (the feast). (...) Sometimes there are some who will not do it, because it is like giving him (the dance leader) the child’s life. This is very dangerous and so the father may say no, as ‘suddenly something may happen or the ants will eat the maize balls.’ (...) This is why some fathers prefer to stay these three, four, five months in the house, for the sake of the child. They say no, there are those who say no” (Esneda Saavreda).¹⁸

When *tamuya* and *yorbako* are put into the *kanoa*, *siminok*, the “arrow of the chicha”, a small stick with a charcoal painting that for the dead resembles the worm *kürhüke* is prepared and placed on the *kanoa*. The “arrow”, with the help of which the chicha is able defend itself, is used to drive the spirits of the dead away. If the dead would come and drink from the chicha, it would remain – as the Yukpa say – cold and not start to ferment, or “dance”, as the movement of the fermenting and bubbling beer in the *kanoa* is called. In this case the strength (*owashpo*), vitality, and taste of the beer would get lost and be appropriated by the dead.

Dancing the Baby and “Killing” the Enemy

On the first day of the dance the leader dances with the baby strapped to his back by a forehead strap (*wanish*) for several hours. The basic dance step for the next three days is a “very simple back-and-forth dance” (Bolinder 1958, p.135). A row of men, with the dance leader in the center, dance with bow and arrow or their guns and are followed by a row of women. Dancing consists of putting the right foot in front of the left and giving the impression of taking short steps and walking with a slight “limp” of the right leg. Everyone, men and women

¹⁸ Parents are especially reluctant to hold the children’s dance, and likely to stress the potential danger, when they are involved in actual conflicts.

continuously move in this way back and forth for about two meters. They do so in front of row of transplanted agave plants that symbolize the bodies of enemies. In the end the men let out shouts that are typical for an attack (üh! üh! üh! üh!), point their bows at the agave, and shoot it with their arrows.

“They always plant an agave with many leaves; it is planted and must remain until the last day, when all (leaves) must be destroyed, with the arrows they must be cut. Whenever they are resting (between the dances) they shoot and then they start again (to dance) and when they rest they shoot the agave” (Esneda Saavreda).



Foto 3: (Sokorpa Yukpa). Autora: Anne Goletz.

While on the first day the dance is still rather calm, later in the night and on the following days it becomes more complex and wild. The women circle the men, the men group into small teams, and the songs are more provocative. The dance lasts for hours, only the rhythm changes according to the songs. These are animal songs that refer to mythical events at the time of origin (*owaya tamoriya*) and by themselves would merit further investigation. Esneda Saavreda responded as follows when I asked her about the songs. There is the

“song of the skunk (maposhi isirhi) they sing on the first day, on the first or second night and the Yari isirhi, the opossum song they sing at four in the morning on the last day, as the opossum gets to eat the chickens, and this is the time they take

the child to the house und take the chicken and whatever is there (see below cleaning the house). And at midnight of the second day, they sing what is the song of the jaguar, pakosa isirhi. Already on the second day they begin to sing it, and on the second day they sing all that pakosa isirhi and psigaracha isirhi, the song of the bat. Kushnash, the colibri song, is part of the karhiso (the panflute dance), kushnash is at the end.

E.H.: Are there other songs?

E.S.: No, no more than these, of the tiger, of the skunk, the opossum.

E.H.: And these are the songs of these animals, they sang like that?

E.S.: Yes, there is a story. It were these animals that taught these songs.”

Among the Sokorpa, the respective animal is only indicated by the rhythm and melody, as most songs are performed without lyrics. Knowledge of animal songs seems more elaborated among the Iroka. In 2018 Fernando Peñaloza sang over 30 different animal songs to be recorded by Anne Goletz, including lyrics. Many referred to birds, but there were also songs of fish (*poshi*), the spectacled bear (*mashiramu*), the agouti (*kasachash*), or the deer (*amusha*).

Between the songs, the wild agave plants are shot at repeatedly over the next three days until all their leaves are destroyed. If some leaves remain on the final day, they are cut off with a machete. The parents must hide one of the agave heads without leaves, so that “the child always grows well”, as they say. Let me quote Esneda Saavreda once more:

“On the last day, when they are no longer dancing, at four in the morning there must be a person or two who take away the shot agave. They take it, go and hide it, as the dance is ending. Within the next two days, the person who took it says, “Don’t look over there; there is the maguey, now let’s plant it”.

So, it (the child) is like the maguey, the maguey doesn’t die, it can survive like this (shot and mutilated without leaves), so the child will not be killed easily in war; so the child will have life and be able to endure a battle, a physical injury. They plant it (the agave), so that it (the child) is not easily killed, and there it is, like the child’s life, its life. That’s why the agave plant is preserved and planted, because it is difficult to kill the plant, it hardly dies. If, let’s say, the plant withers after one or two years, the child’s life will be short. The plant must be well hidden. They always plant it in a place where no one bothers it, no one, so that the plant will stay there (...)” (Esneda Saavreda).

The “killing” or mutilation of the plant and its subsequent cultivation thus establishes a special relationship and identification between the life of the specific plant and the life of the child.

The Cleaning of the House

The final night is the most important part of the ritual: Dancing spreads throughout the community and to the parents' house. Now hostile relations are enacted among the dance participants. First, the child is taken at four or five in the morning from the parents' house and carried from house to house. Then the dancers invade the parents' house and "clean" it, as they say. They grab everything they can lay their hands on: pots, plates, knives, clothes, cutlery, food, they kill chickens and even goats. They also enter the houses of nearby families and of the dance leader and "clean" them. The parents must accept their dispossession without resistance or fear, so that the child will not become anxious. Even if they are concerned, they must consent to their dispossession and let all things go. This has become much harder today, when an important part of their possessions are bought and no longer self-produced. The parents may try to sell or hide away certain things or animals before the feast to save some of their possessions, but opposing the dispossession is believed to bring bad luck for the baby. The ritual attack is considered to signal a new start for the family, when it is freed from all its possessions and it is made sure that the child will become fearless and not stingy. Chickens are tied up, so that attackers can grab them easily. The people dance with the items they have acquired, struggle to take things from one another and fight vigorously, especially over the chickens.

"Why all that? It's like that all the old leaves the house. Because if not, the child will remain like impure, will not be clean; will remain impure if they don't do it, so that is why they have to do it: take out everything there is in the house, and above all something to eat, chicken. They take the chickens and tie them to the child, it is the child who carries them.

E.H. Dead or alive?

E.S. Dead, they must be killed, so that they will not breed. Immediately they must be killed and from then on the child carries them, and then they hang the child in a corner of the house, they hang the child there."

The chickens remind of trophies that are taken by and attached to the baby. Interestingly, these are not trophies from a symbolic or predatory exterior that are appropriated, killed, or incorporated in order to increase the names, capacities, or identities available to the group. The process of appropriation and violent redistribution is internal to the community and the captured and killed animals are not game but domesticated animals that belong to the family. Such an expropriation may be termed "consented theft", an expropriation followed by collective redistribution. The appropriation is not just restricted to material possessions and domesticated animals, but even a marriageable daughter may be taken and the parents must agree to the union.

The Opening of the *Chicha*

Around six in the morning, the “cleaning” of the house ends and the *chicha* is opened. This is done by a

“person who (...) has a good hand, that is, a person who knows the traditions, who has the knowledge of what the ritual is. (...) It is this person who breaks the chicha open first, [...] and while he is breaking it open, the others are already painting the father, the mother, and the child (...).

E.H.: Do they give chicha to the child?

E.S.: The first to try the chicha is the child, they give him two or three sips in some of the leaves with which the kanoa was covered. When it has drunk, all the others get something to drink. Father and mother must not drink from the beer, as everything goes in there and the placenta is still fresh.”

This is the part when the child receives a few sips from the *chicha* and is painted, an act that is commonly equated with baptism. In the past, the painting was done with charred wasps. As the catholic priest Santelos (1959) mentioned “This rite of the yucpas has a meaning: the boy thus ‘anointed’ must acquire over the years the speed and ferocity of the wasp in order to defend his people, following the example of the ‘tuano’ or chief” (Santelos 1959: 203).

War Games: Chasing the Enemy Without Getting Shot

After the *chicha* is opened the child is hung in a corner of the house and so-called “war games” (Bolinder 1958: 136) are enacted. A person carrying bow and an arrow, with a head either of a corncob stripped of its kernels (*marhichayi*) or of beeswax (*mapicha*) runs away and another person chases after him. This performance mimics a raid, when the attackers withdraw and are chased by those attacked.

“The one who follows him must move quickly, must move carefully and avoid being shot by the one who is hiding. It is so, because upon this the child's courage depends, depends how the child is going to be. He leaves and nobody may follow him (...). As he does not know where the aggressor is hiding, he must go carefully, and they do not just send anyone, it has to be someone who knows how to handle arrows. When he goes, the one who is hiding shoots at him and he avoids being shot. The child will be a very great warrior. When he returns he will be asked how it was ‘No, I did not let him shoot me’. ‘Ah, good’. Then they take down the child and give it to the mother, drink chicha for a while from around seven to eight and then the maize ball dance starts” (Esneda Saavreda).

Reichel-Dolmatoff and Bolinder have described other kinds of war games when two rows of men oppose each other and shoot at each other with corncob or beeswax arrows. Bolinder (1952, p.136) mentions that in the context of a children's dance

the attack of a neighboring village was performed. Reichel-Dolmatoff describes the ritual in terms of *serémpa*, the pre-war dance, as a “initial cult” that “initiates all war expeditions, either against the Whites or against a neighboring Motilon population against whom war has been declared” (1945: 63-64, see also Halbmayer 2001).

The Maize Ball Dance

The maize ball dance is performed after the “war games” and immediately before the final *karhiso*¹⁹ dance. In the afternoon of the second day of the dance another maize ball, *kuse*, is made. *Kuse* is a small maize ball containing *tami* and the wasp larvae. During the so-called maize ball dance on the morning of the following day, these maize balls are placed on bows or arrows and exchanged among the dancers in a specific way. Esneda Saavreda explained:

“If it’s a girl, the balls that contain a wasp are put on a bow [...] in a row [...] and if it is a boy, on an arrow, on the arrow, there they put the balls on the arrow mikwi, yes. Because the girls, the women, we don’t use mikwi, only wakara (the bow), we grab the bow when a man goes out to fight and we don’t want him to go. In contrast, for the boy they put it on the mikwi, so that he goes out to fight and that he, otaska, hits well when he is shooting, has good accuracy, good marksmanship [...]. On the final day, this is done with the balls; they do it at six in the morning.

Then comes the maize ball dance. You take a maize ball, I take another ball, and the dance starts. Then I give you the ball, I give it to you, and you give me your maize ball and so one is giving the ball to the other, the ball you take you cannot eat yourself.

The other will make you eat (his ball) and this is like sharing that is done, but it is a sharing that is very aggressive, it’s like very aggressive because it’s the child’s dance (...)

E.H. But aggressive in what way?

E.S. You get caught like this, they put the ball like this, they violently force you to eat it (comerselo a la brava). This is done for the child, when it is in battle, it also has the ability to eat in the middle of a battle. It’s not like they give it to you like this, they put the balls forcefully in your mouth. Well, afterwards, at about 10, the final karhiso (...) follows” (Esneda Saavreda).

The Karhiso Dance

What follows is a final, unorganized, and aggressive dance, accompanied by the Colibri theme played on *sokta*, the panpipe. Everyone is already drunk. The men dance with their arrows and shotguns, the women with machetes and bows. They

¹⁹ From span. *carrizo* – reed; it refers to the panpipe *sokta*.

provoke each other, start fighting openly, sometimes with their arrows, and fire their shotguns in the middle of the song. As Esneda told me, “in the *karhiso* (...) someone must leave bleeding and if someone dies, they say, it is even better - because there is the strength, the power of the child. This is the last thing they do, then the children's ritual is finished”

At this stage the women dance in the middle of the men, trying to avoid confrontations, but “there is always someone who escapes.” The dance leader dances with the child on his back, surrounded by the others who shout advice how the child should live his life, be fearless, and act in the future. After the dance, the people continue drinking until the beer is finished.

From Dance to War

As noted above, the killing of agaves and the war game are also part of the ritual preceding a war party. Also after a dance for a newborn, the men may leave to attack a neighboring Yukpa subgroup. An Iroka interlocutor in his forties told the following story about the time when his elderly uncle had been danced as a newborn:

“As long as they did not hold the ceremony for the child, it did not receive a name. For my uncle, they did that, they danced, they had a feast and in dawn, they left for Manastera at the Venezuelan side of the Sierra and killed people there. So before leaving, they give a name to the child and they go there in his name. When they shoot someone there with their bows they said, ‘I kill you in the name of child X.’ So they said, and they shot. Today this is rarely seen, as there are new things. There are only the things they do spiritually with the plants, they take plants and bathe the child. There is a plant, which grows in a tall tree, they take it and put it in the fire to heat it, and put it on the child's heart. A traditional healer does it, and the doctor is talking to the child, telling him I am doing this to you, so you will be strong, so that you will be tetpe and not afraid of anyone.”

Thus additional skills are bestowed upon the child, but it is not a process of transforming an (animal or non-human) enemy or familiarizing him into a human, a relative. The child is always human, but the ritual creates humans with different abilities. While in familiarizing predation, non-human subjects are consumed to produce new subjects within the group, which leads to consanguination and establishes a transition from enmity to familiarization, here skills, strength, and fearlessness are created by a ritual process that performs enmity within a group of close relatives. It is not that an enemy killed or sacrificed becomes a “son”, but rather that the baby acquires the potential to subdue an enemy. Thereby – substituted by adult warriors that attack neighboring subgroups – it may even become a killer.

Conclusion

The child's dance establishes the child's future warrior ability and reestablishes the predatory capacity of the progenitors while reaffirming the notion of an abstract and generalized enemy. To create a warrior it is necessary to personify the enemies, but not to incorporate them. To create a successful Yukpa warrior, it is necessary to create a person who withstands the attacks of his enemies and perseveres even when severely wounded, but it is not necessary to familiarize an enemy. In contrast to Amazonian notions, the ritual represents enemies to be subjugated and repelled, but without incorporating or familiarizing them.

Among the Yukpa a process of internal ritual violence and the mimetic killing of enemy substitutes, as well the avoidance of re-creating the murderous jaguar produces the ability to withstand and carry out attacks. Warfare apparently plays an important role among the Yukpa but does not imply the transformation in/ of the other, of becoming or being fertilized by the enemy, or the systematic identification or incorporation of captives. Rather than being an "exopractic" of interacting and subduing affinal symbolic others, the children's dance is an "endopractic" ritual that transforms internal relations, cultivated plants, and domesticated animals. The capacity to be *tetpe* is generated internally and not acquired externally. Although warfare as the dominant relationship determines the logic of the child's dance and causes a change in the newborn child, it does not do so because of either predatory incorporation or familiarizing predation. The children dance expresses a fairly complex range of relations that cannot be reduced to the simple logic of predation, reciprocity, giving, protection, or transmission. The ritual establishes as well as averts relations to specific others, and transforms internal relations, thus producing gradually increasing forms of mimicking and enacting aggression and violence. Even the internal exchange of food becomes violent.

In contrast to Amazonian and Mesoamerican concepts, among the Yukpa the child is neither an animal to be transformed into a human being, nor an enemy or war captive. The child is viewed as human from the very beginning, but, like its parents, as vulnerable, injured, and *tamipi* in a state of transformation. The transformation of the human body is conceptualized in vegetal terms, especially of maize, and connects parents and the child but also a killer and his victim. The children's dance aims to end this kind of relationship and the parents' vulnerable subordination, to invert this hierarchy by (re-)establishing the active and predatory potentialities of child and parents, and to create the ability to resist attacks and undertake war expeditions. This transformation that gives vitality and strength is expressed in vegetal terms of the maize mass, in terms of flowering through the shooting of plants that represent enemies and which become associated with the life of child. Although corn and agaves are seemingly opposed among the Yukpa, both are

associated with specific forms of vitality, one with the flourishing of the *tami* in the process of fermentation or putrefaction associated with germination, and the other with the extraordinary regenerative power of the dissipated or decapitated agave.

This ritual does not make kin out of others, nor children out of captured enemies. External alterity is either completely avoided, as is the case with the jaguar who must not eat *tami*, or with the dead who must not drink maize beer, or killed, erased, and subdued, as is the case with the agave and the wasps. What is ritually transformed and distributed among the community is the maize from the families' own fields, the families' domesticated animals, the families' possessions, and even their child. Everything the family used to own is appropriated, redistributed, and consumed by the community. The family has no part in the consumption. The act of appropriation creates confrontations and violence among the ones who appropriate, while those who provide are expropriated, are cleaned, and can start again from scratch, having acquired new skills and potentials.

Struggle and violence among the ones who appropriate range from quarrels over about the things taken from the houses to enforced sharing or aggressive reciprocity that is intended to subdue the other, to direct open violence during the *karhiso* dance. Violent relations are staged within the community, whereby the collective capacity to resist outside aggression and kill enemies in the name of the child is created.

The Yukpa logic of predation and transformation aims to avoid transformation between species. The latter may happen, but only rarely and is considered dangerous and irreversible. For this reason the transmission and creation of skills on the base of a logic of mimesis and practices that recreate otherness and alterity is important, as the ritual has shown (cf. Taussig 1993).

Of highest importance for understanding the Yukpa in the context of the Isthmo-Columbian area and its anthropocentric cosmologies (Niño Vargas 2020; Halbmayer 2019, 2020b) is the fact that the relationships toward various animals, the enemies, the dead, and the gods or the primordial creators are not homologous and cannot be subjected to a single common logic. These areas are distinguished and distinct positions of alterity emerge, while animals are subhuman and at the margin of many of these anthropocentric cosmologies.

The original creators are not anthropophagous affines, but conceived in terms of consanguinity as fathers and mothers, and relations with the dead are important, unlike in many Amazonian cases. The importance of enemies as one distinct kind of relations that are associated with warfare is apparently especially great among Carib-speakers²⁰ rather than the region's Chibcha groups. The expression of this

²⁰ Among the Yukpa this area is symbolically associated not only with the jaguar but, in contrast to most Carib-speakers, with the sun that is conceived as cannibal and seen in contradistinction to the helpful and protective moon, which is related to agriculture.

complex in the children's dance shows a logic of mimetic enactment of enemies to be subdued quite distinct from animistic metamorphosis. For this reason the Yukpa neither give birth to enemies, nor are there dividual persons between enemies and Yukpa. The process of activating predatory skills simultaneously recreates and reactivates enemies as Others and the ability to survive their attacks and to subdue them.

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