The Anthropology of Landscape

Perspectives on Place and Space

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Land, People, and Paper in Western Amazonia

PETER GOW

It is hard to see Amazonia as landscape, in the sense this term has for people from temperate climes. The land does not recede away from a point of observation to the distant horizon, for everywhere vegetation occludes the view. In the forest, sight penetrates only a short distance into the mass of trees. Along the big rivers, you can see further, but even here there is no distant blue horizon. The sky starts abruptly from behind the screen of forest. Sight is hemmed in, and you would succumb to claustrophobia had not a plane journey or many days of travel let you know the scale of this land of big rivers and unending forests. To travel in most of Amazonia is to pass through an endless succession of small enclosed places, and to imagination itself is left the task of contructing out of these an immense extension of space. Only when an Amazonian landscape has been radically transformed by roads and deforestation is it revealed as visually extended space. A bright red road extends to the horizon, while buildings, fences, and isolated trees recede away into the distance. It looks more like a northern temperate landscape, with the wilderness forest no longer dominating the visual field, but simply a hazy transition between land and sky in the far distance.

Being able to see Amazonia has nothing to do with sight as naïve perceptual experience. The eyes that see the colonization frontiers as landscape are eyes structured by a particular kind of visual practice. As Ong has put it, 'Only after print and the extensive experience of maps that print implemented would human beings, when they thought about the cosmos or universe or "world", think primarily of something laid out before their eyes, as in a modern printed atlas, a vast surface or assemblage of surfaces (vision presents surfaces) ready to be "explored" ' (1982: 73). It is not simply that we perceive the world as structured like a map or a landscape painting. Looking at a deforested Amazonian landscape, we are looking at a visual environment constructed from maps, and at a simulacrum of a northern temperate environment. Much of the recent colonization of Amazonia has proceeded along roads, which themselves had their first existence as lines drawn across the empty spaces on maps. And the most 'developed' form of this newly constructed landscape is based on cattle pasture, the only economic rationale of which is that it makes this land look 'civilized', that is, like the domesticated rural landscapes of Europe or

North America. In Brazil and in Peru, Amazonian cattle-ranching is possible only because of massive state subsidies (Hecht and Cockburn 1989). As with the roads, it is what is written on paper, not produced in the land, which makes the colonized and deforested parts of Amazonia look, to some people, like real landscapes.

Seen from an airplane, uncolonized Amazonia looks like uninhabited wilderness, but it is not. It is people's land. It is either currently inhabited or, if it is not, it shows constant evidence of recently having been so. Even the naïve viewer can see settlements from the air, while the more knowledgeable voyager can see the network of irregular patches of secondary vegetation that are the mark of slash-and-burn agriculture. The most knowledgeable, such as certain ecologists and Native Amazonian people themselves, see even more, and find the marks of human activity in what is apparently virgin forest. For the ecologists, this knowledge is essentially abstract, and produced by their own accumulation of records on paper in their scientific practice. For Native Amazonian people, this knowledge is part of lived experience in the sense of 'what is going on'. It is with the nature of this latter knowledge as lived experience that this essay deals. What does it mean that Native Amazonian people do not create representations of their land, and what implications does this have for their modes of experience?

I must make it quite clear from the outset that I do not argue that Native Amazonian people have some sort of immediate relationship to the land. As will become clear, particular people have densely mediated relationships to particular places: this is what makes Amazonia a lived human landscape. But I am arguing that these mediations do not, on the whole, take the form of *representations*. By 'representation' I mean something which stands for something else in its absence. To use Gibsonian terminology, a representation is that kind of visual display which presents a virtual surface to perception (Gibson 1986). What makes an object into a representation is both its mode of fabrication and an element of fantasy. A piece of paper with lines on it is a piece of paper with lines on it. It only becomes a map of the Bajo Urubamba when direct perception is denied, and the course of that great river is imagined in the lines on the surface of the sheet. The issue is not primarily one of perception, but one of social processes. What sort of processes produce and depend on representations, and what sorts do not? It is this question of the agency of representations that I address here.

I assume here that the engagements between people and land on the Bajo Urubamba river in Eastern Peru are meaningful actions, and that the ramifying results of such engagements are themselves meaningful to native people. There is as much meaning, for native people, in the process of forest regeneration in an old garden as there is in a mythic narrative or in a shamanic curing session. The focus must therefore be on the existential form of the symbolic process (see Munn 1986), for clearly forest regeneration, the narration of myths, and

shamanic curing are not the same sorts of things. But an analysis of the existential forms of such symbolic processes cannot rely on the difference between representation and the thing represented. The issue is too serious to be modelled analytically on the relationship between the thing itself and the other thing that only stands for the thing itself. The empty spaces on maps of Amazonia have already allowed too many people to pretend that nobody lives there.

The View from Santa Clara

Santa Clara is a small native community on the right bank of the Bajo Urubamba river. It has a fluctuating population of about eighty to ninety people, most of whom are identifiable as Piro or Campa. When I first arrived on the Bajo Urubamba in 1980, I chose to study in Santa Clara rather than in any other nearby community because it closely approximated my image of what a beautiful Amazonian village should be. Most of the houses are arranged around a central square, and many are shaded by large mango trees. Even the dissonant note of the corrugated iron roofs can easily be forgiven as one gazes on the majestic silhouette of the *pifuayo* palms against the sky or the line of tall *ojé* trees marking the boundary of the forest in the background. You cannot see the mainstream of the Urubamba river from Santa Clara, or even from the port, which means you are screened from the constant to-and-fro of travellers. But you never lose awareness of the river, either in the dry season when you can hear the shingle rolling in its bed, or in the rainy season when it slowly escapes its channel and floods the village and the forest.

As I lived in Santa Clara, I began to learn that the river and the forest are not undifferentiated, to learn that each is a mosaic of different small zones. Learning the differentiation of the forest was relatively easy, preconditioned as I was by my reading to recognize gardens, secondary forest, and primary forest. Learning to differentiate the products of the complex interaction of river and forest was more difficult. It is easy, in the abstract, to know that landscapes are formed by flowing water, but difficult to understand in practice the dynamics of a large Amazonian river. Over the eight years I have known the Santa Clara area, the mouth of the Huau river has shifted upstream by half a mile while the height of Santa Clara has risen perceptibly. It has taken me this long not to be mystified by statements like, 'This is good land for making a plantain garden. It's new land, it used to be the main channel of the river.' Equally, all inhabited space, each settlement, took on a precise social meaning. I slowly learned the meanings of Huau, Nueva Italia, Kinkón, Bellavista, El Aguajal, etc. I learned that the inhabitants of Santa Clara were, on the whole, on fairly bad terms with the people of all these places. With some settlements, such as Huau or Nueva Italia, the hostility had to do with old fights between kinspeople. But in many

cases, residents of Santa Clara had lived with these people in the past, and sometimes mentioned their desire to move in with them again. With other places such as Bellavista and El Aguajal, the hostility was based on ties between *patrones* and *peones*, bosses and workers. The settlements are small commercial plantations owned by non-native people, who employ men from Santa Clara as labourers. But here again, several people in Santa Clara had lived on these plantations in the past, and all older people had lived as slaves on the *haciendas* of the great *patrón*, Pancho Vargas.

As my knowledge grew, Santa Clara also began to lose its stability. It ceased to be a place with no beginning, and its inhabitants ceased to be a group of people inevitably linked to this site. I came to realize that the settlement of Santa Clara had a fairly precise and short history, and that its inhabitants had little more reason to live there than anywhere else. Had I arrived fifteen years earlier, Santa Clara would have looked as tenuous and new as the house Roberto was building on Mapchirga stream. I also realized that the movement of old Mauricio and his wife Clotilde into this house meant more than they said. They told me that they had moved to look after the house while their son Roberto was away on the coast. But by then I knew that Roberto had left Santa Clara largely because of his strained relationship with his older brother Artemio, the village headman. Old Mauricio and Clotilde were expressing their dissatisfaction with Artemio by living far from the village. Their youngest daughter Sara moved in with them, and she thereby added to the friction within the community. In Santa Clara, other people began to voice criticisms of Artemio's high-handed behaviour. His oldest sister and her husband announced their intention to shift residence to their new garden on Mapchirga stream, and their married son said the same. I was now aware that these minor shifts in residence were part of the infinitely subtle politics of a native community. Annoyed with Artemio's behaviour, his coresidents were moving out. Roberto's house on Mapchirga looked as though it would become a new community.

Seven years later, everyone was again living in Santa Clara. Although Artemio was less respected as headman than before, Roberto seemed to have disappeared for good, and his parents were now obviously too old to live far from their children. His niece Miriam had transformed from a feckless teenager into a young and competent mother, and she complained about the ever-increasing dryness of the river channel that flowed past Santa Clara. She told me, 'We're going to move the village to Mapchirga. The canoes can get that far when the river is low and there is clean water to drink. Santa Clara is no good any more, so we're going to move there.' Miriam and her husband Limber were young and active, but also mature enough to voice their opinions in public, and be listened to.

One day I walked past the rotting posts of Roberto's house with my godson Hermes trailing behind. Sara had given birth to him while she lived here with her parents. I pointed out the house site to him, saying that this was where he

was born. He looked a little confused by my statement, but trotted on after me to bathe in the Mapchirga stream. As we washed, he told me that he was afraid to be in this place, for his mother had told him that jaguars walked about there. 'Don't be afraid,' I told him, 'there are no jaguars here.' But his fear made this once-lively place seem desolate, and I wondered if he spoke the truth.

Over the years, as my knowledge of the place called Santa Clara and its people has deepened, I have realized that this is not just a natural landscape in which people live and to which they give meaning. I have realized that their lives are intimately bound up in it. I learned about this landscape by moving around in it, but also through hearing it being described in a thousand different narratives told by native people. Anthropologists customarily analyse such narratives for the way in which they reveal the meanings people attribute to a landscape. But there is surely more to the issue than this. The native people of the Bajo Urubamba do not just impose meanings on the land, any more than I did when I told young Hermes that this site was where he was born. Something about our relationship was implicated in this particular place, and our being there together. Equally, his childish fear of jaguars would have been easy to dismiss had he not referred to his mother as an authority. Experience has made me a greater authority on the past than Hermes, but experience has made Sara a greater authority on the dangers of lonely spots in the forest than I.

In my case, perhaps telling Hermes that he was born in such-and-such a place reflects an anxiety to establish a deeper relationship with this young stranger. But for Hermes, a young boy growing up in a native community on the Bajo Urubamba, telling me that jaguars frequent this spot is part of his growing understanding of the landscape in which he lives. His knowledge of this landscape comes partly through moving through it, and partly through what older people tell him about it. Hermes is still a young child, but already he has learned from his mother to fear this place on Mapchirga stream, and to seek reassurance in it from his godfather. Hermes has already learned, if he ever needed to be taught, that the land is an aspect of kinship.

Kinship and Land

Elsewhere I have developed at length my analysis of kinship for the native people of the Bajo Urubamba (Gow 1991). I argued there that the term 'kinship', in this specific social context, must be understood in its widest possible sense. Kinship cannot be limited to the social implications of being born, procreating, and dying, for it must also include the wider conditions of those social implications. On the Bajo Urubamba, being born is not a sufficient cause of being a person, for one must also be grown through acts of feeding. Equally, sex is not a sufficient cause of procreation, for sex is predicated on the work of

feeding another person, just as procreation is predicated on the work of repeated sexual intercourse. Death is predicated on these relations too, for the old die because they have exhausted their vitality in creating others through work, and the newborn die because their parents' acts of production or consumption rebound on them as sickness. There are no pristine acts in the creation of kinship, for every kinship relation is predicated on former acts which created the people it binds together. Kinship is implicated in the whole social universe of the native people of the Bajo Urubamba, where any relationship which is not one of kinship receives its full meaning only in this opposition.

In truth, I did not learn of the centrality of kinship for native people through the classical anthropological techniques. I found the famous 'genealogical method' rather embarrassing to use, for my informants were either insulted or aggrieved by my objectification of their kinship relations. Nor was it easy simply to elicit the idioms of kinship, for my informants were acutely aware of my own presence among them, and thus of my potential as a kinsperson. I learned about kinship through what native people told me about the land, and through observing how they used the land in their relations with other people, including myself.

From the very start, my relationship with native people was focused on what I ate. Could I, or would I, eat what they call 'real food'? The first couple I stayed with, the schoolteacher of Huau and his wife, suggested that I pay them money and be cooked 'fine food', which is the food that white people eat. When I lived later with this woman's parents in Santa Clara, I was never asked to pay anything and was fed with 'real food', the food native people eat. I paid for nothing, as I was constantly reminded, but I was also constantly asked for 'help', in the form of an endless stream of shotgun shells, presents of store-bought food, small gifts, and large amounts of alcohol. I represented this help to myself as a slightly more expensive version of the earlier relationship of paying for food, but I was wrong. Native people endlessly told me that they fed me for free because they themselves paid nothing for the food. As one man put it, 'Here you do not have to pay for food. If you want to eat plantains, just clear a garden and plant it. Then you have plantains. If you want to eat fish, just go to the river. It is full of fish. Here you eat well, you don't need money.' For native people, 'real food' is free, but it is not defined strictly by the absence of payment. 'Real food' is produced locally, through human interaction with the land.

The native people of the Bajo Urubamba are slash-and-burn agriculturalists. Each year every married man, especially if he has children, is expected to clear a new garden in the forest for himself and his wife. The couple then plant this garden with a sequence of crops, depending on what they expect to need over the next few years. Gardens produce for more than a year, sometimes almost indefinitely, so each couple has a series of producing gardens scattered around the community. Further, various tree species and other cultigens are

planted in gardens, and these will be harvested over many years. The exclusive control a couple have over a garden declines as a function of the work they put into it. As they stop weeding and replanting a garden, and as the secondary growth takes over, their exclusive control wanes. The products of an old garden (*purma*) are free for anyone who takes the trouble to harvest them, but the site will be referred as the *purma* of the original makers until the memory is totally lost.

In addition to the work of gardening, men, and to a lesser extent women, are producers of game. Forest game, particularly the animals of remote inland areas, are the most desired food items, but river fish are the most commonly eaten. Unlike garden crops, the game animals of the forest and river exist outside of human agency. Humans do not create them nor do they work to multiply them. They are produced and multiplied through the agency of forest and river spirits, the 'owners' and 'mothers' of their respective domains. The game is produced as food by locating and then catching it.

The major garden crops are plantains and manioc. Plantains are the daily staple and, served with fish or forest game, are *comida legítima*, the 'real food' which constitutes kinship relations. Manioc is processed by women into *masato*, the beer which is circulated to the maximal extension of kinship. The circulation of real food and manioc beer is continuous in native communities, in a process whereby kinship made in the past is remembered and kinship is created for the future. As I have discussed at length elsewhere (Gow 1991), kin ties, for native people, are generated by acts of being fed as children by adults: acts which are subsequently extended by productive adults in memory of care given as children. Kinship is predicated on the active work of men and women linked together in marriage. Through work, they make gardens, harvest plantains and manioc, cook and brew beer. The products of this work are then circulated. This is what I saw every day in Santa Clara, where 'life's dull round' is the ceaseless process of kinship.[1]

Landscape Implication

The production and circulation of food produces people, who respond with memory of these acts of caring. But equally, these productive activities create the mosaic of vegetation zones around the village. To use Sauer's terms (1963), these are modifications of the natural environment through human landscape agency. These zones are not however a useless by-product or detritus of native people's productive activities. They are at once important resources for local people, and loci of kinship. To understand this requires a short detour on some recent research on Native Amazonian ecology.

There are a number of studies on the impressive ecological knowledge of Native Amazonian peoples. Any anthropologist who is informed on natural

history will have had experience of this. Many of the most arcane ecological relationships in neotropical rain forest, such as the symbiotic relationship between oropendolas (New World orioles) and a species of wasp, or the parasiticism of a vine species on a large ant, are the common knowledge of Native Amazonian people. But as ethno-ecologists have investigated Native Amazonian peoples in greater depth, it is becoming clear that these people do not simply know their environment, but that they have also been consciously manipulating it over extensive periods. I refer to Denevan's studies of the creation of grasslands by the Gran Pajonal Campa and of the long-term manipulation of forest regeneration by the Bora of north-eastern Peru, and Posey's work on the modification of forest and savannah by the Central-Brazilian Kayapó.[2] These studies are opening up a new temporal depth to Native Amazonian ecology, by revealing that these people interact with an environment which has already been formed by purposeful human agency.

My work on the native people of the Bajo Urubamba was not conducted with such issues in mind, but they have suggested a new importance for the information I did collect in the course of daily life in these communities. As I learned about the local landscape of Santa Clara, I became increasingly impressed by the way in which kinship, as a temporal process, was bound up in it. This can be illustrated by the following example:

Roberto wanted to make a pasture for cattle. He had no cattle, but intended to purchase some from one of the local *patrones*. He chose a site where the path leading from Santa Clara to El Aguajal crosses the Mapchirga stream. This was, to my eyes, an undifferentiated area of forest. But as the forest was cleared, even I could see that growing among them were species like *pifuayo* palm, which is a full domesticate, incapable of dispersal in the wild. I was helped in this perception by the fact that Roberto had left them standing proud. I asked Roberto's father Mauricio who had planted these trees, and he told me that his own brother-in-law Tiburcio had done so, some thirty years before. I knew that Tiburcio had lived on Mapchirga in the past, but was now able to locate his house site precisely. Meanwhile, nearby, the men of Santa Clara were helping Roberto's brother Artemio clear a new garden. In doing so, someone found a long straight log lying on the ground. After testing it with his machete, he commented that such a log would make an excellent house post. Old Mauricio came to look, announced that it was indeed good wood for a house post, and that this very tree had been felled twenty-five years previously by a Campa man, Julio Felipe, when he lived on Mapchirga. This information naturally excited me, for it provided both spatial and temporal locations for a narrative the old man had told me weeks before. He had told me that Tiburcio had lived on Mapchirga, and that he had been joined there by some Machiguenga people from the Alto Urubamba. Then Tiburcio had left, and Julio Felipe had immigrated from the Tambo to live at the site. Later the Machiguenga people left, moving back to the Alto Urubamba, as did Julio Felipe. I knew nothing of the Machiguenga, having never met them, but I did know Julio Felipe, for he had returned to the Mapchirga years later, and now lived some distance upstream from Roberto's new house.

There are several important points to be made about this series of incidents and stories. The first is that such processes first introduced me to the time depth of kinship for native people. I was endlessly told such stories, usually in order to relate an incident notable for its humour, tragedy, or mystic import. Each narrative embeds the focal incident in an apparently superfluous mass of information about who else was there, what they were eating, and what they were doing when the incident took place. Such a story, told in the physical setting of Santa Clara, would profoundly irritate me, providing a mass of the 'hard data' on kinship I had come to discover, but in a style marked by imprecision. If I asked, 'Where exactly were you living when this happened?', the reply would be a vague, 'Over there,' or, 'Just downstream from where old Julio Felipe is going to make his new garden.'

Such imprecision has a precise meaning. Once you already know where 'over there' is, or where old Julio Felipe is making his garden, you can locate the spatial meaning of the incident. If you do not know, how could it matter? You, as a listener, are not implicated in the landscape in which these things happened, so can only relate to them in the abstract. As you become implicated in the landscape, these stories take on new meanings. I say implicated in the landscape, rather than saying simply 'as you gain knowledge of the landscape'. In this context, knowledge would suggest a purely subjective experience. It is not such an experience, because implication depends on actively moving around in the landscape, and leaving traces in it.

The implication of the listener in the environment occurs through the agency of older people. Most of the men clearing Artemio's gardens did not live in the area when it was cleared for Julio Felipe, and of those few, most would have been too young to take part. So the prior event of garden-making was not part of their personal experience. But old Mauricio was there, and so was able to explain what had happened. This is the most important fact, for it implies a great deal about kinship. The garden was being cleared for Artemio and his wife Lilí, to feed their children. The products of the garden would also circulate as manioc beer to everyone else in Santa Clara, and to visitors from elsewhere. But in making this garden, with these projects in mind, they were re-clearing land which had once been old Julio Felipe's garden. The produce of this garden had fed old Mauricio and his wife Clotilde, who had often drunk beer with Julio Felipe. And the men working in the garden that day were the sons, sons-in-law, grandsons, and other younger kin of old Mauricio and Clotilde and of Julio Felipe. These younger men were co-operating to make Artemio's garden, just as they would co-operate to make everyone's gardens, because of the prior relationships between these old people who made them. And the relationship between old Mauricio and Clotilde and Julio Felipe was implicated in this ancient garden, and the network of settlement sites and gardens that had once radiated from it and which are now old secondary forest.

No one on the Bajo Urubamba would ever appeal to an abandoned garden as a basis for current social action. No one would say, 'I help him because we both ate food from that garden when we were children.' Native people say, 'I help him because we are kin' (see Gow 1991). The focus is always on an active relationship between two living people. But landscape is implicated in these relationships in two different ways: as active place-making and as narrative of places. The active relationships between kin implicate landscape because the help that kin give each other is landscape modification: kin help each other to transform forest into gardens. The most radical implication of kinship in landscape is the act of house-building. Kin help each other to build houses so that they may live together. Living together is the supreme act of kin, for it implies the ceaseless acts of generosity which constitute 'life's dull round'. The village is at once the scene of kinship and the product of kinship.

Native people are quite capable of specifying kin relations in the bald terms of a 'genealogical method'. Anyone can say, of any other, that 'He/she is my older sibling/parent/aunt or uncle/etc.', and follow out the links between them. A young native stranger to a community will be interrogated by older people in just this fashion, 'Where do you live/who is your father/who is your mother/who are your grandparents?' The interrogation continues until a familiar name is mentioned, at which point the older person will say, 'Haa, you are my younger brother's grandchild! Call me "grandfather".' But such situations are limiting cases, caused by long-distance travel. Normally, native people know their kin either because they grew up among them, or because they have heard them endlessly referred to in the stories of older kinspeople.

This is the force of the apparently extraneous information in native people's narration. The stories older people tell to the young are, as I have said, filled with details of place and of people. Often the locations are meaningless to the listener, as, for example, when old Jorge Manchinari told his grandson Pablo and me about, 'the time he was almost killed by the Brazilians on the Yuruá river'. Old Jorge detailed exactly where he and his companions ate and slept during their epic flight up the Yuruá river. Neither Pablo nor I have ever travelled on this river, so these locations meant nothing to us. But Jorge's companions were Pablo's older kin, and the ascendant kin of many people living in the Santa Clara area. The residential histories of these old people are the origins of the younger generations. Pablo's mother was born in Brazil, and Pablo sometimes jokingly calls himself a Brazilian. Pablo is implicated in a distant landscape he has never seen, but only a little bit. He is really implicated in the landscape of Huau and Santa Clara, to which old Jorge and all his kin returned to raise their children.

The details of these stories are not extraneous to kinship relations which are constituted elsewhere. They are not simply adventures that people had away from the serious business of living. They are stories whose heroes are the narrators themselves, and they are told to the younger kin of the narrators.

Elsewhere I have discussed how these narratives implicate kinship in their form, content, and place of narration (1990, 1991). They are only told to those who do not know, that is, to junior kin who cannot have personally experienced the events. Native people narrate these stories as evidence that they are, as they say in Piro, *kshinikanu/kshinikano*, 'those who remember, think about, care about', and younger people listen to show that they are willing to learn. These narratives are 'face-to-face' communication in a radical sense, for they imply the presence of older and younger kin together in one place. Living together is central to kinship, and to the ceaseless acts of generosity between kin. Narratives of personal experiences track the production of present coresidence, the here and now of a village, through other places and people. The act of narrating expands the spatial and temporal dimensions of the village outwards into a wider landscape, while simultaneously focusing these dimensions to the mutual co-presence of narrator and listener in this one place.

The Dead and Powerful Beings in Landscape

Implication within a landscape is central to native people's understanding of life. For any particular person, this implication occurs through being born, growing up, marrying, and working as an adult to raise children, and through dying. But native people are always implicated in particular landscapes which are always changing. A child grows up in a particular house in a specific village site, eating the food produced in particular gardens. But grown to adulthood, and working as an adult man or woman, the landscapes of childhood will have transformed. The house site will almost certainly be abandoned, the village site may have been abandoned, and the gardens will be regenerating as forest. This temporal process of landscape is not just a physical fact, it is constantly reiterated by native people. Younger people are constantly moving around, discussing shifts of house site and gardens, or even moves to other communities. Old people deny that they will move, and say, 'I am old now, I know where I want to die.' This is not some sort of romantic choice of a beautiful spot for death, for the place chosen is always the place in which one lives. It is a statement of resignation in the face of old age, for the old realize that their failing physical strength will preclude them from making gardens or building houses.

When an adult person dies on the Bajo Urubamba, the house in which he or she lived is abandoned. It is sometimes burned down, but more often it is dismantled and the reusable parts, like new thatching or a well-made door, are used in a new house. The reason is that the dead soul (Spanish: *alma*; Piro: *samenchi*) is potently attached to this place, and indeed to all the places it knew in life. It hangs around these places, weeping and begging its surviving kin to join it in death. The sorrow of the dead soul evokes a lethal nostalgia in the living, causing them to sicken and die if they succumb to it. The dead soul is an

image of memory, incapable of any kinship action except evoking the pity of its kin. Native people stoically ignore such imprecations, and avoid the places where the dead soul is likely to be encountered. Over time, by this means, the landscape becomes punctuated with places avoided by the living because they are associated with dead souls.

The dead soul is an image of memory, and disappears as memory disappears. Native people have no fear of the souls of dead strangers, for with no link of memory, they are incapable of having relationships with them. For the same reason, they have no fear of the souls of remote ancestors, who are also strangers to them. But they do fear another aspect of the dead, which has no link to memory. This is the bone or corpse demon (Spanish: *difunto/muerto*; Piro: *gipnachri*). A dead soul is always the dead soul of someone in particular, met with in a particular place associated with that person. It is an image of memory, as I have said. The bone demon is also a dead person, but no particular dead person. It is not tied to particular places, but wanders freely around, even entering villages at night. It seeks to eat people or to kill them through violent sexual intercourse, and is the embodiment of desire.

The dead soul is relatively easy to avoid, provided one avoids places associated with it. But the bone demon is not, for it inhabits the same zones as humans and travels freely. It is consistently encountered in the known inhabited landscape, but in unpredictable ways. Bone demons inhabit the same zones as humans, but not particular places. Their cannibal and sexual desire for the living reflects the place of human desire in the creation of kinship, and the motor force of landscape modification. It is the oral and sexual desire of men and women related as husbands and wives which initiates the transformation of forest into gardens and houses. I do not think it would be too far-fetched to argue that the bone demons stand at the far end of that process, as once-used places are retransformed into undifferentiated forest. The bone demons are the 'agents' of forest regeneration, and are associated with those planted species which *no saben morrir*, 'do not know how to die'. In particular, they are associated with *ayahuasca*, 'corpse vine', the curing hallucinogen.[3] The bone demons are both the deep past of kinship (anonymous forgotten dead in secondary forest) and disembodied images of what makes kinship in the present and projects it into the future (oral and sexual desire).

Beyond the landscapes of living and dead humans, and encapsulating them, are the generalized worlds of the river and the forest as autonomous spaces. These spaces are generated by the supreme agents, the 'owners' and 'mothers' of the forest and river. These agents, variously described as giant anacondas and as beautiful tall white foreigners, create and maintain the forest and riverine domains. The forest is said to 'come from' (*venir de*) the giant forest anaconda *sachamama*, 'Forest Mother', just as rivers and lakes 'come from' *yacumama*, 'River Mother'. These domains are maintained and patrolled by *sacharuna*, 'Forest Person', and *yacuruna*, 'River Person', respectively. In

shamanic discourse, they are called *gente*, 'people'. They are 'people' in this discourse because they are moral and knowledgeable agents, but they are not subject to birth or death. They generate and maintain space through their awesome knowledge (usually associated with their songs).

As immortal powerful beings, the 'owners' and 'mothers' of the forest and river do not depend on humans for their existence, and are usually indifferent to them. But in order to live, humans must invade these spaces in hunting, fishing, travel, and especially in the creation of specific landscapes of villages and gardens. In response, the powerful beings inflict humans with sickness and death. Although human sorcery is the commonest diagnosis for severe or fatal illness, killing power ultimately derives from these powerful beings, whether directly or through the medium of shamanic use of these powers. But equally, they are also the sources of curing power. Shamans take *ayahuasca*, and through the medium of *icaros*, curing songs, tame the powerful beings into revealing themselves as people (see Gow 1991).

Taking drugs, shamans enter the forest and river, and perceive these directly as settlements filled with people. The landscape comes full circle, with the supreme antithesis of human activities, the depths of the river and the centre of the forest, revealed as human settlements. When shamans take hallucinogens, their souls leave their bodies and wander freely, and they see directly as the spirits see. The spirits call to them, inviting them into their houses to eat and drink. They live with the spirits as kin, eating their food and hearing their powerful and beautiful songs. The general categories of space, the forest and the river, which in everyday experience are the location of specific landscapes of implication of specific persons, are transformed into the specific houses and villages of powerful beings, the agents of space at its most general. This transformation of the general into the specific, and the specific into the general, is a hallmark of shamanic experience.[4]

Meaning and Representation

When shamans take hallucinogens, they see the forest or river as settlements full of people. One might argue that these shamans transpose a cultural image (human settlements) on to natural domains (forest and river), and proceed to say that shamans 'represent', in their discourse, the natural as cultural. But to do so would be to ignore all the other complex ways in which the landscape is implicated in people, and people in the landscape. When a shaman says he sees a forest tree as a house full of people when he takes *ayahuasca*, we cannot restrict analysis to that tree and to that image. We must take into account that houses are made out of forest trees, on ground where trees once stood, are abandoned to turn back into forest, and so on. The shaman's hallucination may strike us as particularly dramatic and exotic, but it can only be understood as

one particular point in the complex processes by which people and landscape interact.

The statements shamans make about their drug experiences are perhaps not easy to understand, but at the very least shamans are saying that they see these things in a way that is closely connected to the everyday perception of kinship in the environment. Kinship, as I have argued, is directly perceived by native people in the environment because it is there. It is there because kinship is created out of human landscape agency. The position I have taken here may raise certain problems within the psychology of perception, although it should not. I suspect most psychologists would deny that people could perceive directly such a complex cultural category as kinship is for the native people of the Bajo Urubamba. But in so far as kinship is only about direct social relations, and in so far as these relations implicate direct landscape modifications, native people must be able to perceive kinship in the landscape. It is of course true that each native person must be socialized into so doing, but this is already given in the relations of kinship.[5]

In my analysis, I have sought to avoid any claim that the native people of the Bajo Urubamba 'read' kinship into their environment, or that they 'represent' it as an aspect of kinship. I will return to the issue of representation later. The metaphor of culture as a particular reading of the world is as popular as it is unanalysed. It models all human culture on a very restricted Western cultural practice. It implies encoding and decoding of information, senders and receivers of information. In the process I have described here, there are no senders and no encoding of information, and hence no receivers or decoding. To suggest that Tiburcio planted fruit trees around his house on Mapchirga as a kind of postcard to future generations has only to be stated to seem ridiculous. Logically, therefore, it is as ridiculous to suggest that I, or anyone else, read the history of his residence in the mature fruit trees revealed as Roberto cleared the site.

Writing and reading are interesting human cultural practices in their own right, but they should not serve us as unanalysed metaphors for either human culture or human thought. Writing and reading, properly understood, imply texts, which are fabricated forms of graphic representation. As such, they are material objects and hence parts of the material environment. To conclude my account, I will discuss one such object which is intimately bound up in the processes of landscape and kinship I have described here. The object is a text, consisting of both written words and a map, the land title of the *Comunidad Nativa de Santa Clara*.

According to the schoolteacher of Santa Clara, there are two copies of this text. One is kept in the Ministry of Agriculture in Lima, the capital of Peru, the other is kept by Don Mauricio Fasabi, in his capacity as most responsible person in the community. Most of the time, this document rests unseen in a box in old Mauricio's house. I have only seen it once, when the schoolteacher

called for it to be produced at the height of the land dispute discussed below. I was interested in the map primarily to help me understand the lived landscape of Santa Clara. Even as maps go, this one is remarkably abstract. It includes no reference points other than certain abstractly defined orientation co-ordinates. Even the ecologically salient boundaries and sites, like the banks of the Urubamba or Mapchirga river, are sketchily represented. Its only interest, as a map, is that it shows that the village of Santa Clara, and hence much of the land gardened by its residents, technically lies outside the community territory.

Needless to say, nobody in Santa Clara uses this document to orientate them in their environment, and probably nobody could. It is not even used as knowledge about the environment. If people in or outside Santa Clara need to locate the precise boundaries of the community land, they do not do so with reference to this map, but by reference to the paths around the territory cut by the men of Santa Clara in the company of the agricultural engineers of SINAMOS when the land was first surveyed for titling. These paths were made in the landscape by known people at a known time, and hence define the community territory. They are there in the environment, the objectification of the act of demarcation of community land, and they are periodically cleared to emphasize their existence.

The land title document is used by no one in Santa Clara as knowledge of the environment, but it is used as a physical reference point in the ongoing struggle between the people of Santa Clara and their immediate neighbours over land ownership. The land immediately downriver from Santa Clara is the plantation of Eustaquio Ruis. This man was drowned in 1981, and his plantation was taken over by his son-in-law Manolo. Until 1975, when Santa Clara was legally constituted as a *Comunidad Nativa*, Ruis had claimed ownership of all its territory. The claim had no legal basis, but was backed by the entire power of the white *patrón* class in the area. Years before, when Tiburcio and his kin lived on Mapchirga, Ruis's pigs had regularly raided their gardens. In retaliation, the Piro people killed and ate one of these pigs. Ruis called the police, who took Tiburcio and his fellows to court in the local administrative centre of Atalaya. The judge, a friend of Ruis's, sentenced the men to a month's work for Ruis. He made them clear a large pasture, on which he installed cattle. It was to escape from Ruis, his pigs, and now his cattle, that Tiburcio and the rest left Mapchirga and moved far upriver. The current inhabitants of Santa Clara were not involved in this dispute, but its story is still narrated as an example of what a white *patrón* is capable. The land title document was used in fights with Ruis's son-in-law Manolo, as a sign that there was nothing arbitrary about the boundary between his land and that of Santa Clara. The boundary is present to perception as the path cut along the limit between the two areas. This path is a material reality, linked to the material reality of the title deed. In some mysterious way, it refers to the power of the state in Lima. The people of Santa Clara would have been extremely reluctant to appeal to the vague authority of

Lima in any fight with Manolo, but fortunately Manolo was equally reluctant to chance his luck.[6]

The land title of Santa Clara, as an object, thus does not represent the environment of Santa Clara to anyone in the area. At most it is a material token of another set of powers which native people have learned historically to use against their exploiters. The copy of the land title that sits in Don Mauricio's box thus has a particular efficacy as the material embodiment of a particular set of events in the political history of the Bajo Urubamba and of a particular configuration of power relations. The land title takes its small place within the complex of meaningful relationships between the inhabitants of Santa Clara and the local landscape. It does not stand for the totality of these relationships for native people, nor could it. For native people, there can be no such totality, as long as people need to clear land for gardens and houses, as children grow, and as narratives trace the past into the present.

The other copy of the land title, in Lima, is something else. It is part of a vast mass of texts and documents, laws and title deeds, and of the social relations these inhabit. That land title document defines the relationship between the people of Santa Clara and their land as a unidirectional relationship of possession. It links that relationship to a multiplicity of other relationships of similar or different order, such that the people and land of Santa Clara become enchained within a network of graphic representations and social relations about which they know little or nothing. By representing the ties between people and land in Santa Clara, the land title imposes potential limits to the meanings of those ties, and simultaneously imposes new meanings on it. Analytically, the complex circulation of multiplicities of relations between the people and the landscape of Santa Clara, as meaningful action, cannot be reduced to the unidirectional relationship between a collective subject (the *Comunidad Nativa* of Santa Clara) and an object (the territory of Santa Clara). But the land title implies that they can, and the power relations within which it operates suggest that they might well be.

Conclusion: A Landscape and a Land Title

I began this paper with the problems that people from the temperate North have with seeing Amazonia as a human landscape. I have argued that one small part of Amazonia, the Bajo Urubamba river, is lived as a human landscape by local native people through a multiplicity of engagements with the forest and river, with each other in acts of generosity and in narration, and in encounters with the dead and with spirits. Finally, I pointed out a little object which lies hidden within the landscape of one native community, the land title, which contains another vision of this landscape. In conclusion, I want to draw out some of the implications of this analysis.

For the native people of the Bajo Urubamba, the local environment is a lived space. It is known by means of movement through it, seeing the traces of other people's movements and agency, and through the narratives of yet other people's agency. The narratives, while apparently most distant from embodied experience, are in fact closely linked to it, for they depend on the simultaneous presence of speaker and hearer in one place. That which is indeed distant from embodied experience is the origin of the general spaces of landscape outside of human agency, which is revealed only through the medium of drugs. At this level, the major difference between this landscape and that embodied in the land title is the concreteness of the former and the abstraction of the latter. The land title might seem to be an airy representation of the concrete presence of people in the land. But it is not, for it is the concrete embodiment of certain very important social processes. Their effects were not too evident on the Bajo Urubamba at the time of my fieldwork, but their potential was definitely there.

It might be thought that I have given the little piece of paper which embodies the land title of Santa Clara a more portentous significance than it deserves. But one has only to look into the processes of struggle for land in Amazonia, or anywhere that indigenous tribal people are fighting for control of their country, to see just how important these little bits of paper are. The legal registration of indigenous people's land claims, and court battles surrounding it, is primarily an issue of the portentous significance of pieces of paper. We imagine such pieces of paper to embody abstract principles of ownership and control, but they can do so only because they *are* pieces of paper. It is not after all the land of Santa Clara that is held in the Ministry of Agriculture in Lima, but a paper representation of it. As many Native Amazonian people have found to their dire cost, it is these pieces of paper which determine who owns what, not their own complex relationships to their land.

In the ongoing social processes of Santa Clara, it is the path cleared around the community territory which matters, not the abstract representation of this boundary as the ink line on the land title map. The boundary path is the direct embodiment of native people in the landscape of Santa Clara. But the little inky line on the piece of paper is the direct physical embodiment of someone else. This someone else, unknown to the people of Santa Clara and to myself, is the one who embodied the laws of the Peruvian State in the process of registering the *Comunidad Nativa de Santa Clara*. The land title of Santa Clara is not a representation of Santa Clara primarily because it looks like Santa Clara, but because its 'standing for' that landscape has the potential to be effected as concrete social action.

Ethnography itself, as writing about culture, is also engaged with pieces of paper. It is, as we all now recognize, a mode of representation. But this does not mean that what ethnographers are writing about, 'culture' or 'society', is itself a form of representation. Unfortunately, however, certain of our most

important and pervasive models of culture are based on this metaphor: Durkheim's 'collective representations' and Boas' 'seeing eye of tradition' (see Sperber 1985 and Sahlins 1976 for powerful recent restatements of these respective positions). In both cases, cultural processes are modelled on the classic order of representation. In the Durkheimian case, bodily-interior states are modelled as materially fabricated objects of a specific type, while in the Boasian case, culture is modelled on the aesthetic contemplation which constitutes the viewer's place in relationship to representation (see Foucault 1970 on classical representation). It is like the two aspects of a classic Western landscape painting: the fabricated painting and the viewing aesthete.

As Foucault has shown so clearly in his analysis of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, subject, object, and world are held together in a specific mode in the order of representation.[7] But Foucault's work, however enlightening about the interior construction of Western modes of knowledge, provides ethnographers with no guide to reflection on the modes of experience with which they seek to engage. The relationship between the people of Santa Clara and their land cannot be decanted from a critical reflection on Western philosophy, for it must be sought out in active engagement with these people, with all the problems that involves. But equally, we must avoid clutching at the fantasy of 'immediate presence', the mystical participation with other peoples in other countries. We must not model the experiences of the people of Santa Clara as the inverse or spectral images of our own.

This is why I have placed such stress on the specific forms of lived experience of landscape of the Bajo Urubamba. As Munn has shown in her study of Gawa (1986), specific practices create the world, or spacetime, in which they occur, and which thereby constitutes the immediate experience of the agents who produce it. In so far as it is the specific practices which constitute both world and subjective experience, it is to variations in specific practices that we must apply our attention. In this light, the creation and use of little bits of paper with their inky lines, as a specific practice, can be seen to generate a very different spacetime from the oral narratives of older kin on the Bajo Urubamba. Indeed, Latour (1987) has argued that it is the production and amassing of marks on paper that is the central practice of science, rather than any mode of thought or contemplation of objective reality. The spacetime generated by these marks on paper, or representations, is what we call 'the real world'. It is this spacetime which is then lived by us, as the abstract order is imposed on other spacetimes: in other words, as a line drawn on a map is effected as a road cut across part of Amazonia.

In his study of the changing ecological relations in colonial New England, Cronon writes, 'Our project must be to locate a nature that is within rather than without history, for only by so doing can we find human communities which are inside rather than outside nature' (1983: 15). But we must be careful not to reduce history to one aspect of human material-making, the production

of texts, representations. We must begin to think of other possible histories inside nature, of the meanings of patterns of deflection in vegetation, of making paths through the forest, of abandoning old gardens, and of telling stories in a particular place and at a particular time. And we must begin to think of the implications of those other histories as modes of lived experience.

Notes

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1. I borrow this apt phrase from Rivière (1969).
2. Denevan (1971), Denevan *et al.* (1986), and Posey (1987).
3. In Piro, *ayahuasca* is called *kamalampi*, which seems to be closely related to the root *kama-*, 'to have supernatural power', and 'to kill'. The term *kamchi* refers to any supernatural being, but is also used of the bone demon. A similar relationship holds in Campa.
4. My analysis of the dead and of spirits draws on Munn (1970). Cf. also Myers (1986).
5. But see Toren (in Ingold (1990)) for a critique of the concept of 'socialization' with implications for the analysis presented here.
6. See Gow (1991) for a more detailed account of land ownership and disputation on the Bajo Urubamba.
7. See Green (1990) for an analysis of this tripartite system in the representation of landscape, as well as his reflections on landscape as personal experience.

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