

Animate and inanimate in Cashinahua - grammar and sociability

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Resumo

O estudo das categorias animadas e inanimadas revela elementos animistas na filosofia caxinauá, cujo conceito de mundo é baseado na noção geral de “indiferenciação” dos seres. Sua linguagem mostra morfossintaticamente como eles concebem e organizam os seres (humanos e não humanos). Em caxinauá, os agentes linguísticos mostram que elementos animados e alguns inanimados (como rochas/pedras, flechas) podem pertencer à classe dos seres vivos e, como tal, são considerados humanóides, capazes de interagir como humanos. A categoria lexical e seu papel etnossintático refletem, em caxinauá, sua categoria semântica e seu tratamento sintático.

Palavras-chave:

Caxinauá, grupo pano, subjectividade e agentividade dos objetos, Amazônia, etnosintaxe.

Resumé

L'étude des catégories animées et inanimées révèle les éléments animistes de la philosophie cashinahua dont la conception du monde repose sur la notion générale d'« indifférenciation » des êtres. Leur langage montre morpho-syntaxiquement comment ils conçoivent et organisent les êtres (humains et non humains). Les agents linguistiques cashinahua montrent que les éléments animés et certains inanimés (comme les rochers/pierres, les flèches) peuvent appartenir à la classe des êtres vivants, et en tant que tels sont considérés des humanoïdes, réputés capables d'interagir comme les humains. La catégorie lexicale et son rôle ethnosyntaxique reflètent sa catégorie sémantique et son traitement syntaxique en Cashinahua.

Mots-clés:

Cachinawa, groupe pano, subjectivité et agentivité des objets, Amazonie, ethnosyntax.

Resumen

El estudio de las categorías animado e inanimado revela los elementos animistas de la filosofía cashinahua, cuyo concepto del mundo se basa en la noción general de “indiferenciación” de los seres. Su lengua muestra morfosintáticamente cómo conciben y organizan a los seres (humanos y no humanos). Los agentes lingüísticos de cashinahua muestran que los elementos animados y algunos inanimados (como rocas/piedras, flechas) pueden pertenecer a la clase de seres vivos y, como tales, son considerados humanoides, capaces de interactuar como humanos. La categoría léxica y su rol etnosintático reflejan su categoría semántica y su tratamiento sintático en cashinahua.

Palabras clave:

Cashinahua; grupo pano; subjetividad y agentividad de los objetos; Amazonia, etnosintaxis.

1. Introduction¹

In Cashinahua, a South American indigenous language belonging to the Panoan language family², the distinction between animate and inanimate elements is not clear cut. Many of the elements considered in other cultures as inanimate are linguistically treated as animate or at least likely to express agentivity. This agentive status of objects is linked to the Cashinahua way of organizing human interaction with elements of nature and manufactured items. A look at Cashinahua grammar and philosophy indicate that beings in general belong to the field of social – or sociable– relations. Such human or non-human beings (animal or non-animal), build unique forms of sociability among themselves, which are reflected linguistically. They require, however, different interpretations depending on the origin of the beings in question. Thus, for instance, a genitive construction, where the possessor element is represented by a human being, refers to a generic concept when there is no morphological marking; but if there is one, the relations between the beings are of a specific kind. However, the same morpho-syntactic structure with a non-human possessor requires a different interpretation. In this case, the genitive case-marking refers to a specific relation, but also to the quantification of the possessed element, as for instance in the case of pets.

Thus, stories about mythological times, the times of indifferentiation when boundaries between the different beings that populated the world were not yet clear-cut, display syntactic processes that clearly indicate a change in social category, the shift from human to non-human. The syntax allows us to determine the way in which the Cashinahua language expresses the idea of the social, and who can participate in the social universe. It also suggests that the contrast between humans and non-humans (animals and non-animals) is not pertinent in the Cashinahua language. Thus, in the genitive construction, the semantic opposition that seems to prevail is that between humans and assimilated to humanness versus non-humans. In the actancy construction, the agentivity seems to be limited to the universe of those beings endowed with subjectivity, human or non-human.

Manufactured goods belong to the class of non-humans and, as such, in a genitive construction, are treated morphologically as they are. In our corpus, only arrows and bows receive the ergative case marking which expresses agentivity. Thus, should we consider them as inanima-

1. Bernard Comrie, Fernando Santos-Granero, Philippe Erikson and Sabine Reiter stimulated me to think about the question of the subjectivity of objects. To them my special thanks.

2. It is spoken by around 12,000 individuals. The self-denomination *huni kuin* is shared by about fifteen other Panoan groups, with some phonetic variants, *huni kuin* 'man kuin' (man is taken in the broad sense of humanity). This group is currently known as *sai nawa* 'screaming people'. Since the end of the 1990s, the Cashinahuas auto denominate themselves as *Huni kuin*, which gives to this group greater visibility with regard to the indigenous exoticism so sought after by westerners. In order to respect all Panoan groups (*huni kuinbu*), I use the ethnic term Cashinahua (*kaxi nawa* 'Bat people'), which refers clearly to this specific group. Note. All translation from the Cashinahua language into English is done by the author.

te elements? In this case, it is the relationship humans have with these goods that is important. Bows and arrows are tightly linked with male gender roles. Moreover, the available data indicate that the subjectivity of objects is latent, above all, in the shamanic sphere. This can be seen in verbal communication between shamans and rocks, and also with big trees. The link between society and language may be seen through Cashinahua syntax, as I show throughout this text.

2. Indifferentiation in the narratives

It is said that in the times of indifferentiation humans turned into non-humans and vice-versa. Because they shared social relations, both adapted to each other's life: at times they spoke (the humans); at times they shouted (the non-humans). In his masterwork on the Cashinahua, João Capistrano de Abreu ([1911] 1941) registered myths about the metamorphosis of human beings, who, because of frustration, decided to live as non-humans. Some of these texts show the transformation of human beings into non-human beings, a categorical switch that is linguistically marked. The indifferentiation of the human and non-human categories is clearly revealed in one of the fundamental myths of this Panoan society: the myth of the jaguars, which I shall discuss below. It illustrates both indistinction of beings, as well as the rules of sociability, governed on the one hand by the *inu bakebu*³ 'the progenies of the jaguar' and on the other, by the *dua bakebu*⁴ 'the progenies of the puma'.

Capistrano de Abreu organized these narratives into two types: *Huni kuin damini kiaki*⁵ 'Cashinahua transformed into animals,' and *Yuinaka damini kiaki*⁶ 'Animals that were enchanted.' In Portuguese, the author resorted to the lexicon to differentiate the human turned into an animal by using the word "transformed" and from the animal turned into a human by the use of the word 'enchanted'. In contrast, the vernacular language employs a single word, *dami*, 'transformation,' 'metamorphosis,' but also 'drawing,' such as in the construction *damidan peki*, 'well-made drawing.' In other words, a single polysemic word suffices to account for different types of changes, including graphic representation.

The texts transcribed by Capistrano de Abreu illustrate the great polyvalence of the lexical roots that separate categories such as nouns and verbs (Camargo, 2003). In cases of indifferentiation, this linguistic expedient enables the narrator to move from one state to the

3. *Inu* 'jaguar' *bake* 'son,' 'progeny'; *-bu* suffix of plurality.

4. The Cashinahua writing follows its phonological system. It presents four vowels (/a/, /e/ [ə], /i/, /u/) and fourteen consonants (b, d [d]/[Q], h, k, m, n, p, s, x [ʃ]/[f], t, ts, tx, w, y [j]/[j]).

5. Chapter 9 (Capistrano de Abreu 1941) includes seven narratives: *yaix* 'tatu', *xae* 'great anteater', *awa* 'tapir', *yawa* 'white-lipped peccary', *xawe* 'land turtle', *du xau* 'piping guan' (*Anthus chii*), *txuntxum* 'wren'.

6. Chapter 10 (Capistrano de Abreu 1941) includes four narratives: *kapa* 'squirrel', *ixtxinkan* 'toad' (gener.), *heu* 'bullfrog', *txaxu* 'deer'.

other, from one category to another. Animal names, for instance, get verbal suffixes such as in the narrative about the ‘woman who turned into a great anteater,’ *ainbu xae dami-ni kiaki*. The following four examples illustrate this transition, which is linguistically marked.

In (1a) the narrator employs the aspectual morpheme of permanent state, *-i*, to say that the woman has already turned into an anteater, thus marking the passage from human to non-human state. In (2) the narrator employs the aspectual value of process or of progressive, *-ai*, to express that the woman is undergoing the transformation process and is turning into an anteater because her body is growing animal ‘fur,’ *dani*. In (3) the woman asks herself if she could pass from the human to the animal state and become an anteater. In this case she uses the modal suffix *-pa* as a possibility for such transformation. The example in (4) illustrates the suffix *-pai*, expressing frustration. The narrator employs it to communicate that the human being was trying to become an animal, but didn’t succeed:

-i, *-a* permanent state and evolutive state values⁷ respectively:

1a. *xae-i*

great anteater-perm⁸

She is (already) an anteater.

1b. *xae-a*

great anteater-evol

She is (already) (in the skin of) an anteater.

-ai processual aspectual value:

| | | | |
|--------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2. (∅) | <i>mawa</i> | <i>dani-ai,</i> | <i>keyu-tan</i> |
| (s/he) | a lot of | fur-PROC | full-tan |

She has fur all over her body.

-pa notional value of possible:

3. *xae-pa*

great anteater-MODAL.INTER

Will I be able to turn into an anteater?

-pai frustrative⁹:

4. *xae-pai*

great anteater-frust

She wanted to be an anteater (, but was unable to).

7. The verbal suffix *-a* expresses perfect/stative with meaning of resultant state on terminative verbs and highlighting the meaning of state on aterminative verbs. The verbal suffix *i-* expresses a present or simultaneity with another action.

8. *Abbreviations.* a(gent), adj(etivizer), ass(ertive), caus(al), evid(ential). past, erg(ative), evol. (evolutive state), foc(us), frust(rative), gen(itive), hab(itual), hist(orical).past, indef(inite), inf(imitive), inter(rogative), instr(umental), med(iative), mod(al), lit(eral), p(atient), pp (past participle, past, perf(ective), perm. (permanent state), pl(ural), pres(ent), prog(ressive), rec(iproque), s(ingle argument), soc(iative), sg(singular), top(ic), vbr(verbalizer), voc(ative), vs(verbal substitute).

9. Those suffixes are equally added to lexemes of verbal values: *ka* ‘to go’: *ka-i-dan* (to go-perm-foc) ‘He is the one who is going’; *en ka-ai* (I/ to go-prog) ‘I’m going’; *ka-pa* (to go-modal) ‘can I go?’; *ka-pai* (to go-frust) ‘wanted to go [but can’t]’.

The indifferentiation of beings is well expressed in one of the most important Cashinahua myths, called *Inu yuxibu huni kuin nukun ibuki*¹⁰ ‘The jaguar’s *yuxibu*¹¹ is our owner/master’, which describes the attributes of each being in their dualist philosophy. In this myth, a human being, *ainbu dabanen*, (the woman who is afraid of having sexual intercourse with human being) cohabits with two non-human beings, who are two jaguars: *inu keneya*, ‘jaguar’ (*Felis onca*) and *txaxu inu*, ‘puma’ (*Puma concolor*). The woman and the two felines form an alliance. The myth is a good example of the principle of animism described by Descola (2015), in which different beings, with different bodies, but who are similar inside, share the same world. It conveys the indifferentiation among beings sharing a single language and moving through different worlds, as shown in the following condensed version:

A girl who was afraid of having sex with men, *ainbu dabanen*, had sexual intercourse with a ‘worm’, *nuin*, who lived under her ‘mat’, *pixin*. When sweeping the mat, the mother found her daughter’s worm-husband and killed it. Desperate from the death of her worm-husband, the girl went into the forest calling the jaguars to come eat her:

5. *Inawan, ea piyuwe*

Hey, jaguar, eat me!

Two brothers, *inu keneya*, ‘the jaguar,’ and *txaxu inu*, ‘the puma,’ upon hearing her, turned into human beings (*Ha inu keneya ma huni kuina, txaxu inundi ma huni kuina* ‘That jaguar has already turned into man, and the puma too has already turned into man’) and came to her. After the girl told them what had happened to her worm-husband and of her fear of human-husbands (*Huni kuin tenen dabanennibu kiaki* ‘She feared sexual relations with humans’), the jaguars in human skin revealed their jaguar identity to her:

6. *Ah, habia en eaki inudan, matxuama, en bin inu aki ikai*

Ah, that’s exactly that, I’m a jaguar. It’s no lie, I’m really a jaguar.

The girl then went to live in the world of the jaguars and learned their language: *Ha ainbu yui tapinma, ninkatan, habe kani kiaki* ‘that woman learned the speech and how to understand [the jaguars’ language]; and went with them’.

She first lived with the puma, the ‘good-hunter’ *marupiara* jaguar, *dekuya*. Next, she lived with the jaguar proper, the ‘bad-hunter’

10. This myth is known under different names, among which *Inawan ainbu yuiniki* ‘the speech of the jaguar-woman’ and *Inawan miyuiki, ainbu dananandan, nuin txutamakin* ‘the myth of the jaguar, the woman afraid of sexual relations with men who has sex with the worm.’

11. *Yuxibu* can be considered as living beings, who affect, for instance, the health of human beings. They may also be considered superhuman or over humans endowed with corporality. Among them stand out ‘the river dolphin’, *kuxu ika*, and the ‘anaconda’, *dunuwan*, the *yuinaka yuxibu*, ‘animal’s *yuxibu*’, the *ni ewapabu yuxibu*, ‘plant’s *yuxibu*’, and the *maxax yuxibu*, ‘mineral’s *yuxibu* are two examples of such beings (see also Lagrou 2007).

panema jaguar, *yupa*, with whom she had children. The jaguars' mother was called to take care of her grandchildren, but she devoured them. So, her jaguar-sons decided to burn her:

7. *En daki pinanti* [...]. *Kuananwe*

I suspect she's eating [her grandchildren]. Let's burn her!

The jaguar-mother announced that, after she was burned, her spilled blood would call all the jaguars:

8. *Uindaxankanwe* [...] *ea kuatana ha en himi betsa betsai, dasibi inu bekanikiki...*

Be careful [...] when you burn me, my blood will be transformed and all the jaguars will come.

They would come to the place where the fire was set to find out what had happened and to find who was responsible for the fire. With the help of the 'wild rabbit', *utsa*, the jaguar-sons and the girl survived. The event caused the appearance of a number of illnesses (above all headaches) and brought about the end of indistinction. The jaguars were kept in their non-human skins and the girl in her human skin. By living as jaguars, they would be exclusively predators, eating those animals that neither scared them, such as the great anteater, *xae*, nor were considered smart, such as the wild rabbit. The girl went back to her human world.

With the end of the period of indistinction, the animals remained as such, and human beings continued to be human. The speech of One could no longer be understood by the Other. The former began to 'roar', *hi-hi imiski*, 'bellow' *sai-sai imiski*, 'bark' *hau-hau imiski*, and 'squeak' *keu imiski*, whereas the latter started to speak, *hantxa imiski*. The man, however, imitated the animals with a predatory intention in order to be able to get closer to them.

This narrative suggests the existence of a network of sociability among the beings that appear in it, presenting the dominant fields of each of them. To wit, the predatory jaguar-grandmother, who devours her grandchildren; the human-wife, who procreates and carries out the domestic chores as the social rules recommend; and the jaguar-husbands, who reveal their social attributes: the jaguar, associated with rhetoric and mostly in charge of external relations, and the puma, linked to prudence and in charge of internal relations. The structure of this dualistic society –or rather dualistic thought- which is strongly reflected in the social structure of contemporary Cashinahua, is built precisely upon the human beings that are

descended from the jaguar, *inu bakebu*, and from the puma, *dua bakebu*. Kept throughout time, this social structure indicates that such indifferen-
tiation is necessary for social relations; the social network being weaved by
One and the Other regardless of the being's human or non-human nature.

3. Mediators of Communication between Different Beings and Spheres.

The *huni mukaya*, or shaman, moves through the different spheres of the world, and understands its different languages: the 'village language,' *mae hantxa*; the 'forest language,' *ni medan hantxa*; and the 'language of the waters,' *hene hantxa*. This enables shamans to communicate with different beings, human or not. The latter includes animals, plants, and minerals. Shamans communicate with the vital force of the various beings that inhabit the world, whether they are living (*yuxibu*) or not (*yuxin*¹³), and are able to decode their messages:

9. *Hi yuxibu sai ik-i-dan, huni mukaya-n*
tree *yuxibu* cry VBR-PRES-FOC shaman-A

unan-mis-ki, Ninka-mis-ki,
know-HAB-ASS listen-HAB-ASS

ui be-nun-dan, niwen-dan, be-nun-dan.
rain come-CAUS-FOC wind-TOP come-CAUS-FOC

Yuinaka be-nun-bu-n-dan.
game come-CAUS-PL-n-FOC

The shaman knows the cry of the *yuxibu* of the trees. S/he understands the cry of the rain, of the wind. That means there's game close by.

Shamans, who can communicate with five large trees: *buxix* 'copal', *kuman* 'cumarú', *xunuwan* 'kapok tree', *baxawa* and *yumenewan*, interrogate them using their names (*hi ewapabudan kenayaki*) and talk with their *yuxin*:

10. *Dasibi yuxin-a-bu-ki hantxa-tidu-bu-ki,*
All yuxin-PER-PL-ASS talk-MOD-PL-ASS

huni mukaya be hantxa-pauni-bu-ki, yui-name-a
shaman SOC talk-HIST.PAST-PL-ASS tell-REC-PP
All the *yuxin* are able to speak; they talk with shamans; they know each other's language.

13. *Yuxin* is an ontological category traditionally interpreted as 'spirit', 'spiritual being', 'vital force', or 'supernatural entity'. This category has been recently reinterpreted as leading to a notion of common knowledge found in the knowledge of epistemological natures, whose point of intersection would be the ontological nature. Among the Sharanawa, it denotes a category of perception (Déléage, 2005: 47-50). See also Lagrou (2007), Pérez-Gil (2001), Lima (2000). The Cashinahua, for their part, are not capable of seeing the *yuxin*, the presence of which is manifested, for instance, by the wind. They can, however, see different aspects of *yuxibu*: *Yuxindan nun uinismaki, niwe bestiki; yuxibu nun imiski, ni yuxibudan, hene yuxibudan, dasibi yuinakadan yuxibu hayaki, awa yuxibu hayaki* 'We do not see the *yuxin*, only the wind, while we can perceive the *yuxibu* entities: *yuxibu* of the forest, *yuxibu* of the river, all wild animals (for instance) have *yuxibu*, the tapir has *yuxibu*.'

Objects such as cliffs and minerals, represented by the *maxax* rock, are also part of this discursive relationship:

11. *Huni mukaya hantxa-mis-ki mawa-dan, maxax-dan*
 Shaman talk-HAB-ASS cliff-TOP rock-TOP
hi be hantxa-mis-ki
 tree SOC talk- HAB-ASS
 The shaman talks with the cliff, rocks, and trees.

In (11), it shows the use of the associative postposition *be*, used for human beings, linked to the term *hi*, ‘tree.’ The *yuxin* question her/him (*yuxin-en-dan mia kenatiduki*, ‘the *yuxin* [of a non-living being] may call you’) thus:

12. *Epa-n, mia ak-a, ha-wen hi mi-n*
 Father-VOC 2sg say-PP 3SG-SOC tree 2SG-A
ninka-tidu-ki ha-wen yuda uin-yama-dan.
 listen-MOD-ASS 3sg-soc body see-PAST-FOC
 Hey, father! he says to you. You may understand [the language of] that tree, you can see its body.

People who are considered to be the *yuxin*’s children, *yuxin bakebu*, *yuxin* progenies¹⁴, also have access to other worlds. These *yuxin bakebu* distinguish themselves from other people because of some kind of deficiency, such as blindness, muteness, or albinism. They are seen as very intelligent and extremely skilful, as can be seen below:

13. — *Huni yuxibu-n bake-n unan-mis-ki.*
 — Man *yuxibu*-GEN progeny-A know-HAB-ASS
 Huni mukaya keska-ki:
 shaman be.like-ASS
ha-wen pabinki xaba-a-ki, ha-wen bedu
 3SG-SOC ear clear-PP-ASS 3SG-SOC eye
xaba-a-ki.
 clear-PP-ASS
 — The progenies of *yuxin*¹⁵ know everything. They are like the shamans: their ears hear everything and their eyes see everything.

14. Cashinahua points out that *yuxin bake* is ‘the child of the *yuxin* of a dead person’, whereas *yuxibu bake* is ‘the child of the *yuxin* of a living person’. The former is intelligent and skillful in whatever it does; the latter is a diviner and has premonitory abilities.

15. In their living manifestation, these are considered *huni yuxibu bake*.

3.1 Elements of the *kuin* category

The *kuin* category encompasses all elements indifferently, whether human, non-human, or inanimate. The epithet *kuin* marks, on the one hand, the speaker's referential element par excellence, and, on the other, its prototypicalized element or object:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Category | kuin |
| | |
| Class | huni kuin |
| | ‘human’ (assimilated referential) |
| <i>yuinaka kuin</i> | ‘animal of prey’ |
| <i>bai kuin</i> | ‘planting field +adequate’ ¹⁶ |
| <i>pia kuin</i> | ‘bamboo +arrow’ |
| <i>piti kuin</i> | ‘+food’ |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Category | kuinma |
| | |
| Class | huni kuinma |
| | ‘human or endowed with to the speaker’s humanness’ |
| | (non-assimilated to the speaker’s referential) |
| <i>yuinaka kuinma</i> | ‘non-edible animal’ |
| <i>bai kuinma</i> | ‘planting field -adequate land’ |
| <i>pia kuinma</i> | ‘bamboo -arrow’ |
| <i>piti kuinma</i> | ‘food’ |

Different classes have sub-classes, where the prototypical element is designated by *kuin* as well:

Different classes have sub-classes, where the prototypical element is designated by *kuin* as well:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| class | piti kuin |
| | ‘food’ |
| | / \ |
| sub-class | atsa kuin atsa kuinma |
| | ‘manioc +edible’ ‘manioc -edible’ |
| | <i>sani atsa</i> <i>muka atsa</i> |
| | <i>xunu atsa</i> <i>kapan atsa</i> |

3.2 Beings of the Huni Kuinma Class

The Cashinahuas have a categorical system¹⁷ that contrasts with the class of *huni kuin*, humans assimilated to the speaker’s referential, to

16. The markings + and - indicate an opposition between the elements, such as a planting field whose land is adequate for cultivation (planting field +adequate land), as opposed to a planting field whose land is not adequate for cultivation (planting field -adequate land).

17. It’s worthwhile to point out, however, that the categorical system is flexible and its referent molds itself according to the enunciation or referential situation. See Lagrou (2007).

the class of the *huni kuinma*, humans non-assimilated to the speaker's referential. But first, what does '*huni kuin*' really mean?

Huni designates 'man' (Na *huni ma huaki* 'That man has just arrived'). And in this adjectival construction, *huni* refers to man in the broad sense of humanity. The epithet *kuin* is not translatable, at least, in National non Indigenous languages spoken in all Americas. Its social semantics is flexible because according to the context, it takes on a restricted or a broad meaning, identifying an individual or a group of individuals in such situations. In the Cashinahua case, this construction must be understood in its corresponding enunciative context, since a Cashinahua can also be a «no *huni kuin*», that is, a *huni kuinma*¹⁸. The inhabitants of a Cashinahua village, for example, can be *huni kuin* compared to those of another Cashinahua village. But if the context of the enunciation refers to all the Cashinahua communities, they will all be *huni kuinbu*¹⁹ (with the plural, *-bu*). All the Cashinahuas, in turn, are *huni kuin* (or *huni kuinbu*) in relation to other ethnic groups of Panoan origin (Sharanahuas, Chani-nahuas, Mastanahuas), who also call themselves *huni kuin*, or are so in relation to other ethnic groups of other language families (Arawak, Arua etc.). But if a Cashinahua speaks in an assembly that brings together different indigenous groups on an issue in which the Other is the "mestizos" (Peruvians or Brazilians), in that context all of them (the indigenous) will be *huni kuinbu*. Thus, *kuin* is a flexible epithet with a context-dependent meaning, and it may concern humans and non-humans.

The same applies to *yuxin* and *yuxibu*. The *yuxin*, for instance, are found in a variety of beings. They manifest themselves not only through vision, smell and hearing, but also through speech. As shown in the scheme below, these beings are sub-classified into beings that are visible to the shaman, *yuxin kuin*, and those that can be detected by the shaman, but also by other members of the group, through hearing and smell, *yuxin kuinma*:

| class | huni kuinma (animated no kuin) | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | yuxin | |
| sub-class | / | \ |
| | <i>yuxin kuin</i> | <i>yuxin kuinma</i> |
| | | |
| | <i>uinkin</i> | <i>ninkakin, xetekin</i> |
| | (visual perception) | (hearing and/or smell perception) |

18. *huni kuin-ma* (human/*kuin*-NEG) 'no (es) *kuin*.'

19. The suffix *-bu* marks nominal and verbal constructions. It presents a different meaning when attached to nouns designating ethnic groups: Xipibu (or Shipibo) |*xipi* 'white-headed marmoset (*Callithrix geoffroyi*) | *-bu* 'a large amount', it indicates a particular characteristic of the group that is referred to. According to the Cashinahuas, when Xipibus drink a large amount of *masato* in one shot, they leave traces of the manioc fermented drink around their mouths reminiscent of the marmoset monkey. The plural suffix *-bu* expresses here a "large quantity". The construction *uxabu* exemplifies this meaning: *uxa* 'sleep' – *bu* 'a large quantity' designating 'sleepyhead'.

The above scheme suggests a contrast between the field of visibility and the field of non-visibility. Visual perception is the shaman's exclusive realm. Only the shaman is able to see the *yuxin kuin*. In the following locution, a Cashinahua interlocutor states that the shaman can indeed see, but only good things:

14. *Huni mukaya-n yuxin kuin uin-mis-ki huni mukaya-n*
 Shaman-A *yuxin kuin.P* see-HAB-ASS Shaman-A
yuxin betsa uin-is-ma-ki.
yuxin other.P see-HAB-NEG-ASS
yuxin kuin.p see-HAB-ASS shaman-A
Pepa uin-mis-ki.
 well see-HAB-ASS

The shaman sees the *yuxin kuin*, s/he doesn't see another kind of *yuxin* (the *yuxin kuinma*, because s/he only feels or hears it). S/he sees what's good.

So, he goes on to say that s/he doesn't see what's no good because s/he is afraid that those *yuxin*-other may "eat us":

15. *Txakabu uin-is-ma-ki. Mese-ki, nuku pi-a,*
 Bad see-HAB-NEG-ASS be.afraid- ASS 1PL.P eat-PP
ik-a-dan.
 VS-PP-FOC

S/he doesn't see bad things. S/he is afraid they'll eat us.

The *yuxin kuinma* also belongs to the field of non-visibility, being part of the perceptive field of hearing and smell. This field is open to all those (shamans and non-shamans) who are able to 'hear,' *ninkakin*, and 'feel,' *xetekin*, the *yuxin*. It should be kept in mind that beings of the *huni kuin*, human, and *huni kuinma*, non-human, categories have +animated attributes. This is because perception is manifested by different beings (human and non-human) and is perceived in different ways (human or not) by the different beings that are susceptible to communication between these worlds. Among human beings, shamans are an exception for they are endowed with the undifferentiated perception of the field of visibility. Such beings (human and non-human) display not only attributes that are inherent to perception, but also agentivity, as discussed below.

4. Animacy in the syntax

Cashinahua syntax has different casual markers, one of which has a multifunctional value: $\{-\{a/i/e\}n\}$ and also the suffix *-pan*, which is applied, among others, to the genitive and to the ergative cases (Camargo, 2010). In a genitive construction, this suffix marks the relation of dependence that among beings. In the ergative, it marks actancy, when applied to the agent of a transitive construction. In the first situation, it is associated with the possessor element, represented by a human being or a being assimilated to humanness, or by a number of non-human beings. In the second situation, it is seen next to any nominal that has agentivity. Thus, it can be suffixed to terms that designate human beings and non-human beings, such as animals and plants, and even minerals and natural phenomena. Below I discuss how the syntax treats such constructions.

4.1. The genitive construction

In a genitival phrase, comprised of two nouns (N-N), the absence of a marker, tied to the element on the left, points to a generic relation. The presence of a marker, however, refers to a specific relation.

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4.1.1 The generic relation of animated elements

The noun phrases below seem to supply the following linguistic information: (a) the gender for human and non-human beings is formed differently. For human beings, it is expressed by the terms *man*, *huni*, and *woman*, *ainbu*:

16. a. *huni bake* ‘boy’ (lit. ‘progeny of man’)
- b. *ainbu bake* ‘girl’ (lit. ‘progeny of woman’)

For non-human beings, it is expressed by the terms *bene*, male, and *yuxan*, female:

- c. *takada bene* ‘rooster’ (lit. ‘male of domestic bird’)
- d. *takada yuxan* ‘hen’ (lit. ‘female of domestic bird’)

(b) syntactically, a construction in which the possessor element is represented by an animated, human or non-human being (c-d) is no different than a construction in which the possessor element is represented by an inanimate being:

e. *nupe bake* 'knife handle' (lit. 'progeny of knife')

f. *hi punya* 'branch' (lit. 'tree arm')

and (c) the various constructions refer to a generic sense.

The determined element is placed on the right of the noun phrase, which shows that, in a noun phrase in Cashinahua, determination takes place from right to left. That construction also shows that syntactically nothing differentiates the relationship between beings. Each expresses a generic relationship, as the literal interpretation suggests:

17. a. *takada bake* 'chick' (lit. 'progeny of domestic bird')
 b. *inu bake* 'jaguar cub' (lit. 'progeny of jaguar')
 c. *due bake* 'ax handle' (lit. 'continuity/progeny of ax')

Such juxtaposition of nominals is kept regardless of the meaning of the determined element, whether it is represented by body parts:

18. a. *awa buxka* 'tapir head'
 b. *awa tae* 'tapir paw'

14

or kinship terms:

19. a. *awa ibu* 'tapir genitor' (to which we referred)
 b. *awa bake* *pixta ha besti, e-n*
 tapir offspring small 3SG alone, 1SG-GEN
hiwe anu e-n bu-xu-ki
 home dir 1SG-A bring-PERF-ASS
 [I went after the tapir's progeny, but] only offspring was there. I brought it home.

4.1.2 The generic relation of inanimate elements

The morpho-syntactic structure of a genitive phrase whose determined element is represented by an inanimate being is identical to that whose determined element is represented above by an animated non-human. This morpho-syntactic treatment, that is, the absence of a genitive marking, aligns the animated non-human elements with the inanimate elements in a single possession phrase:

20. a. *due bake* ‘ax handle’
 b. *hi bake* ‘wooden doll’

4.1.3 Genitive: assimilator of beings to humanness

Following the same syntactic pattern of the genitival phrases shown so far, the determinant element may, however, be morphologically treated in the genitive case, $\{-a/i/e\}n$. (Camargo & Toribio, 2019). This suffix may join both a nominal represented by a human being (21a) and by a non-human being (21b-c). Such treatment shows that the opposition human/non-human is not pertinent in Cashinahua:

21. a. *huni-n bake* ‘(the) man’s progeny’
 man-GEN progeny
 b. *takada-n bake* ‘(the) chicken/rooster’s chick’
 c. *anu-n bake* ‘(the) paca’s progeny’

However, the marking in (21b-c) refers to pets or domesticated animals. This morphological treatment attributes to these beings +human properties. Nonetheless different Cashinahua interlocutors find it difficult to explain the use of such noun phrases marked or not marked by the genitive suffix, as illustrated in (18, 21). They tend to refer to a pluralization of the dominant element, but (21) proves the opposite. Perhaps it is not a plural, but rather an assimilation of a non-human being to humanness. Incidentally, they refer only to domestic and/or domesticated beings. As the following examples show, the syntax elicits the differentiation between the category of breeding animals, *ina mae anu*, and the category of animals that live in the forest, *yuinaka ni medan*. The former gets the marking of the genitive case. This category encompasses domesticated animals, such as cows, *ina awa*, and dogs, *kaman*, but also captured offspring of wild animals, such as, for instance, monkeys and pacas, which, under this new living condition, in a physical space of human beings, are assimilated to them:

| Ina xiadabu hiweabuki (breeding animals) | (yuinaka) ni medan hiweabuki (wild animals) |
|--|---|
| | |
| <i>ina awa-n bake</i> , ‘(the) cow’s progeny’ | <i>awa bake</i> , ‘tapir’s progeny’ |
| <i>kaman-an bake</i> , ‘(the) dog’s pup’ | <i>kaman bake</i> , ‘wild dog’s pup’ |

The distinction between animals that have been assimilated to humans and those that have not is pertinent regardless of the semantic nature of the determinant element. In (21b-c) the determined element is a kinship term as *bake* ‘progeny’; in (22a) the determined element expresses a place as *mae*, village:

22. a. *anu-n mae* ‘(the) place where the paca lives in the village’
 b. *anu mae* ‘place where the paca lives in the forest’

This distinction, however, is not pertinent regarding parts of the human body (23). In this case, the noun phrase does not receive the genitive marking, which refers to a relation of the generic type:

23. *anu buxka*, ‘paca’s head’ (**anu-n buxka*, ‘paca’s head’).

4.1.4. The specific relation

The use of the genitive case in genitival phrases in which the possessing element is represented by a human being specifies the kind of relationship that beings have with each other. The commutation between the genitival phrases below reveals the semantic pertinence among those constructions. In (24a) there is a relationship of the generic kind, whereas in (24b) it is specific, marked by the genitive. Such opposition does not depend on the semantic nature of the possessed element which could refer to objects (24a), kinship relations (24b) or body parts (24c):

24. a. *ainbu hiwe* ‘women’s house’, that is, ‘crafts’ house’
 house
 b. *ainbu ibu* ‘woman’s progenitor’
 progenitor
 c. *ainbu bu-dan* ‘woman’s hair’
 hair-top
25. a. *ainbu-n hiwe* (The) woman’s house.
 woman-gen house
 b. *ainbu-n ibu* (The) woman’s progenitor.
 c. *ainbu-n bu-dan* (The) woman’s hair.

The semantic pertinence here is the human attributes expressed by the determinant element, whether it is a human being (25b, 26a-

b), or a being that has been assimilated to humanness, such as the case of construction (26c), which designates the planet Venus:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|---|
| 26a. <i>ainbu-n</i> | <i>baba</i> | (The) woman's grandchild. |
| 26b. <i>Maxi-n</i> | <i>baba</i> | Maxi's grandchild. |
| 26c. <i>uxe-n</i> | <i>baba</i> | Venus. (lit. It is the moon's grandchild. |
| moon-GEN | | grandchild |

These morpho-syntactic structures suggest a relationship of dependence between the elements when the determined element is represented by ⁺human, while such dependence is not pertinent when the determined element is represented by ⁻human/⁻animated.

4.2 Elements assimilated to humanness

The assimilation of the moon to humanness, as mentioned above, requires an explanation. Cashinahua mythology explains that, after having been chopped off, the head of *Yube Nawa buxka* rose to the sky and stayed up there, *Yube Nawa buxka ua nia*, 'Yube Nawa's head is there standing up'. The construction (26c) suggests a kinship relation between the Moon and the planet that shines most brightly until dawn. Because the star is considered to be the moon's grandchild, it is treated grammatically as assimilated to humanness, thus receiving the marking of the genitive case.

According to the Cashinahuas, this character can be seen with the naked eye. In the crescent moon it can be seen lying down, as if it were sick in a hammock, but in the new moon it stands up. That means vitality in work and in health. The 'full moon,' *uxe bena*²⁰, doesn't like to have its name said, nor it likes to hear that it is lying down. The enunciation below reveals that, upon hearing its name, it causes bad things to the person who evoked it:

27. "*Uxe uadan dakaki*"; *min isin tenexani, hawen kena ninkatidumaki. Uxe sinataikiki, hawen kena ninka katis ikama. Uxedan ua daka miadi min dakaxanai isin teneidan*

"(If you say that) « the moon is there lying down", you'll get very sick, for it can't hear its name. It seems to get upset, since it doesn't want to hear its name. It's there lying down (and by saying so) you'll be sick in bed.

In the sentence below, it expresses the moon's mood: if it is happy, it gives strength and happiness to everybody who will work well:

20. For the Cashinahua, what they call 'new moon,' *uxe bena*, is, for us, the full moon. In that moon they see the character 'Yube Nawa Buxka lying down,' *uxe bena besti dakaki*. They designate the crescent moon 'the standing moon,' *uxe niaki*. By the way, they see in it the same character through a different angle, meaning, for them, good work.

28. « *uxe ua niaki* », *uxe benimai*. *Dayei pemisbuki*. *Uxe bena ewapaya benimai, niaki*.

« There's the moon standing up ». When it is happy, people work well. During the crescent moon it grows and becomes happy to be standing up.

If the syntax is taken as a basis for comprehending the categories of elements, the enunciation below suggests that 'trees, born out of seeds of large trees, *hi ewapa*, but still undergoing growth, are assimilated to humanness'. The genitival phrase *hi-n bake* (lit) 'tree's continuity' is marked by the genitive:

29a. *Hi ewapa bimi-ya nidi-tan, yume-mis-ki,*
 tree large fruit-ADJR fall-tan grow-HAB-ASS,
hi-n bake-dan
 tree-GEN progeny-FOC
 The large tree's fruit falls down and grows. It's the tree's continuity/
 progeny.

29b. *Hi-n e-n kaman, ea*
 tree-A 1SG-GEN dog. P 1sg.P
debu-n wa-xu-k
 die-n do-PERF-ASS
 The tree killed my dog.

The animacy of a larger kind of tree is not only expressed syntactically (24a-b) but in the Cashinahua way of thinking itself. To them, such a tree has got a *yuxin*, making it capable of transforming people into other *yuxins*: *Hi ewapa yuxindan mia hadibi watiduki*. The *yuxin* of the large tree also may transform. Its animacy raises it to the class of +human because like a human being, too, it dies, whereas a small tree, perceived as inanimate, does not. It only is wasted as is expressed in the following Spanish statement of a Cashinahua consultant: "Con el árbol grande se hace bote, y cuando se rompe se muere. Pero con palo corto se hace juguete, este palo no es humano entonces no se muere, se malogra no más". That is: 'With a large tree, boats are built, and when it is cut it dies. But with a short stem toy are built, this stem is not human, therefore it does not die, it simply is wasted'.

The arrow is the bow's tooth, because it is the arrow that gets stuck in the goal. What animates such an object is its *yuxin* which 'hu-

manizes' it. Due to this animacy a state, such as *buni* 'be hungry' (to go hunting) in (30a), or *manu* 'longing/ yearning' (to go hunting), in (30b), is assigned to it, as well as activities like hunting/ killing in (31) or talking in war-times as in (32). In fact, it is the *yuxin* of these objects – morpho-syntactically expressed by the ergative case marker – that manifests itself and acts.

- 30a. *Pia* *buni-mis-ki*, \emptyset *deku*
 arrow.S hunger-HAB-ASS 3SG.P sting
 itxa *wa-i-dan*.
 gather make-ASP-FOC

The tip of the arrow/ the rifle is hungry and stings very hard, it bites the game.

- 30b. *Kanum-dan* *ha-wen* *pia* *manu-mis-ki*
 bow-TOP 3SG-SOC arrow be.longing-HAB-ASS
 xeta *manu-i-dan*
 tooth be.longing-ASP-FOC

- 31a. *E-n* *kanum-an-dan* *tsaka-iki-ki*
 1SG-GEN bow-ERG-TOP hunt/kill-MED-ASS
 My bow goes hunting.

- 32b. *pia-n-dan* *tsaka-mis-ki*
 arrow-ERG-TOP hunt/kill-HAB-ASS
 The arrow always hunts.

32. *Pia-wen* *hatu* *tsakabu-n-dan* *ha-wen*
 arrow-INSTR 3pl.A kill-PL-*n*-FOC 3SG-SOC
 yuxin *ka-mis-ki* *xei-xei* *ik-a*
 yuxin go-HAB-ASS buzz VBR-PAS
 i-ni-dan
 SV-INDE.PAST-FOC

The Yaminawa kills people with an arrow, and (at midnight) its *yuxin* goes hunting.

For the Cashinahua, when hunting it is either the arrow or the rifle, both referred to by *pia*, which acts/kills. For the following senten-

ce an explanation of pragmatic concepts in Cashinahua is needed. In this hunting group, a man is proud to be a good hunter, hunting being a frequent if not daily activity. When a hunter does not use his instrument (arrow or rifle) it becomes angry, sad, and hungry. According to the Cashinahua, these weapons, after a few days without killing or, in the case of a rifle, without ammunition, get very happy when hunting again and so hungry for a kill that it is certain that their target will not be missed. It is in this context that (33) was uttered by a Cashinahua consultant:

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 33. <i>E-n</i> | <i>pia</i> | <i>e-n</i> | <i>mistu-xin-a</i> |
| 1SG-GEN | rifle | 1sg-A | insert-TEMP-ASP |
| <i>e-n</i> | <i>hakima</i> | <i>a-xin-a,</i> | |
| 1SG-S | forget | SV-TEMP-ASP | |
| <i>e-n</i> | <i>bu-a</i> | \emptyset | <i>kuma</i> |
| 1sg-A | take-PP | 3sg.A | curassow.bird |
| <i>tsaka-xu-ki</i> | | | |
| hunt-PERF-ASS | | | |

I carried the rifle and forgot about it (not hunting, so when) I took it with me, it killed a curassowbird.

20

The animacy of the arrow is noticeable by the classification made of the different tips used, forming a family in which one of the tips represents the father, *bene*, another the mother, *hawen ain*, and two others their children: firstborn, *bake ewa*, and the second, *bake hakatxu*. Hunting of air animals (monkeys, birds) is attributed to the mother-arrow and the firstborn-arrow. The hunting of earth animals to the father-arrow and the youngest son-arrow. (Camargo et alii, 2018: 17-23)

In the sphere of human beings there are also some characters which have been recently integrated into Cashinahua thinking: God, *Dius*, and Jesus. The morpho-syntax of Cashinahua language shows that those beings have been integrated within a kinship relation, thus establishing a dependent relationship between them. God relates to his progenies; Jesus only with his siblings (of the same sex, *betsa*, or of the opposite sex, *pui*, because he had no children, *bake umaki* ||child |priv-ass||). Under the cognitive representation, such constructions are interesting because they point out to a strong tie between these Other beings and the Cashinahua through kinship relations. It seems that the

Bible's translators were careful to mark the dependence that governs both beings regarding:

21. See Kensinger, 1995.

34a. *dius-un* *bake-bu*
 god-gen progeny-pl
 (The) children of the God. (*God's children)

34b. *jesus-un* *betsa-bu*
 jesus-gen sibling-pl
 (The) siblings of Jesus. (*Jesus' siblings)

The notion of a generic relationship of being “God’s son” has not been morpho-syntactically incorporated (*dius bakebu*), perhaps because it is more abstract and does not express a strongly dependent relationship, as the structure marked by the genitive reveals. In any case, that construction is not accepted by speakers either.

4.2.1 Attributes of the jaguar and the xane bird to human beings

21

Cashinahua philosophy is characterized by its duality in which two moieties, the *Inu bakebu*, ‘progenies of *Inu*’, and the *Dua bakebu*, ‘progenies of *Dua*’, cohabit and govern the village together. Each moiety has as its symbol the ‘jaguar’, *inawan*. The jaguar proper, *inu keneya*, refers above all to chiefs and those in contact with the exterior. The ‘puma’, *txaxu inu*, on the other hand, refers to the group’s social equilibrium and governs its internal relations. As the above myth implies, men have animal attributes. Chiefs wear ‘headdresses’, *maiti*, displaying macaw tails, jaguar skin, and feathers of the *xane* bird. This bird, in addition to having beautifully coloured feathers, is considered to have the power of foresight. Such power is granted to those who wear its feathers.²¹ Thus, there are beings (human and non-human) that cohabit and belong to the same social organization. As we shall see below, in Cashinahua syntax these beings are treated as assimilated to humanness.

4.2.2 Jaguar attributes to the dualistic philosophy

Cashinahua sociability is built based on a dualistic thought in which the ideal village is conceived as being made up of two moieties. Their

respective origins are narrated in the above-mentioned myth and are associated with the jaguar, *inu keneya*, and the puma, *txaxu inu*. Thus, in every Cashinahua village there are representatives of the ‘progenies of jaguar’, the *inu bakebu*, and representatives of the ‘progenies of puma’, the *dua bakebu*.

Reference to human - In the generic sense, the nominal phrase, comprised of two nouns, gets only a plural marker, *-bu* (35a). In the specific sense, the genitive case-marking (35b) is tied to the possessing element (human), referring to the progeny of the *Inu* which the speaker is referring to:

35a. *inu* *bake-bu*
 Inu progeny-PL
 ‘progenies of the moiety Inu’

35b. *inu-n* *bake*
 inu-GEN progeny
 ‘progeny of the Inu’

Reference to the animal - As we have already seen, breeding animals are assimilated to humanness. Jaguars are not among the animals that Cashinahua people breed. Thus, when the reference of the noun phrase (36) is the jaguar, it doesn’t get the marking of the genitive, such as in (35b), whose reference is a human being. Construction (35a) always refers to a human being, while construction (36) always refers to an animal. The marking of plural specifies that it is a relation that refers to human beings (35). Its absence, on the other hand, refers to animals:

36. *inu bake*
 ‘jaguar cub’

4.2.3 Xane attributes to leadership

As it has been already said, the headdresses worn exclusively by village leaders were decorated with the feathers of the small bird *xane pidu*. According to witnesses, village leaders used the feathers of this bird because of their capacity to foresee the future. This capacity was believed to be transferred to the chief, who, by wearing the bird’s feathers was able to foresee the future and ensure the safety of his community and

family. The beauty of these feathers also made chiefs recognizable wherever they went:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 37. <i>Xane pidun-dan</i> | <i>ha-wen</i> | <i>dua-ki</i> | <i>haskaken</i> |
| Xane-TOP | 3SG-SOC | beautiful-ASS | that's why |
| <i>xanen ibu-an</i> | <i>maiti</i> | <i>wa-mis-ki,</i> | |
| chief-A | headdress.P | make-HAB-ASS | |
| <i>ha-wen</i> | <i>nabu</i> | <i>ha</i> | <i>ikuwan-nun-dan.</i> |
| 3SG-SOC | family | 3SG | take with-CAUS-FOC |

The bird *xane* is beautiful, that's why the chief makes a headdress (with its feathers), which lets him see his family/his fellow villagers.

The bird's name, *xane*, also means 'political leader'. This designation is formed by a nominal composition, in which *xane* is the possessing element, getting the marking of the genitive. In this construction, whose referential is a human element, the genitive suffix in which the possessed element, the bird, is assimilated to the category of human beings. To express, for example, the 'chief's house' (38b), the lexeme *xane* designates 'chief'. This suggests that the bird, thanks to its capacity to foresee the future, is assimilated to humanness, but in a specific form, it is assimilated to the political leader who has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of his people:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 38a. <i>xane-n</i> | <i>ibu</i> |
| xane-GEN | master |
| (The) chief, (the) political leader. | |

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 38b. <i>xane-n</i> | <i>hiwe</i> |
| xane-GEN | house |
| (The) chief's house. | |

The use of the expression *xanen ibu*, designating 'chief', is also attributed to those animals that have a social organization headed by a 'chief'. Such is the case of ants: *hisis, hima, unan, buna xanen ibu hayaki*, 'The ants *hisis, hima, unan, buna* have a chief,' and bees: *xana xanen ibu hayaki*, 'The bees have a chief.'

4.3 The inca assimilated to non-humans

Cashinahua mythical narratives often refer to a personage or category of beings called Inca²². This is basically a reference to the un-

22. See Capistrano de Abreu (1941), McCallum (2002), Calavia Sáez (2000).

derworld, where Cashinahua people believe they go after they die. In order to reach the underworld, the dead take the ‘Inca pathway’ *inka bai*, after which their bodies and hearts are weakened:

39. *Inka bai-dan mawa bai-ki. Mawa katsi*
 Inca pathway die pathway-ass die VOL
hadukun Inka bai betxi-tan,
 first Inca pathway reach-tan
 nun nuka-mis-ki nuku-n huinti nuka-i-dan.
 1PL-S WEAK-HAB-ASS 1PL-GEN heart.s weak-PRES-FOC
 The Inca pathway is the path to death. When we are about to die and reach the first Inca pathway, we become very weak and our heart weakens.

Then the dead Cashinahua meet the Inca. In fact, Cashinahua people who die young go to live with an Inca, who becomes their ally as they say:

40. *Bedunan debutandan Inka txipax ain wamiski, txipax debutandan inka bedunan bene wamiski.*
 ‘A young (Cashinahua) man who dies marries a young *inka* woman, and a young (Cashinahua) woman who passes away marries a young inca man’.

In the passage below it can be seen that in the phrase *inka bai*, the possessing element, in principle a term that refers to an animated human, *inka*, is not marked by the genitive case. In this case, it is a construction of generic value, designating ‘inca pathway’:

41. *mawa-tan, inka bai nu-n tana-mis-ki.*
 die-tan Inca way 1PL-A take-HAB-ASS
Nu-n ka-ai Inka-bu-ki nu-n nuku-mis-ki.
 1PL-S go-PROG Inca-PL-ASS, 1PL-A meet-HAB-ASS
Inka-bu-ki nuku-tan nu-n hiwe-mis-ki.
 Inca-PL-ASS meet-tan 1PL-S live-HAB-ASS

When we die, we take the Inca pathway. We follow the path and meet the Inca, with whom we live. This post-mortem event is treated syntactically as a nominal phrase of generic value. The Cashinahua may possibly assimilate those beings who no longer share the current sphere of life –in other words, the dead – to the category of non-humans. In

the case of the dead, the relationship between the two entities does not receive the morphological case marking of the genitive.

23. See Keifenheim (1990), McCallum (2002).

4.4 Alterity designated by Nawa/Inka²³

Nawa designates the Inca people, the Inca man, but also ‘alterity’, ‘foreigner’, and, by semantic extension, ‘non-Amerindian’, i.e., the ‘Westerner’. In the narrative of the Jaguar, the term *nawa* is employed in the sense of ‘different’. Thus, Jaguar notes that different animals eat ‘different’ or *nawa*:

42. — *Txain min nawa pikin, min haska watidumenkain*

— ‘Hey, brother-in-law, you eat different. I wonder what you do to eat like that?’

The syntax of the phrases below suggests that the Cashinahua treat relationships among non-living beings as being generic (43b-c), whereas they treat those among living beings, endowed with human-ness, as being specific (43a):

43a. *nawa-n buxka* ‘the head/face of a white man’

43b. *nawa buxka* ‘the head/face of Nawa’ (i.e., ‘the face of Inca’)

43c. *inka buxka* ‘the head/face of Inca’

The field of visibility seems to be also a criterion that would interfere in the syntax. What comes from the order of visibility (44a) is marked by the genitive, and what comes from the order of non-visibility, of the unknown, is not treated morphologically (44b). This phrase refers to the pathway that the dead Cashinahua take in order to meet the Inca:

44a. *nawa-n bai* ‘rainbow’ (lit. ‘Nawa’s pathway’)

44b. *nawa bai* ‘Inca pathway’ (lit ‘dead’s pathway’)

Noun phrase (45) confirms the semantic reference of (44) to the world of the dead. In this example, it is the ‘dirge’, sung to the dead person so that s/he follows the path of the dead to meet the Inca:

45. *nawa bai mawa-xu-ki*
nawa pathway die-PERF-ASS

Dirge for the dead one.

Construction (44b) brings a synonym *inka bai*. In both cases, the referential is the inaccessibility, since *nawa* designates the ‘Other’ in

the sense of alterity. It is seen as an inaccessible entity, and in Cashinahua cosmology it refers generally to the Inca, a powerful being who holds what is most precious for the Cashinahua: metal, *mane*. The metaphor attributed to rainbow suggests this distant contact. The inaccessibility of this Other seems to mark the strong image of this omnipresent being in Cashinahua cosmology that makes it a non-human being.²⁴

The term *nawa*, on the other hand, relates to another kind of “Otherness” (westerners). In this case, the westerners also are *huni kuin*, and they see, for instance, the Cashinahuas, as Others, i.e. as *Nawa*²⁵. This reveals a kind of inter-ethnic perspectivism, as Alberto R. Toribio²⁶ explained: “I am *huni kuin* and I see Others as *nawa*, but at the same time a *nawa* can see himself as *huni kuin* and see the Others (indigenous people) as *nawa*”.

4.5 Animacy in syntax: agentivity marked by the ergative case

Different Panoan languages have a split syntactic system, in which the discursive personal pronoun arguments (‘I and you’) are distinct from the nominal arguments (and the third person plural and free pronouns). The latter follows a syntax of the ergative/absolutive kind, in which the element with most agentivity is marked by the suffix of the ergative case *-{a/i/e}n* and *-pan*, which is glossed A(gent). The examples below illustrate how the Cashinahua conceive as beings not only human and non-human elements, but also natural phenomena (sun, wind, rain). Such elements are grammatically endowed with agency (See Camargo, 2013).

Human and non-human animate beings

46a. *huni-n pi-xu-ki*
man-a eat-PERF-ASS
The man ate.

46b. *inu-n pi-xu-ki*
jaguar-A eat-PERF-ASS
The jaguar ate.

46c. *bina-n bake pi-xu-ki*
BULLET ant-A progeny-ABS bit-PERF-ASS
The tocandira (*Paraponera clavata*) ant bit the child.

24. Only through a deeper knowledge of the Cashinahua/Inca relation will it be possible to understand this syntactic structure, which is currently under analysis. (See Calavia Sáez, 2000)

25. See § 4.3.

26. Personal communication, during a Cashinahua culture and language workshop in Puerto Esperanza (2017).

Inanimate elements

- 47a. *niwe-n hiwe txakabu-mis-ki*
 wind-A house.P damage-HAB-ASS

The wind always damages the house.

- 47b. *ui-n-dan xaxu bu-xu-ki*
 rain-A-TOP canoe.p take-perf-ass

The rain takes the canoe.

Among such inanimate beings are cliffs, *mawa*, and big rocks, *maxax*. According to the Cashinahua, cliffs speak to human beings because the echo is considered a dynamic manifestation of the cliff, which, for the Cashinahua, has *yuxin*. It is the *yuxin* who answers to human beings, whether they are shamans or not. In the specific case of *mawa*, ‘cliff’, when marked by a habitual or continuative verbal suffix, *-mis-*, that term must be interpreted as ‘the echoing of a cliff’:

48. *mawa-n yui-iki-ki. Mawa-n-dan*
 cliff-A talk-MED-ASS cliff-A-TOP

nuku mawa-mis-ki,
 1PL.P cliff-HAB-ASS

Communication with animals and rocks, as well as the decoding of the language of trees, wind, and rain²⁷, is the shaman’s exclusive domain, who can know, for instance, whether hunting will be good. The enunciation below illustrates one such communication, in which a rock questions the shaman using the term *txai* ‘brother-in-law’:

49. *maxax-an-dan yuka-mis-ki huni mukaya-dan:*
 rock-A-TOP ask-HAB-ASS shaman-TOP

The rock asks the shaman:

— *Mi-n hani ka-ai? a-mis-ki.*
 2SG-S where go-PROG say-HAB-ASS

— Where are you going?, it asks.

— *E-n daya-i ka-ai a-mis-ki*
 1SG-S work-INF go-PROG answer-HAB-ASS

yui-kindan maxax-dan yuxibu-ki.
 say-FOC rock-TOP yuxibu-ASS

— I’m going to work, is what answers the rock, which is a *yuxibu*.

27. For the Trio (cariban group), rocks are the abodes of spirits with whom shamans can communicate (D. Fajardo, personal comm).

The utterances shown in this section reveal that, different elements – not only animate non-humans, but also inanimate elements – are susceptible to subjectivity, especially in the shamanic sphere. In this field, elements not only have subjectivity, but also transformational properties, which are apprehended in a different way, at least in the field of visual perception. This is expressed in the sentence below, with regard to the meat eaten by a shaman:

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|--|
| 50. <i>Huni mukaya-n</i> | <i>yuinaka</i> | <i>be-a-bu</i> | | |
| Shaman-A | game | bring-PERF-PL | | |
| <i>pi-is-ma-ki.</i> | <i>Nami-dan</i> | <i>nami</i> | <i>pi-a-dan,</i> | |
| eat-HAB-NEG-ASS | meat-TOP | meat | eat-PERF-FOC | |
| <i>dami-mis</i> | <i>kiaki</i> | <i>senpa-i-dan</i> | | |
| transform-HAB | EVID.PAST | senpa-PRES-FOC | | |
| <i>bui-i-dan</i> | <i>yumen-i-dan.</i> | | | |
| bui-PRES-FOC | string-PRES-FOC | | | |

4.5 Absence of agentivity in the syntax

In a genitival phrase, the possessing element represented by a manufactured object does not get the suffix of the genitive case. The construction *due bake*, for instance, should be interpreted as ‘ax handle’, and not as ‘the ax’s handle’. The interpretation of ‘ax’s handle’, in which the determined term is defined, requires the marking of a specific possessive for the third person singular, *hawen*, [*due [hawen bake]*], and thus two operations take place: [ax [its handle]₁]₂.

In some constructions, objects take the place of the subject (51b), but without its syntactic-semantic value. The case morpheme *-n* is multifunctional and may mark not only the ergative and the genitive, as we have seen above, but also the locative and, in some cases, the instrumental case marking. Objects such as ‘wood’, ‘knife’ and ‘canoe’ lack an agentive property, occurring only as object. In this case, the realization of *-n* is a homophony of the nasal consonant that morphologically would refer to ‘the argument that represents the agent’. In (51b), for instance, the inanimate element *hi*, ‘stick, wood’ may be interpreted only as object, not as subject:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 51a. <i>huni-n</i> | <i>hi</i> | <i>menu-mis-ki</i> |
| man-A | wood.P | burn-HAB-ASS |
| The man always burns wood. | | |

51b. \emptyset *hi*- \emptyset *menu-mis-ki*
 3SG. A wood.P burn-HAB-ASS

He always burns wood. (*The wood (always) burns)

28. 'Its bark is used as
 medicine,' *hawen bitxidán*,
dauki.

But the wood's *yuxibu* can express themselves in a common language among the beings who live in the Cashinahua cosmology. In fact, beings are constantly in transformation (*xeni*, which designates 'caterpillar') and the language is the element that binds them. For instance, the wood *inu hi* 'jacaréuba' (Portuguese) / 'lagarto caspi' (Spanish) (*Calophyllum brasiliense*) is used to build 'boats', it is hard and lasts a long time²⁸. Its vernacular name *inu hi* 'jaguar wood' suggests that it hosts jaguars which are also strong. And the sap of the tree has the power to transform the different beings which, once transformed, are all *huni kuin*, speaking a universal language, *hantxa kayabi* (lit. 'the real language'): the tree *kuin*, which is a host, makes the beings speak a single language. So, the epithet *kuin* seems, in a way, to express the universality of beings.

5. The hidden side of the life of things

29

The Cashinahua data analyzed above reveal how human interacts with non-human, and how the material world is apprehended by human cognition. Linguistic data reveal the animistic elements in Cashinahua philosophy: a conception of the world based on the general notion of indifferentiation of beings. The way in which they conceive and organize beings (human and non-human) is morpho-syntactically registered in their language. On the one hand, we have seen that a variety of beings are endowed with dynamism, which leads to agentivity and, in consequence, to subjectivity. On the other hand, the language marks a clear opposition between humans and beings assimilated to humanness and non-humans. The latter regroups animated non-humans and inanimate elements, which get the same morphological treatment in the genitival phrase. Agentivity is attributed to animated non-humans as well as to natural phenomena, such as rain or wind and other natural elements such as cliffs. These elements are conceived of as agents. This subjectivity may be extended to certain manufactured objects, which, in the shamanic realm, are endowed with agentivity. In the sphere of the living, visible beings, one of the relevant oppositions refers to the space

occupied by humans and non-humans. Through the vast spatial field inhabited by those different beings, one of them, the shaman, moves about mediating the different forces and interpreting the different forms of communication.

Cashinahua linguistic expedients show that animated elements and some inanimate elements (as rocks, big trees) may belong to the class of beings conceived of as being alive, and as such are deemed capable of interacting like humans. Verbal communication among beings has no limits because the limits of Cashinahua sociability do not end in the limits of humanity. Although these beings may be distinguished by their material form, they all share the same language.

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