Narratives of catastrophe: 
the zaparoan experience in amazonian Ecuador

Mary-Elizabeth Reeve

Introduction

The traveler going eastward from the Andean cordillera of central Ecuador into the Amazonian region must first pass through the deep canyon of the Pastaza River and then over a broad, eroded upland where the headwaters of various Amazonian tributaries arise. Further eastward, these tributaries broaden out and begin their slow meanders toward the Amazon River. The Curaray River is one of them. As far back as the historical and ethnohistorical record goes until the early 20th century, Záparos people have maintained a core territory between the headwaters of the Curaray in Amazonian Ecuador and its confluence with the Napo River in Peru. This paper explores the ways in which descendants of Zaparoan people (both Gayes and Záparos) recount their own history, and their disappearance as a distinct group.

In this Amazonian region just east of the Andean cordillera, Záparos and other tropical forest peoples have a long history of direct and indirect contacts with the highlands. Their sense of history can therefore contribute to our understanding of mythic and historic constructs in both regions.

Today this area is inhabited by the Curaray Runa, Quichua speaking descendants of Quijos Quichua, Zaparoans, Canelos Quichua and Achuar who have settled along the Villano and Curaray rivers. Traveling down the Villano River to the settlement at its confluence with the Curaray, the relatively cool uplands and clear swift, stony river dotted with treacherous rapids gives way to a hotter, drier, flatter forest and meandering and silt-laden waters; a true Amazonian riverine environment. The Quichua and other groups in the region control both upland and Amazonian environments along major rivers. Curaray Runa regularly travel upriver to the Runa settlement of Villano. From here they trek overland on trails leading to other Runa settlements on the Bobonaza River, or go upriver as far as the Lluchin to travel south to the Conambo River settlements. The entire Amazonian region of Ecuador is linked by trails crossing river systems and ethnic boundaries in a network that has long mirrored social relations in the region.

Curaray Runa occupy the former territory of the Záparos, who no longer maintain a distinct culture at this site. Curaray Runa possess a sense of identity as Runa (people, in Quichua) that includes reference to a distinct origin as either Achuar, Canelos, Quijos Quichua or Zaparoan. Achuar and Quijos Quichua continue to intermarry with Runa at Curaray but retain enduring links to their territory of origin. This same pattern of intermarriage extends into Achuar territory to the south (Descola 1989: 42). Runa who are descendants of Záparos maintain a continuing identity as Zápara through oral narratives recounting their history, and perhaps some knowledge of the Záparos language as well.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, peoples of the Upper Curaray and Bobonaza rivers suffered the impact of disease epidemics, slave raiding and occasional punitive expeditions. To a greater or lesser degree, they were also subjected to Christianization. Through the dislocating effects of these colonial forces, coupled with that of the rubber boom in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these peoples emerged as a distinct Quichua speaking ethnic group. While ethnohistorical sources mention groups of Záparos, Gaye, Semigaye, Caninche and Canelos peoples in the Curaray-Bobonaza region, by the end of the Amazonian rubber boom era (c. 1935 here), all reference to these groups as distinct peoples ceases.

From about the 1980s, the Curaray River below the mouth of the Villano has been a site of incipient and intermittent international commercial exploitation. Up through the 1930s, rubber merchants maintained settlements along the length of the Curaray. Many Záparos, together with Quijos Quichua, worked for the rubber merchants, living at or adjacent to their settlements and making treks outward into the forest to collect rubber. In the mid 1930s a severe yellow fever epidemic swept through the area, killing most of the Záparos and Quijos Quichua peoples at these settlements. According to Curaray Runa, the few who survived fied the area, going to the Quichua settlements of Villano or to Canelos, while others returned to the Napo. At this point, with the exception of the interfluvial dwelling Huorani, the Curaray River region became unhabited. It ceased to be the core territory of the Záparos. The Záparos say that it was shamanic warfare which caused their demise. We will explore the implications of shamanic warfare in this history.

The problem of the apparent dissolution of distinct peoples in the Curaray-Bobonaza region must be placed within the context of the development of a multiethnic system. The history revealed through ethnohistorical documents indicates a gradual Christianization of the population coupled with the spread of the Quichua language; it is the European interpretation of the events leading to the territorial conquest of the region and spiritual conquest of its indigenous
inhabitants. However, it is argued here that indigenous peoples formulate a parallel history of events which is transmitted from generation to generation in oral narrative (e.g. Price 1983, Sahlin 1981). Both views must be accounted for in order to understand the processes leading to the present multiethnic system of the region. Just as these Quichua speakers among themselves continue to be of Záparos, Gaye, Canelos, Achuar and Quijos Quichua origins, in this region they have become *runapura* (Quichua speakers among ourselves), in response to state expansion into their lowland territories.

While much discussion has been generated in historical and anthropological analyses over the impact of direct colonizing efforts such as missionization and the economic exploitation exemplified by the rubber boom, the impact of epidemic disease has received far less attention. I suggest that without an appreciation of the role of disease epidemics, we have an incomplete picture of the transformation of indigenous societies over the past 400 years in both the Amazonian and Andean regions. Záparos oral histories may offer us some insight into this role. Oral histories are told by the descendants of Záparos which explain the “disappearance” of their people as a distinct group. These histories are stories of shamanic warfare and physical combat. They are considered to be part of the corpus of knowledge from “beginning times”. In this paper I will discuss three themes: first; the nature of the oral histories themselves, in terms particularly of the animal-human transformations, the significance of geography, and the distinctions between mythic and historic time as conceived by the tellers. Secondly, I will discuss the history of the Záparos and the influence of epidemics on ethnic group survival, using data from ethnographic sources. Finally, I will offer some interpretation of the explanatory role of these histories as indigenous exegesis of a particular experience of social upheaval caused, at least in part, by introduced disease.

![Map of Amazonian Ecuador](image-url)
Concepts of time-space

The Curaray Runa differentiate three concepts of time-space: mythic time-space, beginning times, and present times. All are recognized as following from the beginnings of life to the present, in the sense that knowledge gained in mythic time-space and beginning times is transmitted down through present times. The three are also seen as existing simultaneously in the present, as nonlinear, as living on in Runa experience today, each referring to a specific type of knowledge. There are many present times because there are many different peoples, each with their own system of knowledge. Quicha speakers of the Curaray River, including descendants of Záparos, possess as oral tradition, a corpus of accounts about beginning times, referred to as callari uras. For Curaray Runa beginning times includes the demise of the Záparos, the experience of the rubber boom and the end of long distance trading expeditions into the Peruvian Amazon (REEVE 1985: 113-117; 1988a: 101-105; 1988b: 19-34). At that point beginning times is transformed into present times, an indigenous interpretation that is paralleled in the ethnohistorical documentation by the disappearance of references to distinct non-Quicha speaking peoples in the area non-controlled by the Canelos Quichuas.

Beginning times are contrasted with mythic time-space, unai, the undifferentiated state of primordial beginnings. Texts set in mythic time-space contain Runa knowledge of a time when animals were human, or consorted with humans, by disguising themselves as such. Resolution in these accounts often involves the first differentiation of humans and non-humans. Mythic time-space also exists alongside of and interpenetrates present times. In contrast, texts set in beginning times, such as those concerning the Záparoan demise, focus on inter-ethnic relations between Runa and non-Runa peoples or between those peoples who became Quicha-speakers. The texts are part of a corpus of information transmitted from generation to generation and referred to as xucanchij yachana (our cultural knowledge). This knowledge is shared just among Runa, including intermarried Achuar, Canelos Quiccha, Quijos Quiccha and Záparos. It is explicitly contrasted with knowledge possessed by other peoples. Additionally, each group of Runa maintains a slightly different version of the knowledge from mythic time-space, such that internal variation within "our cultural knowledge" is preserved according to ethnic groups of origin.

Stories set in mythic time-space describe events taking place in an undifferentiated domain in which human/animal transformations occur as the protagonists of each episode discover their true identity through their actions. The principle of differentiation and identification extends into beginning times. Narratives set in beginning times deal not with human/animal transformability per se but with relationships between peoples. These texts serve to establish a model of Runa distinctiveness based upon relationships of trade and intermarriage or warfare and exploitation with other groups, both indigenous and nonindigenous.

At the core of Runa historical thought is an indigenous theory of identity that contrasts "Quicha speakers among ourselves", runapura, with non-forest dwelling foreigners, ahualacta or huiragucha, on the one hand and "those forest dwellers who have killed or captured our relatives", ausa, on the other. The concept of runapura includes kin and potential kin; those believed to share a common origin in mythic time-space. Runa use stipulated shared descent as a symbolic statement of commonality that unites the several historically intermarrying ethnic groups as one people.

Knowledge from mythic time-space and beginning times serves as a guiding construct for the creation of meaning, reflects and gives coherence to world view, and provides metaphors for understanding present reality. History—not the simple recounting of events—is created by actors, in dialogue with listeners, with reference to a present shared reality. It is continually retold, re-created, as part of the ongoing process of social production. In this sense, history shares with ritual the process of reaffirmation and potential renegotiation of a shared social reality (see REeve 1985: 136-175; 1988a: 121-156, on ritual).

On the Curaray, descendants of Záparos say that Záparos (Gaye and Záparos) no longer exist, having fought among themselves until only a few were left. These few married Quiccha-speakers at mission sites, and became Runa. They learned to speak Quiccha, taught their children to speak Quiccha and (with the help of a priest) took a surname common to the Runa, which was passed on to their children. The Runa say that in this way the Záparos have hidden themselves from their enemies.

Among the Záparos, warfare between family groups was centered around shamanic revenge killings. Each extended family group was headed by a shaman who, using his knowledge of supernatural spirit substance, caused sickness and occasionally death in the extended family group of a shaman with whom he was in conflict. Shamanic feuds occasionally escalated into sparring deaths of whole families in surprise attacks on the household.

Former Záparos groups along the Villano included those of the Lahuano, Tapino and Nushīno rivers, while those on the Curaray included the Auricuri, at the mouth of the Villano and the Guanino at the Namo River. These Záparos claimed territory down at least as far as the present site of Lorocachi on the Curaray. On the Comombo River lived a very different group; some of them may have become Záparos through intermarriage with Záparos—learning the Záparoan language. The Curaray and Comombo Záparos are considered as the "Záparos proper". The other major group of Záparos in this region were the Gayes who occupied territory north of Montaíío near the mouth of the Bobonaza, and on the Upper Bobonaza. The Záparos of the Curaray area went on long treks to visit the group living near Montaíío where they apparently also traded with and intermarried Andoains, and possibly also eastern Achuar. Descendants of both the Comombo and Curaray groups of Záparos, as well as Gayes from the Bobonaza, make up the a portion of the present day population of Curaray Runa.
Before the surviving Záparos were absorbed into the Quichua-speaking population, this large group and the Quichua had little contact. Descendants explain that although they occupied in some cases the same territory, they lived apart from each other and rarely interacted. They did not speak each other’s language and when and if they met, it was in some area far from the main residence territory, while on a trek. Yet exchanges were peaceful.

Záparos descendants draw a major distinction between themselves and the Christian Runa by pointing out that the Runa were “tame” (mansa, in Spanish), they did not kill among themselves, while the Záparos were “fierce” (piñashka, in Quichua). These former Záparos point out that now it is only these Runa, just amongst themselves, who are increasing themselves. The last point is critical — the strategy always cited by Runa when they seek to explain the motive behind the desire of other peoples to “become” Runa is that of biological survival — to increase themselves, following a period of devastating intragroup warfare.

**The Narrative**

During the course of fieldwork in the community of Curaray, I listened to three individuals give their version of the history of Záparoan warfare. One of these narratives was told as part of a corpus of accounts from callari uras to myself, a group of family members and a compadre during a drinking party. The other full account was told to me and a few close family members during an afternoon visit some six months later at the beginning of the annual festival (jista) celebration. The final account was told not as a cuinta, a narration, of the war, but as an exegetic explanation of the cause of the war and contrast between Záparoan and Runa lifeways. This was given during an afternoon visit in which I was invited to listen to the teller play the bigolin, and was part of an introduction to mythic thought complemented by earlier work with the teller’s wife on personal songs. The text reproduced here is that told to me shortly before the annual jista celebration.

**Guacamaya Cuinta**

Chi imashki kay Villano unaibirni tian mangapaki urcu nishka, jawa urcu.
Chimanda Montalvoi manga urcu nishka tian.
Chaywan Gayes, Gayespartigua shuc guerras tucunaraia.
Puro lansata riun - mana shuc ninaun kay entero.
Chaywan caspukmanda, chaywan chanda shuc bobara nishka cazi rundo.
Chaywan shuc wañuancucugenera.
Aska kaymanda chi imashkimandia risha wañuna-cucunashka manga urcu, Kay Villano umewan.
Imasata jista purinoun cajawan, cashi ricurana, pero micunacunan, micunoun puyunaga wañuchusa wanganami, nishka animalmi.
Sacarie shuc plaza tiahcai, guerra rana plaza, enchunmi.
Na chay pabtari piri cunashka chasana filia, filia, filia, filia, filia, guerras pishinara, shuc partiva salyata.
Chaywan tucunancucshkai.
Chi lurinwan casara tarisha, chaywan ricusha, fia may compaña, may pikina tempo, na shuc apacai sakwata casan.
Chaywan yanunguna picashka.
Na cha, cha, cha, cha, chasana shuc wañuschusa causcanara.
Chay ʃa, ʃa wanuita nishka, ʃa cutillata sakirou.
Sakirou ʃa payba llacta.
Chimanda manga urcu randi chaywan pactariumu-shcai guerrasa payba salyata, salyata.
Chay sakirou puyuna randi.
Chasana shuc causcanara.
Chasnashi ba unai guerrata apana rauskchina (?).
Kaymanda rinoita imashki Gaes parti, manga urcuman, chaywan manga urcuman, chaymanda manga partiman.
Chay ricuna pufushcaun ba pactanan.

There at the head of the Villano (river) there is Broken Pot Hill, they say, a high hill. From there, at Montalvo is Pot Hill, they say.

In that place the Gayes, the Gayes people had a war. Only lances were seen. Not just one, they say but all. With these [lances] of wood, with these also a shield, almost round.

With that [they] began the killing. Many, having come from wherever died at Pot Hill, at the head of the Villano.

They looked as in the jista walking with drums, but they ate, they ate the killed wangan, saying they are animals.

In the jungle there was a plaza, a wide plaza made for war. Now arriving there they formed lines [waiting], the war was not finished.

With that they began speaking, with the shield[s] they stood hunting. They appeared thus, ... now capturing one they left off hunting, from there to cook the cut up [meat].

Now in that way one dying they lived.

That one now dead, it is said, now again [the war] was left off. They remained in their settlement. From there again they went to Pot Hill, they arrived to fight in the same way.

There they left off again.

That is how one [they] lived.

Now like that the war went on a long time. From there the Gayes went to Pot Hill.

There a dream vision arrived.

Arriving, that guacamaya came, that guacamaya came in the middle of the night, this now began to cry out.

From the morning until evening, one old person said.
Pactanabi shi guacamay shumura chaupi tuta.
Chaupi tuta shuc guacamaylala shuwarimuya.
Kayta chirira wa nakasha.
- Chishi, tutamandaga shuc rucu nisha.
Mama nishishi rira.
Curaga ka moy urocu llambu guerraspu tucuchi
tucugaronchi nisha.
Chige ricauna, chiga moy urocu tucitata churash-
caua fi shuc jatun ruyac, jatun, uchupoto ninchu
nucaunchi.
Kay tianchi enteru bulachisha tarapata shinasha
rasha chapishcuna nambibi caso waycmunanda.
Chayabi sham fi tarumushcuna, fi cajawangai.
China cuenata.
Chi chaupi urocu payguna ushaishi chi tarapata piti-
shcuna, fi tas, tak, pitshca ruyaca volarishu rujan.
Lata runetaga fi, fi win shuc llissi kishpica fi
chay, chay shyapica.
Chesna wakasha parasha guacamaya cuenta.
Chya shuc tucuricunena.
Chay guerra fi sakishcuna fi, tucurishca fi.

Now at Pot hill we finish off in war, we all will be fin-
ished it was said.
Seeing in that way, in that way they laid a trap on Pot
hill now they lay down a huge tree, a tree we call
uchupoto.
With the trap made in this way they waited at the
trail from the river gorge.

There they now came making noise now with their
drums. It is told thusly.
Then [at] mid hill they cut the trap, now tas, tak, the
cut tree went flying.

Now all Runa but one died in that place (?)

This is the sad tale of the Guacamaya.
In that way [a people] were finished. That war is now
left off, now finished.

The interpretation of mythic time-space, beginning
times and present times is evident in the knowledge-
seeking, knowledge building formulations of individ-
ual Runa. Runa interpret mythic time-space as
accessible through night dreams, through vision
states induced by datura or ayahuasca, through
artistic means such as song, the playing of musical
instruments or the making of pottery, and collectively
through ritual. In performances and experiences,
human/animal transformability becomes part of
everyday experience. It is important to realize that
there is no single vehicle for this transformative
process, and that it is a part of all Runa’s personal
experience. Nevertheless, the capacity to interpret
and manipulate experience from mythic time-space
is possessed by knowledgeable Runa, who are able
to guide others (see N. Whitten 1985 for a complete
discussion of the knowledge and vision-seeking
process among the Canelos Quichus; see also
The geography referenced in the texts about Zape-
roan warfare forms another linkage between mythic
time-space, beginning times and the present. Ethno-
historical documentation corroborates the text
references. The original territory of the Gayes lay
along the north bank of the Bobonaza and the upper
Curaray, including part of the upper Tigre. The Jesuit
Fathers Suárez, Hurtado and Lucero reported in 1663
that many Gayes resided on the Bobonaza. A mission
was established there and augmented by people from
the upper Tigre and Curaray. Some years later, several
Gayes murdered the missionary, the settlement was
burned and the population fled into the forest. Gayes
relied on their allies among the Roamaina to the south
and the Záparos and Semigaye to the north for protec-
tion against Spanish reprisals. Two years later,
however, Spanish soldiers from Borja succeeded in
capturing many Gayes, dispersing them in settle-
ments throughout the Jesuit province of Mainas
(Reeve 1985: 88-89; 1988a: 83-84). The majority of
Gayes, however, lived outside of mission settlements
and retained their territory to the north of the Bobo-
naza up through the early part of this century.
The Curaray River has always been the core area of the Záparos (PIERRE 1983: 85). Contacted in 1665 by the Jesuit Father CUEVA and visited by Father SUÁREZ in 1667, a Záparos mission was established in 1669. In 1738, ZARATE noted that there were seven distinct groups of Záparos on the Curaray (1904: 395). It is unclear whether the Záparos occupied lands as far south as the Bobonaza until the beginning of the 1700s (GROHS 1974: 66). By the early to mid 1700s, however, Záparos were living with Goyas at mission settlements in this region and were also dispersed between the Corrientes and Curaray rivers. In this region, they were described in the mid 1800s as "covering an immense territory and with a number of population nuclei of 100 persons or more, each separated from the next and each surrounded by an enormous chagra..." (CASTRUCCI 1925: 167-174).

Although few of the total population of Záparoans lived at mission settlements, there were Záparoans at the missions along the Bobonaza and on the Curaray. Both Záparos and Canelos Quichua were living at the mission of Curaray Alto, above the current mission site, in the mid-1800s. By the late 1800s, the original diversity of groups along the Curaray had dwindled. Father PIERRE described the Záparos as occupying both banks and divided into two major factions: the first occupying the lower Curaray to the Napo and upper Tigre. The other had as its center the population of the upper Curaray and Lliquito. Contemporary Záparo descendants recall these two divisions, the upper one having ties with the Záparos of the Conamo, while the lower group was carried off in its entirety and perished during the rubber boom.

Present times: negotiating catastrophic change

The narrative stands as a statement of the sharp break between beginning times and present times — a break defined by the demise of the Záparoan peoples. Biological survival continues as Quichua speakers, and a cultural record remains in the memory of warfare kept alive through the telling of this history. The possibility of this outcome, however, predates the events. The processes of transculturation and ethnogenesis are evident at the Curaray mission by the early 20th century. In a 1910 record of baptisms performed in Curaray Alto (Dominican Archives; Puyo, Pastaza Province), the origins of parents and grandparents indicate that Záparos, Achuar and Quijos Quichua were marrying into and moving into the mission, which had, as a base population, a number of Quichua families from Canelos on the Bobonaza. Those from the Napo married persons of Záparos origin and Achuar married Canelos Quichua. There is no case of Achuar-Záparos marriage. It appears that in this region, no Achuar-Záparos marriage ever took place before an intermediate generation marriage to a Quichua speaker, and probably rarely even then. Further, it appears that the distinctions between those who are originally of the Canelos-Achuar intermarrying group and those of the Quijos Quichua-Záparo intermarrying group remain a salient division upheld geographically and expressed ritually during the annual jasta in the contemporary community of Curaray.

From the forgoing documentation, it appears that Záparoans maintained a great resilience to the effects of missionization at a few sites as well as periodic epidemics between the 17th and 19th century. Yet their own history points clearly to a major catastrophe — a series of shamanic feuds which stimulated ongoing warfare — and brought about the end of Záparoans as a people. These histories, like myths, are structured so that the outcome is a cataclysmic change. They necessarily impute the beginning of a new order. As Lawrence SULLIVAN so aptly states: "The imagery of disaster proves essential to apprehending all instances of breakthrough. Only through the symbolism of disaster can one come to grips with a completely new mode of being. The myths of catastrophe exhibit the violence of novelty and change..." (SULLIVAN 1986: 619). The histories, like myths, impart meaning to the predicament of Záparoan descendants today. Cut off from their past, they remain "hidden" from their enemies and so are able to increase themselves. The development of a dynamic multiethnic system in this region of the Amazonian Ecuador facilitates their survival.

We are left wondering about what might have stimulated this intense shamanic feuding which led to the death of so many. Or was the shamanic feeding a response to the death of many? Recently, Pedro PORRAS uncovered in Rome a document written by a rubber collector who lived first on the Napo and then on the Curaray from the late 1880s into the early 20th century. The writer describes a smallpox epidemic on the upper Napo in which "The Indians, struck down by the terrible murry [smallpox] had recourse to sorcery and only spread the disease more quickly... Many families, already affected, emigrated to hide themselves from the disease and left their route littered with many sick and dying who were left unrecovered after suffering cruel agonies... Indians who had been vaccinated or who had seen vaccination performed, believing that the fluid of the vaccine had been extracted from the smallpox pustules, inoculated healthy persons with the disease and spread it forthwith even more widely. The villages were left abandoned and when they were reorganized, 65% of the population, including sorcerers, had perished" (PORRAS 1979: 28-29).

As an eye-witness, or close to eye-witness account, this commentary provides us with chilling imagery of the terror and confusion which accompanies an epidemic of this magnitude. Historically, the arrival of an epidemic has stimulated warfare. ZARATE in 1739 recorded that a Jesuit attempted to settle a group of Ticuna at the Pevas mission (near the current Peruvian-Brazilian border), when an epidemic broke out there. The residents, believing that the Ticuna had brought the sickness attacked and killed 20 or 30 of the Ticuna (1904: 371). Other historical documentation, although sparse, indicate that this was not an isolated incident.

During the colonial period, epidemic disease in western Amazonian thought took on a corporal manifestation; traveling in various terrifying human guises, it was said to walk about at night (UMARTE 1952: 225-256). As a spirit force, then, it was potentially manipulatable by shamans. Shamanic killing
was tied to epidemics, and what began as sickness ended in warfare.
Runa say that the epidemic which raked the Curaray region in the 1930s was so severe that the entire area was left depopulated. The disease was said to have lingered, and a generation was born before anyone returned. The extent to which a certain tie can be made between the shamanic warfare among Záparoans at this time and the disease epidemic is a matter of conjecture, yet within a belief system in which death is not "natural", but often seen as the result of human manipulation, the potential role of disease epidemics in historic patterns of warfare remains significant.

While ethnohistorical and anthropological research has focused on the impact of overt colonial action on indigenous populations, the unintended consequences also merit attention. It is to these processes that Taussig (1987: 372-373) eludes in his discussion of the colonial experience as creating a "space of death"; the memory of lost souls and former epochs lying so uneasily on the living that they demand continual negotiation. While in the Andes, this may take the form of rituals of placation, in the Amazonian region, the acknowledged great power of former souls is evoked in many ways; from the soul stones used to polish pottery, to shamanic curing and to the telling of oral histories.

Their territory now almost completely lost, a few Záparoans continue to live in areas remote from contact with outsiders. Yet the Quichua language continues to spread throughout central Amazonian Ecuador and Runa say these people are becoming bilingual. They imply that even outside of mission settlements, where the majority of survivors went, those who remain are very few and intermarriage with Quichua speakers may be necessary for survival. The adoption of the Quichua language is for the Runa the marker by which a profound change in status takes place. As Záparoans descendants tell their history, they keep alive also knowledge from beginning times. The dynamic interpenetration of the past with the present and with mythic time-space continues to be transmitted from generation to generation.

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**Summary**

Mary Elizabeth Reeve studies a short myth of the Curaray Runa, a people belonging to the Quichua language group in the piedmont of Ecuador, which tells about the disappearance of the Zigaro people. The author explains that the Curaray Runa have three kinds of traditional recitations which can be distinguished by their different times. The “beginning times” deal with the origin of the Curaray Runa until the recent period of the rubber boom, including the disappearance of the Zigaro people; these times allude essentially to the relationship between peoples. “Mythic time-space” is concerned with history and knowledge of the world when humans and animals were relatively alike. Finally the “present times” continue the “beginning times”, arising when the peoples who still did not speak Quichua lose their language and their specific identity. Reeve speaks of parallel history to evidence that these three original genres are three different kinds of narrative. The short myth presented here must be interpreted jointly in the three styles: even though it recounts the disappearance of the Gayas people, it represents in fact the Zigaro experience of being annihilated through wars and epidemics. Thus, at the same time, it gives the reasons for which Zigaro people eventually adopted the Quichua language in order to escape from their enemies.

**Resumen**

Mary-Elisabeth Reeve estudia un mito corto Curaray, un pueblo de lengua Quechua de la llanura ecuatoriana, que relata la desaparición de los Gayas. La autora explica que los Curaray runa practican tres clases de narraciones tradicionales, que se distinguen entre sí por los tiempos que evocan: “el tiempo del principio”, que parte del origen de los Curaray runa hasta la época reciente del boom del caucho, pasando por la desaparición de los Zigaro, y que evoca sus relaciones con otros pueblos; “los tiempos míticos”, que constituyen el conocimiento y relatan la historia del mundo en la época en que los animales y los hombres estaban relativamente indiferenciados; y por último, “los tiempos actuales”, que prolongan “el tiempo del principio” a partir del momento en que los pueblos que no hablaban Quechua desaparecieron. Reeve habla de la historia paralela para demostrar claramente que estas tres clases de narraciones son tres palabras de origen que continúan igualmente perpetúándose en nuestros días. Así, el breve relato que nos presenta debe interpretarse simultáneamente de las tres maneras. Aunque se nos explica la desaparición de los Gayas, su destino representa en realidad la situación de los Zigaro expuestos a sus enemigos y a las epidemias, y, al mismo tiempo, las razones por las cuales han terminado por adoptar el Quechua para escapar de sus enemigos.