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SCHOOL FOOD POLITICS, IDENTITY, AND INDIGENEITY IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

Emmanuelle Ricaud Oneto

May 22, 2017, in a Maijuna village in the northwest Amazon, Peru.

It is a foggy morning. Romana[1] gets up before dawn. It is her turn to prepare snacks and lunch for school children. This little village counts twenty-two elementary students, including her nine-year-old daughter. She walks from her house to the canteen, a little house on stilts made of wood and crowned with a thatched leaf roof next to the concrete school building. At the back of the canteen, in the kitchen, there is some wood and a bucket of water her husband brought the evening before. She lights the fire. The teacher, Noe, climbs the few steps of the canteen, reaches the storage area, and with his key unlocks the heavy chain. He shows me the foodstuff from Peru's National School Feeding Program, *Qali Warma*, which means "vigorous child" in Quechua.[2] Among the tuna, sardine, and chicken cans, the pasta, rice, lentils, powdered eggs, and canned milk, he selects some ingredients based on the suggested menus sent by Qali Warma for Romana to prepare.

The menu of the day? For breakfast: porridge with milk, oats, and sugar, with quinoa cookies. For lunch: tuna, pasta, rice, and split peas. In a large metal pot, Romana pours the milk and lets it cook with the oats and sugar until it has the consistency of porridge (*mazamorra*, or *jùrù* in Máíjɨkì, Maijuna language). She serves one cup for each child; meanwhile, the teacher distributes cookies wrapped in plastic. At 7 a.m., children dressed

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in colorful and fluorescent clothes—usually football T-shirts and shorts for boys, shades of pink T-shirts and shorts or skirts for girls, and shoes—sit on the bench at the table to eat.[3] The smaller ones eat on the floor as they do not reach the table. Once breakfast is finished, they go to school. Later, Romana prepares lunch. Since she fished the day before, she prepares *sudado de pescado* (stewed fish) and puts the tuna cans aside. She adds some condiments: garlic she bought at the little village bodega, sweet pepper, turmeric, and coriander from her garden. When the meal is ready (stewed fish with split peas mash, rice, and pasta), she serves it generously in individual plates. The children eat a part of it at the canteen and save the rest to take home on plates they brought from home.[4] Members of their families share the food later. Romana brings home the unopened cans of tuna she set aside, in case her household runs out of game or fish.

This extract from my fieldwork notes describes how a mother inhabiting a Maijuna village has both applied and deviated from Qali Warma to realize her own vision of what school meals should be and to allot herself a compensation for her collaboration: the canned tuna. During twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2013 to 2017 in the lowlands of the northwest Amazon,[5] I witnessed many mothers adapting the program to their needs in similar ways. I was working in six different villages in northeastern Peru, officially and locally called Native communities.[6]

Four were Maijuna villages, and two were Napuruna villages in the lower Napo River Basin. Located in the Loreto department, they lie in various degrees of remoteness from the city of Iquitos, from five hours to a full day of travel by boat. After receiving official authorization from local representatives and community assemblies, I collected data using ethnographic methods such as participant observation and semi-structured and informal interviews. In this chapter, I draw on that material to analyze the implementation of Qali Warma at the local level, focusing especially on the role of the mothers who almost always cook school meals.[7] They are the last intermediaries between what the state provides and what ends up on children's plates. Within that limited space for maneuver, caregivers[8] both concretize and transform the school food program that has been designed by state policies.[9] They engage in a complex negotiation with

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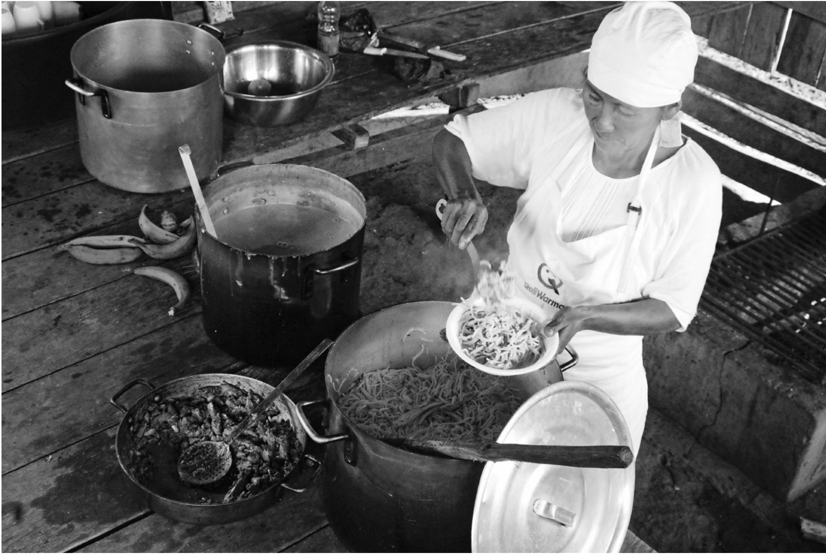

3.1 A Napuruna mother prepares sardines, rice, and plantains for a school meal. Students harvested the plantains. Credit: Emmanuelle Ricaud Oneto.

the Peruvian government as they grapple with the constraints of the program and deploy strategies to adapt it to their own agendas.

I use the term negotiation to emphasize the active process deployed by mothers, which does not involve actual, verbal discussion between government representatives and beneficiaries. Rather, mothers "negotiate" by preparing some supplied foods while expressing concern, or altogether avoiding others; substituting local ingredients; and spreading rumors about the nature of government-provided food and its risks. I understand these discrete resistances as the "infrapolitics of subaltern groups," that is, "political acts that are disguised or offstage [that] help us to map a realm of possible dissent."[10]

Despite their concerns, both groups seem to embrace the program because, like school itself, it allows their children to acquire a *mestizo* socialization. In general, *mestizo* is a Spanish word that refers to anyone who adopts a behavior related to modernity, technology, or urbanity. It is also used as an adjective to indicate industrial or urban-style food (*comida mestiza*). Caregivers believe that learning how to be mestizo, by adopting their cultural habits and eating the food, will open up possibilities for children,

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fostering less discriminatory and more egalitarian relationships with the mestizo and providing easier access to job opportunities in the mestizo world. The motivation behind appropriating these cultural habits is that, in the long term, it might serve the community's best interests.

All this happens within what scholar Antonella Tassinari, writing about Indigenous schools, calls a *frontier*.[11] Rather than seeing schools as merely imposed on from the top-down or appropriated or resisted from the bottom-up, Tassinari writes, we should understand them as "an area of contact and exchange between peoples, with translatable space, as creative situation in which knowledge and traditions are rethought, sometimes reinforced, sometimes rejected, in which ethnic differences both emerge and are built."[12] I argue that school meals constitute a similar space of exchange, interrelation, and negotiation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous worlds.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Mothers' school food negotiations and the contours of the frontier that they shape are influenced by local geographies, histories, and cultures. The Napuruna are settled on the Napo River, a large commercial shipping lane that connects the Andean Region in Ecuador to the Peruvian Amazon. They call themselves both *Kichwa del Napo* [of the Napo River] and Napuruna, number around 7,600 individuals, and speak Kichwa and Spanish.[13] The approximately five hundred Maijuna inhabit the more remote banks of the tributaries of the Napo and Algodón Rivers. Maijuna is their self-determined name, and they speak Máíjìkì and Spanish.

Both groups have a long history of colonial exploitation, discrimination, and disregard from external actors (colonial settlers to, more recently, the Peruvian government and extractive companies).[14] However, their respective locations have contributed to diverging historical relationships with the mestizo. Napuruna are inclined to exchange, trade with, and marry into other ethnic groups and with mestizo people.[15] In contrast, the Maijuna, who have inhabited harder-to-reach interfluvial areas, have maintained more distant relationships with the mestizo. According to historical records, during the colonial and missionary period from the sixteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, their ancestors, the *Payagua*, were generally

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depicted by missionaries and explorers as rebellious, unstable, and insubordinate.[16] In the last few decades, however, the Maijuna have begun to establish more connections with mestizos in nearby towns.

Both the Maijuna and the Napuruna compose their meals from their large gardens where they grow a great diversity of crops and tubers; with bushmeat and gathered fruits from the forest; with fish from rivers and lagoons; and, more recently, with industrial food purchased in cities or local bodegas. Forest resources are drawn from their Native communities' territories and from the 391,000-hectare regional conservation area Maijuna-Kichwa, decreed in 2015 for their sustenance. Their dietary diversity can be attributed to specific cultural knowledge of the area's wide variety of species prepared using many culinary techniques that expand the array of meals.[17] Both groups present some noticeable food systems' differences, but from a broad perspective, their daily meals contain boiled, grilled, smoked, or steamed fish or game with plantains and cassava, the staple food. Women also prepare juices and fermented drinks with cassava and other plants. These shared traditions, as well as each group's regional interethnic relationships, shape how they have received and transformed Qali Warma, a recent national policy that stems from a longer history of Peruvian school food politics.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMS IN PERU

During the 1950s, the newly founded US Agency for International Development (USAID) began routing agricultural surpluses to developing countries, which meant the poorer sections of Peruvian society began receiving some food assistance.[18] By the 1980s, as Peru emerged from twelve years of military rule (1968–1980), it underwent a profound political, social, and economic crisis marked by market liberalization and economic adjustment policies. Like other Latin American countries, Peru could no longer borrow from foreign countries and implemented austerity policies to pay extant debts. To try to mitigate the effects of rising poverty, grassroots women's associations, first in Lima and eventually across the country, created *comedores populares* (community kitchens) that significantly increased food aid to poor families, as well as informal glasses of milk programs for children and pregnant women. The kitchens were funded primarily by the USAID

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but also by international organizations, channeling food donations through local private agencies like Christian organizations and NGOs.[19]

In a clientelist maneuver, or an exchange of public goods for political support, the mayor of Lima announced the creation of *Programa Vaso de Leche* (Glass of Milk Program) for the city in 1984. The following year, the Peruvian president expanded the program to the national scale, morphing into the first national food program. Through successive national governments, several programs succeeded one another until passage of the 1992 *Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria*, PRONAA (National Food Assistance Program),[20] which provided nutritional supplements for infants and pregnant women as well as school lunches for children in poor areas. PRONAA was, however, an inefficient and controversial program due to a combination of inadequate funding, poor organization, and corruption.[21]

In 2012, the newly elected president Ollanta Humala terminated PRONAA and launched a new package of social policies, including a Mother Allowances Program, old-age pensions, and the National School Food Program Qali Warma, which aims to provide meals for all children in state nursery schools and elementary schools, and seeks to increase school attendance and food security by delivering “a sustainable and healthy quality food service, adapted to local eating habits, co-managed by the community.”[22]

Before 2014, when Qali Warma extended to Indigenous communities in the Amazon, children tended to eat before or after class, returning home for meals during a school-day break. On days schools were open, elementary-aged children received both a breakfast snack (usually porridge with cookies) and lunch. Secondary schools did not receive Qali Warma food. Some students still returned home during breaks to eat with their families, and the ones living at boarding schools, since secondary school was far away from their families’ village, cooked dishes from ingredients provided by their parents.

Since 2014, Qali Warma was expanded for students in the Amazonian region to include lunch for elementary students (in addition to breakfast) and extended to middle and high school students. In that year, the federal government conferred[23] the status of “extreme poverty”[24] on inhabitants of Amazonian Native communities, thus automatically expanding Qali Warma’s reach. By 2017, there were 1.2 million children in state

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nurseries (from three to five years old) and 2.6 million children in elementary schools (from six to eleven years old).[25] Approximately 3.5 million rations were distributed every school day throughout the country.[26] Qali Warma reaches 330,000 Indigenous students from Peru's fifty-five officially recognized Indigenous peoples.[27]

Qali Warma recipients at times must demonstrate that they meet various requirements. More specifically, their mothers must show proof of, for example, birth control use, infant and children health controls and vaccinations, and ensure that children attend school until the age of fourteen. In some Napuruna villages, mothers who do not come to prepare school meals on their assigned days have to pay a fine of around 10 soles (US$3), which is used later for condiments. Teachers, nurses, and state representatives have all been found to demand informal "shadow conditions."[28] For example, some teachers threaten to suspend food allocations if children do not wear school uniforms, despite it not being mandatory for students to wear them. As scholars of Peru, and Latin America generally, have pointed out, antipoverty social policies that promote co-responsibility mean, in practice, that the "burden of responsibility"[29] falls on mothers' shoulders.[30]

Qali Warma's structure reflects the global context of neoliberal governance, specifically the principle of co-responsibility with systems of co-management and cooperation with local actors. This model replaces direct social assistance from the central government, which policymakers argue creates dependency on state welfare.[31] As in other Latin American countries, new participatory committees oversee the local implementation of national government programs. The School Food Committee (CAE), composed of parents and teachers, is responsible for receiving the food, controlling its quantity and quality, and cooking it. The Purchasing Committee (CC), composed of parent and teacher representatives working with local governments, organizes the purchase of food to comply with menus sent from the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS). Although the program's guidelines state that MIDIS should source the products from within Peru, giving preference to local suppliers,[32] small and family farms rarely meet the required industrial standards regarding production, packaging, and transport.[33] Thus, as MIDIS goes through rounds of public bidding,[34] they source most food from large national and sometimes international agro-industrial companies.[35]

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Even though Indigenous communities—who hunt, fish, collect and cultivate fresh, nutritious food—provide large quantities of food to city-dwellers, they do not meet the government hygienic and logistical requirements to qualify as suppliers for Qali Warma. Neither are they involved or consulted[36] in policymaking decisions that deeply impact their communities; despite policies stipulating participatory committees, Indigenous stakeholders are still excluded from the policy process. The provision of fresh products sourced from beyond the region to Amazonian villages is logistically challenging, so the government provides industrial canned or packaged food to the Maijuna and the Napuruna once a month by boat, the primary mode of transport in the region.

In villages, local leaders, family farmers, and caregivers have complained both formally and informally about the quality of the food from national producers.[37] Some parents complained about allergies their children had when exposed to some products, usually canned food, and about low-quality food with a lot of fat and outdated expiration labels. In 2018, the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP) published the Indigenous Women of the Amazon Agenda to

3.2 A Maijuna girl playing with school meal ingredients. Credit: Emmanuelle Ricaud Oneto.

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continue this demand for fresh, healthy, culturally responsive, and sustainable school food: "To influence MIDIS so that social programs aimed at Native communities, such as *Qali Warma* and *Cuna Más*, acquire local products and prepare food in accordance with the cultural consumption of Indigenous peoples.[38] Though the Peruvian government has not changed its policies, the Maijuna and the Napuruna enact their communities' Indigenous logics to rework the goals and implementation of Qali Warma at the local level to further their own aims for their children's learning: to embody and become mestizo by eating school meals.

EATING MESTIZO, BECOMING MESTIZO: AMAZONIAN INDIGENOUS LOGICS RELATED TO THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOLING

For the Maijuna and Napuruna people, schooling is understood as highly important for children's futures. When I asked parents why they want their children to study in the schools, they answered that by studying they can get a salaried job, which most parents do not have. For instance, an old man who had adopted his grandchild told me:

> I do not want him to sweat in the garden. He should have a position, like working for the State and they give him a salary. Nowadays, children should study to be able to earn a salary. Because, if he does not study, he will marry, go [to the garden] with his ax, his basket. For me, this is not good. I want him to complete his education (*superar su educación*). Working as a secretary, with computers, all of that, with papers. It seems to me that it is better. But living and gardening, no. He will suffer a lot.

Most of my interlocutors stressed that they would like their children to become professionals who, after pursuing secondary education, would return to their villages to support their communities. When I asked Lucía what she expected for her daughter's future, she responded, "I would like her to be what God wants: a nurse, maybe an engineer, a nurse. I would like that my children move forward, that they study." I asked if she wanted her daughter to stay in the village, and she explained, "No. I would like her to work first to learn how it is to be a nurse, what pills should be used for what disease. And when she can return here, she might serve people." Like other Amazonian Indigenous groups, the Maijuna and Napuruna seemed

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to see school not as an essentially colonizing institution but as something to instrumentalize to meet communities' needs and expectations.[39]

School physically and symbolically is a non-Indigenous arena within the community. While the local houses are made of wood, the school is a concrete building. Inside, children learn mestizo knowledge and mestizo behaviors, from clothing, language, and posture to food habits. At school, they have notebooks and pencils; they wear shoes, uniforms, or new clothes, and girls tie their hair. After school, they change into used clothes, take off their shoes, and untie their hair. Parents insist on the importance of this knowing in order "not to be fooled." Many of the adults in these villages have suffered discrimination in cities when they needed hospital attention or asked for government support, and mestizo retailers who sell Maijuna products have ripped them off. Parents hope that, if their children learn about mestizo behavior, they will be able to anticipate and avoid similar discriminations and injustices and they will pursue secondary or higher education or find work in different locales.

School food is a cornerstone of this process of becoming mestizo. Schoolchildren perform mestizo ways of eating, but they also embody mestizo identity and take a non-Indigenous point of view when they eat mestizo food. As Viveiros de Castro has written, "food and cooking regimes in Amazonia" have a "symbolic importance," such that "the set of habits and processes that constitute bodies is precisely the location from which identity and difference emerge."[40] My Maijuna and Napuruna interlocutors revealed this too: when I asked them about what eating a specific food or diet means for them, their answers involved identity. For instance, a Maijuna man, Felipe, explained to me what kind of food he does not eat and why:

FELIPE: Salad, chopped leaf, I do not eat.

Do you not like it?

FELIPE: Do I eat leaves?! In Iquitos, I remove leaves, I am not a *motelo* (yellow-footed tortoise, *Chelonoidis denticulata*) that eats leaves! [. . .] And, another meal, ceviche. I also do not like ceviche. Ceviche you eat raw raw, with mere chili. It burns the meat of the *paiche* (a fish, *Arapaima gigas*). I am not a jaguar that eats that!

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In both Maijuna and Napuruna cosmologies, the difference between beings does not lie in their bodies, understood as substance or physiology, but rather in their behavior and food ethos—a concept Viveiros de Castro calls "perspectivism."[41] Thus, eating the food that a certain animal eats or performing its habits means becoming this animal, adopting its point of view.[42] For instance, the Maijuna and Napuruna people do not drink water from the river like other Amazonian Indigenous groups because, as they say, it is an animal habit.[43] For most Amazonian groups, the Maijuna and Napuruna included, food behaviors mark the bodily differences between humans and animals, as well as distinct human groups such as mestizo and Indigenous.[44] Regarding mestizo food, Lucía, a Maijuna woman, said:

LUCÍA: Mestizo food is motelo stew, of meat, of chicken. Mestizo food is made of chicken. They eat it in Iquitos.

Do you eat chicken?

LUCÍA: Yes, I do. I am also mestiza!

Similarly, in a Napuruna village, when I was eating with María and her children in the kitchen, she said that we were eating as *wiracocha*, white or mestizo people. She referred to the fact that we were seated on a bench in front of a table covered with a white tablecloth, eating our fish soup with cassava flour on plates, with forks and spoons. The following day, she told me that she wanted to eat as a *Nativa* (Indigenous). Seated on the floor, we used our hands to eat boiled fish and cassava from one *bijao* leaf (*Calathea sp*.) placed on the ground between us. Ingredients themselves transform according to how they are cooked and served. When Romana added local river fish to the school lunch described at the start of this chapter, she cooked it *sudado de pescado*, as a mestizo meal, and it was thus perceived as mestizo or prepared food. Similarly, when Maijuna and Napuruna mothers add to school meals local fresh ingredients from their garden—such as sweet pepper, *cocona*, a local tropical fruit, or *sacha culantro* (local coriander)—they are considered mestizo food, used in mestizo cuisine.

Like other Amazonian Indigenous people, the Maijuna and the Napuruna do not just perform identity; they embody it. Enacting the school meal program, then, children who learn mestizo eating habits are also

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becoming mestizo.[45] This allows them to experience social (state) policies not as interactive, not unidirectional. Although a few elders expressed concerns that children in school might learn to deny or depreciate their origins and their own culture, most of the parents with whom I spoke did not see the process of acquiring mestizo knowledge, norms, and behaviors as a way of forgetting or denying their own culture; rather, they presented it as a useful addition. Nevertheless, rumors about school food that circulated throughout the villages reflected real concerns and fears about both mestizo eating and, more broadly, the possible long-term consequences of becoming mestizo.

NEGOTIATING SCHOOL FOOD: NUANCING LOGICS AND STRATEGIES

The Maijuna and Napuruna people value the food schools receive from the government for its role in the process of becoming mestizo, for the variety it adds to school menus, and for its economic and practical benefits. When parents are working in the garden or in the forest, or when local resources are scarce, children can still be fed at school. But the status of the food provided differs from one product to another. Overall, caregivers tend to value their own food resources over industrial or mestizo products, some of which—particularly canned food—they mistrust or altogether reject. They explain their judgment in terms of values, allergies observed after ingestion, and a general distrust of the government. Even though Maijuna or Kichwa caregivers are not consulted and cannot become official Qali Warma suppliers, they develop strategies to participate, adapt, and transform the program according to their Indigenous views and values.

For example, caregivers mostly appreciated white rice from Peru or other countries, which replaces plantains or cassava to accompany game or fish. White rice is often eaten during community gatherings when the hosts can afford it, providing dietary variety and a sense of prestige to the hosts. However, caregivers and some elders criticize the quantity of white rice children are getting used to eating, noting that it should not be consumed every day. A Maijuna man explained to me that eating natural food, not rice and sugar, should be the rule: "You are not going to eat every day just

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that [rice and sugar], you should eat your natural food. When you are tired, you eat something else. Varied, varied that is how one should eat."

"Natural food" is the phrase both the Napuruna and the Maijuna use to refer to their normal diets, contrasting rainforest or garden food with the urban industrial food they pejoratively call *comida química* ("chemical food"). For instance, artificial flavors are considered chemicals and therefore make food unhealthy. Lucía, a Maijuna woman, told me that she carefully limits the doses of *ajino*[46] (monosodium glutamate) in her soups: "I put a little bit of ajino in the food. I do not put a lot. If you put a lot, it gives you disease in your body. Some like it, they put half of it [the sachet]. I take care of myself, of my children." When I asked her what chemical food signifies, she said that it refers to "what food causes disease," which contrasts with the health value inherent in natural food.

Chemical/natural dichotomies within Indigenous food logics shape how Qali Warma is perceived and negotiated at the village level. For example, the people I spoke with during fieldwork pointed to health concerns around the canned tuna provided by the government. Canned tuna is generally despised by adults and most children. Although it is kept in school kitchens in case of need, in practice, mothers either replace it with game, fish, or eggs when they collaborate or they tell their children to eat only the rest of the meal, usually rice. Almost all the mothers told me that students have suffered from allergies when they ate canned tuna. I have noticed several children with the symptoms they described as signs of allergies: white spots, hives, itching, and diarrhea, symptoms that are likely due to preservatives, additives, other chemical substances, or expired tuna. The Maijuna and the Napuruna I spoke to added that eating canned food when they are sick risks aggravating their symptoms, an extension and adaptation of similar cultural knowledge regarding not eating the meat of specific animals when sick.

These examples illustrate how caregivers set limits to the introduction of mestizo school food into their children's diets. Paradoxically, even as they value consuming a variety of "natural" food from gardens, forests, and rivers, they do not encourage their children to orient their lives to obtain it: they prefer their children to find salaried jobs instead of working in gardens, and they hope that a carefully managed mestizo diet will help them achieve that goal.

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QALI WARMA AND INDUSTRIAL FOOD AS AFASI MIKUNA FOR NAPURUNA

Many Napuruna consider industrial products like canned fish *afasi mikuna* (lazy food) as opposed to the more coveted game or fish, called prey, without which an Amazonian meal is considered an incomplete "naked dish." Only when no prey is available do the Napuruna choose to eat canned fish. In these cases, despite being disliked, canned fish is a food security device that allows women to prepare a "real meal." When I asked a Napuruna man if he eats canned food, he answered, embarrassed:

> If you cannot find any game, it is our afasi mikuna, afasi mikuna. Cans, rice, pasta and oil, and the meal is done. When you have nothing left in your kitchen, it is afasi mikuna, it is made with products from the bodega.

The Napuruna value system places a high value on *sinzhi* (strength) and hard work whether in Indigenous locales or the mestizo world of cities.[47] Men are expected to provide game and money for their families, and women are expected to work hard in the gardens, *chacras*, for the same ends. Caregivers endeavor to "throw away the laziness" of children by holding macerated tobacco or chili close to children's eyes, nostrils, or mouth, which causes vomiting, urinating, or defecating.[48] Such practice is believed to evacuate a phlegm that causes laziness; they use the same method to improve dogs' hunting abilities. Another practice is to give children liquids to drink with plants considered "strong," such as *chuchuwasha* (Maytenus laevis), early in the morning. Some Napuruna feared that Qali Warma's canned, "lazy food" might make their children become lazy or fragile. For instance, a father criticized the nonchalance of schoolchildren who do "as they please" while parents must labor hard.

To limit this transformation, caregivers maintain the local moral framework at schools, and encourage children's autonomy in kind. At the canteen, for instance, older schoolchildren can gain some prestige when they bring fish for lunch. One day, a twelve-year-old boy told me proudly, in the presence of the male teacher and two mothers who were there to cook, that he was used to fishing early and bringing his catch to school. Usually, he only had enough fish for himself, but on this day, he brought two fish, one for him, the second for the teacher, who thanked and praised him, as did the mothers. All three caregivers were balancing the school

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feeding program's work to help children become mestizo with their own Indigenous values and practices.

RUMORS AS INFRAPOLITICAL DISCOURSES AMONG MAIJUNA

In general, when I asked Maijuna and Napuruna people why they participate in the Qali Warma program, they gave the same reasons as state representatives. They mentioned the risks of undernourished and anemic children as well as situations where parents are not able to prepare breakfast. Mealtimes are flexible, as it depends on the availability of fish and game; parents usually eat around 9–10 a.m., but school begins at 7 a.m.

Yet many Maijuna, mostly mothers, expressed skepticism about Qali Warma, saying that they do not know the true reason the government has in providing the food. For instance, a young mother, Lucila, told me that: "We do not know. For education, that is what they say, but we do not know why." After several months in Maijuna communities, during which there was an increased number of state agents present, I heard mothers worrying and disseminating rumors about both the Qali Warma program and the broader set of social policies.

These stories tended to follow one of two narratives. In the first, the state will kidnap their children, kill them, and return them to the village in tuna cans. The indefinable content of canned food and meat under vacuum—which is either minced meat or fish but not easily recognizable as such—sparks many rumors.[49] In the initial years of the program, the Napuruna and the Maijuna told me they threw away all the cans because they thought it was Indigenous people's flesh. Health controls for children, such as measuring their weight and height, are sometimes seen as a check of their fatness and suitability for the cannibalistic end of becoming canned tuna. Another study with the Maijuna details a rumor that "cans of tuna or sardines in oil are the favorite food of the whites in the forest because they contain Indian meat."[50] Similar rumors have been in circulation for the last few centuries in the Andes and Amazon about the *pishtaco*, an outsider figure—sometimes a colonial settler, sometimes a boss, sometimes a government or NGO agent—who threatens Andean or Amazonian Indigenous lands.[51] In this case, the pishtaco is a cannibalistic outsider threatening their children and, by extension, their social reproduction and way of life.

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According to a second set of rumors, drawing on the Bible,[52] the government conspires with merchants and bankers, and people who receive government support (family allowances or food) will be marked by the devil or the Beast. When the Apocalypse comes, all marked people will be killed.[53] These rumors previously circulated among the Napuruna and are still shared among the Maijuna. However, the Maijuna do not seem to fully believe these accounts: in some cases, Maijuna women were laughing when recounting the story, while others seemed quite worried or suspicious. Each story can be understood as "a proposition for belief,"[54] rumors that reflect real fear felt by women for their children, and real distrust, suspicion, and resistance vis-à-vis government institutions and actors.[55] Andean and Amazonian Indigenous communities have understood Qali Warma and other co-responsibility programs not under the promoted logic of rights and duties, but rather as gifts "around which an exchange relationship is created and renewed with a powerful external actor: the Peruvian state."[56] Under this logic of reciprocity, the gifts, supports, or aid of food and money can only be maintained by meeting official requirements, seen as compulsory and coercive.

One of those perceived requirements seems to be eating the school meals. For example, a Maijuna woman said: "We have to eat what the State gives, otherwise it will not send anymore [food supplies]." Another is the required maternal health controls to receive social policy supports: women usually do not feel comfortable in mestizo health institutions. A third are school requirements, even those that are not official, such as the threat that a teacher might suspend their allowances if their children do not wear a uniform. Within this understanding, state agents such as Qali Warma officials, nurses, or teachers appear as intrusive and coercive actors,[57] and the mothers are self-policing by respecting the main program guidelines and providing unpaid work at the canteen. At the same time, rumors indicate a form of resistance.[58]

Such stories bring to light mothers' concerns for the future of their children in the mestizo world. Rumors that the state will kidnap children might be interpreted as mothers' expressions or feelings about losing their children to the mestizo world, and more broadly, the loss of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being. Mothers want their children to study and find work but fear that they might continue to live far from their villages,

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forget their culture, or even reject their origins. Although the Maijuna and Napuruna don't expect school to be the place where Indigenous knowledge and behaviors are transmitted, some of them, mostly elders, do criticize children for failing to respect their Indigenous heritage. Taken as a whole, rumors[59] about school food reveal the power dynamics, questions, and struggles between mothers and government agents involved in the program.

CONCLUSION

In both Maijuna and Napuruna villages where this research was completed, most families seem not to directly question the provision of school food from the government: they openly ask for food supplies and sometimes even request larger quantities. They understand school food as providing sustenance and helping students pursue what they see as the main objective of schooling: becoming mestizo. Nevertheless, mothers circumscribe this process with precise limits to prevent unwanted effects of school food that their sociocultural values warn against.

Through the introduction of local food to provide more variety in daily meals, Indigenous peoples support the resilience of their own diets and traditions, and by extension, their identities. They transform school food at the "frontier" between Maijuna and Napuruna and mestizo relational social categories. Their informal acts also push back against the bureaucratic apparatus that excludes Indigenous peoples as potential school food suppliers. At the same time, rumors, as infra-political discourses, express skepticism and doubt about the process of becoming mestizo and the ways that the program's constraints risk preventing mothers from providing for their family and supporting their community. In other words, even as these villagers try to follow the basic contours of the program, beneficiaries feel threatened by, and resistant to, the dominant figure of the Peruvian state.

NOTES

1. All names are pseudonyms.

2. This is one of the dominant and Indigenous languages in Peru, but it is not the language of the Maijuna or the Napuruna.

3. Most school children also have national uniforms that parents purchase. They wear them only on Mondays in this village as it is considered a more formal school day.

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4. Qali Warma provides cooking and eating utensils, but because the children bring food home, they use their own utensils and dishes.

5. Master's fieldwork was conducted in 2013 with funding from the Research Institute for Development. From 2015 to 2017, doctoral research received financial support from the Interdisciplinary Institute of Contemporary Anthropology; two grants from the Lelong Legacy associated with the French National Center for Scientific Research; the Institute of the Americas' grant; the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Aires Culturelles Grant; Île-de-France Regional Council's International Mobility Aid; and the French Institute of Andean Studies Grant. I thank Matthias Teeuwen for his insightful suggestions on this chapter.

6. "Ley de Comunidades Nativas y de Desarrollo Agrario de la Selva y de Ceja de Selva" (Decreto-Ley No. 20653, Peru, 1974).

7. During the survey, only one Napuruna man told me he prepared school meals because he was a cook in the National Army. Similarly, in Maijuna villages, no man cooks at the canteen, including a widower and single father who relies on women in the community to cook.

8. Instead of parents, this term points to all individuals involved in childcare.

9. As Weaver-Hightower and Robert argue, "School Food [. . .] Is Deeply Political on Every Level." See Sarah A. Robert and Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower, *School Food Politics: The Complex Ecology of Hunger and Feeding in Schools around the World* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), 6. Guidelines and rules are not followed in the local context the way they were meant to be followed as envisioned and introduced by state officials, illustrating the "deviations" (dérives) that Olivier de Sardan's calls "the recurrent gap between expected behavior and real behavior." See Jean-Pierre Oliver de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development: Understanding Contemporary Social Change* (London-New York: Zed Books, 2005), 28.

10. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 20.

11. Antonella Tassinari, "Escola Indígena: Novos Horizontes Teóricos, Novas Fronteiras de Educação," in *Antropologia, História e Educação: A Questão Indígena e a Escola*, orgs. Aracy Lopes da Silva, and Mariana Ferreira (Sao Paulo: Global, 2001).

12. Tassinari, "Escola Indígena," 68; Antonella Tassinari and Clarice Cohn, "'Opening to the Other': Schooling among the Karipuna and Mebengokré-Xikrin of Brazil." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2009): 150–169.

13. Irène Bellier, *El temblor y la luna: ensayo sobre las relaciones entre las mujeres y los hombres mai huna* (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 1991); INEI, "Censos nacionales 2017: XII de Población, VII de Vivienda y III de Comunidades Nativas y Comunidades Campesinas" (Lima, 2017).

14. Anne Taylor, "The Western Margins of Amazonia from the Early Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas: Volume 3: South America*, ed. Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, vol. 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 188–256, https://doi.org/10.1017

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/CHOL9780521630764.005; Bellier, *El temblor y la luna: Ensayo sobre las relaciones entre las mujeres y los hombres mai huna*.

15. Taylor, "The Western Margins of Amazonia"; Michael Uzendoski and Norman Whitten Jr., "From 'Acculturated Indians' to 'Dynamic Amazonian Quichua-Speaking Peoples,'" *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 12, no. 1 (July 26, 2014): 1–13.

16. Bellier, *El temblor y la luna*.

17. Emmanuelle Ricaud Oneto, "Dynamiques de Changement d'un Système Alimentaire Autochtone. Le Cas Des Maijuna En Amazonie Péruvienne" (master's thesis, National Museum of Natural History, Paris, 2013).

18. United States Agency for International Development, "30 Años, Programa de Alimentos Para La Paz" (Folleto del Servicio Cultural e Informativo de Estados Unidos, Washington, DC,1985).

19. Cecilia Blondet and Carmen Montero, *Hoy: Menú popular: Los comedores en Lima* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and UNICEF, 1995), 41, https://repositorio.iep.org.pe/handle/IEP/617.

20. Decreto Supremo No° 020–92-PCM.

21. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *Alimentación Escolar y Las Posibilidades de Compra Directa de La Agricultura Familiar* (Cooperación Brasil-FAO, 2013), https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1041702/.

22. Decreto Supremo No 008–2012-MIDIS.

23. Resolución Ministerial No 227–2014-MIDIS.

24. The Household Targeting System (*Sistema de Focalización de Hogares*—SISFOH) defines this status to decide the granting of social programs. It refers to a range of criteria such as the household income, socioeconomic situation, and so on. In the decree mentioned, it is based only on a geographical and identity (Indigenous) criteria.

25. "Estadísticas De Educación," Perú Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI), Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI), accessed April 12, 2023, https://www.inei.gob.pe/estadisticas/indice-tematico/education/.

26. https://plataformacelac.org/programa/185.

27. Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática , "Censos Nacionales 2007: XI de Población y Vivienda. Resultados Definitivos de Las Comunidades Indígenas" (Lima: Government of Peru, 2009).

28. Tara Patricia Cookson, "Peruvian Mothers Contending with Conditional Aid and Its Selective Inattention to the Conditions of Rural Life," in *Money from the Government in Latin America*, ed. Maria Elisa Balen and Martin Fotta (New York: Routledge, 2019), 69.

29. Cookson, "Peruvian Mothers," 73.

30. Sarah Bradshaw and Ana Quiros, "Women Beneficiaries or Women Bearing the Cost? A Gendered Analysis of the Red de Protección Social in Nicaragua," *Development*

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and Change 39 (October 28, 2008): 823–844, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2008.00507.x; Sylvia Chant, "The 'Feminisation of Poverty' and the 'Feminisation' of Anti-Poverty Programmes: Room for Revision?," *Journal of Development Studies* 44, no. 2 (February 1, 2008): 165–197, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380701789810; Cookson, "Peruvian Mothers"; Nora Nagels, "Les Représentations Des Rapports Sociaux de Sexe Au Sein Des Politiques de Lutte Contre La Pauvreté Au Pérou," *Recherches Féministes* 24, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 115–134, https://doi.org/10.7202/1007755ar.

31. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *Alimentación Escolar y Las Posibilidades de Compra Directa de La Agricultura Familiar: Estudio de Caso en Ocho Países* (Rome, Italy, 2013), 58–59, https://www.fao.org/3/i3413s/i3413s.pdf.

32. Law No. 27767 (2002) established the norms to regulate the compulsory purchase of national food products of agricultural and hydrobiological origin by the Food Support and Social Compensation Programs and all state agencies that use public resources. Law No. 29367 (2009) added, "All government agencies purchase local and regional products directly from peasants, Natives, individual or organized producers, and agro-industrial micro-enterprises in the region that use locally produced inputs, at more favorable prices and quality conditions" (Peru), Article 2.

33. Moreover, the use of pesticides, plastic or metal packaging, food additives, and preservatives are not mentioned in purchasing guidelines. "School Menu Planning Guidelines," Resolución Jefatural No. 001–2013, No. 001–2013, Lima.

34. FAO, "Alimentación Escolar y Las Posibilidades de Compra Directa de La Agricultura Familiar".

35. FAO, "Alimentación Escolar y Las Posibilidades de Compra Directa de La Agricultura Familiar".

36. I refer to the right of Indigenous peoples to free, prior, and informed consent according to the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO) promulgated in 1989 and ratified by Peru in 1993 (Legislative Resolution No. 26253).

37. See Redacción EC, "Qali Warma, una historia de escándalos y denuncias," *El Comercio*, March 21, 2014, https://elcomercio.pe/peru/ica/qali-warma-historia-escandalos-denuncias-303593-noticia/.

38. Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana, "Agenda de las mujeres indígenas de la Amazonía" (Peru, 2018), 5.

39. Raphaël Colliaux, "De l'emprise à la prise de l'école. Usages de la scolarisation et expérience de la 'communauté'chez les Matsigenka (Amazonie péruvienne)" (PhD dissertation, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, 2019), https://theses.fr/2019EHES0001; Peter Gow, *Of Mixed Blood: Kinship and History in Peruvian Amazonia* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991); Laura M. Rival, *Trekking through History: The Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

40. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (1998): 479–480, https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157.

41. Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis."

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42. Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis;" See also, Aparecida Vilaca, "Devenir Autre: Chamanisme et Contact Interethnique En Amazonie Brésilienne," *Journal de La Société Des Américanistes* 85 (1999): 239–260; Aparecida Vilaça, "Chronically Unstable Bodies: Reflections on Amazonian Corporalities," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 3 (2005): 445–464; Fernando Santos-Granero, "Hybrid Bodyscapes: A Visual History of Yanesha Patterns of Cultural Change," *Current Anthropology* 50, no. 4 (August 1, 2009): 477–512, https://doi.org/10.1086/604708.

43. For example, P. Descola, *La nature domestique. Symbolisme et praxis dans l'écologie des Achuar* (Paris: Foundation Singer-Polignac et Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1986), 52, https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/as/1990-v14-n3-as786/015150ar/.

44. Vilaca, "Devenir Autre," 245.

45. Mestizo should not be confused with the process of mestizaje, which in Latin American countries refers to an ideology related to the construction of nation-states that promotes the fusion of Indigenous and European colonizers into "mestizos." In contrast, becoming mestizo in the situations described coincide with a "hybridity" rather than a fusion of different ethnic identities. For example, José Antonio Kelly, *About Anti-Mestizaje* (Species—Núcleo de Antropologia Especulativa, Desterro [Florianópolis]: Cultura e Barbárie, 2016); Fernando Santos-Granero, "Hybrid Bodyscapes: A Visual History of Yanesha Patterns of Cultural Change," *Current Anthropology* 50, no. 4 (August 1, 2009): 477–512, https://doi.org/10.1086/604708.

46. Monosodium glutamate sold by the Japanese brand *Ajinomoto*.

47. Michael Uzendoski, *The Napo Runa of Amazonian Ecuador* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

48. This practice, *tabaquear*, is also applied to dogs for being good hunters.

49. In contrast, sardine is interpreted as a more valued product than tuna as the fish is seen in its entirety.

50. Irène Bellier, *El temblor y la luna: Ensayo sobre las relaciones entre las mujeres y los hombres mai huna* (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 1991).

51. Ludwig Huber et al., "Programa Juntos: Certezas y malentendidos en torno a las transferencias condicionadas, estudio de caso de seis distritos rurales del Perú," *UNICEF–Instituto de Estudios Peruanos*, 2009, https://repositorio.iep.org.pe/handle/IEP/723; Emmanuelle Piccoli, "«Dicen que los cien soles son del Diablo»: L'interprétation apocalyptique et mythique du Programa Juntos dans les communautés andines de Cajamarca (Pérou) et la critique populaire des programmes sociaux," *Social Compass* 61 (September 1, 2014): 328–347, https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614535701; Norma Correa, Terry Roopnaraine, and Amy Margolies, "Conditional Cash Transfer Program Implementation and Effects in Peruvian Indigenous Contexts," in *Cash Transfers in Context: An Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan and E. Piccoli (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04jbv.9. Irène Bellier and Anne Marie Hocquenghem, "De Los Andes a La Amazonia: Una Representacion Evolutiva Del 'Otro,'" Bulletin *de l'Institut Francais d'Etudes Andines* 20, no. 1 (1991): 41–59.

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52. The Napuruna are mainly Catholic, and the Maijuna have been Christianized by evangelists in recent decades—currently, few are evangelicals though they usually maintain connections with evangelists.

53. This rumor takes up parts of the Revelation of St. John (Rev. 13, 1–17) and reflects Emmanuelle Piccoli, "«Dicen que los cien soles son del Diablo»."

54. Julien Bonhomme, *The Sex Thieves: The Anthropology of a Rumor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press/Hau Books, 2016), 119; Robert H. Knapp, "A Psychology of Rumor," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1944): 22.

55. Emmanuelle Piccoli, "«Dicen Que Los Cien Soles Son Del Diablo»"; Fernando Santos-Granero and Frederica Barclay, "Bundles, Stampers, and Flying Gringos: Native Perceptions of Capitalist Violence in Peruvian Amazonia," *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (April 2011): 143–167, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1935-4940.2011.01128.x; Scott, *Domination*, 4.

56. Correa, Roopnaraine, and Margolies, "Conditional Cash Transfer Program," 42.

57. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975).

58. Scott, *Domination*, 198.

59. Julien Bonhomme, *The Sex Thieves: The Anthropology of a Rumor*; Emmanuelle Piccoli, "«Dicen Que Los Cien Soles Son Del Diablo»"; Scott, *Domination.*; Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

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Transforming School Food Politics around the World

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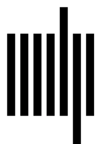

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