1962, vol. 36, pp. 287–92; idem., 'Opium again in antiquity', *Levant*, 1979, vol. 11, pp. 167–71; idem., 'Highs and lows in the Holy Land: opium in Biblical times', *Eretz-Israel* (Yadin Memorial Volume) 1989, vol. 20, pp. 148–53; J. Evans, 'Report' appended to the foregoing, pp. 153–4. The Hebrew word *rosh* ('head'), translated in the Bible as 'gall' (eg 'gall and wormwood'), is likely to refer to the opium poppy; a reference in the fourth century Jerusalem Talmud uses the Greek word *opion*. The association of *rosh* with wickedness and suffering would indicate both its bitter taste and the moral problems of misuse; Merrillees, 'Highs and lows in the Holy Land', op. cit., p. 150. The use of opiates seems to have spread eastwards from Europe and western Asia, to appear in south-east Asia in the first millennium AD.

122 N. Kourou, 'Handmade pottery and trade: the case of Argive monochrome ware', *Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Ancient Greek and Related Pottery*, Copenhagen, National Museum, 1988, pp. 314–24.

123 Conversely, the USA today spends almost as much on the suppression of 'drugs' as it does on defence.

In J. Goodman, P. Lovejoy and A. Sherratt (eds) Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology. London. Routledge 1995.

2

COCA, BEER, CIGARS AND *YAGÉ*

Meals and anti-meals in an Amerindian community

Stephen Hugh-Jones

The primary concern of this essay is to document and analyse the use of coca, tobacco, beer and *yagé* (a hallucinogenic drink prepared from the bark of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vines) among the Barasana, a group of Tukanoan-speaking Amerindians living in north-west Amazonia on the frontier between Colombia and Brazil.[1] However, it is also intended to stimulate reflection on how anthropologists, historians and other scholars might contribute more widely to debates concerning 'drugs'. It is here that I shall begin.[2]

In their attempts to control the use of illicit drugs, government agencies have typically paid more attention to supply than to demand. To discuss why this should be so would take me far away from the intentions of this essay. Here I would merely make two observations. The first is that an emphasis on supply has, as one of its effects, the export of militaristic solutions to the perceived problem and the displacement of the violence and social upheaval that goes with them away from the wealthy consuming countries to the poorer producing countries and, in these, away from the cities towards centres of production located in rural areas.

My second observation would be that this focus on production and supply often seems to reflect a theory of demand phrased in terms of individual desires and needs. Debates about the 'drugs problem' are often characterized by an explicit or implicit assumption that demand for drugs is psychological or physiological in origin. This view of demand is especially prevalent in those many discussions of drugs which focus on the issue of addiction and which see the 'drugs problem' more in medico-legal than in socio-political terms. This reified emphasis on substances rather than on people results in a shift in attention away from the social forces that lie behind the consumption or prohibition of stimulants and psychoactive substances – what people do with drugs and why they do it – on to the apparent power of the substances

themselves – what drugs do to people. The various campaigns against the indigenous use of coca in Latin America would be but one example of this common tendency to see drugs largely in medico-legal terms, to fetishize and exaggerate the inherent, dangerous potency of particular substances, to create 'problems' where none exist and fail to deal with real problems elsewhere.

Historians, sociologists, anthropologists and experts on cultural studies have all emphasized that consumption is a social activity, that demand is socially constituted and that the categorization and differential use of goods and services serve to create and maintain social distinctions and values. As Appadurai puts it, 'consumption is eminently social, relational, and active rather than private, atomic, or passive'.[3] Although a number of ethnographic case studies describe and analyse the use of stimulants in non-Western societies,[4] it is striking how little anthropological attention has been paid to 'drugs' closer to home and this despite their contemporary political, economic and social significance.[5] Most striking of all is that, despite their potential relevance to many of the arguments raised, 'drugs' are almost entirely absent from the recent literature on consumption.[6] Given the copious references to food and drink in these works and given also their emphasis on what Appadurai calls the 'politics of value', this neglect is surprising. If discussions of the 'drugs problem' might profit from recent studies of consumption, such studies might also profit by paying more attention to 'drugs'.

One reason for the scholarly neglect of drugs is that their illegal status tends to make them invisible. They are typically left out of statistics and other information on the economy – gathering reliable data about the production, distribution and consumption of drugs can be both difficult and dangerous. But this invisibility sometimes has other, more theoretical, sources as well. When, for example, Douglas and Isherwood define consumption as 'a use of material possessions that is beyond commerce and *free within the law*',[7] the illegal consumption of drugs is left in a theoretical vacuum. This explicit and rather arbitrary circumscription of the notion of consumption also finds echoes in a more widespread tendency to treat the category of 'drug' as unproblematic and self-evident and to extend it inappropriately to non-Western contexts.

Although anthropologists quite often employ it loosely as a general, cross-cultural category, the sense and meaning of the concept 'drug' are intimately linked to a particular institutional matrix – a state, established judiciary, police force and customs together with specialized and monopolistic medical and pharmacological professions and perhaps to an established clergy or priesthood as well. The concept also depends on a historically and culturally specific classification of substances and on a specific set of rules, norms and conventions concerning the

appropriate ways in which these substances are to be distributed and consumed.

In common usage, the value of the term 'drug' frequently depends on a double contrast. On the one hand, 'drugs' are opposed to 'medicines' supplied legally by doctors and chemists to specified individuals and used for supposedly beneficial and non-recreational purposes; on the other hand, they are opposed to 'foods' which have to do with 'nutrition' or 'feeding' rather than with 'curing'. 'Foods' and 'medicines' are used, 'drugs' are 'ab-used'. However, this three-way contrast between 'drugs', 'foods' and 'medicines' appears to be both historically quite recent and confined to industrial societies;[8] it does not always map easily on to the way that substances are categorized elsewhere. Anthropologists have often documented the intimate relation between food and medicine in non-Western societies and it is clear that, above and beyond any nutritional value or physiological effects, food, drink, drugs and medicines all serve as vehicles for social interaction, as systems of communication and as expressions of social values in Western societies.

The implicit acceptance of the category 'drug' in anthropological analysis often goes together with a rather arbitrary allocation of different consumable substances – 'food', 'drink' and 'drugs' – into discrete analytical fields which might more profitably be discussed together. Two recent works on Andean societies provide examples. Johnsson analyses the social and cultural significance of food and drink among the Bolivian Aymara but ignores coca altogether, apparently on the grounds that it is not a 'food' but a 'drug'.[9] Inversely, Allen's otherwise excellent analysis of the use and significance of coca and alcohol in a Peruvian Quechua community is marred by her tendency to isolate these substances from a sustained consideration of more ordinary food and drink.[10] In a similar vein, Douglas' edited volume, *Constructive Drinking*, delivers a curious cocktail of alcohol, tea and *kava* but studiously avoids any mention of 'drugs'.[11] Despite this, many of the issues raised in the volume apply as much to 'drugs' in general as they do to drink in particular, a point which can be inferred from the remark that 'current interest in the alternative or black economy must turn more and more towards the anthropology of drink'.[12]

Partly aimed at stimulating reflection, these observations are also intended to make a specific point. What I am suggesting is not so much that more attention be paid to 'drugs' but rather that because 'drug' is a non-scientific category inseparable from its political and moral overtones, care should be taken to avoid the rather arbitrary divisions of relevant fields of discussion and analysis to which it so often leads. I want to use a specific case to suggest that while the category 'drug' often seems to divert attention away from 'food' and 'drink', an anthropology of 'peculiar substances' might usefully begin by thinking more

about the consumption of stimulants or psychoactive substances in relation to the consumption of more ordinary fare. This would involve combining an ethnographic focus on behaviour, paying attention to the use of stimulant and psychoactive substances in the context of social interaction, and a more cultural approach focusing on categorization: of different consumable substances in relation to each other, of the relevant social occasions, and of the people involved.

With reference to the Barasana Indians of north-western Amazonia, I shall show how the consumption of powdered coca leaves accompanies verbal exchanges and serves as a vehicle for social interaction and how patterns of coca consumption are related to social divisions based on gender, age and kinship. I shall also show how coca use is related to the use of tobacco (in the form of cigars and snuff), alcohol (in the form of beer), and of *yagé*. Although some or all of these might be referred to as 'drugs', I shall try to avoid imposing an alien category; I want instead to show that an examination of the overall pattern of consumption of these substances in relation to that of other foods and drinks reveals an implicit categorization of substances into two contrasting sets each with an analogous internal structure.

Although the indigenous use of coca is usually associated with the Andean zone it is in fact also quite widespread in the western part of Amazonia. Coca itself is a semi-tropical plant and the coca consumed by the highland Quechua and Aymara is actually grown in the warmer montaña region on the eastern, Amazonian slopes of the Andes. In the lowlands further to the north and east, a different, Amazonian variety of coca is found. This variety, grown from cuttings rather than seeds and with a much lower alkaloid content, is used mainly by the Tukanoan and Witotoan-speaking groups in south-east Colombia and north-east Peru. Unlike in the Andes, where dried coca leaves are chewed whole mixed with lime, here they are first dried by stirring them rapidly in a pot heated on a fire and then pounded to a fine green powder to which ash from burned Cecropia or Pourouma leaves is added.[13] The wetted powder, stored as a lump in the cheek, is slowly swallowed; the widely used phrase 'coca chewing' is thus not really appropriate in this context.

The Barasana are one of some twenty Tukanoan-speaking Indian groups living in the southern part of the Colombian Comisaría del Vaupés. These intermarrying groups are exogamous, patrilineal units and (ideally) each speaks a different language. Relations between these groups are characterized by reciprocal exchanges of food and material goods, of feasts and of spouses in marriage. The external equality of status between groups stands in marked contrast to the ranked hierarchy within. Each group is sub-divided into a series of clans related as 'brothers' and ranked according to the birth-order of their founding ancestors. Ideally the clan is a single, co-residential unit. In practice clan

segments made up of a group of brothers with their in-married wives and children live together in a communal, multi-family longhouse or *maloca*. Relative age and birth-order not only are the model for status differences between whole clans but also determine status differences between brothers within the clan or longhouse. As we shall see, this age-based hierarchy is reflected in the details of how coca is prepared and consumed. In addition to this linear ranking of clans, there is some evidence to suggest that all the different groups were once also divided into three ranked strata of 'chiefs', 'commoners' and 'servants', a class-like system that applied to Tukanoan society as a whole. Present-day Barasana state that, as in the pre-conquest Andes, coca consumption was once the prerogative of the higher-ranking groups.

The Barasana treat coca with a respect that gives the plant and all the products and activities associated with it a sacred-like status. The planting of coca bushes, the picking and processing of coca leaves and the consumption of coca powder are all ritualized and surrounded by elaborate etiquette. Coca is eaten by all adult men and by a few of the older women. It thus takes on the role of a sign, both of adult (principally male) status and of certain powers and attributes that go with this status. In particular, it signals the capacity to engage in communication with other human and spirit beings in the outside world. Though it is sometimes eaten when alone, coca consumption is essentially a social activity, accompanied by conventionalized speech and formalized behaviour which focuses less on the ingestion of the powder or its effects than on the act of exchanging or sharing the powder with others.

Coca is used in three different but overlapping contexts: at work during the day; in the men's conversation circle at night; and during periodic ritual dances involving visiting groups from other longhouses. At work, coca is often accompanied by a shared cigar and occasionally by snuff; at night, cigars and snuff are almost always taken, and boiled manioc juice (*manicuera*) is usually served soon after dark. At dances, *yagé* is added to the list of coca, cigars and snuff and boiled manioc juice is replaced by beer. In addition to differences in the kinds of substances consumed, each different context involves a different degree of formalization of behaviour and is associated with differences in both the style and the content of speech.

Although people rarely comment directly upon the physiological or psychological effects of coca, when they do, the effects they perceive or choose to emphasize also depend on context. In relation to work, they emphasize that coca gives them energy, stamina and concentration and that it staves off hunger; in relation to the men's circle, they say it elevates their mood, makes them more convivial and able to talk, helps them to think and to meditate, and keeps sleep at bay; in relation to ritual dances, they say that both coca and *yagé* help them to learn and

concentrate on the complex verbal and bodily routines involved in dancing and chanting and that coca helps them to stay awake and do without food for twenty-four hours or more. Resistance to sleep and hunger are two of the virtues of adult men. They also emphasize the role of coca in facilitating communication with their fellow men and with their ancestors.

When they are engaged in solitary work, men sometimes eat coca on their own. Consumed in this way, coca comes close to having a purely instrumental use on a par with the 'snacks' eaten by hungry people. When work is done in company, eating coca takes on a more social aspect. Such work is usually done on behalf of a particular man who is expected to supply his fellow workers with coca and who orders the breaks when they are consumed. The coca is now referred to as a 'treat' or 'reward' (*bose*) and, like those for tea, coffee or cigarettes elsewhere, coca breaks allow people to rest and give rhythm and structure to the work in hand. After the break, the men return to their tasks with a wad of coca in their cheeks; when the wad is finished it is time for another break.

In my own experience, coca-picking is often a tedious and lengthy task, frequently carried out in hot sun and a cloud of biting flies. Privately, many Barasana men would agree with this view. For this reason, despite its official status as a quintessentially male occupation, they are not above sending their wives out to pick the leaves for them. Publicly, however, neither the picking nor processing of coca is classed as 'work' and, on the surface, every effort is made to present coca-picking as a pleasant period of quiet socializing between co-operating equals. Underneath, however, certain elements of hierarchy can be detected. The bushes being picked are owned by the (usually elder) man who planted them. It is he who invites the others to pick with him, who weeds the coca rows as the others start to pick, who determines the amount to be picked, who passes round coca and cigars during periodic rests, and who does most of the talking. He is as generous with his words as he is with the coca he supplies.

This disguised hierarchy emerges more clearly as the coca is processed. Coca-toasting is quite skilled – burned leaves have an unpleasant bitter taste – and is done either by the owner of the leaves or by another elder man, often a respected visitor who is invited to do the job. It thus has higher-status connotations. Once toasted, the leaves are pounded in a mortar by the most junior men present and it is also they who are usually sent to collect Pourouma or Cecropia leaves for the ash. A more senior man burns these leaves and he is in charge of sieving the powdered coca leaves. The pounded coca is mixed with the ash and placed in a bark-cloth sleeve fixed to the end of a long pole which is inserted into a long, hollow balsa-wood cylinder. By flexing the pole back

and forth, the bag is made to bash against the inner sides of the tube causing the fine, green powder to fly out and collect in the bottom of the tube.

At the end of the sieving, the man tips the coca powder out of the tube into a hemispherical gourd which he presents to the owner. The owner then stores the coca away in a container: a round gourd, a pot, a bark-cloth bag with a bone-tube 'straw' or an empty tin. If a lot of coca has been made, he will give a share of the product to the other senior men present. The whole process is quite formalized and it is noticeable that the allocation of tasks and distribution of product depend on relative status. This is determined by a combination of ownership, age and whether people are hosts or guests. In the past, the hierarchy was apparently even more explicit. In those days, higher-ranking clans were the masters of servant clans made up of semi-nomadic hunters, the Makú. These servants were called 'the people who light cigars' (*būdo yori bāsa*). Men would send their servants out to pick and process coca leaves for them. Occasionally this still happens today and under these conditions, coca-picking and processing has the status of plain hard work.

If coca breaks give structure and rhythm to work, the production and consumption of coca have a more general relation to time. Like the women's harvesting and processing of bitter manioc, the men's picking and processing of coca is a regular, daily and very time-consuming process. Men usually hunt, fish or do other work in the morning and then begin to pick and process coca in the afternoon, the task being timed to end around dusk. People say that, without coca, their day would have no structure; a myth about the origin of night describes the tedium of unstructured time when, with neither night nor coca to structure their lives, men sat around aimlessly, not knowing what to do or when.

Coca is never consumed with food nor food with coca. The only relatively fixed meal of the day happens soon after waking; thereafter, the day is punctuated by periodic but rather unpredictable meals and snacks whose timing depends largely on what is available and when. For men at least, the time between food or meals is largely given over to coca and, if enough is around, it is chewed throughout the day. Eating little is another male virtue. Women and children often continue eating after dusk but men eat little in the afternoon and, as soon as it gets dark, eat no food at all. Food and cooking are as strongly identified with women as coca and coca preparation are associated with men. Jokingly men refer to coca as *bōbi*, a word they also use to refer to boiled sweets brought in from outside; they also consider it to be their equivalent to the fruits and other sweet foods that women are said to prefer. The routine of coca preparation also bears a formal relation to the production of manioc bread and the two are talked of as analogous processes.[14]

For the men, both the minor alternation between eating food and

eating coca during the day and the major alternation between day as a time for food and night as a time for coca also mark an alternation in their relations and contact with women. They eat food with women and children but eat coca almost exclusively with each other. The separation brought about by coca is most dramatic at night. The women, often nibbling little snacks, sit together in a group towards the rear of the house, with their men folk grouped in an open circle in the middle of the house, eating their coca, smoking cigars and taking occasional doses of snuff. The men eat no food but will sometimes drink *farinha* (toasted manioc granules) mixed with water or, more usually, drink *manicuera*, a warm, sweet drink made from boiled manioc juice which the women prepare at dusk. Night is the time of spirits and ancestors who, like the men after dark, consume only coca and tobacco. Here coca takes on another temporal aspect for, acting as a mediator and stimulating thought, it allows men in the present to enter into communion with these ancestors in the past.

The mood and tone of the nightly men's circle are of restrained formality, of calm conviviality, of serious talk and quiet meditation, a time for communion with other people and communication with the spirit world. The men sit on wooden stools, the shamans often blowing spells into gourds of food to ward off illness while the others talk quietly or sit in silence, weaving baskets, making string and rope from hanks of raffia, or doing nothing in particular.

The places where they sit say much about who they are. The headman of the longhouse usually sits close to a cluster of hourglass-shaped stands near the post where coca is sieved. These stands support gourds containing much of the paraphernalia of male ritual life: coca, snuff, cigars, lumps of tobacco and aromatic beeswax. Shamans prefer to sit leaning against a house post for these posts are vehicles of contact with the upper and lower worlds. The other men sit near the headman; when there are many people present there may be two vaguely defined arcs extending towards the front or men's door, with the most senior nearest the centre and the most junior furthest to the sides and front. If visitors are present they will sit on either side of the front door or close to one or other of the first two interior posts. A similar hierarchization of space and sitting arrangements appears to be a common feature of stimulant use in more formalized contexts elsewhere in the world.[15] The passing of coca obeys a strict etiquette. The headman, host and owner of the coca lights up a cigar, takes a few puffs, takes a mouthful of coca powder from its container (ideally a gourd with a tapir bone scoop), then passes both cigar and coca to the man next to him. Before smoking and eating, the recipient greets the donor saying 'Give it to me!' (*kwãya*!). As the donor acknowledges his greeting, the man puffs on the cigar, eats some coca and passes them on again. The cigar and coca pass from hand to hand

with each man greeting those who have already been served, starting with the person who handed the coca to him and working in turn up the line to the host.

When cigar and coca have reached the end of the line they are passed back again exactly as they came. As they are passed back from person to person, each man says 'You've had some!' (*yikwahi!*) to all those to whom he passed the cigar and coca, beginning with the man who hands the gourd to him and ending with the man at the end of the line. When his greeting has been acknowledged, he takes another rapid puff of cigar, another brief scoop of coca, then passes both on back up the line towards the host. When the cigar and coca return to the host, he greets back down the line confirming that each man has had his fill. Tobacco snuff, blown into the nose through a v-shaped bone tube that bridges between mouth and nostrils, is passed round in a snail-shell container according to exactly the same routine.

This ritualized passing of coca continues periodically throughout the evening and it serves to underline the spatial hierarchy mentioned above. Like his position in the centre of the house, the headman's largely one-sided supply of coca and tobacco emphasizes his senior position. Senior visitors by the door and the other senior residents in the middle of the house who consider themselves the headman's rough equals usually make sure that they have their own coca and cigar to offer in return.

The hierarchization of space and of coca distribution is also reflected in patterns of speech. When talking about coca, men repeatedly stress its intimate relation to sociability, speech and conversation, a relation which is also obvious in their behaviour. Ideally, and also in practice on more formal occasions, their day is punctuated by a series of formal greetings in which the headman of the maloca puts the other men at their ease and tells them the order of proceedings: 'Soon we will go out to pick coca'; 'We have worked hard, now it's time to relax'; 'Now it is evening, it's time to sit down and talk'; 'We've had a good evening together, now it is time to sleep.' These greetings, too long to give in full, come like gifts from the head of the maloca and, like any serious talk, must be accompanied by the offering of cigars and coca. As formality increases, so also does the length of the speeches. Much of their content is taken up by detailed reference to picking, processing and eating coca so that coca and greeting become mutually-redundant vehicles, both medium and message.

The pattern of talk in the men's circle also mirrors that of coca distribution. The talk usually begins with relatively unstructured chatter and joking, but as the evening wears on, the conversation takes on a more quiet, serious and respectful tone with the headman or his deputy doing most of the talking. He talks in a near monologue, telling news and stories or outlining plans of action. His one chosen interlocutor supplies

brief repetitions and comments to indicate his attention and assent while the others sit in silence. When visitors from other malocas are present, at some stage in the evening, the headman will make a point of going up and offering them coca before inviting them to tell him their news. Squatting in front of them he listens at length to what they have to say, then offers more coca before returning to his usual place.

In sum then, the headman's role as giver of coca parallels his role as giver of speech. The men's circle, focused around the consumption of coca, is an opportunity to exchange information, a forum for social interaction and a ritualized statement of the social order – a statement of hierarchy between men and women, seniors and juniors, of kin relations within the community, and of reciprocal equality between hosts and guests. It is also a playing out of the values that coca encapsulates, an expression of the importance attached to gregariousness, to good speaking, to the ability to tell stories, to peace and quiet, to wise, calm reflection and to the ability to do without sleep.

Coca is strongly associated with its owner, the man who plants it, who organizes its picking and processing, and who gives it out to others. This association between plant and person carries over to the level of the group as a whole. Each group owns one or more specific varieties of coca, planted from cuttings and coming from a common clone. The coca plants of each group are part of their ancestral inheritance, passed across the generations between father and son and maintained by an unbroken line of vegetative reproduction which is used as one of the principal images when speaking of the group's continuity through time. Like the group itself, their coca plants come from a common source, a continuous line of growth from an ancestral stock obtained by the ancestor of the group at the beginning of time. Just as the rows of coca in the gardens are compared to the individual men who own them, so the original plant is identified with the body of the ancestor. Coca serves as an intermediary between people and to give coca is to give out part of oneself, to offer and make manifest an aspect of one's identity. Each group also speaks and owns a distinctive language as another aspect of its patrimony and identity. This too is displayed and given out in the speech that goes with coca.

In the men's circle the main supply of coca is distributed asymmetrically from a single source, the headman or his deputy. This asymmetrical sharing at once emphasizes an in-group of co-resident men with common attributes and underlines the hierarchy, the ranking of clans and of individuals by age and seniority, which characterizes intra-group relations. By contrast, during rituals, when one longhouse community invites its neighbours to dance and drink beer, coca is exchanged on a reciprocal basis between all the senior men of the groups involved and it is here that its role as a gift emerges most clearly. These

reciprocal exchanges of coca mirror other exchanges – of invitations, visits, beer, food, goods and of women – which take place between the members of affinally related communities of equal rank and status.

During ritual dances, sessions of dancing alternate with sessions of chanting. Each session of chanting, with hosts and guests sitting facing each other on two lines of stools, begins and ends with the passing of coca and cigars. The verbal etiquette remains the same as that of the men's circle but now, though it is the leader of the chant who begins the procedure, each senior man is expected to exchange with all the others present; by the end of the session, each will have eaten a sample of coca from everyone else.

This different, more egalitarian mode of exchange is paralleled by a different mode of speaking. The chanting is led by a single individual, a specialist chanter, but the words of each verse of his chant are repeated by the others, each in their own language, before the chanter begins the next. The chant is the analogue of the talk between host and guest at the men's circle but both the mode and content of the speech are different. Unlike the stories told at the men's circle, the chants or 'stories of the ancestors' (*bikira keti*) involve not the doings of the living but rather the doings of the first ancestors with whom the men are now identified. Much of the content of these chants concerns coca, tobacco, *yagé* and beer, the substances which give the chants their pretext. Chants about coca rework myths which tell how coca was created and how each group first obtained their own coca plants, and they make explicit the esoteric significance of the items of equipment used in processing coca leaves.

As they chant together, the men's coca now serves as an intermediary between them and their ancestors and as a communion meal at which the living, now identified with the ancestors, speak about them in their own archaic language and eat a substance identified with the ancestors' bodies. In daily life, coca eating is part of an unquestioned way of life that is not endowed with any explicit symbolic associations. But at dances these chants, and the spells which shamans blow over the gourds of coca before the dance begins, make explicit the mythological and symbolic associations of coca. Before discussing these associations, I must first say more about the relation between coca and food.

As I have explained, coca is never taken together with food. Not only is it physically quite unpleasant to mix the two together in the mouth; coca is also so effective in suppressing appetite that it can sometimes be positively nauseating to try to consume coca and food together. But beyond these purely practical considerations there are further social and cultural factors to take into account.

To begin with, it is not considered acceptable behaviour to eat coca and food together and any attempt to combine them would meet with

strong disapproval. They are kept apart by a set of practices which puts them in opposition in terms of time, space and gender. Men eat coca preferentially at night and they eat it continuously throughout both day and night during rituals. By contrast, they will normally eat food only during the day. At the end of each ritual dance, a large meal, preceded by shamanic spells to render the food safe, marks the men's return to normal life. Men prepare coca towards the front of the house and eat it on their own in the middle while women prepare food at the rear of the house, eat together with their men folk at the sides of the house by day, and sometimes continue eating after dark, sitting by themselves towards the rear of the house.

Drinks – plain water, *farinha* (toasted manioc granules) or palm-fruit pulp mixed with water, boiled manioc juice (*manicuera*), manioc flour boiled in water (*mingau*) – are never consumed directly with food or meals. They are either taken just after eating or else consumed at other times when no food is served. When manioc beer, the most marked form of drink, is served no one eats at all until the beer is finished. Drinks and coca, though both peripheral to meals, are none the less quite often taken together. This combination is most marked at dances, when large amounts of beer and coca are served in a seemingly endless supply, but it also happens each evening when boiled manioc juice is served after the men have begun to eat coca and also in the day when men drink manioc starch boiled with water or *farinha* mixed with water as a refreshment after bouts of work. Finally, coca is usually accompanied by some form of tobacco, either cigars or snuff or both, and there is a strong expectation that the two should always go together.

From these and other observations, we can isolate two opposed complexes: 'food' and 'non-food'.[16] The division between these two complexes corresponds very roughly to that between the mundane and the spiritual, the everyday and the ritual. 'Food' comprises various fruits, tubers and gathered frogs, ants and insect larvae, different kinds of manioc bread and *farinha*, dips made from reduced manioc juice, chillies, fish, manioc leaves or palm-fruits together with fish and meat. 'Non-food' is made up principally of coca, tobacco (as cigars and snuff) and hallucinogenic *yagé*, the foods of the spirits and ancestors, but would also include the different manioc-based drinks mentioned above with which these substances may be consumed.

If we now look at how the different elements of each complex are combined together, we can see certain parallels between them. Snacks consist of fruit, boiled tubers, or pieces of dry, smoked fish or meat eaten with small lumps of manioc bread which hungry people of both sexes consume on their own and standing up. Proper meals are eaten communally with the participants squatting or sitting round one or more pots placed on the floor, with pieces of fish or meat dished out

on a banana leaf. Sometimes men and women eat together, sometimes the men eat before the women and sometimes women eat on their own but, in all cases, meals are seen as something which binds the sexes and the community together.

That meals bind together the sexes is also suggested by the nature of what is eaten: meat or fish produced by men and manioc bread produced by women.[17] Those who eat fish or game without manioc bread are severely reprimanded and told that they must combine meat and bread together. The verb employed in this context is not *wio-* 'to mix physically' but rather *iko-* which has the connotation of mixing to produce some effect. This 'catalytic' quality is shown also in the substantive, *iko*, which refers to the leaf-ash added to coca and tobacco snuff to give it potency; to leaves which are added to *yagé* to make it more potent;[18] to the bait on a fish hook; and to any Western or non-Western 'medicine'. From different perspectives, this conjunction of protein and carbohydrate might be understood as the elements of a balanced diet, as marking the complementary relations between men and women in production and reproduction, as underwriting the ties that bind the community, or as part of a more general, symbolic pattern in which opposites are ritually united or interchanged to produce dynamic results.

Though drinks are often consumed with coca, they are never taken together with food. However, the meal itself has a liquid component, either a broth, heavily spiced with chilli pepper, in which the fish or meat has been boiled, or an ancillary 'pepper pot' made either from scraps of fish cooked with chilli peppers or from manioc juice and chilli peppers reduced by boiling until they form a dark, thick sauce. Manioc bread is dipped into the liquid and then eaten with pieces of fish or meat. Like British gravy, such peppery liquids add zest and serve to bind the more solid components together. In addition, like the terms 'hot' and 'spicy', the pepper pot in particular and chilli peppers in general carry with them a charge of sexual innuendo; a woman's sexual parts may be referred to as her 'pepper pot' and sexual intercourse as 'stirring' this same pot. Chilli peppers thus add a further, latent, dimension of sexual complementarity to each meal.[19]

In sum, as opposed to a snack, a proper meal must be eaten in company by people who either sit or squat on the ground and must have three components: meat or fish produced by men, manioc bread produced by women and some kind of liquid spiced with chilli peppers. This can be represented as in Figure 1.

A similar structure is visible in the case of 'non-foods'. Although coca is sometimes eaten alone as the equivalent of a snack, even at the most informal level when it is consumed during work there is an expectation that it will be accompanied by a cigar. As the level of formality increases, so also does the likelihood that snuff will be offered as well. Coca and

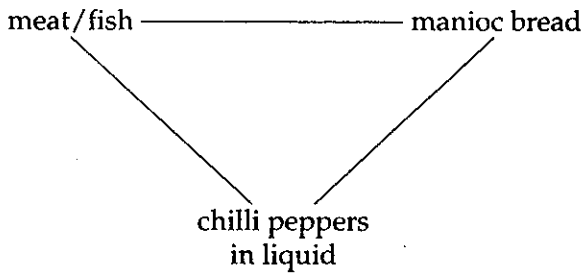

Figure 1 Food in Barasana society

tobacco are also linked together in other ways. Coca powder and tobacco snuff are prepared in exactly the same way, that is by mixing the dried and powdered coca or tobacco together with ash from burned leaves. The aromatic flavour which these burned leaves impart is highly esteemed and may sometimes be specially enhanced by blowing extra smoke into the ash through loose 'cigars' of rolled leaves; chips of Protium-resin incense may also be added to these leaf 'cigars' to impart yet more taste. Thus coca, like tobacco, is prepared with fire and ash and valued partly for its aromatic qualities. Finally, in addition to the obligatory accompaniment of coca by tobacco, some kind of manioc-based drink is usually drunk either just before coca is eaten or together with it. In short, whenever coca is eaten in company, it is consumed together with tobacco and a manioc-based drink in a pattern which recalls that of a meal. The general pattern can be summarized as in Figure 2.

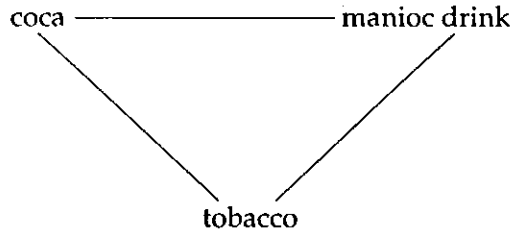

Figure 2 Non-food in Barasana society

However, in addition to that between 'food' and 'non-food' we need to add a further distinction between formality and informality and to bear in mind that, for most of the time, the consumption of both 'food' and 'non-foods' is a matter of habit. It is only on more formal occasions that people become self-conscious about what they do, consciously 'stick to the rules', and begin to make explicit some of the more esoteric associations of 'food' and 'non-food' which normally lie latent behind the taken-for-granted character of everyday objects and activities.

Ritual dances, sometimes attended by guests who may be quite distant strangers with whom relations are tense and ill-defined, are the most formal of all social occasions. They involve a shift to more marked and formal modes of speech and behaviour which accompany an increase in the quantity of 'non-foods' available. At a big dance, prodigious quantities of beer and coca may be produced and consumed. The hosts demonstrate their wealth, fertility and command over labour time by plying their guests with more than they can consume; the guests, under moral obligation to consume all they are offered, show their valour by finishing it all up even if they have to vomit out the excess to do so.[20]

This increase in quantity also goes together with a shift from less to more marked forms of the substances concerned. Let us begin with *yagé*, a hallucinogenic drink prepared from the macerated bark of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vines. Both coca and *yagé* are called *kahi* and distinguished, where necessary, by *bare* ('for eating') and *idire* ('for drinking'); *bare kahi* is coca while *idire kahi* is *yagé*. Coca and *yagé* are thus paired together in word and thought, the more marked form of *kahi*, *yagé*, being consumed only at dances.

This same relation between more and less marked forms is also apparent in the relation between beer and other manioc-based drinks. Generically, and when distinguished from 'food' (*bare* – 'stuff to eat'), all drinks are called *idire* ('stuff to drink'). But, unless otherwise qualified, *idire* on its own means 'beer'. Beer is thus quintessential 'drink' and the phrase 'to drink beer' (*idire idi-*) is the normal way to refer to a ritual dance. Beer is brewed from a base of boiled manioc juice fermented with various other ingredients such as toasted manioc bread, sugar-cane juice or pulped fruits or tubers. As a more marked form, served only at dances or formal gatherings, beer replaces the boiled manioc juice served each evening as the men's circle begins to form. Beer is also paired with *yagé*. The latter is intensely bitter and drinking it usually induces retching and vomiting. To help swallow it and to keep it down, a large gourd of beer is served as a chaser each time *yagé* is drunk. Finally, tobacco too has its more and less marked forms. As already mentioned, on formal occasions tobacco snuff is offered in addition to cigars. At dances, large doses of snuff are ingested up the noses of the participants as a necessary part of the ritual procedures which protect them from harm.

In sum then, the distinction between formality and informality goes together with that between the marked and non-marked forms of 'non-foods', but in each case the combination of these 'non-foods' is similar to that of the foods that make up a meal. Coca and *yagé*, produced by men, are served with drinks made from unfermented or fermented manioc juice, produced by women and accompanied by tobacco in the form of cigars or snuff as represented in Figure 3.

In addition, there is a further parallel this time between chilli pepper

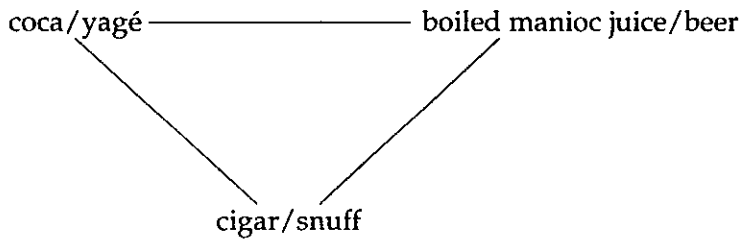

Figure 3 Marked and unmarked non-foods

and tobacco. Both are used more as essence than substance, more for their spicy, aromatic taste and stimulant effects than for providing bulk or sustenance, and both appear to play a similar 'catalytic' role, binding together male and female components. They also have a similar status with respect to smoke, fire and inhalation. Tobacco burned with fire produces a pungent smoke which is inhaled, while tobacco snuff, inhaled directly, produces a burning sensation which is compared to fire. Mythic precedent makes the snuff that shamans administer at dances equivalent to the heat and fire of the male Sun; it also makes the 'heat' of chilli peppers the equivalent of fire, but now fire of female ancestral origin.

Like snuff, the juice of chilli peppers may also be inhaled, but this time to cure hangovers and to produce the copious layer of facial grease which is both a sign of health and necessary for the aesthetics of facial painting. A condiment (*bia-bõa*, 'chilli-salt') made from smoked, dried and pulverized chillies mixed with salt smells quite similar to snuff but has more drastic effects. When burned on fire, dried chillies produce an asphyxiating smoke which is sometimes used as a punishment or fumigant and, in myth, used to smoke forest spirits from their lairs.

Finally, both tobacco and chilli have marked sexual connotations. If chilli peppers and pepper-pots are associated with female sexual organs, tobacco has similar associations with male organs. In myth, the first cigar was the penis of an ancestor and in ritual, a cigar placed in an inverted ritual cigar holder represents an ancestor with an erect penis, while pubic and auxiliary hair is sometimes referred to as 'tobacco hair'.[21]

What all this suggests, then, is that although 'foods' and 'non-foods' are kept apart in practice and opposed in thought, the different elements that make up these two complexes are regularly combined together in a similar fashion. In each case, the resulting 'meals' are made up of two substantial elements, one produced by men, the other by women, combined together in the presence of a third, more aromatic, substance which has more dynamic or 'catalytic' resonances of fire and sexual intercourse.

Although I have briefly mentioned myth in connection with the more esoteric connotations of chilli pepper and tobacco, thus far I have tried

to confine myself largely to an analysis of the way 'foods' and 'non-foods' are used in practice and have emphasized that their consumption is not normally the subject of speculation. But if we now turn our attention to the mythology that the Barasana themselves see as providing the foundations of their everyday and ritual practices, we see that manioc and coca, the principal crops cultivated by women and men, are themselves identified with male and female ancestors and that the relation between them is also couched in sexual terms.

A long myth describes the marriage between the jaguar-like Yeba (Earth) and Yawira, the daughter of Fish Anaconda. This marriage establishes a primordial alliance between the Barasana as 'earth people' and their affines, the Bará, as 'water people'. Yeba is portrayed as an ignorant and wild man of the woods, civilized by his wife and father-in-law, who provide him with cultivated crops. Manioc itself comes in the form of Yawira and her sisters whose names are borne by some of the present-day varieties of this crop. Tobacco comes in the form of a fish which Yawira claims is her father's penis. As for coca, this has a double origin: first it comes from the finger of Yawira's baby brother and second from an amorous escapade between Yawira and Nyake, Yeba's younger brother. Yawira asks Nyake to help her carry manioc sticks to her garden for planting. When they get there, she seduces him and makes love with such vigour that he expires at the point of ejaculation, lying on the ground with arms and legs outstretched. His body becomes a variety of coca specific to the Barasana, which is planted alongside the coca originally obtained from their affines.

For the Barasana, this myth establishes a number of different points: why the expression 'planting coca cuttings' refers metaphorically to sex; why coca is planted in neat grid-like rows on to a blanket of manioc plants; why the eating of coca and manioc has a sacramental quality; and why these plants, as an essential component of the patrimonies of the groups concerned, are celebrated in word and deed during their ritual dances. Reproduced vegetatively from cuttings, manioc is passed on from mother to daughter while coca goes from father to son. They are treated as integral parts of the group identities which endure through time and which are transferred and recombined on marriage. These, then, are some of the resonances that lie behind the combination of gendered substances in the respective meals of 'foods' and 'non-foods'.

In this chapter, I have discussed Barasana consumption of coca from several different perspectives. In describing how coca is actually used, I have been concerned to document its role as a vehicle for different forms of social interaction, to show how its use plays a role in the expression and maintenance of a particular social order, and to draw attention to the close relation between exchanges of coca and verbal intercourse. As is usual with stimulant use throughout the world, the exchange of

coca is used as a frame and pretext for heightened social interaction. In this instance, as formalization and ritualization increase, coca, tobacco, beer and *yagé* become so much the dominant focus of what is said and done that these substances become constitutive of the interactions themselves. This, I suggest, has to do with the fact that, in the culture of the Barasana and other Tukanoan Indians, language and a set of ritual possessions which include coca, tobacco, *yagé* and manioc plants, are crucial aspects of the identities of individuals and groups. These identities are being displayed and affirmed in interactions of this kind.

In discussing the conceptualization of coca and other 'drug-like' substances, I have examined the way in which different substances are combined together into meals in order to demonstrate the cultural construction of a particular pattern of consumption based around two opposed complexes, 'foods' and 'non-foods', each structured in a similar way. The evidence of myth clearly suggests that one aspect of this structuring has to do with a cultural emphasis on the potency of conjoining opposites conceived of in terms of gender.

In my discussion of 'food' and 'drugs', I have tried to demonstrate the importance of working through native cultural categories rather than imposing alien ones derived from a quite different cultural context. In particular, I have tried to avoid a physiological view of consumption, stressing instead that it is always a social activity informed by a cultural classification of substances. It is only at a level below that of the meal, in brief snacks of food or hurried scoops of coca, that the physiological effects of these substances – stopping hunger, giving energy – stand out. In all other contexts, these more pragmatic concerns are overlain by concerns of a quite different order: the creation and modification of social relations through feeding and giving, the expression and furtherance of a social and cosmological order through the combination of opposites and the reinforcement of the values that underlie them all.

NOTES

1 Fieldwork among the Barasana was carried out in 1968–71, 1979, 1984, 1990 and 1991 and was variously supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, the British Museum and King's College, Cambridge. This support is gratefully acknowledged. For ethnographic details on the Barasana and neighbouring groups see C. Hugh-Jones, *From the Milk River*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979 and S. Hugh-Jones, *The Palm and the Pleiades*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

2 S. Weir, *Qat in Yemen: Consumption and Social Change*, London, British Museum Publications, 1985, p. 57 calls for an anthropology of all drug consumption practices.

3 A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 31.

4 C. Allen's study of coca and alcohol use in the Andes, *The Hold Life Has*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1988, and S. Weir's *Qat in Yemen*, op. cit., are two shining examples of this genre.

5 Clearly such a claim depends partly on one's perspectives regarding both 'home' and the boundaries between academic sub-disciplines. There is a smattering of anthropological studies of cocaine and heroin use in the United States (see for example, P. Adler, *Wheeling and Dealing*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993; P. Agar, *Ripping and Running*, New York, Academic Press, 1973; P. Bourgeois, 'Crack in Spanish Harlem', *Anthropology Today*, 1989, vol. 5, pp. 6–11); in this country there is also policy-oriented research of the kind undertaken, for example, by the Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour which sometimes involves anthropologically trained investigators who combine ethnographic techniques with more quantitative and questionnaire-based sociological methods. None the less, it remains true that anthropologists have typically paid more attention to the study of drug-production abroad than to consumption at home.

6 See, for example, M. Douglas and B. Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London, Routledge, 1984; Appadurai, op. cit.; and D. Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, London, Blackwell, 1987.

7 Douglas and Isherwood, op. cit., p. 57 (my emphasis).

8 An exception to this generalization would be the Islamic world in which a distinction of this kind has a long history.

9 M. Johnsson, *Food and Culture among the Bolivian Aymara*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986.

10 Allen, op. cit.

11 M. Douglas (ed.), *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

12 Ibid., p. 14.

13 On the ethnobotany of Amazonian coca see R. Schultes and R. Raffauf, *The Healing Forest*, Portland, Dioscorides Press, 1990, pp. 166–76.

14 On this see S. Hugh-Jones, op. cit.

15 See, for example, Weir, op. cit., pp. 130–4 on *qat* and E. Bott, 'Psychoanalysis and ceremony', in J. La Fontaine (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ritual*, London, Tavistock, 1972, pp. 207–15 on *kava*.

16 I use inverted commas here to indicate covert categories not verbally labelled in local languages and of local application.

17 When men gather large quantities of insects, frogs or fruit, these may take the place of fish or meat but such foods are not to be considered as making up a paradigmatic 'proper meal'.

18 The leaves are those of *Banisteriopsis rusbyana*.

19 On the crucial integrative, binding function of gravy in British cuisine see A. Murcott, 'On the sociological significance of the "cooked dinner" in South Wales', *Social Science Information*, 1982, vol. 21, pp. 677–96. Advertisements for 'browning' and other products used in gravy-making frequently play upon the metaphorical role of gravy in binding the family together and more psychologically inclined advertisers see links between gravy and sexual fluids (Sue Byrne – personal communication).

20 This vomiting out of beer is not simply a matter of practical expedient; it has been widely reported in different parts of Amazonia, typically as a ritualized activity associated with ideas concerning fertility. For an excellent example of this, see E. Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View*, Chicago,

Chicago University Press, 1992. That beer also loosens the bowels and that *yagé* causes both vomiting and diarrhoea both form parts of a whole Barasana philosophy of life-processes based on images of the digestive tube and its functions. (See S. Hugh-Jones, op. cit.). Similar ideas relating fertility to the force-feeding of food and coca are found in Andean communities (see Allen, op. cit., Ch. 6).

21 Tobacco forms one of a set of ritually marked male-owned crops, mostly 'non-foods' but also including maize and fruit trees, the usable parts of which are all borne above the ground. Apart from chilli peppers, all women's crops come from below the ground. This is a further aspect of the ritually marked status of chillies.

3

NICOTIAN DREAMS

The prehistory and early history of tobacco in eastern North America

Alexander von Gernet

ORIGINS OF TOBACCO SMOKING

The botanical origin of the genus *Nicotiana* has been traced to South America.[1] Ancient tobacco remains, smoking pipes and snuffing implements dating to various time periods have been recovered,[2] although the reconstruction of the human use of tobacco on that continent is preliminary.[3] Researchers have, however, been able to elucidate the South American tobacco complex as it existed in the interval between first European contact in the early sixteenth century and modern times. This complex included the ritualized consumption of nicotian substances, not only by smoking, but also by snuffing, drinking and even rectal injection.[4]

The use of *Nicotiana* during the Historic period was associated with slash-and-burn farming. Indeed, Wilbert has hypothesized that South American natives did not use the plant prior to the origins of horticulture, and that earlier forager societies were 'drug-free'.[5] But it seems far more likely that 'tobacco shamanism', as Wilbert calls it, was a vestigial trait of a hunter-gatherer lifestyle that was merely elaborated after the domestication of plants.[6] Wild species of tobacco were probably known to the earliest pre-horticultural societies in the Americas,[7] and it is reasonable to assume that the artificial selection of such species by foragers may even have contributed to the development of horticulture.[8]

Little is known of the origins of tobacco use in Central America, the West Indies and Mexico. Archaeological evidence suggests that an elaborate tobacco complex was present in both the Prehistoric and Historic periods.[9] While the relationship of this complex to the South American equivalent has not been studied, similarities in the smoking technology of prehistoric Mexico and the rest of North America have been demonstrated.[10]

The mechanism and timing of the spread of *Nicotiana* species into North America remains poorly understood.[11] While tubular smoking