Holy Intoxication to Drunken Dissipation

Alcohol Among Quichua Speakers in Otavalo, Ecuador

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Preface

How I *Came* to Tell This Story

IT WAS EARLY DECEMBER 1977 and chilly in the shade of the roofed veranda, *curridur*, where a clean reed mat had been dragged out for us to sit on, and I wrapped my long skirt as best I could over my legs to keep them warm. Copying the other women, I sat with my legs tucked to the side, but they soon went to sleep since, as I was told months later, my technique was wrong—I put too much weight on my thigh. On my first visit to Huaycopungo, where I was hoping to do research, I was carefully watching, trying to comply with what others were doing and straining, only partially successfully, to follow the conversation around me. Yolanda Hidalgo, a *mestiza*[1] schoolteacher from San Rafael, was asking Isabel Criollo Perugachi, a *runa huarmi* (indigenous woman) who spoke fluent Spanish, if she would be willing to help me with the research for my Ph.D. dissertation in her community. Isabel was four years younger than I but, like me, married and a mother. Unlike me, she was already expecting her second child and lived in her parents' one-roomed house with her husband, daughter, and her six siblings. The Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología had sent me to Yolanda because she and Isabel had served as assistants to a Spanish anthropologist, Berta Ares Quejía, several years earlier. Both

local women helped Berta research the large religious festivals that were sponsored by indigenous individuals from the surrounding communities, although they took place in San Rafael, the parish seat (see Ares Quejía 1988). The mestizos who inhabited the town of San Rafael directed the sponsors of the festivals, or at least thought they did, since they considered themselves the overlords of the indigenous peasants and representatives of civilization in one of the more backward outposts of Otavalo cantón.[2] While Yolanda's family was notorious for its exploitation of the indigenous people in the parish, many *runacuna*, the Quichua plural for indigenous people, considered her a friend. She had started the first elementary classroom for indigenous children in Huaycopungo. Yolanda and Isabel's conversation was hard for me to follow because they often used Quichua words and phrases or local idioms in Spanish with which I was not yet familiar.

Isabel's mother, Dolores Perugachi, hovered in the background looking distinctly uncomfortable with the proceedings, although when we arrived, she had made what I came to learn were the appropriate welcoming gestures. Grabbing a broom and stepping from the shade of the veranda into the brilliant sun of midday at high altitude on the equator as we talked, Dolores began dramatically sweeping the yard, the twelve-inch long strands of coral beads hanging from her ears swinging back and forth as much from her emotion as the physical motion of her work. All the while, she muttered under her breath in Quichua—loud enough to be heard but not directed at anyone in particular. This, I later learned, is the traditional way for indigenous women to make their opinions known in public, in contrast to men, who are expected to address a group directly and openly. Despite their indirect delivery, women's opinions are not taken lightly. In fact, these muttered public asides often contain far more emotional information, positive or negative, than those of influential men, who must persuade with a soft and humble voice of authority. Dolores was constrained in speaking directly by the presence of a San Rafael mestiza and schoolteacher, even one she knew and trusted more than most, and a prestigious white foreigner from the United States. But it was her daughter she was trying to influence. Although Isabel's family members were proud of her extraordinary level of education (eighth grade) and activities in support of the indigenous community, they

were frequently exasperated at how her work challenged their expectations for a daughter and made demands on them as well. When Yolanda and I were walking back to San Rafael after Isabel agreed to work with me and we had said our good-byes, I asked Yolanda what Quishpe Dulu Mama, as she was called, had been saying.[3] She was warning Isabel, Yolanda said, that now that I had come, I would become close to the family, become part of their hearts and their lives, and then go away, never to return, as she claimed Berta Ares Quejía had done before.[4] The threads of interdependence so painstakingly woven between us could be broken in an instant. Airplanes high in the sky and heading north, Dolores later told me, made her want to cry, imagining Berta or even me up there disappearing forever into the clouds.

Perhaps Mama Dulu's words are responsible for the fact that her family, in successively more distant concentric circles of relationship, and others in Huaycopungo have been woven into the permanent fabric of my life even now, almost thirty years later. She threw

Fig. 1. Dolores Perugachi Quishpe sorting *totora* reeds, 1978 (PHOTO BY AUTHOR)

down a challenge that I, young, idealistic, and determined, could not help but try to meet. I never got that scene out of my head. But I had help in making that implied plea unforgettable. Community leaders still work tirelessly to catch me in the webs of connection and reciprocity they so eagerly spin, in part because I contribute financially to their community development projects as a way to repay the community for its collaboration in my doctoral degree. For my demonstrated commitment to them, they wish to claim me as a transnational community member.[5] It would be a mistake to draw the conclusion that a financial motive is the sole activating force in this vital relationship, since from their point of view strong affection is expressed and deepened through material reciprocity. They claim with some passion that it is my *moral* support that has been most valuable to them. Many individuals envy those others who have made me their *comadre*, the all-important relationship between the parent and the godparent of a child, since I have continued to honor those relationships over time. In May of 1978 I became the baptismal godmother of Isabel's second child and first son, born on the first of March. Isabel had been seized with back labor pains as I drove us home from a trip to the shrine of the Virgin of Las Lajas, just over the Colombian border. Luckily Ricardo waited to be born until we had returned to Huaycopungo, although we still tease him that he was almost a Colombian. He is now married and has a young son. In July of 2004, I accepted my seventh and eighth godchildren, Isabel's brother's daughter and her second son Alberto's baby boy, and attended the high school graduation of another godchild, Isabel's third son out of five.[6]

Isabel and her husband, José Manuel Tituaña Amaguaña, and I are growing old together. Their oldest child and only daughter, Susana, married hurriedly in 1994 after her son was born. She had been lonely while finishing a two-year post–high school degree in Quito, the capital city, and José, from the neighboring community of Cachiviro, had been a persistent suitor. As each relative arrived for the celebration, we would take a walk and together vent our feelings of frustration in both words and tears that Susana was throwing her hard-won education and other assets away on a young man who was not her equal. Even I had known her since she was three. Since Susana hadn't been able to bring herself to tell me in advance and showed up shamefaced to meet me

in Quito with a baby in her arms, my deep shock and disappointment were all too real. Still, despite the honesty of my emotion, I couldn't help laughing inside as we enacted what countless other families had done over the millennia. Furthermore, no one seemed to question for a moment the naturalness of a *gringa* in the backstage scene of relatives grieving at a wedding. I had a familiar pang of guilt over my continuing the schizophrenic dance of outsider/insider perspective that is essential to participant observation.

We are all accustomed to José now and he's part of the family, and it's the other adult children's choices we agonize over, one by one. None of us believed what everyone older told us, that our children can bring us more heartache as young adults than they do even as teenagers. I have had only one opportunity to return the favor and host a compadre in my home in Wisconsin. In 1995 a relatively new compadre, the husband of José Manuel's sister Elena, Alfonso Farinango, came to Chicago to sell the Ecuadorian handicrafts he had previously sold at a shop in the Canary Islands.

What Kind of Story This Will Be

There are three points I would like to draw from the introductory vignette and its aftermath. One is that I'm telling a story in what follows, a true story up to a point, but one that has a beginning, middle, and end. Real life doesn't stand still for those markers of drama and resolution to endure for long, but human beings constantly frame lives at many levels of generalization—from their own to that of their community or nation—in those terms. This will be one of the themes I will explore in what follows, namely the power of the stories that we think and hear and tell each other to guide our lives, both on the individual level and, in this case especially, as social groups. Our cultural myths serve us as dynamic guides to negotiate the material world in which we are embedded.

However, this is a story written mainly for a North American audience about a part of the world that is both similar and very different from our own. In order to make sense of it, the reader must learn a great deal of cultural information—like what it means in indigenous Otavalo for women to whisper loudly enough to be heard, or where

visitors are expected to sit, or how local ethnic and class divisions are acted out. This is an ethnography in a relatively traditional sense—a book detailing the culture and society of a particular place at a particular time. That means that cultural information is recorded here so that in years to come other researchers, both professional and avocational, may be able to answer questions about the relationship of the past way of life in Huaycopungo to the present. I will try to keep the boring detail to a minimum or to segregate it into endnotes or appendices when appropriate.

I believe that foreign observers deserve to hear what Catherine Allen, quoting Malinowski, called "the hold life has" (Allen 1988, quoting *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* [1922] 1961, 25) or what I sometimes think of as the Disney version of a way of life. All of us grow up in a world where many people tell us why our way of life is good, what a truly admirable person is like, how the different individuals and institutions in our world can work together to create a worthy whole, how we can all be heroes of our cultural stories. Contrarily, we have customary expectations about how things can go badly wrong, what makes for a truly bad person, and what we must guard against as a group. This set of cultural myths is always an idealized and imperfect model of what really happens; sometimes it's even oppressively wrong. Nonetheless, it is an important part of the reality in which we live—to use Clifford Geertz's expression—the webs of significance we ourselves spin and in which we are suspended. In order to understand the lives of the people in the story to follow, readers must be conversant with these cultural myths before they can begin to deconstruct them. Social and cultural change over time is dependent upon the interpretations held by those undergoing the transformation, operating on and molding the hard facts of the situation at hand. In the story I will tell, what once was the ideal came to be seen as the feared misdirection that led to everything falling apart. Readers must be prepared to see what is going on in two different ways at once, because both are in some ways true.

Lastly, this vignette from the very start of this story, almost three decades ago, should introduce you to what kind of research, what kind of relationships to "data," to people, and to anthropology as a social science inform this account. If closeness to the people and culture can be

placed on a continuum, I am far removed from the up-close perspective of a native, whether mestizo or indian,[7] or even of someone who has lived a long time in the area. First, I am a foreigner, however long and deep has been my involvement with Ecuador over the years. Second, anthropology has been a deliberately chosen lens through which I have interpreted what I see, hear, and feel from my first acquaintance with Huaycopungo, and nearly my first acquaintance with Otavalo. Sometimes, as an outsider, I have the advantage of seeing particular local social norms that natives take so for granted that they think they are natural, rather than cultural. But my own deeply ingrained social norms sometimes keep me from seeing others at all, and my analysis of social life is therefore skewed and oversimplified.

Nor does this study fall on the end of the continuum characterized by anonymous and controlled data collection. My research has involved forging a social place for myself in Huaycopungo, including intimate relationships that have persisted over years and the more recent role of a regular community benefactor. Furthermore, systematic, numerically significant data collection has been relatively rare since my dissertation. This has resulted from a number of factors, most important because the length of most of my visits has not been great enough for me to balance to my satisfaction my social obligations to people with relatively intrusive and coercive research. The reader and I are therefore probably both acutely aware of my role in creating the following truth/fiction. This is my interpretation, with the richness and bias of intimacy. My compadres, especially the dozen or so with whom I am particularly close, have had a competitive advantage in shaping this account, although they certainly do not all agree with each other, over other people in and around the community. In recent years I have chosen more often to simply listen to hours of their disputes and discussions with relatives, neighbors, and friends rather than to administer surveys or employ other sophisticated means of data collection, even to the informal asking of questions. In the ideal study these two methodological poles should be given equal weight.

I am a white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class American woman, now middle-aged. My personal and scholarly history is inextricably tied to my experiencing and imagining Ecuador in its three geographic regions. In 1970 I married a foreign student from the coast of Ecuador and the

following year went to live with him in Guayaquil, the largest city in the country and the main port to the Pacific Ocean. During my original two years in Ecuador, I made a visit to the Oriente, the Amazonian jungle region, which convinced me, then and there, to go back to graduate school in the United States in anthropology. My experience of the jungle had confirmed for me the Western literary tradition that gives the jungle great creative power, if not in some mystical sense then because the jungle, or its symbolic representations, so effectively mobilized my own human power and creativity. That these traditions were interwoven with native South Americans' own beliefs that the tropical forests are a primordial source of spiritual knowledge and power was something I would learn only later.

However, since 1977, the Quichua-speaking people in the Andean cantón of Otavalo have been one of my main preoccupations.[8] Although I began our association for my dissertation research in 1977, *research* now seems a misleading, distancing word to use for the shared experiences of the past twenty-eight years. The "friendship" (American gloss) or ritual kinship (*compadrazgo*; Otavalo gloss)[9] I have shared with Isabel Criollo Perugachi, who began as my research assistant, has mediated all my professional and personal associations. No term actually does justice to the rewarding complexities of this relationship. While I try to explain the relationship to Americans by saying she is one of my best friends, she tells people there that I am like a mother to her, which embarrasses the American me, but in which I recognize the same claim of shared pleasure and unconditional support between women. While she is nonplussed to proclaim the symmetrical aspects of our relationship while delighting in the hierarchical ones, I struggle to eliminate the paternalistic parts associated with my greater wealth and social prestige in the wider society, following my middle-class, and 1960s-nurtured, ethic of egalitarianism. To be honest, this inequality of economic and symbolic capital is a treasured resource from her point of view, and the richly rewarding maternalism that results serves to satisfy what is usually only an impossible desire, imaginatively enacted in traditional ritual or now viewed passively on television soap operas. For these people, who are both poor and low on the local social hierarchy, enticing wealth and power into a commitment to share the bounty is a highly valued but generally elusive goal.

As a result of Otavalo norms of ritual kinship, many of my family and friends have shared in this relationship with the large extended kindreds of my comadre Isabel and her husband, José Manuel. We are all comadres and compadres to each other, regardless of age or generation. My close ties also include many individuals in their extended families, and she is not the only person I would call a personal friend. This relationship has served personal, family, and community aims for them as well—emotional, social, economic, and political. It continues by phone, mail, fax and now, since June of 1999, e-mail when we are not together, as do many other relationships there.

I first visited Otavalo in 1972, but came to Ecuador for dissertation research in September of 1977. I left the field that first time in April of 1979, anxious to be with my daughter whom I had left with her father on a visit home the previous September. In the summer of 1982, I returned to Huaycopungo for a three-month postdoctoral study of beliefs and practices related to anger sickness, *colera*.[10] In 1987 I made a one-week trip to Ecuador, during which I visited Huaycopungo and saw firsthand the recent and devastating earthquake damage. As part of three weeks in Ecuador in 1988, I spent one week interviewing community members about the recent changes in community life. In 1989 I stayed in Ecuador two weeks; I spent considerable time with my compadres but did no explicit interviewing. In 1990 I spent three weeks in Huaycopungo pursuing issues of changes in drinking. In 1991 I spent two months in Ecuador, trying to learn more about the role of religious and political movements in the changes in Huaycopungo. In the years since I have continued to make a number of four-day to two-week visits, at least once a year, and, as stated above, we frequently are in touch when I am not there. E-mail has become more common in recent years, although faxes and telephone calls are not unusual.

Increasingly my visits are defined and guided by my ritual kinship relationship and my relationship as minor financial patron to the community, not by my desire to *study* the lives of Otavaleños. Nonetheless, if I time my visit to coincide with San Juan, the summer solstice celebration that lasts for a week in late June and occupies a position of significance similar to that of Christmas for North Americans, I join the other returning family members. Since small groups of family and friends sit for hours during this period exchanging

news and analyzing the advances and losses of the past year for themselves, their extended families, their community, the region, and even the country as a whole, I need only listen carefully to acquire a priceless summary of current events and trends while playing the socially acceptable role of visitor. Quite naturally, the conversation sometimes steers into areas of particular interest to me.

Huaycopungo is overall a very poor community, though not as poor as some in Otavalo cantón. As I got to know more people better in the first decade or so of my visits, our relationships increasingly included symmetry and complementarity along with the hierarchy that frequently gave me a superordinate position. As a white, rich[11] North American, I was more often treated as a superior than an equal, and only very rarely as a subordinate to local indigenous authorities. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that this theme of complementarity/hierarchy has been the incessant background or foreground of our relationships, continually being highlighted, denied, negotiated, suffered, or enjoyed by each of us, as it is in their other relationships.

The people of Huaycopungo are not totally without advantages in the relationship with me. While they have most often displayed respect and humility in the presence of outsiders like myself, there have been social activists among them for many decades who have challenged these restrictive norms of interaction and a very few who have been downright hostile. Furthermore, although I have the power to come and go, when I am there I am on their turf. For all the mutual adjusting and readjusting to real and imagined expectations of the other, it seems that I have the advantage as a student of culture, because I am immersed in theirs. They have a relative advantage as teachers who have greater knowledge of the norms and therefore can exercise greater control over the shape of the relationship. In fact, I sense that some of them would prefer that I remain slightly retarded regarding their culture, because they can remain my protectors and have more control over what I know, do, and say. Whereas, as an anthropologist I prefer to come alone rather than bring friends and family from the United States, because our talk and our activities are then more likely to stay focused on community life, they prefer it when they can talk to and interact with a number of gringos and learn as much as possible about gringo etiquette, values, and fashions. And they are moved to tears of

joy when they convince my friends or family to don their clothing and join in dancing. Because of their financial disadvantage and need of my material generosity, I often grudgingly accept exchanges of assistance in menial labor and verbal performances of gratitude that replay feudal scenes of peasant obeisance to their lord and master. If I don't let my friends carry my suitcase, then they cannot repay me in any way and therefore remain anxiously in my debt. Nor can they ask me again when the need inevitably returns. Sometimes I petulantly grab my suitcase back and carry it myself, resenting my placement in the category of helpless nobility. Nor are they entirely unaware of the feminist and personal struggles for autonomy to which my generation in the United States has made me heir and which sometimes has me snatching back suitcases from my male friends and my father as well.

In the last several years, a number of community leaders—led by the inimitable José Manuel Aguilar, who has been a founder and director of the evangelical church Jesus de Nazareth, president of the Asociación Agrícola Huaycopungo, which was founded to continue a suit for land stolen in the colonial period, and president of the community council, to name just a few of his official positions—have made a request. These leaders hope that when my book is published, I will make it available to them. After all, say some, as a student of their history I have talked to the elders in the time before the recent convulsive changes in their cultural life. They need that account and will need it even more in the future to help their children negotiate the interchange between the two cultures. It is with a heavy feeling of responsibility that I proceed in this endeavor, which began with my desire to understand and articulate that understanding for people in my own country. Furthermore, over the years I became increasingly aware that these leaders wanted to be named in the account and I would have to directly address the conflict between the professional norms of anthropology, which prescribes pseudonyms to protect community members, and their desire for recognition. In the summer of 1999, I convoked a meeting of the community council, asking them to invite any other leaders they wished, to discuss the pros and cons of using pseudonyms in the manuscript. Although I tried to explain the rationale for pseudonyms and highlighted the possible negative consequences to them of using their official names, they unanimously agreed that full names be used.

They again expressed their confidence that I would be able, from my conversations and observations of the culture over the years, to record their cultural history in a work that could serve as a resource for their descendants in years to come. Another source of their confidence, they said, came from the words of the elders who talked to me twenty years ago. Since they infrequently spoke openly to outsiders, if they talked to me, they must have told the truth. I tried to suggest that perhaps they shouldn't trust me so much, and gave them several possible scenarios in which my motives or judgments might violate their best interests, even inadvertently, but they thought my self-deprecation was funny. As shown in studies by Rappaport (2004) and Wogan (2004), my converting their recent history into written form immeasurably increases their value and influence in the world. Wogan writes the following of his examination of indigenous Salasacans in the central Ecuadorian Andes: "What emerges is a picture of writing as a fundamental symbol of power, so fundamental that it can stand beside more well-studied symbolic forms as a window into indigenous relations with the outside world" (108). After the English version, they want versions in both Spanish and Quichua to be produced, which will arguably have a greater local effect on the meaning of their existence, and I agreed to make that happen in some form.

Their confidence in me strikes me as naïve, not because of any particular ineptitude or insincerity on my part, but because there is always a significant and unpredictable potential for interpretive disagreement with such an account, disagreements that could lead to serious and negative political consequences. Furthermore, one account written by a North American professional anthropologist could come to have greater authority than warranted, overriding other interpretations that local people, whether indigenous and not, might want to make. Or contrarily, an account written by a foreign anthropologist could attract especially negative scrutiny by national researchers, who understandably resent the generally greater exposure given to works by North rather than South American professionals.

More than anything else, working for a small Native American tribe in Wisconsin whose people *are* able both to understand the norms and institutions in which I take part, as well as to criticize them in depth, taught me how my actions as an anthropologist were not as implicitly

free of political taint nor as morally unambiguous as I had previously believed. Scholarship is not simply pursuing the enhancement of human knowledge. The norms of face-to-face, nonstranger interactions and community loyalty were as strong local determinants of the exercise of my work role in Wisconsin as of my researcher role in Ecuador. However, whatever "love" I demonstrated for individuals or the community as a whole, as some on the reservation described it, did not free me from responsibility for the intended or unintended political consequences of my actions, any more than it did for the reservation community members themselves. There, excited by the concept of cooperative research, I wanted to offer my services to help design and carry out any research project the tribe itself was interested in, but "research" was a politically loaded term, carrying more disadvantages than advantages. It was often less risky to proclaim my identity as social worker than as anthropologist. Many leaders urged me to carry out research clandestinely, because they trusted my motives, but they would not support me before the tribal council and help obtain official approval for any research project. I learned a lot, but I did not carry out systematic research of any kind.

I am not trying to express a policy here, simply to address the day-to-day working out of specific relationships, which have never been and will never be fully fixed. To be perfectly honest, I used to have nightmares of facing rigged tribunals where torture and death are the only possible outcomes of my gringo presumption. My understanding of the ethical, practical, and moral (that is, how to be a good friend/comadre) dimensions of these questions has been enhanced by realizing to what extent my compadres and I share this fervent desire to understand each other's cultures. This book is, in part, about the attempts of individuals as part of families and an ethnic community to re-create their social identity in the changing context that is contemporary Ecuador and in spheres of transnational culture in a global village. Negotiating intimate relationships, despite the symbolic and real gulf between our positions in world politicoeconomic systems, has been part of that struggle, at least for some individuals in Huaycopungo. The United States, whether seen as a role model or a world oppressor, is a powerful image in the creation of Ecuadorian national identity. It is also key for Otavalans in their renewed representations of themselves, whether

they see the Americans as more sympathetic to them as exotic indigenous people than are Ecuador's prejudiced mestizos, or whether they share the national view of resisting the third-rate, third world image with which Americans saddle Ecuador and Ecuadorians. If they and I, and our friends and families, can recognize that our different cultures both contain knowledge and power and that these powers are of a complementary nature, we will be better served. The alternative has most often been, at least officially, granting knowledge and power only to the societies of South America that have European roots, and sometimes even more to those of North America. With a mutual recognition of the value of indigenous culture, it will be possible for those who still identify themselves and are identified as Andean "Indians" to regain the stature of people of value in the nation, in the world, and in their own hearts that they lost over and over and over again following the Spanish conquest. They can stop defining and forging their culture specifically in opposition to the national one as a way to salvage a sense of cultural dignity in a society that exploits them, a method that inevitably leads to their battling the insidious argument that their domination is due to those differences, which demonstrate their obvious inferiority. Since North America is currently more powerful in the world as a whole than Ecuador or South America, if individual North Americans ratify a different but complementary view of indigenous worth, it is a symbolic, if ephemeral, defeat for the standard local hierarchical arrangement of peoples and a victory for indigenous Otavalans struggling to maintain their dignity in their native land.[12]

Finally, this preface began with the story of how Isabel's mother Dolores's mumbled complaint that I would get in their hearts and then disappear marked a change in the course of events, turning my collaboration with some influential people in Huaycopungo from temporary dissertation research into a lifelong commitment. In the process who we are has been redefined, as has what kind of community Huaycopungo is. This does not imply my power as an actor but instead my significance as a symbol for those local leaders determined to exercise agency on behalf of their community in an era of expanding civil rights. The only remarkable thing I did was continue to show up. Nor is it the absence of a firm dividing line between "truth" and "fiction" that I wish to call attention to, except to make clear my storytelling role in

this narrative about other peoples' lives and stories; rather, I want to point to the power of our continually created and re-created stories, from the level of the individual to the "world system," to channel and change our emotional, social, and physical behavior in reciprocal ways. This examination of drinking alcohol as a practice and as a problem underlines the power of everyone's relatively fleeting or more durable interpretations to motivate behavior and normative change. Stories told with compelling symbolic images about reverberative places, like the Amazon forests or the slopes of Mount Imbabura, or moments, like a major earthquake in the story to come, are the most powerful of all.

A Note on Verb Tense

Deciding how to use the past and present tenses in this manuscript has not been easy or straightforward. Part II was relatively simple, since it addresses issues that were current when I wrote them, although they will all be past once the book is published. Part I presented a much greater challenge. Anthropologists have long used what they call the "ethnographic present" tense to call attention to the enduring nature of culture. Using the past tense carries the risk of implying that cultural continuities are less important than what has changed and that everything is on the chopping block at all times. On the other hand, the ethnographic present can give a false impression of timelessness. Adhering strictly to either the past or the present tense for consistency in part I would have been highly unsatisfying, since my goal was to follow tiny threads of change and continuity through the thicket of complexities to clarify their relationships.

Part I not only describes the events and situations occurring in a stretch of time that is past; it also presents a baseline set of cultural assumptions and an idealized depiction of a way of life, as much as possible from the local point of view—at least when the locals are in a self-justifying mood. Of these cultural assumptions a few have disappeared absolutely, some have altered only in appearance, some affect the older people more than their descendants, and some continue unchanged. After all, the norm cascade that is the subject of this book allowed locals to see themselves as faithfully replicating the past even as they made an about-turn. In order to communicate this sense of a world

and a people as they should be through time, the present tense is very helpful, but not sufficient. In what follows, I try to favor the present tense and confine my use of the past tense to statements that would be seriously misleading in the present tense. I suspect, however, that I am more freewheeling in my use of tense than that implies, throwing in a pinch of this and a dollop of that, just as I cook, rather than carefully measuring to replicate a recipe each time. I heartily apologize to those who find this use of tense disconcerting. For those who are only slightly thrown off balance, I am unrepentant; if you are jarred into awareness of the many voices and constant dialogue in any culture about what is old-fashioned, forgotten, or tried and true, my choices were justified.