


Diese Merkmale sprechen für die Qualität der Beiträge, auch wenn bei der Lektüre mitunter eine übergeordnete Thematik vermißt wird. Ein solcher theoretischer Rahmen taucht in einzelnen Texten auf, wird aber dann mitunter schon im nächsten Beitrag nicht mehr verfolgt. Aber das ist ein Problem, das jedem herausgegebenen Werk anhaftet und das nicht den Beitrag dieses Buches zum Verstehen von Bauen und Wohnen schmälern soll.

Hans Peter Hahn


This volume is the Spanish rendition of a work originally published in English in 1991. Impeccably translated, its enjoyable and careful literary style makes it an easy read that quickly traps the reader. Fernández and Brown attempt to solve a historical and ethnographic dilemma: why in 1965 did scores of Ashaninka and Nomatsiguenga Indians decide to take up arms with the guerrillas of the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left)? More often referred to as "Campa," the Ashaninka inhabit the Peruvian Amazon; at present they number over 50,000 individuals and belong to the Arawak linguistic family.

In order to grasp the underlying causes of the uprising, the authors draw up a genealogy of the nature and meaning of the contacts between the Ashaninka and the Whites. Far from interpreting the Ashaninka's insurGENCY on the basis of their material situation, Fernández and Brown perceive a series of complex symbolic and messianic profiles in their behaviour. They explore various historical circumstances where a truly millennial tradition is "read" in this ethnic group, whose members through the centuries have pinned their hopes of a radical renovation on an outsider who spoke of renewal and social change and was identified as the Son of the Sun or a powerful shaman. The Ashaninka worldview has traditionally seen some charismatic outsiders as saviours, as powerful beings that are capable of delivering them from poverty and injustice. The Ashaninka's decision in 1965 to side with the MIR guerrillas in their armed struggle against the national army can, therefore, only be understood in the light of a complex worldview encompassing myths, prophetic revelations, and a tradition of militant messianism covering over 250 years.

By probing ethnographical works (Hvälfok, Weiss, Varese), ethno-historical sources, chronicles, news from travellers, and all kinds of documents and scattered pieces of information, the book vividly reconstructs the peculiar history of the encounters between the Ashaninka and the Whites. As from 1595, the relationships were ambivalent and problematical: there were conflicts with the missionary authorities due to the tricky issue of polygyny, the fight for prestige between priests and shamans, the identification of missionaries with the arrival of epidemics, and the rigid division of time and labour in the mission stations.
Rezensionen

1740, the Ashaninkas support the uprising of Juan Santos Atahualpa, who sought the removal of the Spaniards and the creation of a pan-Indian empire with Inca remembrances. At this point, Fernández and Brown alreadoly present us with some questions: why did the Campa ally with him in his insurrections of 1742, 1743, and 1746, if his objectives were seemingly as unattractive to them as those of the Franciscans? Whereas the Ashaninkas do not share Juan Santos Atahualpa's view of Christian renewal and his respect for the Catholic faith, by evidencing a certain tension between the Andean and Amazon worldview, there is one myth that acquires tremendous weight among them and that should be recalled. For the Ashaninkas, the Inca becomes a mythicising mythical character. He originally controls the production and exchange of trade goods such as tools, weapons, and cloth. As a result of the son's sinful behaviour, the Alpamayo (viracochas) emerge from a lake, create the Inca, decapitate him, and engage in a relentless campaign of extermination against the Ashaninkas people. The Whites now own the head, which provides them with the goods that warrant their superiority. However, the Ashaninkas patiently await their final settling of accounts: the prophecy goes that they will recover the lost head and will then be wealthy and prosperous again. The authors analyse in detail how certain mythical topics of the Amazonian, and especially Andean, symbolic universe, reverberate in this story. The narrative, in this sense, is a clear variation of the topic of the Inca King (Inkatirri), a cyclical myth of loss and return, destruction and renewal.

In the 1850s, the Ashaninkas suffer from new colonising attempts by the Peruvian government, who seeks to "tame" the wild Amazon. It is not the missionaries they have to face now but other interests, such as the rubber industry and farming. In this context of forced labour, children slavery, and exploitation by the Whites, new uprisings and rebellions take place. In 1897, the Ashaninkas associate the idea of Amachenga (an invisible good spirit that takes on respectful qualities) with Fitzcarraldo, the renowned rubber baron. Early in 1900, the powerful rhetoric of "progress" urged the Amazon's colonisation to be completed; the Indians were either to retreat into the forest or die. In 1896, 1913, and 1936, new insurgencies occur. In 1920, the Ashaninkas become devoted to a Seventh-Day Adventist called Stahl, reinterpret his messianic message, and fervently follow him. In 1930, another charismatic personage is seen in the light of their worldview; this time it is a Protestant missionary named Bulner. This volatile context, along with the traditional belief that a messiah will bring prosperity and freedom, was a fertile ground for the coming events.

The press and the military's opinion minimised the Indians' participation in the insurrection which extended from 1965 until the beginning of the following year. Fernández and Brown demonstrate that this was due to the bias and misunderstanding the military, the Peruvian press, and the local landowners shared toward the Ashaninkas. In fact, the Indians' allies themselves, the MIR militants, did not understand the specific nature of the Ashaninka case at all, as they viewed their occasional companions with the prejudice of any urban man: for them they were “rural proletarians” who should become committed and be “brought face-to-face with history,” exploited peasants who were submerged in a universal class conflict between the capitalists and the workers.

The authors convincingly suggest that, besides the common struggle against the local landowners and other specific concerns, when supporting the insurrection the Ashaninkas considered shamaneic prophecies and myths whereby guerrillas were viewed as having the same spiritual authority that their seventeenth-century counterparts had found in Juan Santos Atahualpa. Once again, the cyclical process is replicated: some Ashaninkas thought that Guillermo Lobatón, a curious political activist of Afro-Peruvian origin who had studied at the Sorbonne and was the leader of the MIR’s “Tupac Amaru” column, was a shaman (sheripintari) or at least a helpful spirit. The guerrilla leader was interpreted according to the myth and the millennial utopia as a symbol of an apocalyptic movement that would lead to a world change; a mediator who would transform scarcity and suffering into wealth and justice.

It should be noted that the authors, based on in-depth ethnographic knowledge, carefully record the struggle for power among Ashaninka shamans and their factions: while some see Lobatón as a messiah, others believe he is a demon (kamari). Fernández and Brown, in fact, have the merit of analysing how the social tensions are projected in the millennial utopia and in the fragmentation of the support given to the MIR’s Amazonian adventurism: some Indians joined the “Tupac Amaru”; others sided with the army. In any case, interestingly enough, both trends, although contradictory with regard to the outcomes of the shamanic revelation, were answers that proved to be consistent and aligned with the Ashaninka worldview structure. Another example of how the Ashaninkas “read” their participation in the conflict is the issue of the tools, weapons, and the like. Confronted with the idea of the “good savages” who, led by the MIR’s trickery and deception, joined in the insurrection enticed by the possibility of solving their material needs, the authors suggest that those trade goods stand in a “metonymic relationship” to the European world. The worldview architecture and mythology relate trade goods with the Inca myth, and a vision of apocalyptic transformation that acquires symbolic dimensions and is not limited to “material needs” but goes beyond them.

In brief, the Ashaninka support to the 1965 uprising reveals itself as a fine case of “mythopoia” or “mytho-praxis,” that is, the invocation of a mythical vision in order to formulate responses to current events. The authors, for instance, associate the Ashaninka case with the well-known Tupi-Guarani motif of Íwoca or the “land without evil.” Both in the example here analysed and in the one studied by H. Clastres, the messianic utopia implies neither a time of unusual effervescence nor the
Finnegan proposes four significant features of a "story" which are common to all of the narratives dealt with in the book: first, a temporal framework; secondly, an element of coherence that renders the story intelligible; thirdly, potential for generalisability, "something of the universal in the particular" (9); and finally, the existence of generic conventions that may vary according to kind of story, storyteller, and framework of performance. As Finnegan moves through the different kinds of stories about urban life or life in Milton Keynes, she shows that these four elements are common to academic "tales of the city," the rhetoric used by planners and media, and personal, biographical stories. In doing so, she takes a novel approach to the analysis of narrative, because she does not hesitate to analyse both academic and personal stories within the same framework.

She also identifies certain recurring themes of the different types of stories, for example, the mythic theme of a lost golden age before the imposition of urbanism on the countryside. The author shows this theme to run as a narrative thread through academic tales about the city, the media reports on Milton Keynes and, to a certain extent, through some of the inhabitants' narratives.

More importantly, however, Finnegan describes the element of the individual "I" providing coherence and the explanatory framework needed for the stories told. She demonstrates that recourse is taken to individual agency and reflection in the personal narratives cited. She also relates this theme to the narrative spheres of academia and the planners of Milton Keynes, and argues that the individual as reflective and creative agent has largely been missing in the academic theoretical discussions of urban life, necessarily due to the abstracting nature of theorisation. Finnegan's study thus represents a novel approach, which puts the individual at the centre of an urban study. However, she demonstrates that in the narratives, the individual is embedded in his own, unique background. Often resounding of the mythic theme of the hero, the story told is thus "not that of a meaningless isolated individual from nowhere, but of a hero with a just base for their own identity and their place in history" (103). The interplay of social embeddedness and individuality of the actor/narrator is a key feature of these narratives, according to Finnegan: "The recognised images, plots and figures communicate precisely because they go beyond just individual. And yet, at the same time, they are effective precisely because they present the accepted general theme of individuals' deeds and experiences, an assertion, as it were, of their reality and significance" (121). She stresses that this focus on the individual as a framework providing coherence is the "general theory" of most of the personal narrations.

It is here that Finnegan's argumentation about narratives is most closely related to recent anthropological, psychological, and philosophical discourse about the individual. She holds that the individual is at the centre of most of these narratives, because it is the cultural convention of the narrators, in this case of Milton Keynes' inhabitants, to tell their story in terms of the individual. She thus argues that other cultures have similar narrative conventions.