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Characterization and contextualization of a group of Aénts Chicham (Jivaro) artefacts formerly in the theological department of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland

This paper presents an unpublished collection of Aénts Chicham[1] artefacts that were discovered in the former ethnographic collections of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Besides traditional material culture from the Ecuador and Peruvian border area, it contains items that incorporate Western materials such as textiles and glass beads. Highly appreciated by indigenous societies, these were exchanged over great distances through a system of trade partners. The collection is discussed together with its possible link to the Jesuit Mainas missions and to Swiss emigration waves of the 19th century.

Introduction

The former ethnographic collections of the University of Fribourg (CH) spent some thirty years packed up in the university basement. Since 2012 it is in the care of the non-profit association Pro Ethnographica (www.proethnographica.ch). While in storage, black carpet beetles had proliferated and severely degraded some of the artefacts. This was the reason the author was called upon to intervene and stabilize the collection. In boxes labelled 'North America' that contained a collection of Menominee artefacts collected in the 19th century by Fr Antoine-Marie Gachet (1882-1890), several pieces were identified that clearly had a different provenance. A closer inspection revealed them to originate most likely from the border-area between today's Ecuador and Peru. The group consists of five ankle rattles made from shells and seeds, three necklaces, a woman's dance belt, four pairs of ear pendants made from beetle elytra, four back ornaments with seeds and bird bones, a decorated headband and two unusual assemblages incorporating European textiles, one made from elytra and seeds, the other from forest beans and Job's tears. They were summarily inventoried in the 1940ies but, according to the collection history, predate 1912. No contextual information has survived to this day.

Orphaned artefacts are not uncommon in the former collections of Fribourg's University as labelling was not always a priority in the 19th and early 20th century. Beside the 23 pieces discussed in this paper, another 40 await to be identified. The selected group of artefacts was considered an ensemble by the author because of the use of the same natural materials, the incorporation of European textiles and beads for some of them, their condition that reflect similarly aged materials and their close resemblance to Aénts Chicham collections housed in museums around the world.

Methodology

Much early ethnological research did not focus on the materiality of collected specimens and left them poorly documented. Having to deal with orphaned objects collected more than a hundred years ago further complicates the task. The study of such poorly documented composite collections therefore becomes an interdisciplinary and collaborative process that can involve conservators, anthropologists, botanists and zoologists, each one bringing their specific knowledge to the table.

For this project the identification of bird beaks and beetle elytra was done in collaboration with the taxidermist Martin Zimmerli from the Natural History Museum of Neuchâtel. The conservator Jacques Cuisin from the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris identified the beak of the Ramphastos Toucan. Christopher Milensky, Collection Manager at the Smithsonian Institute National Museum of Natural History, helped identify the bones from the oilbird Steatornis caripensis. Shells were identified by Estée Bochud and Eike Neubert, both malacologists at the Natural History Museum of Berne. Colin Edward Hughes at the Botanical Garden of the University of Zurich identified the Ormosia seeds. The thesis of Fernanda Vera (2012) was particularly helpful to identify seeds used in Shuar costumes and to describe how they are processed. Further information can be found in the contributions by Carolinae Fernanda Caromano et al (2024) and Deborah G. Harding (2003). Michael Oehrl was kind enough to identify and provide information on the beads that are present on some of the pieces.

The publications by Rafael Karsten (1935) and Mathew William Stirling (1938) on Jivaro Indians are both rich in detail and in the use of Jivaro terminology. Cesare Bianchi's publication (1982) on crafts from the Shuar people is a helpful source for Shuar terminology. Whenever possible we have tried to include available terminology from traditional peoples to highlight their role in the production of these cultural objects. This research should be viewed as a first attempt to contextualize this group of orphaned objects.

The origins of Fribourg's collections

The first cultural collections of Fribourg can be traced back to the Collège St-Michel that was founded in 1582 by the Jesuit order under the auspices of Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585). Over the years, artefacts were collected by the fathers who used them to illustrate their teaching. These collections of natural and man-made curiosities were scattered throughout the building until Father Jean Baptiste Wiere (1793-1850) joined the Collège in 1822. Versed both in theology and sciences and a man of rigor, he transformed the attic space of the Collège into a display room for the collections that he divided into natural history, geology and physics (Phyton 2018: 28-29). This gathering of strange and rare things became the nucleus of Fribourg's growing museum collections. In 1824, Charles Aloyse Fontaine (1754-1834), who had entered the Jesuit order in 1769 and had become archdeacon of the diocese of Lausanne, donated his extensive curiosity cabinet to the Collège. According to Louis Grangier (1817-1891), professor at the Collège and later curator of the Fine Arts collections, the Fontaine collection consisted of a library, a herbarium, coins and medals, natural history specimens, minerals, fossils, and a great number of indigenous and exotic rarities. The collections were opened to the public in 1826 and could be visited on Thursdays between 1 and 3pm. Despite the rather limited opening hours, the museum drew crowds of spectators and elicited a great number of new donations. The collection rapidly outgrew the available space and was moved between 1828 and 1836 to the newly built Lycée. There, the collections were displayed in eight rooms on the first and second floor and opened to the public for four hours on three days a week (Grangier 1882a: 50-96 and 1882b: 3-4). Some losses occurred in 1847 during the short-lived civil Sonderbund war when Bernese and Vaudois troops pillaged the city. The new anticlerical radicals brought an end to the Jesuit presence in Fribourg that had lasted some two and a half centuries.

In 1860 an important ensemble of 48 pieces were sent to the Lycée by Capuchin Father Antoine-Marie Gachet (1822-1890) who, at the time, was working among the Menominee (Wisconsin, USA, 1859-1862).[2] In 1879 the terminally ill painter Adèle Castiglione Colonna (1836-1879), born d'Affry (Marcello), bequeathed her important art collection to the museum. Two years later the collection opened to the public in the Lycée as the Musée Marcello (Phyton 2018: 139-146). When in 1896 the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (MHN) was built in the Pérolles district, the natural history collections were transferred there. Even though an agreement had been reached in 1900 between the Lycée and the MHN to also move the ethnographic collection there, lack of space and funds impaired its display and it was sent back to the Lycée where it was boxed-up in 1912 and stored in the attic (Musy 1912: 73). The art history collections of the Lycée were subsequently transferred to the Hotel Ratzé, today's main building of the Musée d'Art et Histoire. From 1823 to 1902, the curators of the Fribourg collections inventoried all objects and their donors in the so-called Livre des Bienfaiteurs, nowadays kept in the archival collections of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (MHNF I 5.7-001). In 1854 a separate inventory was started for the antiquities and ethnographic collec-

tions, where all entries until 1870 were recorded (Phyton 2018: 40 & 138). By 1877, when Louis Grangier started to piece together the collection history, this second inventory had been lost. This leaves a 23-year gap in acquisition records for the collections – covering the period between 1854 and 1877, the year of Grangier's preparation of his manuscript that was to be published as the complete catalogue in 1882.

The SVD missionary collections in the Fribourg University

After the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938, Fr Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954), trained and ordained by the Society of the Divine Word (Societas Verbi Divini, SVD), fled Austria and found refuge in Switzerland where he was appointed lecturer at the University of Fribourg. At the time, the Theological Department of the Fribourg University offered an orientation in History of Religions as well as in Missionary Studies. Schmidt brought to the university a great reputation and an intricate knowledge of human societies and their material as well as spiritual culture. He founded the publication Anthropos in 1906, with a particular focus on the study of human societies in their multifaceted cultural dimensions. Together with close collaborators of the Anthropos Institute he had organized the Vatican Exhibition on World Cultures in 1925 that drew over one million visitors and became the foundation for the Pontificio Museo Missionario-Ethnologico, today's Ethnological Museum Anima Mundi at the Vatican in Rome (Aigner & Miotk 2013: 365-368).

Schmidt's move to Fribourg in 1939 triggered the relocation of the entire Anthropos Institute to Froideville (Poiseux) in the canton of Fribourg. It further brought the University theologians and anthropologists such as Fr Wilhelm Koppers (1889-1961) who worked among the Bhils in India and Fr Georg Höltker (1895-1976) who spent three years in Papua New Guinea. Both donated part of their collections acquired in the field to the faculty as study material. These collections were displayed from 1941 onwards in showcases lining the first-floor corridor of the northern wing in the newly built concrete and modernist university campus Miséricorde (Fig. 1). At the same time the old ethnographic collections from the Lycée were transferred to the university and merged with the SVD collections. In 1942 Schmidt became the head of the new department for anthropology that he was to chair for the rest of his life (Giordano & Rüegg 2015: 23-25). In 1979 a significant theft occurred, and as the faculty considered the exhibits outdated, they were once more boxed up and this time relegated to the basement of the university. It is due to the relentless efforts of the social anthropologist François Rüegg, as well as a group of highly motivated volunteers, that this collection was rediscovered and brought back to the attention of the scientific community. Since 2014 the independent association Pro Ethnographica is in charge of the collection. Its mission is to bring order into the inventory, photograph all items, conserve what has suffered from neglect, and research and publish the various collections (Miche 2018: 81-87). A total of 1082 object numbers still exist – 591 from Papua New Guinea (Höltker), 147 from India (Koppers), and 217 from Africa.

Figure 1: Photograph from around 1950 of the University's reference collections displayed in the first-floor wall showcases

The allocation of inventory numbers

Each artefact from the University of Fribourg collection has a corresponding numbered inventory card that contains machine typed and hand-written information (object number, origin, collector/donor, date, description etc.) and most of the time a photograph of the item. The card system was introduced in 1940 by Fr Georg Höltker who started the inventory numbering with the New Guinea material he had donated to the university in the same year (Grauer 2022: 179, 198). Some pieces were also received or exchanged in the 1970s and 80s with the Haus der Völker, the SVD museum in St Augustin. The higher numbers (2001-2083) are those given to the North American items collected by Fr Gachet, some South American artefacts, the Aénts Chicham pieces, an Australian belt, a feather headdress from the Congo and some of the earliest Lycée collections with their old hand-written labels. None of these objects have any contextual information written on their inventory cards. It seems that when the card inventory was introduced, priority was given to SVD collections that were used for teaching purpose and came from cultural areas related to the missionary and collecting work of the faculty members. The complete lack of information on the cards relating to the older Lycée collections as well as the Aents Chicham material indicates that by 1940 their collection history had already been lost.

Corroded thumbtacks, that were still present on several back ornaments, indicate that they had been displayed pinned to a wall. This corresponds to the display of the showcases that Schmidt had installed (Fig. 1). Strong fading of textiles parts indicates a long-term display with natural light. The south-east facing corridors of the Miséricorde have hopper windows opposite the showcases which would have had this effect on photosensitive materials. It seems likely that both the early Fribourg collections and the SVD collections were displayed there together.

The Aénts Chicham pieces do not appear in the Livre des Bienfaiteurs. Grangiers's catalogue of 1882 mentions Inv. no. 136 *'Vêtements de femmes sauvages indiennes, travaillés en grain de perles (2 pièces)'*. This said, the total absence of other related pieces most likely indicates that those pieces are not the ones discussed in this paper. This leaves us to believe that our collections must have arrived in Fribourg after the inventory of 1882 and before 1912, the year when all ethnographic collections were put into storage.

The lure of South America

Even though little is known about the origins of the Aénts Chicham collection of Fribourg, they shed light on important exchanges between Switzerland and South America that started in the 18th and intensified in the 19th century. The Genoud family, who appears as donors of a group of artefacts from Panama and Chile in 1877, provides an interesting case study that illustrates how and why Swiss citizens emigrated to Latin America and, at times, brought back with them mementos that were later donated to educational institutions and museums.

Jean Magnin (1701-1753), born in Hauteville by the lake of Gruyère, is of particular interest as he lived among indigenous groups in the border area of Ecuador and Peru. With 28 brethren he set sail for South America in early 1724, crossed Colombia, and finally reached Quito in April of the same year. After ordination in 1727 he taught grammar and morals, but his most ardent dream remained the conversion of Amazonian Indians. In 1736, he was finally sent to the Marañón river area in northern Peru where he was to live for ten years among the *Yaméos, Miguianos, Patranos* and the *Amaonos* (Nicoulin 1987: 13). First in charge of the small mission station of San Paolo dei Napeones, and later of the more affluent San Francisco de Borja, he did his utmost to bring the word of God to what he considered to be non-believers. The explorer and member of a French scientific mission, Charles-Marie de la Condamine (1701-1774), encountered Magnin in 1744 on his way down the Amazon. Magnin, who confided to his diary the trying solitude of missionary life, must have been thrilled by the unexpected visit of a fellow European naturalist, mathematician, and adventurer. At the end of Condamine's stay, Magnin gifted him a detailed hand-drawn map of the Mainas mission territory, some natural history curiosities, and an important manuscript with the description of the indigenous population surrounding the missions (La Condamine 1745: 56). One is tempted to understand that father Magnin had assembled a collection of indigenous or natural artefacts, some of which he entrusted to Condamine. This would not be surprising considering his profound interest in indigenous people, their culture, and the traditional use of medical plants.[3]

Another Jean Genoud, also from Châtel-St-Denis, was one of the many Swiss that left their country with their families in 1819 (Nicoulin 1973: 250). At that time Switzerland reeled from the impact of the industrial revolution

Figure 2: An early 20th century postcard view of Châtel-St-Denis set in the rural landscape of the district of la Veveyeuse in the canton of Fribourg

that left many workers without employment as much human labor had been replaced by more efficient machines imported from England. Tough protectionist imports tariffs from France equally affected the export-oriented industry. The last blow came from a particularly bad harvest that brought famine to many parts of the country (Nicoulin 1973: 21-22). The result was an extensive exodus to North America where many Swiss settlements were established, such as New Bern (North Carolina), New Glarus (Wisconsin), or Bernstadt (Kentucky). On behalf of the canton of Fribourg, Sébastien-Nicolas Gachet 1770-1819) negotiated with King Dom João VI (1767-1826) land concessions in Brazil for Swiss settlers in 1817. At the time the vast kingdom lacked the necessary workforce to exploit its resources and welcomed immigration of farmers to invigorate its economy and become less dependent on more developed nations. Thus, the Jean Genoud family became one of the founding families of the Nova Friburgo settlement in the district of Cantagalo, South-Eastern Brazil, territory of the Purí (Coroado) people. Despite their new life far away from home, ties to their fatherland remained strong. This is exemplified by the donation to the Collège St Michel of two framed boxes of Brazilian butterflies and beetles which the Nova Friburgo parish priest J. Joye brought to Fribourg in 1825 (Livre des Bienfaiteurs, 1825, lot 69). Three years later he shipped a crate containing 200 exotic bird pelts from Nova Friburgo to the Collège St Michel Museum (Joye 1828).

In 1855 a third Jean Genoud (said à Caset), left Châtel-St-Denis for Buenos Aires with his wife and eleven children. Together with his sons Ignace and Casimir, he figures in the land act from 1856 that allowed Swiss settlers to build the Baradero agricultural community in the province of Santa Fe (Ciccioli 2013: 5). The colony was built around what remained of an abandoned Jesuit mission station. At the time it had shrunk to a small village with some 100 inhabitants. In 1857 more colonists arrived, among them the families of Denis and Edouard Genoud, again from Châtel-St-Denis. Ten years later it was the turn of Nicolas Genoud, his wife and their ten children. From the start the colony prospered and the Genoud family quickly became affluent. More settlers joined them from the cantons of Valais, Bern, Basel, Lucerne and Zurich. By 1890 the Baradero colony counted approximately 1000 Swiss colonists. Despite their new Argentinian nationality, the members of the community retained a strong bond to their motherland. Some of them, like Nicolas Genoud and his brother Henri, returned to visit Switzerland on several occasions to represent the alpine farmers (armaillis) at the Fête des Vignerons of Vevey (Mauron 2004: 31-44).

Jean Magnin's story sheds light on the important link between Fribourg, the Jesuits and their missionary presence in the border area of Ecuador and Peru from the 18th century onwards. Mission stations were established on the periphery *Aénts Chicham* territory and it is likely that they not only converted souls, but also collected indigenous artefacts and natural specimens that were brought back to European mission headquarters and passed on to emerging museum collections. This is further illustrated by the Franciscan friar M. J.-A. Genoud[4] who, on his travels to Panama and Chile, collected natural history and ethnographic material that he donated in 1877 to the Lycée (Granget 1882: 83). A Shipibo shirt from northeastern Peru (Inv. no. 2049) could have found its way to Fribourg in a similar way.

Habitat and history of the Aents Chicham

Chicham speaking communities inhabit the cloud-and tropical forests east of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon Cordillera. They live in scattered communities in the vast expanse of primordial forest, roughly between the Río Bobonanza to the north, the valley of the Pastaza to the east, and the upper Río Marañón to the South. Before the arrival of Europeans, their society was one of acephalous political hierarchy and they lived from hunting, gathering, and slash-and-burn horticulture. With the fall of the Inca Empire in 1533, Spanish and mestizo settlers, attracted by gold deposits, gradually moved to the fringes of this territory. Their presence was tolerated as it provided a source of much-wanted western goods. But these new cohabitations also brought tension, which in 1599 resulted in two significant native attacks on Logroño de los Caballeros and Sevilla del Oro. These coordinated mass killings abruptly halted any further colonizing efforts (Bollaert: 1863, 116-117; Taylor 2008: 219).

In the 17th century Jesuits started to move westwards from Iquitos up the Río Napo and the Río Marañón and eastwards from Quito down the Río Napo and Río Pastanza. These waterways were the only possible access to the rugged and impenetrable terrain. Those that were able to befriend local groups established mission stations, called reductions, modelled after those in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina. The approximately 60 missions were referred to as *Mainas missions*, named after the *Maina* people that lived around the Río Marañón.

Even though missions had always played a significant role in the colonial expansion, it was only in the 1860s that the Ecuadorian state started to consider using Catholic missions to prepare the way for future settlements and economic enterprise. After having been expelled from Spanish colonies in 1767, the Jesuits were allowed to return in 1862 and established missions in the provinces of Napo, Macas and Gualaquiza. The experiment was abandoned when in 1875 a smallpox epidemic severely reduced the local population. The Macas mission stayed active until 1884 but failed in converting the local population that had remained hostile towards the fathers (Pagnotta 2020: 126). In 1887 the Dominican order established another mission in Macas, only to abandon it in 1898. Four years later the Protestant mission of the Gospel Missionary Union also tried to get a foothold in Macas, again to no avail. More fruitful were the efforts

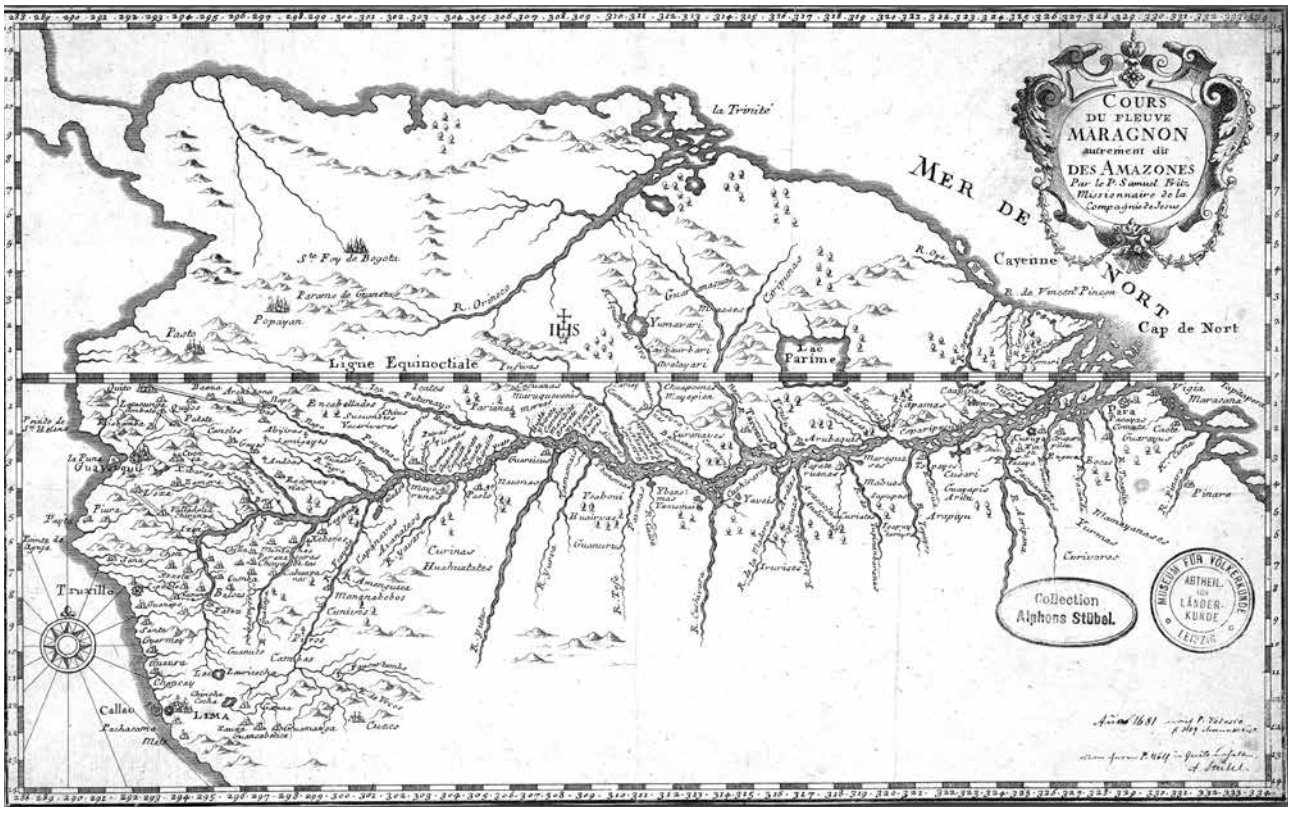

Figure 3: Map of the Marañón and the Mainas mission territories from 1717 after the Jesuit missionary and explorer Samuel Fritz (1654-1728)

of the Catholic Salesians, an order originating from the Italian Piedmont, which opened a mission in Méndez in 1914, ten years later in Macas (Harner 1973: 29-30). The Kansas-based evangelical Church of the Nazarene also established a foothold among the Awajún in the 1920s with a strong focus on the translation of the New Testament. From the 1950s onwards Catholic missions equally increased their general presence among Aénts Chicham groups (Brown 2014: 51).

The rubber boom, driven by the high demand of industrialized nations, started to have an impact on the populations of the Amazon in the late 1870s. Prospectors, mestizo workers and government officials moved up the Río Marañón and its tributaries in search of latex, land, and wealth. The commercial centers were Iquitos and Manaus from where rubber barons dispatched mercenaries to defend their appropriated tapping territories and keep the native workforce from fleeing brutal working conditions (Brown 2014: 46). More intrepid explorers followed when the former Spanish gold deposits were rediscovered and exploited. Prospectors and collectors of the shrub cinchona (also called the Jesuit bark as Peruvian Jesuit missionaries were the first non-indigenous to use it in the 17th century) similarly encroached on the fringes of *Aénts Chicham* territory. The dried bark, containing quinine, was in high demand at the time, being the only existing treatment to combat malaria that was devastating French, Dutch and British troops expanding their respective overseas dominions.

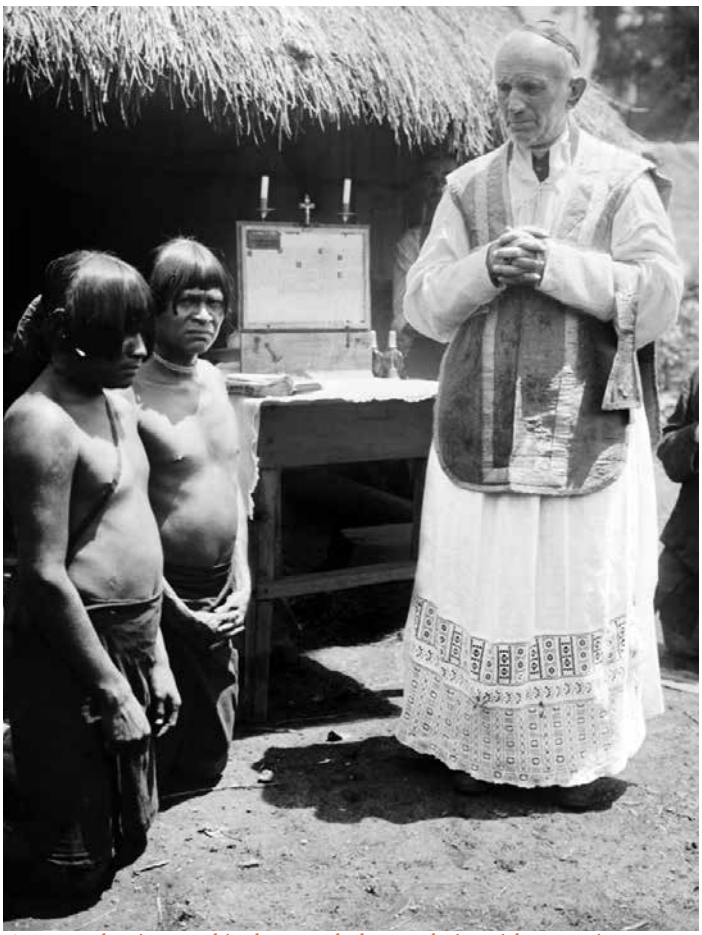

Figure 4: Taken in 1910, this photograph shows Salesian Bishop Domingo Comin with two men from the province of Morona Santiago

Most affected by these new developments were the Awayún and Shuar communities, and to a lesser extent the Achuar. The proximity to missions and agricultural exploitations brought access to desirable western goods, such as superior cutting tools, textiles, and glass beads. But close contact also meant transmission of unknown diseases, such as measles, whooping cough, mumps, tuberculosis, gonorrhea, or influenza, against which the native population had no natural resistance. These deadly mass infections could easily decimate more than half the population of a settlement and were quickly associated with the presence of foreigners, and thus increasing an already existing distrust towards strangers and missionaries. Many a mission was abandoned when, after an epidemic, there were not enough souls left to convert. Taylor estimates that between 1550 and 1780 an 80% decrease of population took place due to diseases caused by close contact in colonial centers and their spread to the interior through indigenous networks (Taylor 2008: 238).

Life for the interior Aénts Chicham remained little affected by these changes in the vortex of western settlements. This said, western goods did reach many of them through networks of indigenous trading partners which relayed them to the interior. The Fribourg collection could reflect some of these dynamics of exchange.

Description of the Fribourg collection

The Fribourg Aénts Chicham collection contains personal ornaments from men and women, the latter clearly in lesser numbers. In the following discussion the collection will be presented either by object groups, or as individual pieces.

Rattles

Rattles (shakap) are used by women and men and are important instruments used to maintain rhythm during dances and religious ceremonies. They can be made from various materials, as long as they produce the desired sound. Like other objects, rattles can be named after the materials they are made of. Makich are foot rattles made from the reddish-brown seeds of the makich tree (Vera 2012: 31). These have a natural V-shaped perforation on one end of the oval seed where the suspension cord is passed through. One side is opened by abrasion to improve the acoustic quality. Inv. nr. 2023 (Fig. 5b) is a shakap

Figure 5a: the ankle shakap Inv. nr. 2016 made from nupi seed pods (L unrolled 28cm, W 5cm)
Figure 5b: shakap Inv. nr. 2023 made from makich seeds fastened to a braided plant fiber most likely worn as a necklace (L 30cm W 32cm)

Figure 6a, b, c, d: Shell rattles Inv. nr. 2017 (15cm x 14cm) and Inv. nr. 2018 (unrolled 59cm x 4cm) are made from the shells of Castalia ecarinata and Monocondylaea costulata. Inv. nr 2019 and 2020 (both unrolled 40cm x 6cm) contain mostly the oval shells of Anodontites sp.

made from makish seeds that was probably worn around the neck.

The oval dark brown and very smooth nupi seeds can be found on many items such as rattles, dance belts and other ornaments (Bianchi 1982: 184, Vera 2012: 18). After cutting off the lower extremity, they are assembled into pairs. Inv. nr. 2016 (Fig. 5a) is an example of a nupi ankle rattle. The seed of the waki fruit (Cayaponia capitata. sp) can equally be used for making shakap (Vera 2012: 32).

Shakap made from shells and shell sections from large land gastropods called kunku (Bianchi 1982: 185). These are triangular sections cut from the shell rim of the giant land snail Megalobulimus terrestris (Spix in J. A. Wagner, 1827). They are frequently found on women's dance belts (see following chapter).

The Fribourg collection contains four shakap made from freshwater mollusks. Inv. nr. 2017 (Fig. 6a) is a foot rattle made from cupped pairs of Castalia ecarinata (Mousson, 1869) and Monocondylaea costulata (J. Moricand, 1858). Each shell pair is attached with a string of natural fibers that is integrated into the central braided fiber cord. Inv. nr. 2018 (Fig. 6b) combines three assembled strands of these shell shakap and could have been worn as a necklace. All shells were carefully polished to remove the external dark pigmented periostracum, revealing the shiny white mother of pearl. Inv. nr. 2019 (Fig. 6c) and 2020 (Fig. 6d) are two necklace shakap made from the oval shells of Anodontites sp. that had their green-brown periostracum abraded and that are attached to a cotton string. Inv. nr. 2019 is enhanced with a single white glass bead between two clapper shells and a makich seed.

Woman's dance belt

In his 1938 publication the American anthropologist and archaeologist Matthew Williams Stirling (1938: 102) refers to woman's dance belts as unda acacho. The Finnish social anthropologist Rafael Karsten, who spent three years among the Jivaros, uses the term kúngu (Karsten 1935: 88, plate XIII), the latter most likely referring to the kunku rattles it is composed of. Woman's dance belts consist of a woven cotton belt ending in a series of plaited strands that are tied together on the belly. From the belt two rows of shakap pendants align left and right all the way to the hip. Shakap of dance belts are often made from kunku, but like the Fribourg example, can contain other rattle types. Each individual shakap is attached to the belt with a string of seeds, galls or glass beads.

Glass beads were first introduced to coastal South America in the 16th century, and by the 18th century had reached the interior by being traded on over long distances through indigenous exchange systems. They were highly estimated for their tangible qualities such as hardness, shininess, color and minute size, qualities that could not be emulated with natural products. Hardness represents durability, control, and, ultimately, immortality. Shininess was desired as it evokes light, cleanliness, social order, and power of attraction (Scaramelli & Tarble 2005: 15). It is thus not surprising that glass beads immediately became integrated into indigenous value systems and incorporated in dress and adornment. Excavations of Jesuit period colonial settlements in Venezuela revealed glass beads being the most frequently found foreign artefact type. They are so numerous that they have become excellent chronological markers for the archaeologists (Scaramelli & Tarble 2005: 152). Venice and its factory island, Murano, were the main suppliers of glass beads to traders and explorers heading to the New World. It had no real competition until the rise of the Bohemian bead industry beginning in the mid-19th century (Karklins 2012: 81). On the Fribourg dance belt a variety of mostly white, but also red, pink and blue seed beads made from opaque and translucent glass have been used on the strands that connect the pendants to the belt. Their difference in size, shape and tones indicate that they originated from different sources and most likely are of varying age. This said, the majority is typical for Bohemian and Venetian seed beads that were traded throughout South America in the second part of the 19th century right up to the 1920ies (Oehrl: personal communication 2024).

For unknown reasons the Fribourg dance belt (Fig. 7) was cut in two at one point and received two inventory numbers (Inv. nr. 2021, 2024). Most of the individual shakap are made from nupi seeds with the occasional ellipsoid Canna seed (probably Canna jaegeriana).[5] Two large and polished kunku and seven toucan beaks complete the belt. The sectioned toucan beaks are most likely from the mid-sized yellow breasted Pteroglossus Araçaris (Pteroglossus inscriptus) that inhabits primary lowland and riverine forests but can occasionally be found in montane subtropical forests along the Cordilleras. Their beaks are black and yellow with hues of red. The completely yellow beak originates from the much rarer and mostly black Ramphastos Toucan (Ramphastos ambiguous and vitelli-

Figure 7: The woven cotton dance belt Inv. nr. 2021/2024 with its lateral shakaps made from a variety of botanical and zoological materials as well as trade beads (116x15cm)

nus). The toucan beaks not only add prestige, but an additional sound quality to the belt when danced. All shakap units are fastened to the belt with a string of white glass beads, with the occasional sprinkling of precious reds and blues. When glass beads were insufficient, wampiak or karikris (Canna L. sp.) seeds were used instead (Vera 2012: 24-25). Minute and dark brown galls are also present. They have the same size as the small glass beads and are discussed in the following chapter. The choice of replacing naturally occurring materials with a more prestigious 'foreign' one, illustrates how Aénts Chicham enhanced their material culture while keeping to its traditional and functional design.[6]

Necklaces

Necklaces of various types are worn by men and women, whereas ornaments worn by women are often less conspicuous. According to Karsten necklaces made from animal teeth and claws (nai) are worn by older experienced men and are thought to impart some of the ferocity and strength of the animal to the owner and reflect his skill and courage. Necklaces made from seeds or dried fruit shells are worn by men and women. Both, the white-grey Job's tears (Coix lacryma, family of Graminea), sometimes called San Pedro tears, and the red and black forest bean (Ormosia, family of Leguminosae) are frequently used. Inv. nr. 2022 (Fig. 8a) measures 70cm in length and is an example that combines both. Karsten names such necklaces étsi (Karsten 1935: 91).

Inv. nr. 2025 (Fig. 8b) is a very fine and rare example of necklace made from the oval black seeds of the red flowering karikris (Canna L. sp), white glass beads, red dotted snail shells of Aylacostoma osculati (A. Villa & G. B. Villa, 1854), and more than a thousand minuscule black perfo-

Figure 8a, 8b: The fragmentary étsi necklace (Inv. nr. 2022) made from Job's tears and forest beans and the meticulous múpish necklace (Inv. nr. 2025: 22 x 21cm)

Figure 9a: Women from the Río Bomboiza adorned with dance belts, photographed by Wolfgang von Hagen in 1935

Figure 9b: Decorated warrior displaying ear pendants, an impressive dúship bandolier, necklaces, woven loincloth (itípi), and a Winchester rifle (Karsten 1935 plate XXVII 2)

rated donut-shaped discs that are also present on the discussed dance belt. These measure 3mm in diameter, 1mm in height and have a circular depression halfway down one of their sides. They are galls produced on the underside of leaves of the dúship tree (Licania Cecidiophora, family of Chrysobalanaceae). Karsten provides the name of múpish for these beads and necklaces, whereas Berlin and Prance, who worked among the Awajún, noted the name dúship for both the tree and the necklaces (Karsten 1935: 92; Berlin & Prance 1978: 83).[7] When the tree sheds its leaves in March-April and October-November, the leaves are gathered in baskets, the galls removed, and their membrane pierced. The most impressive jewelry fashioned from up to 150'000 perforated galls are long-strand necklaces that were worn crossed over the chest by men in bandolier fashion (Berlin & Prance 1978, see also Fig. 9b). Such extremely time-consuming assemblages that could take up to one year to make (Stirling 1938: 102) were worn on important occasions and reflected both status and wealth.

Ear pendants

The Aénts Chicham ear ornaments consist of long chains of assembled elytra of metallic wood-boring beetles and usually end in a tuft of yellow and red toucan feathers. They are some of the most characteristic and spectacular male attire and can be called kuishi (Stirling 1938: 102), akiamu (Bianchi 1982: 228) or, when named after the wáuo beetle, wauwau, or wáuo (Bianchi 1982: 228; Karsten 1935: 90). They are harvested from two distinct beetles, the smaller and light green colored Chrysophora chrysochlora, whose wing covers have a distinct granulate texture, and the larger Euchroma gigantea. Their glossy iridescent colors give a beautiful contrast to the well-groomed black hair men traditionally wear parted in three strands. When danced, the elytra of the Euchroma gigantea give a metallic sound and can act as rattles. Some of the ear pendants end in strands of hair from their owner (Fig. 10a, c, d). According to Karsten hair is considered to be full of magical power and when worn woven into a girdle, or as an addition to decorum, it will give the wearer's body additional strength (Karsten 1935: 426). When not used, akiamu were kept away from dust and pests with other personal adornment in finely woven baskets.

The Fribourg collection contains four different sets of ear pendants. Inv. nr. 2078 (Fig. 10a) is a small pair containing an average of 24 elytra of Euchroma gigantea and terminates in tufts of yellow and red toucan feathers and a strand of human hair (15cm without the hair lock). On the top end the small wooden sticks, that secured the akiamu in the pierced earlobes, are still present. Inv. nr. 2079 (Fig.

Figure 10a, b, c, d: The three aikamu pairs made from wing cases of Euchroma gigantea (Inv. nr. 2078, 2079, 2080) and the Chrysophora chrysochlora one (Inv. nr. 2081)

10b) consists of two strands of some 85 Euchroma gigantea elytra with toucan feather tufts on the bottom and minute white and red glass beads on the top end (44cm). Inv. nr. 2080 (Fig. 10c) are two double strands of different lengths, the shorter one with an added lock of human hair. The long strands count an average of 95 elytra and are 47 respectively 50cm long, the shorter count 73 elytra with a length of 33 and 36cm (without hair). The top end is decorated with additional toucan feather tufts and one row of light-blue glass beads. Inv. nr. 2081 (Fig. 10d) consists of two double strands of assembled Chrysophora chrysochlora with remains of toucan feathers and human hair. Small red and white glass beads embellish the top section of one of the two. Up to 250 of these smaller elytra are tightly packed and strung together, giving a rope-like feel to the strands (41 respectively 44cm). It is possible that these pendants are not a pair but two individual pieces.

Back ornaments

The most important male adornment was an elaborate back ornament called tayu kúnchi.[8] As its name implies, the main components are superimposed rows of ulna or femur bones from the mature oilbird Steatornis caripensis, called tayu. The oilbird is the only nocturnal fruit-eating avian that nests and lives in caves where no daylight penetrates. It lives in large colonies and forages in the night, navigating with the help of a specially adapted eyesight and echolocation. Traditionally, the young are caught in March and April, their fat rich meat being much appreciated (Karsten 1935: 66; Bull 1979: 457). As the chicks need some 120 days before being airborne, they can easily be plucked from the nests. This said, the ascent to the high ledges where the nests are located is a risky business. A completely different feat is to catch mature birds in pitch black caves only dimly lit with copal torches. The caves are also home to jaguars, a much-feared animal into which vengeful souls - eager to kill their enemies - can reincarnate. Jaguars are also believed to be dangerous reincarnations of ancestors (Karsten 1935: 374-375). The accumulation of tayu bones in tayu kúnchi thus reflected a hunter's courage, skill and valor (Stirling 1938: 102).

Traditionally tayu kúnchi consist of seven to eight rows of approximately fifty tayu bones, have a length of between 80 and 90cm and are separated by rows of karikris seeds or small black beans. The top is equipped with a woven head band. The bottom can have a row of decorative shakap seeds, sometimes combined with iridescent beetle wings, forming a sonorous assemblage called kuishi (Stirling 1938: 102). All Bones and seeds are held to-

Figure 11a, b, c, d: The four tayu kúnchi (Inv. nr. 2050: 42 x 17cm, Inv. nr. 2051: 44 x 12cm, Inv. nr. 2052 and 2053 (both 58 x 18cm) made from tayu bird bones and repurposed western textiles9

gether by yarns that run from top to bottom and are secured to each other. Tayu kúnchi were only worn by high status men for important ceremonies and were said to have magical powers increasing the wearer's strength, as well as the power of resistance against malevolent spirits (Karsten 1935: 92). In average some 150 birds were needed to produce one piece.

The Fribourg collection houses four tayu kúnchi of a smaller and particular type. Unlike others in museum collections collected between 1862 and the 1930s, they incorporate repurposed European cotton textiles as a support.[10] One could dismiss them as non-traditional pieces having been made at a mission station without any real connection to their more spiritually charged homologues. But closer inspection reveals that all other components, such as plant fibers or woven cotton threads, are of indigenous manufacture. The pieces have an unprecedented artistic liberty with added decorative rows of black Ormosia and Canna, as well as white Coix lacryma seeds. These intentionally add space between the tayu bones, leaving much of the textile visible. Three of the tayu kúnchi (Inv. nr. 2050, 2052, 2053; Fig. 11a, c, d) are stitched to fragments of the same textile, Inv. nr. 2051 (Fig. 11b and 12a) to a much finer weave. On the back its original purple color is faded but still visible. Years of light exposure (corroded old thumbtacks suggest the tayu kúnchi were fastened to back panels of showcases) have completely faded the front. The textiles seem to have been dyed with a synthetic red-purple and light-sensitive dye. Purple, the color for bishops, does not exist as a natural dye in Aénts Chicham material culture. The headbands are traditional weaves with red (Fig. 12a) and green (Fig. 12b) dyed threads, the latter most likely of imported origin.

Jean Magnin mentions in 1740 the lure of metal tools

Figure 12a: The back side of the finely woven Inv. nr. 2051 showing remains of the purple dye
Figure 12b: The rougher weave of Inv. nr. 2053

that kept Aénts Chicham around the missions and how, once they got hold of these implements, they tended to vanish back into the jungle (Magnin 1740: 126). Those that would stay in the settlement would be recompensed with shirts and skirts. Hats were the definitive mark of distinction that would only be given to those that made the journey all the way to Quito. Such fineries would be worn and displayed during celebrations (Magnin 1740: 152). Thus, manufactured goods quickly entered indigenous trade networks and were used to enhance social power and prestige. The presence of these goods in and around missions played an important role for the latter being tolerated by the local population. At times, the presence and accumulation of such riches resulted in settlements being raided (Steel 1999: 757). Up to the 1870s the mission station of Macas was the main supplier for western-manufactured goods which were exchanged for land-clearing work, meat and other native products. In the early 1970ies Harner observed that, machine-woven trade clothing was reserved for visiting or receiving visitors, whereas the home-woven garments were worn on a daily basis (Harner 1973: 69).

Headband

This head decoration consists of a finely woven band of 8cm width with rows of decorative bands of white, brown and black (Fig. 13). At the back of the head the multicolored warp yarns are tied together with a white thread and continue for another 50cm as a bundle of loose threads. Towards their end they are tied together with a string that runs through a perforated tayu bird bone. On the latter three other bones, two toucan beaks and the heads of four smaller birds are attached.[11] A comparable piece without attachments, identified as an armband, was collected in the 1860ies by the Spanish Comisión Científica del Pacífico Expedición and is nowadays in the collections of the Museo Nacional de Antropologia, Madrid (NMDA CE593).

Figure 13: The bird beak headband Inv. nr. 2029

The weaving of headbands, dance belts, male loincloth, belts, poncho, or the female shoulder dress, was and still is a male prerogative in Aénts Chicham groups. These textiles are made inside the houses on backstrap looms from home-grown cotton dyed in vegetal solutions. The time-consuming dying process is assumed by women who follow a strict fasting program before embarking on this delicate work. Shades of red are achieved by boiling the cotton in a solution made from achiote (Bixa orellana L.) seeds and the bark of the kuaí and payas tree (Stirling 1938: 92; Karsten 1935: 104).[12] Brown is achieved by soaking the cotton yarn in boiling water with the leaves of a cultivated vine called tai. A deep brown is achieved with the leaves of the yamakái plant (Karsten 1935: 104). The juice from the fruit of the sua (Genipa Americana) produces a clear liquid that oxidizes into a deep blue-black color that can either be used to dye cotton and bark-cloth, or as a water-resistant body paint that lasts for one or two weeks. To make it more durable, it is often mixed with nui, a particular type of clay, and the boiled solution of the bark of the chiángrapi or ukúmcha trees. The undyed white yarn is referred to as pútsuh (Magnin 1740: 120; Karsten 1935: 89 & 104-106).

The two large beaks are most likely from the Gold-collared Toucanet (Selenidera reinwardtii) that can be found in lowlands but are more common in the upper forests and ridges of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. When first collected, the beak would have had a black and red coloration that added color to the headdress. Today the red pigmentation has faded and appears beige. The group of three small bird heads are all from nocturnal insectivores, most likely nightjars (Caprimulgidae), whereas the separate and larger head comes from a New World Blackbird (Cacicus).

Large beaked toucans were also worn stuffed and dried as dance accessories on belts and pendants. The shy bird, to which magical properties were attributed, was hunted with blowgun and poisoned darts. Some toucans, such as the Lettered Arçari, enrich their plant-based diet with meat by raiding the nests of pigeons, finches and swallows (Del Hoyo et al. 2002: 261). Just like their human counterparts they can be considered takers of heads. Once hunted and preserved, they were believed to contain similar potency as tsantsas made from the reduced heads of humans (Karsten 1935: 91).

Elytra decorated panel

The finely woven cotton fabric used as a backing of the tayu kúnchi (Inv. nr. 2051) reappears in the assemblage that constitutes object Inv. nr. 2068 (Fig. 14). Measuring 21 x 54 cm, it consists of a rectangular panel of folded textile which is reinforced on the back with thin sewn-on wooden sticks. The front is decorated with a stitched alignment of 158 carefully perforated Euchroma gigantea elytra and 27 smaller elytra from Chrysophora chrysochlora (18 additional ones are missing) that used to contrast the purple color of the textile. The upper edge is lined with a double row of stringed Ormosia seeds, another one separates the first row of elytra from the others. Left and right of the panel three strings made from natural fibers used to be attached, only the middle remains on the left side. No similar piece could be found in museum collections in Europe and the United States. Its function remains a mystery. As with the tayu kúnchi, it represents a marriage of two powerful materials, this time resulting in a novel creation that was certainly meant to impress.

Figure 14: The iridescent elytra of Inv. nr. 2068 must have been a dazzling display contrasting the underlying purple textile

Figure 15: The mesmerizing mosaic of Job's tears and forest beans sewn on to the former purple cotton trade cloth of Inv. nr. 2048

Apron

Another mysterious assemblage is Inv. nr. 2048 (Fig. 15). It consists of an old repurposed purple cotton textile (112 x 50cm). On a surface of 58x43cm a complex pattern has been realized with strings of alternating groups of Job's tears and red and black forest beans stitched to the support. On the left side and along the bottom of the mosaic two reinforcing strips of hide have been sowed to the textile. On the bottom a series of pendants, made from Job's tears and nupi seeds, have been added. The remaining textile shows a discolored fold line that could indicate that it was not to be cut away, but carefully folded (and possibly stitched together) on the back. The folding and stitching together of surplus textile are consistent with the treatment of the tayu kúnchi textiles and the elytra panel.

We do not know for sure how it was intended to be used, but it could be an apron that would have been added in front of a woven loin cloth, the itípi. The archives of the Mission géodésique française de l'Equateur (1901-1906) at the Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac contain a photograph by the Ecuadorian photographer Benjamin Ribadeneira (1855-1936), depicting three Jivaro chiefs said to be from the Chihuasas group in their best attire (Fig. 16). The gentleman in the middle, showing off two incredibly long ear pendants and a gall bandolier, sports an elegant apron made from oilbird bones, seeds and a pendant fringe with shell sections. The Fribourg mosaic has the right size to have been used as an apron and the pendant fringe is an indicator of its orientation. Unlike the traditional strung assemblage techniques, the textile support

Figure 16: »Chefs Jibaros, de la tribu des Chihuasas«. Silver bromide gelatin on glass plate taken in 1892 by Benjamin Ribadeneira and printed by Albert Cintract

allowed the artist to use seeds and beans in an innovative way giving an incredible dynamic to the mosaic. Just like with the tayu kúnchi and the elytra panel, one could interpret it as an indigenous appropriation of a western good which resulted in a new creation that was meant to dazzle and increase both the status and uniqueness of its owner. On an old hand-written label attached to the textile one can read 'Inca'. This early - but wrong - attribution is not surprising, as the dynamic pattern created by the seeds and beans has a visual quality similar to that of pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles from Paracas.

Conclusion

The Aénts Chicham collection of the Fribourg University, nowadays in the care of Pro Ethnographica, gives us a rare glimpse into dynamics of encounter and exchange in Western Ecuador and Eastern Peru. Even though we were not able to identify who collected the items and how they made their journey to Switzerland, researching the collection sheds light on the political, social and cultural changes in both Switzerland and South America in the 18th and 19th century. After the coastal areas and lowlands of Ecuador, Peru and Brazil were colonized, the impenetrable tropical forests started to be explored in search of exploitable resources. Difficult terrain, ever present diseases and hostile indigenous groups made it a particularly difficult venture. Missionaries became instrumental in making first contact and establishing mission stations that spearheaded the penetration of indigenous lands by colonial forces. The Society of Jesus was one of several religious orders that sent intrepid fathers on these spiritual and occasionally lethal missions. Before their expulsion in 1767, the Jesuits had established the most important network of reductions on the fringes of Aénts Chicham territory. It is likely that the Fribourg collection originates from contacts with Jesuit Mainas missions such as the one in Macas. When looking at the materials used, and by comparing the objects to similar collections, it can be attributed to a Aénts Chicham group, possibly to the Awajún.[13]

What sets the Fribourg collection apart are several pieces that marry traditional material culture with purple trade cloth, possibly giving them a 'foreign' potency and new agency. Even though artefacts collected in the late 19th and early 20th century frequently contain trade beads, none could be identified that incorporates such a variety of recycled textiles. These new and desirable foreign goods, first introduced as gifts, quickly turned into commodities that were incorporated into indigenous value and trade systems. They played an important role in the establishment of permanent settlements that were to fundamentally change the lifestyle and religious cosmology of indigenous populations of South America. The Fribourg objects could illustrate the resilience of Aénts Chicham groups to colonial expansion while successfully controlling access to desirable western goods through indigenous trade relations with intermediary accultured or non-indigenous groups. The discussed novelty items, such as the tayu kúnchi, the elytra panel or the apron, reflect a high degree of individuality, creativity and a playful capacity to incorporate new and potent trade goods into traditional material culture.

ENDNOTES

1 In 2018 the term Aénts Chicham (people of the language) was adapted by Achuar and Shuar cultural groups to replace the colonial and to some pejorative term Jivaro. Aénts Chicham designates today the linguistic groups of the Achuar (Achual), Awajún (Aguaruna), Shiwiar (Maina Achuar), Shuar (Uuntsuri Shuar) and Wampis (Huambisa) (Deshouillère & Utitiaj Paati 2019: 167-178). In case specific linguistic groups are discussed in this paper the author will refer to the above-mentioned denominations that are also found in the literature.

2 Grangier 1882, 76. For more details on the Gachet collection see Kasprycki 2018 and Pro Fribourg (ed.) 2020.

3 Condamine relied heavily on Magnin's manuscript for his own publications and actively suppressed its publication. It was only in 1993 that this important and early account of interaction between missions and indigenous groups was finally published (Henkel 1993).

4 In the inventory he said to be 'du Petit-Rome', which would indicate that he was a member of the Franciscan order of the Convict Marianum of Fribourg.

5 See Fernandes Caromano et al. 2024 for different types of Canna seeds used on a Ashàninka hood.

6 For a comparable impact of glass beads and trade items among Orinoco societies see Scaramelli & Tarble de Scaramelli 2005.

7 Karsten mistakenly states that these 'buttons' are made from mupish tree twigs that are cut into small pieces. The regularity and minuteness of them makes such a feat impossible. They also are devoid of any fibrous structure that would be present in twigs. The central donut-like depression on one side is typical for the growth of galls.

8 Various ways of wording have been proposed in the literature: Stirling (1938: 102) refers to them as Tayocunchi, Karsten (1934: 92) as Tayukúnchi, Bianci (1982: 212) as Tayu Ukunch'. Anne-Christine Taylor (personal communication 2021) as Tayu Kunchi, kunchi meaning 'bone'.

9 The measurements do not include the headband.

10 The textiles can be identified as non-indigenous products by the machined selvedges made for added resistance. The rough weave could indicate fabrics made for wrapping and transporting goods.

11 The total length, the headband being folded, is 90cm.

12 The pink flowering Bixa Orellana is known as achiote in Ecuador and Peru but is also frequently referred to as roucou in the literature. The seeds are deep red in color and their oily red pigment is used to dye textiles and used as face paint. It can also be used as a condiment for cooking. Karsten refers to it as ipyáku and notes its use for the painting of clay vessels (Karsten 1935: 104).

13 The presence of galls in necklaces could well indicate an Awajún origin according to the evidence collected by Karsten and Berlin & Prance. This said, there is just not enough information available to exclude other groups.

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