

Aleksandra Wierucka, Re-creation of Traditional Knowledge Among the Huaorani of Eastern Ecuador

Intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge in small-scale societies is often disrupted due to acculturation and globalization processes. Cultural identity is associated with values shared through enculturation, yet in modern times formal schooling as well as national identity expectations influence parental guidance and, in turn, cultural identification. Over the last fifty years, the Huaorani of Eastern Ecuador experienced various kinds of social, political and economic pressures regarding their cultural practices and local or national identities. Drawing on fieldwork conducted among the Huaorani group between 2007 and 2012, this paper focuses on shamanistic and livelihood practices of the people, intergenerational succession of traditional knowledge as well as the younger generation's attitude towards their elders' wisdom. Vernacular forms of knowledge are renewed through modern technological means and are not losing their cultural significance in the process. Some aspects of livelihood practices were re-shaped or disappeared, yet at the same time others were actualized in new socio-cultural context, thus enabling the members of the group to base their identity on re-discovered cultural values.