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Taming the jaguar: On the lexical equivalence of 'jaguar' and 'domestic dog' in Amazonian languages

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1. Introduction

This paper takes as its starting point the frequently observed lexicalization pattern in Amazonian languages whereby 'jaguar' (*Panthera onca*) and 'domestic dog' (*Canis familiaris*) share a root (Schwartz 1997: 164; Adelaar 2013: 124, among others). For an English speaker this lexical overlap is surprising, and likewise from a biological perspective, since it cuts across two sets of carnivores: felids (cat family) and canids (dog family). The discussion seeks to answer the question: "why should jaguars and dogs be lexically linked?" – and the answer proposed is that while the lexical overlap may have found its initial motivation in the simple homology of two carnivorous predators, it is best explained synchronically as maintaining a symbolic link between the two animals. The jaguar is the archetypal wild forest predator, and the domestic dog is the archetype of domestication – the two animals occupy extremes of a scale of wildness/domestication. The symbolic and lexical link functions both as "calling a dog a jaguar" – imbuing it with desirable

properties that make it better at hunting – and "calling a jaguar a dog", attenuating its inherent threat by symbolically taming it.

The paper does not aim to provide an exhaustive study of the ways of talking about jaguars and dogs throughout the Amazon Basin, and such an undertaking would require much more, and more detailed, data. There remains much work to be done in this area, as the lexical situation tends to be far more complex and nuanced than published dictionaries can do justice to.[1]

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 describes and exemplifies the observed lexical overlap in the context of the semantic field of terms for carnivores. Section 3 describes the cultural importance of the domestic dog in Amazonia, showing its human-like and specifically child-like status. Section 4 describes the cultural importance of the jaguar, in particular its association with shamanism and shape-shifting and addressing the question of verbal taboos and related phenomena. Section 5 brings together the threads of the discussion and provides some concluding comments.

2. Lexicon and etymology

The observed lexical conflation of 'jaguar' and 'dog' is widely assumed to result from a historical extension of an etymon originally referring only to 'jaguar'. This direction of change is assumed in the etymological notes for many languages in the *Languages of Hunter-gatherers and their Neighbors* database (Epps 2018), for example, and is made explicit by Meira & Franchetto (2005):

> Most Cariban languages have only one word for both 'dog' and 'jaguar'. Since the oldest meaning is, of course, 'jaguar' (dogs were introduced by Europeans), it is taken here as basic. (Meira & Franchetto 2005: 179)

While there were certainly domestic dogs in the Americas in pre-Columbian times, they seem to have been absent from lowland Amazonia until colonial times (Gilmore 1950; Schwartz 1997; Dienst & Fleck 2009). There is some evidence of both domestic dogs and tame local canids on the Caribbean coast and the northern margins of Amazonia (Gilmore 1950; Schwartz 1997).[2] Recent genetic evidence, however, shows that "American [domestic] dogs alive today have almost no ancestry from precontact [domestic] dogs" (Goodman & Karlsson 2018: 27), so Amazonian domestic dog populations and their cultural status can be assumed to essentially date from colonial times when European dogs were introduced and spread

[1] I thank the speakers of Aguaruna and Kandozi-Chapra who provided original data included in this paper, and Sasha Aikhenvald, Luis Miguel Rojas Berscia, Glenn Shepard, and Pilar Valenzuela for helpful answers to my questions. The paper has also benefited greatly from editorial comments, which I gratefully acknowledge, while taking full responsibility for any errors or shortcomings. Note that orthography has been somewhat normalised to follow IPA, except that <y> = IPA <j>, <ch> = IPA <tʃ>, <sh> = IPA <ʃ>, and <ll> = IPA <ʎ>.

[2] While cross-breeding with wild populations of wolves and coyotes may have occurred (Vilà & Wayne 2001; Wayne & Vilà 2001), cross-breeding with other canids is extremely unlikely from a biological standpoint (Schwartz 1997; Gilmore 1950: 424–426). Gilmore (1950) also notes that the crab-eating fox (*Cerdocyon thous*) may be able to interbreed with the domestic dog (see also Schwartz 1997: 40); this animal is not found in lowland Amazonia, but is found on the margins, in particular in the north and on the Caribbean coast (Emmons & Feer 1997: 148).

via the extensive trade networks of indigenous South America (Schwartz 1997; Pache et al. 2016).

The first Spanish invaders arriving in the Caribbean and the coast of modern Mexico brought large dogs which they trained to attack humans, and colonial reports show that indigenous Americans' first encounters with European dogs were violent and terrifying (de Las Casas 2004 [1552]); by contrast, the Aztecs' domestic dogs were small creatures raised for food (Díaz 1963 [1632]). We could hypothesise, then, that the newly encountered European dogs were classified as jaguars on the basis of this experience. Even so, a historical scenario based on first impressions cannot explain the enduring and widespread categorisation of dogs with jaguars in the Amazon region, and the role of dogs in modern Amazonian societies is as the archetype of a domestic animal – "man's best friend" – and the wiry whippets that are raised as hunting dogs are a far cry from the powerful jaguar.

2.1 Amazonian felids

Looking more deeply at the lexical overlap shows that it covers more than simply 'jaguar' and 'dog'. There are a number of felids apart from the jaguar, and the melanistic form of the jaguar itself may be labelled with a distinct term (as in English *black panther*), and often has its own distinct role in myths (as with the *yana-puma* myth referred to below, §4). The puma (*Puma concolor*, also known as *cougar* in English) is a large felid that prefers mountainous terrain, but shares some of its range with the jaguar, and the lowland Amazon basin is home to various smaller felids of the genera *Leopardus* and *Herpailurus*, including the ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), margay (*Leopardus wiedii*) and oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*). A general term that covers 'jaguar' and 'dog' typically refers to a class including all of the other felids too.

Chicham (formerly known as Jivaroan) languages, for example, use the term *yãwãã* for both jaguar and dog; in practice, the word *yãwãã* on its own is typically interpreted as 'dog', while 'jaguar' is specified with the compound *ikam yãwãã*, literally 'forest jaguar/dog'.[3] A parallel compound *taŋku yãwãã* ('domesticated jaguar/dog') exists for 'dog', but is only rarely used. The compound *ikam yãwãã* is used more broadly as a cover term for all wild felids, all of which (including the black panther) can also be specified with compounds or underived nouns; these differ to some extent amongst the Chicham languages – Wampis, for example, has the term *uun yãwãã* ('large jaguar/dog') for 'jaguar' (Jakway et al. 1987), which Aguaruna does not use. Finally note that there is another term *puwaŋkat* 'jaguar', of unknown etymology, as well as a distinct term *kaish* 'black panther'. It is possible that *puwaŋkat* is an earlier term that was replaced by the loanword *yãwãã* (see §2.3). Table 1 lists a selection of terms for the *yãwãã* category in Aguaruna, and Figure 1 shows the semantic relations between those terms that are polysemous between a hypernym and a specific hyponym. Note that native Amazonian canids are not covered by the term *yãwãã* – see §2.2 below.

[3] Sources on Chicham languages differ as to whether the final vowel of *yãwãã* is long or short. I transcribe it as long (orthographically doubled) throughout this paper in the interests of consistency.

TERM	DEFINITION
yãwãã	domestic dog/felid; domestic dog *stricto sensu*
taŋku yãwãã	domestic dog
ikam yãwãã	felid; jaguar *stricto sensu*
hapayua	(< *hapa yãwãã* 'deer jaguar/dog') puma (*Puma concolor*)
puwaŋkat	jaguar (*Panthera onca*)
kaish	black panther (*Panthera onca*)
shiashia	ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)
untucham	oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*)

Table 1: Terms and definitions in Aguaruna (Chicham)

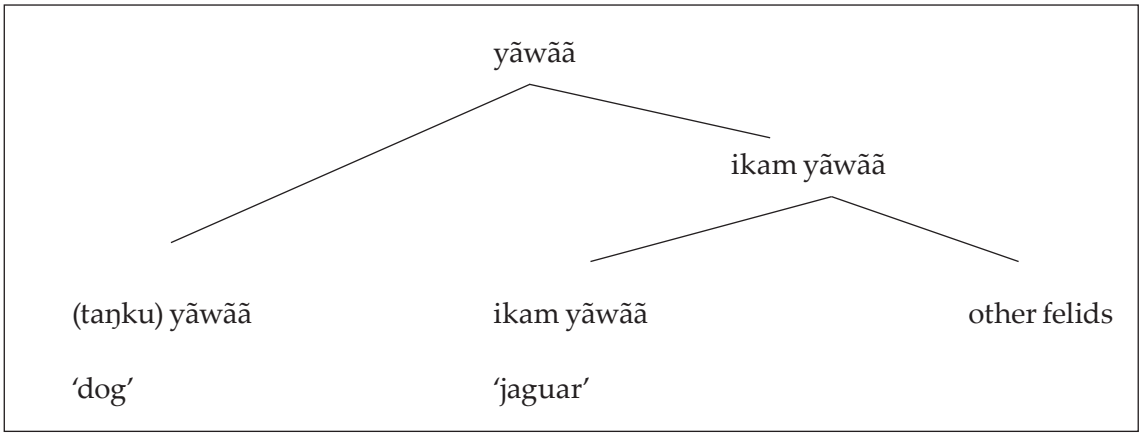

Figure 1: Hypernymy and hyponymy in the Aguaruna category yãwãã

The jaguar/dog polysemy of *yãwãã* is apparently synchronically symmetrical, in that one referent is not treated as a metaphorical extension of the other. Fast et al. (1996) in their dictionary of Achuar-Shiwiar comment that *ikiam yãwãã* 'jaguar' is literally "perro del monte" [dog of the forest], while in the entry for *taŋku yãwãã* 'domestic dog' they comment that this is literally "jaguar domesticado" [domesticated jaguar]. This suggests that for the native speakers who worked with the compilers of the dictionary, the term *yãwãã* evokes both jaguar and domestic dog equally.

For Shipibo (Panoan), Valenzuela notes a similar polysemy, along with the possibility of disambiguating through compounding:

> [T]he term *ino*, translated in the local Spanish as *tigre* 'tiger', includes a variety of wild cats. However, *ino* refers primarily to one kind of wild cat, the jaguar. There is a polysemous relation between the generic *ino* 'jaguar' and the intermediate category *ino* 'wild cats in general', […] The bimorphemic name *ino-kon* (< *ino* 'jaguar' + *ikon* 'real, genuine') is used when specific reference to 'jaguar' is needed. (Valenzuela 2000: 25)

Da Cruz (2011) describes a similar development for Nheêngatú (Tupí-Guaraní), where *yawara* 'dog' meant 'jaguar' in the precursor language Tupinambá, and was extended to cover 'dog'; the modern Nheêngatú word *yawareté* 'jaguar' developed from *yawara-ete* 'jaguar/dog-GENUINE' (Da Cruz 2011: 241).[4] So a new 'jaguar' term was innovated by altering the old form to avoid ambiguity.

Kawapanan languages also suggest a historical spread of 'jaguar' to 'domestic dog', with the latter sense distinguished by a suffix in the modern languages. For Shawi, Rojas (2013: 32) gives *ni?ni?* 'jaguar'/'dog' and *ni?ni-ra* 'dog', where *-ra* is an unproductive diminutive suffix. Note that the unmarked term covers both 'dog' and 'jaguar', and the suffixed form specifies 'dog'. Shiwilu has *ɲiɲi?wa* 'domestic dog', showing the fossilised suffix, but has innovated a new term *amana?* 'jaguar' (of unknown etymology). The unsuffixed Shiwilu form *ɲiɲi?* only appears in compounds, including *tanan-ɲiɲi?* 'bush dog' (cf. *tanan* 'forest') and *kellulu-ɲiɲi?* 'black panther' (it is not clear what the first element means) (Pilar Valenzuela, personal communication; Valenzuela et al. 2013). So the Kawapana data are consistent with a proto-form something like **ni?ni?* 'jaguar' which was extended to cover 'dog', with the latter meaning later distinguished by incorporation of a diminutive suffix.

In Kandozi-Chapra (isolate) *tumuuʂ* 'jaguar'/'dog' is rarely modified, but in the sense 'jaguar' it may be followed by the word *paweenmash*, which may also appear alone with that meaning, and is perhaps an older term for 'jaguar'.

Still other languages show no overlap. In the northwest of the Amazon basin, in the contact zone that includes Chicham and Kandozi-Chapra, we also find Urarina (isolate) *ɯɾeɾey* 'jaguar' and *ɾe:mae* 'domestic dog' (Olawsky 2011). Further afield, but still in the western Amazon basin, Matsés (Panoan) has *bɨdi* 'jaguar' and *opa* 'dog' (Epps 2018); Yine (also known as Piro; Arawak) has *kewe* 'dog' and *mhenoklɨ* 'jaguar' (Nies 1986). Obviously the conclusions drawn in this paper do not apply to such languages.

2.2 Amazonian canids

While the felids are well-known, the Amazonian canids, the short-eared dog *Atelocynus microtis* and bush dog *Speothos venaticus*, are rarely encountered and have not been domesticated, although there are accounts of tame bush dogs. The short-eared dog is solitary and very rare. The bush dog lives in family groups and is somewhat common in Peru and the Guyanas

[4] Note that Stradelli (1929: 275) transcribes the word for 'jaguar' as *iauareté*, and for 'domestic dog' he gives *iauára-tainha*, where tainha means 'child' (Stradelli 1929: 136), another example of specification by compounding.

(Emmons & Feer 1997). Both are quite distinct genetically from the domestic dog (Wayne & Vilà 2001). The bush dog shares a root with the jaguar/dog category in Kawapanan, as shown above, and Waiwai (Carib) has the same term *šaΦari* for 'bush dog' and 'domestic dog', distinct from *kamarači* 'jaguar' (Epps 2018). But this is unusual even among the Carib languages, as shown by the quote from Meira & Franchetto (2005), above, and reflects the unique cultural history of Waiwai domestic dogs and tame canids (Howard 2001; Gilmore 1950). More typically, canids tend to be distinct from the class of felids and domestic dogs.

The bush dog is associated metaphorically with hunting dogs as a symbol of ferocity – Codjia (2017) reports an equivalence of the domestic dog with the bush dog in a Wampis magic song, as does Descola for Achuar, while noting that "[a]lthough the Achuar recognize no genetic kinship between their domesticated dogs and these bush dogs, the latter are regarded as the archetype to which all hunting dogs should approximate" (Descola 1996: 79). At the same time, he notes that comparisons to other animals also appear in the songs, including the tayra (*Eira barbara*), a mustelid known for its cunning in stealing chickens, and female dogs are equated with the tapir (*Tapirus sp.*), a symbol of animal fecundity – so this feature of the bush dog is part of a wider pattern of animal metaphors, and cannot be taken as evidence of an especially close association between the bush dog and domestic dog. In this context, the use of a term that also means 'jaguar' to refer to the domestic dog can be seen as a similar symbolic linking of the dog with the desired qualities of the apex predator.

To summarise, where 'jaguar' and 'dog', share a root this is likely to have its etymological basis in the spread of a term meaning 'jaguar', based on simple homology. Synchronically, however, the terms refer equally to both, reflecting a conceptual equivalence, and they may be modified in various ways in order to specify one or the other sense.

2.3 Words across Amazonia

A further striking lexical phenomenon is that terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog' in contemporary Amazonian languages are frequently identifiable as loanwords, and this is just part of a larger pattern of loanword vocabulary skewed to the semantic fields of flora and fauna (Epps 2015a).

For example, Epps (2015b: 582) follows Payne (1991) in reconstructing **tsini* as 'jaguar' for the Arawak family, but in the northern Arawak languages this root never refers to 'jaguar', only to 'domestic dog'. The form for 'jaguar' in the northern languages is *yawi* or similar, and this form has no obvious cognates in the south (Alexandra Aikhenvald, personal communication). The latter form is similar to the reconstructed Tukanoan **yaʔi* 'jaguar' (Epps 2015b: 582), as well as Makushi (Carib) *ʤawi* and Hodi (isolate) *yɛwi* (Zamponi 2017: 271). Epps (2018) recognises this form as a *Wanderwort*, a proto-form shared by members of at least three genetically unrelated lineages with no clear basis to assign an ultimate source language. There is also some similarity with Tupi-Guarani **yawar,* but at present there is no basis to say whether or not this is mere coincidence.

Chicham *yãwãã* is most likely a loan from Tupí-Guaraní **yawar*: the loss of /r/ is expected in loans (Overall 2017: 30), and other apparent loans attest to contact with Tupí-Guaraní languages (see also Michael 2014 on Omagua and

Kokama as pre-Columbian contact languages in the Maynas region, near to the historically Chicham-speaking area).

Other languages have taken words for 'domestic dog' from colonial languages, but these do not seem to show the overlap with 'jaguar', e.g. Kari'nja (Carib) *pero, peru* 'dog' < Spanish *perro,* but *kaikusi* 'jaguar' (Courtz 2008); Kaingang (Jê) *kasor* < Portuguese *cachorro*, but *mĩg* /mĩŋ/ 'jaguar' (Wiesemann 2011).

So terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog' are both targets for lexical replacement, often through loanwords, and this is just part of a much wider Amazonian pattern, reflecting the important cultural status of both dogs and jaguars, which is the topic of the next two sections.

3. The domestic dog in Amazonian culture

While domestic dogs may be equated with wild predators in terms of their hunting prowess, their cultural significance lies in their status as the archetypal domesticated animal, which confers them a human-like status. Vander Velden (2016: 63) cites a Karitiana (Tupí) consultant describing dogs as "just like us, because they help people, they kill animals in the hunt for people, they eat the flesh and bones." Dogs may receive personal names, like humans but unlike any other domestic animal. This is the case among Chicham speaking groups (Descola 1996: 83 on Achuar), and the Kwaza (isolate) (Van der Voort 2004: 732–733). Dumont (1977: 91) gives a list of specifically dog names, that have no other meaning, used by speakers of Panare (Carib) and Tuggy (1966: 251) gives a similar list of dog names of opaque meaning (as are human names) used by speakers of Kandozi-Chapra (isolate).[5]

Dogs are not just human-like, but specifically childlike (Aikhenvald 2012: 15). In keeping with the parental role of bestowing names, a dog's owners are referred to as its *duku* 'mother' and *apa* 'father' in Aguaruna society. Like children, dogs are socialised through training and discipline, including food taboos, and are administered drugs that allow them to connect with the spirit world – Descola describes a type of brugmansia or angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia sp.*) named *yãwãã maikiua* ('dog brugmansia') that is "used to improve the animals' scent, courage and pugnacity" (Descola 1996: 75). Howard (2001: 258) notes that both dogs and parrots are "metaphors of children" for the Waiwai.[6]

Many traditional stories refer to and reinforce the close bond between dogs and humans. A traditional Aguaruna story tells of how the human penis was formerly that of the dog, and consequently human couples would find themselves physically stuck together for some time after coitus. This resulted in adulterous couples being discovered and killed; seeing this, the dog agreed to an exchange of penises with men, making human life easier. Another story tells of a dog and his human mistress falling in love. This results in the dog refusing to go hunting with the cuckolded husband, instead preferring to accompany the wife to her garden where they would have sex. This latter theme is reminiscent of scenes depicted in Mochica ceramics of the north Peruvian

[5] Interestingly, one of the Kandozi-Chapra dog names is *Ptókamá* /ptukam(a)/, cf. Achuar (Chicham) *patukam* 'bush dog' (Descola 1996: 78–79).

[6] Schwartz (1997: 11) notes that women may have played a major role in the original domestication of dogs, essentially "adopting" wolf pups.

coast, and of Mesoamerican myths explaining the origin of humanity in a dog mating with a woman (Pache et al. 2016, citing Latocha 1983).

Both of these stories highlight a preoccupation with the dog's involvement in domestic concerns, a key feature of the dog in Chicham culture, where it stands at the nexus of feminine and masculine spheres. As Descola puts it, while the dog is "placed entirely in the dependence of the women and raised, cared for, fed and trained by them, it is mainly used by the men in one of the most distinctively masculine occupations [i.e. hunting]" (Descola 1996: 83). So the domestic dog is of enormous cultural importance in Amazonian societies, and occupies an ambiguous position as its child-like qualities lead to it being associated with the feminine and domestic, while its hunting role associates it with masculinity and the wild.

4. Jaguars, killers, and shamans

The jaguar is a hugely important figure for religious and mythological traditions throughout its natural range (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975) and even beyond, for example in the iconography of the high Andean Chavín culture. Jaguars feature prominently in motifs of traditional stories shared by widely-dispersed Amazonian groups. Carneiro (1989) recounts a story that he labels "To the Village of the Jaguars" told by the Kuikuro (Carib), and a similar story among the Amahuaca (Panoan) (Carneiro 2009; Chicham and Kandozi-Chapra cultures feature similar myths): a Jaguar takes in and cures a sick woman wandering in the forest, then marries and impregnates her; the woman ends up killing the jaguar husband by putting a hot stone in his mouth, but she then gives birth to all the forest felids. Gow (2001: 106) notes that although jaguars are solitary creatures, in this myth they live in a family group, adding an extra level of uncanny horror (and also making them more human – social living is an important analogy to humanity in mythological roles of parrots and peccaries, among others, see Overall 2019).

The mythology infuses everyday life: Yine (or Piro; Arawak) parents use the jaguar as a type of bogeyman to discourage children from wandering, while being well aware that the actual likelihood of an encounter is very low (Gow 2001: 105–106). Shepard (2014) points out, however, that while jaguars usually stay well clear of human settlements, old or sick jaguars are sometimes willing to risk living near villages in order to take advantage of the softer and slower-moving prey: chickens, dogs, and even small humans. The Matsigenka (Arawak) consider these to be "were-jaguars" – old or infirm people who have turned into jaguars and come back to haunt the group.

Lévi-Strauss (1970: 66 ff.) relates six versions of an important myth from different Jê groups. The myth concerns the origin of fire, which came from a jaguar. Chicham speakers on the other side of the Amazon basin tell a story that shares some important elements. In the Jê stories, a man and his wife's younger brother go bird-nesting. The younger boy climbs up to the nest but doesn't get any eggs, a quarrel ensues and the older man removes the ladder leaving the young boy trapped. He becomes very thin, and in one version ends up covered in bird droppings. A jaguar passes by and rescues the boy, taking him to his home where the boy encounters fire and cooked meat for the first time (as above, the jaguar is portrayed as human in some way). The boy

ends up stealing fire from the jaguar and bringing it to humankind. In the Aguaruna story, two men are hunting baby oilbirds (*Steatornis caripensis*) in a deep cave, and are trapped there and left for dead by the lover of the wife of one of the brothers. One of the brothers dies in the cave, and the surviving brother (the cuckolded one), sits helplessly in the dark for many days, becoming emaciated and covered in bird droppings. Finally his brother's spirit appears to him in the form of a jaguar and helps him escape, and he is able to take revenge on his unfaithful wife and her murderous lover. The theft of fire does not feature in the Aguaruna story, and is the subject of an unrelated myth. Although these stories are quite distinct, the shared elements are remarkable, including the important role of the jaguar/human figure.

The jaguar has a close association with humans through shape-shifting: as we have just seen, jaguars (as with other forest creatures) appear as humans in mythological contexts, and human spirits can return in the form of a jaguar. Some shamanic traditions allow shamans to shape-shift into the form of a jaguar, a clear symbolic representation of great power (Aikhenvald 1999: 34, 2012: 310; Wright 2013). As Reichel-Dolmatoff (1975) puts it:

> In tropical America, the close association between shamanism and jaguars or jaguar-spirits has long been a well-known phenomenon ... a shaman can turn into a jaguar at will ... [a]fter death, the shaman may turn permanently into a jaguar. (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975: 43)

Beyond the shamanic shape-shifting and were-jaguars, jaguar myths can be read as representing the horrors of colonial oppression and genocide, where the jaguar/human represents the *patrón*, an exploitative trader of European descent. Pau (2014) discusses this in the context of a myth about a black panther that kills a gang of rubber-tappers, told by Kukama elders near Nauta, Peru. He concludes:

> Lo *yanapuma* è così la versione animalesca del *patrón*, che dispone delle persone che lavorano per lui come fossero degli oggetti e che non si pone scrupoli ad abusare di loro e portarli alla morte.
>
> [So the *yanapuma* ('black panther') is the animalistic version of the *patrón*, who uses the people who work for him as if they were objects, and has no compunction in abusing and even killing them.] (Pau 2014: 173)[7]

We have seen, then, that the jaguar is associated with humanity through its role in shamanism, and the jaguar-as-human represents a powerful and dangerous shaman. This contrasts with the dog-as-human, which is conceptualised as a child (§3).

4.1 Taboo and euphemism

A widespread practice in Amazonia is the use of special replacement vocabulary in particular contexts: "ritual wailing" (Beier et al. 2002), shamanic discourse, and hunting. Fleck (2013) describes special replacement lexemes that must be used when preparing curare, and elaborate sets of synonyms for game animals among Panoan groups: "Matses and Kulina of the Curuçá River (and perhaps other Panoan

[7] The term *yanapuma* is a Quechua compound meaning 'black jaguar', also used in the local Spanish of the Peruvian Amazon.

languages) … have as many as five synonyms for most game animals" (Fleck 2013: 48). Lexical replacement in a hunting context is also reported for Murui (Witotoan; Wojtylak 2015) and Achuar (Chicham; Descola 1996), although not described for other Chicham languages.

Fleck (2013) also describes Panoan mystical languages, for example the language of the Sharanawa shamanic chants is incomprehensible to the uninitiated despite being phonologically and grammatically the same as normal language – "parce qu'il est entièrement organisé autour de substitutions lexicales." [because it is organised entirely around lexical substitutions] (Déléage 2005: 361). Déléage gives the example of the dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*, another animal with strong supernatural associations) referred to as tapir or anteater.

Contextual word taboo has long been recognised as a driver of lexical replacement (Comrie 2000), and Epps (2015a) observes that flora and fauna terminology is disproportionately represented (relative to other parts of the world) in Amazonian loanword repertoires – a phenomenon that Epps also explicitly links to shamanic discourse. It seems likely then that taboo may be a motivation in some of the loanwords for 'jaguar', of the type labelled "religious taboo" by Emeneau (1948: 60). There is little evidence, however, for such lexical replacement of words for 'jaguar' due to taboo.[8] I have come across just two clear examples of this type of avoidance replacement: firstly, the Palikur (Arawak) term for 'jaguar' is *ka-wokwi-ne* (REL-arm-POSS) 'the one with an arm', which originates in an avoidance register formerly used while fishing (Alexandra Aikhenvald, personal communication). And for Kwaza (isolate), Van der Voort (2004: 782) reports that women must avoid the word *yerexwa* 'jaguar'/'dog' (possibly < Tupí-Guaraní **yawar*) when in the forest, instead using the term *ĩtsɛ̃*, of unknown etymology, and said to be the "private name" of the jaguar.[9]

The apparent lack of religious taboo in the case of the jaguar is explained when we recognise that the lexical overlap with 'dog' has the effect of labelling the jaguar as an archetype of domestication, thereby reducing its threat.

5. Conclusion

At this point we can return to the question asked at the outset, namely, why should the jaguar and the dog be lexically linked? I have shown that to answer this question we must look beyond the homology of jaguars and dogs as carnivorous predators, even though this may have been an initial motivation for the lexical overlap. I have argued that a more salient motivation has its basis in the difference between the two animals, which represent extremes of a scale of wildness/domestication – the lexical link serves to reduce this difference, and this is desirable because it allows humans to control the uncontrollable: it makes the already tame dog more wild, therefore a better hunting companion; and it tames the wild jaguar, making it less dangerous. As noted above for Achuar (§2.1), the lexical overlap allows speakers both to "call a dog a jaguar" and to "call a jaguar a dog".

The link between the jaguar and the dog is so salient and enduring because both creatures

[8] Epps (2015b: 585) suggests taboo to explain the Nadëb (Nadahup) word for 'jaguar' which appears to be a loan from Tupí-Guaraní, but does not discuss it in detail, nor does she cite the word involved, so I leave this possibility aside.

[9] Another possible example is Matsigenka: the dictionary notes that the term *maniti* is used to refer figuratively to all types of felines so that they won't get angry and come to eat people, but gives no further details (Snell 2008 [1998]: 142).

are closely associated with humanity: the dog-as-human is childlike, cared for by women and needing socialisation and training, while the jaguar-as-human is associated with dangerous shamanic power and shapeshifting. This gives a parallel analogy of the form:

dog : child :: jaguar : shaman

The fear-inspiring jaguar, with its supernatural connections, is symbolically tamed by being referred to with a word which also means 'dog', functionally simulating word taboo. Note, however, that I am not suggesting that a word for 'jaguar' has been replaced by a word for 'dog', simply that this is another motivation for maintaining the lexical overlap, independently of its origin.[10]

Future work on reconstructing the etymological origins of terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog', and the spread of related loanwords, will undoubtedly shed more light on the phenomena discussed here.

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[10] The motivation is thus the same as that of Emeneau's (1948) "religious taboo", but does not necessarily involve lexical replacement of the type Emeneau describes for Dravidian languages' use of a word meaning 'jackal' to refer to 'tiger'.

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