

**GENTE DE ISLA – ISLAND PEOPLE : AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF
APIAO, CHILOÉ, SOUTHERN CHILE**

by

Giovanna Bacchiddu

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GENTE DE ISLA - ISLAND PEOPLE

An ethnography of Apiao, Chiloé, southern Chile

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University of St Andrews

PhD in Social Anthropology

2007

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Abstract

This thesis is based upon fieldwork carried out in the island of Apiao, in the archipelago of Chiloé, southern Chile. It is an ethnographic exploration of the way the small community of Apiao conceive of communication and interaction with both fellow human beings and supernatural creatures. The thesis describes details of every day life, with an emphasis on visiting as the main mode of social interaction. Through reciprocal hospitality the islanders enact balanced reciprocal exchange. Food and drink is offered and received; this is always returned in equal measure with a return visit. Visits between friends or neighbours are articulated according to a formal ritualistic etiquette based on asking. Balance is temporarily interrupted and small debts are incurred when favors are asked. These must be reciprocated promptly. Momentary interruption of equilibrium perpetuates relations among people who describe themselves as being 'all the same'.

Marriage equates to forming an independent, productive unit with a focus on inhabitants of households rather than on family in terms of descent or blood ties. Kinship terms are limited to the word *mama*, which refers to the grandmother, the focal role in raising children. Active memory as expression of love and care is what makes people related to each other. Kin ties must be kept active by constant love and care. Forgetful kin are in turn forgotten and slowly erased from memory.

The thesis shows that religious beliefs are centered on exchange relationships with powerful entities that belong to the supernatural world. The dead and the miraculous San Antonio are powerful and ambivalent: they protect and help the living but can be revengeful and harmful if neglected by the living. *Novenas* are offered to the dead and the San Antonio in exchange for protection and miracles. *Novenas* represent a powerful ritual display of hospitality, enacting values of memory, solidarity and exchange.

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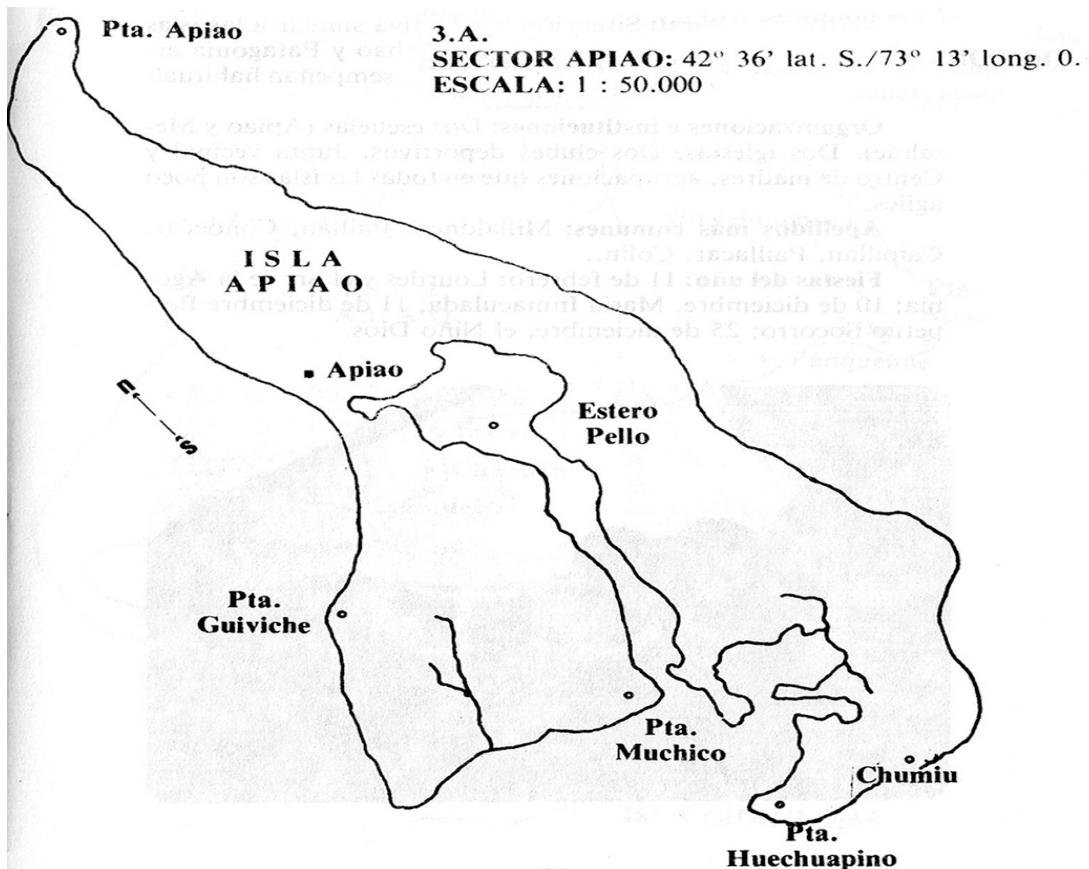
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For my mother, my father and my brothers

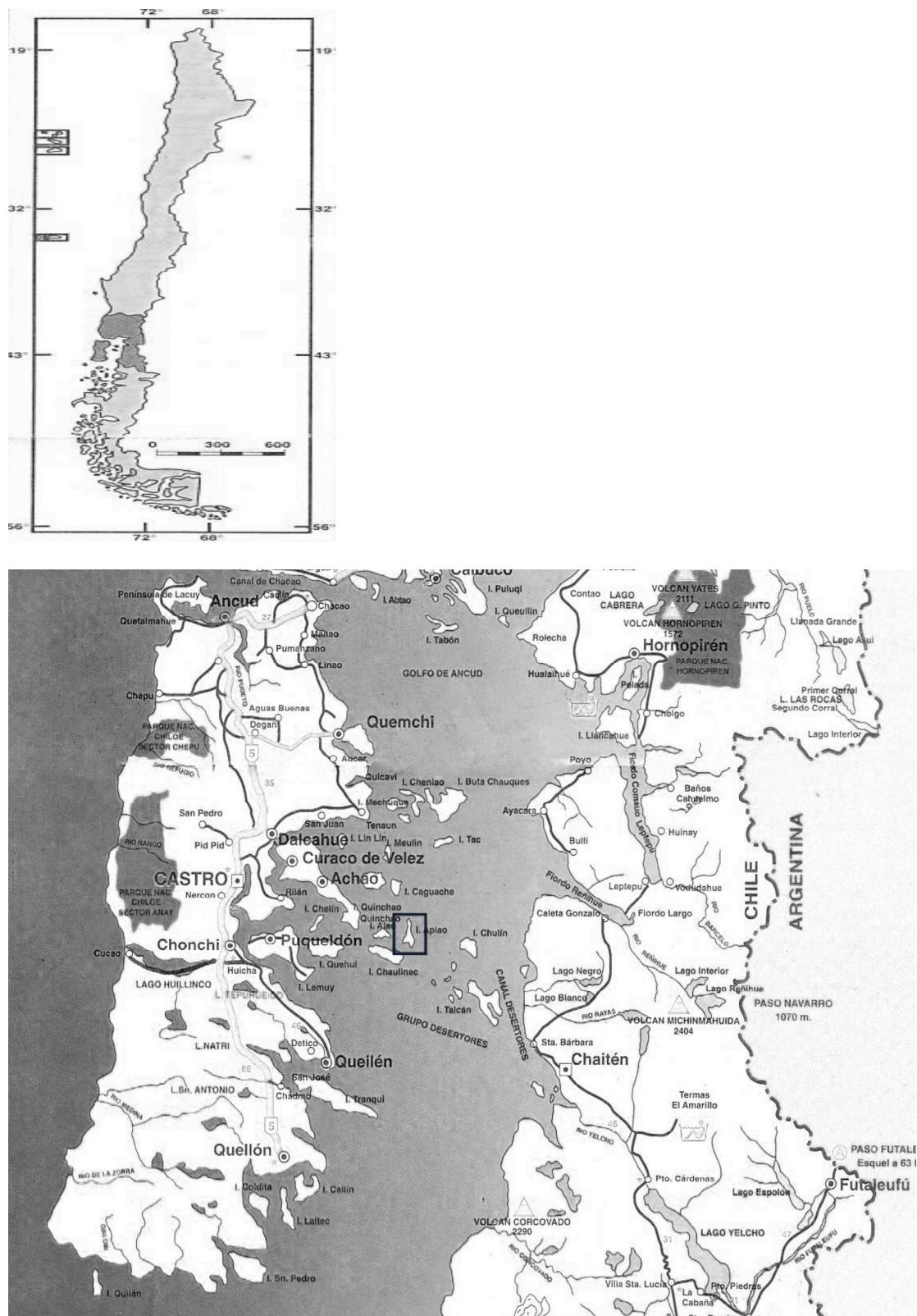
And

To the memory of Rubén Paillacar Nahuelanca

Maps



Map 1. Apiao Island (from Cardenas & Trujillo 1986)



Map 2. Chiloé (from Sernatur, Chile)

GENTE DE ISLA - ISLAND PEOPLE

Introduction

The archipelago of Chiloé as a region shares the same geography, the same landscape, the same subsistence activities and lifestyle throughout its territory. Gentle hills of vivid green, with fields covered with a thick carpet of green grass; lines of trees here and there and a few bushes delineate the landscape. Always surrounded by vast segments of land, the characteristic wooden households, covered with the distinctive *tejuelas*, are scattered along the hills. People can hardly ever be seen, but the smoke that invariably comes out of the households' chimney reveals human presence. Cows and sheep pasture here and there, far from each other and from the households. On the coast, little wooden boats (*botes*), usually painted in yellow, are anchored, and bigger colourful motorboats, called *lanchas*, lay further away from the beach. The tide changes slowly and regularly modifies the landscape. Depending on the time of day these boats float, or lie on the wet dark sand, revealing their scraped hulls and keels. The impression that one gets while travelling in Chiloé is one of a reassuring uniformity.

Nevertheless, each island (and on the bigger islands, each town and sector) has a specific way to deal with the issues of daily life. The concerns, the mentality, the social theory, the religious preoccupations and all matters of everyday life are experienced in different ways (sometimes, strikingly different ways) throughout the archipelago. I lived in Apiao for just under two years, and also in Llingua for a month; I visited Quenac twice for several days; I stayed in Caguach for more than a month, on different visits during the occasion of a very important religious festival. During my visits I had the opportunity to spend long hours in lengthy conversations with people coming from different Chiloé islands. From my experience and the data I gathered it is quite obvious that each island is a microcosm.

This work is concerned with the island of Apiao, its inhabitants and their way of living life. Describing a community as a discrete unity, detached from a context, fixed

in time and space was a common technique used by early anthropologists in their attempt to package scientific ethnographies accurately. Every student nowadays knows that much former anthropology is filled with misconceptions, impositions, incorrect approaches to the discipline and partial or forged portrayals of groups of people, forced into particular frameworks to fit artificial social theories. More recent anthropological production provides excellent literature that is more in tune with what the people in question actually experience - provided that we can ever aspire to convey such thing, a very presumptuous task. Despite the fact that we are warned of such dangers, we are still confronted with the challenge of describing a community and its mentality in thought and action, and of applying some sort of analysis to our account. Our description, and our analysis, cannot but be personal, and a product of our own academic formation, individual history, and point of view. In what follows I try to describe Apiao people, making use of what I could personally see, hear and share in each circumstance illustrated and discussed; however my main goal is to let Apiao people speak through their own actions and words. In the compilation of each of the following chapters I try to make the episodes I have experienced and witnessed, and the people who were part of these episodes, alive in my writing. Apiao social theory will, I hope, spring out of its people's own words and actions.

This is the account of a relationship: that between Apiao people and me.

Chiloé in the literature

The existing literature on Chiloé consists of historical, geographical and miscellaneous studies. The historical studies (Urbina 1983; Olguin 1971; Espindola 1974) are detailed accounts of the administration of Chiloé and of the Jesuit missionaries' activities during the colonial government in the 18th century. One of the main works on current Chiloé is a rich geographical study (Grenier 1984), together with a PhD thesis on female factory workers (Alonso 1993). The most recent contribution to the poor ethnographic knowledge of the region has been the recent publication of a descriptive study of a community living on the west coast of the Isla Grande (Weisner 2003). Besides these scientific studies, the remaining literature, which I have termed miscellaneous, is a series of travel books, small monographs, pamphlets, booklets, and collections of information written mostly for tourists. Some

of these published works are folklore booklets, which provide general information on Chiloé and devote substantial space to superficial descriptions of the local myths. While these different works provide interesting insights and information along different lines, the region of Chiloé has been largely ignored by anthropologists.

Euro-American scholars of Latin America concentrated their efforts on the Andean population and on the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, leaving the southern regions largely unexplored. Where southern Chile is concerned, all the existing studies tend to focus on the Mapuche Indians, the main indigenous group of Chile. The southern areas and Patagonia have been largely neglected, besides the ‘reconstructive’ ethnography by Chapman (1982), written after interviews with the last members of the Selk’nam people of Tierra del Fuego, and the now dated work of her predecessors Gusinde and Bridges (1951). The existing literature on the Huilliche, the original inhabitants of Chiloé, is limited to a few data in books on Chilean indigenous peoples (Grebe 1998; Dannemann and Valencia 1989), and to an account of the Chilote Huilliche’s recent struggle for the reappropriation of their lands within the island (de la Calle 1986). None of these publications take account of current religious beliefs or practices, and this is where my interests lie.

Chiloé: geographical and historical overview

The archipelago of Chiloé lies at the northern edge of the Chilean Patagonia, in southern Chile, and is located approximately 1,000 km south of Santiago. Besides the main island, la Isla Grande¹, 200 km long by 70 km wide, it comprises more than fifty small islands, most of which are inhabited. The Western coast faces the Pacific Ocean and has slopes and heights up to 800 metres above sea level. The Eastern coast, facing the Interior Sea, has a sandy substratum and is broken into several islands. The Eastern part is where most inhabitants live. Weather wise, the area is extremely damp²: the climate is oceanic hyper-humid, and the average annual rainfall is 2500 mm (Grenier 1984: 19).

¹ Although Chiloé is an archipelago, normally in the literature it is la Isla Grande which is referred to by the phrase ‘the island of Chiloé’.

² Charles Darwin writes: ‘In winter the climate is detestable, and in summer it is only a little better. I should think there are few parts of the world, within the temperate regions, where so much rain falls. The winds are very boisterous, and the sky almost always clouded: to have a week of fine weather is something wonderful’ (Darwin 1977: 261).

Apiao, positioned in the Interior Sea, tucked between the islands of Alao, Chaulinec and Caguach, is a small island of 13 square kilometres, inhabited by 700 people, who live in approximately 150 scattered households. In Apiao there is a Catholic church, certainly the most imposing building of the island, which sits on an esplanade next to the beach where the boats dock. In the last few years an evangelical temple has been built on the island. There are two schools and one health post.

As for internal territorial division, the island of Apiao is divided into three sectors: Norte, Metahue and la Vega. Each sector has a football team and a football field. The island is a curious triangular shape, which points north. The southern half of the island is bisected by a canal called *el estero* that changes the physiognomy of the internal coasts every day with the low tide phenomenon. The sector Norte comprises the northern part, while the two other sectors occupy the southern part, one at each side of the canal. People speak of themselves as belonging to a specific sector, and generally refer to the sectors according to their geographical position, which can be either north, indicated as *pa'rriba* (literally, in the higher part), or south, indicated as *pa'bajo* (in the lower part). Accordingly, people living in the lower sectors would be called *los de pa'bajo*, and the others *los de pa'rriba*³.

As for government regional demarcation, Chiloé is a province and belongs to the Tenth Region, or Región de los Lagos. The administrative and commercial activities of the island are centralised in the two major cities, Ancud and Castro, the latter being the capital of the province. According to the 2002 census the province of Chiloé has a population of 171.000 approximately (INE 2005⁴). Chiloé as a province presents one of the highest percentages of rural population in the country.

In the province of Chiloé there are ten *comunas*, and the island of Apiao belongs to the *comuna* of Quinchao, comprising several islands and having a total of 9.000 inhabitants. The town of Achao (under 3.500 inhabitants) is the seat of the *comuna* mayor and governmental offices, as well as a post office, a bank, and a parish church.

³ Usually, people from the northern part of the island would tell stories about the southerners, and vice versa. For example, I was often told that *pa'bajo* people would not attend visitors, and would not call their dogs when they were attacking the newcomers. Or, whenever people mention the presence of witches, they would simply generically say that *pa'rriba* there are plenty of them.

⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas – INE, <http://www.ine.cl/>, 25 March 2005

Achao is the closest reference town for Apiao people as well as for all the other island inhabitants of the area, the town where they tend to travel regularly to buy and sell various products.

The Chiloé inhabitants, called Chilotes, are mainly *mestizo*, with a minority of Huilliche indigenous people, that represent approximately 1% of the population and claim to be of pure blood (de la Calle 1986). Roman Catholicism is the main religion, with a growing minority of evangelical Protestant adherents (see Chapter 5).

The main productive activity of the Chilotes is agriculture. The most important crop is the potato, followed by wheat, garlic and occasionally other cereals. The potato is the central preoccupation for the Chiloé peasants, the one crop that guarantees the certainty of alimentary autonomy, and the agricultural cycle of the potato is the one that shapes the Chilotes activities calendar. Agriculture is complemented with farming livestock (cattle, sheep) and domesticated animals (chickens, pigs), fishing, shellfish gathering, seaweed collecting and forestry. However, none of these activities practiced on their own would be enough for the economic sustenance of the region, which survives out of a combination of these complementary activities.

According to Grenier (see also Borde and Santana-Aguilar 1980), the techniques utilised are elementary, primitive and highly underdeveloped, and are not sufficient to elevate the Chilotes above the strict subsistence level. Chiloé, Grenier argues, is affected by poverty, unemployment, lack of professionals and technicians, lack of capital, unequal distribution of land, cultural backwardness (*retard culturel*) and systematic migration⁵ (Grenier 1984:16). The reason for such a situation lies in Chiloé's extreme marginality and isolation from the mainland, characteristics that have affected Chiloé continuously since the 16th century. He mentions the 'triple handicap' of its position, insularity and dispersion of inhabitants that confine peoples to their own lands, cut off from relations and communication. In fact, the transport is limited and the paved route that interconnects the island was built only in the 1960s.

⁵ The Chilotes are traditional migrants: this habit was already signalled in the 18th century (Urbina 1983:44ff). In the Argentinean Patagonia 20-25% of the population is of Chilote origin (Borde and Santana-Aguilar 1980:179, see also Alonso 1993:28ff). Nowadays the migration pattern seems to be that of seasonal, temporary migration and affects mainly small-holding peasants.

Chiloé is described as a cul-de-sac, whose land leads nowhere (Grenier 1984:370) and seen as the end of something: of Christianity (Darwin 1977: 267), of land (a *finisterre*); it is indeed the end of the Panamericana Highway that starts in Alaska (or, at least, the end of one of the branches of the famous auto route) and is always generally described as an immutable world, where little has changed since the arrival of the Spanish colonisers.

Interestingly, the dominant image of Chiloé and its inhabitants in the little literature available seems to revolve around the same themes, that is themes of ‘lack’. Lack of elaboration, lack of economic development, lack of communication, lack of progression, lack of access to modern technology and consequent backwardness. The Chilotes are consistently reported to be docile, meek and obedient in historical documents as well as ready to adopt the invaders’ rule and impositions by dropping their own language and quickly embracing the Spanish language and culture. They are often contrasted to the passionate nature of the Mapuches, always portrayed as a people of proud warriors, who fought annexation from Spanish and Chilean rule for centuries. On the other hand, the number of sources, of mainly Chilean production, that are entirely devoted to the rich mythology of Chiloé, explored in a superficial way and mainly in connection to witchcraft beliefs, contribute to the exotisation of the Chilotes, relegating them to the position of isolated *campesinos* that because of their remoteness, are forced to interact with the natural world, producing visions and beliefs that are equated to the Chilotes worldview. Indeed the popular representation of the Chilotes inevitably rests on and coincides with witchcraft and related myths exclusively.

While I am in no position to contradict historical evidence, as presented in the documents, I can certainly detect a prejudicial attitude in some of the more recent literature, betrayed by the listing of negative traits, or by the reification of the people of Chiloé as superstitious and simple minded.

If on the one hand the leitmotiv of the current accounts seems to be marginality, the historical role Chiloé had was all but marginal. In fact, for more than two centuries

Chiloé has occupied the prominent position of religious centre for the whole of southern Chile, as well as being the base for evangelisation of the southern lands.

There is hardly any archaeological evidence of the early settlers of Chiloé: Pre-Columbian traces are extremely difficult to find because of the hyper humidity of the medium, which doesn't retain organic remains (Grenier 1984: 289) However, it is commonly accepted that the first inhabitants of the archipelago were Huilliches and Chonos. The Huilliches belonged to the same ethnic group of the Mapuches, whereas the Chonos were nomadic groups belonging to the same ethnic group of the Alacalufes and Yaganas who inhabited the land from Chiloé to Cape Horn (Alonso 1993: 18 ff)

The Huilliches were more evolved than the Chonos: they were pastoralists and practiced agriculture in a way not dissimilar to the continental Araucanos (Mapuches). Their isolation protected them from the invasion of the belligerent northern people. In fact, unlike the Mapuches, who fought against the invasion, the Huilliches did not offer resistance to the invaders, and are generally described in the records as meek, peaceful and agreeable.

The Spanish arrived on the Isla Grande in 1567 and founded Castro, which was to remain the capital of Chiloé. Despite the fact that the Spanish were interested in the area for its strategic position as a military base, rather than for a colonising urge for economic exploitation, the *encomienda* system was set up, involving what was to be the most austral population of the Spanish Empire. Chiloé was to remain Spanish until 1826⁶.

Following the arrival of the Spanish, several Catholic missions were established on the island. The first missionaries to reach Chiloé were the Franciscans and Mercedarios that arrived in 1590. The Jesuit missionaries arrived in Chiloé in the early 1600s, founded their mission in 1617 (Espindola 1974:17) and remained active

⁶ Whereas the rest of the country gained its independence in 1810, Chiloé was the last loyalist zone to the Spanish crown. The region finally surrendered in 1926 after a battle that lasted nine years (Vasquez de Acuña 1988: 22).

in the archipelago until their expulsion from Latin America in 1767. They built a College in Castro and introduced the institution of the ‘circular mission’, through which their intense activity of evangelisation was organised. During the circular mission, which took place from September to May, the missionaries visited the settlements and the various islands throughout the archipelago, taking with them sacred images of patron saints, which were carried in procession from the beach to the church or chapel. They are described as travelling all around the archipelago, the often dangerous weather conditions notwithstanding, using small boats and defying the sea. Wherever they went, they built several chapels as a way to mark the landscape with the Christian presence. Many of these churches still exist, and are powerful cultural symbols for the Chilotes⁷. The missionaries, as opposed to the secular priests (three at that time for the whole archipelago) were specifically in charge of the Indians. Their duties involved teaching reading and writing, catechism, confession, assistance to the ill, and all sorts of pastoral care. Urbina reports that all preaching was done in the local language, the *beliche*; so much so that in 1770 the Spanish authorities ordered any preaching and evangelizing to be done in Spanish, and speaking of the native language was prohibited⁸ (Urbina 1983: 188-199, see also Alonso 1993: 22ff).

The Jesuits looked for collaboration from the locals and involved them in an institution that persists today: the *fiscales*. These were Indian representatives of the missionaries, that regularly congregated the village for prayers, assisted the community with teaching and dealing with marriage celebrations and funerals. They were also responsible for the church maintenance and preparation for the arrival of the missionaries⁹. In 1785 there were 61 *fiscales* throughout the archipelago (Urbina 1983:159).

⁷ At present there are 60 traditional wooden churches throughout the archipelago, and all share the same typical architectural characteristics that are a Chilote landmark. Recently 14 of these 60 churches, notably the oldest, are being considered by the UNESCO to be declared World Heritage sites (El Llanquihue 29\10\1999).

⁸ It seems that the indigenous language was the one preferentially spoken by the Spanish society (both religious and secular) living in Chiloé: Urbina (1983: 103ff; 108) argues that the Spanish seemed to have more in common with the indigenous people they lived with, than with the whites of the Kingdom, and that their knowledge of Spanish was in fact rather limited.

⁹ For a similar institution in colonial Mexico, see Merrill (1993:136).

The Indians are described as ‘docile, obedient, Christians and more civilised than those of the continent’ (Urbina, 1983:113; my trans.), and generally well disposed, inclined to the Christian religion¹⁰. According to the sources the relations between Indians and missionaries was peaceful, as opposed to the continuous hostilities with the Spanish and the political authorities. The missionaries are said to have an enormous ascendant on the natives (*ibid*: 116), an element that clearly irritated the governors, worried by the Jesuits’ authority and consensus. They are described as ‘big men’ or ‘semi-gods’ (see also Barruel 1997), referring to the success they had among the natives. At the beginning of 1700 the Chiloé mission was the most prestigious of the whole Reign of Chile (*ibid*: 179). This is a considerable fact, given the difficulties faced by the missionaries: insufficient numbers of *padres*, the dispersion of the population and the difficult geography and climatic conditions of the region. From their centres in Chiloé the Jesuits ventured into the southern territories, often facing the Indians’ resistance and aggression. Chiloé was defined by Darwin, who visited it in 1834, as ‘the end of Christendom’: in fact, it was through Chiloé that the missionaries progressively reached the southern regions of Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego, their active territory being from the Rio Bueno to Cape Horn (Urbina 1983: 190).

At the moment of their expulsion, the Jesuits had four missionary centres in the province of Chiloé, one of which was devoted to the inhabitants of the Chono islands. From these missions they ruled 80 chapels and relative settlements spread around the archipelago (Cardenas 1986: 23). The Franciscans substituted the Jesuits after 1767 and, according to what Alonso (1993: 24) reports, out of the 103 *pueblos* the order had in America, 83 were located in the archipelago.

Brief notes on the anthropological literature that has informed this thesis

This thesis is a primary ethnography of the island of Apiao. The data on which this thesis is based have been collected over a period of two years between 2000 and

¹⁰ Despite this, their relation with the Spanish was not necessarily a pacific one: the Indians often rebelled against the harsh conditions of the *encomienda* system. In 1712 there was a violent riot that resulted in 1500 soldiers brought to the Isla Grande as a surveillance force (Alonso:1993:22). Another source of resistance was the formation of a clandestine sect of sorcerers, called Recta Provincia, whose members were Indians only. The accusations of crimes connected to witchcraft led the Chiloe governor to conduct judicial proceedings against the sect in 1881 (Alonso 1993: 22ff; Rojas Flores 2002).

2002, and during a subsequent visit to the field in 2003. In total I spent approximately two years in Apiao.

As previously pointed out, there is little ethnographic literature on the area that I could consult for comparative purposes. As the focus of the thesis is mainly ethnographical, I have concentrated my efforts on delineating a portrait of the main values of the lived experience of everyday existence of a group of islanders, reporting the details of episodes I have personally witnessed, or stories I have been told. In this work, my endeavour has been to let Apiao people speak for themselves through their words, actions, and celebrations. Great attention has been put into structuring the sequence of my ethnographic stories, and into analysing the data.

Several anthropological works have influenced my own approach and analysis, and this influence is visible throughout the thesis, even though, for lack of space, I did not engage at length in theoretical discussions. Despite this, I am aware of the literature and of its influence on my own thought and formation in the discipline, and I believe that this influence is visible throughout this work. Given that its focus revolves around the three main themes of sociality, kinship and religion, the theoretical interests and approaches to each of these main themes are vast and varied.

The most evident theoretical and ethnographic references for studies of South American peoples are on the one hand the Andes, and on the other Amazonia. Chiloé is classified as ‘lowland’ for obvious reasons; and yet a comparative approach to both Andean and Amazonian studies is both extremely fruitful, and yet never entirely satisfactory. The most obvious comparison would be with the neighbouring Mapuches, however, the numerous overlaps are counterbalanced with some striking differences. Some studies I found most interestingly attuned to my own material happen to be studies of small, mostly rural communities in different parts of the world (Cannell 1991, 1995; Catedra 1992; Cohen 1987; Christian 1972, 1992; Strathern 1981; L. Taylor 1995, and Edwards 2000).

Marcel Mauss (1990) and his gift theory as a total social fact is certainly one of the most prominent, if not the most important; as well as the further elaborations of the same theory by Lévi -Strauss (1969), Sahlins (1972), Ortner (1978), Overing (1983-4), Alberti and Mayer (1974), Toren (1989) among others.

My exploration of the Apiao understandings of kinship bears on the studies by Allen (1988), Canessa (1999), Carsten (1991, 1995), Gow (1989, 1991), Harris (2000), Weismantel (1995, 1988), Stack (1974), Scheper-Hughes (1992).

My interest in the local forms of Catholicism has been inspired by several studies over the years. Among these are the works of Cannell (1991, 1995, 2006), Christian (1972, 1992), Cayubi-Novaes (1007), Gow (2006), Taylor (1995), Viveros de Castro (1993).

While lack of space prevents me from fully discussing the several theories presented by each of these numerous authors, I have every now and then inserted references into the literature in the form of footnotes, contextualised to my own work.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is articulated in three main sections: sociality, kinship and religion.

The main themes of the Apiao ethnography are discussed throughout the sections, and they return time and again, in the different circumstances that constitute the everyday life of Apiao people. I will give an overview of the three sections and of each chapter in each section.

The sociality section comprises two chapters. It deals with the way Apiao people understand sociality, that is, the proper way to communicate and interact with both fellow islanders, and with the people that come to the island from outside. If indeed the entire thesis is an attempt to explore the social ways of Apiao people, the pillars of the way social life is understood and acted out are introduced in this first section. They return under different forms and in different contexts in the other two sections.

Chapter 1 ‘Here we’re all the same’ begins with the initial paradox that Apiao did not appear to have a community at first; and that I found its inhabitants to appear particularly antisocial. I then illustrate what other people say about them, and what they say about themselves. Apiao people say that they are all the same. People’s everyday activities and concerns are described. Whoever does not take part in all these activities and, for example, earns a salary is not perceived as part of the group and will never be. I describe the kinds of ‘different’ people that live on the island and why they are seen as different. In people’s view, being engaged in the same activities

for a living, sharing the same concerns and having the same lifestyle is what makes people belong to the place and make people the same. The chapter then describes what happens when Apiao people are confronted with *los afuerinos*, people from outside the island that for various reasons visit Apiao. The attitude towards visitors to the island are revealing of Apiao people's understanding of themselves as a community, as two different episodes concerning the mayor and a missionary from Santiago, illustrate. The proclaimed sameness is explicit when confronting difference, and the reaction of Apiao people state a strong sense of community - this I failed to notice at the beginning.

Chapter 2 'Exchanging sociality' is concerned with social relations between fellow islanders, and illustrates the way these are activated, kept and renewed. In this chapter the paramount value of Apiao understandings of life, reciprocity, is introduced.

People's crucial social encounters are always articulated through hospitality, and, specifically, through the act of visiting, which allows the offering and the receiving of food and drink in household kitchens, where people are attended. Just as failing to offer is the negation of sociality, failure to accept is an antisocial act and as such is usually interpreted as an offence. All that is given must be returned in equal amount: the food and drink offered is proportional to the amount received on a previous occasion by the guest when acting as a host. People pay careful attention to reciprocate in exactly the same quantity and in the same style as the original offer. Reciprocity is what regulates not only food offerings, but also every other sort of social relations, that are always based on exchange. Help, work, tools, favours, and meat are constantly exchanged between people in equal amounts.

All relationships are continuously tested on the basis of balanced, reciprocal exchanges; no connection is taken for granted but needs to be constantly negotiated and renovated. This happens whenever there is an opportunity for exchange, when the equilibrium is somehow interrupted, creating a temporary displacement that needs to be adjusted. The constant readjustment to temporary unbalances is what keeps relationships active and alive. This type of negotiation is informed by a code of decorum that implies stylistic devices of verbal and non-verbal communication. The chapter describes the proper way to ask for something, as well as the various instances of highly formalised behaviour. These are often ceremonial occasions, where specific

ritual formulas are used. These occasions are described, together with the appropriate formulas, and put in context.

The Apiao *comadrazgo* system, called *obligación* is described, as well as the regular reciprocal exchange of food that happens between *obligación* relations.

The kinship section consists of two chapters and discusses the way families are formed and households are made in Apiao.

Chapter 3 ‘How households are made’ discusses how children grow up, become adults and eventually get married to form an independent, productive unit. The activities accomplished in and around the household are illustrated, and how men and women learn from a young age to perform all sorts of activities and be independent. It then describes how adolescents and young people leave the household during weekends and *fiestas* to enjoy the evenings in the company of fellow islanders of their own age. How girls and boys start relationships, and how romantic relationships are experienced in Apiao are described. Generally young couples meet in secret for months and sometimes years until the man proposes and the couple get married. For that to happen, the man must ask for a woman’s hand accompanied by two sets of couples: his parents and his godfather and godmother, a couple chosen for the occasion. After a formal discourse the new couple leave to go and live with the man’s parents, and from that moment on they are officially a couple. Gradually they acquire their own belongings and after some years they will build a household of their own. A young couple is ‘followed’ in their history of secret dating, in their traditional marriage, and in their first events as a couple, such as their first pig slaughtering. The young couple’s history gives me a chance to reflect on the meaning of marriage in Apiao: independence and joint productivity. By working together to the benefit of the household, a man and a woman become independent producers and they actively start ties of reciprocity with other couples and other individuals. Until they are married they will belong to their parents’ household and will work for the benefit of their parents’ household. It is only with marriage that individuals start to slowly detach from the household of their childhood and begin their own productive unit. A household is an independent productive unit and a couple must be joined in the everyday workload. Both men and woman work interchangeably and attend to

everyday needs in full collaboration. There is no experience of subordination; rather the emphasis is on the communal work and on the collaboration of both individuals between the couple during everyday routine.

Chapter 4 'Reticent mothers' is about notions of motherhood and parenthood, and in fact describes Apiao theory of kinship. What does it mean to be a mother in Apiao? Ethnographic evidence shows that motherhood is downplayed: pregnant women or young mothers never talk about their babies, and a baby's presence is hardly mentioned. The use of kinship terms also seems to support this: children address parents using first names and the term *mama* is reserved for the grandmother, who is the kin associated with the act of 'bringing up'. Bringing up is valued more than giving birth, and motherhood is spoken of in emotional terms, as well as in an idiom of remembering, *acordarse de uno*, meaning taking care. Only those relatives who keep in touch and care for one another are in turn remembered. Those who leave and do not keep in touch are soon forgotten. This applies to the fathers of children born to single mothers, a common phenomenon on the island. If a man makes a woman pregnant and chooses not to marry, she will remain in her parents' household and her children will live with her. By not marrying such men erase the woman and the child from their lives and are in turn erased. The idiom of 'remembering' corresponds with the forgetfulness towards those men who gave single mothers their children: they are never mentioned, even if their identity is well known. The same forgetfulness applies to those relatives who ignore their kin: they are hardly mentioned and are in a sense forgotten.

The kinship tie is never taken for granted but is strictly dependent on a constant flux of care and love, expressed in terms of 'memory'. If someone does not remember his kinspeople (i.e. does not care for them) he is quickly forgotten, regardless of relatedness. Descent and blood ties are never mentioned - 'remembering' describes and defines a relationship, not kinship.

The third and last section is devoted to religion, and it comprises three chapters.

Chapter 5 'Before we were all Catholics' deals with conversion to evangelical Protestantism. Apiao people have always been Catholic, however recently thanks to the intervention of two Protestant missionaries, there is a small group of converts. The

reaction of the Catholic majority to this recent conversion is examined and analysed. As a consequence of their changing religion, the converts refuse to take part in most community rituals, thereby cutting themselves out of the community. I argue that the missionaries failed in their converting plans because being Catholic in Apiao means - more than strict religion practices - being part of an exchange network, that is perpetuated through attending funerals and novenas. In all these events there are structural elements such as the repetitions of fixed text prayers (rosary), and drinking alcohol and dancing, all practices vehemently condemned by the Protestants. This is a strong deterrent to conversion given that this is what perpetuates Apiao sociality, (social solidarity, reciprocal exchange, etc). Notions of descent, completely absent whenever kin ties are discussed or experienced, are articulated in the conversion context: being born into a religion is what makes someone belong to that religion, and being Catholic is a non-changeable status. Religious matters expose the Apiao theory of sociality and reveal one of the strongest values: social solidarity.

Chapter 6 ‘Fears and prayers’ discusses Apiao people’s attitudes towards death and the dead. It begins with a few dramatic episodes where dogs became anti-social, monstrous creatures that killed sheep. The only way to deal with this threat to the well being of the community is to destroy the guilty dogs: the possibility of negotiation, crucial in social relations, is impossible when dealing with guilty dogs.

The chapter explains the reasons why people are fundamentally terrified of dead people and corpses. The dead are perceived as extremely powerful and fundamentally ambivalent. They need to be taken care of by the living in the period after their death, with proper funeral rituals, and prayer meetings, the *novenas*. If the living neglect their duty towards the dead, then the dead can haunt and harm. I call this articulation one of *hubris* and *tisis*, reminiscent of the classical Greek tragedy tension between the gods and the heroes, where the arrogance of the humans is severely punished by the gods. In fact Apiao people negotiate with the supernatural as much as with fellow humans.

The chapter describes funeral related rituals, and shows once again the fundamental reciprocity issue, dramatically activated in moments of need. The importance of offering prayers to the dead is colourfully illustrated in the praying rituals of the Day of All Souls and All Saints, when *fiscales* are paid to pray on the tombs at the cemetery by the families of the bereaved. Funerals and *novenas* for the dead are

opportunities to reinforce alliances between different households, and to renew ties of solidarity.

Chapter 7. The final chapter, ‘Miracles and exchange’ is entirely devoted to the description of the most important religious cult of the island, the *novena* to the miraculous San Antonio de Padua. People trade with the powerful saint, asking for miracles and offering *novena* ritual prayers in exchange. Once the miracle is granted, as an act of gratitude, a nine-day event that involves long collective praying sessions in private households, dancing, the offering of food and alcohol is organised. The exchange with the saint is always reciprocal, in that the *novenas* are only organised if the request has been granted by the saint. In participating in the ritual the fellow islanders not only honour a pact made with the saint but also honour the reciprocity rule with their relatives, friends and neighbours. The sacred space of the novena is the occasion for a display of highly ritualistic behavior (fixed formulas) and offering and receiving in a formalized context. This presents a chance for people to ask and offer help (enactment of solidarity) and to negotiate, test and renew their relations.

The novena is a fundamental event in which all the main characteristics of the Apiao way of experiencing life are ‘staged’ and exposed in theatrical, dramatic style. It is a symbolic summary of Apiao’s most important notions of what life in a community should be, as it combines the relationship with the divine and the human ties, negotiated and renovated constantly.

Finally, the Appendix gathers the text of the San Antonio *novena* as copied from the Apiao *fiscal*, as well as two papers that I have written and published elsewhere. ‘Stepping between different worlds’ is a reflection on fieldwork, and ‘Do you believe in monsters?’ is an exploration of witchcraft beliefs in Apiao.

Note on the local language

Given that there is not a standard orthography of the local Spanish¹¹, which to my knowledge has not been the subject of serious scientific linguistic analysis, I have tried to convey the local speech as faithfully and as consistently as possible. Quotes of

¹¹ Alonso (1993: 24) argues that the Spanish language spoken in Chiloé presents unique characteristics with respect to the rest of the country. It presents both several archaisms and influences of the veiche that was spoken in the archipelago until the beginning of the 19th century.

the local fixed formulas, or the quotes of my informants have been collected during fieldwork and I have tried to report them matching the orthography with the pronunciation. Possible faults and mistakes are entirely my own.

PART I. SOCIALITY

Chapter 1. ‘Acá somos todos iguales’ ‘Here we are all the same’

A community? Initial impressions

What I found very puzzling about Apiao, for a good portion of my fieldwork, was the seeming lack of a community. Apiao people seemed to be the most antisocial people I had ever come across. The island does not have a village or a house conglomerate, but households are scattered along the land and quite distant from each other. There is no public recreational space: no bars, restaurants, shops or buildings where people meet up for a chat, or simply to get together. Nowhere for young people to gather. In fact, people seemed to be totally uninterested in getting together at all: whenever there was a social opportunity, they all seemed to consistently refrain from enjoying it. When walking to the church, to the island dock on the beach, or when walking back from a *novena*, people were happy to walk in a casual line of individuals, never exchanging a word, never walking together even when going in the same direction. When travelling on the same boat, people hardly acknowledged each other’s presence, even when part of the same family. Formal greetings are commonly used with everybody, close family and acquaintances, as well as distant neighbours. Shaking hands, and the use of fixed courtesy formulas are regularly used with close family members also, and the courtesy pronoun is generally employed with the majority of adults. Visiting hardly takes place at all - at least, recreational visiting, the leisure activity that, in Euro-American society as well as in mainstream Chilean society, cements social relations and starts chains of affection. I thought that without social places to meet and social visiting there was not much to observe, and I increasingly worried that my observation had to be limited to the daily activities of my host family, who certainly did not have an intense social life. Each time I asked my landlady if I could accompany her whenever she left the house for her doings, she seemed to agree. However, she invariably ended up sneaking out the backdoor and I was left behind, increasingly bored and concerned that my fieldwork was not going to take me very far in observing and understanding. Since I was unconsciously looking for proofs to confirm my own social rules, I was highly disappointed and quite confused, and

ended up writing perplexed messages to my supervisors, explaining that there was no community at all and that these people were very individualistic and incredibly antisocial.

It took many months of patient observation and committed interaction to find answers to my premature questions, and to understand the reasons beyond actions. Apiao people do not really like defining, explaining or illustrating, and whenever I asked questions I was somehow breaking boundaries. I never stopped asking questions, but now I realise that the easiest and happiest times were those towards the end of my stay, when my familiarity to Apiao life made questions unnecessary.

What does it mean to be from Apiao? What does it mean to be *gente de isla* besides being *campesinos*, in a world increasingly dominated by technology? How does it feel to be experiencing a lifestyle that cannot aspire to any significant changes for a long time? How do Apiao people see themselves, vis-à-vis those non-islanders who live in the nearby *pueblo*, and towards all non-islanders in general? All these issues are intimately connected to Apiao insularity, and to its difficult accessibility, that if on the one hand prevents its inhabitants from enjoying some benefits, on the other protects and guards them from what is different, from what is unlike them, from what is not part of their community. And the undeniable fact of being *gente de isla* shapes and imprints social relations, both between Apiao people themselves and between Apiao people and the outsiders.

The following chapter is devoted to Apiao inhabitants as a community. It starts with the paradox of what, to my confused eyes, appeared as a non-community, and it continues with the opinions voiced by outsiders on Apiao people. The reactions of the islanders to some of the episodes reported are revealing of their own perception of themselves as a community vis-à-vis the different degrees of otherness and difference.

What other people say about them

Island smells

During my life in Apiao I used to take regular breaks from fieldwork. Approximately once every two months I would pack my rucksack with my laundry and leave the

island to spend a couple of days in the nearest town, where I stayed with a family of friends. The lady of the family, my friend Teresa, was originally from a Chiloé island, but had been living in the town for most of her life. When she saw me arriving from down the hill, my rucksack on my shoulders, she walked towards me to meet me, and she would hug me and my rucksack, which were like one body. Each single time the same scene would be repeated: ‘Mmhhh *mi’jita* you are coming with launch smell! Go quickly and have a shower!’ she invariably urged me, teasingly, but with the sincerity of someone who means what she is saying. Then we would sit down beside the stove and we would talk about that typical smell, that *olor ‘e lancha* that I was carrying. How to describe that smell? Marine salt, fresh fish, smoked meat, fish and shellfish, algae, and the pungent chimney smoke of the stove impregnated my clothes and hair. Plus, whatever happened to be travelling in the launch at the time, be it piglets, sheep, or chickens.

A combination of all, but especially the smoke, that blackens every Chiloé kitchen, and particularly island kitchens. The kitchen is the only warm room of the household, kept warm by the stove, whose little metal door is constantly opened to add wood. This is where food is prepared and shared, but also where meat and fish are hanged to dry, as well as clothes and shoes. And the kitchen is where people spend most of their time, sitting, staying with each other, sipping *mate*. Teresa knew this very well, having been born and raised in that environment, and yet every time she met me, on my way back from the island, she was surprised by the evocative smell, considered it for a bit, in a nostalgic mood, and then sent me to get rid of it with a hot bath.

Middle class Chileans were quite impressed by what they considered my adventure skills. In their opinion, to go and live on a remote Chiloé island was nothing short of an Indiana Jones-type of adventure, and I was some kind of hero. They would never dare doing research that involved staying that far for that long, in a place obviously lacking all basic comforts of modernity.

I was amused by the stories of a middle class man of Chiloé origin that used to live in Patagonia and was now a Chiloé resident. He told me that whenever Chiloé inhabitants fly to Punta Arenas (they are well known seasonal migrants) they are easily recognisable by the smell they carry. He told me that it was not unusual to see the plane crew randomly spraying the cabin with room fragrance and deodorant. ‘You can smell them from a distance! Of course, they carry a lot of dry seafood, smoked

fish, and invariably that acrid chimney smell (*olor e' caño*). It's a real spectacle to fly from Puerto Montt to Punta Arenas!'

The true Chiloé Indian, '*El verdadero Indio Chilote*'

These comments can tell us something about both Chiloé inhabitants and middle class Chileans of Chiloé origin; but what I found remarkable was the comment I heard from a man leading exactly the same kind of life as Apiao people, but on another island that lies a couple of hours' sailing away, Quenac. I had the chance to visit Quenac a few times because I was friends with a teacher that came from there. He insisted that I must see Quenac, 'because it is really different'. He was right: on my first visit to the island I was seriously impressed by the striking differences in relation to Apiao. On the boat to Quenac the passengers didn't stare at me insistently and with a defiant look; instead they politely smiled and some of them engaged in conversation with me. The women were dressed in Western style and they were wearing makeup, jewellery and watches, and were sporting fresh haircuts, Western hairstyle and manicured hands. Once arrived at the dock of the island, I was highly surprised to see two street signs for vehicles (stop and give way), and in fact their presence was justified, since a couple of cars came down to meet their relatives just arrived from the town. I noticed that one of the drivers was wearing sunglasses. I could not believe that no one turned up with an oxen yoke, as it regularly happens in Apiao, where oxen drawn sleighs are the main transport medium.

Quenac boasts 99% Spanish surnames, and by virtue of their surnames the locals call themselves *mestizos*. Unlike Apiao, Quenac has a *villa*, a household settlement that resembles a small town, with houses one next to the other, streets with shops and restaurants with lively signs, and, especially, electricity poles. Quenac is a parish and has its own priest, who is entitled to a parish house next to the church. The priest invited me for coffee at his sister's house, and to my surprise this had an indoor bathroom with *calefont*, a living room with an enormous colour TV with a SKY antenna. What I saw in Quenac's *villa* was certainly closer to a continental town than a Chiloé island.

However, once outside of the settlement, Quenac displays its real nature as a Chiloé island, with the pattern of gentle hills with scattered households, cattle and sheep.

Those who do not live in the *villa* by the dock cannot enjoy the modernity of urban Quenac, and their lifestyle is very much like that found in Apiao. My friend's father lived a one and a half hour walk from the *villa*, and when I first met him the sun had already set, so our conversation happened in the dim candlelight. 'So you are staying in Apiao?' he asked me, with a grave expression. 'The real Chiloé Indian lives there' (*el verdadero indio Chilote*), he said, slowly, distinctly pronouncing each word. 'They are short, dark, little...it's true!' (*son bajitos, negritos, pequeños....verdad!*) and he lifted his arm, as if to show the proportions of a species of plant or animal, according to an imaginary taxonomy. He later explained that in the area there were three classes of people: the *indios*, the *mestizos*, and the Spanish; then of course the *gringos* and the Europeans, although these last two groups were hard to find in Chiloé. The list was in order of increasing quality. The *indios* had no value in the man's eyes, and he made clear that his lifestyle and manners were different from the *indios*: he drank no *mate*, he always sat at the table, he ate no fish but only meat; he was very proud of his son being a schoolteacher and he would never have wanted him to get married to one of those *indias* that would stain his surname and would want him just for his money and position. Little mattered to him that his everyday activities, standard of living and work routine were absolutely identical to what I had observed everyday in Apiao. However, in his opinion, his surname and his Quenac origin made all the difference.

Since the aim of this thesis is to describe Apiao life I will not divert from my purpose by devoting too much attention to Quenac. Suffice it to say that concerns of race and identity, while clearly a part of the social world of Quenac, were hardly ever voiced or even indirectly expressed in Apiao, where the great majority of people have an indigenous surname, and where those who happen to have a *mestizo* surname (according to Quenac classification) never appeared different or expressed difference from the others, in any way. When Quenac people state that the true Chilote Indian lives on Apiao, they are stating their superiority, ascribed by their surname, possibly reminiscent of Spanish origin and therefore of a different status. For Quenac people are interested in differentiating themselves from their neighbours on the basis of their surnames precisely because in their look and their lifestyle, they are exactly like their neighbours. Conversely, Apiao people often used an idiom of sameness to describe their island and its inhabitants. The following section describes, in Apiao people's words, what it means to be from Apiao and to live in there.

'Acá somos todos iguales' 'Here we are all the same'

Acá somos todos iguales, 'Here we are all equal' Apiao people often say. With this statement they express their idea of 'sameness' and of 'equality' as they experience it in everyday life and activity. At the same time, the expression indicates that they feel that there is a compact group, formed by those who were born and live on the island, cutting out all those who do not belong to the place. In Apiao all people consider themselves to be alike. They all share a common origin: they were all born and brought up on the island, and the same is true of their ancestors, as they would proudly emphasise. They all do the same work for a living, they all engage in the same activities, they all share the same interests and concerns; they all have the same duty and everyday tasks to accomplish. It is extremely difficult for Apiao people to name a 'leader', when they have to choose a person to represent them, because having a 'leader' - even when this means someone willing to do a job that involves more hassle than anything else - implies having someone that in some sense is 'different' from the others. And they are 'all the same'.

People in Apiao would describe themselves as *gente de isla*, island people. They regard themselves to be 'all equal', a compact group especially in relation to other groups. One of the comments that Apiao people mostly utter in their conversations, is comparing and contrasting their island with *el pueblo*, the town. This idea is useful in so far as it tells a lot about the identity of the Apiao people as a group.

'How do you like it here?' people often asked me, during my stay. I always energetically replied that I loved it, and then they would usually say 'of course, this is not like in the town, this is so much better: we all know each other, there is no danger, no criminality, life is quiet here, and everyone here is free'. 'Unlike in the town', they would add, 'where there are people from everywhere, and you cannot trust anybody. Also, in the town you have to have money to survive, because there you have to buy all you need, especially food'. On the island the contrary is the case: people live off of the food that is produced or collected within their household. Money circulates very little on the island (even if its use is increasing), people continue to barter today and pay for work with food, or with other work. Young people tend to marry within the

island and live there, because life in the town is so expensive, and so inconvenient, 'there you have to buy all'. On the island, on the other hand, '*uno tiene lo suyo*', people own things, they produce everything they need to live: the potatoes from their fields, the meat of their own pigs and chickens, the shellfish and fish they collect and catch, or they barter goods and services with other islanders. All these products are not simply property but, so to say, extensions of the people who own them and work to produce them.

Las papas - Potatoes

'In the town people have to buy potatoes in kilos!' Apiao people often commented horrified. Potatoes are the main crop planted on the island, and a substantial part of the everyday diet, for people as well as domesticated animals (dogs, chickens, and pigs). They are consumed in large quantities, at least twice a day; and peoples' lives are in a sense organised around the agricultural cycle of the potato fields. Each household has its own field, and this is included within the household boundaries. Along with the potatoes, which have an absolute priority over any other cultivation, some households grow wheat in small quantities, mainly to feed the chickens, and some people have gardens with carrots, cabbage, beans, and salad in summer. Since not every household grows wheat and vegetables, it is quite common for people to visit each other and ask for some vegetables, offering some other product in exchange for it. Bartering is widely used and it works to everyone's advantage: for example, only a few households fish in large enough quantities to smoke the fish in order to barter or sell it. But it would be really unusual to barter something for potatoes, and this would indicate extreme poverty, and an inability to lead a proper life. To my knowledge there was only one such case on the island: an old man, head of his household, that obstinately forced his family to live 'like the ancients', as people said rather sarcastically. Their house did not have a metal stove but rather an open fire in the middle of the main room of the house (*fogón*), the fire being the only means of cooking as well as heating in the house¹². This family used to make *chicha* (the local apple cider) by handgrating their apples, as opposed to using a motor-powered

¹² This, in fact, is the way people used to live until 15-20 years ago in Chiloé, but now the fire in the middle of the room, the *fogón*, is in a separate section of the house and it is used to prepare the pigs' food and to smoke meat and fish.

machine, as with every other family. The old man, in his late seventies at the time, refused to accept the local government's monthly pension (granted to all senior citizens in the area) on the basis that this would mean admitting that he was not 'good at working' anymore. This meant that the man and his family were quite poor. He often offered his services to work in somebody else's potato fields, not for money but for potatoes - which corresponds to ultimate poverty in peoples' opinion. People would comment on this when spotting the old man going back home the end of the working day, with insecure steps, a sack of potatoes on his shoulders. They would not find it unfortunate that he had worked hard all day at his old age, but they would certainly comment on the potatoes as payment. These comments implied that the man somehow chose to do things his own way, different from the others, in ways that made little sense to the community: in fact people would never think to refuse the government pension; or not to plant enough potatoes.

Potato fields are always visible on the island, whether in the distance, from the hills, or from close by. Whenever people talk about the fields they would always refer to them as somebody's property: 'I've got to work on my potatoes', 'how well are So and So potatoes growing', 'I must hurry up if I want to finish digging up my potatoes', 'are your potatoes ready to eat?' and so on. Indeed this continuous statement of property applies also to all the other products of the household, or to things that they themselves make. It is a way to stress belonging both in the sense of property and in the sense of familiarity with something, with a task for example, and it certainly asserts belonging to a place. Life on the island allows people to be in charge of their own land, to cultivate it, to be owners of the products of the land and of all the things that can be made within the household. Life on the island allows people to be amongst equals, where every person deals with the same kind of tasks and concerns as anybody else. This is impossible to achieve anywhere else, and especially so in the town, where all must be bought, and one owns nothing.

El pueblo - The town

What are people's relation to the *pueblo* anyway?

Apiao people, like all other inhabitants of the Chiloé archipelago, depend on the town, that they visit regularly to buy products that are not produced on the island, such as

flour, sugar, *mate* herb, coffee, wine, etc. They also regularly withdraw government money, given to senior citizens, mothers of children up to 18 years old, and to invalids. They also travel to the town to be attended to by the doctors and nurses in case of urgent illness, and women generally go to the local hospital to give birth. Children that are over 15 years old attend the town college as boarders and their parents travel to the town to go to school meetings, and to justify the absence from school of their children (frequent, because of bad weather conditions). These parents have somehow to build and continue a relationship with the so-called *apoderados*, the person that acts a 'next of kin' for each student. The *apoderados* are a connection that people from the islands have managed to secure, and it must be maintained for as long as the children study in the town. Therefore, in order to thank the *apoderados* for their time and devotion, the islanders would travel with goods to offer them: sacks of potatoes, fresh and smoked fish, woven blankets - products of their own households, and of their own labour. These goods travelling from the island to the town make the relation between parents and *apoderados* possible and ongoing.

All this applies to the closest *pueblo*, which is the nearby little town of Achao (approximately three hours away by boat), and to a lesser extent to the town of Castro (five hours away). When people travel to Achao, they always return the same day, while a trip to Castro lasts at least three days. The travellers on this longer trip have relatives to stay with, who will provide accommodation and food, while the visitors are busy around the town with all their things to do - goods to sell, goods to buy, people to talk to, offices to visit, and so on. While Apiao people are likely to travel to Achao once or more times per month, a trip to Castro is not so common and they might travel once or twice per year. Consequently, this trip requires a great deal of preparation: the potatoes, whether to be sold or given, have to be 'taken out' of the field, cleaned and put into the sacks, which in turn have to be sewn. Usually a small animal is slaughtered, either a pig, or a lamb, or a couple of chickens, to offer some meat to the family in the town. A family with a diver would send him to dive for shells or crabs. Also, fresh bread is baked, and potato pancakes are made. One would never travel to the bigger town, and be someone's guest for three days without having several resources available, to give to the hosts. It is always a balanced exchange: nothing is given nor received for free, there is always some kind of exchange taking place, and the goods - natural products, the only payment Apiao people would be able

to make - travel from the island to the town. The family that lives in the town generally has strong connections with the island, such as a past experience of living there, and/or parents and grandparents still living there, therefore they appreciate the incoming goods for both economic and emotional reasons. All this ensures that a connection is restated every time people travel in opposite directions and visit each other (though it must be said that islanders would never travel to the town merely to visit). The island products act as people's extensions in that through them a bond is renewed and reaffirmed each time, and the act of giving allows both the giver to be remembered, and the receiver to remember what the giver expects from him. This is a way people 'remember' others, and in this way - through goods, which are extensions of people - relationships are perpetuated. The whole issue of giving as 'remembering' is crucially important in that it also defines kinship for Apiao people, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

After having illustrated what Apiao people see as a common identity background that unites them all and makes them 'all the same', I will now describe more in detail how some Apiao peoples' occupations and positions makes them stand out from the group.

The responsibility positions.

As I previously said, in Apiao there are no leaders at all, but there are some positions of responsibility - voluntarily taken, for which there is no remuneration whatsoever - that have to be accepted every period of two to three years, or annually. These positions, though, are assumed to by islanders who are exactly like anybody else, in terms of lifestyle, activities, preoccupations, and so on. These positions are: president of the committee of the island, (*presidente de la junta de vecinos*), president of the association of parents of schoolchildren, (*presidente centro de padres*), one for each of the two schools of the island, and presidents of the local 'indigenous communities', set up rather artificially in order to benefit from development programmes arranged by the major national indigenous development agency, the CONADI. There are three such 'indigenous communities', one for each sector of the island. The other civil association that has a president is the football team, and there are four of them on the island. All these committees and communities have a board that also comprises a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

In no sense do these positions reflect supremacy, or call for authority. They are instead seen as a nuisance and people accept the charge only when they are cornered and don't appear to have a choice. In fact, very few people turn up when a new committee has to be formed, and those who happen to be present are extremely reluctant to be involved in any of the positions. To be in a committee means obligations, waste of time and most likely, troubles: people might be unsatisfied and criticise the committee, starting a chain reaction. And, most of all, it means to somehow have to stand out from the crowd and speak up in the interest of the community: not an easy task in Apiao, where since all are the same, they tend to speak for themselves and to deal with matters personally and individually.

However, the role that certainly has more weight within Apiao society is the religious figure of the *fiscal*. There are two of them in Apiao: the *fiscal mayor*, the main *fiscal*, and the *sotafiscal*, the second *fiscal*. They are chosen by the community, and if a man accepts the position, he will do it willingly (unlike the committees previously described). The *fiscales* are representatives of the priest, (who only goes to the island once or twice per year, to celebrate mass) and have to be present whenever there is a religious task to carry out. Their main duty is to pray, in fact the *fiscales* are people who 'know how to pray', as the people in Apiao say. They are called to baptise a newborn, to bless a dead person, to perform funerals, and to perform *novenas* (nine-day praying meetings), either church *novenas*, San Antonio *novenas* or *novenas* for dead people. The San Antonio and the dead *novenas* are performed in private houses, while the other *novenas*, pertaining to the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, are performed on the island church. The *fiscales* are also supposed to open the church every Sunday and pray together with the community¹³. Given the number of collective prayer meetings, either for *novenas* or for funerals, the *fiscales* have a lot of work to do, and they patiently comply with their commitment. But they are not leaders; they are just *fiscales*.

It is important to stress that the *fiscales* are not considered authorities by Apiao people. They are appreciated for the service they provide, which is totally voluntary and without monetary compensation, but they are not in a leadership position. On the

¹³ In fact this hardly happened during my presence on the island. The weather was often bad (rainy, windy) and people would not dare go to church, and the *fiscales* would also stay home, or sometimes they opened the church and said some prayers in front of one or two women, as well as the omnipresent anthropologist.

contrary, whenever they have to address the community they do so with modesty and humility, according to the island's etiquette. People respect them, but do not spare them harsh critiques regarding their personal life or their public behaviour. In fact the *fiscales* are two men just like every other man on the island: they live exactly like everybody else, dress and speak like everybody else, and are involved in the same routine activities as any other islander. Their potato fields are a constant concern for them, and whenever they travel to the town they have to worry about weaving relationships, to name a few examples. The *fiscales*, as well as the various presidents and members of committees are '*igual que los demás no más*', 'just like all the others': these are ordinary people who have a responsibility and have to be available whenever necessary.

So far I have introduced characters that are somehow different in that they fulfil necessary positions within the community, but they do so without ceasing to be part of the group. I will now turn to introduce people are somehow perceived differently, for various reasons. These people are the nurse, the teachers, the couple of evangelical missionaries and the families of evangelical converts.

The paid positions

The nurse. The nurse is a middle age Apiao man who has a minor degree in nursing and acts as a paramedic. He attends the health centre, *la posta*, (in fact, a first aid room) during office hours. He is from the island but at the same time he lives a different kind of life, spends most of the day in a building that does not belong to him, and, more importantly, has a salary. This is the crucial factor that separates him from the rest of the people: the salary allows and entitles him to a different lifestyle, for example he can afford luxuries such as a house in the town, a car, a colour TV, a video camera: goods that most islanders will never be able to access. The nurse's job and lifestyle to a certain extent made him an outsider, despite being a local.

The teachers. On the island there are two schools for children from five up to 15 years of age and one nursery school. In total there were eight teachers, five men and

three women. Only one of them was a local, all the others came from somewhere else in the Chiloé region, or from other regions of Chile. At the time of fieldwork their ages ranged from approximately 25 to 50. Some of them were young and single and some of them had been married for a long time. Three of them married local people, and two of them had been living on the island for more than 25 years. Still, they were not like the others, and they will never be. Teachers are profoundly different from the other islanders for a number of reasons: first, they are considered as very high status people because of their position and because of the money they earn, which by Apiao standards is considered enormous. To marry a teacher is considered highly profitable and male teachers are always the object of female attention, in fact to have a child with a teacher, even as a single mother is a choice many women made. At the same time, although this would never be stated explicitly, their work is not considered proper work, since they cannot work regularly in the fields, nor have the same concerns of the others. In commenting on a lazy woman, who does nothing, people would say 'Look at her, as if she was a teacher!' '*Parece profesora!*'. Despite the fact that some teachers had lived on the island for decades, they were generally perceived as outsiders, and often harshly criticised. They actively participated in the community's life throughout the years, and were familiar with most islanders, and yet this did not modify their status as *afuerinos*, outsiders. This was true of all the islands I visited: in a nearby island there was a notable case of a schoolteacher from a rural area of Chiloé who had lived and worked in that island for thirty years and never felt part of the community. She had married a local affluent man and they had a daughter, yet she confided in me that her most acute desire was to ask people of the island why they never accepted her as a proper citizen. She intended to enquire and openly discuss the topic with locals after her retirement.

The attitude of members of small communities towards outsiders that chose to be part of that community is a common issue appearing in the literature: Cohen (1987) and Strathern (1981) beautifully described similar accounts for Whalsay and Elmdon respectively. In Strathern 1981 there is an anecdote reported by Audrey Richard where a woman who had lived and worked in Elmdon for forty-four years was described as a 'stranger' by her sister-in-law, a local villager. As Strathern puts it 'simply living there does not make one a village person (1981:3). However, the question at stake is, what do outsiders represent to Apiao islanders? Is the uneasiness

towards waged people to be justified by concerns regarding status, as Strathern suggests, or with the need to keep threatening others at a distance, as Cohen observes? How important is it for Apiao people to maintain a shared localness to be a group? In the sections that follow more instances of this crucial question are described and analysed.

The evangelical missionaries and the converts.

In Apiao, as throughout Chiloé there is a strong Catholic tradition, and, as I have previously illustrated, Spanish Jesuits were effectively active with their circular mission since the early 17th century, building the several characteristic wooden churches that are now a Chiloé landmark. In the late 1990s a young married couple of protestant evangelical missionaries moved to the island. The man was Chilean and his wife was from Uruguay, and at the time of fieldwork they had two children. Since their arrival they had been working to proselytise and attract new followers. They were clearly different from Apiao people: they spoke and dressed in a different way, did not have any field to grow potatoes, did not work like everybody else and spent most of their time in their temple or with the families of converts. As a converting technique, they provided clothes and medicaments for free, and often people approached them simply to obtain something, without being in the slightest interested in a change of religion. Given their long-term residence on the island, the missionaries had managed to gain general respect within the community, and the man was appreciated because he did some electrical repair work and was kind to everybody. However, up to 2003 they had only managed to convert five or six families, less than 5% of the total island population¹⁴.

While Apiao people did not judge the missionaries for being evangelical, they adopted a different attitude towards the families of converts. In their opinion one cannot be born into a religion, spend a considerable time span within that religion and then change it at some point. They viewed the change as ridiculous and false, and the converts as ignorant. The missionaries were born into evangelism, from evangelical parents, and lived their youth within the religion; but a person in his right mind would not think about changing religion, because this is simply impossible.

¹⁴ An entire chapter will be devoted to the relationship between evangelical converts and Catholics in Apiao.

It was very easy for me to spot evangelical converts: their attitude was completely different from that of other people: in meeting me they would shake hands and say 'God bless you' with a wide smile. During conversations, they would use a language that they had learnt in attending the missionaries and the temple, using words and expressions that clearly did not belong to the island expression. But, beside these obvious formal changes in the converts' attitudes, their change of religion strongly affected their lifestyle and their sociality. Apiao people define themselves as Catholics and in Apiao religion and social life are strongly intertwined. *Novenas* for example are social as well as religious happenings, which involve a great display of social relations that work according to exchange patterns. As I mentioned before, praying meetings are frequent. Given that evangelicals do not believe in prayers (fixed-text, Catholic style prayers) they did not take part in *novenas*. This is a serious matter, because by not attending *novenas* people automatically cut themselves out of the social group, abandoning the circle of exchange relations. By not taking part in *novenas* the evangelical families declared their unavailability to social life. Moreover, they cannot drink alcohol and this is in opposition to the dietary, social and religious weight of the *chicha*, the local apple cider. For all these reasons, the converts were cut off from the group. They shared the same concerns as all the others, but the choice they made moved them away from most of what in Apiao is considered a normal social life.

Whereas the teachers were 'as if locals' for their prolonged stay but never 'really' locals for actually being from somewhere else and having a different status, the evangelical converts were locals (*legítimo de Apiao*) 'as if outsiders' for their withdrawal from the community social life and their rejection of reciprocity ties. Now I will turn to those who are real outsiders, *afuerinos*.

Los afuerinos - People from 'outside'

Together with their special relation with their fields, their products, and the *pueblo*, Apiao people share the same attitude towards the *afuerinos*, 'those who come from outside'.

Whenever people who do not belong to the community travel to the island, they are noticed from a long distance: their clothes, their look, their way of walking and speaking reveal their difference. When *afuerinos* travel to the island in a local boat, the passengers would stare at them with a diffident pride for the duration of the entire trip, but nobody would speak to them. In fact, people 'from outside' generally represent a problem to deal with. Whenever Apiao people happen to be visited by someone who does not belong to the island community, they experience a mixture of acute embarrassment, preoccupation, humiliation and pride. This is because they feel the outsiders would not understand their lifestyle: in this context Apiao people tend to describe their own position as one of poverty, and feel they would be regarded as backward (*atrasados*) and too poor, and be judged for the appearance of their house. These criticisms would be implicit in the visitors' behaviour: insistent looking around with a judgemental eye, and an inquisitive look and attitude. There is an expression in the local Spanish to indicate this type of behaviour: *reparar*, which means to watch attentively so as to spot defects, to observe critically and finally to disdain. A *reparista* person is someone who visits in order to see and judge, and also someone who refuses to accept the food that is offered, implying that what is offered does not meet a certain standard. The expression always has a negative connotation. Outsiders are always a problem for what concerns food: they might not accept the island's food, or judge it too simple, or not good enough. To prevent this occurrence, Apiao people would refrain from offering food, and this, in Apiao terms, is a social disaster: relations are always negotiated and articulated through the offering and receiving of food. But with outsiders it is different: who knows what their rules are? The only certainty is that they are not from 'here', they are not 'like us'. These preoccupations emerge only in the presence of an outsider, never with fellow islanders, since they all live the same lifestyle, eat the same food, keep their houses in the same fashion, and so on. People feeling confident with me would often tell me 'we are the last ones, we are so backward, so poor....' to justify or to excuse what they thought was likely to be judged inadequate by my foreign eyes. Such a disclaimer would never be uttered to a fellow islander.

What happens when Apiao people are confronted with the outside in their own land? Continuing my examination of the way Apiao people are considered, I now turn to

describe circumstances in which they were confronted with non-islanders, *gente de afuera* that for different reasons came to the island for a brief visit.

This is generally a situation where the community is gathered to meet the newcomer. The sections below show the great divide between a community of alike people and occasional visitors, those who come to the island too infrequently to be familiar with the sense of boundaries that rules social interaction. Those who travel to Apiao for a sporadic visit are often town or city citizens of higher status than *los de la isla* by the mere fact that they are *not* from the island, and generally individuals on whom Apiao people are somehow dependent: local government officials, doctors, municipality staff, and clergy. What follows are my impressions on the brief visit of the mayor, and on the longer stay of a Santiago missionary during Holy Week.

Visitors: the mayor

During the annual visit of the local mayor, several people congregated in the island's meeting hut, ceremoniously called '*sede de la junta de vecinos*'. Some of those gathered for the special visit (approximately 20 to 25 people) spoke up, voicing various concerns. Among these were the lack of water, the conditions of the meeting hut, and especially the state of the path, which the abundant rains inevitably turned into a mud pool, making transit impossible. 'This means that people need to ask my permission to pass through my private property! And this is no good' said one old man. The mayor, whose attitude was generally patronising (using the *tu* form when addressing adults, saying *mi'jita* to adult women, taking little notice of people's needs, attending to questions in a hurry and generally without paying too much attention) disregarded the man's dissatisfaction. Instead of listening and giving credit to people's needs, he listed a series of island situations that reflected the islanders' negligence, with evident irritation. He said that Apiao people should keep in mind that up to a few years before it was impossible to 'walk with shoes' on the island (as opposed to walking with rubber boots, because of the dense vegetation and the lack of paths). His rhetoric was a badly dissimulated blackmail: they recently had the path done; instead of appreciating the upgrading, there they were, asking for more. Those gathered in the hut were hardly given a chance to speak: time soon ran out and the mayor hurried away to the dock, where there was a boat ready to take him to another

island for another annual visit. If the mayor's visit represented to me an annoying instance of the way Apiao people are dealt with by local authorities, I was to be surprised to a greater extent with the following series of episodes.

The Catholic missionary

One easy way to monitor what happens on the island is to travel by launch to the nearest small town. People gather at the dock in the early morning on travelling days (Mondays and Fridays, weather permitting) and the launches arrive already charged with passengers picked up from the island's internal canal, *el estero*, where they are left overnight. When one travels, he has the chance to know who else is travelling, and why. People generally travel to buy food or material that is not available on the island, or to go to the hospital or the bank, or to see young children who are studying at the town's boarding school. In fact, when travelling, people tend to attend to all of those duties, thus making the trip worthwhile. Alternatively, if someone cannot afford the trip, or does not want to get up early and spend the whole day in the town without a purpose, but still needs something, they would ask someone they know well to do some shopping for them (*encargar algo a alguien*). In such cases they always go to the dock to meet the traveller, pick up their *encargo* and pay whatever is due. By 5pm most launches are back or are visible on the horizon, and the dock and the beach fills with close relatives of the travellers, waiting to help out carrying the heavy items to the households. Some people come with their yokes so that they can put the entire load on the cart pulled by the animals; those who own a horse come down on horseback, while some other people come with a little rowing boat to transport the shopping via sea to their house. The dock gets animated and filled with a crowd of people waiting, and when the boats arrive they are attached at each side of the cement dock side-by-side. The place bursts with activity, people running, children moving around, each person carrying some sort of load.

No matter who is travelling in the family, it is guaranteed that at the end of the day, when he or she gets back, they can update those who stayed at home on the news of the travelling day; such as, who was on the boat, what did they buy, who did they meet, what did they say, who was drunk on the way back, and so on. Every detail of

the trip and of those involved in the trip are discussed animatedly, without malice, while having a dinner that tends to be different than usual, since special ‘town’ food is consumed (town bread, town chicken, soft drinks, wine and sweets).

One such evening I was at the dock - as often, on travelling days - when a man from Santiago disembarked. He was a Catholic missionary, who had come to stay for the Holy Week. The man was in his sixties, tall, with grey hair (something uncommon among the locals) and a grave expression. He saw me as soon as he jumped out of the boat onto the cement jetty and immediately spoke to me. ‘You must be the Italian girl, I know all about you, I’ve heard it all already’. A few months before, during summer, the island had received the visit of a small group of Catholic missionaries from Santiago, who had met me and were on good terms with me. They had stayed on the island for a week, living in a small building next to the church, built to welcome the priest and whomever accompanied him. The missionaries, who were all volunteers, toured the island’s households, without having a specific agenda besides giving some catechism lessons to children. They visited each household, brought Holy Communion to elderly people and happily enjoyed the summer weather. The visit of those missionaries did not elicit special comments by the locals, besides the general remark that they were *buena gente*, good people. To be *buena gente* does not require much effort: by being kind, open, positive and generally non judgmental of the peasant community, such city people earned Apiao’s acceptance during their short stay on the island.

Unlike them, the missionary man immediately adopted a different attitude. His presence on the island caused turmoil that on the one hand disrupted people’s pacific days and on the other gave me an opportunity to understand Apiao people’s attachment to their own specific and private sense of community. In fact, by observing how people deal with outsiders within the boundaries of their own land, one can get a sense of the meaning of ‘boundaries’ for that community.

That Monday evening at the beach dock, one of the island’s *fiscales*, who was waiting for his son who had been travelling, politely introduced himself to the missionary. The missionary man started to enquire about the organised activities that were to take place in the local church for Easter Week; the man was obliged to tell the missionary that in fact nobody had organised anything so far. It was autumn: the season for harvesting and threshing wheat, and for making apple cider, *chicha*. Every household

is bursting with activity in autumn, and the *fiscal*, as much as any other Apiao inhabitant had a considerably busy schedule at home.

On the Wednesday, I had spent the whole day in the *fiscal*'s neighbourhood, attending to the threshing and the manual separation of the chaff from the wheat, referred to as *ventear*. I was talking to the *fiscal*'s wife when he came rushing from a neighbour's wheat harvest. His wife offered him some food, but he said he had to rush to the church because the Santiago missionary was there, and was expecting to see him.

Hardly anyone went to church on that Wednesday or on the Thursday, however the church was packed on Good Friday. Apiao people tend to go to church very little, but Good Friday is a crucial date in the calendar¹⁵, and they respect several obligations and prohibitions traditionally associated with this specific holy day. For example, people would not work, yoke their animals (*enyugar*), start to weave a blanket (*urdir una frazada*); they would chop wood but they say that one must do the sign of the cross to ask for forgiveness. In the past, I was told, people would not cook or comb their hair. They certainly would not miss a visit to the church on Good Friday, unless extremely ill or too old.

At first there were mostly women and children, but after a short time the church became crowded with everyone of all ages. The missionary preached his sermon, yet he was clearly upset. Why did nobody come to church? He was asking. 'I have come all the way from Santiago, just for you, but you are so ungrateful that you don't even bother coming down here, and last Wednesday I had to preach for myself, since nobody else turned up. I am going to meet the bishop and I will tell him everything that I have seen here in Apiao. We missionaries know all about the islands, do you think that just because I am from Santiago I know nothing of your place? In fact I happen to know more than you, because I have travelled all around the archipelago and even further south. The bishop sent us, and now I will have to tell him that you

¹⁵ The scarce attendance at the church during the year coupled with the attention devoted to special days such as Good Friday, Christmas or the patron saint's *fiesta* seems to be historically recorded throughout Chiloé. Urbina (1983: 55-56) reports that in the middle of the 18th century the bishop was complaining about the town of Castro, in the Isla Grande: its inhabitants would generally ignore the activities of the Jesuits, except for the occasions of Easter, Holy Week and the day of the Apostle Santiago. During such celebrations the town would be crowded and colourful, returning to 'almost desert' when the celebrations were concluded.

are losing the faith! Speak now or stay silent forever: do you want the missionaries to keep coming to you, or would you rather have the sects, the evangelicals, the Jehovah Witnesses? One must have a bit of brains! Last summer four missionaries came to be with you, and it looks as though they wasted their time!' He then proceeded to complain about the state of the church: it was dirty, its floor covered in mud and mice excrement, and it looked abandoned. He concluded that Apiao people must be very dirty indeed, since obviously the cleanliness of the church reflected the hygiene of each household. He then went on to insult a local church congregation, the so-called Maria's Daughters (*Hijas de María*), that supposedly had to take care of the building and clean it regularly.

Conversely, he extensively praised the family that was giving him hospitality, stating how holy they were, since they had been to church each day since his arrival, and how such a family should be taken as a model to imitate. 'Well', he added, 'it must be admitted that you are left alone a lot, because of the lack of ministers in your dioceses. However, I don't see any willingness to get better and that is very sad'. He then announced that he was going to proceed with the celebration, not without having urged everybody to listen carefully, urging them to try to understand what was being said, and to try not to make any noise (*traten de no meter bulla*).

In less than half an hour the missionary managed to gravely insult and seriously offend Apiao people in at least two ways: first, by using an aggressive and authoritarian tone that implied he was of a superior standing, and that they were inferior. Secondly, he attacked the islanders with a list of serious abuses, implying that not only were they dirty, and lacking the hygiene standards of proper people, but also that they were incapable of understanding and taking care of religious matters. Furthermore, the threat to report their incapacity to the bishop¹⁶, the highest local religious authority and a well-respected man in the region, particularly hurt the islanders, who felt they had managed to earn the bishop's respect and esteem. They were essentially treated like little children, who needed to be told to listen carefully and shut up whenever necessary. Finally, they were insulted by one of the worse accusations that can ever be uttered on the island: to be inhospitable and ungrateful.

¹⁶ The prelate, a lively Spaniard in his late seventies at the time, is the man who originally suggested I conduct my research in Apiao. Particularly respectful of Chiloé people's indigenous religious traditions, he always spoke fondly of Apiao inhabitants, and the islanders reciprocated his esteem. This was not necessarily the case with other members of the local clergy.

They were all compared with the family who was hosting the missionary, described as the model for the superlative family. Incidentally, this family was well known for causing annoyance and distress within the community for different reasons. The missionary was clearly biased and completely unaware of the local relational politics. All his accusations were strong, and they had been proffered in an aggressive and patronising tone. The contained reaction of those present in the church was impressive: beside a few women whispering to each other, there was a respectful silence¹⁷.

After his angry outburst, the missionary continued the Good Friday celebration, urging some people to hold candles, and firmly instructing them to stay in front of the altar. In Apiao there is a strong etiquette concerning manners and ways of addressing people (this is dealt with in depth in following chapter), and the imperative tone of the missionary was striking. As I felt part of this community, it was difficult not to experience this outburst as wrong and deeply unjust. Apiao people, however, had different complaints on the matter. The reasons for my anger and theirs were quite different.

Once at home I had the chance to express my views of the Good Friday sermon to my hosts, and later on to several families of friends. After an initial careful reaction, showing once again people's reserved nature when it comes to articulating feelings, they felt free to express their opinion on the subject, and this they did quite energetically. The unanimous complaint - besides obvious remarks on the man's rudeness and inappropriate commentary - was that someone from 'outside' (*de afuera*) should not come to Apiao to order people around. 'They come here, think they understand everything and speak loud. They should know by now that this is not the city: we have our custom (*costumbre*) here, and that is not to be changed. They come here once per year and cannot just change the way things are. They must keep in mind that they are visitors, they are guests. They are meant to be much better than any one of us, but they are much worse than us. They are nothing. They cannot tell us what to do here, in our own land. We were given our religion from our ancestors, and we don't need someone that comes here once a year to change our ways'.

¹⁷ Compare Overing's description of Piaroa silent anger in 1989:178.

Predictably, hardly anyone showed up for the Holy Saturday celebration in church. I was chatting and enjoying the sun on the church esplanade with some other youths, when the missionary appeared and harshly urged us to quickly get into the church, since we were late for the celebration. In Apiao the attitude towards time is flexible, and meeting times are always approximate¹⁸. No Apiao person would be scandalised if a given time was not respected, because, in a sense, it is never meant to be strictly respected. The missionary's comment on the time was perhaps appropriate to the Santiago parish scene, but nonsensical in a place where people have no fixed timetable, no watch to keep an eye on, and have total control over what they do at any given time of the day. The freedom enjoyed in Apiao was suddenly obvious, that evening on the church esplanade, where the relaxed pose of the locals, lying on their sides on the green grass, contrasted strongly with the tense expression of the missionary, standing nervously above them, preoccupied with strictly and successfully adhering to his carefully arranged schedule. My friends and I reluctantly got up from the grass and followed the man into the church, not without commenting on his bossy manners. In fact the man appeared to enjoy using an imperative tone whenever addressing someone (also see above, when he ordered people to hold the candles and stand by the altar) - something which in Apiao hardly ever happens, and is indeed considered extremely rude.

Apiao people, when in charge of something, (say, the *fiscales* during religious celebrations) would do all they possibly could to downplay their temporary difference in status, blending their requests with an assortment of apologies, pleas and humble wishes to those present, always keeping a humble demeanour. To ask for something is a serious ritual, with a code of decorum¹⁹. That code was painfully ignored by the missionary man, who in a short space of time had managed to break the boundaries, which the community carefully adheres to in its everyday pacific rhythm of life.

Once inside the church we had to attend and endure the Holy Saturday celebration, that the missionary had staged as a replica of a city parish service. 'This is the way we

¹⁸ This same point was noted by both Darwin (1977 [1906]) and Grenier (1984). Darwin reports an anecdote regarding Castro, Chiloé's capital, which he found strikingly poor: 'No individual possessed either a watch or a clock; and an old man, who was supposed to have a good idea of time, was employed to strike the church bell by guess' (1906:265). According to Grenier the non-precise notion of time of Chiloé people is directly connected to the vague notion of distance, whose definition is strictly dependent on the weather (1984:63).

¹⁹ These issues are discussed in the following chapter.

do it in the city; we do it at midnight there but here, given the lack of electricity it's better to do it now. I see that despite my hard work very few have attended this service; how sad to have left my family at home to come here' he thundered, and returned once more to his threatening remarks of Apiao ungratefulness, underlining once again their obvious deficiencies. The few people who attended were ordered to follow instructions: light a candle at a specific moment, walk outside to light a symbolic fire, sing a song, walk back into church, exchange candles with the neighbour as a token of friendship, and finally hold the neighbour's hand while reciting the Holy Father. The instructions were first listed by the missionary and then read by the *fiscal* from a pile of photocopies brought directly from Santiago. Clearly tailored for the city's pilgrims, the whole ceremony was out of context in Apiao. When urged to hold the neighbours' hand, people gave each other the right hand, as when shaking one's hand, rather than holding hands to form a circle. Why would people hold hands, if not for briefly shaking someone's right hand to politely greet a fellow islander?

When the missionary, before leaving, reiterated his disappointment at the lack of cleanliness of the church, and mentioned 'those in charge of the cleaning', one of the *fiscales* spoke up and said that there were no people in charge of cleaning the church on the island. A woman stood up and added some comments on the subject, defending the Maria's Daughters' congregation from the insults of the day before, while the *fiscales* generously agreed to take some of the blame, in that they were partially responsible for appointing someone to clean the church. The following day, Easter Sunday, the church was packed, although many people had actively decided to stay away because they felt resentful towards the missionary. It was yet another celebration, other rituals that made little sense to the locals. When the missionary authoritatively proclaimed the instruction for each person to hug their neighbour, loud laughter came from a group of youths assembled next to the entrance of the church. A few minutes later, when a whistling announced the start of the football match, organised by the Maria's Daughters in the esplanade, the whole group left hurriedly.

The missionary's presence was still the subject of irate conversations months later. The common complaint was that the *fiscales* should never have allowed a host to speak the way the missionary had, and no one must be allowed to act as owner (*hacerse dueño*), especially since he was a visitor to the island.

Elevarse - To raise one's status

The episodes related to the visit of the missionary from Santiago are useful in that they offer a glimpse of the attitude of Apiao people *vis-à-vis* the outside world, and the people that live in that world. Let us return to some categories with racial connotation widely in South America, with an equally wide range of meaning, such as the concepts of *mestizo* and *indio*. At the beginning of the chapter I introduced the words as used by someone from the neighbouring island of Quenac. However, whenever I heard the word *mestizo* or *indio* in Apiao it had a different meaning and different implications.

Nowadays in Apiao the word *indio* is used with a very specific meaning that has hardly anything to do with the racially loaded meaning found elsewhere. People tend to use it to tease each other when they are very shy, for example I have heard mothers, and even wives, affectionately teasing their children or husbands that were reluctant to have their photo taken on several occasions. ‘*De puro indio no más que es!*’ ‘He is behaving like this because he is *indio!*’ they would say, smiling sweetly. Another detail: one of the male adults of the island is known precisely as El Indio. People always referred to him as such and I have no knowledge of his real name²⁰. In no way is this nickname offensive or derogatory. The man happens to be a Subiabre. The Subiabres who live in Apiao today, quite a substantial group, are the descendants of a married couple who moved to Apiao some 50 years ago from a town on one of the bigger islands of the archipelago to settle in Apiao. Since this was never a topic of conversation, I had to dig to find some information on the ancestors who came to Apiao with a Spanish surname. The following is what I was told by a close middle-aged friend:

‘In the past, things were different...the Subiabres were racist and treated us as inferior: they would address us with the *tu* [rather than the courtesy pronoun *Usted*, due to all adults] and would insult us calling us *indios*. But that was when I was a

²⁰ In Apiao practically everyone is called, identified and known either by a diminutive or by one or more nicknames. Individuals' complete names are never used, unless in specific official circumstances, such as when their names are read in a religious festival list. Nicknames can spring out of satirical contexts, but they are never offensive. Even pets sometimes have both a name and a diminutive or nickname.

child; that was the grandfather of the Subiabres you know now. Now we are all the same; some of them have money (*son gente de plata*), but in fact we are all the same'.

In the words of my friend there was a past that seemed really distant, where someone dared to treat the others disrespectfully by inappropriately saying *tu*, whereas nowadays in Apiao even siblings and close relatives address each other with the *Usted* form. There is a stress on personal boundaries and formal respect due to individuals amongst all the inhabitants of the island. If the Subiabres had arrived on the island some 60 years ago, they had by now completely integrated into the social fabric of the island and each Subiabre acted and related to the others in exactly the same way as everyone else, to the best of my observation. I managed to ask some Subiabres their feelings about their origin, and whenever I did so, a strong sense of belonging to the island was expressed: 'I was born here and I have lived here all my life', they would proudly say. Just like everybody else on the island.

The *mestizos*²¹ are those who were born from two white parents, or with at least one white parent. They live in the town, have a paid job, and generally a job that gives them what is perceived as high status: a schoolteacher, a nurse, a doctor, a bank employee. However, even people coming from islands (in Quenac terms, *indios*, in Apiao terms, *gente de isla*) can be living in the town. They can study and become schoolteachers: this is seen by Apiao people as 'elevating oneself' in status, for attending university, and ultimately, having a job that pays a salary. In Apiao for example there was a local young man training to become a schoolteacher. He had registered at the nearest university and was taking a distance course, doing full-time practical training at the school on the island. One day he radiantly announced his successful shift from one academic year to the following. He started to hug and kiss all those present (friends and relatives of one teacher, city people), while he ignored the only local who was present, a woman. Hugging and kissing are an utterly non-

²¹ It must be said that this is not a topic that is much discussed in Apiao. However, after enquiring, I was once told that what differentiates *mestizos* from everyone else is the surname, *el apellido*. Nothing else. 'The surname cannot be disowned, no matter how ugly. It's part of the person' '*El apellido no se puede renegar, aunque sea feo. Es parte de la persona*'. However, despite these words, the general attitude towards both the townspeople and the fellow islanders with a Spanish surname reveal that the perception of the difference of the townspeople cannot be solely rooted in their surname, but in a concurrence of events such as occupation, location, and lifestyle.

Apiao way of manifesting emotions, and in fact the young man was expressing his emotions in a way appropriate to the majority of his audience, which was non-local. The woman did nothing, stared expressionless, and I noticed that the two of them, the only locals in that building at that time, did not talk to each other, did not greet each other, did not hug. The woman did not really expect to be hugged nor kissed, and when I joined her on the path she expressed her surprise and her genuine happiness for the young man. “Mother! To university! How good, that poor boy, he can rise” (*se eleva*). To rise: the young man by being allowed into university was ascending from a status of islander (*de isla*, and also *campesino*, peasant, involved in specific activities and lifestyle) to one of public employee with a salary, a typical town activity and lifestyle. Such an achievement was so powerful to the woman that she spoke with fear and respect, and whispered her words: the event was so important that could only be spoken of in a soft voice. Such a shift, despite requiring much effort and some stroke of luck, is certainly open to anyone who is resourceful, clever and hardworking.

Egualarse - To be/become the same

In fact in Apiao sameness and difference are operated by standards that have little to do with ethnic origin or surnames. My landlord and good friend Don Ruben, a diver, was once describing the relationship he had with the town man to whom he regularly sold the sea urchins that he collected for a living. ‘We know each other very well because we have been working together for years now. He lent me money many times, and I always paid him back with my work, little by little. There is trust and confidence between us: I have even been at his house! Imagine! To have been at his own house, as if it was my house! And he is a man with money! I could never be equal to him, and yet I have been at his house’ (*Yo nunca me podría igualar con él, pero igual llegué a su casa*). Aware of his subordinate position to his employer on the status scale, he was nonetheless proud and happy for the friendship bond that they had built up over the years. Ruben could partake of the man’s different lifestyle thanks to their friendship, and yet knew that he could obviously never be as rich as his friend and employer. Equality in Ruben’s words meant enjoying the same economic status, having the same amount of money available to him. The employer for Ruben was not a man of the town or a *mestizo*, he was a ‘man of money’, *un hombre de plata*.

It seems that ultimately money is what marks the difference between people, the discriminatory factor that makes people what they are. But money is a direct product of one's subsistence activity and consequent lifestyle. In Apiao identity is predicated on what one does everyday.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the community of Apiao people by what other people say about them, and what they say about themselves. By stating that 'here we are all the same' they constantly reiterate their sameness, that is constantly acted out with the practices of the everyday. This sameness becomes particularly important whenever Apiao people enter in contact with outsiders, because they have to define themselves and confront the other people's expectations or prejudices.

The mayor, the missionary and all those who come from *afuera*, the outside world, were not aware of 'how things work' (*como son las cosas por aquí*), and were not 'like us' (*como uno*), they belonged to a different world with different rules, different lifestyles and mentalities. They were dangerous because they were threatening to the social balance and autonomy that cements the community by standing out as 'those that come from the city', 'those with money', 'those who can read and write and therefore are more civilised', 'those who are not *campesinos* but work for the government', 'those who point out that we are not good enough when compared with them'. The danger inherent in these hierarchical characters lies in what Cayubi-Novaes (1997) describes as 'play of mirrors': Apiao people saw themselves reflected in the image that both the mayor and the missionary had of them *as a community*. These two authority figures portrayed the islanders in a derogatory way, pointing out the negative aspects of being islanders in a world of non-islanders, where people go to church regularly and where people have decent roads to walk on. Islanders know very well that they are disadvantaged, if they compare themselves with non-islanders. This is why they are not interested in doing it, and this is why they are perfectly happy to engage in meaningful and dynamic relationships with those who are 'equals', 'the same': with those living in the same place, who speak the same social language. When boundaries are maintained, an oscillating balance (Leach 1970) is the norm. When outsiders interact negatively, the strength of islanders' fellowship and shared

localness is all that is available to counterbalance their vulnerability. As Cohen, discussing Whalsay people, put it ‘any breach of its boundaries threatens serious disorientation, a threat which islanders attempted to neutralise and defuse by keeping the breech under control (...) The larger world was not seen as inherently malevolent, but as ignorant of the circumstances of life in Whalsay (...) Not everything which comes across the boundary is negative: but most negatively regarded things do originate *elsewhere*’ (1987: 24, my emphasis). These words strongly resonate with Apiao people’s perceptions of themselves as a community, as expressed in the ethnographic data illustrated in the chapter.

PART I. SOCIALITY

Chapter 2. Exchanging sociality

Exchanging sociality in Apiao

One of the aspects of Apiao culture that was immediately evident to me was the fact that all social relations are hardly acted out in public. Rather, they are confined to the household. The domestic space is the social space *par excellence*, where the most important social act - food offering and receiving - takes place. In fact, I noticed that people largely ignored each other whenever meeting outside of their household in any sort of situation. They could meet on the public path, on a boat travelling to the town, at the school when picking up their children, or for a reunion, a funeral and so forth, and they would generally ignore each other. They would greet hastily, but they would not speak to each other, nor walk together if they were heading in the same direction. Between close and distant neighbours and relatives alike, no familiarity would be expressed. And yet, the same people who would hardly acknowledge each other in public would have a completely different attitude when meeting in each other's household.

People periodically visit each other, with the apparent purpose of either asking for something or returning something that they had previously borrowed. During a visit both host and guest would be engaged in a long ritual of offering and receiving. This ritual always follows the same pattern, no matter what the relation links of the individuals involved. And it is through visiting and during visits that relationships are tested, confirmed and perpetuated. In fact, Apiao sociality is mostly expressed through hospitality, which means the offering and receiving of food and drink in one's household.

Hospitality - *Atender a la gente*

Whenever a person goes for a visit in Apiao, a small ritual takes place. In fact sociality develops according to a set of features of encoded behaviour shared by all

inhabitants of the island. The purpose of the following pages is to describe as carefully as possible what happens on such occasions.

If someone decides to go for a visit, there is always a reason for doing so. It is extremely rare that somebody leaves his house to go visiting for the mere purpose of chatting or for spending time. This behaviour would indeed be considered highly suspicious, as if the visiting person was trying to find out about the owner of the house in a more or less illicit way, and in fact visits for mere social purposes do rarely happen, even amongst close relatives. A valid reason must be had for leaving one's house and entering someone else's property, and this is the set rule for relatives, neighbours and *compadres* alike.

Before a visiting person enters the enclosure of the house he is visiting he must announce his presence, and this is generally done by whistling from outside the enclosures (either wooden fences, or barbed wire), typically holding a stick for self-defence in case the dogs of the house attack. Each household is protected by at least one dog, but generally two or more; dogs always bark when they spot a visitor, and in many cases they literally attack the newcomer, who is left with the chance to use the stick he carries.

On the other hand whenever people in the house spot a visitor appearing in the distance, or whenever the dogs bark to announce the presence of a stranger (someone not living in the house), they would whisper the name of the newcomer to each other and comment, wondering about the reason for the visit, then they would quickly tidy up a bit.

Meanwhile the household owner (the man, or his wife) goes out to calm the dogs and to invite the visitor to come in, with the formula '*Más adelante*', literally, 'come more inside', implying that the person in gaining the household precincts has already been 'inside'. Upon entering, the visitor will always say '*Permiso*' or the local '*Permisito*' and *Buenos días/buenas tardes*' (Permission, and Good morning/evening).

If the visiting and the visited are not in a close relation, or if they are close but they have not seen each other for a while, they greet each other formally by shaking hands. Hand shaking is the common form of greeting, even between parents and children, and siblings, and it is done by offering a well stretched out arm. Body language expresses a special handling of space: here persons have to be surrounded by their

own personal space, which implies little physical contact and some distance from other people (except during *fiestas*, when space is shared and shortened by drinking and dancing, and during *novenas*). During the first stages of my fieldwork I tended to sit next to my hosts, in an attempt to show my willingness to share my time and confidence with them, thus provoking embarrassed reactions: I was clearly invading one's personal space. Later I learnt that to be physically close does not imply confidence, just as physical distance is not a sign of emotional/communicational distance.

The visiting person is always allowed into the house, unless he specifies '*por aquí no más*', ('just here'), meaning that he needs to be attended for an urgent matter, and he is not going to enter. Yet this is not considered ideal, and the majority of people, whenever visiting, tend to stay for a while. The visitor is generally allowed into the household through the secondary door, leading into the kitchen. This door is not the main door of the house, but is the one generally used. The main door, leading into an empty *salón* or living room, is reserved for special guests during special occasions (*novenas*, funerals, and weddings). The visitor is invited to sit down, and he is granted a generous portion of the wooden bench by the stove, or the best chair is wiped with a cloth and offered to him. He would sit during the whole visit, without taking off any of his several layers of clothes, despite the obvious difference in temperature between inside and outside. As soon as the guest sits down, the host quickly gets ready for attending him. Fresh bread is sliced and put on a plate, and fresh *mate* is poured into the gourd, and the host positions himself as '*mate* giver': sitting by the stove, the sugar container in his lap, a teapot at hand, he serves *mate* in a circle to the visitor and to whoever wants some. The guest drinks from the gourd through a metallic straw and then gives the gourd back to the host, who will top it up with a spoonful of sugar and enough hot water, and will pass it again to the guest or to whoever is sitting next to him, and so on. The *mate* gourd is passed around constantly, in a circle, from the host to the guests and vice versa. Water is always ready for *mate*, since there is always a big teapot on the stovetop. In the case where there is no bread already made, a woman would quickly prepare some dough and fry it in round shaped *tortillas* to feed the guest. In some cases cooked, cold meat is also offered with the bread, and all the food is put on a chair that is placed in front of the visitor, for him to help himself as from a small table.

No visitor is ever asked, ‘would you like...?’, and no visitor would ever refuse food or drink: the mere fact of visiting implies the offering and consumption of food and drink, irrespective of the time, and this is never questioned. It is assumed that a guest is to be attended with food and drink.

While eating, the visitor receives *mate* from the person who is attending him, and they might either engage in a generic, short conversation on the weather and its effect on the potato gardens, or the family’s state of health, or they may well stay silent. I have seen many cases where silence reigned for a long time before the visiting person broke by it explaining the reason for his presence in the house. He would never be asked by the hosts: it would be utterly rude to do so. To state the motivation for the visit at once is not polite, and indicates a hurry and an unwillingness to accept hospitality: in fact, only after the guest has had his food and a good amount of *mate* will he express his demands. This is usually done in a humble manner: whether the person takes a long time to explain himself, or goes straight to the point, his attitude is always humble and submissive. This is a peculiar trait of Apiao sociality and I will return to this point later on. The visitor might come to borrow some food, or a tool, or to ask for some information; he might come to offer meat to be sold (this is generally done on the day before slaughtering a pig, or a cow), or he might come to ask for help, in the form of a day of work. Whatever the reason for the visit, neither the host nor the guest can avoid the task of offering and receiving food and drink.

During the visit, all activity that was taking place has to be interrupted, and the attention of the members of the household is solely devoted to the guest. When there is a guest it is as if the whole microcosm of the house is put on stand-by: all everyday tasks are postponed until, so to say, order is restored.

Are all visitors treated in the same manner? Is there any difference between male and female or children and adult? Are some treated with more deference than others?

Generally adults and children are treated alike. The same amount of food and drink is offered to both, even though it is understandable that a child might not consume as much as an adult. Still, in the case where alcohol is offered, children are served exactly as the adults, and they generally accept, especially male children, and they are

encouraged to do so by their parents. Men and women are also attended alike, and offered alcohol in the same amount. All visitors are treated equally, but some can be considered special guests and are treated consequently: they are given not just *mate* and bread but also cooked food, and they are fed several times while in the house. Special visits can be relatives who do not live on the island anymore, teachers, old and respected neighbours, *compadres* and *ahijados* (godchildren), affluent people, missionaries and people coming from outside the island, if previously known.

If the head of the house and his wife are both present, the woman is the one who attends the visitor, offering food and giving *mate*, while the man sits and engages in a conversation. If no woman is at home the man attends the guest with bread and *mate*, but he would not cook. The man is certainly the one in charge of serving alcohol.

During the months immediately following the *maja* (the apple crushing/mashing done seasonally in order to obtain cider), when *chicha* (cider) is made out of local apples, every household has fresh *chicha* in storage. Several hundred litres are made, and it is kept in plastic barrels in the *bodega*, a separate section of the house. Every time it is necessary to fetch some *chicha*, either for domestic consumption or because of a visit it is the man who goes, and it is the man who pours *chicha* into the glass of a guest, especially a male visit. Generally men take *chicha* plain, while women and children have it warm with sugar. When *chicha* is offered, it is always in quantity: a few people easily consume two or three litres while chatting. The host keeps an eye on the guest's glass and fills it as soon as it is empty.

I once accompanied a friend and neighbour, a young man in his twenties, to ask all the households in his sector for a monetary contribution. The money was being collected to organise an annual religious festival. We visited more than twenty households in two days, and each time we approached the house in the way described above, and we were attended in the same way. In each household we visited, we were offered food and drinks. When our visit was done at lunchtime, we were offered lunch. We ended up sitting and having lunch some four or five times, having to accept and not being able to refuse, because '*eso no se hace*', (you don't do that), or '*eso es muy feo*' (that is very ugly). Only towards the end of the day, when we were really tired and had more than enough to eat, were we allowed to be excused and avoiding

sitting for yet another meal. However, we could do this just at the households of close acquaintances and even then we had to sit down and sip *mate* at least for a little while.

Reparar/Refusing the offer

Refusing the offers implicit in the hospitality context is simply unthinkable. In some cases, when the people involved are close to each other, they can excuse themselves and give good reasons not to take any food, but they would still have to take the *mate*. And generally they would be scolded in a loud voice by the hostess, who would give an angry look and would ask them, with *intonation montante*: ‘*Me estas reparando la comida que?*’ (Are you disdaining my cooked food, what?). As I have mentioned in the first chapter, *reparar* is a verb in the local Spanish that refers to the attitude of judging someone’s offers (generally of food) as not good, or not good enough - certainly below expectations. While this is, in a sense, almost to be expected from an outsider (which is why Apiao people deal reluctantly with outsiders in their own households, unless they know them well enough and trust them), should this happen between fellow islanders it would be a warning bell of some serious conflict.

In fact one of the first pieces of advice I was given was to always accept whatever I was being offered; in case I was not eager to eat, or drink, I should still take some of it and then thank politely, but always take at least some. Always accepting whatever is being offered is crucially important and it assumes a special connotation in religious contexts, where guests are offered alcoholic drinks, food and sometimes special items such as cigarettes. I was repeatedly told that even though I was not a smoker I had to accept the cigarettes and keep them in my pocket, because it is considered insulting (as well as a lack of respect) not to accept whatever one is being offered. In such a context it would be doubly disrespectful to refuse an offered item: towards both the host and towards the deceased or the saint in honour of whom the offerings have been made. In fact, the visiting etiquette and formality I have just described is something that happens on a everyday basis, on a one to one basis; but it all takes a much wider dimension when it is done during special occasions such as funerals/*novenas*/work parties. And yet the framework is exactly the same: a host that offers and guests that receive. What changes is only the scale.

A guest does not usually give thanks while he receives; and the rule for *mate* drinking states that the guest will say thanks (*gracias*) only when he does not want to drink anymore *mate*, that is, upon returning the gourd to the host for the last time. However, the etiquette requires that the visiting person, whilst leaving, thanks for whatever he received during the visit, mentioning each item: ‘Thanks for the *mate* and the bread/lunch/*chicha*’ (*Gracias por el mate y el pan/el almuerzo/la chicha*). Again, if someone omits giving thanks for whatever it’s been offered and accepted, this attitude is considered conflictual. ‘She didn’t even thank me for the *mate*. I will never ever offer her bread, she didn’t even accept it!’ (*Ni siquiera me agradeció por el mate. Nunca mas le voy a dar pan, ni me lo recibió!*) exclaimed my friend Rosa once, furious, after a hurried visit from her conflictive neighbour, who had left her kitchen in a rush just saying *chao*, goodbye.

The importance of acknowledging and thanking, once again, assumes a sacred connotation on special occasions, and fixed formulas are used to thank someone appropriately. I will describe these later on.

The imperative of reciprocity

As we have seen, the main social rule is to properly attend and serve a visitor, and that implies the offering of food and drinks, and the consumption of it by the guest. But what regulates these offerings and consumption?

The implicit rule that manages the visiting on the island as well as its entire social and, to a vast extent, its religious life is a strong factor of reciprocity. In fact, all relations are based on a dense network of scrupulously balanced reciprocities. This means that relations between people are organised according to a regular give-and-take that overrules the island's social world.

If a person goes visiting his neighbour, this indicates that they enjoy a good relation; however some neighbours do not pay visits to each other and yet are on good terms, while some other neighbours do not talk to each other at all: their social relation has somehow been interrupted. The way the relationship is carried on between the two parties is strictly regulated by the way each party renews the terms of the relationship in each encounter. People always expect a certain behaviour from the others, and each relationship is confronted with a different challenge each time that there is an

encounter, when, so to say, the connection is put to the test. If the expectations are fulfilled, the relationship goes on as before; if the expectations are unfulfilled, or 'betrayed'²² the relationship henceforth will change, according to the extent of the negligence. In fact what implicitly regulates all behaviour in a social context are social conventions informed by strict reciprocity. Gifts, food, visits, offerings and help are given in the measure and quality in which they were received in previous circumstances. Relations are then perpetuated by regular flows of giving and receiving, and are interrupted, or modified, by irregular flows of giving and receiving. What is given and received could be material objects like food or tools, or could be an appropriate 'good behaviour': kindness, generosity, friendship, and so on. The exchange is always symmetrically balanced, and the convention requires an exact symmetry to be perpetuated, in positive and in negative terms.

Here it is an example of a regular flow of symmetrically balanced reciprocity: every time my family received a visit from Laurita, an old and respected neighbour, she was given bread and *mate* as usual. But when she was about to go, she was given the food she did not consume to take home with her, wrapped in a plastic bag; '*llévense su pancito!*' 'take your bread with you!' was the common goodbye. When I asked why Laurita was always given some bread, I was told that she always did the same to them whenever they went visiting her, and '*así se hace*', 'this is the way it has to be done'. If someone does something for you in a certain way, it must be reciprocated in exactly the same form. On the other hand, if one gives and he is not reciprocated, or is reciprocated only partially, this is a serious matter that can eventually lead to changes in the relation.

During my stay in his house with his family, don Francisco repaired an old, little boat he had bought from a relative. He was going to use the boat everyday to dive for clams and sea urchins, his main source of income. The repairing and fixing of a boat requires several weeks, or months, of work, and various men are usually employed to complete the task, since some people are '*buenos para...*', 'good at...' doing certain specialised works. All boat-fixing work is carried out on the beach; consequently it is public and well known to all neighbours. Once the boat is fixed and ready to be

²² People often speak in terms of betrayal when referring to individuals who changed their attitude, and betrayed reciprocity: 'That person is treacherous (*traicionera*), be careful, do not trust her'.

launched in the water, the owner of the boat goes around his neighbourhood to look for his friends and *compadres*, to ask for their collaboration, and to invite them to the launch, called *la bota*. This is a tough and concentrated job, which requires several men (depending on the dimensions of the boat), to push and move the boat from the shore to the water, with a yoke used to pull heavy loads. Sometimes another boat is required to pull the new boat into the sea.

The night before *la bota* of his boat don Francisco went to look for help. He had a handful of candidates, and each for a precise reason: Carlos because he had interrupted his own work and helped at various times, Juan because he had given some wood for the boat, and he's 'more neighbour' (*más vecino*), therefore it would be 'ugly' (*feo*) not to call him, as well as Rodrigo, who's also a neighbour; Pablo because he had worked in the boat fixing, and Pedro, because 'we're neighbours, *compadres*, we work in the same business, and he called me when he launched his boat'. Finally, Maria was invited to come because she had sold don Francisco the lamb for the barbecue.

Everybody responded to his call, except Pedro: he gave some excuse and said that he would not go. This refusal provoked anger in don Francisco and his wife. The fact that they were *compadres*, neighbours and fellow workers only made matters worse: what really upset the family was the fact that Pedro did not fulfil his reciprocating duty, the *vuelta e' mano*, to 'give a hand back'. 'This is something that he did first, when he launched his own boat, he came and 'suplicated'²³ me; I left my own work to go and help him and accompany him on that important day, and now that I go and ask him to give me his help in return, he denies it to me. He did not return the favour! It was his turn to help!' he passionately said. I commented 'so you're short of workers now', to which don Francisco energetically replied: 'I have workers in excess ('*esos sobran*')! I invited him not for necessity but for affection, because this is a private event, only for a few chosen ones, those who are invited'. He was really upset, as was his wife, who told him in a reproaching tone: 'I am sure that the next time he calls you, you'll be the first one to rush there! I still remember the day he launched his boat, I was just back from Castro [a five-hour sailing trip] and you were on all fours on the sand!' She was reminding her husband that he had behaved correctly by fulfilling (*cumplir*) his duty as a *compadre*, accepting the request for cooperation, working the

²³ His help was formally requested. I will introduce and discuss this concept shortly.

whole day and then receiving all food and drink, until becoming so drunk that eventually he was not able to walk home properly. In his wife's remark there was the implicit critique of the fact that that day his commitment with his *compadre* had taken Francisco away from his domestic tasks for the whole day; and that when she arrived from the town loaded with their monthly provisions of wheat, sugar etc he was unable to help carry the heavy load home, because of having 'accompanied'²⁴ his *compadre* on the launch. Francisco had neglected his home and his family to be a good *compadre*, and now he was 'betrayed'.

There seems to be a double thread in the boat launch circumstance. One calls another to ask him for his help, because he materially needs it, exemplified by the verb *suplicar*, 'to supplicate'. At the same time, one is inviting another to the social event that is intrinsically implied in the launch: plenty of food and plenty of alcohol will be served until late at night, and food and drink will be given for the guests to take home. The food and the drink are intended as the payback that the helpers receive in exchange for their work offered during the day, as in each work party (*minga*). It is work, but it is also a pleasurable social opportunity in which great amounts of food and alcohol are consumed; it is a duty to respond to the call but it is also an honour to be invited, as Francisco had expressed well. In fact, being the launch a special event, there is always a small crowd of curious and occasional helpers on the beach; they get some alcohol, that is continuously offered during the launch, but they do not get invited to the house, since this is only for the *suplicados* (those who are formally requested). The *suplicados* in this case enjoy an interesting mix of privilege and duty.

The episode of the boat launch exemplifies a fault in an important circumstance; however small, events do count as well in the reciprocity balance. Here is another example. After a guest had left, Clara scolded her husband for having attended his guest, a male neighbour, with *chicha*. 'Why did you give him *chicha*? You know that he never does so, he never gives his *chicha* to anybody, that's why his *chicha* lasts for the whole winter!' In serving *chicha* to his neighbour, the man accomplished his duty as a host, but given the reciprocity imperative, he had been more generous than he ought to have been.

²⁴ The verb to accompany (*acompañar*) has a ritualistic meaning and refers to the action of responding to someone's request for help in a collective event, such as a *novena* or a *minga*, a collective work party.

From all the examples presented it is clear how in Apiao, the domestic is the a-gendered site of sociality. In Apiao it is within the domestic milieu that relations are tested, worked out, perpetuated, in contrast to a public arena where encounters are hasty and totally impersonal. Whenever two or more people meet in a public context, such as on one of the island's paths, in the church esplanade for the Sunday football games, or on a boat travelling to and from the neighbouring town, they would formally greet each other, and maybe exchange a few words, but nothing more than that. They would more probably ignore each other - even if they were close relatives. But if one goes visiting another, the same visiting ritual would sacredly occur irrespective of the relation between the people involved. I myself was surprised by what seemed to me a definite change in personality of several people: if I went to visit them I was attended like a special guest; but whenever I happened to meet them in a public context they invariably ignored me, giving rise to the rather unpleasant sensation of having to start all over again. However, I was no exception: I was treated exactly like anybody else. The point is that *the* social context is the realm of the domestic, whereas what happens outside of the household does not offer a chance to properly socialise. One is *dueño*, owner, in his house, and nowhere else, and it is only in his house that he can efficiently attend and deal with a person. The path, or the boat, or the football field, are settings too general to be seriously considered apt to social activity, and by definition exclude the possibility of offering and receiving. In fact the ideal social relation is the one that puts people one in front of one another, as interlocutors, where they alternatively take the role of guest and of host: the best and only way to cement and perpetuate relationships. That this is the basic code of sociality decorum in Apiao is demonstrated on just about every social occasion. Although sociality is mostly acted out within the walls of the households, I introduce here an episode that happens in a public space but that carries that same characteristic framework: the individuals involved shared drinks by acting out the offering and receiving ritual.

Reciprocity in a public setting: September 18

What can perhaps illustrate with a quick image, the idea of reciprocity that is constantly acted out in Apiao, is a vignette I saw during the local party for the national Chilean day, September 18, *Fiestas Patrias*, the most important social lay event of the year. For the occasion the building that hosted the football team seat was transformed into a discotheque. A stereo with loudspeakers provided music to dance the national dance, the *cueca*, and a small group of dancers was enjoying the rare chance to dance. Some women were sitting on the benches, taking care of their children. Most men were standing - those sitting with the women were either helping them with the children, or were very drunk. Most participants were young men, and they were all standing in circles, chatting and laughing. Everyone was carrying a bottle with either wine or *chicha*, or a mix of different alcoholic beverages. Each person was constantly offering his bottle to his neighbour, who accepted it, drank once or twice from it, returned the bottle and offered his own bottle back to the offerer, who in turn took it, drank once or twice, and returned it. Each man did this with each person in the circle, and whenever they walked away from the circle, each person that was around was offered the bottle, drank from it, and returned the offer passing his own bottle. For the whole evening and the entire party there was a constant flow of bottles being passed from hand to hand, from individual to individual. Each man offered to someone who accepted and returned, and vice versa.

This constant offering and receiving identical items owned at the same time by different people, is a meaningful symbol of the rule of reciprocity as a normative social rule. At the same time, by exchanging bottles in a continuous flow Apiao men were acting out their sameness and lack of differentiation (each person is exactly the same - all enjoy the same status, as we have seen in Chapter 1), offering what they have and accepting what they are given in return. They were synthesising their social life in a single slide. The party location, a public space, was neutral, thereby freeing all participants from the hospitality obligations, according to which the host offers and the guest receives: at the party all were alternatively host and guest by simply passing/receiving a bottle. Goods (the drinks that were passed around) were there to

be passed to someone else, rather than to be consumed by those who bought them. The party was an uninterrupted sharing feast²⁵.

To be ‘*obligación* with someone’: alliances

I previously mentioned that the lack of reciprocity at the boat launch episode was perceived as particularly hurtful because the individuals involved were connected by *compadrazgo* ties. I will now briefly discuss this important feature of social relationships in Apiao. When a couple get married, a set of *padrinos* (godparents) is needed, as it will be described and discussed in detail in a following chapter. The *padrinos* will be subsequently connected to the married couple, who become *ahijados*, and also to the married couple’s parents, with whom there would be a reciprocal connection of *compadrazgo*. Equally, when a child is born, the child’s parents need a set of *padrinos* for his baptism. The godparents will be *padrinos* to the child and *compadres* to the child’s parents; the child will be their *ahijado*²⁶. The same happens when a child is confirmed; although often the *padrinos* tend to be the same people that were chosen for the child’s baptism.

As we shall see later, in Apiao being related by kinship ties does not necessarily imply closeness, or amicable relations between people (let alone obligations), because relationships must be constantly nurtured in order to remain active. Therefore, sometimes people make a choice of family alliance and ask their siblings, cousins, or uncles as *compadres/padrinos*. What does this imply? It reinforces an already existing alliance - or, in some cases, it makes an alliance.

When siblings or cousins become connected through *compadrazgo*, they call each other and refer to each other as appropriate, always preceding their name with the

²⁵ The situation I just outlined is in many ways similar to the one described by Lévi-Strauss in the episode of the two guests of a little restaurant pouring wine into one another’s glass: the content is exactly the same but the gesture of reciprocity marks the willingness to entertain a relationship: ‘The two bottles are identical in volume, and their contents similar in quality. Each person in this revealing scene has, in the final analysis, received no more than if he had consumed his own wine. From an economic viewpoint, no one has gained and no one has lost. But the point is that there is much more in the exchange itself than in the things exchanged’ (1969: 59).

²⁶ One woman proudly told me that she has forty *ahijados*. To be asked to be *padrino* or *madrina* is always a welcomed event, even though it requires some expense, in that the *padrinos* need to provide gifts for their *ahijados* on the occasion that is celebrated.

title, such as ‘*compadre* Cornelio’, as my landlady used to address and refer to her first cousin (MZS). If Cornelio had not baptised one of her children, he would be called and addressed simply with his Christian name²⁷. In fact, while a kinship relation does not necessarily carry any obligation, a *compadrazgo* relation is a tie that is kept active through regular reciprocal exchange. In fact the relationship so initiated calls for obligations of reciprocity, and people use the words, *compadre/comadre*, and the word *obligación*, obligation, as interchangeable synonyms. In fact when they say ‘we are *obligación*’ they are saying ‘we are *compadres*, therefore we are *obliged* to them’. Despite the apparently loaded term, this is experienced as a socially significant bond rather than as a burden, a bond that connects people in relations of production better than kinship relations.

The *plato ‘e comida*: the gift of the plate of food.

The *obligación* relation²⁸ requires certain duties to be carried out on a regular basis. One of these is the gift of raw meat and cooked food that follows the pig slaughtering, which is done annually in every Apiao household. This gift is called the *lloco* (or more commonly *plato ‘e comida*), and it consists of a plateful of the following: doughnuts made with wheat, pork fat and a large quantity of eggs²⁹ (*roscas*), crackling (*chicharrones*), sausages made with pork blood and cabbage leaves (*prietas*) and meat. With each *plato* always goes one loaf of oven baked bread. The food is kept between two plates that are wrapped in a white cloth before being given away as a ceremonial offering that involves a fixed formula. The *lloco* exchange is the most evident expression of the connections between different households: it is the basic reciprocal food circulation that binds a circuit of households, and it happens on a yearly basis.

Whenever a pig is slaughtered - an annual event in Apiao, all the products of the *carneo* (slaughtering) are distributed amongst a circuit of partners. These are usually those who are *obligación* to each other. However, the dimension of the circuit varies considerably from household to household, and while some families distribute the

²⁷ As we will see later, Apiao people hardly ever use kinship terms (*hermano/a, primo/a, tío/a, sobrino/a, abuelo/a, cuñado/a, suegro/a* etc.). The only kinship term used is *mama* or *mamy* and it usually indicates the grandmother - not the mother.

²⁸ The word *compadrazgo* is never used in Apiao. The word *obligación* is used instead.

²⁹ I attended a *carneo* where *roscas* were made with ten kilos of flour and forty-three eggs.

lloco to up to twenty-five different households, others limit their list to just a few. ‘Why should I give away all my meat?’ a woman who gives her *lloco* only to three families told me. For her there is no point in slaughtering a pig only to distribute most of it to others. However, this does not necessarily mean that she did not have many *obligación* relations; it rather means that she had little interest in keeping those ties active. In fact, as I was told many times, each household that receives will return the offer on the occasion of their own pig slaughtering. ‘Once you are given, you are obliged to return!’ another woman told me. Once the *lloco* gift is received, it’s an invitation to start a chain of connections that must be reciprocal, otherwise it simply wanes. However, receiving the *lloco* is an action of openness that is taken seriously. It is the shifting of the balance that makes connections active by calling for delayed reciprocity, as the following quotes show. ‘The *plato* is like a debt, a huge debt! When one receives it, it must be returned!’ a woman told me. (*es como una deuda, una tremenda deuda. Cuando uno lo recibe, hay que devolverlo no más!*)

The obligation to return, for the sake of active social ties, sometimes leaves households with almost no resources: a pig that has been fed and fattened with great care³⁰ for a year or more is almost entirely given away. ‘One almost remains with nothing. If the pig is small, just with the pork’s fat. But later it all comes back. And it’s nice when the *lloco* comes to you, one appreciates it; when you slaughter your pig you almost don’t feel like eating any of it’ (*uno casi se queda con nada, si el chancho es pequeño, con la pura manteca no más, pero después todo vuelve, eso vuelve, y es bonito cuanto te llega el lloco, uno lo aprecia. En cambio cuando uno carnea casi no le da ganas de comer nada*).

Despite the fact that having to give the *lloco* gift away to return a previously received gift can be a burden, it is also understood that each *plate* given away, will be returned at some point. It’s a debt, *una tremenda deuda*, and at the same time it is expected and acknowledged that it will be returned. As one friend told me, ‘it’s something lent’ (*es una cosa prestada*). The ‘lent’ gift is the material constitution of the relationship between sets of people, and it is a clear exemplification of how in Apiao relationships are constituted through material exchange. It is through exchange that Apiao people declare, express and reiterate their sameness.

³⁰ The time and care put in the preparation for the pig’s food is remarkable. Milk for example is considered a luxury and it is hardly bought. However sometimes it is given to pigs so that they can grow healthier.

One day, while I was visiting my friend Ita, her *comadre* Ana came to see her, carrying something bulky wrapped in white kitchen cloths. She kept it at her side while sitting beside the stove, and receiving mate. We all chatted for a good while and only after Ana thanked Ita about three times (a clear signal that she wanted to leave) she got up. Only then Ita stood up too, placing herself in front of her *comadre*, stretched her right arm and offered her hand, and while looking at her, said: ‘*Muchas gracias ‘onde vinieron a molestar!*’ ‘Many thanks for your disturbance!’ The women’s bodies one in front of the other, the giver with her outstretched arm and the receiver taking the offered hand into hers, the two gazes interlocked for the time the thanking formula was proffered. The two women are *comadres* and as such they are *obligación*.

Later Ita told me that she is related to Ana because she had been the confirmation godmother (*madrina*) to Ana’s daughter. ‘When the confirmation took place, we were attended’ she told me. ‘*Nos atendieron*’. She was telling me they had been taken care of, attended and treated as guests, in gratitude for having agreed to establish a connection, and establishing a relationship that connected two households for good. And then she added ‘Here things are done this way. One is attended almost like the *fiscales* in the *remate*’ (*A uno lo atienden casi como a los fiscales en el remate*). *Fiscales* are offered abundant food and drink and are given several gifts of meat and bread to take away on the last novena nights, called *remate*, as we will see in the last two chapters of this thesis. The special attention to the *compadres* seals the beginning of a bond of reciprocal exchange and mutual trust - or, at least, signals the willingness to entertain such a bond. This bond is first and foremost reflected in the way *obligaciones* call and address each other.

Apiao people always make use of formal terms when talking to each other (they would always use *don* when referring/talking to a man, and the female determinative article ‘*la*’ when naming a woman. More rarely, the female corresponding of *don* would be used, *doña*. However, if the people were connected by an *obligación* relationship, they would always and invariably refer to each other as *compadre/comadre* or *padrino/madrina* followed by the Christian name, both when addressing each other and when talking about each other in private. The *obligación* connection is like a seal, an immutable condition - once the relationship has been

established, it cannot be undone, even if the relationship deteriorates and the people involved do not communicate any longer, they would still refer to each other as *compadres/padrinos*.

The episode on September 18 shows in a nutshell how, in Apiao, people are all absolutely the same, once again, with a simple action like passing around identical bottles. In situations such as a public party the emphasis is on sharing because all people involved are in exactly the same position. However, as I have previously underlined, the most significant encounters are held in private households, in a context of visiting, where the basic hospitality rule is articulated. As we have seen, visiting and attending a guest is carried out according to a specific etiquette. Generally speaking, Apiao people have a strong sense of respect towards each other and whenever they engage in social exchange they do stress their mutual respect by adhering to a formal register. This is evident in their bodily posture, facial expression and carefully elaborated language. I will introduce this aspect of Apiao social life by describing the simple, ordinary event of asking for something - a common circumstance in a small subsistence community.

The ritual of asking

Often visiting implies asking for something. When this happens, there is a code of decorum that people tend to adhere to. Fixed formulas are often used, and a specific attitude is adopted. When someone is asking for something he needs to de-emphasise that sameness (otherwise constantly celebrated) and put himself in a subordinate position, to allow his interlocutor to be in charge. While lack of differentiation seems to be a pattern of Apiao sociality, in situations that involve asking for something, difference (at least, contingent difference) is stylistically stated in dramatic terms. The following section is devoted to the description of circumstances where someone asks for something, within the framework of visiting.

The morning don Ignacio came to the household where I was living, the kitchen was quite crowded. He was not an *habitué* of the house, so if he was coming he must have

had a good reason, perhaps connected with the church and an imminent religious festival that he, as the main island *fiscal*, was due to organize. Besides the people who lived there (the head of the household, a woman called Maria, a grandson she was raising, two of her children with their partners and their children) her adolescent daughter and myself were present. There was also a man from a nearby sector of the island, who had come to perform the castration of a horse. After concluding the operation, he was made to sit in the kitchen and he was offered breakfast. When don Ignacio joined the party, he was also made to sit and all the men started to joke and to laugh loudly. Then the man left, and don Ignacio was offered lunch, which had been prepared in the meantime. He sat for lunch, eating without removing his jacket, despite the hot weather, the warm temperature of the room, and the hot soup he was served. He ate in silence, wiping sweat away from his forehead every now and then. Only after eating his meal, don Ignacio started a speech directed at the head of the house, Maria. He adopted a specific, submissive attitude, manifested in his facial expression and voice, as well as in his choice of words. His speech was the discourse of a shameful man dealing with an extremely embarrassing matter. His manners were exceedingly humble and his tone was as if justifying himself with tremendous effort, to overcome the shame and the sense of guilt of his action. His facial expression and his mimicry were almost a caricature, and I was genuinely surprised by what seemed to me unnecessarily redundant. The man was coming as a church representative, and what he was asking was not exactly a personal favour. ‘Why should I lie to you’ ‘*Pa'que le voy a mentir*³¹’ he said, overwhelmed with shame. ‘I came to ask for a favour, to see if you could do me this courtesy. You know, I feel terrible having to ask this, but, you know, please believe me, I am left with no other option than turning to your generosity and kindness in granting me this favour’. He needed Maria's grandson to participate in a festival on a nearby island. The boy belonged to the children's folk group and each year they presented a session of dances, songs and short plays. Ignacio was at pains with filling his quota of young performers, and he was touring the island's households to ask parents’ (or in this case, grandparents’) permission to allow their children to travel. This deferential approach allowed for the dominant attitude on the landlady's side. She stood upright while listening to the little, hunched

³¹ I have heard this expression often as an introductory formula whenever a favour is asked. It is a stylistic device to alert one's interlocutor that something is being asked. Through this phrase the person who asks is indirectly introducing his own inferior position with respect to his interlocutor.

man, with her arms folded across her chest, a severe and hard face and her jaw clenched. Even though she agreed on giving permission for the child to travel, her words and her gaze were almost threatening.

The episode just described involved people that are not in a close relationship. However, I observed a similar pattern when Maria's mother came once with a request. The elderly woman had come to ask for some sugar, but she did not utter her request before a good half-hour, in which she accepted the food and *mate* that was offered to her. Eventually she made a long introduction and said that her husband was supposed to travel to town early that morning, but he got up late and when he arrived at the ramp the boat had already left. Therefore, she was asking to borrow two kilos of sugar, to be returned as soon as possible. Given the relationship between the two women (mother and daughter), it seemed to me that this shy manner of asking was a bit redundant. The mother was asking in an extremely humble way, justifying in detail the reason for her request. Her attitude was that of an ashamed person who was trying to overcome the embarrassment of asking for what she really needed. This time Maria listened carefully and silently, with a serious and grave expression, and eventually she handed the carefully weighed sugar to her mother.

Irrespective of the relation between the individuals involved, whenever there is an encounter in which someone asks for something, the attitude of the person asking the favour is constantly characterized by a specific repertoire of stylistic elements, that require an almost ritualistic performance of humbleness and modesty on the part of the requester. What to me seemed an unnecessary overstatement, is in fact part of the required Apiao code of decorum. To be asking for something is, in a sense, to be invading someone's privacy and private space, modifying someone's equilibrium and creating an imbalance, to be corrected as soon as possible. Hence, the humble attitude works as a stylistic device to anticipate and prepare the interlocutor for what comes next. In an extremely egalitarian society, where sameness and lack of differentiation are constantly stated, modesty is a strategic expedient to allow the one who is asked a favour the privilege of being momentarily in charge.

This is reflected in the way one addresses the interlocutor when asking a favour. This fluidity of status and role in a social encounter is also demonstrated by a practice that I observed on several occasions. People alternate the use of the courtesy pronoun with the simple personal pronoun when addressing each other, according to the

circumstance. I noticed that on certain occasions a man addressed his brother on equal terms, and on others on more formal terms (*usted* or *ustedes*, more common on the island). Similarly, a woman addressed her uncle in different ways depending on the context. Even more evidently, during a conversation between two teachers, I noticed that the senior teacher was addressing his colleague and close friend in a novel way, on formal terms. He was asking a favour, and the pronoun *usted*, never used in common interaction, was then appropriate to the role the interlocutors had in that particular instance.

Silence does not give consent, or, the impossibility of negation

As we have seen, asking for something implies much more than what appears. So far we have seen episodes where asking for something encountered a positive response. However, sometimes it is not possible to respond positively to people's requests. In such cases, Apiao people tend to avoid giving a direct negative response. This attitude is well illustrated in the episodes that follow.

My good friend Pancho and his wife decided to move their house downhill, in order to be closer to the beach. Both in their late fifties, they felt that they were reaching old age and needed to have easier access to transport means, and an easier way to carry goods to their home. Moving houses is something that Chiloé people used to do commonly until the recent past. Their oxen were trained to pull and carry heavy loads. Houses were moved according to what was convenient for the owners: it was much easier to just pull a house than to build another one³². Despite this attitude with house dynamism, nowadays it is more difficult to see people pulling houses than it was in the past, and during my two-year stay there was only one such move. I knew well in advance that the event was going to take place, so I had time to tell my friends in the nearby town this news. Some of them were enthusiastic and asked me if they could join me for a few days to witness the famous house-pulling. When I told Pancho and his wife that some of my friends had shown interest, and asked if I could bring them with me, they did not reply to my question. I asked later, thinking that maybe I had

³² In fact houses are thought of as fluid objects, a sort of work-in-progress. They are often re-worked, with extra rooms added, or taken off. Room walls can be easily flattened in order to make a big salon out of several small rooms, and this is common occurrence during *novenas*.

not spoken clearly, and again, they did not say a word, acting as if they did not hear my question, or rather, as if I had not asked a question at all. I later told my friends that I had the impression that it was not a good idea to come to Apiao for the house-pulling matter.

Another revealing episode happened when I was invited for lunch by a friend, a local schoolteacher, who was living as a lodger in the house of a middle-aged couple. At some point during lunch the landlord assumed an extremely humble and embarrassed facial expression and tone of voice, and spoke to the young teacher. ‘*Maestro*, I know that I should never ask you such a question, but I was thinking, if it is not too much trouble for you, I need to go to the other side of the island and my bike is broken once again. If you could just allow me to take yours only one more time! I can assure you that I will take good care of it, and then once I’m back I will put it back in storage.’ The man, stout with a big moustache, was talking to a younger person who was about half his age, with manners and an attitude so exaggeratedly modest that I found the scene to be a bit comical. Moreover, the two were sharing a table that was already small, and I was invited to sit in the middle, between them, making the space available to each one of us really reduced. The young teacher kept eating, his eyes fixed on his stew dish, and not saying a word. Once we finished our meal I hurried to ask my friend the reason for his discourteous behaviour. He replied, quite irritated, that he was fed up with his landlord’s requests for his new bicycle. ‘He always borrows it, even without my permission, and he never puts it back! I decided that he’s not going to take it anymore’ I asked him why he did not just say no. In my opinion it would have been more correct to reply politely to an older person, even if the reply was negative. ‘No’ he said, ‘I did not reply out of politeness. Imagine the shame (*vergüenza*) had I said that I was not going to lend him the bike!’ By ignoring the question, and avoiding engaging in a conversation in which the requesting person would be rejected, he avoided humiliating his interlocutor. The following is another story in which I was again personally involved. Within weeks of my arrival I happened to have a conversation during a boat trip with the boat owner, a young man called Victor. During the conversation I asked him if he could give me his mobile phone number. I thought it would be useful in case I needed to urgently leave the island, since the only way to leave besides the few scheduled trips is to rent a boat. He looked extremely surprised, asked me if I really wanted it, mumbled that he would go

and get it and then disappeared into the boat cabin. He did not come back; and I was left wondering what had I done to cause such a reaction. I also felt humiliated since I could see him playing cards and laughing loudly with his friends through the cabin's window. Months later Victor and I became good friends and I felt enough at ease to ask him the reason for his behaviour on that past occasion. He told me with an embarrassed smile that he hardly gives his number to anyone, and that it would have been 'very ugly' (*muy feo*) to give me a negative response. Therefore, he had opted for the more polite option: to tell me 'yes' and then to vanish. While I had felt as if he was tricking me, he was, in fact, protecting me from the unpleasant feeling of shame and embarrassment perceived to be coming from a direct negation.

Suplicar: ritualising the everyday

The previous section dealt with somehow trivial requests. However, as we have previously seen with the boat launch episode, there are some requests, that are formulated in important circumstances, which are hardly ever ignored or disregarded. Such circumstances are when someone is 'supplicated', formally asked help. The following section is devoted to this important social device.

Our neighbour Blanca, a woman in her sixties, came to our household one morning and, as etiquette requires, sat down for a good while before uttering the reason for her visit. When she finally spoke, she addressed a plea to her host, who was also her *comadre*. Her facial expression revealed intense distress and severe preoccupation. 'I am coming with a very big affliction, *comadre*. Will you lend us your oven to bake bread for the *novena*?' ('*Vengo con un sufrimiento muy grande, comadre...nos prestarán su horno pa' cocer pan pa' la novena?*') Blanca used those words '*un sufrimiento muy grande*' to emphasize that she was coming with a big favour to ask. In fact, her phrase meant much more than its literal sense. She was asking my landlady not simply for the use of her oven, but to bake the bread for the entire *novena* (a nine day praying ritual), since she owned the special oven necessary for such a task. Such a request was an appeal for help³³, and, like all requests in Apiao, it

³³ In fact what Blanca asked my landlady was a huge task. Not every household in Apiao has a stone oven to bake big quantities of bread - about 40 kilos of flour are used - and Blanca, who was about to celebrate a San Antonio *novena*, was sorting out all her responsibilities as a host of such an important religious event. One of the tasks to accomplish was looking for an oven, which in this case included also looking for a person to make and bake the bread. Once my landlady offered her help, Blanca

was uttered in the formal and official way that the circumstance required. However, unlike the requests for favours that I previously described, in this case Blanca came to *suplicar*, to formally request my landlady's help in the organisation of the *novena*.

The word *suplicar*, which we met during the episode of the boat launch, means to formally ask someone to help with some work. Individuals can 'supplicate' other individuals for religious occasions, such as funerals and novenas, or for work done on special occasions, when the collaboration of several people is needed. Such occasions can be the launch of a boat, the pig slaughtering and processing, *chicha* making, and other work related to wheat harvesting and processing. The person that needs cooperation would go to visit some chosen individuals, usually friends or *compadres*, (that is, people that belong to an established network of alliances), and formally request their presence and their collaboration. Women are often 'supplicated' to help with cooking, and they would spend the whole day cooking in the house of the requester, who would direct them and indicate their tasks.

Although the invitation is performed in a humble and supplicating manner, the *suplicados* are expected to respond positively to the request. Indeed, it is uncommon to turn down someone coming to *suplicar*, and it is considered a serious matter if a person declines his help without a good reason, such as a previous commitment. In fact, it would be considered doubly offensive, as it would indicate a severe lack of respect for both the requesting individual and the occasion, and especially so if the occasion is religious.

It is interesting to notice once again the stylistic device that characterises Apiao social interactions. If a certain sacredness surrounds hospitality as a crucial social act, the sacredness is enhanced and reinforced by the whole action and meaning of *suplicar*: this is apparent in Blanca's choice of words and attitude as well as in the word that indicates the action. *Suplicar*, instead of the common verb *pedir*, (to ask): this word reflects the typical redundancy of Apiao formal style, and highlights the sacredness of the crucial moment in which one individual addresses another to request cooperation.

pointed out that she would have sent the flour and two helpers to help make the bread; as well as the necessary food to cook lunch for the three women busy with this task. That meant that my landlady was going to be busy all day for three days, in her own household. My landlady was going to be helped by two other women; however, she was also going to be the host and the one responsible for the making and baking of the bread.

When Blanca was leaving, she bid her *comadre* goodbye with these words: ‘Be patient, *comadre*’ ‘*Tengan paciencia, comadre*’. Once again, a plea for recognition, and at the same time, a way to thank.

However, by supplicating a specific individual, the one who requests is somehow acknowledging one’s ability to accomplish special tasks (in this case, baking bread in the special oven), and celebrating that skill by giving the *supplicados* a chance to act on them. To be asked, in a sense, is an honour - despite the hard work involved in the task. But, especially, by specifically asking someone’s assistance one is starting (or, more correctly, re-starting) a cycle of circular reciprocity. By asking, one is automatically getting indebted to a future occurrence of being asked, in return.

In Apiao all social events revolve around food and drink offering and receiving; to offer is an imperative just like it is to receive what is being offered; likewise, whatever is being offered will have to be equally reciprocated as soon as the opportunity arises. In this sense food is powerful - since sociality revolves around food that travels back and forth, just like the *mate* container I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. And hospitality - again, articulated through food and drink offering and receiving - is the framework for where favours are asked and granted, and for where someone asks for cooperation, *suplicar*. All parties involved know that once someone is asked, he cannot refuse: in this sense asking for something is manipulative³⁴ (Ortner: 1978: 68). In fact, asking - despite the overstated humbleness in the actual performance of the request - is not to compel, but rather equates to putting someone in the position of not being able to refuse. This applies not only with regards to what is asked, but also with regards to what is offered (confront the accusations of *reparar*, disdain someone’s food offers mentioned above) or the imperative of accepting and thanking for each item received. In this sense, food offering - as with requests, sacred or less sacred, impose a positive reaction. A refusal is not really an option.

³⁴ Sherry Ortner (1978) in her inspiring ethnography of the Sherpas describes hospitality rules and gift giving transactions. She argues that food is an extremely powerful tool, in that the one who offers food is entitled to ask favours of the one who receives the gift. Offerings of food and drink are generally instrumental and socially manipulative. ‘At the core of any hospitality event, there is a material transaction: a host gives food to his guest. Feeding is culturally considered to be an act of great power, and although in a large wedding or funeral party, for example, the host has no immediately manipulative intent, most of the other usages of the hospitality framework are explicitly manipulative’ (1978: 68).

The humble attitude while making a request, a peculiar stylistic frame of momentarily muddling up sameness, is a typical instance in Apiao. Understatement is usually a stylistic device to summon the interlocutor's attention: this is evident, once again, in the hospitality context. While offering food in copious quantity, the host would often say 'Here are some little potatoes for you' (*Aquí tiene papitas*), or 'Help yourself with a little piece of bread' (*Sirvanse pancito*) again, belittling the food offered in order to give the receiver somehow a 'higher status', achieved by belittling oneself.

This same device is noticeable in some of the fixed formulas used in a ritual context.

Ritualised behaviour in everyday sociality in Apiao

During my fieldwork one of the things that mostly impressed me was the constant use of fixed formulas, and formal behaviour, in interaction with well known people. This formal behaviour I could observe not only in ritual contexts, generally for religious celebrations, but also in common, everyday situations.

Ritual formulas

I once followed my landlords and some other friends to a funeral held on the other side of the island. The deceased was a middle-aged man who died at sea, as is often the case in Apiao. His own house was too small, therefore the dead was placed in his father in law's household, and this is where the funeral would take place. Outside the house there was a group of people, men with men, and women with children. Soon one of the deceased's brothers in law came towards us and, with an intense facial expression and tone of voice of humble plea, he told all people present 'Have the patience to enter' (*Tengan paciencia de entrar*). People have travelled in order to pay their respects to the deceased and his family, and the bereaved have the moral duty to attend the guests, and they do so with humility and gratitude. The host addresses the guests formally with these specific words, and with an expression of humbleness.

Once inside the house, in front of the corpse, which was by then surrounded by people, before the special prayers and blessings are imparted by the *fiscal*, the people present queued in line towards the widow. Each person shook the woman's right hand

and gave her a symbolic amount of money, usually a note of 1000 *pesos*³⁵. In handing over the note, each person said the following words: ‘Condolences. Forgive my small offering’ (*Sentido pésame. Disculpe con una pequeña limosna*). The widow replied to each person shaking the guest’s right hand again, usually looking in the guest’s eyes, and repeating his or her name, with the following formula: ‘Many thanks, may God and the blessed souls accompany you in your health’ (*Muchísimas gracias, que Dios y las almas benditas la acompañen en su salud*). For some reason, when it was my turn in the queue she changed her formula and she thanked me for coming to the funeral. She was making a distinction between the fact that the fellow islanders were present to pay respect to the dead and his family, but also to honour the reciprocity imperative. It will be shown later in the thesis the crucial phrase ‘no one is free’ (*nadie está libre*) uttered by my landlady when commenting on a disaster that had occurred for a neighbour: the community was called into solidarity since tragedies can happen to anyone at any time. With this phrase, heard so often during those days, people were reiterating the necessity to be there for one another in times of hardship. Those who help might in turn need help and could not expect it, if they did not offer it in the first place. But I was different: since I did not really belong to the community, I needed to be thanked in a different way - I was not honouring people I knew, nor was I reciprocating, or expecting to be reciprocated if I had to go through the same bereavement.

At the end of each funeral, in the cemetery, after the dead has been buried, a member of the family - usually a parent or the spouse - thanks all those present with a fixed formula: ‘I am grateful to all generally, men and women, and I beg you to keep patience and accompany us for three/nine nights of prayers’ (*Agradezco en general a todos, hombres y mujeres, y les ruego que tengan paciencia y nos acompañen por tres/nueve noches de rezo*).

When people gather in the deceased’s house for the prayer nights, the room is rapidly crowded and people fill the benches at both sides. The *fiscales* sit at the table at one side of the room, while men sit with men and women with women on the benches. At this point, just before the prayers start, a person from the deceased’s close family stands in the middle of the room and addresses the crowd with a fixed formula. In fact a little dialogue is staged between the host and the male audience first and then the

³⁵ Approximately £1 in value in the years 2000-2003.

female audience. ‘Good evening to the women/men’ ‘Good evening’ ‘Did you come to accompany us in the prayers?’ ‘Yes sir, for that we came’ ‘God and the blessed souls will be paid back with your patience’. (*Buenas noches las mujeres/los hombres*’ ‘*Buenas noches*’ ‘*Como están de su salud?*’ ‘*Bien gracias y Usted*’ ‘*Llegaron para acompañarnos a rezar?*’ ‘*Si señor, a eso hemos llegado*’ ‘*Dios y las almas benditas serán pagados con sus paciencia*’). Sometimes the salutation formula is repeated a little later, to ensure that no one is left without being properly addressed and included: ‘Good evening, those I have not addressed’ (*Buenas noches los que no saludé*). At the end of the praying session, just before the crowd moves out of the house, the host will address his guests for the last time, saying ‘*Tengan paciencia, mañana habrá otra noche de rezo*’ ‘Be patient, tomorrow there will be another praying night’. By saying that, he is inviting the people to accompany him and his family again in the bereavement celebrations.

All these carefully expressed formulas aim at temporarily interrupting the sameness that in Apiao is constantly expressed, to allow the give and take that produces sociality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the foundation of social life in Apiao. Sociality revolves around hospitality, which consists of a basic pattern of give and take replicated *ad libitum*. Often hospitality is the setting for requests, that are always expressed in a particularly humble style. Why is so much focus put on a humble attitude when requesting, no matter if it is done in an everyday context, or in a ritual circumstance? By asking a favour one is not only intruding, but literally crossing the other’s space and property to ask for someone else’s belongings, or to use some of the other person’s time and space. Given that in Apiao individual space and property is crucial, as well as boundaries between people’s spaces, the crossing of those boundaries becomes a strategy for communication. The starting point is sameness, and Apiao people constantly stress that they are the same, as seen previously. When a request is made, the interaction between those who ask and those who are asked unfolds according to a specific code. The person who makes a request adopts an overstated humble tone and facial expression, with extremely humble words and

usually a long and disproportionate justification when introducing the reason for the request. If the words uttered are not many, they would certainly be chosen to emphasize humility. The one who asks assumes a humble role, whereas the one who is asked assumes the role of someone who is ‘superior’, though only temporarily. In fact the sameness that regulates sociality is momentarily forgotten to allow an empowerment on the one hand, and a humbling on the other. The requester knows that by granting his interlocutor a higher position, he will be able to obtain what he needs. In fact the attitude, the use of formulas, etc. emphasize a momentary lapse in sameness, which is necessary to perpetuate relations. This temporary unbalance is the constitution of social relations: by continuously breaking the balance they are creating the possibility of sameness.

PART II. RELATEDNESS

Chapter 3. How households are made: Marriage, independence and productivity in Apiao

Marriage, independence and productivity in Apiao

To explore and understand the way Apiao people conceptualise kinship, I will now illustrate how households are formed, and how couples are made. Starting from the way children learn to be 'proper persons', I will follow adolescents in their daily tasks and I will then describe how one couple I knew decided to form a new family. This will allow me to explore understandings of marriage as asserting individuals' autonomy and independence.

What do Apiao people think the proper way is to be a man, and a woman? In the first part of the chapter I will list and illustrate the activities that males and females accomplish within the household or for the benefit of it. I will distinguish between male and female tasks, pointing out that in fact most of the activities are communal. Then I will turn to observe young people in their free time spent outside the household.

Young teenagers, like anybody else in Apiao, are busy with everyday activities in and around the household. These are considered crucial for the well-being of the house and its inhabitants. Boys accompany, substitute or complement their fathers in the heavier set of domestic tasks, such as cutting down trees, chopping wood, clearing the ground of roots, moving heavy loads, fishing or diving. Girls tend to stay at home and help their mothers or grandmothers with the routine domestic activities. These include feeding the domestic animals, cooking food for the pigs and the people, making bread, doing the washing, carrying wood or water and attending visits. This is the habitual division of tasks when both men and women are present. If men are not present women will substitute them, and vice versa. In fact people learn most tasks at a young age, and if necessary men and women will interchange tasks. Some tasks are performed communally - men and women, adults and children together.

Some typically male tasks are related to wood, and require strength and physical ability. Cutting and transporting logs is one of these heavy tasks. Once cut down with axes, the logs are transported by land with a yoke of oxen, or by sea, using a boat. The logs are then transformed into poles for fencing purposes, or can be chopped to use as firewood. Any building and roofing work would be done by men. Men are also in charge for the various types of fences that delimit fields and property. A typical fence is made using branches from *arrayan* shrubs, that must be cut, cleared of leaves, and accumulated in quantity before weaving long, fabric-like fences. Land must be cleared of any trunks and roots before being used as potato or wheat fields, and this is typically done by men.

The task of chopping wood takes people's time and energy every day, irrespective of the weather. Apiao people prefer to chop small quantities every day rather than preparing and storing a good amount of wood to last for the whole year. Wood is constantly needed to keep the stove going: the stove is used both as a heating and cooking device, and its fire is extinguished only right before going to sleep at night. Wood chopping is usually, but not exclusively done by men. All women know how to do it and would do it if required.

Men are generally in charge of the animals: sheep, cows and horses. It's always men who tame young animals, and who perform operations on them, such as castration. They are also in charge of the slaughtering of animals (except chickens, which are women's priority). It is usually men's duty to take care of the animals, and they do so by going uphill to the more distant fields to count them every morning, and to make sure they are healthy. Men yoke the oxen, to use them whenever they are necessary, as a means of transport, carefully packing loads on the wooden sleigh attached to the yoke, or to work in the fields. And finally, men go fishing and diving for seashells and crabs. All these tasks are performed by adult men together with their children, starting from when they are in their teens. A young boy always follows his father and anxiously waits to be considered old and good enough to be involved in a task. Boys start chopping wood when they are 10 to 12 years old, and they are proud of showing their ability in what is clearly an adult's task.

Young women help their mothers with all the everyday duties of the household, and they start doing so at a very young age. The tasks are abundant so any working hands are highly valued. To begin with, chickens must be fed, soon afterwards a fire is made

in the *fogón* to cook the food for the pigs. Women go and look for light, dry wood to be used specifically for this task, and go on with the usual procedure of lighting the fire, preparing the pig food and looking after it. Usually several pans must be cooked, as there are several pigs and they need food more than once per day, so the pig meal affair lasts most of the day, with the woman in charge checking the fire and the food every now and then. Then, water must be fetched. Often women need to walk a distance to a pit or a spring, and come back home with a bucket of water, several times a day. Another typical female task is to do the laundry: on a clear, sunny day every woman on the island would fill her big wooden tubs and start washing a pile of dirty clothes, with the help of a brush to remove the crusty mud. Wash, rinse, wring out the water and hang out before the sun disappears. Soon it would rain again and clothes must be dried above the stove, little by little.

Women are always in charge of the preparation of meals, unless they go travelling, and the man is left to fulfil the female tasks. They might have to provide the food to be cooked, such as when they go to the beach to collect seashells. Whenever the tide is good, they go to the beach early in the morning, with a shovel and a basket. It is crucial to have '*algo pa' echar a mi olla, para hacer mi comida*', 'something to put in my pan, to make my meal', and the use of the possessive adjective underlines that this is 'their' task - almost a proud statement of ownership and belonging. And they make bread, a routine job that is done every other day. Together with her family, a woman must also feed the chickens, pigs, cats and dogs of the house. A resourceful woman knows how to weave, to knit and to make baskets. Blankets and baskets, besides being goods for the household, can also be sold or bartered.

Hard working, skilled, responsible men, and industrious, resourceful and jocose women are considered good partners and desirable spouses. People with these characteristics have a better chance of being involved in a relationship, and are appreciated and esteemed within the community. On the other hand, laziness, capriciousness, irresponsibility and bitterness - as well as overindulgence in alcohol drinking are attitudes and defects openly condemned.

Women, men and children work together in the field and in the gardens, for every phase of the agricultural cycle: the preparation of the field before and after sowing, the sowing and the harvest. They all take active part in the making of the apple cider, as well as in the pig slaughtering and consequent meat processing. It must be stressed

that the emphasis is always on the household as a productive unit, to which each member of the family contributes actively. In fact, most of the work described and listed above is done at the same time, within the same space, and interchangeably between men and women. All work is always done to benefit the household, never single members of it.

I will now turn to what I call 'social' situations, directing my attention to youth in particular, and to what happens during particular days of festive occasions. This allows me to introduce young people's attitudes towards sexuality and marriage, as well as ideas about the status of being single.

Whenever they go out of the household precincts, people are leaving their private realm to go outside, *salir pa'fuera*. The word 'salir' indicates going to a place, participating in any kind of activity that does not take place within or around the household, or is not immediately concerned with the household. In this sense, the immediate, self-evident difference between a person involved in an activity within the household premises and one involved in a '*pa'fuera*' context would concern their clothes. In the household everyday context people wear working clothes (old trousers and jumpers for men and long aprons for women) and working shoes, usually rubber boots. Given the characteristics of the terrain and the rainy weather, clothes and boots get muddy easily and quickly, and everyday duties also contribute to stains and patches. But whenever they go out, Apiao people dress up in their best clothes and best shoes, kept for the relatively rare social opportunities held '*pa'fuera*'. Everyone would make a point of washing and carefully combing their hair, and would sport fashionable jeans, immaculate jackets and shiny shoes³⁶. Women with children would carefully bathe them, dress them in new, elegant clothes and perfume them with cologne.

On Sunday evenings, religious *fiestas* and special occasions such as football tournaments or dancing parties young people enjoy the opportunity to go out,

³⁶ I was scolded a few times for wearing every day clothes on 'public' occasions, and for being reluctant to leave my boots. Wearing rubber boots in public situations is considered counter aesthetic and particularly inappropriate. Men who dance in religious occasions (notably, the San Antonio *novena*) would excuse themselves if doing so with their boots.

socialise and share time with same-age friends, away from their parents. Parents are generally wary of teenagers' freedom, especially so towards girls. They tend to be quite strict and girls must obtain permission before spending the evening out, or going to parties. Reasons for this are hardly voiced, but clearly involve the sexual freedom young people might enjoy at such gatherings. At the same time however, late teenagers and youths in their early twenties are implicitly considered to be ready and old enough for marriage. Indeed, they are expected to think about marrying, before getting older.

Teenage girls generally receive the attention of boys and young men, and they can decide whether they are interested or not, by accepting or refusing the courtship. Generally it is the man who takes the initiative, and it has to be the man who asks a woman to start a relationship, *pedir pololeo* in local Spanish. Although women would never ask *pololeo* of men, they flirt freely and sometimes provoke men, showing them interest. Relations start, usually secretly, and continue with the complicity of the group of friends and siblings of each party. It is very common for Apiao couples to meet secretly for several months, even years, before making the relationship public by co-residence. Couples meet in the dark, spend some time together, have hasty sexual encounters and go back home. They either lie to justify their absence, or go out while everybody in the house is asleep.

A young girl starts having boyfriends in her early teens, and she might have several relationships one after the other. Unless, of course, she is 'difficult', meaning, she is not willing to accept courtship, willing to joke, to take risks and so on. A girl who continuously refuses courtship would be considered difficult and spoilt.

People do not really talk about *pololeo* in Apiao, and during my stay it was almost impossible to see unmarried couples going out together. I remember once to my surprise, spotting at a distance an unknown couple walking on the main path in a close embrace. Clearly they were not locals: they were the newly appointed teachers of the school. In fact, whenever I saw a couple walking on the path, this either meant they were married, or that there was no relation between them at all.

Romantic relations are never public, and they are not discussed within households. They are not a common topic of gossip either, unless the people involved are

behaving in a way that is considered inappropriate, such as adulterous relations, or relations between older women and younger men. But romantic relations in general are not a favourite subject of conversation. Given that people are mostly aware of what goes on in the life of their neighbours, and fellow islanders in general, I was surprised to notice that romantic (and sexual) relations are not disclosed nor discussed, as a general principle. Whenever I asked young people about the secretiveness that surrounds romantic relations and the reasons behind it, I was told that girls should ask the permission of their parents before starting a relationship. But to ask permission is somehow risky, as it might not be obtained, therefore couples prefer to meet in secret, without informing their parents. They must be careful to prevent relatives and neighbours from noticing them. If people see them, they would tell the parents, and the girl's father might prohibit the girl from going out at all. Parents in fact often intervene and make couples separate, or, indeed, make couples marry. Another reason for meeting in secret is the fact that, as a woman told me, 'If later nothing happens [the couple do not get married], they are devalued because people would always remember that relationship', '*quedan despreciados*': they remain devalued. More than being a moral issue, there seems to be a concern with the power of gossip, as if people in Apiao make every possible effort to protect themselves from each other.

Throughout my fieldwork I was told that couples prefer to deal with each other in secret; nonetheless I collected two examples of men successfully asking permission to court a woman. When don Juan started dating his future wife, he had just come back from Patagonia, where he had spent five years. He told me that he went to ask permission of the woman's grandparents, who had brought her up, before going out with her in a *pololeo* relationship. He had seen people behaving this way in Patagonia, and felt it was the proper way to do it, although it was not very common in Apiao. He was given permission to court his girlfriend, so they were able to meet without having to hide from neighbours and relatives, and eventually they got married.

I collected another similar story: Pedro had asked permission to court Sofia a long time before they got married. As Sofia's mother put it, 'She was asked before being asked for marriage': Pedro had made sure that Sofia's parents knew and accepted his serious intentions. Pedro told me that Sofia's mother had already approved of them, what had really worried him was Sofia's father's reaction. Eventually all went fine. At

the time of my fieldwork don Juan had been married for 20 years, and Pedro for 16 years.

The shift from a hidden relation to a publicly acknowledged, formal union between a man and a woman rests on the man's initiative. It is the man who initiates a separate family by going to the woman's household and formally asking for her hand. This event, called *pedimiento* (literally, the 'asking for [a wife]'), happens almost abruptly and involves a great deal of formality. Although official marriage (civil and religious marriage) is not celebrated for several months, the new couple are considered effectively married immediately after the *pedimiento*, when the woman leaves her family and goes to live with the man in his parents' household. The ethnography shows how little emphasis there is on marriage celebrations, while there is a stress on the reciprocity imperative that ties individuals together.

What follows is the description of the relationship of a young couple, starting from the early stage of their hidden *pololeo* to the *pedimiento*, co-residence and official marriage.

Anita and Pablo.

Anita and Pablo had been seeing each other secretly for a few years. As often happens on the island, they were neighbours: they grew up in two households '*pa'rriba*', in the northern part of the island, less than ten minutes walk from each other.

Until the day she 'was asked' by Pablo, Anita lived with her widowed mother, her grandmother, her two unmarried brothers and two sisters, also unmarried. The three young women used to do everything together: working in the fields and at home, visiting their married sisters or other relatives, and travelling to the nearby town to run errands. They were very close, and looked inseparable. In their mid to late twenties, they were remarkable for their discreteness, their shyness, and for their silent presence. I had the chance to closely observe the family interactions because I lived with Anita's family, and I was very close to Pablo's family.

Besides enjoying a good neighbouring relation, the two families were connected through the *comadrazco* system, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, ties people in alliance and reciprocal obligations. Anita's younger brother was 'given' as a godchild to Pablo's father, making both sets of parents *compadres*. Pablo, moreover, was a good friend of Anita's younger brother, and together with his own brother they all played in the same football club every weekend, and often met to play cards, or to help each other in various tasks. Being so close, it was somehow easier for the couple to see each other and to organise their meetings. They often relied on their younger brothers to pass on messages, or to cover up for them in case of a prolonged absence.

The boat launch: Anita is '*supplicada*', asked for help

Despite my regular attendance of both households, I never heard a word, or an innuendo, about anything regarding Pablo and Anita's relationship. The only comment I heard came from outside and was uttered by a seemingly well informed woman, on the occasion of the launch of Pablo's new boat. 'I'm sure he's going to call his boat FILOMENA', she said to me. Filomena is Anita's full name, and that comment meant that the woman had either seen the couple, or was told that they were in a relationship. On hearing the gossip Pablo looked worried, and asked me who had said so, and denied it promptly. On the day of the boat launch he had formally requested Anita's help (*suplicar*) to cook for his guests, the friends who had helped him in the launch. Two of those friends were Anita's brothers.

Anita was 'supplicated' for the kitchen, where she helped Pablo's mother, Carmen. I spent the whole day with them, first at the beach to watch the launch, and then in the kitchen with Carmen and Anita, preparing lunch and serving the men, that sat at the table in the living room. There was nothing in the women's attitude that implied a special relation: they treated each other with respect, and the host addressed the *supplicada* with the typical style of such circumstances, directing her and sending her around to look for whatever was necessary. Anita accomplished her role as helper with respect and goodwill, mostly in silence. At the end of the lunch Pablo came into the kitchen with two bottles of special wine: one for the table, and one for Anita. 'This is for you!' he told her, handing her the bottle with a wide smile. She was taken by surprise, and blushed; then accepted the bottle looking away. The fact that Pablo had

given her a present in front of two other persons (his mother and me) was clearly a meaningful act, a statement of a deep attachment.

I was quite close to Pablo, and we often had a chance to chat on our own- he would never say anything in other people's presence - so I asked him about Anita and himself. At first he denied any romantic involvement, and then slowly, little by little he told me their story. They had been going out for a few years, but always in hiding, (*a la escondida - a la callada*), and it had to be so because her mother and her elder brother might have opposed the relationship. They had no trouble in meeting regularly, because they lived close by and their younger brothers could help in arranging meetings and covering up for them. He had serious intentions: he wanted to get married at some point, and maybe have children. 'I'm good for children!' '*soy bueno pa' lo'cabro chico!*'

Looking for *padrinos*

In the following months Pablo told me that all was proceeding well. He had informed Anita's eldest sister, a married woman (therefore living independently) and that she approved of their relationship. 'One day we'll have a big party! Not yet though...' he kept telling me. In September the following year (2002) he radiantly announced to me that he had great news, that he'd soon be able to tell me. Then, about a month later, on a Sunday afternoon, I spotted Pablo and Anita walking on one of the main paths, boldly holding each other very much like the couple of teachers I had met once. They were in my neighbourhood, in the southern part of the island, *pa'bajo*. I wondered, aren't they afraid of being seen? What would be the reaction of the neighbourhood if they were seen, and the consequences? They greeted me, we exchanged a few words, and then proceeded in opposite directions. Hours later, I saw Pablo again at the football field, where there was a post-football charity event, in which alcoholic drinks were being sold to gather some money to benefit the neighbourhood association. It was almost dark, and everybody was quite drunk.

I approached Pablo, who was on his own, and asked him if there was any news, if after all he was going to get married. The following sequence of events happened rapidly and quite unexpectedly: Pablo replied with a wide smile that yes, he was going to marry very soon! He requested that I be discrete, to keep it as a secret, and

then said: on Friday! 'Friday?' I asked, confused. 'Yes! On Friday I'm going to take her, to take her home (*me la llevo, me la llevo a mi casa*). And then we will get married, we will celebrate...I came here to look for the *padrino*! It's going to be don Jorge³⁷. There he is...excuse me!' and off he went, towards the man, who was selling wine in front of us. Pablo greeted him and called him aside, and they talked briefly. I heard the man saying 'Friday?' and I left.

Pablo was referring to the *pedimiento*, the asking for the hand in marriage of a woman. I had heard about the Apiao marriage before, but I had never come across a traditional marriage during my stay. Apiao people in general are not willing to talk about their personal life, and less so for romantic matters. Pablo and Anita had been visiting don Jorge and his wife to ask them to be the wedding *padrinos* (godparents); and Anita had stayed in the house with her future *madrina* while Pablo went to look for don Jorge, who was busy with the wine stall.

The next day I went to visit don Jorge and his wife, both good friends of mine, and they told me that they never expected to be asked to be *padrinos*, since they felt they were getting older (they were in their late fifties); moreover Pablo did not visit them frequently. I then told don Jorge that I would have loved to have the chance to see the important event of the following Friday.

Asking for permission

Aware of the delicate situation, I asked the man if he thought it was appropriate for me to be present at such a private happening. He approved of my presence, given my connections to both families involved, but he warned me to ask Pablo for permission.

When I met Pablo, after having arranged to meet at his parents' household, it was on the Thursday evening: the day before the event. He was very nervous: his parents did not know yet, '*mis viejos no saben todavía*'. I explained to him that I wished to participate in the event, if he would allow me, and I mentioned my conversation with don Jorge. He assured me that he had no problem, but he said: 'You must ask the hosts', '*los dueños de casa*': ask Anita's mother, and Anita. Go to Anita's and tell her that you knew in your neighbourhood, through don Jorge; tell her that you already

³⁷ Don Jorge happens to be Pablo's father's brother. However, there is no prescriptive rule on choosing relatives as *padrinos*.

spoke to me and that I agreed, and let her decide.' All this, he whispered in a moment when we were alone in the kitchen. Shortly afterwards his mother came in and, while serving me *mate* she asked Pablo if he was going to work on the following day. 'I don't think so...' he said, vaguely, and the woman looked at him a bit annoyed, and asked if he had informed his work partner. Quite confused by the mystery and reticence that surrounded the event, I proceeded to Anita's house.

If people want to have a private conversation, they meet outside, in the yard in front of the household, generally by the fence. This is where I met Anita, who was also very nervous, and looked away while I repeated Pablo's words. She took some time before replying: 'I don't know...but if you have the will, I have no problem' (*No sé...pero si usted tiene voluntad, pa' mi no hay problema*). I asked her to call her mother, so that I could ask her too, and once more I had a positive response. We then agreed that on the following day I would join them early in the afternoon. I would be there to wait for the groom, his parents and the *padrinos* together with Anita and her family.

The discretion and form of respect shown in the above episode, as well as the reticence to allow someone without having been granted full permission by all involved is in tune with what has been described previously in the sociality chapter. Apiao people are aware of the possibility to intrude into someone's private life and whenever asking for something, a great deal of humility is required and nothing is taken for granted.

While Anita's brother took me to a further household fence, on my way back home, I asked him if he was happy about the coming event. He only said that he was happy, but also sad, however, after all 'it's quite close', '*es cerquita*'. He was referring to the fact that Anita was leaving her family, but she was going to live nearby, in Pablo's household, and closeness would make the separation more bearable.

The *pedimiento*

The following day I went to Anita's household in the afternoon, as agreed. I found all the family members busy with their usual occupations, wearing the same working clothes and rubber boots of everyday; the elder brother -the man of the house- interrupted his work when I arrived: he was wearing dirty clothes and was unshaven.

No pasa na! 'Nothing happens!' he replied to my questioning remarks. The younger brother did not appear for the whole evening, he was busy playing football with his friends, as I was told. Despite everyone doing their best to pretend nothing important was going to happen, the tension was palpable. Anita, her hair still wet, was extremely nervous and was looking out of the window in silence. I tried asking her how she felt, and obtained very little: she said it was difficult to leave her house forever, and that one never knows how things will turn out eventually.

I suggested that Anita's grandmother and I go out for a little walk, one of our favourite activities, to while away the time. I asked her if she was happy about the event, and she started to cry, and said '*la harina se ve de' el cedazo*', 'you can see wheat from the sieve', implying that Pablo was not a good choice, and showing me her evident disapproval. I tried to console her, assuring her that Pablo was a really good person, but she said 'we'll see, we'll see', pressing her stomach with her hand: she had been in pain for the whole day, she said.

When we got back, the five guests had already arrived and were sitting in the living room, somewhat embarrassed. Pablo's mother and the *madrina* were sitting together; the two men, father and *padrino* were next to Pablo, who was extremely pale and stared constantly at the floor. Anita sat on the other side of the room, also pale and silent. Pablo had brought a bottle of liquor, and some glasses; he was supposed to serve the drink but was clearly too nervous, so he did it randomly and irregularly. Anita's mother entered the room in her working clothes, shook hands with the guests and sat down. Someone commented on the bad weather, and how difficult it was to proceed with work in the fields. Anita's mother replied politely but did not engage in the conversation, keeping her head low and holding her hands across her apron. Silence fell again. After several pauses and silences, the *padrino* started to talk, in a very serious tone and spelling the words out: 'Well. We came for something, so now we will discuss the matter, because this is the purpose of our visit. *Señora*, we came after being asked by the young man here. The young man here asked us, as *padrinos*, to come and ask for Anita's hand, in the name of Pablo!'

I lifted my gaze and realised everyone was humbly looking down, with the young couple especially embarrassed, and pale. Even don Jorge, despite his decisive manner

of speaking, had a very humble and embarrassed expression in his face. After he spoke, he paused to let the woman reply, and she said: 'I knew he was coming, because he came to tell me in advance. What do you want me to say? I cannot force her to stay, if she wants to go!' Pablo's mother intervened with energy: 'They're old enough, and they have thought about it for a long time! It's about time that they form their own family.' 'Yes', added don Jorge, 'I see it all the time, for all children one may have, one always remains alone! Look at us, we had so many children, and yet none of them is left to accompany us! At least you have other children left to accompany you.' And then the atmosphere became slightly more relaxed, until silence fell again. At that point don Jorge spoke again to say that they had accomplished their duty, and they could go: '*A eso vinimos, y ahora nos iremos andando*', and they all stood up ready to leave. Anita's mother stopped them and asked them to wait. The table was quickly set, while in the kitchen the other girls were busy cooking dinner. There was a moment of indecision, on the hosts' side, about who was going to sit together with the guests. They insisted I should sit at the table, but I declined, encouraging Anita to take a seat together with the guests. Initially reluctant³⁸, she eventually accepted and I helped the unmarried sisters in serving at the table, bringing food from the kitchen to the living room. So there they sat, eating a quickly prepared dinner, the three couples: Pablo and Anita, their godparents, and Pablo's parents. No one else sat at the table with them, and no one else stayed in the living room: Anita's family and I stayed in the kitchen, and ate dinner there. We were having the same food at the same time, but in two different rooms: the guests in the living room, and the hosts in the kitchen, the two rooms separated by a wall, and communicating through a door that was kept shut. While eating in silence, we could hear the hosts next door chatting - especially the two men - and occasionally laughing.

Once finished their meal, the guests stood up, thanked and left hastily, using the main entrance of the house, reserved for special guests, which is hardly used at all. Anita joined them, carrying a small suitcase. That moment marked an important transition: she was leaving her home to go and live with her husband in the house of her in-laws. From that moment on, she was an independent, autonomous person, detached from

³⁸ Anita was clearly uncomfortable with switching from being a host to being a guest in her own household. She wanted me to sit at the table and be served, and she was prepared to serve me and the *pedimiento* party; however, her status had changed: she had just successfully been made part of a different household.

her own family nucleus and household. From the moment her mother had agreed to 'give' her, Anita became part of the guests' group: being served, rather than serving, unlike her unmarried sisters. Yet, nothing seemed to mark this event taking place in the house: Anita's sisters left straightaway to go and continue with their work, the elder brother sat with his mother and grandmother, beside the stove, like any other early evening.

'Aren't you going?' they asked me. 'Well, I wasn't invited!' I replied, my eyes still fixed on the six figures that were leaving the house patio. Just then Carmen, Pablo's mother, stepped back and yelled at me, urging me to join them together with Anita's elder brother. At that point I realised that Anita's mother was crying. 'Why are you crying? There's no use to tears, you must not cry (*no sirve llorar*). Moreover they are so close!' she was scolded by her son, that urged me to go and join the party in Pablo's house.

When we reached the neighbours' household, the kitchen table was set and meat was roasting in the oven. Pablo's younger brother had stayed at home busy with the preparation of the meal, and we all sat at the table for our second dinner. The atmosphere was relaxed and the TV was on. We all ate in silence while watching the soap on the national channel, a favourite of every household, to the point that - no matter what - all activity was interrupted to sit and watch the soap opera. After watching TV we chatted about several topics, none of which verged on the marriage. Notably, Pablo was radiant and was continuously serving wine to everybody, filling glasses as soon as they were emptied. Abundance of wine is usually a sign of a special celebration, and roasted meat was served instead of the more common stew. Clearly, in the bride's family, the dinner had been hastily prepared to attend the guests, and not certainly to celebrate the marriage of a family member, an event that was all but appreciated, at least apparently. In fact, the bride's family's attitude, far from being joyous, seemed to exemplify the experience of weakening and loss³⁹. Even though in

³⁹ Compare the following passage described by Van Gennep in his seminal book on rites of passage: 'To marry is (...) to pass from one family to another (...). An individual separation from these groups weakens them but strengthens those he joins. The weakening is at once numerical (and therefore a reduction in force), economic, and emotional' (Van Gennep 1960:124).

A detailed account of Mapuche weddings amongst 'civilised indigenous people' as opposed to traditional weddings through kidnapping is described by Noggler (Noggler 1982: 14ff). What appears significantly similar is the sequence of events, and the formality of the speeches between the parties

the groom's family the atmosphere was more celebrative, I would hesitate to describe it as a celebration for an important transition, as opposed to a get-together, in the presence of guests that were quite close to each other to begin with, being neighbours in one case, and close relatives in the other.

Other remarkable elements to be noted are the reticence and mystery surrounding the event, from all the parties involved. Despite my familiarity with both families, and my presence in their households during the preceding weeks, the subject of the imminent wedding was never uttered. Some of the members of the households seemed to ignore the event themselves, noticeably the groom's parents. The whole event was downplayed by both parties: no special clothes were worn, nor was special food prepared, no time was devoted to talking about the event, or preparing it. Activities continued as normal, and people did not change their habits, or their clothes. The TV soap was watched during dinner - as if to underline a day that was just like any other day.

The whole *pedimiento* circumstance seems a good example of what Van Gennep calls 'social disturbance', a 'disturbance of equilibrium' (1960:139), involving individuals having to ask permission of each other in what seemed to me, at the time, more an intrusion and an interference than a transition celebration.

Getting married: Carmen's story

A long time before Anita was asked for, *pedida*, I had a conversation with Carmen, Pablo's mother, about couples and *pololeo*, and she told me her story. In the past everything was different: it had to be done in hiding, because '*los mayores*', the parents, were much more strict than they are now, and if they found out, young girls would have been badly beaten. No girl was allowed to go out on her own, so one needed to gain the trust of a company of girls to keep the secret. She had met her future husband in the church square, and they saw each other secretly for about a year, meeting only once in a while, when there was something going on in the church esplanade, '*cuando había movimiento*'. And then, one evening, he had come to take

involved – notably, the mediator (the part that belongs to the *padrino* in Apiao) and the father of the bride. Also, confront Faron 1961: 156ff, where marriage by elopement amongst the Mapuches is described.

her home with him. He had told her that he would come to ask for her, but she did not believe this, she did not take him seriously.

She had spent a busy day working in the fields, and when she got back home she found the kitchen full of guests: '*Una tremenda cuadrilla e' gente!*' It was the man with her future mother in law, and the *padrinos*. Her parents got really upset with her, '*me enojaron harto*', but they could not really do anything: 'They could not refuse me to them: you cannot deny a daughter when she is asked for with *padrinos* and everything!'

Why were her parents upset? Because they realised she had a secret relationship with a man, and was able to fool them? Or because the man, by marrying her, was taking her away from her family, depriving them of an important work contributor? (see Van Gennep 1960: 124). When a woman is 'asked' for by a man, or, better said, by a *padrino* on behalf of a man, she is officially asked for. To refuse to give her (or, to let her go) would equate to lacking in respect for the man who acts as a *padrino*, as well as the prospective husband and his parents. The night Carmen was asked for by her future husband and his *cuadrilla*, she went home with them straightaway, '*con lo puesto*', literally meaning 'with the clothes she was wearing'. People use this expression to mean something that happens unexpectedly, situations in which one cannot possibly change his or her clothes, a matter of concern, as seen previously, when people change and prepare to go out for various events. I asked her if she had carried a bag of clothes, and she said that she did not have time for that, so she had to go '*con lo puesto*', because 'when they come to take you, you must go'. In the following days she had to go back to look for clothes. Then I asked her if she was given a room for herself in the groom's house. 'Of course we slept together!' she said, '*al tiro!*' 'straightaway'. She didn't really know her husband's family before getting married, just '*de dia y de tarde no más*', they just used to greet each other politely, and nothing else. During the co-residence her in-laws had been nice with her, and she was on good terms with both her mother in law and the woman's niece, who also lived in the household. After a week, though, she started to miss her family and her previous home, and a great distance separated her from her original household. At that time it was more difficult to walk there, because there were no paths on the island, so she could not really go back frequently. But soon she got used to her new life. When I asked Carmen if she was in love, and if that had helped her adjust to her new

situation, she said 'Yes, in the beginning, but soon that foolishness (*tonteria*) ends, and one has to face real life'. She was 17 at the time. 'I was very young, and did not understand much, at that age one is too young and knows nothing. I am against getting married too early, one does not enjoy life' she told me.

It seems that the *pedimiento* after all is a matter of 'asking' for something and, as Lévi-Strauss (1969: 61) would have it, it is the asking for the most precious thing: a woman to form another household, another productive unit: a family. The rituality of the whole event is remarkable, with the presence of the two couples (*padrinos* and parents) to render the occurrence as official as possible. Those involved assume the attitude of the ones who ask and the ones who are asked, and their approach reflects their position. As we have seen in the previous section, for sociality to work there is the need to shift the balance constantly, the need to interrupt that sameness otherwise constantly proclaimed. This is done by asking or offering something to someone else. The adjustment to the shift in the balance are what creates exchange and ultimately, social life in Apiao.

More on secretiveness

Another remarkable story of getting married in secret is the story of Aurelio: although this story differs from the others in that the couple already had one child, the dynamics of the *pedimiento* bear the same pattern of secretiveness. Aurelio and Lucia, from two different neighbourhoods on the island, had been dating for a while. She had a three-year-old child from the liaison. One late evening Aurelio went to ask for godparents, and that same night, quite late, he went to ask for Lucia (*pedir*). I was told of the episode by the *padrinos* themselves, who explained the man's behaviour simply by saying that clearly he did not want to be seen, he did not want people to know. The episode was recollected with much hilarity by the godfathers.

Another episode contributes to my understanding of the institution of marriage in Apiao as basically downplayed and minimised. Ester, a woman in her early fifties, once invited me to join her and her family for a special dinner. They were celebrating her husband's *santoral*, name-day, and their elder child was given his father's name, thus they liked to remember the day of their name saint with a special meal: good food and abundant alcohol. 'I always remember this day', she told me when we were

left on our own, 'and today marks 23 years since I entered this place for the first time'. Yet, the celebration was for the name-day, not for the *pedimiento* anniversary, and thus this date was always celebrated for the name-day sake. During the dinner the family mentioned several other name-day celebrations they had in the past, and the couple's child told me how sad he had been once on this day, forced to eat beans on his own, while doing his military service. No mention of the couple's start of a life together was ever made.

Going back to our young couple, I will now address the sequence of facts following the *pedimiento* of Anita. On the *pedimiento* night I went back home after dinner, along with the *padrinos*, since we lived in the same neighbourhood, about one hour's walk from Pablo and Anita's sector. As it often happens on the island, we took a shortcut which passed through the property of don Ignacio, married to the *madrina*'s sister. We passed close to the household main door, and despite being very late at night don Jorge felt obliged to scream 'Don Ignacio! *Permiso!*' asking for permission to trespass. Nobody came out, and no dogs barked or attacked us, so we proceeded.

The following day I was sitting and chatting with a group of women in the church esplanade, waiting for a prayer meeting to start. One of the women was the *madrina*'s sister, and she told the others how the night before her sister and her brother-in-law had stopped briefly, saying that they would have passed by on their way back. But they did not mention the reason for their presence in the neighbourhood, therefore she was speculating with her friends: 'Who knows what their business was! I bet it was a *pedimiento*! I say so because I also heard the voice of a young woman, but I didn't recognise it, and I thought that they were doing as people sometimes did in the past, when the *padrinos* used to take the bride to stay with them until the wedding⁴⁰'. I clarified her doubts and told her that the voice she had heard was mine, and that the bride had stayed with her in-laws. She then added several more comments and gossip about the bride, her mother, Pablo, don Jorge and so on. The reticence to discuss one's own personal matters, and to share details of one's private life is matched with intense speculation on the other side: one's own private life events are scanned, discussed and

⁴⁰ I should say I never heard of such a tradition, and nobody was able to remember any cases of such an occurrence. The woman was probably provoking me to see if I could complete the information she had, to fulfil her curiosity.

commented upon by one's neighbours or relatives. In this case, the simple fact of having passed through someone's property stimulated a good amount of conjecture, memories of past events and gossip. The secretiveness and reserve that surrounds events like the *pedimiento* does not prevent others from speculating about what they hear, see, imagine and remember.

The new couple

After that first night spent with her future husband in her in-laws household, Anita became an integral part of Pablo's family. She helped Carmen, her mother-in-law, with everyday work routine in the household, and she also prepared meals, made bread and attended visits, like a proper house owner, *una dueña de casa*.

Usually the postmarital residence pattern in Apiao is virilocal, as in the case described, but the residence rule, far from being strict, is generally dictated by what is more convenient in each different case. In some cases the husband moves to the wife's household, either because the man cannot provide good accommodation, or because the woman owns fields and there is no one else to tend them, or for both reasons. One family I knew was living in what used to be the woman's grandparents' household. She had been raised by her grandmother and had fields to tend, while her husband had been living abroad before his marriage, thus he had no fields to take care of, and his parents' household was too decrepit and in need of reparation. It seemed sensible and natural for the man to move in with his in-laws. Other families were living on the land that had belonged to the woman's grandparents or parents, and the household was built near to what had been the elders' house.

The virilocal residence is generally provisional: the new couple will live with the man's parents until their new house is built. After a variable period that ranges from months to years, the man builds a new household for his nuclear family, often (but not necessarily) within his parents' household precinct. In the period preceding the move, the couple would accumulate belongings and resources to enable them to live independently; they would also have one or more children.

The building of a new house is strictly associated with a marital couple. If a bachelor builds a new house while both or one of his parents are alive and live in their household, it generally means he is planning to get married soon. Those bachelors

who built a new household and never got married are ridiculed by the community; their new houses are generally built and abandoned, since no bachelor would live on his own.

Usually months, and even years separate the *pedimiento* and immediate co-residence from the civil and religious wedding ceremonies. Sometimes couples would not officialise their union at all, but happen to be subsequently asked to be *padrinos* (either for a wedding, or for a baptism, communion or confirmation) and are required to be officially married if they want to obtain permission to be *padrinos* from the priest. This way the state keeps track of married couples and obliges them to formalise their union.

This was exactly the situation that had forced Pablo's parents to marry in haste: they were asked to be confirmation *padrinos*, but they were not married according to the church. The bishop was already on the island and, since the groom was a catechist, he agreed to marry them in a private ceremony the night before the confirmation ceremony. The couple's recollection of the events stressed the fact that they *had* to get married, to be able to honour the pact they had with their godchildren's parents. It sounded like a nuisance, and potential trouble, solved by the generosity of the bishop, who granted a last-minute ceremony that had to be performed to make the union lawful. In fact, I was told that it is the wedding *padrinos'* responsibility to remind their godchildren to validate their union with both State and Church institutions.

'Casarse por las dos leyes': getting officially married

Although the new couple are publicly acknowledged as such following the *pedimiento* and the subsequent moving of the spouse, the union is generally formalised with both a civil and a religious ceremony. People in Apiao refer to the official marriage by using the expression *casarse por las dos leyes*, getting married with the two laws, meaning, being '*really* married'. Whenever people talk about couples getting married, they would use the expression '*por las dos leyes*' to emphasise the fact that the union has been both effectuated and officialised, and to emphatically confirm the existence of a couple. The two ceremonies are generally held on the same day, and the date must necessarily coincide with the presence of a priest on the island. Although priests might travel to Apiao randomly once or twice a year, the local parish always sends a

priest on the occasion of the island's patron saint celebration, on the 11th of February. On this day all religious ceremonies are performed: weddings, baptisms, communions and, if the bishop is present, confirmations. All the couples willing to get officially married travel early in the morning to the closest Civil Registry along with their *padrinos*. The Registry is in a nearby island, and it takes a couple of hours by boat to get there. After the civil ceremony they return to Apiao and participate in the mass, where they are married in a collective wedding ceremony.

While nobody accompanies the couple and their *padrinos* for the Civil Registry ceremony, the religious ceremony is celebrated in the crowded wooden church of the island. Couples, children, their parents and *padrinos* all join up in front of the altar, while relatives, friends and fellow islanders fill the church benches. It must be said, though, that the officialisation of married couples is commingled with other celebrations, where the emphasis is more on creating alliances between sets of individuals than on celebrating the change of status of children. And all these celebrations are held in the frame of the island *fiesta*, a religious feast but also an important social event.

February 11th is a special day in many respects. The arrival of the priest, much awaited, is anticipated by the presence of a small group of missionaries, that do catechism preparation for those who will receive the Holy Communion. The missionaries stay for a whole week and visit most households on the island. Money is collected from each household to attend the priest and the missionaries on the day of the *fiesta*. February 11 falls during the height of summer, and most people leave their houses to go down to the church esplanade. Most people go to mass and follow the procession, that takes the *Virgen de Lourdes*, the island's patron saint, around the church three times. The presence of priest and missionaries, the collective celebration and its double edge of sacred and profane accentuate the festive mood; it is perhaps the only day of the year where people spend most of the day outside, away from their homes and routine duties. People bring food and drinks and picnics, sitting on the land around the church. All go around to congratulate the various sets of *padrinos* and parents; those who can play instruments (accordion and guitar) bring them along and in the afternoon music sessions with dancing are improvised, and even those who are reluctant to dance, lose their reserve with the help of some alcohol. Alcohol is sold in

the esplanade, and at night there is a dancing party organised by the youth of the island.

Given the special and extraordinary context of the *fiesta*, wedding celebrations are somehow lost in this general festive atmosphere, or do not certainly receive much attention, as it would be the case for a specific ceremony on a dedicated day.

Fiesta de casamiento. Wedding party at home: offering dinner to padrinos and guests

By the time Anita and Pablo had their official wedding and the dinner, five months after the *pedimiento*, I had already left Apiao; however, when I went back for a short visit I was told about the events by the *madrina* herself. The following section reports recollections of that particular wedding party, as well as of others held on the island.

While the profile of public wedding celebrations is somehow blurred in the atmosphere of the pan-festivity of the 11th, most couples organise a special dinner for their families and *padrinos*, with the purpose of celebrating and attending the godfathers and some other guests with a special dinner. The dinner is a demanding event that involves the accumulation of resources and vast expense. This is the reason why many couples do not celebrate the wedding at all, preferring to restrict their food gifts to the godfathers, with whom they have incurred a debt, when the *padrinos* accepted the groom's request. Just like *novenas*⁴¹, these celebrations must be performed in order to make a return for something that was previously received. While in the case of *novenas* it is the saint to be thanked and paid back, in the case of the marriage celebrations it is the *padrinos* who have to be thanked for having agreed to fulfil the alliance request of the young couple.

Yet, family and friends expect to have the chance to party, where they can enjoy food and drink alcohol, as is always the case for special events. '*Todos mis hijos se casaron como corresponde*' 'all my children got married the way it has to be done', a woman told me, talking about the wedding parties she had organised. She took some time to enumerate the list of entries that were prepared for her children's wedding dinner. Starter, chicken soup, roasted meat, potatoes and salad, dessert and cake: a three-layered cake, 'enough for everybody to eat'. And wine, liquor and soft drinks in

⁴¹ I am here referring specifically to the San Antonio *novenas*.

plenty. This variety and abundance of different kinds of food and drinks contrasts with everyday meals, that, while plentiful, consist of one main dish, usually a stew, served with boiled potatoes. Dessert is never eaten in common circumstances, and alcohol such as wine and spirits (but not *chicha*) is bought for special occasions only. Food is not only offered, but also given to take away: forty kilos (*un quintal*) of wheat is turned into bread to be distributed to all guests. The giving of bread usually marks an exchange which is both material and ritual⁴²: bread is given both as a form of payment for work being performed, and as a gift of gratitude to participants in funerals and other religious events held in private households. Bread is also given to participants at parties that do not involve a religious celebration⁴³, as in this case.

Anita and Pablo 'did things properly' and organised, together with their families, a proper dinner party. Many people were invited - especially relatives, living on the island or in the town. However, not everybody could participate: eventually there were approximately twenty people, between close relatives, friends and some neighbours.

The abundance of food prepared and offered is a clear marker of a celebration. To properly celebrate a wedding, an event of once in a lifetime, abundance of food and drink is needed by the hosts, and expected by the guests. The guests must be attended '*como corresponde*', 'properly'. Likewise, all guests should bring a present, that is given to the spouses privately, out of sight of other people: the newly weds are called outside the household for this purpose; in general presents are never shown nor discussed in public.

While all guests receive bread as a gratitude gift for their presence and their presents, a more conspicuous exchange of gifts occurs between godparents and their marriage godchildren (*aijados de casamiento*). The *padrinos* are expected to bring a present to the couple, and the couple is expected to give the *padrinos* a present of meat and alcohol, generically indicated as '*la atención*'. Pablo and Anita received from their *madrina* a boxful of kitchenware: a tea set, dishes, glasses, cutlery and pans. And besides this, the *padrinos* gave the couple a female lamb.

⁴² I will return to the significance of the bread as a payment gift later on, when discussing the *novenas*.

⁴³ Just before leaving the island at the end of my fieldwork, the family I was staying with organised a goodbye dinner party for me. The guests were attended with abundant food, alcohol, and, at the moment of leaving, each guest was given one loaf of bread and some roasted meat to take away. This, it was explained, was done to thank them for their presence at the dinner party, and, as my hosts put it, '*pa'que se vayan conformes*', 'for them to leave satisfied'.

'I remember when I got married' one woman told me, 'my *padrinos* gave me nothing! Not even an old kettle, or a pan...I had to start from scratch, since I was given nothing. Just a sheep.' It seems that objects that must be bought in the town are valued more than presents such as sheep or lambs, that, while certainly being appreciated, can be found easily and are usually part of each household property anyway. The idea behind the *madrina*'s careful attention to the young couple was to provide them with the essentials to start a new household one day, when the couple would move to their own house. No matter what sort of presents the couple receive, they will have to pay their debt to the godfathers with the *atención para los padrinos*. *La atención* consists of the meat of half a pig, a bottle of spirit and several litres of wine to the *padrino*; a chicken and a large bottle of soft drink to the *madrina*, and several one-kilo loaves of bread, cooked in a special oven. 'I went there with a heavy load, and I came back home with an even heavier load!' the woman told me. She was given so much meat, that she ended up distributing it to her neighbours.

The dinner is followed by a dance session with live music. A room is cleared to provide space for the dances, that continue until early in the morning. Throughout the night, wine is served to all guests and to the musicians.

Relation between *padrinos* and *ajados*

Marriage and its celebrations bind together three sets of people, which include four couples: the married couple, their parents and the *padrinos*. From the wedding onward, the relation between the *padrinos* and their *ajados* is a relation of *obligación*, obligation. As with the other relations of *comadrazco*, the two sets of individuals are bound by an 'obligation' relation, and this also includes the two sets of parents of the couple. When a marriage is performed, the parents of the bride and groom become *compadres* to each other and to the *padrinos*. Each set of people start to address their *compadres* not by their name, as they had done for all their life, but by the term *compadre* for men, and *comadre* for women. When talking to other people they would also use these terms, (always preceded by the possessive adjective *mi*) whenever referring to their *compadres*. The married couple would do the same when

addressing or referring to their godparents, using the words (*mi*) *padrino* and (*mi*) *madrina*.

Whenever I enquired about the reason for certain people receiving special treatment, I was told '*somos obligaciones*' 'we are obligated [to those people]'. The godchildren owe their *padrinos* a special attention in specific circumstances, and the relation is taken quite seriously, to the point that this notion is reflected in the language with the use of the word 'obligation' as a pronoun. Being 'obligated to someone' implies paying special attention, remembering to honour a pact made, acknowledging a commitment previously taken. In the case of *ajados* and their *padrinos*, the *ajados* have to attend them properly when the official marriage is performed, and have to 'remember them' during the annual pig slaughtering. In this instance the *padrinos* receive a gift of meat, bread and processed pig products, prepared specifically on the day of the pig slaughtering (the *lloco* I described in the previous section). They are expected to reciprocate the gift, once they themselves slaughter their own pig. Also, as mentioned previously, one of the duties of the godfathers soon after the *pedimiento*, is to remind the couple that they are expected to get married *pa' las dos leyes*.

As is always the case in Apiao, relations are never taken for granted, nor are they in a fixed, immutable state. The relation between a couple and their *padrinos* is subject to constant reworking through time, and the obligation of giving and receiving, as well as reciprocating, must be constantly accomplished. Each time there is an opportunity to exchange and participate in the other's ordinary productivity cycle, or for example, on the occasion of the annual pig slaughtering, the relation is put to the test and either renovated, or slowly loosened. By giving an appropriate and valuable present, Pablo and Anita's *padrinos* demonstrated a willingness to take the relation very seriously, starting a circle of 'actively remembering and caring', the pillars of relatedness as well as one of the main emotional themes of Apiao peoples' lives, as it will be discussed in the following chapter.

The meaning of marriage: productivity and 'independence'

After her *pedimiento*, Carmen had lived with her husband in his parents' household for five years, when they decided to move to the other side of the island, to build a house in a piece of land that belonged to Carmen's parents. The reason behind the

move was the lack of land. For five years they had cultivated the land around Carmen's in-laws house, sharing fields with her widowed mother-in-law as well as her grand-daughter, that the old woman had brought up. 'This is why we came here, for the land' she told me.

As it would be expected in a subsistence economy, in Apiao productivity is a crucial value and individuals through productivity become, in their own words, independent. A new couple is first and foremost a new productive unit. One of the first things done by a couple in starting co-residence is the setting aside of the portion of land that will become their own potato field. This is separate from the fields of the parents, or the in-laws, according to the type of residence. Despite sharing a household, meals, time, space and work with some other relatives, the life of a couple is a continuous statement of independence. Individuals in Apiao are taught to be independent from an early age; although always inserted in a family/household context, they are able to be productive and to live out of their work. In marrying, individuals have the chance to strengthen and, so to say, double their independence.

Julia, a young woman in her late twenties, lived with her partner in a house that belonged to his mother, but they never got married. She once told me how she had frequent disagreement with her mother and sisters, and that she was happy to be living in her house, with her partner and their child. 'I am independent now, I am in my house, nobody must annoy me here'. Her independence was granted by her separate residence, and by her economic management of a separate set of resources: the fields at the back of her house, her garden, her fishing net cast on the portion of beach on which her house was built. She was the owner of the products of her work, able to decide about those products, without asking permission or consulting anyone other than her partner, with whom there was a relation of equality and complementarity.

While until marriage individuals act on behalf of their parents' household, after marriage they speak for themselves and for their unit. In getting detached from their kin family, and by forming another separate household, they can claim the status of independent nucleus. The first step is taking (*llevar*) the woman into the groom's household, to begin another family; to form, so to say, another household within an already established household. Marriage (both traditional marriage, and *pa' las dos leyes*) enables individuals to become active social actors, for the sake of the productive unity they form. Established couples can take the role of hosts, invite (in

the form of *suplicar*) individuals to take part in work parties, thereby initiating exchange connections. The first connection built by a couple is the relation with their godfathers, and others follow with the flow of time and major life events.

When a couple have a child, they choose another couple to be the child's baptism godfathers, establishing another important *obligación* relation. The same will happen for each child, and for the different religious celebrations such as Holy Communion, Confirmation, and so on. This way married individuals build and continue an exchange network that provides not prestige and social influence, but rather the continuity of social life between equals.

During my short stay in 2003, Pablo and Anita, who had been living together for nine months and had a baby, had their first pig slaughtering, called *carneo de chancho*. As previously mentioned, this is a crucial event that takes place annually in every household and mobilises several individuals, who work together intensely for a day. As is always done, a few days before the event the owners go to invite (*suplicar*) some chosen individuals to help. I was impressed to see them both, riding a horse in the pouring rain and come to the family where I lived to 'supplicate' us all. It was one of their first social assertions of independence. The year before, Pablo had come to 'supplicate' on behalf of his parents; this time he was acting for himself and his wife.

On the *carneo* day Pablo insisted in personally stabbing the knife into the pig's heart, under his father's supervision and his friends' giggles. Far from being an expert, he did not guess the right spot and the pig took a long time to die. Pablo, a bit embarrassed and ill at ease with his new role of 'pig butcher' —which goes along with being head of a family— joked with his friends and family, who were sweetly teasing him over his performance. 'I feel just bones!' he said laughing, and his friends: 'Well done Pablo! the pig died straightaway!' and the whole *carneo* site resounded in affectionate loud laughter.

The days following their *carneo* Pablo and Anita went to some specific households (notably, to their *padrinos* and *compadres*⁴⁴, and to Anita's mother and sisters) to give a gift of some pig's meat and various processed products. The giving of this gift, called *lloko* or simply *plato 'e comida* (food plate) reiterates the donors' independence

⁴⁴ The baptism godfathers of their child.

and productivity, and establishes or confirms an alliance between those who give and those who receive.

A few days later I was particularly impressed to see a formal expression of Anita's independence. I had accompanied Anita's mother and brothers in their own *carneo*, and I was present when Anita's mother went to her daughter's new residence with a heavy load of *llocos*. Anita welcomed her in the way every guest is welcomed, by preparing *mate* and serving it to the guest with freshly sliced bread, served on a plate put on top of a stool. After having eaten the bread and drinking the *mate*, the woman handed Anita a big wheat sack, saying 'Anita, this is for you'. Anita placed herself in front of her sitting mother and asked for her hand, addressing her with the courtesy pronoun. 'Show me your hand. Thank you so much for taking the trouble [to give me this gift], may God accompany you and give you [good] health' (*A ver su mano. Muchísimas gracias 'onde se molestaron, que Dios la acompañe y les de la salud'*). These words, spoken while holding the giver's hand, are pronounced every time a *lloco* is given; in fact, the same words are pronounced, in the same manner, every time a gift or an offer is given and received. After Anita, Pablo thanked her mother-in-law in exactly the same way, as well as Pablo's mother, who herself received a *lloco*, although smaller than Anita's.

I was quite puzzled by the formality between mother and daughter, who had shared everything for 28 years, up until a few months before. I was given the same explanation by different people: 'Anita is part of an independent family, she does not belong to her mother's family anymore, therefore it is as if she was any other person, and she must thank in that form'.

As I said, marriage enables individuals to become '*familia a parte, familia independiente*', separate, independent family, and to express and act out all their productive potential. Anita's formality was a dramatisation of her independence, of her autonomy gained through marriage. The whole event of the new couple's *carneo* was a statement of independence: from the preparation, that required them both to personally invite individuals and formally ask for help, to the actual pig slaughtering, that required an effort on Pablo's side on performing an act with which he was clearly ill at ease, to the final act of distributing *llocos*, and accepting them as an independent, autonomous family.

At the same time, this independence has its negative side: once individuals leave their family household, they are bound to the bundle of responsibility that an independent household entails, to make the productive cycle continue. A man and a woman form a complementary pair, working together with joint effort towards productivity. Sometimes it happens that one of the two individuals leaves much of the workload to the other person, who is left with a heavy burden. This problem can affect both men and women, and Apiao people say that 'nothing could be done about it': life goes on and priority is always given to autonomy, an immediate consequence of productivity. For example, a woman in her fifties, now widowed, was constantly criticised for being *inútil*, useless, incapable of doing any of the most basic tasks required in a household. The woman used to spend many hours a day walking around her neighbourhood, looking for someone to do things for her. Several people told me that her husband was a 'very good worker' and did almost everything at home and in the fields, since his wife was not of much help. Apparently the woman had an adulterous relationship and the man knew; yet 'nothing could be done' and eventually he had died of cancer, knowing that his accomplishments were to be left to his irresponsible wife. People often pointed out to me the empty land that once were his productive fields, and his beautiful house, which he had personally built, was falling down.

More often, though, men are the ones who leave the responsibility of the household duties to their wives for entire days. This is sometimes the case with men who indulge in alcohol drinking, like Francisca's husband. This man, too often drunk by midday, was hardly able to work, despite his young age. I once asked my friends why did Francisca stay, and why did she not leave and stay with her mother. 'Impossible!' I was told. 'There's no choice but to put up with it', (*Obligao no más a aguantarse*), because one has his property and cannot leave it abandoned. One is 'forced' to endure whatever happens for the sake of the autonomous, productive household. Once individuals become *familia a parte*, separate family, their independence cannot be undone, and, with or without the help of their spouse, they have to cope with the everyday workload required for the successful running of the household. '*Es como la yunta, los bueyes nunca tiran parejo!*' 'It's like the yoke: the oxen never pull the same way!' once a woman said, commenting how sometimes there are problems between the married couple.

The image of the yoke is indeed a crucial one in Apiao life: yokes of oxen are the most important work tool for the potato fields, being used to plough the land before and after sowing, and they are also the main means of transport. The two animals, whose horns are fastened together, become one pulling entity. If one of the two is sick, or hurt, the yoke cannot be used, and the pair is invalidated.

The image of the yoke appeared in another conversation between women. Rosa was telling Carmen about a dream she had, where she was with her yoke and one of the oxen separated from the other and went off on his own. Carmen interpreted the dream and said 'you will be soon asked to be wedding godmother, and then the couple will separate. I had the same dream once and this is exactly what happened: my godchildren separated⁴⁵'. The image of the yoke provides an idiom for people's understanding of marriage and is apt to symbolise a couple, whose goals are supposed to be pulling in the same direction and in the same way⁴⁶.

Conclusion

In marriage the stress is not on the 'rite of passage' marking a radical change of status of those who get married. Rather, the accent is on the shift of married individuals from one productive unit (the household of one's parents) to another (one's own, new household). The married status coincides with the assertion of independence, given by the new couple's productivity. In Apiao individuals, not groups, are the basic social unit, and all transactions happen between individuals, or sets of individuals, such as married couples. A marriage is first and foremost about individuals negotiating with each other: between a man and a woman, first, and then, between a man and his godfather, and a man and his in-laws - only and exclusively for the delicate moment of the *pedimiento*, that, in fact, is experienced as a formality (confront the comment: 'It is very bad to deny a woman when she is officially asked'). From the *pedimiento* onwards, the new couple is a new unit. Individuals are valued for their ability to turn their work into productivity, and their household into an independent, autonomous unit. To achieve that goal, the ideal is the unity and complementarity of the married

⁴⁵ Separation of a married couple is not a frequent event in Apiao: throughout my fieldwork I came across only three such cases.

⁴⁶ Compare Harris (2000: 33): for the Laymi the bulls joined in a yoke are an expression of complementarity: 'their paired duality under the yoke makes of bulls a primary expression of the integral bond between humans and earth'.

couple, which is symbolically likened to a yoke of oxen, a pair of individuals that become a single, unitary force.

PART II. RELATEDNESS

Chapter 4. Reticent mothers, motherly grandmothers and forgotten fathers: the making and unmaking of kinship

Introduction. 'Señora o señorita'?

During the first period of my fieldwork in Apiao I was consistently asked, directly or indirectly, if I was a Miss or a Mrs. I would say that I was a Miss, and then people would ask me if I had any children. My negative reply -doubly negative- would definitely classify me as a ‘very strange person’. I was a young woman, single, childless, away from her country, her home and her possessions: they could hardly make any sense of me at all. I was always happy to explain that while I was a student it was not feasible to consider starting a family. This reply was considered satisfactory, but then the next question regarded my plans for after the end of my studies. ‘You should stay on the island and get married soon’ was the friendly and invariable remark. Most of the people I came across during my stay on the island would reiterate the same suggestion: settle down, find a husband, form a household. It was a little obsession, it seemed to me at the time, that they had with the idea of seeing me married, a busy mother of several children. The people I was closer to used to talk about this subject in a joking way, trying to find me various suitable partners, and imagining some details of my new life with the Apiao man they were suggesting, and even picturing me while pregnant. They went as far as imagining me with a big belly and started describing my body transformed, and the way I would walk then. All of these remarks, comments and fantasies were always made in a joking mode, with much laughter, in a humorous context. Another set of remarks, comments and suggestions would be concerned with my age. In Apiao women of my age tend to have several children, and full household responsibilities. People tended to react with disbelief to the fact that, despite looking younger I was over thirty, and once a girl in my host family came very close to me to better examine my face, mumbling ‘this is impossible, it cannot be true, you must be lying’ in a suspicious tone. Of course, the fact that I was much older than they expected did not improve my situation: ‘you must marry soon’, my first landlady told me, ‘before your pan gets cold’, ‘antes que se te

enfríe la cacerola'. This phrase was openly sarcastic, and it gave rise to bursts of noisy laughter every time it was mentioned. I provocatively asked the woman to explain the phrase, and to make a sketch of the pan for me, but she wouldn't. It was a game we were playing, and it was all revolving around the same subject: my attitude towards men. The fact that I was apparently neglecting sex was a clear indication that I was deviating from the path a young woman is expected to take.

In Apiao terms, I was deviating from that path in several ways: for being single, childless, and away from my people. For being single: a young woman, if single, is certainly the target of single men willing to marry. The fact that I had no husband or partner, called for judgmental remarks concerning my being difficult, spoilt and so on, implying that I always refused any courtship I had received. Childless: many single women become pregnant after casual sex, or during affairs with married or unmarried men. Some women consciously decide to be mothers, taking the risk of remaining single parents, because they know that their partners could not or would not necessarily be interested in marrying them. On the island there are several single mothers and they are not blamed, nor stigmatized by the community⁴⁷. On the other hand, childless single women on their own are considered pitiful and unfortunate, for being lonely, for having all the domestic workload on their shoulders, and for having no-one to take care of them in their old age. Away from my people: people travel a long distance and stay away from land and family only for a good reason: work. Many Apiao people and Chilotes in general migrate to Argentina and southern Chile, and they learn skills which earn a living for them and then they send money or products to their families back home. But I was away from home for my studies, and I was clearly not earning money, rather, I was spending money. This implied my deliberate absence from my parents' home, and my selfishness.

Taking as a starting point the episode of the *cacerola*, I will try to unravel Apiao people's understanding of kinship by going through some ethnographic vignettes, and some reflections on what they could tell anthropology.

Let us start with the apparent paradox of the beginning: my hosts, as I said, seemed to have an obsession with me and maternity: my future was speculated upon, as well as

⁴⁷ Alonso (1993: 220) points out how in Chilean middle and upper classes the approach towards the virginity of women varies. In her opinion, in such milieus, concerns with female virginity have to do with male honor and are related to *machismo* ideology.

my past, and my present was jokingly alluded to as 'going in the wrong direction', seemingly without a real goal in my life. 'So when are you going to have this child then?' my friend Judith asked me, when I went back to Apiao for a brief visit, shaking her head disapprovingly. What I found confusing was the fact that on the one hand they had a sort of obsession with me becoming a mother, and being part of a family, and, on the other, I realised more and more that motherhood was constantly played down in Apiao. At the beginning I justified the reticence regarding motherhood with the high number of single mothers and illegitimate children, but soon it became clear to me that the dismissive attitude towards motherhood was a consistent pattern in Apiao.

A married couple generally spends the first period subsequent to their marriage in the household of the parents of one of the spouses, generally the man's. However, the communal life does not imply communal ownership of resources, such as land and animals: while living with the elder owners of the household, the married couple own and administer their own resources: a garden, the potato field, pigs, chickens, and sheep or cows. After a period of time that can vary from a few months to some years, the married couple move, together with their children, to an independent household. Only married couples would move to live in an independent household. All unmarried people, men and women alike, live in the household of their parents or grandparents. No unmarried man, or woman, would go to live on his /her own: indeed, the building of a new house is strictly associated with a married couple and their productive land. Households are first and foremost productive units and bachelors and single women with living parents or unmarried siblings actively contribute to the everyday activities, performed communally by individual members of the unit. The accomplishment of everyday duties perpetuates the existence of the household and of the family who lives in it.

Within the approximately 150 households of the island, there are some with young married couples and their children, what we call a nuclear family, and other households with an extended family including a number of people, such as an old couple and their unmarried children. Whenever any of these children become single mothers, their children grow up and live in the same household. Whether married or unmarried, women in both types of families become pregnant and have babies. Let us

go back to my original question: why were my hosts - and, indeed, all the Apiao people I met - so concerned with my being a mother, and yet they seemed so uninterested in maternity and motherhood themselves?

'Y después, me enfermé una vez más!' Reticent mothers

One of the most evident instances in which motherhood is downplayed to Western eyes is pregnancy. In Apiao, as well as in the Chiloé area, a woman would refer to her pregnancy as *enfermedad*, illness. 'And then, I got ill once more!' '*Y después, me enfermé una vez más!*' an old woman told me, recalling her many pregnancies⁴⁸. A pregnant woman is limited in her capacity to work, in her movement, and in her efficiency - just as if she were ill. Pregnant women generally act as if they were not pregnant, and in fact their pregnancy is often difficult to spot, until it is in the last stages. This is also because Apiao women tend to wear loose clothes with aprons on top of them. Despite the high number of expecting mothers at the time of my fieldwork, it was seriously difficult for me to realise that a woman was pregnant - and I myself lived with a pregnant woman for months without noticing she was expecting a baby. Nothing in the behaviour, speech, or dress of pregnant women would underline their special state. They would never speak about it, as if it were not appropriate, or simply not necessary. This is true not only for single mothers, but also for married women. Similarly, no special attention is given to them by the family, or the neighbours. A woman carries on with the household daily activities, irrespective of her state, and so do all people in the household, each one with their responsibilities. In fact, pregnant women do all they can to ignore their pregnancy and go on with the usual rhythm of everyday activities. Once a woman told me that she was working in the potato field when she had to interrupt what she was doing because her baby was about to be born; and another woman told me how she had cooked for everyone soon after having given birth⁴⁹.

Up until a few years ago women used to give birth on the island, with the help of local

⁴⁸ See also T. Platt (2001: 642), that reports that Andean women use the term *unqusqa*, meaning 'ill', to refer to the condition of being pregnant.

⁴⁹ Urbina (1983: 112) reports how a group of austral indigenous people, brought to Chiloé at the end of the 18th century by the Jesuit missionaries, specialized in fishing and diving. Diving for seafood was women's task, and they did not find being in an advanced state of pregnancy as an impediment, nor to have just given birth. Faron (1961: 136) writes of the Mapuches that a woman about to give birth 'may be active until heavy labour begins'.

midwives (*parteras*), but nowadays they have easy access to a medical team of doctors, nurses and obstetricians who come to the island once a month (*ronda medica*). The obstetricians encourage expectant mothers to have regular check ups and advise them to go to the local hospital (this is in the nearest town, a three-hour boat trip away) well before their baby is due, to make sure that bad weather conditions do not jeopardise both mother and child. Despite the friendly attitude of the obstetricians, Apiao women are often reluctant to leave their households and their other children for a few weeks, and so leave their trip to the very last days. Once a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy was examined by the obstetrician during the monthly trip to the island, and she was found to be suffering from a dangerous liver condition, and close to giving birth. The obstetrician arranged for her to be brought to hospital immediately, because she was risking her life as well as her baby's. The woman burst into tears, and said that she really could not possibly go, because there was so much to do at home, and she had to feed her other seven children. Another woman having a risky pregnancy was advised to rest, possibly in bed. Half an hour later we spotted her on the path, carrying a 40-kilo sack of wheat on her shoulder. She replied to the obstetrician's protest with a shy smile, and hurried up along the path, towards her household.

I was quite surprised to notice that women that were close to giving birth were not willing to mention - let alone talk about - the imminent event that, in my opinion, would have dramatically changed their lives. So it was, for example, for Carola, a married woman, when I went to visit her a few days before she left for the hospital. We chatted about various things and I stayed with her for a few hours; yet, no mention was made of the imminent birth. Similarly, a few days later, I was present when Carola's husband and mother-in-law were given the news of the birth of a baby boy.

In fact, that day Ana, a girl from my host family, was sent to Carola's in-laws to give them the news, and I offered to accompany her. We sat in the kitchen of our guests, and we were offered *mate* as is always the case with visits. We accepted the *mate* and Ana started a conversation on generic topics, such as the weather, the fields, and so on. Then Carola's husband came in and sat with us, joining in the conversation. When he was about to set off, to make a phone call to the hospital, only then Ana said 'there is no need to call, since Carola already had her baby'. She added that it was a boy and

that he was born by Caesarean section. The man thanked Ana with no particular emphasis, asked his mother if the shirts she had washed were dry, and which ones he could take. He then left to organise his trip to the town for the next day. We stayed for a little while with the grandmother, who briefly mentioned the fact that she had two children, just like Carola, and then the subject shifted again onto totally different topics. I was impressed by the measured reaction of Carola's family: they seemed to be controlling their emotions: not only were they not particularly moved, happy, or impressed with the news; indeed they acted as if it was an ordinary event - and Ana herself brought the news just as she would have done for any other news.

I recorded the same reaction in my household, when Ana's sister, a single mother, had her first baby. After happily congratulating the confused grandparents, who had initially disapproved of the girl's pregnancy, the few moments of enthusiasm (no doubt, promoted by my Italian outburst of happiness) soon gave way to practical worries. Among these, was the organising of a medical card, which involved asking the island's paramedic for some documents. Therefore a boat trip to the health post was set up immediately, and no one talked about the baby anymore. A few days after coming back home, the new mother was as active and energetic as ever and helped her mother as she had always done, taking care of the household, interrupting her activities only when it was necessary to feed the baby. In fact a young mother would devote most of her day to household-related activities, rather than to her baby.

As the data show, there seems to be a consistency in the attitude of both married and unmarried pregnant women towards their condition; they are reticent and unwilling to talk about it - and they act as if they were not pregnant at all, carrying on with the daily domestic activities that define their way of being in the world much more than motherhood does. The same reticent attitude is explicit in the demeanour of all those people close to pregnant women; the event of a new birth is welcomed but does not bring forth celebrations, or emotional reactions. The birth of a new baby is considered a natural, obvious event, and as such does not call for extraordinary measures. At the time of a new birth, practicalities occupy people more than sentimentalities. A corollary of the described attitudes towards pregnancy and birth is that people in Apiao are valued for their personal autonomy, and for their ability to be autonomous, independent individuals - and this is what really defines a person, irrespective of gender. The emphasis is always on productivity and capacity to live the household life

actively, and the attention does not shift - at least apparently - to the pregnant woman and her child.

Motherly grandmothers

After attitudes regarding pregnancy and birth, the second crucial element that contributed to my observation that motherhood is de-emphasised in Apiao is the particular use of kinship terms. During my stay on the island I hardly heard a child addressing his mother by referring to her as 'mother'. All children, as well as all adults of my generation (and sometimes, the previous generation) would address their mother by her Christian name, and their father in the same way. On the other hand, children tend to address their grandparents (especially so grandmothers) with the parental term, *mama* or *mamy* and *papa*, and whenever referring to them in conversation, people would always use the parental term *mama* and *papa* preceded by the possessive adjective. I was initially quite puzzled to see my landlady urging her little children to 'go and sleep with their *mama*', meaning the great-grandmother, a woman in her nineties, her own grandmother, whom she also called *mama*. Once I asked little Miria, who was visiting the house with her grandmother, who had plaited her hair, '*Mi mama*' she replied, indicating her grandmother. And I told her, but I know your mother, Ana, where is she? The girl replied 'Ah! You mean my other mother?' Then she told me she had two mothers and two fathers, the ones with whom she was living (meaning: her grandparents), and the others who lived on the other side of the island (meaning: her parents). Another case: a woman in her seventies was telling me how proud she was of Luis, whom I knew to be her grandchild. She showed me the photo of the boy's graduation, and said 'Look, his *papa* accompanied him to the ceremony!' pointing to her husband, a man in his late seventies. Irma, a woman in her fifties, was telling me about her mother: 'She is still alive, her name is Transito, but we used to call her simply Tato. Never *mama*. We were all the same, *todos parejos*'. The great-grandmother of my house made a similar comment once: 'yo no más soy la *mama*...ellos son *todos hermanos*' 'I am the only mother...they are all siblings!' she told me jokingly, when commenting on the fact that children address their parents by their names, and her by the term *mama*. Another time, after the funeral of his old aunt who had raised him, Mario, in tears, thanked everybody for having accompanied 'his mother' on her last trip to the church.

What do all these different stories have in common?

Let us take the case of little Miria. Miria's mother and father, who lived on the other side of the island with a younger child, had given Miria to her grandparents to 'accompany them', so now the girl was living with them, whom, I was told, 'are helping to raise her', *están ayudando a crecerla*. Lonely people are pitiful, and old people especially so. Likewise, children - at the other extreme of the scale - can be lonely, because their young parents are often too busy working in the fields or in the household, to be able to take care of them properly. It is very common for elders to ask, or to be offered the company of a grandchild to live with, to help with the domestic tasks as well as to 'accompany' them.

Young married couples are not reluctant to leave a child with their elder parents, in that they are able to spend more time on domestic activities; moreover they generally have to take care of several other children. Children are willing to stay with the grandparents, and the co-residence develops and reinforces ties of mutual aid and loving care between grandparents and grandchildren. Grandmothers feed their grandchildren, and in return the grandchildren accompany them, and help them with little tasks throughout the day. Love and care, despite never being mentioned, are continuously expressed in the offering and receiving of food, and the daily help and company that is mutually exchanged between elders and children. The aid is mutual in that children receive food and care and give company and help by becoming an active part of the household.

This pattern of co-residence, which involves a special kin relation, does not stop when those children become adults. Children who are raised by their grandparents will always live with them, and will, in a sense, belong to that household, and this will eventually become their property and responsibility. This is true even in the case of children with living parents. What really matters is where a child has been raised, and by whom, for the idiom of parental kinship reflects exactly this notion. Apiao people are perfectly aware of the biological ties between a child and his natural mother, and of the distinction between mothers 'who give birth', *parir*, and mothers 'who raise', *criar*. *Parir* means bringing to life, *criar* implies not only nurturing care, but also sharing: time, experience, emotions, everyday duties, everyday happenings, happy and less happy. And this is what makes kinship: ultimately those who are considered mothers are those addressed with the term mother: the raising mothers.

As both the great-grandmother and Irma pointed out, the others are all the same, *todos parejos*. Apiao people have no kinship term for siblings⁵⁰. Siblings call each other by their Christian name, and, in fact, according to this logic, mothers and fathers are equalled to siblings - in that they are addressed in the same way - just as if they were siblings. It is, in a sense, a conflation of people belonging to the same generation and people of previous and junior generations - they are *todos parejos*, all the same besides those 'who raised', the grandparents re-defined as parents. All other kinship terms are downplayed or disappear, and different generations are blurred in front of the 'motherhood' of the nurturing, loving grandmother. Even though apparently parents are taken out of the kin group and considered as individuals, in fact what is stressed in this case is not an absence, or a non-relation, but an equality of different junior generations towards the maternal symbol of the nurturing grandmother.

Absent mothers

Leaving to work

In the previous section I showed how children with living parents are sometimes raised by their grandparents, and, even when they are not raised by their grandparents, they tend to spend much time with them - time during which they are fed. Grandparents, associated with the maternal, feeding care provided by parents are addressed as such. This contrast is evident in the way parents are addressed, which, at least verbally through the use of kin terms, conflate parents and their children as if they were siblings. The bond of loving care between children and their grandparents, reflected in the use of kinship terms, is most evident in the case of a child of a single mother, referred to as *hijo huérfano*⁵¹ (orphan child). While in the previous section I dealt with children that have both parents and grandparents, I will now turn to children that have either a restricted choice of parental figures, or no choice at all.

Unmarried women in Apiao are often single mothers. A single mother, like all unmarried people in Apiao, lives with her parents in their household, which is the same household where she grew up. From the moment of his birth the 'orphan child'

⁵⁰ In fact Apiao people hardly ever use kinship terms at all: they tend to address all their relatives (siblings, cousins, parents, parents-in-law, uncles and aunts, etc) with their Christian name, an exception being the words *mama* or *papa*, generally used for grandparents, as described above.

⁵¹ Sometimes the word *huacho* is used to mean 'orphan', and this term is also used to refer to small animals that have been separated from the flock. However, this word can have a derogatory meaning (illegitimate son), and yet it can be used affectionately to refer to young children (*mi huachito*). See also Alonso 1993: 213.

will belong to his mother's household. The connection between the child and the household is, in a sense, stronger than the connection between the child and his mother. In fact, the mother might decide to move somewhere else, to go to the town to work and earn money, or she might get married to another man and go and live with him in another household. In both cases she will leave the child behind. The child tends to remain in the household, where there will always be one or more adults to live with him and feed him. Once again, the bond between the child and his grandparents is quite strong and this is reflected in the use of kinship terms. Just like children of a married couple, children of single mothers tend to address their mother's mother as 'mother', their mother's father as 'father', and their mother with her Christian name.

When a single mother, with no prospect of getting married to the father of her child, decides to leave her family - and indeed she is often encouraged to do so by her own parents - the presence of one or more children does not interfere with her own personal project. Indeed, it seems that children - *hijos huérfanos* - are marginal to their mothers' lives. Maria, the adolescent single mother of the family where I was living, was urged by her parents to leave the island in order to make a living, earn money and 'know the world'. Her parents often voiced their distress at their past life, and hoped for a different future for their daughters: 'one knows nothing, cannot even participate in conversations, one hardly knows any places at all, just the bus station in Achao....' they told me. They thought that their daughter could overcome what they felt was a lack of knowledge 'of the world' on their part. The fact that Maria had a baby who at the time was just a few months old was marginal to the idea of Maria's future, for both Maria's parents and herself. 'I am going to go soon, I want to go out and work somewhere', she told me. I asked her if she was planning to take her baby with her, and she wholeheartedly said that she could not possibly hurt her parents that way, it would have been really dreadful for her to take the baby away from them, they would have suffered terribly. Moreover, they get on so well, she told me.

In a household I knew quite well there was a child of a single mother, eleven-year-old Pablo. He grew up in his maternal grandmother's household, under her care. He hardly remembered his mother at all: his kin world was made up of his *mamy*, who fed him, ordered him around and with whom he shared the bed every night. One day he asked his *mamy* 'You are my mother, aren't you?' to which the woman replied '*Yo*

te crié pero no te partí, 'I have raised you but I have not given birth to you'. Pablo's position and experience is extremely common in Apiao.

Going back to the paradox with which we started, it should be noted at this point that Apiao understanding of motherhood has very little to do with Euro-American notions of the same. The bond between mother and child is so crucially powerful cross-culturally that it evoked the debate on the issue of 'nature' versus 'culture' in the seventies. Women, feminist anthropologists pointed out, are inevitably bound to the 'domestic' realm because of their children, and women's role as nurturing mothers by definition limit their 'public' activity, which is entirely left to men. The data shown here seem to suggest that Apiao mothers are far from constrained, or limited, by their children. In Apiao the idiom of kinship in fact does not rest on given biological ties, but on emotional bonds that are never given, but are created and constantly renovated through action.

At this point it is important to introduce one of the crucial values in Apiao conceptualisation of the world. Active remembering, which is a sign of emotional continuity, is deeply valued and is expressed by the often heard phrase '*acordarse de uno*', remembering someone. Active remembering is exemplified in ideas of feeding, caring, accompanying, helping. Emotional ties are created, activated and renovated through active remembering, while, conversely, other ties - such as kinship ties - are erased, or forgotten, consequent to the lack of loving care.

Leaving to get married

Both the stories just mentioned involve mothers who go to live away from the island. Sometimes a single mother does not leave the island, but leaves the household, to get married. It is generally more difficult for a single mother to be considered a marriageable partner: men tend to prefer childless women for marriage. The presence of children from previous relationships calls for responsibility on the mother's side, which implies that the woman might not be able to concentrate all her productive effort on the new household and family coming with marriage. Also, it calls for the husband's financial commitment towards children who do not belong to him and who are not, therefore, are not part of his family, '*no son familia*', is how Apiao people put it. And yet, although it can be more difficult for a single mother to get married, it is

not impossible or uncommon⁵². The way to solve the *hijos huérfanos* issue is to leave the children out of the newly created family.

A woman who had one or more children when she was very young, might be proposed to several years later, when her children are grown up and do not need their mother's attention like toddlers do. In this case the woman goes to live with her husband, leaving her children with her parents. They are hardly ever taken along to the new household: usually the man does not appreciate them (nor is he expected to), and it is considered respectful from the woman's side not to insist on the matter. The new couple will soon have a child, to fully legitimate the new relation and mark the beginning of a new productive unit. Single mothers chosen as spouses several years after having had children are considered to be lucky by the community. People often commented that these women deserved to be married, for being hardworking, skilled at various tasks and good administrators of their households. Once again, the emphasis is put on personal autonomy - certainly not on motherhood.

Rita, a woman in her fifties, told me that when she started to go out with the man who is now her husband, the daughter she had when she was single was very young. She tried to delay the marriage, because she wanted her child to be older, able to manage on her own. She could not take the child to live in the new household, so she left her with her mother. However, a year later Rita's mother died, and she had been forced by the circumstances to take her daughter back, to stay with her and her husband. But she was welcomed, she said, by her in-laws, because 'she helped me to raise the children! Oh yes, that girl was their mother!' *esa fué su madre!* To have a *hija huérfana* in the new couple's household was not the rule, but the loving care of the girl made her presence accepted, and made her a mother to her half-siblings. From being out of the family because she did not belong to it, she could now be inserted into the group thanks to the care and love she could provide in the new household.

Raising children is the supreme act of love and care, and it is the first act that creates kinship. People will always 'remember' those who raised them, and will always consider them 'parents', no matter what effective biological ties exist between them. Whenever acts of care, attention, company and affection - the same values associated with raising, *criar*, are expressed, the idiom of memory is brought forth. The loving

⁵² Urbina (1983: 109) reports of a document written in 1788 where the Spanish settlers are described as having lost all sentiment of honor or shame: they were indifferent to marrying a woman who was not a damsel or who had children from previous relationships.

memory enables distant people to become close, and unrelated people become 'like kin', (*como familia*) or 'better than kin' (*mejor que familia*).

The idiom of remembering is not limited to the mother-child relation: it permeates relations between kin, and social relations in general. 'I have two brothers', a woman who left the island to live in the town told me, 'but one of them is the one I love: he always remembers me, with any little thing, whenever he travels to the town he always brings me something: some meat, some potatoes....anything'. Relatedness eventually comes to be equated with memory: people are remembered and constantly mentioned as 'loved ones', irrespective of the distance, only insofar as they constantly renew the bonds through acts of care and love. These acts of care and love are described and expressed by Apiao people as memory, as *acordarse de uno*, remembering. This memory is always active: it implies keeping in touch, the offering of gifts, visiting, and so forth. A woman told me how much she was missing her daughter, who had left to work in the town. 'She used to help me so much, in the house...but she is really good; now that she is gone she always remembers me, she sends boxes of food, clothes....' The distance was somehow alleviated by the constant help that the girl was providing to her mother.

Loving neighbours, who help a young mother with her everyday duties, are forever remembered and their help is always acknowledged. Sons-in-law who are caring and generous are mentioned as being 'better than legitimate children'; the memory of the acts of love received is often brought forth, and distant people are continuously remembered for their acts of loving care. As one woman told me, 'I will always remember those who helped me once'. Remembering is so powerfully crucial that it does not stop with death, but extends beyond it. Loving grandmothers are constantly mentioned and remembered: 'love does not end because one is dead' as people in Apiao say.

Forgotten kin, and kin who forget

Just like acts of loving care and presence can make kinship, absence, non-action, non-loving memory can effectively erase people from the kin group. People who loved, and took care in the past, are always remembered, and conversely, those who have not loved, have not taken care, are forgotten. While loving care can create bonds and transform unrelated people into 'family', those who 'forget' are in turn forgotten, no

matter what kinship relation they have.

Back to the *hijos huérfanos*, here is another story of two cousins, who shared the same childhood experience, but with different outcomes. Sara, a woman in her late forties, lives with her family (husband and children), and her widowed grandmother, in her nineties. The grandmother's name is Maria but throughout my stay her name was never uttered: she was always called *mamy* by everybody with the exception of Sara, who called her *mama*, and always referred to her as *mi mama* when talking to others. The household where Sara's family lived at the time of my fieldwork had been built and had belonged to the couple formed by Maria and her husband. This couple, married more than sixty years ago, lived there with their children, and, later, with some of their children's spouses and their children, until the new couples left to live in autonomous households. Two of Maria's daughters had been single mothers, and they had gone to work off the island, leaving behind their two little girls. While they were living somewhere else, forming new families and inhabiting other households, their children remained in Apiao with their grandparents, to be raised by them (*criar*), and, in turn, to accompany them. In living together a strong bond was created between grandparents and grandchildren, so strong that it overshadowed the relation between mothers and children.

Sara hardly remembers her biological mother at all: she once showed me an old and worn out photo, saying 'This was my poor mother: she died very young in Punta Arenas'. The woman had moved to Patagonia never to return. As I mentioned above, Sara always refers to her grandmother as *mama*. 'I grew up with her', '*Yo me crié con ella*' Sara told me when I first visited her household. When Sara got married, her husband moved in with them, both because he could not provide a good household, and because her *mama* was getting older and needed someone to live with her.

While Sara has very little memory of her mother, her cousin Teresa had a different experience. When she was fifteen, she told me, she met her biological mother for the first time. She was told to change her clothes, and to get prepared to meet 'her mother', who had arrived from far away. She recalled her unwillingness to meet a total stranger. 'My mother was there with me, I did not need another mother'. Then she was forced to meet her mother, Anita. While being away Anita had married and now had other children. Teresa told me that she was very ill at ease with this 'new mother' that had suddenly appeared in her life. A few years later, when she had a

chance to leave the island and work, she took it. She is now living in the main city of the Chiloé region, together with her husband and children, and occasionally travels to Apiao to visit her *mama*, the old Maria. Thirty years have passed since she left Apiao and her *mama* household, but she keeps in touch and makes a point of visiting her *mama* at least once a year, and always brings her several gifts of food, money and material objects. As Teresa herself put it, 'I always remember *mi mama*'.

Anita, Teresa's biological mother, also lives in the city, not too far from Teresa. Yet, they do not care much for each other: they do not visit or call each other on the phone. Teresa told me: 'she is just like any other person to me. My only mother is *mi mama*, the woman who raised me. She gave me all she had, she fed me and took care of me. Anita is nothing to me, and I do not really have much care for her'. While I admit that Teresa's articulated discourse is somehow built up with mainstream society expectations - very different from island expectations - her case exemplifies a very common incidence in Apiao, and is paradigmatic of the way kinship is formed and conceptualised. While Apiao people recognise biological ties between a mother and her child, this bond might become irrelevant and insignificant if it is not accompanied by care, company, sharing of food and time. In people's words, it is not to be remembered. Teresa's biological mother lives at a short walk away, yet she has no 'memory' of her as a mother. Her 'real' mother is far away on the island, five hours away by boat, yet, she always 'remembers' her.

Single mother's children do not generally blame their mothers for having let their grandparents raise them, beside pointing out the biological tie that never developed into relatedness (*criar*). However, in the cases of children like Teresa, who left the island at a very young age to live in the town, the attitude towards the woman that gave birth to them is very negative. They voice distress and anger at 'being abandoned' by their mothers, who chose to marry a man, and that implied leaving her children in her parents' household. Having moved to the town they seem to acquire the middle class mentality of mainstream Chilean society, so different from the island conceptualisation of fostering. In fact, mainstream Chilean society considers motherhood to be a crucial part of a woman's identity, so much so that social relations are expressed in an idiom of kinship, and, more specifically, evoke the parental relation. Women constantly refer to their children, and to their role as mothers as

fundamentally carving their identities; and that this opposes them to men, who are not able to give birth. They would commonly refer to their children and address them with the word *hijo/a*, son/daughter. Often they would use this idiom of maternity when addressing their husbands, close friends, and other children, either well known or unknown. They would be addressed by the term *mi'jito/mi'jita*, my little son/my little daughter. Equally, husbands would call their wives *mama*, and older women would be addressed as *mamita*, little mother. Mothers often voice the strong bond that connects them to their children, so different from the bond between a man and a woman. The matrimonial bond can end at any given moment, while the bond between a mother and her children will never end. Given the strong emphasis on the mother-child connection in mainstream Chilean society, it is not surprising that Teresa, that had been part of Chilean society for more than thirty years, had acquired a discourse that does not belong to Apiao.

Mothers - and indeed, all close kin - who 'forget' (i.e. do not show love and care) are in turn forgotten. However, unlike mainstream Chilean, as well as Western understandings of motherhood, this does not call for blame or resentment, it simply involves 'forgetfulness'. People who are 'remembered' are constantly mentioned, either to reiterate their affection, or to show some present they offered once, or to remember some amusing episode of the past. On the other hand, those who do not 'remember' are almost erased from the memory: they are never mentioned, to begin with. I lived for several months with a woman who never mentioned her estranged husband, as well as her eldest child. They went abroad to work, and never kept in touch. Another elderly woman, to whom I was quite close, once briefly mentioned that, in addition to her children who lived on the island, with whom I was familiar, she had two more living abroad 'who had forgotten her': they never wrote, they never came back to see her.

Before she got married, Sara had three children as a single mother, with three different men. Of these three children, I knew only one, the only one who was living on the island. As regards the two other children, during the many months I spent in the family's household, one was never ever mentioned, and the other one, Juana, was referred to maybe once or twice, just to say that she was living abroad with her husband and children. I was quite surprised, when I recently phoned the family, to hear that Juana had come from Argentina to stay with her mother, and she had spent a

few months in her household. 'We told her about you, so that now she knows you through the photographs!' she told me enthusiastically.

Juana, having forgotten her mother for a long time, was herself forgotten and her existence hardly mentioned. By coming back to visit her mother she showed love and care, and this allowed the bond to be re-made. A child who had become distant was re-inserted into the family, while a foreign person who was never part of the family (me) became 'almost like family'. People who forget their kin are in turn forgotten, and this forgetfulness is expressed in the 'erasure' of their memory from every day life. Kin who do not renew the loving bond, by disappearing for example, and by not remembering those who love them, are 'removed' from the loving ties that make up a family, they are erased from the kin group. In forgetting, the kinship tie is un-made. This can happen to children, mothers, and, most dramatically, to fathers of *hijos huérfanos*: the most forgotten kin.

Whenever a single woman becomes pregnant, she knows that unless her partner marries her, she will have to bear the entire responsibility of her child. This will make her the only parent, and her family will be the only family to the child. This notion is acknowledged so strongly and deeply, that nobody would ever challenge it, even if the state legislation has recently changed on the matter. In Chile, as in all Spanish-speaking countries, children receive both the father and the mother's surname. Children of unmarried mothers invariably carry their mother's surname in the double form, i.e. name surname surname. That is, the surname of the mother replaces that of the missing father. But today, according to recent regulations⁵³, women have the right to give the child his father's surname, even if the father does not legally recognise the child. If a father denies paternity, a woman has the right to ask for a DNA test. This was undreamed of until recently, and it will most likely take a long time before women in the Chiloé area will effectively adhere to the benefits of this new law.

The child is thought of as belonging to the mother, always. Affiliation of the newborn child to the father's family is entirely dependent on the father's public acknowledgement of his paternity. This usually coincides with either co-residence or marriage (marriage being always subsequent to co-residence). If the relation between a man and a woman ends while she is pregnant (most likely, because she is pregnant),

⁵³ Cecilia Westermeyer, personal communication.

from the moment she gives birth the man faces the choice, either he marry her, or be completely cut off from her and her child. If the man decides not to marry the woman, this would equate to losing the chance of having any relation with the child at all, forever. A man who does not marry the woman after having given her a child is totally erased from the woman's family - despite being publicly acknowledged as the child's father. He will never be asked for anything - such as money, or goods - for the child, and indeed, most probably he will never talk to the child's mother again. He will not have any kind of relation with the child, not even when the child is a full adult. The man's existence and his name are never mentioned, and usually the child is not informed of the father's identity. If a man does not propose to the mother of his child, i.e. if he does not take the woman to go and live with him, the couple will not form a unit, will not inhabit a household, and in fact will cease to have any sort of interaction. Nor will there be any relation between the respective families. The child will acquire the mother's surname in the double form, which indicates that he is the child of a single mother. The double maternal surname will bind him to his matrilateral kin group.

There is some sort of curious ambivalent attitude surrounding the past relation that produced the child: a silence that confines it to taboo on the one hand, and an accurate reminiscence on the other. This double treatment of the same subject is found in two different sets of people: those immediately involved (the couple and their families), and the community. Those who are personally involved, both on the woman's and the man's side exercise some sort of erasure of memory, combined with a taboo-like prohibition of mentioning anything about the past relation, or the past partner. Partner, relation and consequent paternity are buried in the past and are of no concern. In fact, these interrupted relations are the negation of the crucial value of 'remembering'. A man who never officialised a relationship did the opposite of remembering and taking care: he forgot. Also, there is a second negation on the man's side: the negation of productivity. The man refused to form a productive unit, and to activate kinship ties that he had initiated, but kept suspended, latent, and, ultimately, interrupted.

The other side of the coin is the continuous reminiscence, on the community's side, of these interrupted ties. Despite the name of the father and his paternal responsibility being never mentioned (in the maternal household, by the maternal family and first

and foremost by the mother), it is very common knowledge⁵⁴ on the island, who is who, or, to be more precise, who is whose, as they put it. The numerous children of single mothers present on the island were always indicated to me, and I was given detailed life stories, complete with the father's identity, and sometimes even the reasons why the couple never joined to form a family. Everybody knows, and maps out regularly the kinship belongings, except the parties involved: a woman will never ever mention the lover who left her with a child and never claimed it. Likewise, a man who fathered a child and never married the child's mother would never mention his paternity, his relation to the mother or the child; whatever happened between a man and a woman is either officialised shortly afterwards, or forever forgotten.

A single mother is hardly blamed in Apiao: people often say that single mothers were deceived, *las engañaron*. Men deceive women, *las engañan* by making women believe that they care for them, only to forget them later. It is painful and humiliating for a single mother to admit that she was deceived by her lover. This would be equal to admitting that she allowed him to take advantage of her, by accepting to have a sexual relationship with him, and not having been able to keep him as a husband. This has nothing to do with morality or religion: in fact single mothers are not blamed for having engaged in pre-marital relations, nor are they condemned for not following the codes of Catholicism. In fact, in Apiao purity and virginity are not considered crucial values, despite the community adamantly proclaiming to be Catholic, and, interestingly enough, songs and prayers to the Virgin Mary are an important part of the praying repertoire. The matter of taboo regarding the fathers of single mothers' children has more to do with the negation of the fundamental value of active memory, expressed in denial and rejection, than with sin, shame or dishonour.

A man is not happy to be reminded of his mistakes, such as going out with a woman he eventually did not choose for a companion. The fact that he cannot claim any rights on his children is a conundrum from which he cannot possibly escape. Once he makes a decision, a man has no choice. The choice is possible only at the very beginning: to marry the woman, or not to marry. The first choice implies '*hacerse cargo*', to accept the responsibility, to take the woman to live with him in his family's household, and form a productive unit. The second choice is a silent one. Generally

⁵⁴ However, the fact that this is common knowledge does not necessarily mean that people talk about it. Everybody knows about the paternity of the children of single mothers, but this is not a topic of discussion in Apiao.

the man who is not interested in marrying will stop seeing the woman when she is pregnant. He will not enquire about her status, and once the child is born, he will never visit her, keeping as far away as possible from her household, her family and her connections. The ties are completely severed, never to be re-established. This is not only true of the man-woman tie, but it extends also to the father-child tie, which is non-existent.

As I mentioned before, the men (often single mothers have children with different men) are never mentioned in the household of the single mother. It is as if an episode of her life is completely erased, wiped out never to be mentioned again. Generally the first implication of this is the ignorance of the identity of his father on the child's side. Yet I have never seen a child enquiring about his father's identity, or asking his mother to tell him her life story. The man, together with the relationship that gave life to the child, is confined to the past - a past far too uninteresting to be brought to the surface. 'I was child of a single mother too', *Yo también fui hija huérfana*, the great-grandmother of my house told me once. 'Sara was an orphan child, I was an orphan child, and now Maria had another orphan child...' in enumerating the chain of children raised without a father, she included herself, and told me, in confidence, that she never knew who her father had been. She had asked her mother, maybe a couple of times, but she had always refused to say a word about it. 'I never knew, and up till now no one has ever claimed me, no-one has ever told me 'you belong to our family'. And this way I'm going to leave this world...'

Suspending kinship

The following episode illustrates all these themes, and shows the moment of what I call suspended kinship ties - when a woman is waiting for the man to make a decision to remember, or to forget.

One day Sara and I went visiting to the house of a neighbour, don Francisco. Typically, we had a reason for visiting: we had to give him and his family a message that we had received through the low-band (communication) radio. We spent more than two hours there, chatting animatedly about the last interesting event that had occurred: the night before a young man, drunk, had almost drowned in the canal. Don Francisco, who lives on a hill above the beach, at hearing him screaming had rushed to save him. The episode occupied us and our conversation for the entire visit, and we

commented at length on the young man, and his habit of drinking and crossing the canal in a small polystyrene boat. The boat was easily turned upside down and the man, who could not swim, had risked his life. This had already happened once, they all recalled. Comments and speculations were made on the people the boy had been drinking with. 'First they give him alcohol, and then they don't even help him out when he is about to die'. And the conversation went on, reconstructing the sequence of events, connecting various people to the facts discussed, and blaming them for their responsibility.

While we were chatting and drinking *mate*, a newborn baby was lying beside the stove. She was don Francisco's first grandchild, the child of his daughter Laura, 18, a single mother. We knew that Laura was pregnant, not because her pregnancy was visible, but because this kind of news circulates very well on the island. But we had not been to the house since the baby had been born. For the entire visit the baby stayed beside the stove, nobody showed her to us, nobody told us about the details regarding her birth, her weight, her conditions. Not a single word was pronounced about the baby. She was plainly ignored and we did not enquire about her. We acted just as our hosts, pretending that there was nothing new in that room, and in that family. Just before we left, Sara smiled in direction of the stove, and said, 'Very quiet!' and went as far as asking the mother the baby's name. And we left. On our way home Sara informed me of the identity of the baby's father. 'He's the brother of my godchild Elena; who knows, they might get married....who knows'.

What does this episode tell us about Apiao society?

The first noticeable element is the downplaying of a major life event like the birth of a child. Don Francisco and his wife had become grandparents, Laura had become a mother, yet this was as nothing compared with the episode of the rescue of the drunken man.

Laura, like all the other single mothers on the island, had a relation with a man, and the relation was never officialised, which is to say, the man never came to take her and his child to live with him in his parents' household. The child was publicly acknowledged as being the man's child, but this public recognition did not change the status of the relation between the parties involved: the fact that the woman and her child were living in her parents' household was evidence of the man's disinterest or, in the best hypothesis, temporising. What I want to note here is that the kinship relation

between the three parties involved (the man, the woman and the child) is so to say latent: it is suspended, until the man makes a move. If the man does not show any intention of forming a family of his own, the bond between the woman and himself, and himself and the child, will be severed. Laura and her baby were in a position of suspended kinship. 'They might get married, who knows...' Sara commented. Nobody knew what the father of the baby wanted to do, if he wanted to proceed with the usual process of getting a wife, or if he wanted to keep quiet and continue his life as a single man.

In case of non-marriage, those kinship ties are interrupted. There will never be acknowledgement, in the future, of the relation of paternity between the man and his child. The child won't have any legal rights on his father's property and he will never be inserted in the man's lineage - his surname (the one of his mother, twice) will be the mark of a forgotten relationship.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the way people in Apiao understand relatedness. Kinship is not understood as a given, and kin ties are not viewed as fixed and determined by biology. Kin ties, to be effective, must be constantly reiterated, constantly brought to the surface through acts of active memory. Actively remembering your loved ones means taking care, accompanying, helping out, bringing gifts, and, for those who live at a distance, keeping in touch and visiting. Apiao understanding of kinship is closer to a social relation that is constantly renovated through care and love. In a sense, to be kinsmen *per se* means nothing, since relations must be tested each time, and mediated by acts of loving care. It is not the fact of being related by blood that makes people close, or relations privileged: kin are constantly made or unmade according to the way they treat each other.

Memory is a powerful tool to make kinship ties, as well as to un-make them. In Apiao people are redefined according to their participation in active remembering. The idiom of memory redefines ties between people, who are 'taken into' the kin group with a centripetal movement, or 'taken out' with a centrifugal movement. Grandparents become parents, sisters become mothers, sons-in-law become children; while, on the other hand, mothers become 'any other person'; siblings, children, and fathers become 'no one'. The ultimate denial of a kin tie is the negation of memory,

the erasure of an absent person from someone's life through consistent forgetfulness. Back to the episode with which I started this chapter, what my hosts were telling me was not to be a mother, but to be an active part of the world: be autonomous, live in my own household, participate actively in the household life, be productive. What defines women is not motherhood, but being hardworking, skilled, and responsible. Children are just a part of the whole picture. A woman is free to go away to build her independence leaving her children behind, and yet this is not considered unnatural nor immoral. However, killing a newborn child, or abortion, is considered unnatural and criminal. In fact, what is downplayed is not motherhood as such, but the (in Western mentality, self-evident) bond between a mother and her child. As long as there is someone to give the child food, company and care the presence of a further woman becomes unnecessary. People often discussed the matter this way: 'my mother is not the woman who gave birth to me, but rather is the one who raised me'. In the raising of a child the values that make kinship are at their fullest expression. A person who loves and cares will remember, and, in turn, will always be remembered. An absent person, who has forgotten, will in turn be forgotten.

Being a mother is not as crucial as being an active part of a household, the productive unit where everyday life is lived. Being a father is a denied issue unless a man fathers children within the marriage bond. Caring, accompanying, helping and giving are the real substance of relatedness for Apiao people.

PART III. RELIGION

Chapter 5. ‘*Before we were all Catholics*’: changing religion

Introduction

Several sociological surveys and anthropological studies report evangelical Christianity as a growing force, actively increasing the number of followers, and particularly so in Latin America, described as a ‘Catholic continent trapped in an increasingly Protestant world’ (quoted in Stoll 1993:1). Chile is one of the Latin American countries where Protestantism has been flourishing. The 2002 national census recorded a total population of approximately 15 million, of which 70% declared to be Catholic, and 15% to be evangelical Protestants⁵⁵. This chapter is concerned with issues of ‘conversion’ to evangelical Protestantism in the island of Apiao.

In his substantial study of Chiloé published in 1984, the French human geographer Grenier reiterates for several hundred pages his theory of the Chiloé inhabitants as submissive, marginal and dependent. Submission, indolence and laziness contribute to the fundamental characteristics of these people and their society: immutability and repetition. Grenier is just one of the voices that have historically portrayed Chiloé people as easily tamed and quickly conquered, unlike their northern neighbours the Mapuches, who famously resisted Spanish and Chilean admission until the end of the 19th century.

Given the aggressive and generally successful activity of the evangelicals, it would be expected that a region like Chiloé – described as the cradle of submission – would easily turn into a Protestant haven. And yet ethnographic data - *pace* Grenier - reveal a different story. With the following chapter I intend to present a summary of the activities of two evangelical Protestant missionaries on the island of Apiao, and the effect of their proselytising on the population. The chapter will explore different streams of opinions and reactions within a relationship: that between Apiao people, mostly Catholic, and the missionaries, evangelical and newcomers, and those families

⁵⁵ Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas – INE, <http://www.ine.cl/>, 25 March 2005

who decided to follow them in their religion. I will describe narratives of Apiao Catholics on their fellow islanders who decided to ‘change religion’. I will then briefly describe a session in the evangelical temple, and report the views of some of those who decided to become evangelicals. Despite several years of hard work, the young missionaries have managed to convert only a very small minority (about 5% of the population). The possible reasons for what looks like a failure will be explored: is it because the prohibitions that Evangelism imposes are in complete contrast to the basic social rules of the island, or is it because deep communication and exchange is deemed possible, in Apiao, only between ‘alike’ people? Or, is it much more than that?

Throughout this chapter I use ‘conversion’ and ‘converts’ for a practical reason. It must be said that Apiao people themselves never used these expressions, and always referred to those who started attending the evangelical temple as ‘*los evangélicos*’ or ‘*los que se cambiaron [de religión]*’, ‘the evangelicals’ or ‘those who changed [religion]’. The missionaries referred to them as ‘*los hermanos*’, ‘the brothers’, and they referred to each other in the same way.

Indeed it would be difficult to decide whether those Apiao people who made the decision to follow the missionaries and their teaching did truly convert to evangelism, as Stoll points out for Latin American evangelical churches in general (1993:8ff). However, this chapter does not deal with issues of ‘true’ conversion; it rather concentrates in describing the dialectics of the encounter between two different sets of beliefs and lifestyles, in the background of the small island of Apiao.

‘Before, on the island we were all Catholics’

Apiao, like the whole Chiloé archipelago, has been colonised and converted en masse to Catholicism by the Jesuits in the 17th century. People in the region are overwhelmingly Catholic, and there is a growing Protestant minority. Evangelical churches are sending missionaries to various parts of the archipelago, and, in typical evangelical fashion, they work hard to bring more and more people to the ‘truth’, as they call it.

Apiao people, like most Amerindians, are not interested in the past, unless they have an experiential and visual knowledge of it⁵⁶. The notion of a past without Catholicism is a non-existent one, and in fact it would deny the very existence of the people themselves. Before the arrival of the Protestants, Apiao people never needed to declare they belonged to a religion. There was only ‘one’ religion, one church, and one God – and, to their knowledge, it had always been that way. Now things have changed and they have to define themselves against the evangelical ‘converts’, they have to distinguish between two religions, and two churches.

‘Before, on the island we were all Catholics. Now there are some evangelicals, but generally we are still all Catholics. *Catolismo* here is very strong’ don Julio told me, at the beginning of my fieldwork. Another man, don Daniel, told me how Apiao had been for a long time the only island left without any evangelical missionary, while all the surrounding ones had them. I once accompanied an old woman to the church, on the occasion of an important religious festival, but surprisingly no one had arrived yet and the church was practically empty. ‘There’s no-one....they are all evangelicals now...’ she sarcastically remarked. Her comment was voicing a strange familiarity with the fact that people who had never been presented with a religious choice previously, were now given the chance to opt for another faith. Quite unexpectedly, some of them did.

In Apiao some people turned to evangelism following the arrival of a married couple of missionaries. At the time of my fieldwork the missionaries, in their late twenties, had been living on the island for 5 years, and since their arrival they had been active in proselytising and attracting people to their religion. As I have written elsewhere, the family of the missionaries differed from Apiao people for various reasons: they were ‘different people’ in an island of ‘alike people’. They were not from Apiao nor from the region: the man was from Temuco (IX Region, southern Chile), and his wife from Uruguay. Secondly, they lived on a salary paid to them by their congregation, and that meant that they did not work the land like every other person of the island. They did not cultivate any potatoes nor raised any pigs or chickens, and they did not

⁵⁶ See for ex. Descola 1997: 67; Gow 1991: 151, and, for Chile, Course 2005: 175. In Gow’s book it is argued that history coincides with experienced and remembered kinship.

own any sheep or cattle. And thirdly, they were not Catholic. As such, they never took part in much of the island's social world, deeply intertwined with habits that are heavily condemned by the evangelicals, such as alcohol drinking, praying and so on.

Before I describe in more detail what happens in the temple, the setting of the evangelical meetings, and the 'converts' and their attitude, I will describe the opinion often voiced about the 'converts' and the missionaries by the majority of Apiao people.

Catholics on evangelicals

'*Los que se cambiaron*', 'those who changed [religion]' were objects of discussion amongst the rest of the island population. They were somehow appearing to have accepted this enormous change within their group, and at the same time tended to dismiss those who had chosen to change religion, as if their choice could not be too serious. Also, there was some curiosity on their side, towards what really happened in the temple.

Catholic people in Apiao, or, the overwhelming majority of the population, always provided me with interesting comments on the minority of evangelical faithful. The comments were generally a mixture of personal opinion on the 'converts', and a way of testing their limited knowledge about that religion. Various ideas about the Protestants were commonly discussed, but no one had the chance to personally verify if the information that was passed round corresponded to the truth. My position of anthropology student allowed me access to most events that took place on the island, irrespective of my religious affiliation. I was a privileged observer, so I could be reliable. I used to attend the Sunday morning celebration in the evangelical temple, and then proceed to the Catholic church and attend the prayer meeting there. In fact, this shifting was considered to be amusing, and people I was close to used to joke about it, alluding to a switch of religion in a matter of hours. The joke was in fact a reference to what had really happened with the 'converts'.

One of the commonly heard opinions on evangelical ‘converts’ voiced by the rest of Apiao people was that their ‘conversion’ was an act of convenience and interest. As part of their interaction with the islanders, the missionaries offered them some material goods, and the perspective of acquiring some more was a strong incentive to convert. A teapot, a piece of furniture, even a stove were said to be acquired through the missionaries, together with clothes. ‘The family X has ‘converted’ because they were promised to be given a brand new stove. They got the stove, and then one day they had a disagreement with the other evangelicals, and they left, keeping the stove of course!’ The stove episode was often mentioned, to exemplify the nature of the ‘conversion’. Often the ‘converts’ happened to be amongst the poorer people, and the chance of getting free clothes for children was one of the reasons why they decided to follow the teaching of the missionaries – at least according to people’s opinion. All seemed to agree on mentioning the advantage factor as one of the main reasons for ‘conversion’. ‘They know how to speak well...they talk about the doctrine, and are insistent, so that people with weak personalities are easily won’ one of the *fiscales* told me. Another woman was not so diplomatic, and on several occasions she told me that the group of ‘converts’ was made out of a bunch of foolish people (*los que se cambiaron son unos cuantos lesos no más*). ‘They are so ignorant, they don’t even know how to read or write, that is why they are easily convinced, they have no sense of reality’ someone else added. Either very poor, or very ignorant, or with a very weak personality: these were the typical ‘converts’ in people’s opinion. The ‘converts’ tended to live in the same neighbourhood, the *sector Mapu*, where the missionaries had been more active. Often people pointed out that those from Mapu were generally ignorant and therefore easily manipulated by the missionaries’ more direct communicative style. ‘*Los misioneros los engrupieron....los evangélicos son más comunicativos. Y los lesos le creen...*’

One day my friend Maria got particularly animated while telling me a story that had happened when she was a child. She was working in the field once with her family, and they were busy sowing potatoes, when suddenly a group of evangelical missionaries appeared, carrying guitars and other instruments. Her parents told them that they were busy and could not attend them, so the missionaries asked them if they could stay around, and started to sing and play their instruments. While the family

carried on working, the religious people went on singing their songs in front of the land that was being cultivated. And eventually during harvest time they realised that that field had not been fruitful. ‘All our work was useless, and the harvest was none for that field! Whenever I remember that, I get so angry! And all because of those evangelicals!’ she told me, furious, surrounded by the giggling of her grown-up children. And then she added that recently, during summer, she had received a visit from some evangelical missionaries, and she had invited them to come in for teatime. But after having received food and drink they did not show willingness to leave, and eventually she had to ‘almost throw them away’.

Both these episodes reiterate once again the basic social rule for Apiao people: offering drink and food in the household. Sociality equates with the offering and the receiving of food and drink, and the refusal to do so is considered the anti-social act *par excellence*. The first episode sees the family being unable to fulfil their role as hosts (offering hospitality to newcomers), and having to pay for the consequences of their anti-social act. In the woman’s words, it was clear that she was attributing the responsibility of the unproductive harvest to the intervention of the evangelical strangers. The denial of hospitality was returned with a subsequent denial of the fields to be productive. In the second case, the woman had offered hospitality to the strangers, but they had somehow abused her time, and were reluctant to go, after having allowed the main social rule to be acted out (offering and receiving food).

Not like all the others.

But why are those who ‘changed’ religion different from the majority?

Throughout my stay in Apiao, whenever I met people on the path, they generally replied to my greetings, but always kept a discrete distance, and hardly ever stopped for a chat. In fact, it also happened to me that people that had welcomed me and attended me in their households, tended to ignore me if meeting me on the island’s path. I very often noticed a sharp contrast between the kind attitude if I was a visiting guest, and the reserve that I observed in a public situation. However, if I met some evangelicals, their greeting would always be distinctive, and loud. ‘*Hola señorita!*’ ‘May God bless you!’ (*Que Dios la bendiga!*) and if I was asking ‘how are you’, the reply would be ‘Fine, with God’s favour!’ (*Bien, con el favor de Dios*). This, no other

Apiao person would ever tell me. Admittedly, though, such a welcoming greeting would be uttered loud and clear only if there was no one else around, especially non-evangelicals. Otherwise, the greeting would be whispered, or directly avoided.

While people who did not know me very well made few and generally neutral comments about the island's evangelicals, sometimes jokes about them were voiced. My Apiao friends would often make humorous comments on the fact that the evangelicals used a special language, which they found very funny. Sometimes such phrases were repeated and quoted as if they were jokes, such as '*mi señora esposa*', 'my lady wife', as one of the 'converts' had once referred to his wife, instead of the more common 'my woman', or 'my wife'. People also made amused comments at the supposed restraint from drinking alcohol of the 'converts', and whenever there was nothing to drink in the house, they would joke 'there's no wine today! Today we play evangelicals!' (*Ohy nos tiramos pa' evangélicos*).

'Detached' families.

Besides these amusing aspects of the 'converts', what Apiao people really resented was the refusal to take part in the community wishes, in concrete situations. The 'converts' were generally perceived as willing to separate themselves from the group. 'It's been a while since those families have been "detached" from the community', the *fiscal* told me once. This 'detachment', or separation, he said, was clearly visible on the occasions of two important religious festivals. Twice a year every family contributes an offer of a fixed amount of money to organise the festival and to attend the priest and pilgrims who arrive from a nearby island. By refusing to take part in the contribution they were officially and publicly showing their refusal to be part of the community in a direct way. Still, the person in charge of collecting the small offer would stop by evangelical families, just in case they would contribute. Being from Apiao means forming a community that at first glance may not appear to be terribly compact, but religious solidarity has always been a matter of principle. And, as we have already seen, hospitality and attending someone is one of the crucial and most sacred ways in which sociality is experienced.

One of the comments that I often heard, to support this idea of the 'converts' as voluntarily separating themselves from the community, was the fact that they wanted

to have a separate cemetery, as if they refused to be buried in the existing one, together with the Catholics. I later found the information to be false, but the widespread misrepresentation of a fact seems to indicate a clear perception of the ‘converts’ as a separate micro-community, on the part of the other island inhabitants.

The topic of death and burial of those who ‘changed religion’ is obviously a very important one to Apiao people. One day during a religious festival a man made a joke that was deemed to be very funny by those present. The man, a Catholic, had acted as a *patron* for a saint statue in the festival, becoming responsible for that particular statue for that year. At some point the conversation fell on the ‘converts’, and someone wondered what was going to happen to them in case of death. Would they be admitted in the cemetery, after their death? They must ask permission, someone replied. ‘What are we going to do with all those people on the island then? We will hang them and we will smoke them, so that we can store them up!’ The man was referring to the regular smoking process of fresh meat and fish to keep it in storage. The terms he used are those used to refer to the animal slaughtering and subsequent meat processing. The joke was received with loud laughter, and it was repeated several times and told to friends and family on several occasions. What was deemed hilarious was the fact that the *patron*, who had committed himself to observe a (Catholic) religious obligation, had his mother and brother amongst the ‘converts’; and they regularly attended the evangelical temple. ‘That was a very good joke!’ said the man who told us the story, ‘as if he did not remember that he was talking about his own mother!’ True or untrue, the notion of the evangelicals’ supposed incompatibility with the island cemetery seemed to preoccupy Apiao people. It is quite significant that in a joke people could project the image of the slaughtering of an animal onto a human being, setting up an inversion that sees men suddenly become animal-like (either pigs or cows). The image evokes complete surrender, and it is easy to think of the acquiescence and the acceptance of the ‘converts’ in the temple. To imagine the evangelical dead as if they were animals, and to portray them in the shape of dried and smoked meat is a graphic way to reveal a very strong perception of their ‘difference’. By joking about his own brother and – especially – his own mother, the man was somehow symbolically detaching his family from himself, and was at the same time alluding to their own detachment from the community. Through a joke, he

was exaggerating in images what the ‘converts’ had done in real life: showing the rest of the people that they wanted to be ‘different’.

However, whereas the image of the joke evokes the butcher’s table and is in fact quite brutal, what is at stake here is so much more than an inversion (with the relative humiliation) of men-animals.

‘The evangelicals don’t even believe in the dead’, an old woman once told me, one of my best friends, almost whispering, as if she had just made an almost sacrilegious statement. Apiao people take the dead very seriously, and they are very careful not to disrespect them, both in words and in behaviour. They can come back and terrify, they can appear in dreams or during the day, they can threaten and obsess the living for several reasons. One of these reasons, and certainly the most important, is not having given the dead a decent funeral, then a proper praying session after death, and again on the occasion of the 1st anniversary of the death.

The dead are considered very scary and very powerful, and as such are respected and honoured. Just like God and the local miraculous saints, they have ambivalent powers: can be benevolent and revengeful at the same time. The dead must be remembered and prayed for, by their living relatives. Whenever there is a funeral, or whenever someone commemorates a deceased relative, or honours a promise made to a saint, the person in charge organises praying sessions to be held in his or her household. These are called *novenas* and last up to nine days. While theoretically the sessions are offered to the deceased or the saint, the community’s participation is crucial. A successful praying meeting is attended by many people, and the hosts would notice, appreciate and carefully remember the presence of neighbours, relatives and people from other sectors. *Novenas* are always held at night, and often people walk through heavy rains, carrying infants or little children, and sit for hours with their clothes completely wet. During *novenas* three sets of rosaries are prayed and sung, and food and drink is offered. While a dinner is served every other night, alcoholic drink (usually *chicha*, the local apple cider) is offered every day at the beginning, at the end and in between rosaries. Attending *novenas*, praying and drinking, is done in the name of either the deceased, or the saint; the presence of those assembled in the house is meant to ‘accompany’ (*acompañar*) the person who

organised the *novena*, thereby showing their solidarity. They attend the sessions, and are in turn attended by the host with drink and food. People always participate, or at least go visiting to show their solidarity, to ‘accompany’ someone who is in need. At some point it might be their turn, and the favour will be reciprocated.

The *novenas* imply attending many people and spending vast amounts of money to honour the dead and the saints. The celebrations that accompany the prayers - ritual consumption of food and alcohol - allow individuals to strengthen their alliances with other individuals, in respect to the strict reciprocity rule that governs interaction in Apiao. Offerings and *novenas* represent the chance the living have to negotiate with the supernatural, offering something in exchange for something else, such as peace, tranquillity, and protection. These celebrations also enact the fundamental value of actively remembering, a way to perpetuate relations.

The repetition of fixed-text prayers and the consumption of alcohol are vehemently opposed by the evangelical missionaries. Those who ‘changed’ do not participate in *novenas* anymore. In changing religion they made a public statement of separation. Suddenly their presence at the various *novenas* celebrated every year is not obvious anymore: not only are they not permitted to drink alcohol, they are also taught that the Catholic praying style is pointless. The refusal to take part in *novenas* implies the negation of reciprocity and mutual solidarity. In fact, what really made the families of ‘converts’ somehow ‘separated’ from the rest was their denial of reciprocity, together with the rejection of alliance ties.

What is it to be religious for Apiao people?

If I were to ask such a question in Apiao, my enquiry would be taken as very odd and rather unusual. In fact, that is more of an anthropologist’s question – not really an Apiao issue at all. Apiao people never state what and who they are, they are not interested in labelling themselves, or in identifying themselves with a religious faith, or a political group. If asked ‘*Usted siempre fue de Apiao?*’ that could be roughly translated ‘are you from Apiao and have you always lived here?’ they would reply: ‘*Fui nacido y crecido en Apiao*’ ‘I was born and bred in Apiao’. As described previously, to be from Apiao means to live like Apiao people do, to be engaged in the same activities, to share the same concerns, the same values. These same values shape

the view of sociality, expressed in their everyday lived world. One of these crucial values is reciprocity, that lies at the basis of Apiao life, and it articulates relationships with both human and supernatural beings. All that is obtained must be returned, because nothing is given for free. Whatever is received, calls for a return. The return can be delayed, but it must be respected, '*porque nadie está libre*', 'because nobody is free'. I heard this expression several times on the occasion of an accident that happened on the island, in a distant sector, during my fieldwork. A family had lost their house and all their belongings in a fire that had occurred at night, while they were asleep. They had managed to escape and only the woman had reported some injuries; however, they were left with nothing. Immediately after the accident, a neighbour welcomed them to stay with his family until they could rebuild a new house. The story moved the islanders, who went visiting the family, offering some clothes, kitchenware, and money. Most of the people on the island went to see them, irrespective of their relationship, and all brought something to offer. '*Nadie está libre*' people repeated thoughtfully. 'Any time, any day, this could happen to us, it could be our turn. One has to be generous and give, because if one is good, people would remember. And if one ever needs help.....if one has always given generously, he will also receive. Because no-one is free'. The episode of the burned-down house is just an example, useful to illustrate the dynamics at work in people's lives.

Given that reciprocity seems to be the *leitmotiv* of Apiao sociality, it is easy to see how religion is deeply intertwined with social life, to the point that withdrawing from Catholicism equates with dropping out of Apiao social life. Religion and solidarity are intrinsically joint - there would not be religious rituals without reciprocal solidarity.

Denial of alliance ties.

Severe comments were made about people who, as a consequence of their 'change', had severed their ties with fellow islanders. My host family told me that one of the 'converts', a man, made a point of not greeting them whenever they met. Not only was this generally unacceptable; in this case it was a serious fault given that the two families had *compadrazgo* ties (my hosts, years before, had been asked to baptise the children of the family who subsequently 'converted'). I enquired about the possible reason for this behaviour, and they told me that it could have been that the man was

ashamed. ‘They have “oiled” all their children, and they also have all the sacraments. And now, evangelicals?’ The expression Apiao people use to mean ‘to baptise’ is a direct reference to the act performed by the priest during baptism, to sign the cross on the infant’s head with blessed oil. The ritual act is a symbolic welcoming of the newborn into the Catholic community, together with the erasure of the original sin. By using the verb *oliar*, which is characteristic to the local Spanish, Apiao people stress the seriousness with which they approach the ritual of baptism and the act of belonging to the Catholic Church. The use of the word is a direct reference to the ‘circular missions’ organised by the Jesuits who were in charge of the evangelisation of the archipelago since the 17th century. Due to the geographical distance from the continent, even nowadays the island can be visited by priests only once or twice a year. In the past babies were ‘baptised’ by the local church representatives, the *fiscales*, who could sign and bless the newborn with water. However, the priest alone could impart the oil blessing, or *oliar*⁵⁷. Henceforth the distinction between ‘to bless with water’ and ‘to bless with oil’. The latter ended up being commonly used to mean ‘baptism’ in a metonymic reduction.

Given that their *compadres* had taken part in the sacred ritual of the baptism, they could not possibly be ‘real evangelicals’ in the eyes of my hosts. The ‘real evangelicals’, (*los verdaderos evangélicos*), they said, are the missionaries, because they were born evangelical, and they have always been evangelical. That is like ‘the true Catholic’. To be a ‘true evangelical’ one has to be born evangelical. Otherwise, one is a fake evangelical. A change of religion at this stage (as an adult) is fake and nonsensical. In fact, it is a lie, *una mentira*.

All the people I spoke to were quite firm in stating that the ‘change of religion’ was ‘fake’. In their own words, it is impossible to change religion when one is born a Catholic. You cannot possibly change religion as an adult. They would not convert, they kept saying, because they were born ‘within the Catholic religion’, and since this is an unchangeable status, a change of religion is simply impossible.

Talking about Juan, a man who had ‘converted’, along with all his family, people told me, ‘How can this possibly be true? How can he convert, if he is married in church, his parents are married in church, all his children received baptism and confirmation?’

⁵⁷ Milton Uribe, personal communication

A couple of years ago, despite having changed religion already, he had his daughter receive confirmation in the church, and the next day they all went to their temple! See now what kind of people are these?' In all these comments on the 'converts', the stress was always on the little sense that the whole phenomenon made to the majority of Apiao people. They could hardly explain the behaviour of some people who had 'converted', and often the only approach they could use in talking about it was by way of joking. 'I was told that the X family now go singing on the path....that's ridiculous, not even the pastor does that, he's more sensible than them!'

What is crucially important in the religious discussions concerning the 'converts' is the discourse of descent brought forth by Apiao people. Interestingly, they hardly voice descent preoccupations in everyday life; kinship ties are not necessarily prominent in social life, or in moral discourse. As I have argued elsewhere, kinship ties are made out of values that transcend what are commonly thought of as blood ties. Kinship is experienced rather as an emotional tie between people that care for one another, and remember one another. Family ties are easily overlooked if emotional bonds are not continuously renovated with constant love and care. Descent and blood ties are never mentioned in conversation – except when issues of 'conversion' come up. Discourses of belonging, hardly voiced in family contexts, emerge in religious matters. You cannot be something that, by way of birth, does not belong to you. You can only be what you were born.

In the evangelical temple.

The evangelical temple has been built patiently by the missionary man and some of the 'converts'. The material has been acquired by the missionaries with offers from the congregation. The new material (fresh wooden tables and corrugated iron roof) of the building is in sharp contrast with the old Catholic church of the island, a landmark visible from a distance, dating from the early 20th century. Like most chapels in the archipelago, Apiao church is built entirely of wood, with its roof made entirely out of wooden tiles, characteristic of the architecture of the area. A number of Chiloé churches have been recently designated humanity cultural heritage by UNESCO, and even though Apiao church was not included in the list of the 16 protected buildings, it retains the same architectural and stylistic characteristics as those that are. The

evangelic temple is just another modern building, half hidden by the vegetation. Inside the spacious room are benches and a carpet. No candles, flowers or sacred images whatsoever – just a painting of a man in chains, progressively freeing himself from them, adorned the wall in front of the audience. Next to the painting, the Gospel quote ‘And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ (John 8:32) was inscribed.

When I arrived, on a Sunday afternoon, with a family of ‘converts’, I found several people sitting, waiting for the service to start. There were some men and several women, some of them elders; some others were young mothers carrying babies. Next to the altar there was a group of young musicians: some boys and a girl playing guitars plugged into loudspeakers, and two tambourines. Standing at the altar, animating the praying session, a man playing an accordion, and singing into a microphone. After singing three songs, with himself leading and the audience responding, the man began a free prayer, what the evangelicals call the ‘*oraciones*’. This praying style, called *orar*, differs from the one called *rezar*, employed by Catholics using fixed-text formulas and prayers such as the rosary and the litanies. The missionaries often repeat that it does not make sense to sit down and repeat formulas for hours, like Catholic people in Apiao. According to them, prayers must be in the form of a personal dialogue with God, where each individual begins a spontaneous conversation with the Lord. The man with the accordion and the microphone, his eyes closed, was screaming his prayers into the microphone, in a spontaneous flow according to his own mood and wishes; everyone else around kept their eyes closed and every now and then they all commented on the man’s speech by saying ‘Yes, my Lord!’ ‘This is it, my Lord!’ ‘Glory to God!’ ‘Amen!’. In fact all spoke aloud whatever they felt, always keeping their eyes closed, everyone immersed in a personal, direct conversation with God. Some people raised their arms as well. I wondered what the point was of having someone leading the session from the altar (which, was more like a sort of stage), screaming into a microphone, since no-one was really paying attention, and in fact, each person seemed to be concentrated in personal prayer. The general effect, from the point of view of a ‘non-convert’, was slightly confusing and quite noisy. One woman got overemotional and started to scream. I wondered if the pastor was prepared in case someone was unable to manage the

emotional overflow developed in the temple context? I turned towards him to observe his reaction, but he was sitting quietly, his eyes closed. After a good while, the man with the accordion invited the missionary to speak, and the pastor gave a speech, with energy and fervour, and the people present commented aloud in the usual way, nodding their heads. After his speech the pastor invited anyone who was interested to go to the stage and talk; a woman volunteered and was handed in the microphone. She seemed quite at ease and spoke very spontaneously, giving thanks for the beautiful day, for the food she had, and for being at the temple with her ‘brothers’. She was used to doing this, and smiled, danced and held the microphone with one hand, while keeping the cable with the other, between two fingers. I could not help but thinking that this reminded me of the starlets that crowd the Chilean TV shows every hour of the day, very popular with Apiao tele-spectators. Nothing could be further from what I had so far seen on the island. People are not happy to be the centre of attention, they rather shyly hide behind their stoves and speak very little and only whenever strictly necessary, especially in front of people they are not familiar with – as I was for all of them. Emotions, either positive (happiness, satisfaction, approval), or negative (disappointment, anger, pain) are hardly ever expressed and people are well accustomed to mastering their reactions. Equally, bodily postures often contribute to hiding or masking something: very often I happened to see people sitting for half an hour or more, eating and drinking, and then, with the most natural gesture, pulling from their clothing a live chicken, a 2 litre-bottle of Coke, or a bagful of eggs. Nothing in their posture would have shown or revealed that they were carrying something, just like the pregnant women I described elsewhere – nothing would have revealed their state.

How could all this radical change of style appeal to some people? How could they cope with the very different way of expressing themselves, moreover in public? So much for a superficial view of what is immediately observable.

However, when the evangelicals meet in the temple, their radical difference is confined to the interior of the building. Their singing could be heard by passers-by, but in fact people hardly take that path, unless going to the temple. But what could definitely be perceived even outside of the temple walls are the social implications of being evangelical, or, rather, of having ‘changed religion’.

How about those who ‘changed’ religion, ‘*los que se cambiaron*’?

Those who ‘changed’.

It was not very easy for me to have a chance to talk to the ‘converts’ in a relaxed manner, especially because in Apiao only people who knew me very well were happy to discuss personal matters. I often went visiting the missionaries, with whom I was on friendly terms, and sometimes I would meet some ‘converts’, who, like me, had come for a visit. On one such occasion, I met one of the local ‘converts’, a young woman. She was known throughout the island as Caro, but the missionaries always made a point of calling Apiao people by their full name, and always putting the word *hermano/a* (brother/sister) in front of the name. So Caro for them was ‘sister Carolina’. She got married when she was 18 and had then three children of five, three and one year respectively. The woman had come visiting, but as it often happens on the island she had been silent for about an hour. She participated with shy smiles to the conversation between me and the female missionary. When the missionary left to put her baby daughter to sleep, I was left alone for a little while with Caro, and we had a chat. I told her that I was a student and that I was not an evangelical. She told me, after my request, that she had changed religion about a year ago, and that she was very happy. Her husband did not change, but he had been to the temple a couple of times, and he ‘knew the Word’. Her mother-in-law had changed (religion) too, so they went to the temple together. She told me that her life had changed, so I asked her in what terms. ‘Before, a lot of bad things happened to me. My husband drinks a lot and I used to go out to look for him, in the middle of the night, with my children, and I used to insult him and those who sold him the alcohol. Now I don’t do that anymore: I realised that that made him very cross, so now I just try to be patient. I understand that problems must be solved within one’s home. Another big change in my life has been my attitude towards my father. My mother was a single mother. She died when I was a baby and I was brought up by my grandmother. It was very sad for me, and I was always told that my father was don Ignacio (a local boat owner). I hated him for many years, but not anymore. I now realise that I’ve got another father, a much better one, one that loves me much more than that’. I asked her if she had been criticised for having changed religion, and she said that yes, people told rumours and criticised her. ‘But I know that all wickedness is paid for in life’.

I asked her if it had been very difficult to change, and she admitted that indeed it had been very difficult, especially at the beginning, for example, to renounce crossing herself. ‘I grew up in the church, my grandma always sent me there. I made crowns for my dead, but I never paid for prayers.’ I eventually asked her if she would go to a San Antonio prayer meeting (the main local Catholic cult, immensely popular) and she said ‘going to sit down (and pray)? No. If I were asked to help and cook, I might.’ And then our conversation was interrupted by our host, who returned to the kitchen and added some comments on the local religious traditions, expressing her views in a strongly assertive way. Caro immediately switched back to her silent mood.

Considering the words of the young woman, I noticed an obviously different attitude towards typical events in Apiao daily life. Often husbands leave the household and engage in drinking with friends, and a strong sense of pride and self-protection would urge a woman never to mention the fact to a total stranger, like me. In fact, once a woman is married, she is responsible for the productive unity of her household, and if her husband is not productive, the burden will be left to her. Yet she is not expected to complain, or to denounce the situation. In a sense, she is also responsible for her husband’s productivity, or lack of it; so the last thing a young woman would do is complain about her husband. That would expose her, and show her in a bad light. Caro’s reference to her husband and his drinking habit was most likely due to the missionaries’ rhetoric on drinking. Missionaries vehemently condemn and oppose the consumption of alcohol, and the *hermanos* are expected to follow this rule. However, in Apiao drinking has a sacred aspect that goes beyond mere conviviality.

Another very interesting element in Caro’s discourse is her remark about the man who supposedly is her father. In Apiao unmarried women are very often single mothers, and there is no stigma attached to them or their children. The fathers, who interrupted their relationship to the women after realising a pregnancy, are not part of the picture and are never mentioned. The children hardly ever question this very obvious absence, and, especially, they do not blame these absent fathers. It seemed to me that Caro’s discourse was heavily influenced by the missionaries’ oratory, that underlines how the word they preach is the only ‘true word’, the only one capable of changing one’s life completely. Clearly the young woman needed her life to change: all alone

with three children and a drunkard man, she found solace in a religion that filled her with emotional warmth.

If ‘sister Caro’ had gained inner peace and comfort in her personal life, she must have also noticed some dramatic changes in her social life. Going back to her words, she said that she would not ‘go and sit’ to the San Antonio *novena*; and for her dead she would make crowns – but would not offer prayers. This takes us back to one of the most important aspects of Apiao sociality: religious solidarity. In making a change of religion, the woman was actively stepping out of a moral universe, made out of obligations both towards the community and the supernatural beings that populate Apiao experience of the lived world.

Chachi and his pact

One summer Sunday morning, on my way to the church I met don Ernesto, better known as Chachi. Chachi was a characteristic figure on the island: very often completely drunk, he used to spend the nights on the path, where he had fallen asleep after heavy drinking. Chachi was nonetheless an excellent worker and was regularly employed by islanders who needed help either with boat building, or working in the fields. When I met him that day we had a long conversation and I eventually asked him if he had any intention of ‘changing religion’. He said that it was impossible for him to change religion, because he had already made promises to the Nazareno (a Spanish lifesize statue of a Christ, on the nearby island of Caguach, to which Chiloé people are particularly devoted). ‘It’s like a pact between me and him, I cannot possibly step back now’. Apiao people weave relationships with miraculous saints and these relations are quite dynamic. They are not afraid of asking for miracles and favours of various sorts, and they always offer something in exchange – something that implies an effort, a sacrifice, and generally a sound expenditure of money. At the same time, if the saints do not give what is asked, people feel free to withdraw their offerings. By negotiating with the powerful beings, in a sense they replicate the pattern of social relations that they live by in everyday contexts with their fellow islanders.

A couple of months later I met Chachi again and he told me that he had given up drinking; he told me that he had been attending the evangelical temple for a couple of

Sundays and that he felt very welcomed. ‘All those who are there used to be drunkards, we were all thrown on the path together’. He put the blame on those few people of the island who sell wine, ‘they sell you wine any time, day or night, and they just do it for money. It should be prohibited!’. ‘Since I gave up drinking’, he said, ‘I reflected on my life and I realised that my animals were almost abandoned and so was my household’. It seemed that a whole range of new social opportunities was opening for him now: he had spent the Christmas days in the company of the ‘*hermanos, que le dicen ellos*’ ‘as they say it’, and he had more invitations to come, for barbecues, parties and dinners. He seemed to still be adapting to the new lifestyle, yet he sounded happy.

Going back to Chachi’s pact with the Nazareno, several Apiao people participate in a *novena* and feast in honour of the Nazareno Christ, held twice a year in the nearby island of Caguach. The Nazareno feasts attract thousands of people from the nearby region and various other locations, and Apiao people, following a tradition that goes back to the 18th century⁵⁸, actively contribute to the feast and the *novena*. Several families make *promesas* (promises) to the Christ and in order to fulfil them they spend the whole 10-day period of the *novena* and the feast camping in Caguach. During one such *novena* period, a very dramatic episode occurred to one of the Apiao pilgrims.

Episode of the Caguach wreck

The main Caguach festival is held in August, in the middle of winter – and often the weather is terrible and the sea very rough. This was the case one night, so much so that one of the Apiao pilgrims decided to move his boat, anchored in front of the beach, to a more secure position. Once he reached the boat, though, he made the mistake of lifting the anchor before turning the engine on, and when he tried, the engine did not work, leaving him at the mercy of the tempest for a whole night. That night people hardly slept – the wind was so strong that some roofs were lifted off, and, as someone put it, ‘the house was like a cradle’ (*la casa parecía cuna*). And yet, the next morning we heard the good news: the man had reached a nearby island in the

⁵⁸ More exactly, to May 10, 1778. A detailed historical report of the events that made Apiao one of the ‘five people’ (*cinco pueblos*) to organise and celebrate the Nazareno of Caguach festival continuously since then, is given by Cardenas and Trujillo 1986.

middle of the night – he was alive. This episode raised interesting comments on the missionary’s side – comments that while showing the different attitude towards a very popular religious festival in which Apiao people are actively involved, do in fact shed light on the different nature of the evangelicals’ life project.

Once back on the island I had a conversation with the missionary woman about this episode. In her view the festival was a hell in miniature, which God was going to punish. ‘Every time they go to that festival, something terrible happens’ she said. ‘They just go there to have fun, enjoy themselves, get drunk. The Bible says very clearly that the cult of the images comes from the devil’. The man had been saved by God’s mercy: he got punished for his *hubris*, and he almost lost his life.

The cult of the images – what the evangelical missionaries name idolatry – is a crucial aspect of Apiao people’s religious beliefs and, ultimately, worldview. In engaging with the saint, enclosed in a sacred image, they engage in a ‘proper’ social relation, where goods are offered in exchange for other goods; where the pacts made must be honoured from both sides – otherwise the relationship will end. The saints *are* the statues; and it is the statues that are visited, prayed to, asked for miracles, and offered money and presents. The statues are brought to places, allowing people to physically engage with them, to touch them, to hold them while carrying them, to have them in their own households. This is especially true of the most cherished saint in Apiao, the little San Antonio de Padua, brought regularly to the island from nearby Caguach to be given *novenas* in exchange for miracles. Saints, in their statue form, are treated like persons: they are even given nicknames, and attributed agency. The relationship between Apiao people and their saints is entwined with everyday life, and months and even years are spent getting organised to fulfil a pact, and the arrival of a statue, or the approaching of a festival are frequent topics of conversation in Apiao.

Evangelical doctrine heavily condemns the cult of the images. The missionaries argue that people that are devoted to images are ignorant, and as such they ‘adore a piece of wood’. They are ‘tied to a lie’ (*están amarrados a una mentira*): devotion to saints is idolatry, and idolatry is to adore the devil. The prayers addressed to the little San Antonio are blasphemous; and the only truth is the one of the Bible. And those who do not follow the only truth will lose themselves and go to Hell.

Freedom

To be ‘tied to a lie’: we are again reminded of the idea of freedom sponsored by the missionaries. This was, in fact, the concept portrayed in the only image that adorned the evangelical temple. People are ‘tied to a lie’, and this lie is preventing them from understanding the truth, and keeps them prisoners. Knowing the truth will make you free. ‘If you only knew the truth, you would cry out of happiness’, the pastor told me one day. The ‘lie’ and the chains that are tying up Apiao people’s lives, in the evangelicals’ opinion, are what happen to be pillars of their social life, and the grounding of their moral world. Devotion to saints (in the form of statues), the repetition of fixed-text prayers for the dead and for the saint, engaging in alcoholic drinking during the same praying meetings: these are the ‘lies’ that tie Apiao people. Truth makes people free – and their ignorance makes them slaves.

If the missionaries embarked in a truth-dissemination task, to free more and more Apiao people from the chains of ignorance and paganism, what those same Apiao people mean by ‘freedom’ seems to be of different nature entirely. ‘No-one is free’ is a statement that proclaims people’s belonging to a social group. No-one is a detached individual, all are part of a wider group, all belong to a unit and – although everyday life in Apiao is seemingly experienced in individualistic terms, whenever there is a dramatic event in someone’s life, the community always shows strong solidarity. To refuse to take part in a solidary circle of mutuality is not an option, for it would deny someone’s existence as member of a group. During crucial events in people’s lives the presence of the community is essential and a *sine qua non* condition for the perpetuation of life cycles. Funerals, *novenas* and other private celebrations to honour one’s dead or one’s promise to a saint are group events, that by definition involve a big portion of the community. No one would be interested in giving up group membership – no one would voluntarily step back from the community. Because nobody is free. The statement of Apiao sociality as a collective, mutual experience does not stop there: it goes a step further by indicating an ‘extended project’ of social commitment to fellow islanders. It is the consciousness of ongoing community life, and the project of the continuation of that social life, the projection of that ideal into the future. Something that the evangelicals are actively changing, by proposing a different kind of sociality, based on different premises. With their religious zeal and enthusiastic preaching, they are actively denying what Apiao people demonstrate as

being the structures of their sociality. In fact, Evangelism is a project that would render social life (as they conceive it) unnecessary.

Conclusion

This chapter is concerned with issues of ‘conversion’. The impact of evangelical missionary presence on the island is revealing in that it shows how religious affiliation is strongly tied up with notions of descent, tradition, identity and community.

In half a decade the missionaries could convert only a small percentage of the islanders. This is because of what being evangelical entails for the ‘converts’: the adoption of a new lifestyle, special rules in the interrelations with fellow islanders, as well as a different relation with one's own body. All this sits ill at ease with the delicate exchange system that supports the politics of relationships on the island. Those who decided to convert are pinpointed as 'liar' and 'foolish', on the basis that religion, like blood, is inherited and therefore unchangeable. Yet, those families who adhered to Protestantism changed radically in such a way as to somehow cut them out of the community. The ethnography shows the re-making of identity, lifestyle and concept of the self of a small group of ‘converts’, and the reactions of the Catholic majority to this dramatic change. It is argued that, despite the attractiveness represented by western-oriented missionaries and their material and spiritual offers, people consciously resist ‘conversion’ on the basis of attachment to tradition, identity and a peculiar sense of the person - inherent in their being Catholic. This is because evangelism goes against some of the crucial rules governing both supernatural beliefs and sociality in the Apiao lived world, and eventually actively denies the very community.

Epilogue

About a year after my last encounter with Don Ernesto, better known as Chachi, here he was again, one afternoon, coming to visit my host family. “I have been sent as a missionary by the pastor, since I have not been to the Catholic church at all, so I am ready to go around inviting people to come to the evangelical cult”. He was telling us

of his missionising activities, and he said that he used to go around with the Bible, but that one of our neighbours had kept it to read. ‘Yesterday I went to see Jose Luis, and I ended up spending the night there!...*Claro que no tendría que tomar*...Sure that I am not supposed to drink, but still with my friend Jose we talked about the Bible, while drinking a bit of *chicha* to accompany us....and so the night came!’ ‘Now I’ll go back home, wash, and will go straight to the temple...’, he said, while accepting the food and *mate* drink that my hosts offered him. And then he added, as if to justify himself with his fellow islanders: ‘Sure that one changes religion for interest more than anything! Yes, because.....for religious matters, not really!!! It’s because they give various things! Everything! Look at my clothes: shirts, trousers, when have you ever seen me with such a good shirt? And food as well: noodles, rice...and other things as well....someone even got a boat engine!’ and then he continued commenting on his fellow temple goers, and added a small list of supposed future ‘converts’. He even named one of the island *fiscales*, and he said that he just wanted to hand over his duty and ‘change religion’. ‘Of course! He needs some help! Look: the religion is almost the same. One has to sit down, and stand up, and then kneel when they say it, just like in the Catholic church. The only real difference is that in the evangelical church one has to cry...but that doesn’t really matter. Of course one just bends over and cries, even if he has to force himself to that, but eventually tears come up and that’s it. And also, the fact that we have to respect them, let them speak when they speak, without interrupting them, keeping silent, that’s all really”.

He thanked my hosts for the food and drink received, grabbed his hat and left.

‘Don’t pay too much attention to him’, they told me once he was gone, ‘he’s just a bit nuts’ and we all went on with our activities. I was left pondering about the universality of the child that ‘could only see things as his eyes show them to him’ and points out that the emperor is not wearing new clothes: he’s stark naked.

PART III. RELIGION

Chapter 6. Fear and prayers: negotiating with the dead

The dead are feared and respected in Apiao. Just like San Antonio, the local miraculous saint, they are perceived to be powerful and revengeful. This chapter describes the beliefs surrounding death and the dead in Apiao. The dead have ambivalent powers: they can be benevolent and vengeful at the same time. They can be placated with proper funeral celebrations, and prayer sessions, called *novenas*. The *novenas* must be repeated for the first death anniversary, and every time it is considered necessary. The *novenas* imply inviting and attending to many people, and spending vast amounts of money to honour the dead. The celebrations that accompany the prayers -ritual consumption of food and alcohol- allow individuals to strengthen their alliances with other individuals, in respect of the strict reciprocity rule that governs interaction in Apiao. Offerings and *novenas* represent the chance the living have to negotiate with the supernatural realm, to which the dead, called souls (*animas*) belong, offering prayer rituals in exchange for peace, tranquillity, and protection. These celebrations also enact the fundamental value of actively remembering, a way to perpetuate relations.

The chapter starts with a few episodes concerning people and guilty dogs. The attitude people have towards the death of animals is described, drawing on the cases of killer dogs that had to be executed by their owners to prevent them from doing further damage.

Later on I discuss the reasons why the dead are spoken of as very frightening. A description of the funeral celebrations inserts in the picture the fundamental value of solidarity for the Apiao community.

Death, people and their animals

Apiao households are made out of a building, the land that surrounds it, the people who live in it, and their animals. In Apiao, people and animals are strongly connected: in fact people's daily routine is regulated by the household animals and their subsistence is very much dependent on their animals: chickens, pigs, sheep, cows, and finally dogs. Chickens and pigs are fed every day by the women, who spend a considerable amount of their time preparing pigs meals. Cows are usually kept in lands away from the household, so a member of the family would go to check and count them once or twice per day, and the same would be done with the sheep.

Women are in charge of slaughtering chickens and fish but not other animals, which are always killed by men. The women would be present to help, by holding the animal while it is been slaughtered, but the actual killing would always be performed by a man. Women would cut a fish head while the fish is still alive and jumping, would boil crabs alive, or slaughter a chicken very quickly by cutting its throat, and holding it while the blood gathers in a bowl. The procedure would be similar with the other animals, which are generally stabbed at the heart. I have seen several animal slaughtering (*carneos*), events that usually involve at least two households, but I never observed any feeling of repugnance, unease or embarrassment for the act of killing. I have described in a previous chapter how Pablo, the newly wed young man, had to perform the killing of his big pig for the first time. On that occasion, his clumsy attempts to stab the animal in the right spot were received with much giggling and loud laughter by his friends. But in that case, it was his opportunity to show his status as an independent adult and he had to prove that he was perfectly able to perform an adult's task. An adult man is expected to be able to kill an animal – especially a pig, something that is done on a regular basis. Only once I came across a man who could not do it, and I was told by his mother that he was 'useless at killing animals⁵⁹' (*inútil para carnear*).

While chickens, pigs, sheep and cows provide meat and their *raison d' être* is basically to be consumed, dogs are weighted differently in people's daily routines. Each household in Apiao has at least one, but usually several dogs. The dogs are guard dogs and are never allowed into the house. They would announce visitors by

⁵⁹ Somebody later pointed out to me that to describe someone as *inútil*, useless, was a strong statement, bordering on the insult.

barking and very often would attack a newcomer, unless the host is quick enough to prevent this from happening, calling his dog and urging him to stop. Dogs are considered very faithful and are, in a sense, part of the family. They are always given names and nicknames, and they would be talked about very regularly mentioning them by name. Whenever a member of the family goes somewhere on his own, he will always bring along the dog for company, calling him by his name and urging him to follow. The dog would always wait outside the visited household until his owner comes out, and then they would walk back together. Dogs are always urged to accompany children, and I was always encouraged to take the dog with me to ‘accompany me’.

While the above-mentioned animals are considered exclusively in utilitarian terms (they provide meat), dogs are viewed as in-between creatures: despite belonging undeniably to the animal world, they are somehow viewed as closer to men, and are appreciated and valued for special reasons. In fact, beside offering company, they are the ultimate providers of protection, as they guard and protect the household precincts - Apiao people would feel very vulnerable without their dogs at their house entrances - both during the day and at night.

The episodes that follow are stories of dogs that allowed their beastly nature to overcome the quasi-human aspect of their kind, and as such, became highly anti-social creatures, verging on the monstrous.

Episode of Toby the dog

Early one morning, while I was still in bed, I heard someone whistling outside my bedroom window, at the back of the house. Such is the way to announce oneself in Apiao, so I got up to call up my hosts, who were obviously sound asleep and did not notice that someone was calling. It was don Daniel, a neighbour and relative very close my family. It was 7.30 am. He was allowed in the kitchen, and while the head of the family hastened to make the fire, his wife organised *mate* and sliced bread to offer the guest. ‘I came to offer meat’ he said, ‘*porque me tocó la mala*’, ‘because I was struck by evil fate’. People do not generally go visiting so early in the morning, unless there is a serious reason, involving a life-threatening accident – either of a human being, or of a valuable animal. The night before, don Daniel and his wife had heard

dogs barking and they thought it was Toby, their dog, playing with their neighbours' dogs; but they decided to get up and double-check; and at the light of the full moon they saw a carnage: about four of their sheep had been killed, two more were severely wounded and one of them, pregnant, had already given birth to a premature lamb who was not going to survive. Apparently Felicia, don Daniel's wife, spotted Toby, their dog, the moment they arrived at the massacre place. It was night-time, they had no torchlight, and yet she was sure that she saw her dog, feasting on their own sheep. The middle-aged couple spent the rest of the night butchering the carcasses of the dead animals, in order to be able to eat the meat; and Felicia tried to feed a little lamb that was left motherless. Early in the morning, don Daniel had come to the household of my hosts, his closer relatives and friends, to offer some meat and to ask for help. He told us the story in detail, while drinking *mate*, and we all waited for the heavy rain to stop, before joining him at his household. Once we all got there, the two men removed the fleece of the animals and started cutting and dividing the meat. The intestines and the entrails were kept aside, in a basket, to get rid of them later on. 'A dead animal, it's not good to eat the insides' they explained (*Un animal muertecino, no sirve comer las partes interiores*).

Such accidents happen quite often. Cows can fall out of the ravine and injure their legs; more commonly sheep are attacked by dogs at night and they are bitten so badly that they lose too much blood and they just die. If the animal is still alive, the owner slaughters it at once, and the meat could be sold to fellow islanders, in the same way as when an animal is being slaughtered with the purpose of selling the meat. If an animal has recently died and it is still warm, they would still butcher it, but this meat would be kept for the family circle, and never sold, since it is considered very bad to offer for sale the meat of a dead animal. I accompanied don Daniel to get rid of the contents of his basket at a nearby piece of land, in a hole in the ground. After throwing it in the hole, he pushed it further down with a long stick. 'Now it's fine'.

We then returned to his household land, where the other people were tending to the wounds of the sheep. I kept following don Daniel, when I noticed that he had planted several fruit trees on a little plot of land beside his household, and I enquired about those trees. He had re-planted them after having taking them away from a previous location, he said; so, to sustain them, he had organised a system of poles to which he had tied each one of the trees with pieces of cloth. While he was patiently explaining

something that was incredibly obvious to him, I noticed that he was tying a rope in a noose. His gestures were slow, his attitude very calm, he was taking his time, measuring his actions. All this, as if to put some temporal distance between himself and what he felt he had to do. Toby the dog was right there, by the fruit trees, and he started to play with the rope. The dog's destiny was signed: engaging in a play far too dangerous, he had killed the sheep of his owners, and he was now considered untrustworthy. When dogs kill once, they just keep doing it, people say: once they taste blood, they enjoy it and want more. And, as the man told me, 'If it's your sheep to be killed, it's just loss; but sheep that belong to others, you must pay them back'. No-one can really afford that, so to avoid such a scary prospect, the culprit dogs are always killed. Toby the dog was a particularly nice dog: still young, he was very playful, very loyal, and accompanied the couple in their everyday duties. I tried and asked don Daniel if he could possibly spare Toby's life, with a trick: I suggested he could keep him tied at night (when such sheep killings usually happen), so that he could still act as the household's guard dog, and accompany them during the day. But don Daniel did not seem to agree; he thought that it would have been too troublesome; and there was little point in avoiding or postponing the right thing to do: kill him. If he had spared the dog's life and he would have killed again, he would be doubly responsible for allowing a killer dog to live.

While he calmly put the rope around the dog's neck, I asked him if he had done this before, and he firmly said 'never'. It was the very first time for him. And then, keeping his pensive attitude he asked me to please go for his wife, and ask her to confirm that he had to kill the dog. I rushed into the kitchen, where the women were busy peeling potatoes. Felicia told me that she left the decision to him: 'Of course I love my dog, but I don't want to be responsible if something happens!' I rushed back to the man, who was still in his thoughtful mind, and in the same position I had left him, with the rope in his hands. 'Excuse me, be patient, and go and ask her to come here, it's better if she comes...'. Loud laughter welcomed me when I entered the kitchen again, and Felicia, who wasn't laughing at all, stared at me desolate and impotent, and she came out with me. 'Tell me Felicia are you sure you have seen the dog last night?' 'Yes, of course' 'Should I kill him, then?' 'Yes, I don't feel sorry at all (*no me da lastima na*)', it's dangerous, he can do it again'. 'Fine', he said, and she

ran back to the house⁶⁰. I ran as well, but in the opposite direction, towards the neighbours' household, and stopped for a bit of crying. I was very fond of the dog, and I was a bit confused by this announced death. The neighbours saw me going towards their house, and asked me from a distance if don Daniel was actually killing the dog. The screams of the dying dog replied to their question, and they commented that it was such a lovely dog.

A few minutes later, I joined my host family and we headed towards home, passing by the tree with poor Toby hanging from it. The children stared at it speechless; my landlord, a sack full of meat in his shoulder, asked don Daniel how much they owed him for the meat. 'Nothing', he said, 'just take it'. 'Fine, thank you then, uncle'. That was one of the few occasions where I heard a kinship term being uttered. It was an extra sign of respect, marking the gratitude for the great amount of meat received. Having been struck by evil fate, as the man had put it early that morning, he had shared the meat of his dead animals with his close family.

On the topic of dead animals, it is as if people get accustomed to the idea of having to separate from their animals at some point. Once the old dog of my household disappeared for a couple of days, and nobody knew what had happened to him. My family simply thought that he was dead, and spoke about it without any grief or nostalgia. When he eventually reappeared, he was jokingly called *finaito*⁶¹, the 'little late' for a while. I could observe an interesting attitude towards a dog's death once more later, when my landlord had to get rid of one of the dogs of the house, a bitch called Mueve-mueve. The name of the dog itself caused much laughter, as she was given the suggestive nickname of a local woman, who tended to sway her hips while walking.

That time, once again in the middle of the night, my landlords heard dogs barking, and thought that it could have well been that their sheep were being attacked. So they went out to have a look, and indeed they found what they later described as 'the tragedy'. Two lambs and a sheep were torn in pieces, and once again, the house dog

⁶⁰ The woman pretended she was not affected by the prospect of losing her dog to facilitate her husband's duty. She was, in fact, very fond of the dog, and she kept remembering him way after his death.

⁶¹ Local Spanish. The standard Spanish term is *finado/finadito*.

was spotted on the scene. This time though the bitch was killed immediately. ‘We should have killed her a good while ago, because we had already seen her’ my landlady told me. ‘This time there was no excuse: I took her and hanged her at once’, my landlord said. ‘She knew she was guilty: she didn’t object (*esa no chilló*); she was dead before I hanged her’. This attribution of the sense of guilt to the bitch is very interesting. While the dead lambs were pitied and referred to as ‘innocent, guiltless creatures’, the bitch was responsible for the tragedy and deserved to die immediately.

The accident happened at night, thus in the morning all the family received the news from my landlord and his wife. They were very upset for the loss, and for having had to spend the night slaughtering at least one sheep, in order to recover the meat.

The children, two boys of 9 and 11 years, and I went to have a look at Mueve-mueve. There she was, completely stiff, under a tree, with a rope tied around her neck. The children poked her with a stick, turned her round, observed her breasts and commented on her muzzle, dirty with the blood of the lambs, and soiled with the food that she had been fed the previous night. They laughed, and made fun of the bitch, calling her ‘the late’ (*finaita*), and making fun of the way she looked. Then they mounted her on a pole through her fastened legs, as if she was a hunting trophy, and carried on the pole towards a hole that their father had dug. ‘Should I throw her in?’ (*la largo?*) asked one of them, and the other said ‘No! Wait for me!’ and they did it together. They adjusted the dead dog in the hole and their father added the dead lambs, and finally covered the hole with some earth.

Later that day I was told many stories of dogs that kill huge numbers of sheep, and very often the owners refuse to admit their responsibility, and do not kill the guilty dogs. ‘It’s a shame to kill an animal’ (*da pena*), but with guilt.....then, no. The bitch knew she was guilty! And the owner does not give her orders’ (*el dueño no la manda*).

During the night-time comments, the sense of guilt attributed to the fierce animal appeared once more: the bitch was so guilty that she was somehow expecting to be punished, and gave herself up to be hanged, without opposing any resistance. She had even been fed, they remarked: she did it out of greed, not certainly because she was hungry. The children took the chance to organise their own, mock funeral for the dog, transporting her to the hole, and throwing her into it, sharing the fun of the rare event.

The bitch was never remembered later on (unlike people or events that are emotionally involving), and if someone in the family happened to mention her, it just evoked loud laughter because of her name, chosen by the children.

So far I have introduced the topic of death through the relation between people and their animals, and especially people and their guilty dogs. There seems to be a correspondence between actions and their outcomes, as far as dogs are involved in causing the death of innocent animals. The killer dogs are responsible for having momentarily abandoned their social, quasi-human nature, and deserve to die. This punishment is necessary in order to avoid more death of innocent creatures, more loss of precious resources, and further complications in social relations: in fact the dog owners are fully responsible for their dogs' crimes, and as such, have to pay for whatever economic loss is incurred.

What differentiates people and animals? Dogs are privileged animals that guard households, accompany and protect their owners, and attack trespassers. If they betray the expectations people have towards them by turning into killers, this is a point of no-return, a non-negotiable situation.

As we have seen, and will continue to see, one of the values that make up Apiao people's way of experiencing life is the possibility of negotiation. Relationships are never fixed but need to be constantly renewed, and tested. If there is a disagreement, at some point later on there will be a chance to review what happened, and start anew. This is true of relationships between people, and between people and supernatural beings (the dead and the powerful saint). Perhaps the main difference between people and animals is the fact that animals, specifically dogs, have no possibility of negotiation, no chance to compromise and offer an alternative solution. Once the sheep have been slaughtered, either in a dangerous game, or in a greed crisis, there is only one thing to do - no matter how strong the attachment to the dog.

If overall people in Apiao do not seem to find the death of animals particularly disturbing or problematic⁶², this is certainly not true for what concerns dead people. The dead are generally experienced and understood as very frightening; as creatures that used to belong to this world and now belong to a separate realm, they are perceived as dangerous and threatening to the living. The following sections are devoted to the way the living articulate their relationship to the dead.

'Que me harán los muertos?' 'What will the dead do to me?'

One night, very late, around 11 pm, me and my host family were about to go to bed, when we heard someone calling outside. Don Julio, the man of the house went out to attend the newcomers and he stayed out for a good while, while his wife, really worried, tried to understand what was going on by looking from the windows in the next room. ‘God, what is it, at this time? Oh my lord, it must be an accident’ she kept saying. Don Julio came back in to grab his jacket and to ask one of his children to join him. The boy, initially reluctant, eventually followed him, and they went off without a word. We waited for them to come back for a good while, by the stove, chatting the time away. When they finally got back home, don Julio told us the whole story: it was an old woman from ‘the other side’ of the island (*el otro lado*), she had lost her way looking for the house of her son, who lived in our sector, in a place admittedly difficult to find. She happened to have lost some money during a boat trip: she had stored it together with some dried seaweed that she had collected to sell, but she had lost track of that bag. And she needed to tell her son, in case he could have helped finding the money. She was accompanied by a grandchild, not her husband, she said, ‘because that was my money, why would he care about my belongings?’ She was clearly very scared: in a sector she was not familiar with, looking for a house the exact location of which she did not know, worried about her money (it was in fact a considerable amount). Since her husband was not interested in accompanying her, she had taken a child with her. Don Julio wanted to do the same, and left with his young son. His absence, and the curiosity about the unusual event kept the family up, notwithstanding the late hour. Don Julio in fact had been generous and offered to take the woman to the household she was looking for; ‘otherwise she might wander for the

⁶² Or at least they seem to find it cosmologically safe, i.e. not bearing future consequences, as opposed to the concerns they voice regarding dead people.

whole night'. Everyone at home commented on the episode: an old woman, accompanied just by a child, at night, coming from far away and going far away: a perfect situation of complete defencelessness. 'At night, all alone, God Lord! So dangerous! Coming from the other side!' Don Julio felt it was appropriate to take her to her destination, without even explaining to his wife and family. He took his own child to accompany him, together with the dog – since, as I was told many times, one should never go alone at night. A dog should always accompany you at night, at least a dog: but a child is a better option. Children are innocent and they are like angels: nothing is meant to happen in their presence. Both don Julio and the old woman were accompanied by a child for the sake of protection and company. But why would it be dangerous for people to wander out at night, and why even more so if they do it all alone? Once he got back, Don Julio told us that the woman kept repeating 'What will the dead do to me?' '*Que me harán los muertos?*'

What can the dead do?

Before I explain in detail people's ideas of the dead, I will give some background on what happens when someone dies in Apiao. Here I will just outline the sequence of events with a brief description. I will not dwell on the *novenas* themselves with more details at this stage, as I will describe and discuss them fully in the chapter on the San Antonio rituals. My main concern in this chapter is to investigate people's attitudes to death, and their feelings towards the dead.

People in Apiao die because of old age, because of illness, or because of accidents, which generally take place at sea. Deaths at sea are especially common in that Apiao people ordinarily cannot swim, unless they are divers⁶³. It is frequently the case that men on boats drink, fall in the icy-cold water and drown.

When someone dies, the family of the deceased get busy organising the pre-and post-funeral events. Before the funeral takes place, there will be three days of prayers in the household of the deceased, *corpore praesenti*. These prayer nights are called *velorio* (wake), and more generally *rezo* (prayer session) and consist of the reciting of

⁶³ Only a handful of men are divers in Apiao. Interestingly Bridges (1951:63) describes how the Yahgan men could not swim, and it was the women that were expert swimmers and moved the canoes about, from the sea to the shore and vice versa, swimming with their babies on their backs in the icy waters of Tierra del Fuego.

three rosaries per night, by a group of people, led by one *fiscal*, in the presence of the deceased's family, and with all those friends and neighbours that paid a visit to join in the prayers. The *velorio* or *rezo* is substantially very similar to a *novena*, that I describe below. To my knowledge, in Apiao (unlike other Chiloé islands) the deceased is never accompanied throughout the night, and the word *velorio* is in fact somehow misleading, because such a wake does not take place.

The three days of *rezo* culminate with the ritual of the *encajonamiento*, performed on the morning of the funeral, during which the *fiscal* puts the deceased into the coffin. Each person who goes to the deceased's household to take part to the pre-funeral celebration is welcomed by the bereaved with a cup of coffee and a loaf of a special oven-baked bread⁶⁴. At the same time, each person approaches the bereaved and offers condolences and a small sum of money. I have described this moment together with the appropriate ritual formulas used in this context in Chapter 2.

After the *encajonamiento*, the dead leaves his household and all people present follow the coffin in a slow and quiet procession to the island's church. The *fiscal* leads some prayers in the church, with the coffin next to the altar, while in the cemetery that lies behind the church the new tomb is being dug. When this is done, the coffin is laid out with more prayers. The bereaved weep, surrounded by a group of participants of either family or neighbours, willing to accompany the dead on his last trip.

Before they leave the cemetery, the bereaved give thanks to everyone for their presence, and make a plea, asking all present to accompany⁶⁵ them in the three or nine nights of prayers that follow the funeral. The thanking and the pleading for the fellow islanders' presence is done in a ritualistic mode and it is a symbolic way to acknowledge the importance of solidarity in major life events such as death in one's family. We have already found this aspect in the previous chapter, and we will find it again in the following. The 'sameness', or lack of differentiation that unites all Apiao people, means that the presence of the community is what gives significance to crucial life moments, that are likely to be repeated at some point in each household. One's existence is acknowledged by the community's presence, which must in turn be

⁶⁴ This special bread is baked only for *novenas* and therefore has a ritual significance.

⁶⁵ To accompany, *acompañar*, indicates the act of solidarity of fellow islanders in moments of need, such as funerals *novenas*, or San Antonio *novenas*.

acknowledged. The ritual thanking and pleading highlight exactly that sameness and the need for mutual acknowledging.

Praying sessions, called *novenas*, are organised in the deceased's household; these are crucially important and involve a number of people, who are generally solicited and asked for help by the bereaved, in the *suplica* form that we have already seen. A *novena* consists of the reciting of three sets of rosaries, accompanied by litanies, as well as songs. Three *fiscales* are needed to lead the prayers and the songs, that will be responded to and sung by fellow islanders. Every *novena* night the bereaved offer alcoholic drinks to all participants, at least twice, more commonly three times per session. Every other night, in addition to drinks, a dinner is offered to all participants, to be consumed *in loco*. People sit on wooden benches, prepared for the occasion, and receive a plate of hot stew, which they eat silently on their laps. When the meal is consumed, they all leave the bereaved household.

The very last night of the *novena* is called *remate* and it differs from the other nights in that the praying specialists and some other chosen individuals are invited to have dinner at the table. The table is set in front of all the participants, who take their meals on their lap, whereas those few who sit at the table are served with generous amounts of food and alcoholic drinks. In addition to the usual meal, which is served every other night (a stew with meat, and alcoholic drinks), each participant receives a take-away gift, consisting of one or more breads, a piece of cooked meat and a plateful of *mazamorra*, an oat porridge that is made exclusively on *remate* nights. These gifts of food are intended as a thanking gift⁶⁶ for those who 'accompanied' (*acompañar*) the bereaved in their prayers. At the end of each praying night, and especially at the end of the *remate*, the bereaved thank each individual sitting at the table personally, as well as all the helpers, and generically all those who took part in the prayers. The thanking ritual is very emotional and usually the household owner (the bereaved) weeps while pronouncing the thanking formulas.

All these elements return in the San Antonio *novena* context, and I will discuss them more in depth in the chapter devoted to the miraculous saint. For now, suffice it to say that the pattern of the dead prayer celebrations (both for funeral *rezos* and for

⁶⁶ It could be said that this is an exchange gift: the bereaved exchange with cooked food the presence and the prayers they have been granted by the participants.

anniversaries/*cumpleaños de muerto*) follows a pattern that is repeated in the San Antonio *novena*.

Frightening dead.

Let us go back to the period of time when the dead is lying in his household, before the funeral. When someone in Apiao dies, a sort of altar made on a desk is organised in a corner of the room, and on top of it a few candles are placed and lit, together with the ID card of the deceased (presumably because it contains a photo). The dead is laid on top of the table, covered with a blanket, if it is a man or a child, and a shawl if it is a woman⁶⁷. A white cloth (usually a sheet) is put on the wall at the back of the table, and a black cross in either cloth or paper is pinned to the white sheet. Sometimes some branches of a bush are pinned to the white sheet as well, or plants and flowers are put at the sides of the white sheet.

Apiao people find it particularly frightening to watch a dead person; that is why they tend to avoid staying by someone's corpse in the days that precede the funeral, when the dead is kept in the house, on top of the table. They go visiting the deceased's family, shake hands with the closest relative and offer their condolences with the phrase '*sentido pésame*', they then sit for the praying session that is offered to the dead before and after the funeral. Apiao people would not stand by the deceased, and, especially, they would not stare at his face. Those who do, later on are terrified⁶⁸ by the image of the dead, called '*el finao*' or '*el finaito*', appearing to them in dreams. As one woman from a different Chiloé area put it, somehow sarcastically: 'In the areas of Curaco and Dalcahue the bereaved stay by the dead; here, to give your condolences you have to look for them in the kitchen, in the *fogón*...' (*En la zona de Curaco y Dalcahue los dolientes están a lado del muerto; acá para darle el pésame hay que buscarlos en la cocina, en el fogón ...*). And yet it seems true: people avoid staying next to dead people as much as they can, because they find it a truly terrifying experience.

⁶⁷ A shawl is commonly a woman's garment, that she uses wrapped around her body.

⁶⁸ Despite the fact that the dead are considered dangerous and are feared, there is no trace of the disgusted reactions and the repugnance described by Harris (2000: 27ff), nor of taboos or prohibitions related to death and contact with the dead.

I once went visiting don Fabricio, one of the praying specialists, or, one of ‘those who know how to pray’, (*‘los que saben rezar’*), as people say. He told me that he had learnt how to pray when he was a child, having been taught by his elder brother, who is a *fiscal*, as well as by one of the older *fiscales* of the island. It seemed natural to ask the man if he would be interested in being a *fiscal*, given his willingness to pray in novenas and other religious meetings. The man replied straightaway with much determination and energy: ‘Never! Never ever! Me? Watching a corpse on the table, move him from there and put him in his coffin? And afterwards, go back to my own place? Never! Never ever! I am very scared!’ I admired the man’s honesty but I wanted to know more, so I asked him why was he so scared. And in typical Apiao fashion, he replied ‘Cos I am a coward, that’s it!’ (*‘Por cobardía no más!’*). But then he added: ‘A *fiscal* needs to go out at night, anywhere! I am afraid of going out all alone at night. With a companion I can go everywhere, then I am not afraid anymore, but on my own...never. The point is that here...things happen. And one is afraid.’

As mentioned elsewhere⁶⁹, night-time is a special moment where all social knowledge and codes of conduct that are valid during the day become somehow suspended and invalidated, and the creatures of the supernatural world come out and scare the living. Creatures of the supernatural realm, which are somehow intermediate beings, can either be the dead, *las animas*, or witches, *brujos*. Witches are human beings endowed with special powers, that might appear as real people, or as animals, but in fact are monsters in disguise. On the other hand, *las animas* are souls of the dead that wander around with the intent to scare or punish the living for their ill conduct. For this reason no one in Apiao is comfortable with the idea of going out at night, when all is dark: strange encounters can happen and people can be easily mistaken. At night all people are very vulnerable to the attacks of both *animas* and witches. This thesis will not deal with witches and the understanding Apiao people have of them; at this point I will instead concentrate on the dead and some general attitudes and practices surrounding death and the dead in Apiao.

⁶⁹ The mentioned paper, titled ‘Do You Believe in Monsters? Superstition and Fear in a Chiloé Community (Southern Chile)’, was presented at the conference ‘Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil’ Conference, held in Budapest in 2005. The paper is in the Appendix.

Dreaming the dead

Carola, a young woman, said that she dreamt several times of young Pablo, a neighbour who had recently drowned on the island's waters, one afternoon, while bathing with some children. Pablo's death had shocked everybody: in his early twenties, he was healthy and in good spirit. One sunny afternoon, he went swimming with some children of the neighbourhood, and he drowned. Many people gathered on the beach that evening, and stayed with the corpse, wrapped in a blanket, and with the family, until very late at night, when the police arrived from the nearby town. Carola, who was Pablo's next door neighbour, said that she dreamt many times of the moment when she had been to see him for the very last time, at the beach. Pablo seemed asleep: his face was quiet and relaxed: he was still warm. She dreamt him with the same clothes he was wearing on that day, and he was telling her 'Carola! You didn't even light a candle for me.....'. She was so confused by the realism of the vision, that she jumped out of her bed and checked under it, twice. After this episode, she hurried to buy candles and left them, all lit up, on top of the young man's tomb on the following day.

As I previously mentioned, people seemed to be extremely frightened at the idea of staring at the dead and subsequently dreaming of them. Particularly scary are the dead whose bodies were never found, and this often happens in Apiao, especially with the high occurrence of death at sea: those souls tend to appear in dreams to those who knew them in life⁷⁰.

They say that to dream of the deceased is something so terrifying and so haunting that the only way to get rid of this persecution is to organise a praying session for that dead, if the dead belongs to one's immediate family. Alternatively, and if the dead is not part of the family but is just a friend or neighbour, one can buy a set of candles and light them up by the grave in the cemetery. To be spared such a terrifying experience people avoid staring at the dead's face. 'Once I stared at a corpse when he

⁷⁰ The dead whose bodies were never found present a complex predicament for their family: local beliefs suggest that haste in organising the funeral would accelerate death, in case the person is still alive; on the other hand, not celebrating the funeral and the *rezo* would imply constant wandering for the restless soul, and subsequent trouble for the soul's immediate family who neglected the *anima*. I was told of several such cases, and I know of one case when the body was returned by the sea several days after its disappearance. Given all these implications, it is clear why these souls are considered extremely frightening.

was put into the coffin...then I couldn't stop dreaming of him, for several nights. I was so terrified that I had to do him a *rezo*. Since then, I never ever stared at the dead' (*nunca más volví a mirar los muertos*). And another woman told me that the last time she had seen a corpse on the table, a neighbour, she had dreamt of him several times, getting out of the coffin and running after her. Eventually she had paid for a mass to be given for him, and 'he then stopped appearing in my dreams' as she put it.

On the occasion of a funeral, I spent the day with a group of women busy baking bread to be offered to the people coming to greet the bereaved, working and chatting the time away. One of the women said that her mother was originally from a neighbouring island, and that she had said that when she passed away she wanted 'everything to be done like it's done at her place'. While in Apiao people that participate at the funeral are welcomed with a cup of coffee and a big loaf of bread, which is given to each person to take away, on that other island the custom is to give funeral participants one bread and a big portion of meat. 'If she asks, it has to be fulfilled' '*Si lo pide, hay que cumplir*'. The old woman, quite authoritative, had already warned her daughter that she wanted to follow her native island's custom for when she died. And her daughter would not think of dismissing her mother's request. Not only because she was an imposing character, but also because after her death she would become a soul, *una anima*. And souls punish the living, if they do not accomplish what they are expected to.

The old woman's episode also shows how the living can be seen as soon-to-change, since they will be dead in the near future. The real shift is not when people die, but rather in the period following death. In fact death is seen as a liminal stage, not just for the dead themselves, but also for the whole community. What matters is what happens next, after someone's death, when someone turns into an *anima*.

Revengeful souls - '*Las animas son castigadoras..*'

So far I have introduced the widespread idea of the dead being experienced and described as very frightening and threatening to the vulnerable living. However, the living can prevent the dead from having reasons to disturb them, once they turn into

animas, by attending the dead ‘the way it’s supposed to be done’, ‘*como corresponde*’.

What are the living expected to do for the dead?

During my stay on the island, a very old man died, leaving behind his wife, in her nineties, and several grandchildren, with whom the old couple had been living. The funeral had been quite emotional, with much pathos and loud crying. Once at home, we commented on the day’s events and my hosts remarked that from the amount of crying, one could not suspect that the man was all but nice. ‘They cried so much for him, and yet he was a bad man’ and even ‘why did they cry for him, that wicked person!’ (*Lo lloraron tanto....ese maldito, porque lo lloraron?*).

Indeed the old man’s funeral had been quite emotional: his granddaughter had cried a lot, in a powerful display of ritual weeping. Her husband stood quietly behind her, and did not try to console her in any way. In fact, she was expected to mourn her relative – and a proper mourning implies weeping for the deceased. Even if he was a wicked man.

On a similar subject, I was once surprised to hear what I thought to be contradictory comments on a deceased relative and his funeral. One of the young girls of the family I was staying with asked her mother: ‘At this point our grandfather will be in hell⁷¹, right?’ The comment was in line with all the information I had on the old man. He had been nasty, stingy, and had always opposed my landlady’s marriage to his son, making her life difficult, according to what she often told me. And yet, when he died, the woman – his daughter-in-law – was the only family member to organise his funeral, as well as organising and paying for the *novena* to be prayed. ‘We did a three-day *novena*’ she said, ‘but with three rosaries per day, so that counts like nine days: the *fiscales* are paid as for a nine-day praying’. She was very keen on letting me know that she had dealt with the matter ‘the way it is supposed to be done’, ‘*como corresponde*’. In fact she once took me to the cemetery and she made a point of showing me her in-laws’ tomb, that she had ordered and paid for: made with the best material, it was one of the few tombs of the cemetery that had photos of the deceased framed, in a Western style.

⁷¹ That was the first and only time I heard the word hell being mentioned during my stay in Apiao.

And yet, the old man's wickedness was often pointed out; he was not remembered for whatever he left (land, animals): he was remembered rather for his nasty behaviour. Why then, take so much pain to organise prayer meetings, pay for a better than average tomb, if the deceased was not only not appreciated in life, but consistently blamed?

'The souls [of the dead] are vengeful...some people don't do a proper *rezo* in order to save money, and they don't realise that later on the souls will send a punishment...and one's animals will start to die...never look at the expense, or think of saving, never', my friend Maria told me. People strongly disapprove of those who do not fulfil their duties concerning the dead. If someone dies and their family does not attend properly to the guests who arrive for the funeral, the community would comment on the event in very negative terms. Once a woman was reported to be so stingy that when her ill husband had died, she did not want to slaughter one of her animals, to avoid the expense. The same woman, on the occasion of her husband's first death anniversary, had apparently preferred to buy some frozen chicken from the nearby town to prepare dinner for the guests. Such behaviour is considered highly inappropriate and it calls for revenge on the side of the dead, everyone agreed. This is because the dead turn into *animas*, souls. As I mentioned before, *animas* are in-between creatures that belong to the supernatural realm. Just like the powerful, miraculous saints, they have ambivalent powers. They can benefit, help and protect the living, or they can take revenge on them, if they are not properly taken care of. This is an important point that will reappear later on, when discussing the relationship between Apiao people and the miraculous San Antonio.

The tension generated by the extremes of protection and punishment in revenge is articulated in a way that is reminiscent of the *hubris/tisis/nemesis* dynamic in classic Greek tragedies, and classic Greek literature in general. The men (heroes) commit the sin of arrogance and pride (*hubris*) and, thinking that they are similar to the gods commit all sorts of violations; this causes the gods' wrath (*tisis*) and the gods punish such insolence and self-confidence with a terrible and inexorable divine retribution, the *nemesis*.

Another example of the powerful understanding of *las animas* is given by the way Clara, a notoriously lazy woman was talked about by the community. She was considered quite selfish, and had never been able to take care of her own household properly. She was often seen walking around the island apparently aimlessly. In fact the woman was often just looking for someone to do her own chores for her, since she was incapable of doing what most Apiao women regularly do: process and smoke fresh meat, collect shellfish, make baskets, weave, and so on. Besides these flaws, however, she was guilty of some serious negligence: she had mistreated her late parents after her marriage.

She had received a lot from them: in her first years of marriage, she would constantly leave her kids with her mother or with her neighbour. This is very common on the island - however, it also calls for an exchange. In this case the woman had been very keen to ask for help and benefit from her own mother's and a kind neighbour's generosity; however, once those women became aged and needed help of different sorts, she had never offered them any help. She had never reciprocated. Clara was often blamed for being selfish and lazy. People kept saying of her: 'She will have to pay dear for what she did to her parents. She was very mean to them, she will have to pay for that, oh God, how badly she will pay!' (*Cuanto va a tener que pagar esa!*).

The necessity to reciprocate comes back and certainly is a recurrent theme in the ethnography. As I have previously discussed, whenever someone asks something of someone else, a sort of unbalance is created. Until the favour is returned, there is a breach in the equilibrium, that is somehow interrupted and made precarious. People are very aware of such misbalance, and tend to have vivid memories of any dues. They know that if they owe something and they procrastinate in paying their debt, at some point they will have to deal with the consequences of their action. To fail to reciprocate and to return a favour calls for social disruption, a state of social disorder and disharmony.

If reciprocity obligations are crucial in Apiao social life, whenever exchange transactions have to do with the supernatural (the dead and the miraculous saints) there is an aspect of awesome sacrality at play. All asymmetries must always be

balanced back⁷², and to leave obligations unfulfilled is wrong, and, in this case, dangerous. The notion of exchange evoked here is quite powerful, in that it has to do with dead people. The people to whom Clara had failed to reciprocate when she had to, were now dead - not part of the living community anymore, they belonged to the realm of the souls, and, as people repeated, the souls are revengeful. This is why she must have expected to pay for what she had failed to do: reciprocate what she had received from those people when they were on the same level as her, in this life.

The day of All Saints and of All Souls

Apiao cemetery lies on a square piece of land at one side of the imposing church, not too far from the beach. The square piece of land is surrounded by a fence, that at some point had been painted in white. The fence encloses all Apiao tombs, and Apiao dead. Most tombs nowadays are rectangular boxes made in cement, with a little hut-shaped headstone. The headstone is generally made with a glass window that opens to allow candles to burn inside, sheltered from the wind and rain. Every now and then, towards the back of the cemetery, there are some older tombs that do not have any cement: they are just surrounded by wooden fences, and look like cradles, or children's beds. In every single tomb there is a tall wooden cross, often with the name and the age of the deceased painted on it.

During the year people do not tend to spend a lot of time in the cemetery, even if they pass in front of it every day or several times per day, on their way to the ramp where boats leave and arrive, or simply coming and going from one side of the island to the other. People go to the cemetery if there is a funeral, to accompany the family of the deceased when the coffin is laid in the ground. On such occasions, people would take a walk to pay a quick visit to their dead, to have a look at the tomb and to remove leaves and small branches that the wind has deposited in the tombs. Sometimes people would go and light candles to their deceased relatives, and it is not uncommon for passers-by to see dim candle lights animating the cemetery on pitch-dark nights. But the cemetery really becomes a focus of people's attention when November 1st and

⁷² I am not trying to say that the exchange between the living and the dead, and the living and the saints is equivalent, or symmetrical. Obviously living and *animas* or saints do not enjoy equal status. What I am saying is that the exchange must be reciprocal. Thus, in the eyes of Apiao people, the exchange must always be honoured; the unbalance must always be adjusted, with whatever medium the living have to do so. This shows once again the powerful tool of negotiation that the living have.

2nd approach. This is the only time when Apiao people devote an entire day to their dead relatives.

Towards the end of the month of October, at the beginning of the summer season, when the days are long and warm and the green grass is tall, people start to get organised for the day when all the souls will be remembered. They go to the cemetery and start to ‘clean’ their family tombs. In order to do this, they remove all sorts of bush and weeds that grew by the tombs of their relatives during the year; they would also sweep away all rubbish that might have accumulated with time. Most of the people would also re-paint the family tomb, often choosing vivid colours: orange, blue, red are not uncommon colours for tombs (people often use leftover paint that they previously used for their household or boat). The fresh paint gives an overall impression of order and cleanliness. When November the 1st, the Day of All Saints, arrives, the cemetery has become a colourful place, all clean and tidy, filled with crowns of leaves and flowers, and with people. While the All Souls’ Day is on November the 2nd, some people choose to dedicate the Day of the Saints to their dead, to avoid the crowd of the 2nd. Each household collects flowers and green branches and make crowns, usually one per dead. The crowns are artistically made to be put on the cross of each tomb, and they take the place of the old, dried crowns that were prepared the year before.

Late in the morning of the 1st, people go to the cemetery bringing their fresh crowns, candles, some food and drink, and some money. Here they always find some of ‘those who know how to pray’, ready to perform prayers and songs upon request. Along with the two island *fiscales*, a number of other people go to the cemetery to offer their prayers upon request; the families ask one of the praying specialists if they can pray for their dead, and specifically ask for the number of rosaries they want to be prayed on their relatives’ tombs. Then the whole family sits by the tomb for the *rezo*, accompanying the prayers, often silently, sometimes participating in the prayers. They are all well dressed, with a bottle of *chicha* or wine at their side as well as some bread, to give to the praying person as a thank you gift, together with some money. At the end of the praying session, which lasts approximately half an hour, someone from the family asks the praying official what is due, and he generally replies ‘*Su voluntad no más*’, leaving payment as a voluntary contribution.

While on November the 1st the cemetery is animated but quiet, on the 2nd the little piece of land becomes incredibly crowded, and clusters of people sit on their relatives' tombs either attending a personal praying session, or waiting for one of the praying people to finish one session and pray to their tomb. 'Those who know how to pray' go to the cemetery as early as 7 am, and give appointments to people in order to make shifts. At the peak of the day, there is a busy soundscape of parallel voices singing the same songs and reciting the same prayers; as one woman put it, 'it is complicated, if they don't have the book to follow, they can get lost' (*es para perderse...*)', since all pray and sing at the same time.

According to the usual imperative of exchange, it is fundamental to have to pay the praying specialist for his or her service; as we have seen throughout the different expressions of life in society for Apiao people every action calls for a return. In this case, the people who offer their services to the community have to be compensated, in order for the prayer to be effective. There must be some sort of transaction between those who ask for the prayers, and those who offer the prayers. Prayers are proffered by the praying specialist, who sits or kneels by the tomb, holding his prayer booklets and his rosary; in exchange, the relatives of the dead offer some money, some food and alcohol.

This aspect of compensation is clearly visible in the following episode: the wife of one of the *fiscales* was sitting on her family tomb on Souls Day, waiting for a praying specialist to pray for her family. When asked the reason why she did not have her own husband praying, but needed someone else, she replied 'No! Because it must be paid for' (*Hay que pagar*). It must be paid for: otherwise, those prayers lose efficacy, it is almost as if one is tricking the dead, and somehow cheating. Those who have received something (in this case, prayers for their dead) must give something in exchange that involves an expense, a sacrifice, some sort of loss. This is why it is considered nonsense for a *fiscal* to do his own prayers: there would be no transaction, no exchange involved. Again, this is another fundamental element, that comes back strongly in the San Antonio *novena* context.

Protection: vulnerable dead and vulnerable living

There seems to be a double thread of protection in the relationship people have with their dead. They initially do all they can to protect them, by accompanying them properly (*despedirlos*) with a proper funeral and proper sets of prayers, repeated various times on different occasions. The prayers for the souls typically wish the souls to rest in peace, and to have their pain alleviated. These prayers are repeated several times during the funeral or death anniversary *novenas*. Furthermore, each time a San Antonio *novena* is prayed, half of the prayers (i.e. one set of rosary prayers out of two) are always said for the dead of the household. In fact, the first rosary of the San Antonio celebration is always dedicated to the dead and it is called *novenario*. On the last night of the *novena* for the saint, the final feast called *remate* (see the last chapter) is concluded with a further set of prayers recited specifically for the household dead. Some of these prayers recite ‘*para el alivio y el descanso de la alma de...; para el Cristo de la agonía, que lo habrá asistido en su ultima ora...*’ The overall motif of the prayers is to protect the souls.

On the topic of protecting the dead, there are some strong connections with witchcraft beliefs, that are quite strong throughout Chiloé in general. Up until recently the dead used to be guarded in the cemetery by close relatives for a number of days after burial, to prevent attacks from witches. The recently dead were believed to be particularly vulnerable, and subject to the attention of witches willing to collect the dead bodies in order to peel the skin off them. The skin would constitute parts of the *macuñ*, a jumper that the witches use to fly (see also Rojas Flores 2002:82ff; Cárdenas Álvarez 1998:84ff; Tangol 1976:61). The presence of close relatives by the tomb prevents evil forces from taking the corpses and protects the vulnerable dead.

Thus, the first part of the protection thread has the living protecting the dead and doing all they can to honour and accompany them in the period subsequent their passing. However, the dead turn into souls, *animas*, and can haunt, frighten and harm the living if they are not properly remembered after death. Remembering, as we have seen in a previous chapter, is a crucial value for Apiao people, in that it is through what I called ‘active memory’ that relatedness is experienced, and it is what ultimately articulates relationships. By ‘remembering’ their dead, the living are both taking care of the dead the way it should be done (*como corresponde*) and at the same time they are protecting themselves. In fact all the effort that the living put into

organising and performing ritual collective prayers is done in order to protect themselves from the powerful souls (see also León León 1999: 43; 89).

Praying for the dead is a double act of memory: by praying the living remember their dead, and they make the dead remember them - hence, they make their dead leave them in peace. As we have seen in a previous chapter, active memory is more important to relationships than kinship ties. This crucial concept returns here in the way the living care for their dead: active memory is not limited to life but goes beyond, as funeral celebrations exemplify.

Prayers to the dead are also the chance the living have to negotiate with the dead: by engaging in an exchange interaction, they ensure their own tranquillity. This important element will be further explored in the chapter dedicated to the San Antonio *novena*, but it is clearly present in the relationship Apiao people have with their dead, in the period that immediately follows death and for approximately one year after death.

Alliances

‘We used to go so much [to funerals and *novenas*]! And now no one wants to accompany us...’ (*Tan andadores que fuimos! Y ahora nadie nos quiere acompañar..*). These words were exclaimed by the mourning mother of little Sara, a one-year-old child that died in the winter of 2003. The woman was commenting on the absence of fellow islanders, minutes before the funeral rituals started. Some people had arrived, and several others were waiting outside of the household. In hearing her remark, they entered the little room and sat on the benches, and the *fiscal* started with the appropriate set of prayers to bid farewell to the little angel⁷³.

If praying sessions in honour of the dead mark a necessary separation between the dead and the living, and highlight the ritual necessity of severing a link, and turning the dead from social beings to *animas*, on the other hand praying rituals are a celebration of creation. Apiao social life indeed revolves around such events, and it is in these specific gatherings that the community has a precious opportunity to connect.

⁷³ Dead children are called angels, or little angels (*angeles/angelitos*).

The principles that frame the *novenas* are centred upon food and drink offering and receiving. Apiao community is in fact founded upon such interaction, the exchange of food, drink and service in exchange for food, drink and more service. Goods and help circulate constantly, what changes is the occasion, but the same people are constantly involved in some way or another, given the limited number of people living on the island. In this sense, praying rituals are a way to regenerate alliances, to perpetuate social relations, or to untie them - depending on the way people make use of the negotiation tool.

The reader will recall that the formula used by the bereaved to plead for the community's presence at the *novena* included the verb to accompany, *acompañar*. In fact this verb is recurrent in Apiao fixed formulas containing pleas. It is the community's presence that gives its full meaning to a ritual celebration. The bereaved, with his humble facial expression and contrite tone of voice expresses his request to the community, acknowledging his need to be accompanied in this ritual duty.

The celebrations for the dead therefore are clearly social occasions where the alliances with fellow islanders are tested, confirmed and strengthened (or weakened). Attendance at funerals and *novenas* for the dead (as well as San Antonio *novenas*) is in sharp contrast with, for example, church attendance on Sundays or for various holy days of the liturgical calendar⁷⁴. The attendance whenever a *novena* is celebrated in a private house is overwhelming, to the eyes of a newcomer, more prone to notice the seeming lack of social life on the island. Besides accepting the *suplica* invitation (that, as I pointed out, is a request with a sacred facet to it) that is rarely if ever turned down, participation of fellow islanders to the rituals connected to the dead is always very strong, and it is strongly expected by the bereaved. In fact, people remember exactly who turned out to the *novena* they hosted, or even just attended. This is a crucial element that will return in the San Antonio *novena* chapter, where I mention how it is necessary to note down exactly who participated, and for how many nights,

⁷⁴ A priest from the nearby town only travels to the island once or twice per year; however the two *fiscales* tend to open the church and recite some prayers on Sundays, regularly throughout the year. In spite of this, hardly anyone takes part in these church prayers. In fact, people tend to leave their household with their everyday duties only for a good reason. Taking part in *novenas* is a very good reason, because of the reciprocity rule: one is either returning a favour, or creating the possibility of being returned the favour in the future. Going to church is an action that does not make room for such interaction, and, in a sense, is a dead end.

in that all participants will receive a gift of bread in return for their presence. This gift that varies according to the number of nights the *novena* was attended.

Once again, when someone neglects what is considered a moral obligation, comments of complaints are voiced, and someone's absence at a funeral is always noticed. The following vignette explains these sorts of expectations.

Our neighbour Lucinda came to see my host family the day after a funeral. She had to return a hen that she owed to my landlady, however, in typical Apiao fashion, she did not take the live chicken out of her blouse until her visit was about to end. She sat with us beside the stove, and we talked about the previous day's funeral. 'Were you there?' she asked. 'Yes, we were right behind the dead'. 'Ah, right, I did not see you at all; the majority of people that went were from the other sector in fact, from this neighbourhood very few; from the other sector uphill the same, just a few!' All those who had been present were enumerated, together with the possible reasons for the absence of those who always go, and the motivations behind the usual absentees. 'And what about Pedro? That one never goes anywhere. His sister, she has to go everywhere!' 'That is something returned' (*una cosa cambiada*), because when his grandma died, a lot of people showed up, and he never goes anywhere, and what about Alvaro? That one, it's like nothing will ever happen to him, never ever!'

The women's comments on who was present at the funeral, and who was not, goes beyond recording an event. They were pointing out the unbalance they felt in people's behaviour, and their failure to fulfil the imperative of reciprocity. Going to a funeral is 'something returned', *una cosa cambiada*: the proper person knows that just like he expects people to turn up at funerals that may take place at his household, he should be compassionate, and express support and solidarity whenever it is requested.

This same point - reciprocal exchange - comes back in every aspect of Apiao people's lives, and it reminds us of the statement 'no one is free' discussed in the chapter devoted to conversion. Everybody will, at some point, need solidarity, therefore one should always fulfil expectations because at some point it might as well be his turn.

Conclusion

This chapter began with Apiao people's attitude towards death, taking as a starting point the death inflicted on guilty dogs. While guilty dogs cannot be offered another chance and need to be punished, the relationship between fellow islanders are articulated through negotiation, and alliances are made, renewed and unmade constantly through the events in people's lives. The same powerful tool, negotiation, is employed in the relationship people entertain with the potent supernatural beings such as the dead. The dead can protect or haunt the living, according to the care the living have offered the dead with prayers and *novena* rituals. The relationship with another powerful supernatural entity, the miraculous San Antonio is articulated in the same way and this is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

PART III. RELIGION

Chapter 7. Negotiating with the saint: miracles and exchange

This chapter is dedicated to the relationship Apiao people have with the miraculous San Antonio de Padua, and to the supreme expression of this relationship, the ritual thanking of the saint's gift of a miracle with a *novena*. San Antonio *novenas* are public gatherings in private households to celebrate the statue of a miraculous saint with prayers, food and alcoholic drinks, and dance. These ritual celebrations are Catholic and those who organise and take part in them are Catholic; however, there is no mediation of the religious institution and no priest or any other clergyman was ever involved in it, or was even aware of it. The San Antonio *novenas* regularly celebrated in Apiao are completely independent from institutional Church authority, take place outside and regardless of the church, and are unique to the island of Apiao.

I have chosen to locate this chapter at the end of the thesis because in my opinion, the dialogical interaction with this powerful entity is in many ways a powerful dramatisation of the Apiao way of conceiving and experiencing the social world, and ultimately life.

Furthermore, ordinary everyday habits and codes of behaviour are highlighted and elevated in the sacred context of the San Antonio *novena*, where they acquire a sacredness that proves how each bit of the ritual reflects a crucially important element of daily nature. Having the chance to see the everyday mirrored and amplified in the *novena* sacred context was a revealing reminder of the powerful significance of each and every practice of everyday life in Apiao.

The sacrality of asking and the subsequent committing to return something in exchange are the most obvious aspects that the *novena* highlights. In fact, the *novena* is the supreme example of the tool of negotiation that Apiao people constantly employ in dealing with both fellow humans and supernatural beings. As we have seen, these are the pillars of social life and the way Apiao people experience and conceive it. However, the *novena* is much more than just a complete cycle of exchange. The

novena also sheds some light on the fundamental value of solidarity, of honouring one's obligations, on the merit of spending money and giving up resources to pay back what is due, on the importance of greeting, of offering, of receiving, of attending guests, of giving gifts in exchange for the help obtained, on the sacrality intrinsic in food and alcohol, on the significance of offering prayers as an act of memory. All these different moments intertwine and form a matrix that is acted out and repeated in almost identical ways each time the saint is fetched to the island. Individuals connect to the saint, and, through the saint, to each other. The *novena* is the dramatisation of different layers of every day life, a give-and-return that involves the whole community.

In more practical terms, the *novena* is also a gathering of people and an important social event. From 40 to 80 people join the household owner for a *novena*, with the higher number of people attending the *remate*, the last night celebration.

In this chapter I will describe in detail the various phases of the different steps each *novena* takes, from the moment it is conceived in the heart of the requester, as Apiao people put it, till it is slowly organised, and eventually performed.

There are three different and parallel threads of social relationships that emerge within the *novena* context: person-saint, person-person and people (collectivity)-saint. I will first explore the relation individuals have with the saints, and then I will discuss the relations that connect different people throughout the *novena* and because of the *novena*. I will talk about how *novenas* give the chance to connect with the saint not only to the people who are hosting them, but also to the whole community.

1. The thread person-saint

'De' que tengo juicio': The Saint

I heard about 'San Antonio the Padua', *el santito*, as Apiao people call him⁷⁵, almost immediately upon my arrival on the island. My host family purposefully told me about him, his powers and the *novena*, I believe, on my first day in their household.

I did not have to wait too long to meet him, and in fact a few months later I could accompany don Julio and his wife to the nearby island of Caguach to pick him up.

After having heard so much about the little statue, I was certainly expecting something quite different from what I saw that afternoon in a humble *media agua* in Caguach. Chiloé churches host some beautiful 18th-19th century Spanish statues, carved out of wood, part of a corpus known as *santería chilota*. I initially thought that the renowned saint was part of the *santería*, but I was to be surprised.

When I first saw the little statue I was baffled by its minute dimensions and its unexpected simplicity. *El santito*, 'the little saint' is a little statue, about 15 centimetres tall, of a friar. The statue, most likely made of painted chalk, is not particularly old, nor aesthetically fine looking, nor valuable. But that does not matter to anyone, because the *santito* is incredibly powerful, strong and miraculous. People say that he has always been part of their lives: 'I have always known San Antonio. I call him just Chuco, I have much faith in him and lots of respect, because everything I asked him, he has always granted to me. I have always known him.... *De' que tengo juicio*⁷⁶...' 'Every single thing I ever asked him, he gave it to me. Sometimes he took his time to give you what you asked, but he always gives you what you asked him'. 'He's very powerful, very strong, very miraculous....' These are some comments voiced on the saint, one of the few topics Apiao people seemed willing to talk to the newcomer.

What is peculiar about San Antonio is that, unlike all the other saints that are venerated in the archipelago, he does not belong to a church, but to a private owner.

⁷⁵ I refer to the saint as 'him' because this is the way Apiao people themselves indicate him. It is also important to remark that the saint is identified with the statue: the statue *is* the saint. By having the statue in their household, people are in fact hosting San Antonio the miraculous saint - not just a statue.

⁷⁶This expression, commonly used in Apiao, literally means 'since I have judgement'. We can translate the word '*juicio*' as conscience, knowledge and memory.

The owner is a woman in her forties who lives on the nearby island of Caguach. She inherited the little statue of the saint from her grandmother, who in turn inherited it from her own grandmother. The details about the origin of the *santito* are obscure; according to the owner he might have landed at the beach into a wooden box after a storm⁷⁷.

The woman, poor and with a complicated family situation, owned the little statue and kept it in her own household, and always made it available to the Apiao pilgrims, who regularly came to ask her if they could take the saint to their own island for a *novena*. Interestingly enough, the cult of the saint Antonio is limited to Apiao: Caguach people did not appear interested in this saint, nor did they think he was special or powerful⁷⁸. The unique relationship binds the saint and Apiao pilgrims only, and the origin of this important connection are, once again, unclear.

The statue belongs to a private household, and thanks to the generosity of its owner it tends to travel around: the faithful do not go to visit the saint, they rather go to fetch him and to take him home with them for a number of days. This detail makes of the saint a unique phenomenon within Chiloé, where devotion to saints is usually strictly associated to the churches that host them. Apiao people keep the statue for approximately ten days, which include a *novena*, and on the tenth day, weather permitting, he is fetched back home to his island and to his owner.

The saint is extremely popular in Apiao: during my two-year stay on the island eight *novenas* for the saint were celebrated. That means that the image stayed in Apiao more than 72 days in total, more than two months. As people told me, ‘the saint is almost stable here’ (*aquí está casi estable el santo*). The unique feeling of hosting a saint in one’s household is a privilege that Apiao people look forward to: as my landlord told me once, ‘I could hold him here, in my lap, as if he was my child’. Respect and awe for this powerful saint, and acquaintance with what is now a familiar character merge in the *novena* events for all those involved.

⁷⁷ It is quite meaningful that the San Antonio comes from somewhere else - and, incidentally, he has no particular value for the people of his own place. This is particularly interesting in the Chiloé context, where the famous wooden churches host several statues of saints. Apiao church itself hosts several such statues, but none of them has ever acquired the importance of San Antonio. The travelling saint’s alterity (on many different levels) certainly allows exchange in a more powerful way.

⁷⁸ Caguach people have their own special devotion to *el Nazareno de Caguach*, a miraculous statue of a Christ, also defined ‘saint’, that sits on the island’s church. The Nazareno is celebrated twice a year with an important festival, a large-scale event that attracts thousands of pilgrims, as it has been mentioned in chapter 5.

The miracles

Why is the little saint so popular?

The image of San Antonio is believed to be miraculous and powerful. He is able to grant miracles to those who request his help with faith and devotion. Whenever a person in Apiao experiences an intense danger, especially in a life-threatening situation, they ask San Antonio for help, more specifically, they ask him for a miracle (*un milagro*).

In addressing the saint and asking for a miracle, individuals are in fact proposing an exchange: whenever they ask for something to happen, they always inevitably promise to return something else. In the very moment of addressing the saint, they commit themselves to giving him a reward for his help. Generally the reward offered to the saint is a *novena*, a nine-day prayer meeting to be held in the supplicant's household. The offer the supplicant makes is a burdensome one: to organise a *novena* it takes a family years of hard work and savings.

However, interestingly the person who addresses the saint offers to do a *novena* as a thank you to the saint *in case of positive outcome* of the request. That is, if, and only if, the miracle is granted, the person will do the *novena*. This seems to me a crucial element in that it conveys once again the intrinsic reciprocity approach that characterises the Apiao way of experiencing social relationships. In fact I believe that their interaction with the saint replicates the pattern of social relations. Employing the tool of negotiation, they communicate with the powerful other as they would with a fellow human, establishing a bond that resembles a social relationship. I will develop this argument further during the chapter, and I will provide examples of this interaction.

The background context of each *novena* is unique, and personal. Generally the request and the miracle that lie behind a reason for doing a *novena* are hardly ever discussed, and generally kept private. It is a conversation the requester has with the saint, and only the two parties involved need to know.

What sorts of miracles does the saint perform? Although people tend to be discreet on the matter, I was told that the saint is usually addressed mostly in life-threatening

situations: for example, a typical situation is someone falling from a boat into the sea, not being able to swim and addressing the saint asks to be saved. This is a common occurrence on the island, given that the majority of islanders cannot swim. Some people have addressed the saint when their children or their spouses were suffering from a serious illness. While the saint is generally addressed in extreme situations involving someone's life, sometimes islanders address him with requests about less dramatic matters: a woman, for example, asked the saint for the strength to finish building her household. Another time, a woman offered the saint a *novena* as a special prayer for her deceased mother, on the first anniversary of her death, (*cumpleaños de muerto*) instead of the more common 'souls *novena*' that is offered on such an occasion. That way, she told me, she felt sure to have done all her best to properly 'accompany' her mother after her death.

The tendency I have observed is to ask for a miracle first, and to pay the saint back with a *novena* in return for the received favour only later. This is a general pattern that several people stated to me quite straightforwardly: a miracle is necessary for people to get involved in the draining *novena* experience.

One of my closest friends, a man, told me that years ago one of his young children was gravely ill, so ill that he looked yellow and it was clear to him that he had little time to live. While he was travelling on the boat to take the child to the nearest hospital, he addressed the saint, asking him to spare the child's life. 'Had he not granted me the miracle', he told me, 'I would have never offered him a *novena*. My request was clear, and my offer was clear too: only if you give me what I ask you, I'll pay you back the way I promised in the first place' he told me. His child survived, therefore as soon as he and his family could gather all the necessary goods, a proper *novena* was organised and celebrated.

The overall assertiveness of the man, in his address to the saint is, I believe, remarkably evocative of the relationship that Apiao people establish and entertain with the saint. By opening a dialogue and stating their request, and what they are offering in exchange, they are inviting the saint to a one-to-one dialogue. They are thus extending their 'sameness', their lack of differentiation (see the first chapter) to the powerful supernatural other, the saint. The saint, by granting the miracle is

endorsing and approving the initiative of his interlocutors, and is thereby showing his willingness to get into a relationship with those who address him.

Sometimes, even though more rarely, people invert the exchange terms, anticipating the gift. In such cases they ask for a miracle and at the same time organise and celebrate a *novena*, to be offered to the saint as a gift, hoping to be helped, displaying a strong faith in him. This happened once during my stay on the island: a couple celebrated a *novena* hoping that the saint would rescue their child, unjustly accused of having committed a crime. We could venture to say that this way the requesters were somehow putting the saint in an indebted position, because they offered something before receiving the miracle. However, the couple certainly showed their great faith in the saint's powers and the willingness to offer a great deal in order for their wish to be granted.

'Poderoso y milagroso, y muy castigador' (powerful and miraculous and very revengeful)

The saint was consistently described to me as both miraculous and powerful. His power is to be understood as ambivalent: on the one hand he is able to dispense forceful miracles, on the other he is believed to expect a return from people; this is especially true whenever people make a statement of a commitment to the saint. I was often told that once a person commits to offer something to the saint, she must attend to that commitment as soon as possible. While it is acceptable that gathering the necessary resources might take years, to deliberately ignore the promise made, or to pretend not to have promised, or to dismiss a *novena* celebration to avoid great expenses is a grave misbehaviour towards the saint, and it calls for the saint's powerful revenge. This kind of fault is always blamed and frowned upon by the community. I was told several stories of people who, being stingy, kept delaying the celebrations and had to suffer misfortunes such as the loss of several animals, or the loss of a considerable sum of money, or worse, a serious illness. To Apiao people's eyes, this is a clear warning from the saint, who, after granting the miracle, was never paid back as promised. Sometimes the misfortunes come at regular intervals, in growing proportion, so that the one who failed to comply would be warned. One such person confided in me that he had made a promise to the saint while risking his life,

but after he had his life spared he had ignored his own commitment to the saint. Then he suddenly started to experience various kinds of troubles: he lost money, some of his animals died, and various other untoward events. At some point his sister wondered about the origin of his misfortune, and asked him if by any chance he had a pending responsibility, a duty to honour. He had to admit that yes, he had promised a reward to the saint that he never fulfilled. She urged him to immediately start gathering all the resources to organise a *novena*, that took place while I was on the island.

Another woman told me that she was taking her time to fulfil her commitment to the saint, when one day she tripped and fell when she was seven months pregnant. In the event she was not hurt and her pregnancy was successful, but the fright that followed the serious accident reminded her that she was postponing an important duty - the saint is known to punish those who do not take him seriously. ‘It was a sort of message he was sending me’, she told me, ‘a message of warning’. I quote a long passage from a conversation I had with this woman because it illustrates well the relationship between the faithful and the saint. Originally from Apiao, she moved to Argentina where she got married. She came back to the island to fulfil her duty with the saint and make a *novena* (the second so far) according to what she had promised the saint sometime in the past.

“*De’ que tengo juicio...* I have always known San Antonio. I just call him Chuco. I have a lot of faith and a lot of respect for him, because he always fulfilled (*me cumplió*) everything I ever asked him. My parents did a *novena* when I was two years old, and I did one myself ten years ago, and now. I came from so far away, four days of travelling to keep my promise; I really had to do this. Two years ago I came with my husband, but we were not ready yet for a *novena*, the money was simply not enough. That is why I was committed to coming back just for this purpose. The trip went fine, I always ask him to protect me. For the first *novena* I asked him to take care of my parents, because I had to leave them and go abroad. I am an only child therefore for me my parents are the most important thing. Then I asked him to give me a house, and he complied (*y me lo cumplieron*), and then I asked him to protect my children and my family. I always remember him (*siempre me acuerdo de el*). But if people laugh at him, or make fun of him, or don’t keep their promise, he punishes

them (*el los castiga*). And people don't realise until things happen to them. For example, I had this promise to fulfil, and I had not done it yet, and when I was seven months pregnant I fell, I slipped on the ice and I fell on my belly. I was coming back from the hospital, I just had my check-up; I was only 5 blocks away from home. Luckily I was holding my husband's hand, I fainted and my daughter got really scared. I went back to the hospital and they checked everything again. Everything was fine with the baby, thank God. That was him warning me that I still had my promise to keep. I was really frightened, but he trusted me and continued protecting me. Some people on the island have made a promise, but they don't fulfil their duty (*no cumplen*). They keep postponing and they say that one day they'll do it, 'cos they don't have the resources, the money and all that is necessary. And the years pass. But they should know that when they least expect it, the saint is going to punish them. People should not make fun of him, and by doing this, they are making fun of him. Take my cousin, for example..it's been years since he promised, and nothing yet. And I have come from such a distance to fulfil my promise...

We wanted to go to Achao to leave him the money, but he didn't want to (*y el no quiso*), and we missed the boat. I told my father, Chuco wants me to go to Caguach! And this is what happened: good weather! I wanted to leave the island to buy my ticket to go back to Argentina, but the weather was always bad. Anchquito didn't want to give me the good weather! But when I myself went to take him back, with my daughter, then, only then the weather got better. He wanted me to take him back to Caguach!"

In the woman's story, the saint is just like another individual with whom she is interacting. In fact she talks about the saint as if he were a person of flesh and bone. She calls him affectionately Chuco or Anchquito, giving him not one but two nicknames, a practice that people have only towards close acquaintances or relatives. She depicts him as someone having agency: he listens to the requests, gives what he is asked, gives warnings, punishes those who deserve it, guides people's actions by giving the right weather at the right time to have them act in one way rather than in another. He has his own way to show his interlocutors what he wants, and they readily receive the message, acknowledge it and act upon it.

The woman's story is but one example of this attribution of willingness, agency and a distinct personality to the saint. This was particularly visible in comments related to the weather and the saint's arrival or departure. Apiao being an island, the weather is a crucial determinant for all activities that imply leaving the place. If the weather is persistently bad and does not allow boats to leave the island, the *novena* starting date needs to be postponed. In such cases people tend to say that the rain and the wind happen because the saint knows that those who are doing the *novena* do not have 'a good heart' (*no tienen buen corazón*), or they say that the saint does not want to come [to stay with them] (*no quiere llegar*). The weather in Apiao and indeed, in the whole Chiloé region is often bad and it is not uncommon for the rain to fall for weeks without interruption⁷⁹. *Novenas* are planned ahead and sometimes people speculate whether the celebrations can take place since the weather determines such occurrence. 'When he comes, there's always good weather' the *fiscal* responded to my remark about the persistent bad weather. 'Wait and see, Saturday the weather will get better, it always improves when he comes'. 'Ah, then Antonio comes on Saturday?' asked his elderly mother, almost deaf and blind. In hearing *la mamy* formulating her question, it really seemed that she was talking about a real person in flesh and blood. Anchquito is experienced exactly that way - like a person with agency, someone to have a unique, personal relation with⁸⁰.

Negotiation

One of the characteristics of the relationship between Apiao people and the saint is the use of negotiation. Just like relationships with fellow islanders are never taken for granted, but constantly renovated and put to the test, the relationship they entertain with the saint mirrors this pattern. People interact with the saint, in a sort of dialogic form, formulating a question and waiting for an answer; making an offer and thereby agreeing on an exchange, or otherwise offering an apology, and expecting the apology to be accepted. The interaction is sought after, the will to engage is strong and

⁷⁹ According to Grenier (1984:18), the average yearly rainfall in Chiloé is 2500 mm.

⁸⁰ Rodrigo Villagra (personal communication) pointed out to me the existence of a popular Latin-American song titled 'Palo Bonito'. Its lyrics say '*Tengo a San Antonio puesto de cabeza, si no me da novia, nadie lo endereza*' (I'm keeping San Antonio turned upside down, if he does not give me a girlfriend, no one will turn him up again'). The song lyrics are yet another example, taken from popular culture, of addressing a powerful other in familiar terms. In some areas the saint is considered miraculous for the specific task of finding a marriage partner. This, however, is not true for Apiao.

individuals actively carry out communication and interaction with the saint. Despite perceiving the obvious gap between a supernatural, powerful entity, and the limited condition of human beings, Apiao people do not feel that this gap is limiting, and keep conversing with San Antonio in a very active, assertive and creative way, on a regular basis.

We have previously seen some examples of this attitude in the chapter dedicated to the dead, and we see it reappearing in relation to the saint. Apiao people have a way of negotiating, offering something in exchange for something else, suggesting new ideas, developing new threads of conversation, reviewing old decisions, changing their minds and proposing a new, different solution.

Carlos, a young boat owner, was supposed to participate in a San Antonio *novena* that was being celebrated in his neighbourhood. However, he was unexpectedly offered a well-paid job: the nearby municipality office offered to rent his boat and his service for a whole day. The municipality pays well and it would be foolish to refuse such an offer. I heard the story during a conversation between women, busy preparing the meal for the *remate* night, the last *novena* day. Carlos' sister was telling everyone how she told her brother 'Carlos, ask permission to the saint and just go, yes, he is going to grant it to you, 'cos he knows you, and you have already brought him here a few times!' to which several of the women present agreed, nodding their heads and adding 'Yes, for sure!', confirming what the woman had just said. What does this imply? Let me sketch the brief sequence:

- Talking to the saint, mentioning possible participation in the *novena*
- A good job offer appears: change of plan, consequent inability to go and sit in the praying ritual as expected and as promised
- Talking to the saint again, asking for his permission, reminding him of the previous times a connection bound them together (Carlos offering his boat to fetch the saint to the island)
- Firm belief in the saint granting permission
- Decision to proceed and take the job

This is just one example, but there are several instances of this type of negotiation taking place. People know that they are allowed to negotiate with the saint; they have to do it ‘with a good heart’, as I was told several times, ‘*con buen corazón*’. If one’s heart is pure, if one’s intentions are pure, the saint will listen and accept what the individual proposes.

However, if the individual does not take the saint seriously, and speaks without meaning his words, he is looking for trouble, because he will learn that his way of acting is wrong.

‘*Lo tengo dicho*’: speaking out = acting out

While usually Apiao people do not pay much attention to things said when interacting with their fellow islanders, they consider each uttered word very carefully whenever talking about the saint. This is why they refer to the commitment they have with the saint with the much heard expression ‘*lo tengo dicho*’, ‘I have said so’. With that expression they are officially stating that they have made a pact with the saint, and they are making that pact public. By speaking out, a proper person is committing to follow his words with appropriate action. By uttering those words, the pact is sealed, and the community is witness to that pact.

Conversely, if someone promises to attend a novena for a certain number of days, or promises to attend and light a certain number of candles, or to offer an amount of money, and does not do it, that is considered not only a lack of respect, but a sacrilegious act that calls for the saint’s revenge. As a man told me once, ‘*mejor no hable uno*’, ‘it’s better not to say anything’, it is preferable not to speak of doing something regarding the saint unless one is absolutely convinced he is able to keep faithful to his promise. Otherwise the saint may harm someone, ‘*si no ese lo daña a uno*’.

Just like we have seen in the chapter dedicated to the dead, the saint is capable of giving and at the same time he is capable of taking away. Just as much as he protects and helps those who make contact with him, he expects something in exchange and when this does not happen, his punishment can be severe. His attribute of *castigador* in fact was always spelled out next to *poderoso*. Powerful *and* revengeful. Once again the *hubris/tisis* articulation of the Greek tragedies comes to mind: it is fine to interact

with the divine, the powerful other, provided that all the pacts are respected. If the human does not respect the pacts and fails to return and pay his debts back appropriately, he can certainly expect a divine punishment. The retribution is directed against men's arrogance and pride, for the one who does not pay his debts and honour his promises lacks humility and respect. We see the same pattern we already discussed returning, and being powerfully displayed with the San Antonio theme.

Another main value, memory, also returns. As the woman put it 'I always remember him' '*siempre me acuerdo de el*': honouring one's pacts and paying one's debts is also a matter of memory, of keeping someone emotionally present, of constantly evoking the memory of someone to whom one feels attached. To ignore the saint and the promise made is a denial of memory and thus a denial of a relationship. The saint punishes this arrogance with his powerful revenge.

Exchange: restoring the balance

I once asked one of the people who had a *novena* in her household, what I would have to do in order to ask the saint for a miracle. I told her that I kept asking him, was that enough? 'You must promise something in exchange', she said. 'Anything! Money, candles, a *novena*...but something must be given in exchange...otherwise you are asking a favour in exchange for nothing!'.

Once we see the peculiar relation Apiao people have managed to weave with the little powerful saint in the framework of reciprocity, it becomes apparent that the way to experience the supernatural repeats a pattern that constitutes the basis of Apiao relationality. I believe that people perceive the experience of the saint's punishment as something to expect in case of unfulfilled duty because in Apiao social theory the foundation of all relationships is reciprocity. As I explained throughout this thesis, in Apiao giving always leaves room for expecting a return in equal terms, and receiving always means that something has been given previously. Social life is truly experienced in terms of reciprocal exchange, and when someone gives, he expects an equal return. Until a return is given, there is an unbalance that leaves the situation somehow suspended, on the wait for some sort of temporary equilibrium⁸¹ to be

⁸¹ Leach and his notion of oscillating, unstable equilibrium (1954) as a necessary feature of social reality as opposed to conceptual models of societies come to mind here.

reached again. Until then, the equilibrium is instable and the unbalance will always be accurately kept in mind by those who need a return. At this point it is useful to return to the image of the *lloco* that we met previously: the plate of food given to selected families after the pig's slaughter, that was described as 'something lent' (*una cosa presta*), meaning, something that is meant to come back in exactly the same terms, filled with exactly the same content in the same amount. Apiao sociality is constituted through a series of exchange relations. The relation people entertain with San Antonio is a reflection of this important articulation, and a powerful reminder of the importance of exchange as a foundation in Apiao lived world. When the giving/returning circle is interrupted, it is like a loop where people are unpleasantly stuck, when dealing with fellow islanders; if that same circle is left hanging whenever the saint is involved, the disharmony reaches a cosmic dimension and resonance, and mistakes attract a just punishment.

The balance must always be respected. 'When one commits, he must fulfil' '*Cuando se compromete, uno tiene que cumplir*'.

2. Thread man-man

Alliance/solidarity: The *novena*

After having talked about the relation between the saint and the individuals that, by asking for a miracle, engage the saint in a relationship, I will now turn to the relationship between the people that take part in the *novena*. The *novena* owners are in fact indebted not only to the saint, but to the community as well. By committing publicly they have also promised the community to host the important celebration. At the same time, the community is needed to endorse the promise and the event. Each individual that takes part not only honours a pact previously made with the saint, but also honours a fellow islander with his presence, by 'accompanying' him (*acompañar*) in an event that requires a high degree of solidarity. In turn, the owner acts as the foremost host and offers the best treatment to both the saint and his fellow islanders, by welcoming them and attending them properly.

I will now describe the actual *novena* and the way it is organised and carried out.

The *novena* consists of the recitation of two sets of rosaries led by three ‘praying experts’, the *fiscales*, and accompanied by a group of faithful, who attend the celebration in devotion to the saint as a token of respect and solidarity to the *novena* organiser, who is hosting the saint in his own household for the duration of the *novena*, that is, nine days. This person is called the *promesa* owner, or *novena* owner, *dueño de la promesa*, or *dueño de la novena*.

The household. The *novena* certainly marks a special time where order is suspended and things are fluid: even household boundaries are temporarily modified to host the saint and welcome the fellow islanders. One of the biggest rooms of the household is emptied of all furniture or objects that might usually be stored there, and made available to receive a large number of guests. Often households do not have a wide enough room; in such cases the thin walls of plywood that separate the small rooms from each other are temporarily brought down, in order to have a bigger space available. Two sets of benches, facing each other, are built on both sides of the room, one for the men and one for the women and the children⁸², that are generally brought along in great numbers.

The statue of San Antonio witnesses the celebration sitting on a small table transformed into an altar, adorned with branches of trees, flowers and various sorts of glittery decorations. Three chairs are put around the altar, facing the saint, where the *fiscales* will sit. The prayers are alternated with songs, sung to the music of drums and the accordion. Three musicians sit in front of the first row of the men’s benches, close to the altar.

Each *novena* night two rosaries are prayed. The first rosary is said for the souls of the dead of the owner’s household, and the second rosary is entirely devoted to the saint, and it is to pray for this rosary that the crowd comes. Together with the rosaries, several other prayers are said and sung, such as litanies. In addition, every night a different text concerning the life of the saint and his miracles is read by the main *fiscal*.

Prayers and songs are always preceded and followed by drinking, and the sessions are concluded with either eating or dancing. Before starting to pray and in between

⁸² However, sometimes the children sit with their fathers or elder brothers on the men’s side.

rosaries every person present - children included - is offered a glass of alcoholic drink; every other night each person will be offered a cooked dinner, to be consumed while sitting on the benches, at the end of the prayers.

On alternate nights the Chilean national dance, *cueca*, is danced by couples, to the music of the accordion and a special *cueca* song. The *cueca* is very popular in Chiloé, where it has its own variant, the *cueca chilota*, and in Apiao it has a strong religious connotation. Interestingly, the *cueca* as danced in Apiao is a reflection of the island's typical sociality in that it is highly formal and ritualised. The dancers, always a couple (a man and a woman), follow a fixed pattern and their bodies never touch, just like their eyes never meet. Dancing *cueca* in the *novena* takes on a special ritualistic meaning: couples dance by the altar, in front of the saint, and the dance is offered to the saint, in exchange and in fulfilment of a promise. Men are generally reluctant to dance: it is they who need to take the initiative and invite a woman to join them in the dance, and they say that they need to be tipsy to overcome the embarrassment. Often those who dance are children: they learn *cueca* dancing in school and are less shy than adults. Dancing for the saint is always seen and enjoyed as a ritual performance, and those who take the initiative to dance are appreciated for rendering a service to both saint and community. The atmosphere can be quite light and the dancers - especially in *remate* nights - can offer enjoyable performances, and entertain those present. Amusing *cueca* sessions and humorous male dancers are remembered, and talked about, for a long time.

Just like for funeral *rezos*, the last night, the ninth, takes the name of *remate* and is a special night, lasting several hours. Alcohol is served in abundance, as well as a special dinner that includes gifts of food to take away. While all the participants have their dinner brought to them on a hot plate, that they put on their lap, the *fiscales*, the musicians and a few other selected individuals are invited to have dinner sitting at a table that is put in front of the altar, between the two sets of benches.

There are several rounds of *cueca*, a special set of final prayers and blessings and a highly emotional final speech where the *novena* owner thanks all those who 'accompanied' him.

Before the *novena*. The actual *novena* celebrations mark the culmination of a long period of preparation. The long celebration means that quite an amount of resources need to be gathered. Several pigs are fattened for a year or longer, to be slaughtered for the occasion; several hundred litres of *chicha*, the local apple cider, as well as wine, are kept or bought for this purpose; several hundred kilos of wheat are transformed into big breads to be distributed on the *remate* night to every participant, together with a large portion of roasted meat, and a plate of *mazamorra*, a special porridge, made exclusively on *novenas' remates*. Extra meat and bread is necessary to be given to all the helpers: they are never given cash, but they are paid with food, that is, chunks of meat and big loaves of bread. In addition, some cash is needed to rent the boat that will fetch the saint from his island, and take him back; praying staff and musicians are also traditionally paid in cash. Some cash is also needed to buy candles: each day eight candles are lit and they must be replaced at the beginning of each rosary, even if they are not entirely extinguished.

If we consider that the goods consumed in a *novena* easily amount to the general expenses of a household within one or even two years, we can appreciate the aspect of sacrifice intrinsic in this ritual. Only when all the required resources have been collected can the owner proceed and organise the event.

First of all, he needs to find several people to take lead roles in the event.

The *fiscal* has to be accompanied in his prayers by two other praying men, generally *ex fiscales*. Together with the praying staff it is necessary to have three musicians: one for the accordion, and two for the drums. The music will accompany the prayers, and there will be some solo singing, performed by the accordionist and the *fiscal*. These six persons are strictly necessary for the religious part of the *novena*.

Besides the six ‘religious staff’ the owner needs to hire a good number of people to help him in the fulfilment of his promise. Many tasks have to be carried out for the entire *novena* period. The following are female tasks: to cook, to make and bake bread (this can be done only by women who have the special oven required to cook large quantities of bread), to prepare the *mazamorra* (only a handful of women know how to do this). The following are male tasks: to help make the house suitable to welcome a crowd of people (which entails dismantling parts of the house, building

wood benches; sometimes even building a hut to juxtapose to the existing house), to attend the door, to allocate people to the appropriate seat, to fill and light the paraffin lamp, to serve drinks, to serve food, to row people across the canal by boat. Each task mentioned requires one or more individuals. A motorboat is also needed to fetch the saint from his island, and to bring him back once the *novena* is concluded.

The *suplica*⁸³. Once the owner has set a date and has booked the saint, he has to go and ask each person he needs, informing them of the imminent *novena*, as fulfilment of a previous promise. He asks for their help in the form of *suplica*, as has been described previously. This is done in the humblest possible manner, after sitting and attending to the usual ritual offer of food and drink. It is considered a grave fault to deny one's help, unless this is done in certain circumstances, such as in the case of commitments previously made. It is indeed considered an offence towards both the saint, and the *novena* organiser.

During the *novena* the owner delegates most of the work that has to be done to his staff; he will be primarily making decisions and directing the helping staff. Those who are asked for help are mainly close family members, neighbours and *compadres*. All of them are generally referred to as *los suplicados*, those who were asked for help. The verb *suplicar*, to implore, conveys a sense of intense request, much stronger than 'to ask'. But in Apiao it indicates the action of requesting someone's presence for a praying occasion, be it the San Antonio *novena* or a *novena* for a funeral, or a 'birthday of the dead' (anniversary). As we have already seen, the apparent redundancy of the term reflects well the implications of entering someone else's space and life, almost intruding in someone's house to ask for a favour. All these *novena* settings are ritual contexts that are created, and made sense of, only with the collaboration of several individuals willing to offer their help. The only way to approach them is through the *suplica*: the sacred occasion requires a ritual address, and the *suplica* conveys both the importance of the situation, and the sacredness of the reasons behind the asking - which, in the case of the saint *novena*, do not have to be disclosed.

⁸³ I have illustrated earlier - in Chapter 2 - the specific formulas of *suplicas*.

Trip to Caguach. The *novena* begins on the day the saint is brought from the island of Caguach. On the afternoon of that day the owner of the promise leaves Apiao accompanied by one *fiscal* and the three musicians, and whomever wants to ‘accompany him’ to bring San Antonio to Apiao. Usually several members of the family, as well as various islanders are willing to make the trip. During the trip the promise owner makes sure every traveller is offered alcoholic drink, and sometimes food, for the whole travelling time. The drink can be wine but is generally *chicha*. In fact he is acting as the host of the event, and he is attending his guests as if they were sitting in the kitchen of his household. He must offer them food and drink, and they must receive it - this time, in the name of San Antonio.

When the boat arrives in Caguach, the little group of people follow a path that runs from the beach to the uphill fields, they jump several wooden fences to get to the house of the saint’s owner. She welcomes everybody into a room where the statue is displayed on a table, and all sit on the benches at each side of the room. The owner of the promise speaks to the woman, and tells her that they have came to take the San Antonio to Apiao, in fulfilment of a previous promise. His speech is stylized and his attitude is formal and solemn. Then *chicha* brought from Apiao is poured into a glass that will be offered to every person and filled up again until all have been served. The *fiscal* starts a set of prayers and the musicians play, then the owner of the promise stands up in the middle of the room and with a fixed formula invites whomever is willing to dance to do so, while the musicians start playing a *cueca*. Then a man stands up with a white handkerchief in his hand and invites a woman to join him; before starting to dance they stand in front of San Antonio and make the sign of the cross. They will repeat this act after having danced, before going back to sit down. This same sequence is repeated each time a *cueca* is danced throughout the *novena*. Then *chicha* is poured again, until all have drunk and the *chicha* container is empty. Eventually the little group leaves in a procession-like line, the owner of the promise leading the way with the little San Antonio in his hands. Immediately following, a man carrying the flag of San Antonio, which is a Chilean flag that belongs to the statue. San Antonio owns various paraphernalia, besides the flag: an accordion, which is always used in his *novena*, and a wealth of porcelain ornaments, vases and a box for collecting money. All these objects travel in a bag. After the saint and the flag bearer are the three musicians who continuously play a religious march on the way to

the boat. This is interrupted only when crossing and jumping fences. Everybody else follows behind.

Throughout the whole trip back to Apiao the owner of the promise holds the saint as if he was a baby, taking all the possible care, protecting him from raindrops, and carefully shielding him during the changes from the little rowing boat (*bote*) to the bigger motorboat (*lancha*), in leaving Caguach and upon arrival in Apiao. During the trip back to Apiao the musicians play, especially so after leaving Caguach, and when close to Apiao, while *chicha* is continuously served to all, adults and children alike.

Arrival in Apiao and first *novena* night. When the motorboat arrives in Apiao there is always a small crowd waiting for the saint on the beach, and sometimes a few boats follow the *lancha* that carries him from the canal to the beach where he lands. *Ir a encontrar el santito*, ‘to go to meet the little saint’ is something that everybody is willing to do, even those who are busy.

The owner disembarks with the saint in his arms, and the *fiscal* starts to pray, and all those present respond to it. After some prayers and a few songs sung at the beach, the owner begs his fellow islanders to please come to his household to accompany him for the entire duration of the *novena*. After the *dueño* plea, a little procession forms to the music of the religious march, and everyone joins the owner and the saint in the journey towards the household where the *novena* will take place. Upon arrival the saint is placed on the previously prepared altar, adorned with branches from native trees, coloured sheets of paper, Christmas balls, and various shiny decorations. To these are added the various objects that belong to the saint: several porcelain miniatures (little girls, dolphins, angels), vases of plastic flowers, embroidered cloths that are given to San Antonio as a gift, and these always accompany him wherever he goes.

The pilgrims are invited to take a seat and they do so, all men on one side of the room and all women and children, if very little, on the other side. *Chicha* is immediately served to everybody by two or more designated persons, who struggle to pass through the crowd and to serve each a full glass from a heavy tray. Then the *fiscal* starts a brief set of prayers and songs, to which all are supposed to reply, and music is played.

Then, just as it happened in Caguach, the owner stands up and humbly invites the men ‘of good will’, or ‘those who have [made] a promise’ to have patience and to dance *cueca*. The accordionist starts the well-known *cueca* notes, and a man stands up and looks for a woman to dance with. The dancers will dance in front of the saint and in his honour, and before and after they will always cross themselves looking up at him. If there are several couples willing to dance, *cueca* tunes are played again. Then *chicha* is served once more to everybody, and just before they all leave the *fiscal* announces the starting time of the actual *novena*, a few hours later. And while all are noisily standing up, jumping through the file of benches and collecting the children, the owner humbly invites them to ‘have patience’ and come back to accompany him ‘in his promise’.

A few hours later the real *novena* begins. It consists of two parts. The first one is the reciting of a rosary set of prayers for the dead ancestors of the owner, the second part is dedicated to San Antonio. The praying for the dead is called *novenario* and is prayed by one *fiscal*, and no music is played. Generally the *novenario* is done with few people present, because it is a matter that mainly interests the owner and his immediate family. The *novenario* lasts approximately one hour, and it consists of a rosary and various other prayers, led by one *fiscal* who sits with the table-altar of the saint in front of him. All the benches would be behind the shoulders of the *fiscal*. Towards the end of the *novenario* people start arriving, and entering the room, and by the end of it the room is crowded. Guests are directed to the appropriate seat by the *arreglador*, that makes them all sit on the benches, men on one side and women in front of the men.

Before starting the San Antonio prayers *chicha* is poured and served to everybody, starting with the *fiscales* and the musicians. Children are served the same amount of *chicha* as the adults, and all accept and empty the glass; it is always considered rude not to accept food or drink whenever it is offered, and especially so for the *novena*.

At this point the owner addresses the audience with a series of fixed formulas. As I described earlier on, the owner first addresses all the women present at the household, sitting on the benches for the prayers, and then all the men, sitting together on the benches opposite the female group; he then asks them if they came ‘to accompany

him in the prayers'; and eventually thanks them, in the name of the 'blessed souls, and our father San Antonio' for their generosity in coming 'to accompany'. Once again, before all those present leave, he would pray them for to come back on the following days to 'accompany him' on the occasion.

As I already mentioned, the *novena* to San Antonio consists of the reciting of a rosary, with some music and songs, various sets of prayers, the reading of a text on the life of the saint, and the singing of specific songs. The three *fiscales* pray and sing together, sitting at the table-altar, facing the saint with their shoulders to the people sitting on the benches.

The text that is read every night is taken from a small and very old and worn out booklet that belongs to one of the *fiscales*. Without that little typewritten booklet, of obscure origin, the *novena* cannot be celebrated: it contains episodes of the saint's life that are read every day - a different one each day, together with special *oraciones*, again different for every day. The text is written in literary Spanish, and some of it does not sound familiar to the islanders, who speak a local form of Spanish. For example, the conjugation of the verb for the second plural person takes a form in Spanish that is never used in the Castellan spoken in Chile. Equally, some words of the text are archaic, uncommon, or hardly used. Do the people who participate in the *novena* understand these words? In fact, do those who read the text - the *fiscales* - understand what they are saying? Some of the stories in the text are incomplete, or incomprehensible in some passages (see Appendix). It is interesting to note that it is quite likely no one pays much attention to the text, or to the event narrated in that text. However, this shows that people take part in this unique event for reasons that go beyond the understanding of that text, or, even the repetition of prayers that hardly resonate in the life of the average Apiao person. For example, the second rosary is always preceded by the litany 'Blessed be your purity, and blessed be eternally' (*Bendita sea tu pureza, y eternamente lo sea*). Besides the rosary, a good number of the prayers and songs are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and her purity, candour and innocence. All these qualities are not really viewed as a value in Apiao, and, as we have previously seen, the high number of single mothers are not stigmatised nor blamed by the community. The meaning of these gatherings encompasses religion, but goes further and takes a 'total social fact' resonance. The entire corpus of values

is expressed and revealed in the *novena*, where people are able to strengthen social and cosmic connections, and feel once again that ‘they are all the same’.

When all the prayers are concluded, the *chicha* offering is repeated, and followed by a meal. The owner stands up and announces in a humble tone that there will be a ‘small dinner’, and he requests that those present have the patience to stay to enjoy the food that will be served. The respect showed by these humble requests is indicative of the need the owner has of his fellow islanders’ support. He is acknowledging their generosity, and in turn, he is thanking them with his hospitality - offering them drink and food in exchange for their ‘company’.

Plates of hot food (usually a stew) circulate from the kitchen to the *novena* room, and are served to everyone by two or more *suplicados*. All guests eat with the plate on their knees, silently, or occasionally whispering to the neighbour, or laughing if tipsy. The *fiscales* and the players eat separately from the others: they are either invited to go to the kitchen, or the kitchen table would be brought into the *novena* room, and quickly set for the six men to have dinner at. The table is put in the middle of the room, in the space between the two sets of benches, and an abundant meal is served, with one of the serving people constantly checking that the guests have all they need to enjoy their meal. *Fiscales* and players chat during the dinner, actively engaging in a conversation among themselves. On this occasion, as described for the funeral celebrations, the emphasis is on attending the guests, on taking care of everyone present and especially the selected guests that sit at the table. This is a feast for those that are attended: the household owner would stay in the background, instructing the helpers and making sure all guests are properly received and attended. In the *novena* there is a demarcation between those who attend and those who are attended, and roles are fixed and well defined. This is not a feast of sharing: it is rather a feast of offering and receiving, in line with Apiao sociality characteristics, however, here these are amplified and formalised by the sacred context.

When dinner is concluded, everybody leaves, but not before the owner begs them in the usual humble tone to come back again tomorrow, with patience, to accompany him in his promise.

During the last night, the *remate*, the dinner is particularly sumptuous for those who are at the table. Together with the *fiscales* and musicians, two or three more selected individuals are invited to accompany the *novena* staff at the table. These are usually persons who helped in a special way, or offered some goods in honour of the saint, helping the owner too; and if there is an outsider or a foreign person in the crowd, she is invited too, for no other reason than being foreign⁸⁴.

After the dinner, that is abundant in both food and wine, and lasts for a good couple of hours, the gifts of bread and meat are brought to the table and given to each table guest. These gifts are intended as exchange gifts to thank those who kindly ‘accompanied’ the novena owner in the celebration; they vary in quantity for each table guest. These gifts are brought to the table in colourful plastic basins, and placed next to each recipient. The *fiscales* are given up to seven one-kilo loaves of breads and three or four big meat chunks; the musicians slightly less than the *fiscales*, and the other table guests receive less than both *fiscales* and *músicos*, but more than everyone else who is sitting on the benches. In addition to these gifts, each table guest puts aside the big meat chunk that was served with the stew, and the *mazamorra* porridge. Each participant brings a few plastic bags with the purpose of carrying the gifts, and the praying staff bring resistant wheat sacks, that are useful after the end of the celebration for carrying home several kilos of food on the muddy paths.

At the same time all those sitting on the benches receive a chunk of meat (also, in their stew), that they store away, the *mazamorra*, which is also stored away, and one or two loaves of bread, depending on the number of nights they attended the *novena*. The *dueño* and his family carefully note down this detail (see Appendix) because it is important to give appropriately to each person. Participation of five nights or more is rewarded with two loaves, less than five nights is rewarded with just one loaf. When the helpers make a mistake concerning the number of loaves to be given, the recipients feel hurt and I have heard irritated comments that pointed out the lack of attention of some of the *suplicados*. People know what they give, and expect an adequate return, and when this does not happen, it causes friction.

Participants are aware that they will receive gifts at the end of the *remate* night, and are willing to contribute with a voluntary donation - usually a note of 1000 CP - and

⁸⁴ This happened to me a few times.

to that purpose they queue any time during the breaks of the ninth night and offer their contribution to the *dueño*. I have already described a similar interaction for funerals; the attitude of both the giver and the receiver is similar in that situation, the same formulas are used by both and the ritualistic atmosphere is pervasive. The receiver holds the right hand of the giver and looks straight into his eyes whilst pronouncing the thanking formula, complete with the giver's name.

At the end of the dinner, after the distribution of the gifts, there is the ritualistic thanking moment, when the praying staff are also paid. This is a highly emotional moment, charged with pathos. The *dueño* goes around the table and addresses the main *fiscal*, asking him how much he owes in a discrete whisper. The *fiscal* answers with the more or less fixed formula '*eso es voluntad/promesa de usted no más*' (this is your will/promise, it's up to you) and the owner offers him a sealed envelope⁸⁵. The *fiscal* receives it and thanks him with a fixed formula, to which the owner replies with a further thanking phrase, holding his right hand and looking at him. This final thanking session is highly emotional, and the owner starts crying when he addresses the first table guest. By the time he has thanked and paid all those sitting at the table he is weeping intensely; the owner is often accompanied by his spouse, or by a parent or a grandparent, and all the thanking parties are weeping while thanking. After the table guests are thanked and paid, all the helpers are called one by one and thanked (they are not paid at this point⁸⁶), in the same manner, with a fixed formula, holding their hand and looking at them in the eyes. The moment is intensely emotional and the *dueño* weeps profusely.

At first I was highly surprised by the emotional outburst and by seeing adult crying openly and noisily in an otherwise quite reserved community, but I soon realised that everyone else considered it a common emotional expression, belonging precisely to the atmosphere of the *remate* night. The owner cries, I was told, because he is moved by the grace he has received from the saint, because he is happy to have had the saint

⁸⁵ The obvious fact that the envelopes are sealed, and have the recipient names on the front, shows that the question 'how much do I owe you' is purely rhetorical. There is an amount that is considered acceptable and the *novena* owner always enquires in advance.

⁸⁶ All the *suplicados* are paid with food: they are fed everyday, and those that work in their own household, like the women who make and bake the bread, are given the raw ingredients to cook themselves lunch. All workers that help someone, either for a religious event or for an agricultural cycle event, are always paid with food. If some special cases require a cash payment, that is in addition to the food payment.

staying in his own household for nine days, and because he is grateful for the generosity of his fellow islanders that ‘accompanied’ him in the *novena* days.

The crowd of pilgrims goes out into the dark night and take the path to go back home, sometimes in little groups, more generally individually and silently. Very often it rains heavily, and the path is so muddy that walking on it is impossible; in such cases people seek alternate ways to reach home, crossing private lands, jumping fences and passing through barbed wire.

While organising a *novena* is the seal of a personal pact between someone and the saint, involving these two individuals and no one else, at the same time a *novena* by definition implies a crowd of faithful, a group of people to do the praying and the singing, which in a *novena* is always done in group. However, a San Antonio *novena* is much more than this. The San Antonio *novena* is in fact a good chance to see real solidarity in action on the island. While in the past every sort of important work was done communally, in the form of *mingas*, where all community members participated voluntarily to help individual households, and then received the same kind of help when they needed it, nowadays most work is done for money. However, in religious matters there is still a strong display of mutual help and solidarity. By participating in this crucial event, Apiao people are acknowledging their status as human beings, and are stating once more their ‘sameness’, their lack of differentiation. Because ‘no one is free’. They all might, at some point, need the same solidarity. The reciprocity pattern is always present and it can be seen quite evidently in the gifts the owner gives the community (bread and meat), and in the counter-gift each participant offers the owner (a small amount of cash). Other reciprocity levels are less evident but it is around these that the whole *novena* event revolves.

3. Thread people-saint

The saint returns to Caguach. On the tenth day, late in the morning, the main *fiscal* and whoever wants to say goodbye (*despedir*) to the saint goes for the last time to the *novena* location, for a final prayer and for a solemn blessing. The final blessing is directed at the household, its owners and all those present and is performed by the *fiscal* holding the saint, rotating the statue around the room, and doing the sign of the

cross - the same way priests do in church with a special cross or with the urn containing the Blessed Communion during special solemn celebrations⁸⁷. After this ritual conclusion, that is an intensely emotional moment, the saint is taken to the beach by the owner followed by the *fiscal*, musicians that play throughout the journey, and a small crowd of pilgrims.

The saint is always given several presents during his stay in Apiao: on each *novena* night there is a constant movement of people that leave their benches to go to the saint's altar, sign themselves and offer him some money by putting it in a wooden box kept for that purpose. After they have done so, they sign themselves again and return to their seat.

People make various promises to the saint, and they have the chance to accomplish them during a *novena*. They can either promise to attend a certain number of nights, or to buy him some candles, or to give him some cash, or some food. Whatever is promised must involve a sacrifice, that is, it must be something that costs the giver some effort or some expense.

The money that is gathered in the saint's own wooden box is carefully counted on the day the saint is brought back to Caguach, in the presence of a few witnesses; the amount is written on a piece of paper, and is carefully wrapped to be given to the saint's owner once in Caguach. Pilgrims and *novena* organisers gather all the gifts offered: the money, the live chickens, smoked fish, wine, *chicha*, potatoes, garlic. All these gifts are collected and taken to the beach, where they are loaded into the boat and brought to Caguach, and given to the saint owner when the saint is returned. There is always a strong respect towards the offerings to the saint, and I have never heard comments on who gave what. Equally, no one would dare to keep any of the goods destined for the saint: to do so would equal to stealing from the saint and would provoke the saint's powerful revenge (see the *hubris/tisis* articulation previously

⁸⁷Urbina (1983: 185ff) describes the sequence of events on the occasion of the circular mission of the Jesuits in the different pueblos in Chiloé: the arrival of the priest, accompanied by a small contingent of indigenous people; the priest is met at the beach by the locals, carrying a cross, singing religious songs and the children adorned with flowers; once arrived at the church the statues are placed in the altar and the rosary is prayed several times, alternated with litanies. At the end of the prayers and of the mass the crowd forms a procession out of the church on the nearby fields, carrying a cross and singing songs in praise of the Virgin Mary and Christ. A further procession carrying the statues is held before the departure of the priest; and it is concluded with a special blessing. This sequence is replicated in similar terms nowadays in Chiloé on the occasion of patron saint feasts, and certainly for the San Antonio *novena*.

discussed). I was told of someone who suffered from a terrible accident while he was doing a *novena*: his household caught fire and even the saint was badly burnt. People commented that most likely the owner had bad intentions, or had stolen from the goods offered to the saint as a present.

It does not matter that all these goods are collected and enjoyed by the woman who owns the statue: the fact that the faithful give to the saint, (again as thanks for something they have received from him, or to accompany a request, or simply as an act of generosity) is what really matters. This is positively striking: it proves the point that the saint is treated like a person - to the point that he is given presents that would benefit a human being, rather than a saint: money to spend, and resources to consume. The saint's owner - who to my eyes seemed to be profiting from the situation - is legitimised by Apiao people by her position as owner. She breaks the chain of reciprocity because she is the final recipient of the goods, but she is out of the reciprocity circle⁸⁸.

No one ever questions the final destination of that money or of the offers; once people offer what they previously promised, they feel the unbalance has been evened out, and the equilibrium is restored. Also, people offer the gifts to the saint as if they were giving them to a much-remembered relative or friend. It is the Apiao way of keeping a relationship active and alive: active memory, *acordarse de uno*, in this case, remembering what the saint did for oneself, and what he may still do in the future, if or when asked.

Conclusion

The San Antonio *novena* is a complex event and I am aware that describing and analysing it in detail would require far more than a chapter of a thesis. However, I hope I was able to convey a general idea of what the cult involves for Apiao people.

It must be stressed that this celebration has no control from the church, nor is any official church staff involved at all. Apiao people are fairly independent, (as well as fairly geographically isolated) and celebrate their own cult with a strong devotion and

⁸⁸ The woman covers the role of the priest in the church, wherever standard *novenas* are celebrated. However, since she is not part of the clergy she is not invested of an official role and there is no power play in action.

faith, without the need for the mediation of a priest, who visits the island only once a year, when he travels to the island on the day of its patron saint to celebrate mass.

The *novena* is a ritual that involves a set of crucial beliefs on the natural, the supernatural, the social and the relational of each Apiao inhabitant's lived world. In the *novena* each element that makes up everyday life is repeated and magnified in a religious framework, with a display of fixed formulas, offers, emotional outbursts and an enormous faith in a tiny statue of a powerful saint. The official text, with its difficult words, is an authoritative tool to render official something that is incredibly familiar and completely homemade. That text, whose words hardly make sense to those who listen to them being read each night, are the unfamiliarisation of the familiar, the distancing of a close, affective connection to the powerful, supernatural other, that is otherwise perfectly inserted in Apiao social world, just like any other person with which Apiao people happen to interact, negotiate, and exchange.

The structural elements that compose the *novena* are regularly experienced by Apiao people in everyday contexts, and yet in the *novena* they assume a distinctively sacred emphasis. The duty to fulfil an obligation, '*el deber de cumplir con un compromiso*', or to respect an agreement, is a crucial element in the relationships between fellow islanders, and it assumes a supreme importance whenever dealing with the saint. Given that balanced, reciprocal exchange is what articulates people's sociality - and this is often reiterated in every day life, in its most basic aspects - it is interesting to notice that this same 'code of conduct' is valid in the interaction with the saint. The saint, despite belonging to the supernatural realm is treated as an individual, like a fellow human being: people entertain a social relation with him. They ask, they negotiate, they offer in return, they pay their debt. Once received what had been asked for, it must be paid back just as it had been previously promised. Like neighbours, friends and relatives are expected to reciprocate, pay back and return whatever was previously offered to them (be it work, food, alcoholic drink, tools, or help in different situations) in the correct amount, reproducing exactly what was previously taken, the faithful are expected to return to the saint what they had committed themselves to give him. That is a duty that one must fulfil, because that is the main principle of society. In their attitudes to the saint, Apiao people reproduce a social relation, replicating the pattern of the relations they entertain with their fellow islanders.

A double thread of reciprocal exchange is acted out: towards the powerful, miraculous saint, and towards the fellow inhabitants who are hosting the celebrations. In participating in the cult, people have the chance to activate ties of mutual solidarity with fellow islanders. The *novena* is the quintessential hospitality: the host offers food and drink, in the name of the saint, to the community who joined the prayers in a generous act which is an affirmation not only of solidarity, but of equality and sameness.

Conclusion

Rebalancing unbalance

In this thesis I have tried to illustrate the world of the inhabitants of the island of Apiao as experienced in its everyday occurrences and situations. Sharing time, space, events and emotions gave me a chance to get a glimpse of Apiao people's own categories that I have tried to render analytical. A few main themes recur in the ethnography; they are the pillars of Apiao lived world and present, in a nutshell, the values that make 'proper' people. These same values are the tools that inform social interaction and perpetuate connections.

When Apiao people say 'here we are all the same' they are stating what their world is like. The Apiao social world is made of alike people that understand the same communication codes and share the same etiquette. To be amongst fellow Apiao people is easy and plain, or at least not particularly challenging, and it is safe. Egalitarianism, a characteristic feature of Amerindian societies, allows for negotiation between people, encourages reciprocal exchange, and protects individuals' autonomy. As Overing often pointed out in her work, personal autonomy and the existence of a community are strictly interdependent. In Apiao, just like among the Piaroa, the sense of community is based and predicated upon structures of equality. In such a community 'the social is viewed as the means through which people can actively prevent the establishment of relations of dominance' (Overing 1989: 160). Similarly, in Whalsay (Shetland) 'social relations are characterised by a public ethic of egalitarianism which, even though it may only mask inequalities, results in the democratic conduct of life in public and restraint from anything which looks like assertive or superior behaviour' (Cohen 1987: 35). In fact Cohen speaks of egalitarian conduct as normative (1987: 60), to carefully avoid conflict in a small and insular community.

The egalitarianism discussed by both Overing and Cohen, undeniably present in Apiao, is strengthened by a strong sense of sameness, an accentuated lack of

differentiation. Both sameness, and lack of differentiation are constantly stated, verbally and non-verbally, by Apiao people, through their highly formalised behaviour, their fixed formulas, and their consistent set of sequences when socialising.

In Apiao people constantly negotiate relationships, moulding them and reshaping them each time there is an encounter. Relations are tested regularly: people ask favours of each other, goods flow from one side and then gracefully flow back. Interaction might be positive as well as conflictual; sometimes people have arguments and temporarily interrupt any communication. Later some sort of reconciliation takes place, hurtful matters are forgotten and social ties are recreated again. I choose the term ‘negotiation’ because it conveys the dynamism that I regularly observed in Apiao social relations, and that have been described in detail in the thesis chapters. By no means do I mean to state that ‘negotiation’ is what summarises the idea of ‘society’, and I am aware of the dangers of essentialising inherent in the use of such a concept, as Barth (1992: 27) has forcefully pointed out. My reflection here does not concentrate on a ‘degree of conflict of interests within a framework of shared understanding’, but rather views negotiation as dialectic exploration: the *possibility* to ask and the chance to receive a positive or a negative answer; the *possibility* of getting help or not, and so on. Alliances are continuously formed and broken, every day with the same and with different people, and with the same people on different levels at the same time. New agreements are made each day over different matters, then they are solved or broken and the next time new ones will substitute the old ones. This openness to chance is possible only among people that are all equal, that are all the same. This is because they are all interested in the same social ethics, and they share a communicative code: they know the meaning behind a phrase, a facial expression, an attitude. What goes without saying for people who belong to the same place.

Reciprocal, balanced exchange is what communication is about in Apiao. Through visiting, the most important social act, goods (food and drink) are offered and received. By offering and receiving, or by asking for something, the balance is temporarily interrupted and people enter a position of debt on the one hand, and of being owed on the other. This momentary shift in the equilibrium, the break in the

balance, is in fact what reaffirms sameness and what perpetuates social relations. By creating unbalance they reconstitute the possibility of sameness again and again.

This crucial feature of Apiao social life is replicated in the relationship people entertain with the powerful, supernatural others: the dead and the saints, and specifically the miraculous San Antonio de Padua. The divine is treated as equal and each person has a chance to negotiate a relation with the supernatural other through asking, receiving and offering back.

The *novena* for the dead and the *novena* to the saint are a concentrated display and expression of Apiao values in a dramatic and ritualised context. In the *novenas* the obligation of offering and receiving, of reciprocating, of formally addressing one's interlocutor, of paying back debts, of honouring a pact to rebalance unbalance are displayed and presented at their most elevated, sacred expression. A complete and correct performance is a crucial condition for the debt to be repaid, and for every unbalance to be resolved.

The sacredness and rituality of the event are validated and endorsed by the substantial presence of fellow islanders to the ritual. The value of solidarity, another powerful statement of sameness, allows closure in the circle of exchange. Human-human and human-divine are brought together and ritually played out in this vast display of the Apiao way of experiencing life.

Appendix

NOVENA A SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA⁸⁹

ACTO DE CONTRICIÓN

Señor mío Jesucristo dios y hombre verdadero creador y redentor mío,
por ser vos quien soy, porque os amo sobre todas las cosas, me pesa de todo corazón,
de haberos ofendido y propongo firmemente la enmienda esperando, en nuestra
infinita misericordia, que me habéis de perdonar y salvar AMEN.

DIA PRIMERO

HUYE LA MUERTE

Esta excelencia tuvo San Antonio en alto grado, pues fue nuncio y embajador
Como predicador admirable de Dios, enviados por su majestad a los hombres para
sacarlos de lo vicios y pecados librándolos a muchos de la muerte, eterna y temporal,
dirigiéndolos y enseñándoles el camino de la salvación, en tantos que fue la
admiración del mundo, púes a sus sermones a veces acudían 30 mil personas. Y dio el
señor tal virtud a su voz, que se le oía predicar a varias lenguas de distancias.

⁸⁹ This text is copied from the old booklet owned by one of the *fiscales*. It contains the text of the San Antonio *novena* that is read every night for nine consecutive nights, with each day having its corresponding section. The mistakes found in the original Spanish have been left as they are.

Fueron innumerables los pecadores que convirtió y muchos los obstinadísimos, a muchas almas piadosas dirigió por el camino de la perfección, para que no se extraviese, son también muchos los que resucito a la vida temporal, y los que libero de una muerte segura.

EJEMPLO

Una hermana de San Antonio tenía un hijo llamado Aparicio, siendo este niño de una edad de cinco años. Fue con otros a divertirse a un barco en el mar. Volcando el barco se salvaron todos menos el sobrino de San Antonio, que apareció ahogado después de tres horas.

Tal era el cariño que su madre profesaba, que no consistió que lo enterrasen: y cuando ya se empezaba a sentir lo efectos de la corrupción acudió fervorosa con muchas lagrimas a su santo hermano pidiéndole que le resucitasen al hijo, prometiéndole consagrarlo a Dios en religión SERÁFICA, al poco tiempo en presencia de una gran multitud, resucitó el niño que después vistió el hábito de San Francisco, vivió y murió santamente en su religión.

Da gracias al altísimo por lo mucho, que ha honrado, este glorioso Santo y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones.

ORACIONES

Dios y señor, de los ángeles que adornasteis, el alma, del bien aventurado San Antonio de angélica pureza haciéndoles vuestro embajador y predicador admirable,

para beneficio de los hombres, a muchos de los cuales libró, de la muerte eterna y temporal, con su doctrina y ejemplo; yo os doy rendida

Gracias por las grandes excelencias, con que enriquecisteis, a este glorioso Santo haciéndoles, semejantes, aquellos soberanos espíritus; y os suplico por su intercesión, que adornéis mi alma, con celestial pureza, me libréis, de la muerte eterna y me concedáis lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena, y si es para mayor honra, gloria y provecho de mi alma.

(Aquí se hace la petición, luego se rezará un padre nuestro, ave María en gloria al padre y los gozos siguientes.)

GOZOS

Púes vuestros santos favores dan de quien sois testimonio,

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO RUEGA POR LOS PECADORES .

Vuestra palabra divina forzó a los peces del mar que saliesen a escuchar vuestro sermón y doctrina, y, pues fue tan peregrina que extirpo 10 mil errores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO RUEGA POR LOS PECADORES .

Vos sois de la tempestad al amparo milagroso de incendio riguroso agua de la claridad, puerto de seguridad, del mar y de sus rigores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO RUEGA POR LOS PECADORES .

Sonáis mudos y tullidos, paralíticos leprosos, endemoniados leprosos, endemoniados furiosos restituís los sentidos volvéis los bienes perdidos curáis todos los dolores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

Sonáis de gota coral ciegos contra hechos llagados consoláis desconsolados y curáis de cualquier mal, cual médico celestial a quien Dios hace favores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

Ya de tres días ahogados resucitasteis a 10 niños y dos de ellos como harmaninos [sic] de sucesos desastrados, sus padres atribulados lloraban por sus amores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

De una que ya no creía, que perdón de Dios tomaba voz sobre la pena que merecía , y al tomarla el mismo día hizo le Dios mil favores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

Vos libráis a cualquier reo de los grillos y cadena y el que los clama se enajena del pecado sucio y feo, púes que sois divino Orfeo de Jesús flor de las flores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

A la que con santo celo y fervorosa oración, el fruto de bendición os pide para consuelo le dais este don del cielo y aun otras cosas mayores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

Sois de Jesús tan amado que a solas con el jugáis, haciéndolos porque lo amáis su profeta regalado su celador estimado y luz de sus confesores.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO.....

Y pues vuestros santos favores dan de quien sois testimonio.

HUMILDE Y EXCELSO ANTONIO RUEGA POR LOS PECADORES .

ORACIÓN PARA TODOS LOS DÍAS DE LA NOVENA

Oh glorioso San Antonio! Gloria y feliz, depósito de Padua, a quien, la militante iglesia, venera, como a gran valido, de la divina majestad, de quien en su necesidad, consigue, con tu valimiento, tantos favores, tu soberana intercesión, implora, en esta novena, mi devoción, glorificando al divino niño Jesús, quien para que fuese, digno trono suyo, te hizo semejante a los ángeles y pues le tiene, tan de tu mano, que parece, puso en él, ella el despacho de los divinos favores: atiende benignos, a la suplica, que en esta novena, te presento, si no es, contra el servicio de Dios, bien conozco, que no lo merezco, por lo mal que te sirvo y por lo mucho, que ha ese divino niño, ofendo, pero si, a los mayores pecadores, sabes favorecer, con luces de gracias, ilustra mi alma, para conseguirla, con la enmienda, la cual propongo, esperando que tu luz dirija mi voluntad para quien todo haga, lo que sea, del mayor agrado de Dios Amén.

DIA SEGUNDO

El error desterrado

En este día consideraras como los celestiales espíritus del segundo coro, que se llaman arcángeles, son a quien Dios encomienda las obras mas heroicas, graves y de mas importancia para su mayor gloria y bien de los hombres. Esta excelencia se haya en el glorioso San Antonio, púes, con gran celo de la divina gloria y fervor de caridad, emprendió una obra tan heroica y tan de agrado de Dios y bien de las almas, como fue el plantar la fe entres los MAHOMETANOS, acosta [sic] de su sangre, aunque no lo pudo conseguir por haberle reservado Dios para mas de su agrado; y a Ecselino romano, gran tirano y general del emperador FEDERICO, que fue un monstruo cruel. Y el azote de Italia reprendió públicamente sus crueidades, con tan ardiente espíritu que le obligó a que se postrase a sus pies y pidiese perdón de sus maldades. Fueron sin números los errores de que libro a Europa convirtiendo a muchos herejes y entre ellos, algunos de gran significado y muy doctos, no solo con aquel milagro tan sabido de la adoración del santísimo sacramento por un bruto y hambriento de tres días dejó la comida presente por adorarle y de los peces a los cuales predico y le oyeron atentos con grande confusión de los mismos herejes que lo miraban; sino en otras muchas ocasiones.

EJEMPLO

Un hereje luterano, tenía en su cuarto la imagen de San Antonio, colgada con la cabeza para abajo, algunos amigos Católicos le enderezaron con devoción, pero con su incredulidad herética burlándose de San Antonio la volvió a poner cabeza hacia abajo, diciéndoles: “si la imagen se por si misma , os juro que me haré Católico”, dicho esto se fueron todos con él, que cerró muy bien la puerta de su cuarto.

Al volver halló la imagen derecha y pendiente en el aire, sin estar apoyada en parte alguna, se aturdió quedo helado y atónito, pero no cumplió su palabra y para apartar su imaginación de tan claro prodigo que llevaba siempre fijo en su memoria, se dio a caminar por el mundo.

Pasó a Holanda, navego a levante y finalmente llego a Italia, se hizo soldado en el puerto de Ferrara (Toscana), donde no pudiendo resistir mas los remordimientos de conciencia y la gracia que le llamaba por las razones del Obispo de mesa, Pablo Pacci, abjuró sus errores se convirtió al Catolicismo y en el año 1699, a 4 de Junio hizose lego de San Francisco, con el nombre de Fray Antonio Pablo, y murió como buen religioso con edificación de todos.

Da gracias a Dios por las maravillas que ha obrado por medio de este glorioso santo y dile a su majestad las siguientes oraciones.....

ORACIONES

Dios y señor de los arcángeles que honrasteis, a vuestro amado ciervo, San Antonio, con admirables prerrogativas, y la elegisteis para la obra gravísima de vuestra mayor gloria y beneficio de las almas, yo os doy rendidas gracias por las grandes excelencias con que le enrequisisteis [sic] y favorecisteis a semejanza de aquellos soberanos espíritus y os suplico por su intercesión y meritos, apartéis de mi alma los errores que le ofrezcan y hagáis que perfectamente con las obligaciones del estado en que vuestra divina providencia me a colocado, me concedáis lo que especialmente pido en esta novena y si es para mayor gloria y bien de mi alma amén.

DIA TERCERO

“Desaparecen los demonios y la miseria”

En este día considerarás las grandes excelencias con que Dios adorno el tercer coro de los bien aventurados espíritus que se llaman principados, a los cuales revelan los secretos admirables de su providencias para que, como los príncipes y superiores los intimen a los otros ángeles inferiores.

Esta prerrogativa tuvo el glorioso San Antonio en eminente grado, pues el mismo Dios en forma de niño preciosísimo conversaba familiarmente con él, le revelaba muchas cosas ocultas como otro ángel inferior, y el santo lo intimaba a otros hombres, cuando conocía eran para gloria del altísimo y utilidad de su prójimo. Y también les inspiraba lo que debía ejecutar en su servicio, como fue aquel admirable silencio de muchos años, con que encumbró su profunda sabiduría, hasta que conociendo ser voluntad de Dios que no cubriese más aquel celestial tesoro, lo manifestó llegando hacer la admiración del mundo. En el remediar las necesidades y las miserias de sus devotos, son innumerables los ejemplos que se pudieron traer y cada cual podrá hablar según lo hubiere experimentado.

EJEMPLO

Muy célebre es el caso de un paduano que, deseando saber algunas cosas ocultas, recorrió a un infame hechicero condujole hasta un campo y haciendo un círculo, lo metió en él pronunció entre dientes varias palabras dichas las cuales se aparecieron muchos terribles monstruos, preguntando al pobre hombre que era lo que quería.

Atemorizado y en el interior de su corazón verdaderamente arrepentido de haber buscado para su intento medio, tan limpio, respondió que nada deseaba. Entonces los monstruos le sacaron los ojos y la lengua, desaparecieron dejándolos caídos en la tierra encontrándolo el día siguiente y lo condujeron al altar de San Antonio, cuando allí estaban movidos a compasión de verles en tan infeliz estado rogaban por el que con lágrimas de corazón contrito y confiado se encomendaban al Santo.

Mandaron a decir una misa en su altar y al preferir las últimas palabras del prefacio; “benedictus que venit”, etc., fueron restituído al paciente sus ojos sanos con mucha alegría de los circunstante.

Informado el celebrante del milagro y de lo que faltaba para hacerlo pidiendo todo con gran fervor al Taumaturgo, prosiguió la misa y al preferir las palabras: “Agnus dei que tollis” etc., recobró el paciente la lengua.

De gracias a Dios por estos singulares privilegios que concedió a San Antonio y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones.

ORACIÓN

Dios y señor de los principados que revelasteis a San Antonio el tesoro de vuestra sabiduría para que fue luz del mundo ilustrado y llevando a muchos por el camino recto de la vida eterna librando a sus devotos de muchas miserias y calamidades espirituales y temporales yo os suplico rendidamente por los meritos de este glorioso santo. Ilustréis mi entendimiento con vuestra celestial luz, encendáis mi voluntad en vuestro divino amor y me libréis de las asechanzas del demonio para que no caiga en pecado que es la mayor miseria porque impide mi salvación y si es para vuestra mayor gloria y bien de mi alma lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena. Amén.
(lo demás como el primer día pagina 8 a 11).

DIA CUARTO

Sanan los leprosos y los enfermos cobran salud.

En este día considerarás las admirables excelencias con que Dios adorno el cuarto coro de los celestiales espíritus que se llaman potestades, los cuales resplandecen de poder y también tiene especial Imperio sobre los demonios. A semejanza de estos soberanos espíritus , enriqueció Dios al glorioso San Antonio, dándole un poder grande y una cierta superioridad sobre muchos príncipes y grandes señores a quien predicaba, instruía y convertía rindiéndolos con suave violencia a su obediencia y voluntad. Extendióse este poder a los enfermos sanando a muchos leprosos y toda clase de dolencia. El imperio que tuvo y tiene sobre los demonios, es admirable. En una ocasión obligó al demonio a que sacase de las cavernas infernales a un condenado llamado Juan de Moreno, haciéndole firmar un papel para abono de una deuda considerable, que cargaba injustamente a un devoto suyo, que se valió de su patrocinio en esta tribulación.

EJEMPLO

Oyendo un pobre leproso las maravillas que hacia San Antonio en favor de sus devotos, fue a postrarse ante su sepulcro en Padua. Encontró en la calle un soldado Hereje, el cual burlándose de los milagros del santo le dijo: Adonde vas puerco? Crees a las cenizas y huesos de este fraile con capacidad de oír tus suplicas? Dile que me envíes a mí tu lepra, si puede, que yo no tengo miedo a los muertos. No hizo caso el leproso de las heréticas blasfemias del soldado, si no, que lleno de confianza en el santo, llegando a la iglesia se postró ante su tumba invocando su patrocinio. Durmióse San Antonio y ahí dulcemente en el sueño se le apareció le dijo; levántate que estas sano pero lleva tus muletas a aquel soldado, por que esta lleno de lepra.

Levantóse y se encontró perfectamente sano, busco al soldado a quien halló cubierto de lepras y muy afligido presentándole las muletas le dijo, "Me mandas el Santo que se las traiga púes a mi me a curado."

Fácilmente conoció el infeliz soldado que lo que le sucedía era castigo de su atrevimiento en injuriar a tan Gran Santo. Y haciendo a las eficaces exhortaciones de su interlocutor se fue a postrar ante el sepulcro milagroso y hizo votos de mudar de vida, pidió al Santo que lo curase y quedo también sano.

Da gracias a Dios por estos singulares privilegio que concedió a San Antonio y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones.

ORACIÓN

Dios y Señor de las potestades que liberalmente comunicasteis al glorioso San Antonio tan grande imperio y eficacia en los corazones humanos para atraerlos y rendirlos a vuestra obediencia y voluntad, un poder y gracias universales para curar de innumerables enfermedades a muchos devotos suyos en imperar a los espíritus infernales que a su pesar le obedecen; os doy rendidas gracias por estos favores tan singulares que le hicisteis y os pido por sus meritos, me concedáis perfecta salud de alma y de cuerpo para emplearla en vuestro santo servicio y resista con fortaleza las

asechanzas del demonio, para que no se sujete al imperio por la culpa y si es para vuestra mayor gloria. Lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena amén.

(lo demás como el primer día pag 8-11).

DIA QUINTO

El mar obedece y son libres los encarcelados.

En este día consideraras la especial prerrogativa con que Dios adorno el quinto coro de los celestiales espíritus que se llaman virtudes por lo cual hacen estupendo milagro en beneficio de los hombres.

Y esta excelencia concedió su majestad a nuestro milagroso San Antonio, en tan inminente grado que son sin números los que a obrado y obra cada día en la tierra y en el mar siendo aclamado en todo el mundo el

“SANTO DE LOS MILAGROS”.

EJEMPLO

Dirigíase desde Calabria a Nápoles un navío cargado de seda, al pasar por Sicilia, se levanto una tempestad tan grande que no bastaban el arte y la fuerza de los marineros a gobernarlos, por lo que, sin velas ni timón caminaban a dirección de las olas.

Perdida la esperanza se daban todos por muertos, cuando de improviso dijo uno, confiado vivamente en San Antonio “Tomad Vos Oh Santo” el cuidado del navío que a vos lo confiamos todos, los compañeros, repetían lo mismo y rezaron el responorio, luego se dejó ver el santo en la popa y con semblante alegre les dijo “Dejad andar la

nave por si misma que va bien" y desapareció. Cesó la tempestad y con viento favorable arribaron a puerto deseado.

Alaba al altísimo por tan estupendos milagros, como a obrado por este prodigioso Santo y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones

ORACIÓN

Dios y señor de las virtudes que tan liberalmente comunicasteis al glorioso San Antonio de Padua, poderosa virtud en la tierra y en el mar para obrar, estupendos prodigios y milagros en beneficio de sus devotos que te invocan , yo os doy sinceras gracias por esta liberal misericordia y os pido por sus meritos e intercesión que en el mar tempestuoso en este mundo sea yo dirigido con la luz de vuestra divina inspiración y así me libre de caer en el profundo abismo del infierno.

Y si es para vuestra mayor gloria, concededme lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena amén.

DIA SEXTO

Los ancianos y los jóvenes recobran miembros y cosas perdidas.

En este día consideraras las excelencias con que Dios adorno los celestiales espíritus que se les llaman dominaciones los cuales con excuso modo presiden a las cosas inferiores en el orden de la naturaleza y de la gracia. La cual excelencia comunicó a San Antonio en tanto grado que había conocido a San Francisco el don de su celestial y profunda doctrina, que la nombró lector de teología en su religión, para que presidiese y enseñad en los actos literarios y en las prevacías que tuvo siendo un vivo retrato de su seráfico padre, imán de los corazones de sus súbditos a quienes guiaba con ejemplos y palabras a las mas puras observacioncias [sic] de la vida religiosa de lo que fue celador de ferventísimo. Dominaba sobre los efectos de todos y además

sobre sus propias personas y caudales restituyéndoles lo que con gran dolor habían perdido.

EJEMPLO

Hallándose en Nápoles cierto babero solo, violo un amigo suyo que se vengó de él dándole 20 puñaladas y huyó dejándolo tendido y bañado en sangre. Su pobre esposa con gran ánimo encomendó al moribundo a San Antonio y con un papel que contenía el responsorio e hizo con gran fe la señal de la cruz en una de las heridas, la cual el punto se sano y se cerro. Animada con tan evidente milagro repitió sucesivamente en todas las heridas la señal de la cruz y todas sanaron a vista de un gran conjunto de gente, el moribundo levanto sano y bueno como estaba antes y se fue enseguida a dar gracias al Santo Taumaturgo San Antonio.

Alaba al altísimo por tan raras maravillas como obra de este glorioso Santo y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones .

ORACIONES

Dios y señor de las dominaciones a cuyo poder esta sujeto toda criatura que sublimasteis y adornasteis a vuestro amado siervo San Antonio con tal admirable sabiduría que fue luz imperiosa para muchos príncipes y prelados, instruyéndoles en el camino de la vida eterna y sujetándolos en su voluntad y le concedisteis el singular privilegio de hallar las cosas perdidas. Os doy rendidas gracias por lo mucho que favorecisteis a este glorioso Santo y os pido por su intercesión concedáis a mi alma luz celestial y eficacia para que domine y refrene mis apetitos desordenados, para seguir nuestra divina inspiración y que no pierda la joya preciosísima de vuestra mayor gloria concédeme lo que os pido en esta novena Amén.

DIA SÉPTIMO

Los peligros se deshacen

En este día consideraras las admirables excelencias con que Dios adorno el séptimo coro de los espíritus celestiales que se llaman tronos porque en ellos descansan como en su real silla, las reverencias contemplan sobre si, con suma humildad y rendimiento.

Es excelencia se vio en nuestro glorioso Santo como admirable propiedad, que el mismo Dios que en figura de niño hermosísimo familiarmente se regalaba con él, haciendo trono de sus brazos y pecho enamorado y él le recibía con profundísima humildad y le abrasaba con la gracia a donde acuden sus votos, logrando a innumerables beneficios de su divina liberalidad e intercesión de nuestro Santo.

EJEMPLO

El reverendo Padre, ex-ministro general de los Franciscanos, Fr. Luis de Parma, se confiesa deudor de la vida de San Antonio que lo libro de una muerta segura el 24 de Agosto de 1892. Después de haber pasado 3 meses en tierra Santa, practicando la Santa visita, regresaba a la estación de Jaffa, carroza del Baj Turco ya acompañado de una muchedumbre, innumerables

Cristianos, judíos y mahometanos a la afueras de Jerusalén, torcieron los caballos al camino y dejaron caer el coche por un precipicio lleno de rocas y de 12 metros de profundidad. Todos pudieron salirse del carroaje a tiempo, excepto el reverendísimo padre general y el padre vicario custodial, que cayeron con el coche y los caballos, todos los concurrentes pensaron que habían muerto los padres, pero quedaron sorprendidos cuando al poco tiempo los vieron salir del precipicio con solo algunas

ligeras lesiones, gracias a la protección de San Antonio invocado fervorosamente por los padres.

Admírate de la infinita caridad de Dios, que tan singulares hizo este siervo suyo y en gran confianza que pues el dulcísimo José se muestra familiar con San Antonio, el librara por su intercesión de los peligros del alma y cuerpo que te afligen en esta vida, y da gracias a Dios con la siguiente oración.

ORACIÓN

Dios y Señor de los tronos que elegisteis tantas veces el enamorado pecho y brazos del devotísimo San Antonio para trono de nuestra gracia y lugar de vuestra delicia que con la fragancia de vuestras celestiales virtudes lograba y le honrasteis con singulares privilegios en beneficio de sus devotos para liberarlos de innumerables peligros de cuerpo y alma.

Yo os doy gracias por tan grande benignidad y misericordia y os pido por el amor que tenéis a este fidelísimo siervo me concedáis tal pureza de alma y cuerpo, que sea digna morada vuestra cuando os reciba en el santísimo sacramento del altar y con este escudo me vea libre de todos los peligros que se me ofrecieron en esta miserable vida y si es para vuestra mayor honra y gloria lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena Amén.

DIA OCTAVO

La Necesidad Remediada

En este día consideraras excelencias de que Dios adorno el octavo coro de los espíritus celestiales que se llaman querubines, que quiere decir, plenitud de ciencia porque sobre todos los demás se ocupan en el conocimiento de la divina majestad y de sus perfecciones.

En esta soberana excelencia es singularísimo San Antonio pues que tal sabiduría y conocimiento de Dios y sus misterios y sagradas escrituras que el papa Gregorio LX le llamó “Arca de Testamento”. De este conocimiento de ser divino nacía en el aquella reverencia con que le adoraba y alababa como si se le viese con los ojos corporales, procurando que otros lo conociesen adorasen y alabasen, y para manifestar Dios esto los hombres quiso que su lenguas se conservasen hasta hoy fresca y sin corrupción. También le concedió como premio de aquel conocimiento altísimo de Dios se derivase el conocimientos de los hombres se estado y necesidad que tantas veces remedio.

EJEMPLO

Viéndose una señora en suma pobreza para remediarla intentó la perdición de su hija no menos honesta procurando varias veces inducirlas en vano se entregase al pecado pero siempre en vano, pues la joven avergonzada llorosa y con gran constancia de animo le respondía ser ignominioso aquel partido para toda mujer honrada.

Pero persistiendo la madre en su inicuo propósito recurrió la hija a San Antonio pidiéndole, postrada ante su altar la defendiera y la socorriese, luego lo consiguió, pues extendiendo la estatua del Santo, la mano le dio una letra de cambio, diciendo al mercader a quien estaba dirigida.

El billete decía así, “A la doncella que te presente esta carta mía le darás de dote tanta cantidad de plata buena, cuanto pese este billete, Dios te guarde – Fr Antonio”. Fue la joven al mercader el cual dijo: “Tan poco dote quiere tu amante para casarse con tigo? O está muy ciego de la pasión, o es tan pobre como tu, si con tan poco se contenta? Y o la verdad no te creo pero no obstante quiero por esta vez dejarme engañar en honor de aquel gran Santo, cuyo nombre has fingido”. Dicho esto puso en un platillo de la balanza el billete y en otras unas pocas monedas de palta las que no contrabalearon [sic] añadió otras que tampoco bastaban, admirado el mercader del peso de aquel peso papel miraba a la modestísima doncella sin saber que pensar. Finalmente fue añadiendo monedas sin poder equilibrar el billete hasta que llegó a 400 escudos, viendo esto él y reconociendo en el prodigo un milagro de San Antonio le dio con mucho gusto y con mas gusto retuvo consigo el prodigioso billete.

Alaba el altísimo por la misericordia que dispensan por medio de este glorioso Santo y di a su majestad las siguientes oraciones.

ORACIÓN

Dios y señor de los querubines que adornasteis el alma del bien aventurado San Antonio celestial y santísima sabiduría para que os contemplasen y enseñasen a otros las ciencias importantísimas de los Santos.

Yo os adora con profunda humildad y reverencia y os confieso por mi Dios y Señor infinitamente bueno poderoso y sabio dando os infinitas gracias por este singular favor que le concedisteis, y os pido por sus meritos ilustres mi alma con vuestra celestial luz para que os conozca a me y cumpla con toda vuestra santísima voluntad y que en los rasgos de esta vida y en la ultima y gravísima necesidad de la hora de la muerte me socorra con su intercesión y vos Dios mío asistidme con vuestro auxilio por el amor que tenéis a vuestro fielísimo San Antonio y si es para vuestra mayor honra y gloria, concededme lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena Amén.

DIA NOVENO

En este día la suprema excelencia con que Dios enriqueció el noveno y supremo coro de los celestiales espíritus que se llaman serafines, que son lo mas inmediato a su majestad y por esto, participar mas que todo de aquel infinito fuego de amor por esencia, y es tanto nuestro glorioso serafín San Antonio, no solo inmediato al trono de Dios como los que vio Isaías, mas sirviendo aunque menor de otro elevado y excelso trono en mediación tan extraña y cariñosa, Que llamas que incendios y volcanes no participaría del divino pecho? Este sin duda fue su mayor excelencia y como la caridad es la mas excelente de todas las virtudes, con ella y por ella gano tantos privilegios de la liberalidad y caridad divina para consuelo y beneficio de sus devotos

que son testigos a innumerables socorridos y especialmente los paduanos a quienes el Santo siempre tener especial efecto.

Y esta ciudad de Padua, sobre todas las del mundo sea esmerado es la reverencia devoción y culto a San Antonio, eligiéndole por su patrono, elevándoles diversos templos, una hermosa capilla tan rica y adorable que es una de las mayores maravillas de Europa y en ella han colocado su sagrado cuerpo. Y el Santo se muestra tan agradecido de sus moradores que son muchísimos los prodigios que en beneficios suyos a obrado.

Un sacerdote de Padua muy devoto de San Antonio tenia algunos enemigos que para matarles se había escondido en un sitio donde el debía de pasar. Llego allí un fraile y se paro sobre ellos con esperanza que se fuese de allí. “vosotros les respondió el padre, si que debéis iros, adelante que yo quiero quedarme aquí” bien ellos que estaban quieto le preguntaron con palabras furiosas quien era.

Y les respondió sois el santo de Padua y protejo al clérigo a quien vosotros queréis matar, temblando por la inesperada respuesta se prestaron a sus pies y a este tiempo pasaba el sacerdote, cuando vio que se arrodillaban sus amigos enemigos, le cuentan el caso, le pidieron perdón y se reconciliaron con el. Y los mismos publicaron el hecho por la ciudad para mayor gloria del Santo.

Da gracias a Dios por la infaltable misericordia que obra por San Antonio y di a su majestad y di las siguientes oraciones.

ORACIONES

Dios y señor de los serafines que enriquecisteis el corazón del devoto San Antonio, de tan ardiente amor vuestro que a manera de serafín se atrasaba en vuestra paciencia,

presencia, en unión estrechísima y por esto le elegisteis tantas veces para tener en pecho un nuevo cielo vuestras delicias y regalos. Yo os doy infinitas gracias por esta dignación tan grande de vuestra inmensa caridad y por ello os pido encendáis mi alma en el fuego de vuestro divino amor para que siempre en esta vida y después los acompañe en compañía de los coros angélicos y del glorioso San Antonio.

Vuestro fidelísimo siervo y así pueda siempre alabar y engrandecer nuestra misericordia y confesar que sois admirable en vuestro Santo y es para vuestra mayor honra y gloria concededme lo que especialmente os pido en esta novena.

AMEN

Aquí se despide y se medita

F I N

Stepping between different worlds: reflections before, during and after fieldwork⁹⁰

When I was about to leave for my fieldwork, I remember a strange conversation one of my supervisors was having, somewhat jokingly, with another person in the school lift. He was saying: 'We anthropologists are truly different, we are the only ones who send our students out and we don't even know if they will ever come back!' I remember that I stared at him puzzled, but he disappeared, leaving me to wonder about the empty spaces that were awaiting me-and at that time I felt more at ease within the small, familiar space of the lift. My feeling of being lost was heightened further by the fact that no anthropologist had previously carried out fieldwork in the area I was planning to study. This meant that there was neither any generic nor specific information available, and consequently there existed no reassuring survival strategies I could rely on. I only had the various fieldwork anecdotes I had heard from fellow students and teachers to go by.

In this paper I explore some of the contradictions of fieldwork, as I experienced them before, during and after my time as a fieldworker in southern Chile. Does fieldwork make any sense at all? Are we working and going through extremes of pain and joy for the sake of research, or merely to fulfill our egos (cf. Barley 1983)? And what about the people we study? Will they ever benefit from our engagement with them? Lastly, how do we cope with ourselves in the fieldwork situation, not only as human beings, but also as anthropologists, given that we will find ourselves emotionally involved to a degree that can be overwhelming?

In considering these issues, I follow Dwyer, who argued that it is fundamental, in ethnographic writing, to 'confront rather than disguise the vulnerability of the Self and its society in the encounter with the Other' (1982: xxii).

Before

We know that fieldwork is a rite de passage that awaits every trainee anthropologist, the essential stage to pass through in order to join the ranks of those who have already experienced 'the real thing'. As a student I used to listen, with admiration and envy, to the fascinating stories of teachers and fellow students who had just returned from the

⁹⁰ This paper has been published in Anthropology Matters Journal 2004, Vol 6 (2).

field. 'I used to live in a place about five hours away by motorbike from the first village', a friend told me. 'And how did you manage?' I asked, horrified. 'I bought myself a motorbike!' she replied, smiling. Some fellow post-graduates came back plump and fat, others had lost weight, sometimes up to ten kilos. Some had learned really complicated languages; others had to rely on a field assistant in order to communicate. Some had learned hunting and fishing techniques while others had been scuba diving or had learned how to weave baskets.

I was fascinated by the stories of academics who would temporarily abandon their familiar environment, their comfortable homes, and their families to go off into the middle of the jungle, hours and hours away from healthcare, and willingly expose themselves to diverse dangers for the sake of research. I was struck by the ease and the naturalness with which they seemed to switch between two different realities. I remember I had lots of questions to ask those I considered the privileged ones, who appeared so heroic to me. I wanted to know about the practical details, as well as more serious matters such as the profound problems of communication between the European student and the people they met during fieldwork. What about the clash of cultural values and attitudes? How can you possibly manage, if you can hardly speak the language and no one tells you what you should and should not do?

Then I went on a short preliminary field trip, to check, rather presumptuously, if this landscape and these people were suitable for me and my research. When I was there I was very active: I observed attentively, I asked direct questions and I tried to engage people in conversation on what I assumed to be crucial topics. Later I realized that I made several mistakes-and now that I know much more about my field hosts I realise how insensitive and intrusive I had been. In these situations one becomes starkly aware of the differences between 'us' and 'them'. In the field we are driven by the urge to gather data, to collect 'cultural facts' to feel that we have accomplished something, to feel productive. We are tremendously aware of the passing of time, and each minute we spend in the field must lead on to something. I remember my apprehension at the prospect of spending hour after hour sitting behind a stove, in the company of silent people, for 18 long months, and feeling frustrated at not being able to gather useful, clear and straightforward information. My line of reasoning was: 'I am a student, I am here for research, and I need to make the best of the time I am going to spend here'. This is a line of reasoning that is possibly familiar to many first-time

fieldworkers.

With the 'package of information' I had gathered during my short pre-fieldwork trip, and with a rough idea of what I wanted to research I proceeded to write my research proposal, which had to be original, informed by a pertinent theory, academically feasible, and practically do-able. A difficult challenge, for we have to imagine situations that we do not really know, and question other anthropologists' theories and their relevance to our fieldsite. We are required to pretend that we know a lot, while in fact the very opposite is true-and, incidentally, this is the reason behind wanting to do fieldwork!

When the long awaited moment came, the practicalities of packing whatever was necessary for a two-year trip somehow distracted me from the crazy adventure on which I was about to embark. It was only when I was already on the plane, flying across the Atlantic ocean, that reality suddenly hit me and I realized-almost panicking-that there I was, heading towards the unknown.

During

After so much fantasizing about what my life would be like in a different and unknown country, I finally arrived in Santiago de Chile. It was late November, in the middle of the summer, 35 degrees, and the parents of a Chilean friend were waiting for me at the airport. My hosts were talking to me in such a warm and caring manner that I felt immediately connected and welcome. The familiarity with which I was treated and the warmth of their hospitality made my arrival incredibly pleasant. I felt loved, appreciated and admired for the sole reason of being there, away from my family and about to start an adventure that seemed daunting even to my hosts.

After having become familiar with the language and feeling reasonably at ease with the fact of being in Chile, I had to move towards the country's periphery, more than a thousand kilometres from the capital, and find a fieldsite. Given that I had no contact in that area at all, I had to find someone who could provide useful suggestions about a place to stay for my research. After a long and boring series of adventures, I finally settled on a small island with 700 inhabitants, three to four hours away from a small town.

The fact that I was living on an island somehow intensified the sense of separation and isolation from my previous world. There was no electricity, no phone, no

computers and obviously no email, and a boat left the island only twice a week-weather permitting. There was absolutely nothing to do, or so it seemed at the time. It was extremely boring. A social life, such as I expected, was non-existent: there were no places for people to meet and socialize; no restaurants or bars, no markets or shops; no public square for people to convene in. Even the church was permanently closed for lack of a priest. To add to the sense of desolation I felt, the weather was terrible. It rained constantly and heavily, while chilly Cordillera winds blew. It was July: just an ordinary winter in southern Chile.

Since there were very few 'public' situations to observe, I concentrated on the 'domestic'. After all, with the torrential rain, people tended to spend most of their time in the house, more specifically in the only heated room: the kitchen. In an attempt to become familiar with my hosts I engaged in conversations, demonstrating my willingness to let to know them as well as showing them something about myself. I knew that I was a real mystery to them. During the boat trip to the island, people had made a point of staring at me defiantly for the entire journey; yet, no one had said a word to me. I understood my presence could be perceived as threatening. In order to overcome what I felt was an unpleasant sense of difference lurking between us, I decided to demonstrate my harmlessness to the people on the island. I did this by talking a lot, and by sitting close to women-in an attempt to show them my willingness to share my time and to prove I was trustworthy. Unfortunately my attitude provoked very embarrassed reactions: people felt I had invaded their privacy and consequently were even more taciturn than usual, and my attempt at conversation was often met with yawning. Later I learnt that physical proximity does not imply emotional closeness, just as physical distance is not a sign of emotional distance.

Little by little I made some friends and I was welcomed in a warmer way whenever I went visiting. Most of the times I was offered food and drink. Some of the women started to accept me and began talking to me. Then, the same women who had been so friendly and warm when I came to visit, would ignore me on a public path, or in religious meetings-for no apparent reason-if they were with someone else or if I was accompanied. I was puzzled and I felt that I had to start all over again, by slowly building connections, making myself known and appreciated. It was as if all my previous efforts had been completely wiped out. The codes of behaviour that seemed to inform my hosts' lives were really different to what I had expected, and it took me a

long while to make sense of them. As Gow has put it, 'ethnographic fieldwork entails, for fieldworkers, an extreme sensitization to the nature of their assumptions about what humans are like, as these are daily brought into conflict with the corresponding assumptions of the people being studied' (Gow 2001:22)

I had, in a sense, to 'suspend' all my previous knowledge, all my conscious and unconscious ideas about what was 'common sense', and I had to slowly substitute them with what my hosts took to be common sense. This had to be done in every possible field: from social relations and tastes in music, food and drink, to ideas about what was comfortable, or better. Just like I had to re-learn how to walk-in fact, I had to adapt my taken-for-granted walking ability to a completely different kind of terrain (muddy and very slippery)-I had to re-learn a different way of thinking and behaving. Eventually I became so absorbed by peoples' lives and lived experiences that I genuinely became an active member of the community. I was able to express myself using the regional expressions in the peculiar local accent; I was able to interact with other islanders in their own way, I had internalized their typical gestures and bodily postures. In addition to these embodied aspects of culture, I was increasingly familiar with the 'internal rules' that are hardly voiced because they are taken for granted-the 'back bone' of a culture (see Bloch 1998). The various sequences of some common social and religious events became very familiar to me. All the peculiarities that had surprised me and caught my attention when I had first arrived, were now obvious matters that I could put in context. I felt at ease with most of the people, and certain occurrences hardly surprised me at all. In sum, I had naturally and effectively adopted my hosts' mentality. Or so it seemed to me at the time.

After

The trouble is that at some point the student has to go back home, and this usually happens when things are going really smoothly, when all the secrets are just being disclosed and when even the most hostile people are becoming more friendly and talkative. The feeling of having to leave a place just when it all starts to make sense is a very common experience among fieldworkers. Moreover, during our time in the field we tend to get attached to some people, and I was no exception. I had grown so close to my host family and friends that the idea of separation seemed unbearable, both for myself and for them. My looming future absence was discussed and commented upon, days and activities without my presence were imagined and talked

about, in serious conversation as well as in a joking way, turning pain into laughter. I was particularly sad to leave the old great-grandmother and the children. I thought that I would never find things and people again the way I left them. Still, nothing can be done: visas expire and we have to go back home.

Once back in London, I experienced a sense of intense displacement: an incident of what could be called reverse culture shock. I was totally unprepared for it. Just like I had felt out of context at the beginning of my fieldwork, I was again feeling the same—but this time I was supposedly on familiar ground! The experience was so powerful that I felt paralysed. I was incapable of dealing with the immense crowds that animated the streets, the noise of traffic, the waste of electricity, water and paper. I did not know who I was, where I was, and in what language I was organizing my confused thoughts. I was unable to speak English any longer. It was even worse when, a month later, I went home to Italy: I could not speak Italian either, and I needed to be left in solitude to gather my thoughts. I felt I had lost myself in a world that did not belong to me, and I was unable to find my old self—indeed so much had changed in the meantime; more than anything, I had changed. I also felt the frustration of what seemed the sheer impossibility of communicating my fieldwork experience: an experience that belonged only to me and that I felt unable to share. I felt people would not really understand the feelings and emotions involved in what I had lived through.

Now that I am trying to distance myself from my days of fieldwork, in order to read through my data and analyse them properly, I realize how difficult a task this is. We go through quick displacement, compulsory adaptation, and then again re-displacement and re-adaptation in a relatively short period of time—and then, we have to write about all this in an academic way. I am trying to ease my way out of what seems to me an almost unachievable task by thinking of my fieldwork as an ongoing relationship. My fieldwork allowed me to connect with a group of people who have given something to me and at the same time have received something from me. I have also been through the unexpected experience of feeling like 'the different other' in a small world of 'alike people'. My hosts coped with the presence of 'the other' in their small island for 18 months, and together we built up several long, complex and unfinished conversations. The ongoing threads of this two year long dialogue will, hopefully, be unravelled, singled out and brought to the surface in my doctoral thesis.

Conclusion: be one of them? The danger of the 'Zelig effect'

Ever since Malinowski, we anthropologists have been told that the purpose of fieldwork is precisely to 'go native', to be able to think in the others' own terms-this is the only way to approach and access how people think of themselves. But, is this really possible, or even reasonable? To reflect on the matter I will briefly look back, in retrospect, at what seemed to me the most difficult part of the fieldwork endeavour-the moment when a fieldworker has to step out of what she patiently built over several months.

From a distance, I can clearly visualize myself shortly before I had to leave, and my pain at the prospect made my attachment more intense. One of my brothers had come to visit right on the last week of my stay in the island, and-although incredibly happy to have him there-the timing was quite bad and there seemed to be a gap between us. He was keen on updating me on the political situation of our country, on the last satirical TV programmes that made fun of the government, and he wanted to share his impressions with my fellow island friends too. There he was, speaking half Italian, half Spanish one night on the beach, when we were reunited for a farewell bonfire. I could not help but consider my brother's concerns a thousand miles away from my own-and I felt to be sharing this same feeling with my local friends sitting around the fire. That night I had my two worlds in front of me: my 'old' life, personified by my brother, whose visit I had longed for and eagerly awaited for months, and my 'new' world, represented by my island friends to whom I had grown strong feelings of love and attachment. I had pictured this moment many times, and now that it was real something was not working the way I expected: it was as if the two worlds could not easily blend. I wished my brother was more into my 'new' world-but maybe I was expecting too much of him. I understand now that it was impossible for him to share my deepest feelings.

When I left the field a few days later, I felt as if I had been torn from a social and emotional fabric in which I had become perfectly entwined. Where was my old self? Had my fieldwork been too successful in making me part of my hosts' life-so much that through deep understanding and adoption of the same, I had been slowly forgetting my old self? Was my previous culture truly effaced? Or, was I, chameleon-like, able to adapt to a radically different world, and easily switch from one reality to another? My deep involvement with my field world curiously reminds me of Zelig,

the chameleon-like character created and portrayed by Woody Allen in the early Eighties (Allen 1983). Zelig is a man with the ability (and the curse) to integrate into any social setting in which he happens to find himself, because of his need to 'fit in'. He is so desperate to conform and to blend in with the crowd, that he inadvertently starts a physical and emotional transformation. While to assimilate the fieldworker to the grotesque and pathological Zelig character might appear a bit excessive, it is true that this character portrays an aspect quite familiar to the anthropologists' experience. Any anthropologist needs to be accepted by the community-and this implies not only downplaying differences but also engaging in a process of 'imitation'. The desire to feel part of the group and to succeed in creating ties-in order to conduct a successful research-has unexpected emotional consequences. I had experienced the end of my fieldwork period as an abrupt rupture, a too sudden change, which I had no time to come to terms with before it was upon me. I did not feel, as often happens, that it was time to go. While I could have taken my sense of familiarity as a signal and a reminder that my research had reached a satisfactory point of completion and that it was time to move on, instead I dreaded the approaching separation. The sense of confusion and displacement that I experienced in London was probably intensified by this reluctance to accept the end of my Chilean stay. Winter had just finished in Chile, and summer was about to start: I am not really prepared for another hard winter in Europe, I kept thinking.

Seven months after my return, a *deus ex machina* situation offered me another chance to look into my fieldwork experience somehow through different eyes. I was concentrating on organizing my copious field notes and was beginning my writing, when unexpectedly I was offered the chance to go back to Chile for a conference. My initial reaction was of strong rejection: I was only just emerging from that intense emotional turmoil that had been the separation from my fieldwork. How could I possibly cope with plunging into the same feelings again? And admittedly seven months was just too short a gap to be back to double-check and complete some of my data. I seriously considered not going. Then I eventually, though reluctantly, decided that I could and should make the effort. I planned to extend my stay and return to my field site. Thus I packed my rucksack again for another two months in a very cold Chilean winter.

The sudden temperature change from a record-breaking hot European summer to the

freezing Chilean winter (the exact reverse of my first arrival) was all but pleasant; this time I was finding it extremely difficult to cope with the cold. Once on the island the joy and happiness of meeting my old friends overcame the irritation of the pestering fleas and the constant rains. I was very happy and relieved, and I again felt completely at home. Indeed, I was surprised by a distinct feeling of belonging there irrespective of where I chose to live my life. It was as if I had left for the weekend, or for a couple of weeks break. How silly, I thought, to have been pondering and meditating and missing these people and fearing that God knows what would have irremediably changed during my absence. Seven months after my departure and we had our same clothes on, I was surprisingly able to remember everybody's names and with a click I felt I had once again become a part of the human landscape as if I had never left.

When it was time to leave though, none of us felt the intense pain of our first separation. Then everybody had cried, including some adult men. The overwhelming emotions that followed my first departure had somehow blurred: this time a friend told me with a serene expression: 'Now I know that just as you came back once, you will come back again'. She put in simple words a peculiar feeling of acknowledgement that after all our different worlds were not that distant. The feeling of old and safe familiarity that both me and my hosts experienced assured us that we had been able to build durable ties.

This second fieldtrip allowed me to step back from fieldwork as emotional experience, and to situate everything in the context of my doctoral thesis. While this was certainly not a secondary motivation throughout my time in Chile (to the point that my hosts kept asking me information on my studies and my degree), the emotional underpinnings of the relations I had formed had a privileged place and they had somehow obscured my wider goals. I know that this is, again, a common experience among anthropologists. Siskind for example, describes very similar feelings, talks of the 'romance of fieldwork' and admits she seriously considered never leaving (1973: 19).

Recently, for the purpose of doing some anthropological writing I have focused on what intrigued me most at the very beginning of my fieldwork. In looking at my first impressions of what I found striking about my hosts' perceptions and attitudes towards sociality, I analysed our intrinsic differences in assumptions about everyday concerns. While doing so, I became more aware of the necessary change I went

through since I have been back: from a confused and 'romantic' attitude towards what seemed irremediably lost upon completion of fieldwork, to the intellectual distance that enabled me to look at my data in all its richness. The shift was crucial in that I was reminded of the fresh gaze I had when I first arrived in my field-and my ignorance of what was going on was precisely what lay at the root of my data gathering.

Observing my fieldwork experience from these two vantage points highlights its useful extremes: from a state of ignorance of what to expect at the very beginning to a state of emotional involvement towards the end. As anthropologists, our initial ignorance implies a freshness of gaze, attuned to what is different and hence particularly sensible towards facts that eventually become data. In contrast, the close involvement with people who are much more than just 'informants' makes us less likely to 'observe', and more inclined to 'participate'.

Knowing a lot, though, does not make natives of us: paraphrasing Lévi-Strauss (1968: 16) it could be said that just as the best ethnographic study could not transform those who read it into indigenous people, the best fieldwork will not turn the ethnographer into an indigenous person. Once back for good, and very involved in the task of analysing my data, I realise that I have gained the knowledge and the experience to feel at home in southern Chile, together with the awareness that my position is and will always be that of a guest, who originally settled there on a fact finding journey. From the point of view of a young anthropologist who is still making sense of her data and the overall field experience, I can say that the only way I can conceive of ethnography (or, more precisely, of my ethnography) is to constantly evoke the dialogical form of each episode that formed my fieldwork life.

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Do You Believe in Monsters? Superstition and Fear in a Chiloé Community, (Southern Chile)⁹¹

The life of a community of islanders is regulated by silent conventions, unstated because considered obvious. However, to an anthropologist ‘bizarre’ beliefs call for explanations. Why were my hosts terrified of going out at night? Why, whilst outside at night, they ignored whoever they met - even close friends, neighbours or relatives? The night is terrifying: it hides dangers and it is the only time when humans are vulnerable to monsters. Monsters are able to disguise themselves as human beings, (either living or dead), and animals. Dogs, cats, pigs and birds may be just an illusion, and could in fact be dangerous monsters, willing to harm and kill innocent people. Late evenings are favourite occasions for narrating startling stories of monsters and monstrous events. With the complicity of darkness, in the unfaithful company of the only light available - that of candles, a rational Westerner can be transported into a scary world of uncontrollable evil forces. Flying witches, hairy gnomes that knock men out, women who turn into birds, fake dogs and fake pigs‘real stories’, as told by eye witnesses, are described, including in the picture the anthropologist’s first reaction of incredulity and the slow immersion in a different counter-reality.

“Truth is stranger than fiction”

Edgar Allan Poe

The archipelago of Chiloé in southern Chile is well known for its ‘colourful’ system of belief, where indigenous myths are couched within a pervasive Christian framework. As often in Native American worldviews, saints, fairies and monsters blend to present unique results. The impact of evangelisation of the local indigenous inhabitants by the Jesuits at the beginning of the 17th century caused the slow disappearance of the local shamanic system. The indigenous shamans were marginalised, persecuted and condemned as antithetical to Christianity. At the same time witchcraft developed in a distinctive form, gathering powerful individuals into an

⁹¹ This paper was originally presented at the conference ‘Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil’ Conference, held in Budapest in 2005.

organised system that, far from being adverse and opposed to Catholicism, was instead perfectly entwined in it. Chiloé witches were prestigious and influential individuals that, besides dealing with the supernatural, occupied social charges - often within the church - that brought them power and respect. A famous court trial in the 1880s supposedly put an end to witchcraft as organised system in Chiloé. The archipelago is nowadays home to beautiful wooden churches, declared a world heritage site by UNESCO, and to a consistent body of legends, tales and anecdotes, about monstrous creatures connected somehow to witches. These stories are the subject of endless booklets, pamphlets and articles in local folk literature, to the extent that they have been commodified and Chiloé is consistently described in tourist leaflets as “the land that bewitches”. This paper will leave aside the printed versions of these folk stories and will instead concentrate on the tales of the locals, gathered as primary data during anthropological fieldwork during two years⁹². All the stories described have been narrated to me by the locals I was living with. They all reflect a pervasive belief in magic and witchcraft, that obviously permeates Chiloé living world as experienced by its inhabitants in the everyday, at present. According to Lévi-Strauss, for magic to work effectively it is necessary to have belief in magic and social consensus. The shaman, or sorcerer, will be successful only if supported by a strong social consensus, which is to say, if the supernatural powers are recognised by the group. Throughout the known history, Chiloé witches seems to have enjoyed prosperity, influence and, especially, power. From the stories that follow, it can be argued that the mysterious individuals that have a double identity and are generically called *brujos*, witches, are still highly influential, respected, and above all, they are feared. For a few centuries now they have been embodiment and representation of the powerful Otherness that, through ‘special’ knowledge, allows some individuals to blur the boundaries between known and unknown, animal and human, dead and alive. Fear and terror come forth at night - when a parallel, obscure reality substitutes the realm of experience upon which life in Chiloé is built, leaving everyone vulnerable, and in real danger.

When I first arrived on the tiny Chiloé island were I was to spend almost two years, I was already behind schedule and was therefore very anxious to plunge into my new life and start my job: meeting up with people, observing habits and customs, recording

⁹² This paper aims at presenting narratives and experiential data gathered doing anthropological fieldwork. It does not seek to give explanations, nor to interpret the data according to theoretical frameworks, due to the nature of the ‘Monsters’ conference and to the limited space available. The material here presented will be contextualised, expanded and explored more deeply elsewhere.

all my findings in carefully handwritten notes. Thus I was grateful to my host family for their willingness to fill up the long and boring southern Chilean winter nights with their thrilling stories. Every night we would gather beside the stove, comment on the usual stormy weather, and someone would say “*tiempo ‘e brujos*”, witches’ weather: better not to go outside. Our solitary winter nights were populated by stories of pigs, dogs and birds. Not ordinary ones, though. Well, pigs don’t normally haunt people in their homes at night; nor do dogs remain alive after being hanged on a tree; nor do birds swallow human guts to turn into women. Together with stories of ‘special’ animals, I was told many stories of ‘special’ creatures that are difficult to classify. A hairy little beast that is a martial arts champion: if you meet him, it’s a very bad sign - the least that you can expect is to be assaulted and severely beaten; enchanted sailors that charm you with their magical boat with its lights and music, however if you join them they will take you to the town of the dead and you will be gone forever; a ghost woman that wanders dressed in white and screams and weeps: if you see her, you will die within a year. And flying witches. They fly all lit up, from one side of the island to the other, as well as from island to island.

What these monstrous creatures have in common is that they are all active exclusively at night, and they inspire awe and terror to people, that often say to have personally experienced a close encounter. All the stories I have been told had a protagonist - a victim - who had been a witness to the monstrosity described. At first I found these remarkable stories quite amusing, and I happily filled my notebooks with what sounded like very entertaining and creative anecdotes. Then, as I became more and more a part of the emotional landscape of the island, I shared with its inhabitants joy, pain, and fear. By the end of my stay, I was ready to become a victim myself. The ‘magic’ of anthropology was working: I had seemingly forgotten my logic-driven approach and I was adopting my hosts’ worldview.

1. The Night: ‘As if it was a Separate World’ (*Como que fuera un mundo aparte*)

Anthropologists often focus on what they see and can describe: rituals, events, celebrations. As anthropology students, we are very attentive and curious towards what can be carefully observed and described in detail. But this time I will try to

engage with something that is very difficult to grasp, and indeed is very mysterious and cloudy. I will concentrate on what cannot be seen, described, nor explained. I will shift my focus from what is obvious, and there for everybody to see (i.e. what happens at daytime), to what is vague, cloudy and bordering on the fairy tale, where the boundaries are blurred between magic, horror and ‘reality’.

On the island the night brings forth a very interesting counter-reality, “as if it was a separate world”, as a local friend put it. The lovely paths that cut across the island, so familiar to every one that uses them regularly, become traps and dangerous places to be avoided; the countryside, regularly used as an alternative shortcut when going somewhere, is transformed into a forest of unknown wilderness; the seaside, that people know and use on an everyday basis to collect shellfish, crabs and seaweed, becomes frightening and must be avoided at all costs.

What is it that turns familiar places into threatening ones, and safe spaces into dangerous ones? What is it that makes one’s knowledge, collected in a lifetime, become irrelevant, and one’s friends and relatives become scarier than unknown strangers? The answer is hard to find, but what I can say is that all this seems to happen after dark. When daylight fades away and darkness falls on the island, it is as if everything belongs to another, different world.

To begin with, hardly anything can be seen: an unusual experience for people like me, who grew up surrounded by light. Whenever there is a power cut, in our industrialised realities, the lack of electricity and light is experienced quite dramatically. In my adoptive island, life is geared towards the night switch, and that means retreating to one’s households, and specifically, to the kitchen, which is the only room in the house with some light. The light is the dim candlelight, often shaky as windows allow breeze or wind to come into the room. Sometimes, the light originates from a paraffin lamp, adding a hissing sound to the intimate nightly atmosphere.

2. Not Greeting at Night

From the beginning of my stay, it became obvious that people were not very happy to go out at night. They always made sure to have finished all their duties shortly after sunset; and - if they really had to be out at night, their behaviour was rather peculiar.

One of the most fascinating issues I came across during my life in the tiny Chiloé island was the fact that people refused to greet whoever they met at night, on the island path, on the beach or anywhere. The first time I witnessed this aspect of their social life I was going back home with my host's daughter, a young woman. We passed our neighbour, and my host did not greet him: she plainly ignored him. I was very surprised by what seemed quite rude; however, I was told that at night one should never greet people. This is because, I was told, at night you cannot properly see the face of the person, therefore you cannot be sure of the identity of the person. And even if you can see clearly, you should still avoid greeting the person.

At first I was quite startled by the denial of a most simple and, in my opinion, natural social rule: that of acknowledging the presence of another human being, and a well-known person as well. On our way home after a religious festival, held at night, I asked a friend the reason for such impolite behaviour, and he said: "The fact is that at night you can't see anything". I pointed out to him that we could actually see something, and that I could even recognise the two persons that we had just passed by. "All the same!" he said. "At night, I see no-one, I recognise no-one, for me no-one exists at night! At night I know nobody and all are enemies for me!" When I asked my landlady, she just said that even if I recognised someone, still, I was not supposed to say Hi. I was in my initial stage of fieldwork, the stage where the student knows close to nothing and just imitates whatever it's done around her. Once, though, I just couldn't avoid it and I greeted a person I met at dusk, even if I didn't recognise the person. I had no reply to my clear and loud greeting. When I got back home and I told the story, I was scolded, and I was reminded that "*no sirve andar de noche*", "it's no good to go out at night".

3. At Night Everyone is More Vulnerable

I once had a conversation with a man "who knows how to pray", don Francisco. Men who know how to pray usually become *fiscales*, local church representatives. When I asked him if he would be interested in being a *fiscal*, given his obvious praying skills in various religious events, the man replied straightaway with much decision and energy: "Never! Never ever! Me? Watching a dead man, put him in his coffin? And afterwards, go back to my own place? Never! Never ever! I am very scared!" I

admired the man's honesty but I wanted to know more, so I asked him why was he so scared. "*Por cobardia no mas!*" "Because I am a coward, that's it!", he replied. But then he added: "A *fiscal* needs to go at night, anywhere! I am afraid of going out all alone at night. With a companion I could go everywhere, then I am not afraid anymore, but on my own...never. The point is in here...things happen. And one is afraid".

I collected a great deal of evidence of the fact that people are not willing to go out at night. Once, right after the funeral of a young man who had drowned while swimming, people told me that they had heard some strange noise outside the deceased's house. And the dead man's family told me the following story: "There was something outside the house. We went to let the dogs free, and the 'thing' ran away towards to bushes, and then we heard the neighbour's dogs barking. So after that, it must have taken the main path. And at that same time I have heard somebody moving around the house". I then asked the man's mother what seemed obvious to me, "Why didn't you just go out and have a look?" and she replied 'Because I'm scared! I would never do that! Remember what happened to granny Maria? She went out to see what was going on and she got lost! And when they found her, several hours later, she was thrown in the bushes!"

In fact, people in their right mind would not take any risk and would just stay in the only safe place: one's household. While during the day life goes on according to certain social rules - respect, reciprocity, courtesy, politeness and so on, at night all codes of decorum are somehow suspended. Night-time brings forth a different environment, with other codes of communication, other wandering creatures, other stories.

Strange and unpleasant things happen at night. If people have no interest in getting into trouble, why on earth would they dare putting themselves at risk? If they go out at night, they might have something to do with strange creatures and powerful beings. In a word, those that go out might be witches. If you're not a victim you can be a predator. In this case, a predator means a witch.

People talk very little about witches, but they consistently say that witches are "those who know a lot". Witches are ordinary people, fellow islanders, who happen to be evil and have special powers due to the possession of special knowledge. Witches are able

to transform themselves into something else, they know how to assume the aspect of different animals, different people and especially monsters. They do this to terrify people, to harm and sometimes to kill them. The key characteristic of all witches is their double identity: during the day they act like anyone else, fooling everyone, including their own family. At night, however, they make use of their magic knowledge and they turn into other creatures.

After a long day of activities and events to be experienced, observed, and carefully transcribed in my notebook, I would join my adoptive family for a relaxed couple of hours beside the stove, the only sound being the boiling water of the huge teapots sitting on top of the stove. And there, drinking *mate*, I would be told endless night-time stories.

4. Chuchibo

One of the most common monsters of the island is a creature that has been met by many locals. The monster, called *chuchibo*⁹³, is so frightening that even to pronounce its name is taboo. No one has ever seen it, but people always describe it as small, very hairy, very strong, and incredibly dangerous. It attacks people from behind, hitting them very fiercely and leaving them unconscious. Once a man was going back home at night on horseback, a bit drunk, with a wine bottle in his hand. He suddenly felt that someone had mounted his horse at his back. The man did nothing but offered a drink by passing the wine bottle to whoever was sitting at his back. He received the bottle back and this went on for a good while. The man was reported to have felt the hairy arm of the creature, who suddenly jumped off the horse and left.

“It’s a little creature that runs very fast, and it’s very good at hitting people. I was once hit on the back of my neck and I fell unconscious for hours. When I woke up, I hardly remembered what had happened to me, I was very confused” a friend told me. This strange creature is said to have been seen by several people on the island, and some of them have been chased and miraculously escaped, by entering their own household premises. In fact, one is supposedly safe in one’s house. Anything can happen away from home, in public places and in open, uncontained spaces. The

⁹³ The name has been changed.

path, the countryside and the seaside are considered particularly dangerous at night. But being on one's own land - especially the land by the house - is safe and nothing should ever happen there.

As a measure of protection, people on the island have one or more dogs that are used as guards. Dogs always stay by the house entrance and will bark at and even attack newcomers. They are considered very powerful protectors and when people have to go out at night, or early in the morning, they will always take a dog, to accompany and protect them. Dogs can sense an unusual presence and will be alert and defend their owners. However, sometimes animals are not able to react and help: as if somehow bewitched by magic creatures. If a man is on his horse and happens to meet the little creature I mentioned earlier, the horse will refuse to proceed and rear up, leaving his owner in trouble. And dogs themselves, who supposedly are the loyal and protective friends of man, may turn out to be dangerous creatures disguised as the familiar canine.

5. Disguised Creatures

Some people have special powers that allow them to momentarily take the shape of animals such as pigs, dogs or birds. By becoming animals these creatures have an easy access to the home and therefore the private space of their targets, and cause harm to people. If they have a particular target, they would take the shape of, say, a dog, and go regularly to visit their victims. But sometimes people notice the habitual visit of a certain dog, and suspect an evil presence hidden within the dogs' body. In such cases they will ambush the dog and beat it vigorously. If a witch is punished, that means that he's been recognised and he will have to suffer for his inability to hide and his failure. When a witch disguised as a dog is beaten, the witch will run back home and resume his usual body form: he will be hurt and will need to recover. That will be the ultimate proof of his nature.

People often report cases of witches being 'caught' as a dog, and being beaten so hard that they had to lock themselves up for a long time, in hiding, until they are fully recovered. Being caught as a witch usually determines the end of a witch's career, and life. On the other hand, their strength in resisting attacks proves their powers. Once a suspicious dog, that used to frequently visit one household at night,

was caught and hanged by the man of the house. The following day the man went to check on the dog, with the intention of burying it, to avoid being accused by its owner. Much to his surprise, though, the dog was still alive and after he freed it from the rope, the dog leapt up and ran away. The story proves the powers of some witches: some of them are so strong that they are not very easily defeated. The male witches usually turn into dogs, or pigs. The female witches instead turn into birds or, alternatively, into ghost-like white-dressed creatures that weep and scream at night. Those who see them will die within a year. When a woman turns into a bird, she needs to get rid of her guts first. This is because guts are very heavy and would prevent the witch from becoming a bird. Once a man got up in the middle of the night, and realised that his wife had been out, because she was very cold. This went on for several nights till one night the man decided to stay awake to see what was driving his wife out of the house during the cold night. So he just pretended to be asleep when his wife checked on him, and he saw her getting up, vomiting her guts into a container, and turning into a bird. Horrified at the idea of having married such an evil creature, he threw hot water on the guts. The following day he awoke to find his wife dead at his side.

People were obviously terrified by the dangers of the night time and all its monstrous creatures. Just to mention them was a taboo. And the stories - even those that bordered on the mythical - were told whispering, as if some monster might be present to punish the tale-teller. "It's full of ears...even the trees can hear in this place", I was told once by an old woman, who was telling me tales of monsters. There's no antidote to fear, no solution for terror - one can try and avoid exposing oneself to danger by staying inside. But that is not always possible.

If at the beginning of my fieldwork the stories were to me entertaining intervals to what was seemingly a very boring lifestyle, with the passing of time and the attachment to the family and friends with whom I spent all my time, I got more and more involved in the day/night shift. And once I could test my emotional involvement in my research experience with an episode to which I look back with both embarrassment and amusement. I was sleeping in my bedroom when, in the middle of the night, I heard a peculiar noise: *something* was tapping my window glass, repeatedly, continuously. At first I dismissed the unusual sound, and I tried to go back to sleep turning my back to the window of the little bedroom. However it was impossible to sleep: the noise went on and on, a continuous, persistent tapping. The

dogs should bark! I thought; they do when they sense someone approaching; the birds should have announced a visitor's presence - they always do, and very noisily. And my landlord, who was always alert and could always hear any strange noise, was specifically snoring next door. What to do? I was still half asleep but sufficiently awake to decide that I did not want to be alone in my room with some mysterious, terrifying creature beyond my window glass. Before I realised what was to be done, I found myself leaving my room in haste and jumping into my friend Clara's bed next door. Surprised to see me, on listening to my account of the events she commented, apparently seriously worried: "Mother! That is truly terrible - and yet, I doubt *they* would come and do anything inside the house". I recounted the episode several times to investigate people's perception of monsters, and people's management of fear - my tales always produced comments that I found extremely useful and revealing of feelings that are usually kept private. Much to my surprise, though, several months later it turned out that my friend Clara was soon to be a mother...the terrifying tapping that had pushed me out of bed in the middle of the night, evoking all sorts of supernatural evil creatures, was just a lover's call - alas in the wrong window. Why didn't the dogs bark? The birds scream? My landlord hear the noise? That remained a mystery.

PLATES



Plate 1. The work party for the boat launch



Plate 2. Ceremonial gifts of bread and meat to participants in a work party



Plate 3. Ceremonial gifts of bread and meat to participants in a work party



Plate 4. Child and his great-great grandmother



Plate 5. Prayers for the dead on the day of All Souls



Plate 6. On the boat with the Saint back from Caguach

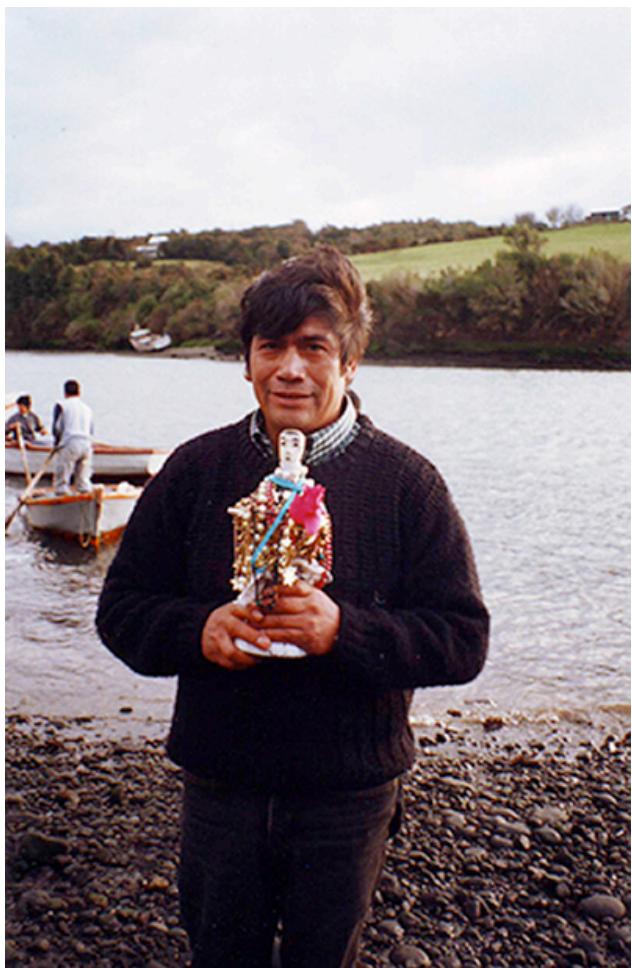


Plate 7. A *novena* owner with the Saint



Plate 8. *Fiscal* praying the San Antonio *novena*



Plate 9. *Fiscal* praying the San Antonio *novena*



Plate 10. The *novena* owner thanks a fellow islander upon receiving a cash offer



Plate 11. *Remate* table dinner for *fiscales* and musicians



Plate 12. *Cueca* dancing in front of the Saint



Plate 13. Gifts offered to the San Antonio: two live chickens kept in sewn baskets



Plate 14. Bringing the Saint back to Caguach

Lista de personas asistidas
durante los 9 noches de la
novena

Nombre y apellido.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Alvaro Abidez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Luis Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Daniel Gutiérrez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Johnn Lombera	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Jarama (Zilia)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Juana Correa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7. Carla Camara	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8. Edelcio Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9. Bernardo Neum.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10. Consuelo Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11. Francisco Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12. Jorge Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13. Mauricio Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14. Eustasio Vargas	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
15. Luis Gutiérrez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
16. Rosario Subirana	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
17. Filomena Tuzuna	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
18. Zenobia Colín	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19. Epifanio Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
20. Alvaro	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
21. Paulina Tuzuna	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22. Francisco Colín	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
23. Jorge Colín	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
24. Luis Mato	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
25. Iris Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
26. Reperto Mato	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
27. Nicolas Mato	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
28. Jose Tuzuna	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
29. Cesar Corocor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
30. Cesar Poblete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
31. Alfonso Poblete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
32. Rold Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
33. Tols Neum.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
34. Luis Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
35. Horacio Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
36. Tomás Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
37. Luis Villalba	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
38. Felix Mato	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
39. Milton Poblete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
40. Manuel Colín	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
41. Concha Taipikan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
42. Eulalia Poblete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
43. Gladys Poblete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
44. Consuelo Neum.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
45. Elias Gutiérrez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
46. Soraya Gutiérrez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
47. Alex Gutiérrez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
48. Ana papa Neum. 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Plate 15. A ‘register’ of *novena* participants; the list is kept to record the presence of people. The participants are awarded a gift of bread that varies according to the number of nights attended

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