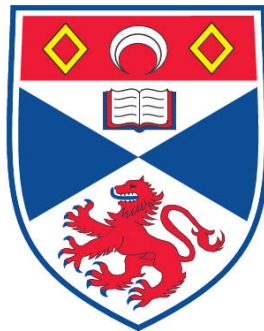


'ES UNA COMUNIDAD LIBRE':
CONTESTING THE POTENTIAL OF INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHEASTERN BOLIVIA

Veronika Groke

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews



2012

Full metadata for this item is available in
Research@StAndrews:FullText
at:

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/2549>

This item is protected by original copyright

This item is licensed under a
Creative Commons License

‘ES UNA COMUNIDAD LIBRE’:
CONTESTING THE POTENTIAL OF INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHEASTERN BOLIVIA

by Veronika Groke

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

August 2011

1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Veronika Groke, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 90,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in September 2004; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2011.

(If you received assistance in writing from anyone other than your supervisor/s):

I,, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of [language, grammar, spelling or syntax], which was provided by

Date signature of candidate

2. Supervisor's declaration:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date signature of supervisor

3. Permission for electronic publication: *(to be signed by both candidate and supervisor)*

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use unless exempt by award of an embargo as requested below, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration, or have requested the appropriate embargo below.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the electronic publication of this thesis:

*Add **one** of the following options:*

(i) Access to printed copy and electronic publication of thesis through the University of St Andrews.

Date signature of candidate

signature of supervisor

A supporting statement for a request for an embargo must be included with the submission of the draft copy of the thesis. Where part of a thesis is to be embargoed, please specify the part and the reasons.

Abstract

This thesis is a study of a Guaraní community (*comunidad*) situated in the Department of Santa Cruz in the southeastern lowlands of Bolivia. The thesis uses the concept of ‘*comunidad*’ as a focus of investigation. While this concept is one that is familiar and firmly embedded in contemporary discourses throughout Bolivia, the meanings which different people and interest groups attach to it and the purposes which they ascribe to it are far from unanimous. Apart from the physical and legal entity, comprising a group of people, the land on which they live, and the legal title for its ownership, a *comunidad* is a multifaceted and multilayered complex of diverging and sometimes competing ideas, desires and agendas. Questioning the concept of ‘*comunidad*’ in this way opens up new perspectives on what people are doing and why that could easily be overlooked in continuing to assume that we know what we are talking about when talking about a ‘*comunidad indígena*’ in Bolivia today. The thesis explores the case of Cañón de Segura by eliciting and bringing together the various claims and perspectives that impact on the lives of its inhabitants (*comunarios*). Starting with a historical overview to situate the *comunidad* within Bolivian and Guaraní history, the thesis moves into an ethnographic discussion of the *comunarios*’ own perceptions and meanings of ‘*comunidad*’, followed by an exploration of various outsiders’ perspectives on the same topic that impact on the *comunarios*’ lives in different ways. The aim of the thesis is to illustrate the overlap and entanglements between these different positions in order to show how the different perspectives on the meaning and purpose of a Guaraní ‘*comunidad*’ all contribute to shape the actual realities of people’s lives ‘on the ground’.

To my mother, Ilse Groke.

In loving memory
of my father, Karl Groke.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Acronyms and Abbreviations	4
Map	6
Introduction – Beginnings.....	7
Part I: The <i>Comunidad</i> in History – History in the <i>Comunidad</i>	27
Chapter 1. Debates and Backgrounds	28
Chapter 2. From <i>Cautiverio</i> to <i>Comunidad</i> : The Case of Cañón de Segura.....	53
2.1 The ‘ <i>Comunarios</i> ’ of Itakua and the Fight over the ‘Chapel’	54
2.2 The Case of Itakua in the Memory of the <i>Comunarios</i>	70
Chapter 3. ‘ <i>Tenemos nuestra historia</i> ’: A Case of History Objectified	82
Part II: Living <i>Tranquilo</i> , Doing What We Want: <i>Comunarios</i> ’ Ideas about ‘ <i>Comunidad</i> ’	92
Chapter 4. ‘ <i>No nos dejaban trabajar</i> ’: The Importance of Being Able to Work in Peace	93
Chapter 5. The Fiesta and the Reproduction of Sociality	107
Chapter 6. Reflections of Kinship and Mobility in the Spatial Organisation of Cañón	124
Chapter 7. Tensions and Aspirations: The Making of Cañón as an Ongoing Process	138
Part III: Multiple Perspectives: Negotiating Different Meanings of ‘ <i>Comunidad</i> ’ ...	150
Chapter 8. (N)GOs and the Economy of <i>Proyectos</i>	151
Chapter 9. Beautiful Culture, ‘Shitty Indians’, or What Have the Guaraní Ever Done for Me?: <i>Karai</i> Takes on ‘ <i>Comunidad</i> ’	166
Chapter 10. Changing Alliances: The Elusive ‘Position’ of Guaraní <i>Comunidades</i> within Local and Regional Politics	183
Chapter 11. <i>Dueños, Duendes, Bichos</i> : Supernatural Agents in Cañón and the Politics of Place-Making.....	197
Conclusions.....	213
Bibliography	221
Appendices.....	238
Appendix 1: Itakua.....	239
Appendix 2: The Unlikely Case of the Cattle Theft	247

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although many more people have – in one way or another – contributed to the completion of this thesis and I am thankful to them all, there are some to whom I am particularly indebted.

In St Andrews, they include those members of staff and fellow postgraduates who, over the years, commented on project and chapter drafts in the pre- and postfieldwork writing-up seminars. I am particularly grateful to Tristan Platt, Christina Toren, Adam Reed, Huon Wardle, Eileadh Swan, Giovanna Bacchiddu, Chris Hewlett, Juan Pablo Sarmiento Barletti, Phil Kao, Anthony Pickles, Moisés Lino e Silva, Máire Ní Mhórdha, Jan Grill, Jeanne Féaux de la Croix, Daniela Castellanos, Eleni Bizas, Ioannis Kallianos, Rosie Harrison, Fiona Hukula, Hsin-Chieh Kao, Giuseppe Ciancia, Nádia Heusi, Nina Holm Vohnsen, Qing Qing Yang, Huw Lloyd-Richards, Alexander McWhinnie, Cornelia Nell, Linda Scott, Conrad Feather and Stacy Hope for sharing writings and insights and for creating a feeling of community that made engaging in academic exchanges a pleasure. I would also like to thank Mark Harris, Rodrigo Villagra Carrón, Margherita Margiotti, Paolo Fortis, and Effie Pollatou for the advice and many encouraging words that made me feel that, just perhaps, it could really all be done. A very special thank you to Giovanna Bacchiddu, Chris Hewlett, Phil Kao, and my beloved ‘sister’ Eileadh Swan for providing support of a non-academic kind when it was much needed. The same goes for Linda Scott, Susan Massey, Kate Pattullo, Ann Slim, Joseph Tendler, ‘Fluffy’ John Dempsey, Martyna Mirecka, Zinaida Lewczuk, and Stan Frankland – I would have never made it without you. Mhairi Aitkenhead, Lisa Neilson, and temporarily Lynne Dalrymple, deserve a special mention for their administrative ingenuity and undefeated good-naturedness in running the department as efficiently as they do. They, along with Margaret Hutcheson, were a cheerful and down-to-earth presence emanating sanity in the midst of writing-up madness. I am grateful to Peter Gow for his suggestions and ever-present goodwill, and to Joanna Overing for being a constant source of inspiration and a wonderful friend. Thank you also to Napier Russell for brightening up many a dull evening with his humour and loveable dodginess!

In Bolivia, I am indebted to Isabelle Combès for taking me under her wing when I first arrived in Santa Cruz with very little Spanish and even less of an idea of how to get started, and for being a benevolent presence throughout the duration of my fieldwork. Thank you also to Chiaki Kinjo for the language exchange and initial encounters with the world of indigenous organisations. In Camiri, I would like to thank doña Pocha, Cornelio Robles, Elio Ortiz and Marcia Mandepora at Teko-Guaraní; at the Capitanía Kaami, Ramón Gómez, Marina Arroyo, Ernesto Arteaga, Josefina Segundo, Víctor Rodríguez and the rest of the Kaami leadership, as well as Víctor Victoria and Elizabeth Arteaga; at the APG, Wilson Changaray and Petrona Bruno; at the GTZ, Ángela Caballero and Marta Pello; and at CIPCA, Miguel Valdez and Nestor Cuellar for their support during my fieldwork. In particular, I am indebted to Miguel Valdez for taking the time to help me think about my fieldwork in the initial stages and for the continual support throughout its duration; to Petrona Bruno and Ramón Gómez for enabling me to gain access to my fieldwork community – their home community – and for facilitating my stay there over time; and to Franz Michel of IDAC for granting me access to his organisation’s archive and for the many informative conversations we had in his office. Further, I am thankful to Chiny Mejía, Polaco Herrera and their family (in particular their daughter Mimi) for welcoming me into their home and into their lives during part of my fieldwork – life in Camiri wouldn’t have been the same without you! I would also like to thank the Heredia Cruz family as well as Claudia Saavedra and her family, Heydi Maldonado, and don Pepe for their great kindness and friendship. Wakana Fukuda and Carol Martinez shared thoughts, gossip, and tea and provided a valuable moral support base. In Isoso, a very special thank you goes to my language teacher, guide and ‘brother’ Justino Arauz, as well as to Isabel Ortiz and their respective families, thanks to whom I got a fascinating glimpse of Isoso life and politics.

Of the fellow researchers I met along the way, I am particularly grateful to Kathleen Lowrey for sharing insights on Guaraní ethnography; to Sebastián Pardo for always pushing me to do better, and for sharing some of the magic of Argentina with me; to Jean Vacher, Verónica Cereceda and the other participants of the Cuarto Congreso de la Asociación de Estudios Bolivianos 2006 for the initial encouragement; to Isabelle Daillant, Vincent Hirtzel, and Mickael Brohan for generously sharing information and

knowledge; to the participants of the Primeiro Encontro Trilateral St Andrews – Lisbon – Rio de Janeiro 2009 (especially to Susana Matos Viegas) for their comments on an early chapter draft; to the guest speakers and staff and PhD students from St Andrews, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh for the talks and academic and social exchanges during the STAR workshops in Kinloch Rannoch of 2009 and 2010; to the St Andrews staff and students who commented on various papers during seminars and workshops; and, above all, to Bret Gustafson for providing advice and encouragement from my pre-fieldwork days onwards. To Bret as well as Mark Harris, thank you also for the interesting and useful feedback on the thesis given during my viva examination!

A very special thank you to my supervisor, Tristan Platt, for sharing his vast knowledge with me and for the untiring support and kindness through difficult times. Being able to work with you has been a true privilege.

My biggest debt by far is to the people of Cañón de Segura, without whose incredible generosity, goodwill, and patience in the light of my initial cluelessness and enduring inquisitiveness this thesis would never have been written. My eternal gratitude goes out to them all but a special mention is due to Ramón Gómez, Tomasa Bruno and their children Gloria, María Teresa, Daniel and Reynaldo; Flora Bruno; Arsenio Bruno; Dionysia Gómez and her daughter Eusebia; Mariano Alvis; Marcelino Robles; and Francisco Álvarez. Thank you for sharing your knowledge of the beautiful Guaraní culture with me, as well as food, chicha, and a lot of laughter!

Finally, a big huge thank you to my mother, Ilse Groke, for always being there for me and believing in me even when I did not, and to Lynda and David Rollason for their great kindness in taking care of my little one (and really us all) so I could finish writing this thesis. It couldn't have been done without any of you! And last but not least, thank you Will Rollason for the invaluable suggestions and criticisms on first drafts of various chapters, the unfaltering moral support, and, more than anything, for adding a whole new dimension to my life that can only be described as 'happiness'. All my love to you and our beautiful baby Holly – you are the sunshine in my life!

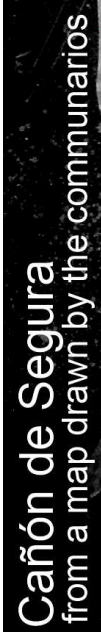
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGACAM	<i>Asociación de Ganaderos de Camiri</i> (Camiri Cattle Breeders' Association)
AND	<i>Acción Democrática Nacionalista</i> (Nationalist Democratic Action)
APDHC	<i>Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos Cordillera</i> (Permanent Assembly of Human Rights of Cordillera)
APG	<i>Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní</i> (Assembly of the Guaraní People)
CABI	<i>Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Isoso</i> (Capitanía of the Upper and Lower Isoso)
CD	Community Development
CIAT	<i>Centro de Investigación Agrícola Tropical</i> (Centre for Tropical Agricultural Investigation)
CIDH	<i>Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos</i> (Interamerican Court of Human Rights)
CIDOB	<i>Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia</i> (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia; formerly <i>Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano</i>)
CIPCA	<i>Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado</i> (Centre for the Investigation and Promotion of the Peasantry)
CONFEAGRO	<i>Confederación de Agropecuarios de Bolivia</i> (Bolivian Agriculturalists' Confederation)
CORDECRUZ	<i>Corporación de Desarrollo de Santa Cruz</i> (Santa Cruz Development Corporation)
CPE	<i>Constitución Política del Estado</i> (Political Constitution of the State)
CRE	<i>Cooperativa Rural de Electrificación</i> (Rural Electricity Cooperative)
DED	<i>Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst</i> (German Development Service)
DMI	<i>Distritos Municipales Indígenas</i> (Indigenous Municipal Districts)
EIB	<i>Educación Intercultural Bilingüe</i> (Intercultural Bilingual Education)
FEGASACRUZ	<i>Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz</i> (Santa Cruz Cattle Breeders' Federation)
FIS	<i>Fondo de Inversión Social</i> (Social Investment Fund)
GDT	<i>Grupo de Trabajo</i> (Work Group)
GO	Governmental Organisation
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> (Society for Technical Cooperation)
IDAC	<i>Instituto de Documentación y Apoyo al Campesinado</i> (Institute for the Documentation and Support of the Peasantry)
IDAG	<i>Instituto de Documentación y Apoyo Guaraní</i> (Institute for the Documentation and Support of the Guaraní)
IDH	<i>Impuestos Directos a los Hidrocarburos</i> (Direct Hydrocarbons Tax)

ILO	International Labour Organisation
INRA	<i>Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria</i> (National Institute of Agrarian Reform)
INSPOC	<i>Instituto Normalista Superior Pluriétnico del Oriente y Chaco</i> (Pluriethnic Superior Teacher's Institute for the Bolivian East and Chaco)
LDA	<i>Ley de Descentralización Administrativa</i> (Administrative Decentralisation Law)
LPP	<i>Ley de Participación Popular</i> (Popular Participation Law)
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i> (Movement towards Socialism)
MASRENA	<i>Proyecto de Manejo Sostenible de Recursos Naturales</i> (Project for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources)
MNR	<i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</i> (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OTB	<i>Organizaciones Territoriales de Base</i> (Territorial Grassroots Organisations)
PADEP	<i>Programa de Apoyo a la Gestión Pública Descentralizada y Lucha Contra La Pobreza</i> (Programme for the Support of Decentralised Governance and the Fight against Poverty)
PDA	<i>Programa de Desarrollo de Área</i> (Areal Development Programme)
PDCC	<i>Plan de Desarrollo del Campesinado de Cordillera</i> (Development Plan for the Peasantry of Cordillera)
PISET	<i>Producción, Infraestructura, Salud, Educación y Tierra/Territorio</i> (Production, Infrastructure, Health, Education and Land/Territory)
PISETRNGC	<i>Producción, Infraestructura, Salud, Educación, Tierra/Territorio, Recursos Naturales, Género y Comunicación</i> (Production, Infrastructure, Health, Education, Land/Territory, Natural Resources, Gender and Communication)
PND	<i>Plan Nacional de Desarrollo</i> (National Development Plan)
PODEMOS	<i>Poder Democrático Social</i> (Social Democratic Power)
SAN – TCO	<i>Saneamiento de Tierras Comunitarias de Origen</i> (Titling of Original Community Lands)
TCO	<i>Tierra Comunitaria de Origen</i> (Original Community Land)
Teko-Guaraní	<i>Taller de Educación y Comunicación Guaraní</i> (Guaraní Education and Communication Workshop)
TIOC	<i>Territorio Indígena Originario Campesino</i> (Indigenous Originary Peasant Territory)
UJC	<i>Union Juvenil Cruceñista</i> (Santa Cruz Youth Union)
VAIPO	<i>Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios</i> (Viceministry for Indigenous Affairs and Originary Peoples)

Cañón de Segura

from a map drawn by the communarios



MAP

INTRODUCTION – BEGINNINGS

I carried out my fieldwork between 2006 and 2008, in a small Guaraní community (Spanish: *comunidad*) called Cañón de Segura, which is part of the Capitanía Kaami¹ and the municipality of Camiri located in Cordillera Province of the Department of Santa Cruz in the south-eastern lowlands of Bolivia. At the time of my fieldwork, Cañón had roughly 250 inhabitants (*comunarios*) distributed over some 30 houses, who mostly made a living from agriculture, although many families also kept animals, and people would sometimes engage in temporary labour outside the community. Most of the *comunarios* were bilingual in Guaraní and Spanish, with mostly monolingual individuals forming the exception.² As the name implies, Cañón is situated in a canyon and is surrounded and permeated by the low, dry forest typical of the region, with a rainy season causing the landscape to burst into lush, green life between the months of November and January, which is also when the sowing of crops takes place.

This thesis is the result of the incredible generosity, patience, and goodwill I was shown by the inhabitants of Cañón, whose story it is attempting to tell.

I arrived in Bolivia with no very clear idea of where I was going to do my fieldwork. What I did know was that I wanted to work with Guaraní people, and that I didn't want to do my fieldwork in Isoso, which is an area that has been attracting anthropologists for a long time and is relatively well researched (cf. Combès 2005a, Lowrey 2003, Riester 1984). Instead, my plan was to go to the Chaco region, where recent ethnographies on Guaraní people have been relatively scarce in comparison.

¹ *Capitanías* are Guaraní 'districts' that are made up of various *comunidades*. They are thus basically the indigenous equivalent of municipalities in the Cordillera and Chaco regions, whereby the territory of one *capitanía* can be part of more than one municipality.

² I am saying mostly here because there was, to my knowledge, no one in Cañón at the time who spoke no Spanish or no Guaraní at all. A few elderly people had a basic knowledge of Spanish and preferred to communicate in Guaraní whenever possible, whereas some of the children who had spent their earliest years away from the *comunidad* because of their parents' work commitments understood Guaraní but almost exclusively spoke Spanish.

I arrived in Camiri, a ‘grim and functional oil producing town’, as my Rough Guide said (Read 2002: 311), on a hot and dusty afternoon in July of 2006. All I had to go on at that time was a couple of addresses and phone numbers which Isabelle Combès had given me when I had met up with her in Santa Cruz, some very basic Spanish, and a lot of enthusiasm. Rather unimpressed with the town itself, which to me appeared as a dirty, chaotic and boring place, I got myself a room in a hotel and started looking around, in search of contacts that might prove useful.

I managed to locate the contacts provided by Isabelle, one of whom turned out to be an elderly gentleman with a white moustache running what was basically a one-man NGO in support of the local Guaraní population. His name was Franz Michel, and he seemed pleased to meet me and spent long afternoons chatting with me about Europe and Guaraní-related stuff. He also very kindly gave me access to the archive/library he had put together in the office building of his organisation, the Institute for Peasant Documentation and Support (IDAC).³ Asked about who might be able to help me in my endeavour to get access to a community, he suggested I approach the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG), the Guaraní’s political organisation about which I had already read a lot back in the UK. Alternatively, he said, I could ask at Teko Guaraní⁴, an NGO that also went out to the *comunidades* a lot.

With Teko, an NGO dedicated to bringing education to the *comunidades*, it was clear from the start that they wouldn’t be able to help me in finding a field site, but at least they pointed me towards a Guaraní language class that was being held at the head office of the indigenous district, the Capitanía Kaami.

What followed were several months in which I spent a lot of time hanging around the APG office, waiting for people who invariably either turned out to have gone on a trip somewhere else (*‘Ha viajado’* was a phrase I heard a lot from doña Nancy, the petite

³ Also sometimes given as ‘Institute for Guaraní Documentation and Support’, or IDAG. For reasons of comprehensibility, I am generally giving names of institutions and organisations in English where they are stated in full; for the Spanish equivalents, see the list of acronyms and abbreviations on page 2.

⁴ ‘Teko Guaraní’ is the Hispanicised third-person form of the much-quoted expression *‘ñande reko’*, ‘our way of being’, and thus means ‘the Guaraní way of being’. In the case of the NGO, it is also a ‘Guaranised’ acronym of *Taller de Educación y Comunicación Guaraní* (Guaraní Education and Communication Workshop).

and very friendly APG secretary) and would only be back the following week, or who were busy in meetings (*‘Está en reunión’*) and couldn’t see me until the next day – when I would come back only to be told that they had gone away on a trip. Whenever I did manage to talk to the people I was after, the result was usually that, after introducing myself and my intended project, which at the time I saw as dealing with different aspects of ‘land’ in the lives of *comunarios*, I was received with enthusiasm and told that I would certainly be able to work in a community, and that the APG would support me as much as they could, which would make me leave in an upbeat and optimistic mood. Only once, however, did I manage to pin someone down on something more concrete; it was a trip to a *comunidad* further to the South on which the then-APG land officer promised he would take me. *‘La vamos a avisar’* – ‘We’ll let you know’, he said, but when I came back to the office sometime later to enquire about the trip, I was told that they had already gone.

Meanwhile, I spent the rest of my time studying Guaraní, reading old development reports in Franz’s office, and immersing myself in Camiri social life. One evening I was at a pub with some friends. I ended up sitting opposite a woman named Heydi, to whom I started talking on account of her Germanic-sounding name. Having discovered that she had in fact spent some time in Germany years ago, we soon had a nice conversation going, in the course of which I bemoaned the fact that I hadn’t been able to get anywhere in my dealings with the APG so far, who I had hoped would help me gain access to a community in which to carry out my fieldwork.

‘Have you tried CIPCA?’ Heydi asked.

I told her that I had not.

‘But you have to go to CIPCA!’ she insisted. ‘They always go out to the *comunidades*; I used to work for them myself a while ago, and I’m telling you, they’ll be able to help you.’

Having by then been so focussed on the APG that I wasn’t even considering looking for alternative options anymore, it hadn’t occurred to me to look them up. CIPCA, the Centre for Research and Promotion of the Peasantry⁵, is one of the largest and most

⁵ See <http://www.cipca.org.bo>.

influential NGOs in Bolivia. It was founded in 1970 by three Jesuits (Luís Alegre, Francisco Javier Santiago, and Xavier Albó, today one of the best-known Bolivian anthropologists), with the aim to promote peasants' and indigenous people's political, economic and cultural positions and has since then initiated countless projects and produced a significant body of literature relating to the various concerns of Bolivia's indigenous and peasant populations (cf. Gianotten 2006). While CIPCA's main office is located in La Paz, there are also branches in Camiri and Charagua, whose employees mainly work with the local Guaraní populations.

At the Camiri office I was told that I needed to talk to Marcelo Núñez⁶, who – miraculously – even was in his office and agreed to see me. When I told him about my research plans, he said it shouldn't be any problem to find a *comunidad* that was willing to take me in. He invited me on a trip to Charagua, a town close to Isoso some four hours' drive from Camiri, where some *mburuvicha reta* (Guaraní communal leaders) were having a meeting. The aim, Marcelo said, was to induce the leaders of the Charagua Norte region to establish new *comunidades*, as they had recently been granted a large area of land which they now needed to take possession of if they didn't want to forfeit their right to it. I happily agreed, and the next morning around 4am we embarked on the hot and dusty journey to Charagua in Marcelo's 1974 Toyota jeep, an adventurous vehicle largely powered by gas bottles.

After listening to Marcelo hold fiery speeches aimed to propel the *capitanes* into action for most of the day (a draining task, as he later said it could be), we had a quiet chat in the patio of the hotel where we were staying in the evening. Not only did Marcelo say that he would help me in getting access to a community, he had in fact thought about it in some more detail, and his suggestion was that I should do a multi-sited study: if I went to two or even three *comunidades*, I would see the differences in people's situations and ways of life, which would enable me to write a much better

⁶ Although many of the people appearing in this thesis would undoubtedly not mind being identified by name, I have decided to use pseudonyms wherever possible because of the delicacy of some of the topics discussed. The exception is where I am referring to people in official positions (such as leaders of Guaraní organisations), and where names of informants appear in cited documents, in which cases they are reproduced unchanged. I have, however, done my best to make it impossible to match those 'official and documental' *comunarios* up to the 'ethnographic' ones whose opinions are reproduced in the main part of the thesis. While some insights into the workings of the community will be lost by this approach, I feel that the privacy of my friends is worth this small sacrifice.

report in the end. The ones he had in mind were Barracas, a ‘captive community’ (*comunidad cautiva*) in Alto Parapetí, and a *comunidad* close to Camiri called Cañón de Segura, which he said was a ‘new *comunidad*’ of only some 10 years old. This latter one was located only a short way outside of Camiri and thus would make for a good place to start with, as it would be easily accessible and I would be able to go into town a lot more easily than from, say, Barracas, which was a long way off from anywhere, and where access was therefore more problematic.

I was thrilled to finally be a step further in my quest and happily consented to his plan. Things then moved very quickly: a few days after coming back to Camiri, Marcelo took me to look up Ramón Gómez, the *capitán grande* of Kaami, who was a friend of his, to ask his permission for me to work in Cañón de Segura, which was promptly granted. The three of us then went out to Cañón, where we spoke to the local *capitán*, Francisco Álvarez, who also gave his consent right away. It was decided that I could live in the former nurse’s house just outside the school compound at the centre of the *comunidad*, or indeed in one of the school buildings if I preferred. It took another week or so for me to actually make the move, as don Ramón, who had promised to take me and my things, wasn’t able to locate me in my Camiri accommodation, and I also needed time to purchase some basic supplies and equipment for the country, in which Marcelo’s wife, doña Dora, very kindly assisted me. Marcelo then drove don Ramón and me out in his jeep, and after they had both left, I proceeded to ‘take possession’ of my new home-for-a-while, a small but well-built adobe building that housed the community’s medical supplies and to which the *comunarios* referred as ‘*la posta*’⁷.

As could perhaps be expected, I went to Cañón harbouring various assumptions that had to be questioned, if not entirely discarded, at later points in time. When Marcelo had told me that Cañón was a ‘new *comunidad*’, the image that had automatically presented itself to me was that of a newly formed group of people, perhaps of migrants from different areas, who had got together to found a community on a piece

⁷ Short for ‘*posta sanitaria*’, the *comunidad*’s medical centre.

of previously uninhabited land, a place without history, so to speak, or where ‘history’ had only recently begun and the practice of life was therefore rooted only in a generalised notion of Guaraní culture shallow enough to be shared by everyone. Even though I was glad and grateful to finally have found a place to do my fieldwork, and even though I kept asserting to those people in Camiri who would criticise me for not having gone for a more ‘traditionally authentic’ place such as Tentayapi in Tarija Province⁸ that I was not interested in chasing authenticity as such but rather in finding out what people’s lived realities were actually like, part of me was secretly disappointed. I felt like I was being presented with something that only vaguely resembled what I had really come for, that is, a ‘proper’ Guaraní *comunidad*, as if a new formation of the kind I was imagining would somehow be less ‘real’.⁹ In other words, I was neatly reproducing what Gupta and Ferguson have referred to as the ‘*hierarchy of purity of fieldsites*’: ‘All ethnographic research is... done “in the field”, but some “fields” are more equal than others – specifically, those that are understood to be distant, exotic, and strange’ (1997: 13).

Needless to say, I was wrong about everything. Apart from the fact that the kind of place I was envisioning would have been just as interesting, complex, and deserving of attention as any more supposedly ‘authentic’ one, the situation in Cañón was very different from what I had thought it would be. I soon found out that the newness of the *comunidad* to which Marcelo had referred consisted in its location rather than the makeup of the group of people, who had previously lived on the property of one of the big private landholders of the area. This situation (in Bolivia known as ‘*cautiverio*’ [captivity]) had remained little changed over various generations before a conflict broke out between *comunarios* and landowners that eventually resulted in the move to the *comunidad*’s current location in Cañón de Segura in 1994. It thus became clear that, rather than lacking its own history, the *comunidad* of Cañón had rather a lot of it, and not only that, it even turned out to be important to its people.

⁸ Tentayapi is famous throughout the region as one of the last strongholds of Guaraní cultural ‘purity’, an image the Tentayapi *comunarios* themselves actively promote.

⁹ Cf. Gow (1991: 1): When discussing the organization of their communities, [Piro people] talk most about the village school and their legal title to land. No recourse is made by these people to what we might term “traditional” models of community organization, familiar to anthropologists through ethnographies of other Amazonian peoples. Indeed they contrast their current “civilized life” in legally recognized settlements with a school, called *Comunidades Nativas*, to their ancestors’ lives in the forest, where they lacked “real villages”.

Partly, this was due to the fact that by acquiring a piece of land and the legal title proving their ownership of it, the people of Cañón had officially entered into the status of '*comunarios*', of inhabitants of a formally recognised *comunidad indígena*, rather than being the peons by default of a family that happened to have inherited the land on which their original home was located, and whose legal position was as a result precariously vague. Going back to my initial misgivings about Cañón, we can see that what I had thought of as the determining elements of a *comunidad* and what the law specified as such were two different things: whereas I had – perhaps by thinking about the *comunidades* in terms of the English 'community' – assumed that what was constitutive of a 'proper' *comunidad* as I imagined it was its people, the law specified the land title as the primary thing. In other words, I had not only been wrong about what Cañón was going to be like, but I had also started from the wrong premise altogether when I had taken the concept of '*comunidad*' for granted. I am not suggesting here that I was wrong and the law was correct; but rather that it is worth examining the meaning of '*comunidad*' a little closer: if I had different assumptions about what a *comunidad* was than the Bolivian State did, what other interpretations were there? And what, indeed, was it the *comunarios* themselves thought? And what were the relationships, or even conflicts, that ensued as results of these different interpretations?

On 12 December 2006, recently after I had arrived in Cañón de Segura for the first time, an event took place in the *comunidad* which not only marked the beginning of my own engagement with Cañón and its people but, retrospectively, also provides a convenient point of departure for the present discussion. I will start by relating the event in full and consequently move on to drawing out the themes I am planning to discuss in the course of the thesis.

In a couple of fleeting first encounters with some *comunarios* I had been told two different versions of what the event was about: the *capitán's* wife had said that it was

a literacy¹⁰ event, and the *capitán grande* that it had to do with the *comunidad* having acquired a new bull for their cattle project. It was to be held in the school, the ‘centre’ of official life in Cañón, at either 8:00 or 9:00 am (this, too, my sources had disagreed on). When I went down to the schoolyard in the morning of the indicated day, there were a few groups of people already assembled in front of the buildings. As I came down, don Rogelio, the *comunidad’s* Education Officer¹¹, approached me, radiating enthusiasm. I asked him about the event, and he said that it was a celebration of the fact that Cañón de Segura was the only Guaraní community where there weren’t any illiterates anymore. He seemed proud of that fact, which he repeated several times. He said the vice-president of the literacy campaign was going to come from Camiri, as was the mayor (*alcalde*), and the event was probably going to start around 10:00 am.

Having more time than I had assumed before the start of the event, I chatted with Rogelio for a bit, and he told me about the school and how it had been built little by little, with funding from different bodies (one, FIS, which he said was foreign¹², the municipality, and the *comunidad*, which had also put in manual labour). They had started with the central building which was also the simplest, basically four low walls and a roof, with desks and a blackboard inside. There were five more buildings surrounding it by then, three of which were equipped with solar panels. One of those powered a TV and video, which (I was told) was used to show educational videos to the children. There were five to six teachers, all of whom came from Camiri to teach, except one who stayed in one of the buildings in the schoolyard, but Rogelio said the *comunidad* was training some teachers of its own. Teaching was done bilingually, with the first couple of years or so purely in Guaraní.¹³

¹⁰ Spanish: *alfabetización*.

¹¹ Since the founding of the APG and the subsequent reorganisation of Guaraní *comunidades* in *capitanías*, each of these levels of representation has a team of ‘officers’ (*responsables*) in charge of promoting the areas of production, infrastructure, health, education, and land/territory (PISET; see Chapter 8).

¹² Rogelio was mistaken in this assumption: The FIS is the Social Investment Fund of Bolivia, which the government founded in 1990 with the aim ‘to develop basic social infrastructure and to provide financial and technical assistance in education, health, water supply, and sanitation projects’ (IEG 2010). Since the government’s increased move towards decentralisation in the 1990s, the FIS has been financing more and more projects on a municipal, institutional, and communal level (*ibid.*).

¹³ For a detailed study of the history of intercultural bilingual education (EIB) in Bolivia, see Gustafson (2009).

Rogelio asked about my house, and I praised it, expressing my surprise at finding that it had running water. Rogelio said that the water supply was quite recent, maybe five years old, and that before they had got it they had had to go quite far to fetch water, at 4:00am in the morning, because later in the day there would already be cows occupying and muddying up the water hole which belonged to the *patrones*.

Before me, there had been a nurse living in my house, but she had been ordered elsewhere by the municipality because the *comunidad* was deemed too small to merit a nurse of its own. I asked how the current system was working for them, with the nurse only coming in once a month or so, and he said it worked but was far from ideal, because if there were any emergencies, or someone needed something in the middle of the night, there was no one to attend to them. While Rogelio and some others had learned about the most basic medicines, any more serious cases had to be referred to the hospital in Camiri. He said they were hoping to have a doctor or nurse from among their own people one day.

After talking with Rogelio, I sat with the women for a bit, who were busy preparing *asado* (barbecued meat) on a large grill behind the communal kitchen. Rogelio then came back to fetch me so I could join the children in the building next-door, where they were watching a video. The video showed how the Guaraní used to be maltreated by the *patrones* who only gave them coca instead of food and made them work all day and live in appalling conditions. It included a lot of shots of men ploughing the earth with picks, speaking about the people's desire to work their own land for themselves. Rogelio told me that the video was about a *comunidad* in the Ingre, where today there were no *comunidades cautivas* anymore, although they still existed in other zones. The video went on to talk about the importance of 'culture', showing people dancing in masks and drinking and preparing *chicha* during the *arete guasu*, the traditional 'grand fiesta' of the Guaraní.¹⁴ The children came and went, some talked sometimes, but on the whole they seemed quite interested, and no one seemed to be on their case to keep watching or pay attention. I got some looks off them, and particularly the little girls smiled at me if I smiled at them first.

¹⁴ Educational videos like this are produced for use in the *comunidades* by Teko Guaraní; see above.

After the video had finished, I went outside, where the literacy woman Rogelio had told me about, a woman called Ana María, started talking to me, telling me – again – how there weren't any illiterates in the *comunidad* anymore. She also mentioned that the particular programme they had come to 'evaluate' (which was the word she used for the event, whereas Rogelio had spoken about a celebration), a literacy programme for adults, was mainly frequented by women. She spoke of how in some *comunidades* she'd seen old grandmothers who could hardly see anymore attend these programmes, and how it had brought tears to her eyes to see them laboriously trace their own names, like primary school children. She talked about how the men were very *machista* and didn't want their women to participate in any decision-making processes, which evidently annoyed her.

The evaluation itself was about to start in the building opposite, where the room filled up rapidly with almost purely women of all ages, and perhaps two men. The teacher who had been showing the video spoke a few words, then one of the evaluators, who had come from Cuba, spoke, making people laugh when her tongue slipped and she talked about 'Cuban history' when she'd meant to say 'Bolivian history'.¹⁵ Then Ana María spoke and a man with a video camera came to film her speech, so I left the room so as not to be in the way.

I was lurking in the entrance when I suddenly noticed someone standing behind me. Turning, I recognised Elisabeth, the secretary of the Capitanía Kaami, whom I knew from attending my Guaraní classes. She greeted me and asked me to have a seat with her in front of the building where some chairs had been put out in a circle. Some five or six people were drinking maize beer (*chicha*) out of a bucket with the aid of *tutumas*¹⁶. They gave me some, as well as a little plastic bag of biscuits, which people were munching on without any haste. I noticed a quiet young girl's T-shirt, which had the words 'Arakavi 2006' written on it. Seeing that another woman's shirt bore the same caption, I asked the girl what *arakavi* meant. She told me, '*tiempo bueno* [good time]'; I only found out later that it was also the name of a project in support of

¹⁵ Shortly after coming into office, Evo Morales launched a literacy campaign for adults entitled '*Yo sí puedo*' ('Yes, I can'). Thanks to Evo's international socialist connections, the campaign was supported by Cuban personnel and finances from Venezuela (Gustafson 2009: 266-7).

¹⁶ Drinking vessels made out of the gourds of the calabash tree (*crescentia cujete*).

school children implemented by Visión Mundial, the Bolivian branch of World Vision (see Chapter 8).

After a little while during which the talking continued inside, interspersed with occasional clapping, the people seated outside started to leave, and, after another cup of *chicha*, Elisabeth and some others got up to go as well so I followed them. I asked where we were going, and they told me, to look at the cattle project. It was only then that I realised that there were in fact two different events going on at the same time, and both my 'informants' had been correct in what they had told me. It turned out that the mayor of Camiri, Gonzalo Moreno, had actually come to give a speech in the cattle corral, and not for the literacy event as Rogelio had suggested.

We walked down the *comunidad's* main path for a little while, stopping once to rest in the shade, then were picked up by two men in a pick-up truck. There was also another white truck, which overtook us and kept picking people up on the way. To get to the corral, we had to get off the truck again and walk down a ravine (*quebrada*). Elisabeth told me that the ground there was made up of 'black earth', which she said didn't hold the water very well but was good for agricultural purposes (as opposed to 'yellow earth', which she said was the opposite in both respects).

Out there, where there were no more houses, the forest was almost unspoiled by the otherwise ever-present rubbish that tended to accumulate by the side of paths and around the edges of the *oka* (patios in front of people's houses), although people unconcernedly kept dropping their empty cookie wrappings. We passed a couple of water holes, then reached the corral, which consisted of a very neat fence, trough, and shed and was filled with cows and bulls and at least three little calves, all neatly branded with numbers. Four people spoke, among them don Rogelio and the mayor, and the same guy from the school filmed the speeches which were all pleasantly short. I took a few pictures, then we all walked back and climbed onto the back of the white truck, where it was a source of amusement for people to try to keep the *chicha* bucket, which had been brought along, from spilling over. A few times the truck leaned towards the left so far that I thought it might tip over, but nothing happened and even the *chicha* made it back to the school.

At the school, a feast of *asado*, potatoes and salad was waiting for us. The mayor was already munching away when we got there, sitting at the only table with one of a few plates in front of him. The food was sitting on the table in larger dishes for people to help themselves. I was given a piece of meat to gnaw on and sat down in between Elisabeth and the quiet girl with the 'Arakavi' T-shirt. Some people were using knives to cut the meat, but only a privileged few had plates and most were just holding the meat in their hands. The salad wasn't very popular, but another woman to whom I had been talking brought some in a plate, and we took turns to eat it, sharing one fork among the four of us. At some point soon after we got back to the school, Ana María left, not without saying goodbye to me.

The mayor, too, left after a while, and a lot of people drifted off, including Elisabeth and the quiet girl. I was pretty much instantly ushered to a seat in between two men at the other side of the table, one of whom turned out to be one of my new 'neighbours', Pedro Medina (a cousin of the *capitán grande's*), and the other of whom was Aurelio Rocca, the uncle of my future friend and 'field assistant' Lupe. They started asking me questions: where I was from, what my name was, what I was doing here, how long I was going to stay etc., then they told me they had already had four or five investigators in Cañón before me, but that none of them had stayed in the *comunidad* but had travelled back and forth from Camiri. I had to explain, as usual, that Austria was not Australia; that it got hot there in the summer although not as hot as in Bolivia, but very cold in the winter; and what the kind of anthropology I was doing involved, in particular that it had nothing to do with digging up bones.

After the two had left, I got talking with don Danilo, one of the speakers from the corral, and he told me that he had been thinking about me while they were preparing the meat for the *asado* the night before and wondering how I might be doing, asking himself how his 'little sister' (*hermanita*) was doing in her house all on her own. After all, he said, we were all human beings, no matter the skin colour and such things, and I agreed, saying that it was only the cultures that were different, which was why it was interesting to study them. The fact that I had come to learn about their culture was generally received with a profession of pride and satisfaction by people, which came as a relief to me as I had been very worried about making a nuisance of myself.

As previously suggested, besides being a good indicator of my initial cluelessness (and perhaps clumsiness in approaching the matter), my initial confusion about where best to start my investigation also reveals something about the situation of the indigenous *comunidades* in Bolivia themselves; namely, that it is complex and by no means straightforward. All parties I had initially consulted about whom best to approach had had a point, in that all the organisations indicated did (and do) deal with the *comunidades* in and around Kaami in some way or another. However, approaching the right authority (in my case, the *capitán grande* of Kaami) proved vital in getting me where I wanted to be.

The whole process would have been a lot smoother had I had funding to implement a particular project; *proyectos* have become something like a currency among the Guaraní, and it happened more than once during my stay in Cañón that an already slightly inebriated *comunario* approached me at a fiesta, pleading, ‘Doña Vero, can’t we do a project? One project, doña Vero!’; requests which, hardly having any money for my own fieldwork, I had to decline, merely being able to express the hope that something might be possible sometime in the future when I would have finished my PhD and might be able to apply for a grant for a project that would benefit the *comunarios* more than my own self-indulgent fieldwork.

What struck me about these requests was their usually thoroughly general nature; apart from don Rogelio, who had some rather specific ideas for improvements that could be done to the school, people always talked about these *proyectos* in a non-specifying way. When I asked them about what project they had in mind, they would basically tell me that it did not matter, anything was welcome. This tendency of people to accept any form of ‘help’ that gets thrown at them from the outside has become pervasive and reflects the degree to which different NGOs and other organisations compete to implement their own agendas in the *comunidades*, to a great degree without any communication among them, resulting in a multitude of unrelated small-scale projects being put into practice in the same *comunidad*. I did hear representatives from different NGOs address this state of affairs in front of

comunarios from different places a couple of times in the course of workshops. However, none of them suggested that the organisations themselves had any responsibility in coordinating their actions among themselves; rather, they suggested that the *comunidades* needed to identify the areas in which they wished to specialise and which they wished to develop rather than accepting everything that was offered them uncritically of its usefulness.

The event discussed above reflects the plurality of opinions about what a *comunidad* is about that are projected onto it by the various stakeholders investing in it: while we can generally say that most *proyectos* are aimed at ‘developing’ a *comunidad* in one way or another, the opinions about what kind of development is needed diverge. While one party in the above example stresses the need for education (in the form of literacy), the other is interested in advancing the *comunidad’s* economy (in this case, cattle breeding). What is more, however, the multiple and at times competing interpretations of what a *comunidad* is about that are generated by the various organisations according to their own interests and agendas can be seen in the *comunarios’* own interpretations as well. Not only is there disagreement about what the event represents (literacy or cattle programme?), but Rogelio’s understanding of it as a ‘celebration’ of literacy (as opposed to Ana María’s talk of an ‘evaluation’) further shows that even the same interpretation can come with different meanings attached to it.

However, while these were interpretations generated by outside sources (which, as we have seen, could be as remote as Cuba) that were taken up and re-evaluated by the *comunarios* (note the fact that Cañón’s cattle project was one that was initiated by the *comunarios* themselves), there were also more specifically ‘internal’ meanings that were attached to the concept of ‘*comunidad*’. The video which was showed to the children during the event provides a glimpse of what people generally seemed to think living in a *comunidad* was about: that is, to live ‘*tranquilo*’, in peace, in particular meaning away from the dominance of the *patrones*, non-Guaraní landowners who often kept the people living in *comunidades* ‘owned’ by them in a state of semi-slavery. While the video showed a generalised version of the Guaraní experience in such ‘captive communities’ (*comunidades cautivas*), Cañón had its own specific and very recent history of escaping such a situation, which was still very much on

people's minds at the time of my fieldwork. As Rogelio's remark about the water supply shows, the move away from the land of the *patrones* to the community's current location, which happened in 1994, was only one step in the ongoing process of gaining independence from them. Instead of saying that they appreciated Cañón for being able to live '*tranquilo*', people sometimes used the phrase, 'Here, we are able to do what we want', which raises the question of what exactly that might be. Independence, from the *patrones*' influence as well as financially, was definitely high up on the agenda, as expressed in Rogelio's wish for more Guaraní professionals such as teachers and nurses and the frequent talk about 'indigenous autonomy' (an idea which had been gaining momentum among demands for departmental autonomy coming from the Cruceño capital, see Chapters 9 and 10) that occurred during regional meetings and other official events.

However, whereas these desires were mainly voiced by people who either carried an official function in one of the Guaraní organisations (APG, Kaami etc.), were working for or with one of the numerous NGOs in Camiri, or were otherwise much engaged in 'outside' activities, 'doing what we want' also meant other things for people whose lives were more centred on the *comunidad* as a location. One important factor was mobility: people appreciated the fact that they could come and go as they pleased, build their houses where they wanted, and work according to their own ability and need. Work, in fact, was one of the most frequently raised points: in Cañón, *comunarios* would say, it was possible to work *tranquilo*, without anyone interfering or telling one what to do. The fact that each family was able to own and work their own field (*chaco* in local Spanish, or *ko* in Guaraní) and keep their own animals was also highly valued. The fact that a lot of the *comunidad*'s internal economy did not involve money also gave people a sense of freedom which they missed in the towns, a sentiment often expressed with the phrase, '*El pueblo es pura plata*' – 'It's all about money in the town'. While in reality money represented a necessity even for *comunarios* (mostly, but not exclusively, in their involvement in the urban market) and something people were constantly short of and in pursuit of, they often talked about it as a kind of necessary evil, something that was not (at least ideally) part of their own way of life. Guaraní people, I was told over and over again, did not need money to live together because they shared and helped each other out.

At this point, it is also worth having a thought about the idea of culture. Not because I am here concerned with any anthropological debates about ‘culture’ as such, but because the idea of *cultura* is one that also strongly informs many discourses about indigenous communities in Bolivia today, whether ‘external’ or ‘internal’. Celebrating their ‘culture’, or way of life (Guaraní: *teko, ñande reko*), was another theme that always strongly featured among the things that *comunarios* ‘wanted to do’ in their own place. The epitome of this otherwise rather elusive concept is the fiesta, which again finds its traditional culmination in the *arete guasu*, a big joint celebration which is nowadays held during carnival time (around February). The *arete* not only involves the consumption of generous amounts of *chicha* (Guaraní: *kägui*; maize beer) but also the performance of mythically inspired games, such as the *yagua yagua/toro toro* (fight between the jaguar and the bull) and the *kuchi kuchi* (chase of the pigs). On a broader level, non-indigenous Bolivians regard the *comunidades* as something like a stronghold of cultural authenticity, for them represented by traditions such as the *arete guasu*, traditional dress, and indigenously produced arts and crafts, which they imitate, adopt and use for their own purposes whenever it suits them (hence the Camireños’ insistence that Tentayapi was more worth studying than Cañón). Again, these two ideas of culture feed on and inform one another, but there are also discrepancies between them, so that ‘*cultura*’ does not necessarily mean the same to non-Guaraní Bolivians as ‘*ñande reko*’ means to Guaraní people, even when they are presumably talking about the same thing.

In short, while the concept of ‘*comunidad*’ is one that is familiar and firmly embedded in contemporary discourses throughout Bolivia, the meanings and purposes which different people and interest groups attach to it are far from unanimous. Apart from the physical and legal entity, comprising a group of people, the land on which they live, and the legal title for its ownership, a *comunidad* is thus a multifaceted and multilayered complex of diverging and sometimes competing ideas, desires and agendas.¹⁷

¹⁷ My argument in this thesis is in many respects similar to that of Peter Gow’s *Of Mixed Blood* (1991). Gow explores the meaning of ‘*comunidad*’ for the Piro people of Peruvian Amazonia, which he finds to be intimately tied to notions of kinship and history. In this thesis, I, like Gow, attend to the constitution of ‘*comunidad*’ in a specific history. However, whereas conducting ethnography amongst the Piro led Gow to attend to kinship, working in Cañón directed my attention towards politics.

My study of Cañón de Segura has thus evolved into a case study of a Bolivian Guaraní *comunidad* in a more literal sense than originally intended. Originally, my aim had been to look at the importance of and meanings attached to land *within* the *comunidad*. However, while looking at life within the *comunidad* was interesting, questioning the concept of ‘*comunidad*’ itself has opened up new perspectives on what people are doing and why that could otherwise have easily been ‘lost in translation’, that is, in continuing to assume – as most parties with an interest in the *comunidades* tend to do – that we know what we are talking about when talking about a ‘*comunidad indígena*’ in Bolivia today.

In academic terms, studies that deal with different aspects of *comunidad* within the Bolivian context tend to focus on the Andean institution of the *ayllu* (which pre-dates the *comunidad* as a form of indigenous social organisation), either conflating the two concepts altogether (cf. Rivera Cusicanqui 1987) or focussing on the relationship between them (cf. Bonilla ed. 1991). This is most likely due to the fact that the idea of indigenous ‘*comunidades*’ has its roots in early colonial Andean history (see Chapter 1).

As the above discussion of the ‘event’ suggests, another influence has been Sahlins and his notion of the ‘structure of the conjuncture (Sahlins, 1985). An event, Sahlins wrote,

is not just a happening in the world; it is a *relation* between a certain happening and a given symbolic system. And although as a happening an event has its own ‘objective’ properties and reasons stemming from other worlds (systems), it is not these properties *as such* that give it effect but their significance as projected from some cultural scheme. The event is a happening interpreted – and interpretations vary. (1985: 153)

In this thesis, I am treating the concept of ‘*comunidad*’ like an event in the Sahlinsian sense in that I am interested in elucidating the relational aspects of the *comunidad* rather than attempting to get at an ultimate definition or even truth. The thing-in-itself – if such a thing exists – remains unknowable and is therefore of little interest in a study dealing with the daily lives of people, which are, on the other hand, greatly

impacted by the variety of perspectives and interests that circulate alongside (and oftentimes in conflict with) their own. As Michael Taussig put it, ‘my subject is not the truth of being but the social being of truth, not whether facts are real but what the politics of their interpretation and representation are’ (1987: xiii).

The aim of this thesis is, then, to establish the *comunidad* as a locus of conflict and negotiation. Given the width of the ground to be covered for this purpose and the conversely rather limited scope of the thesis, a certain degree of restrictedness and generalisation in the choice and elaboration of the themes discussed has been unavoidable. Where I am, for instance, talking about the opinions of ‘the *comunarios*’ or ‘*karai* (non-indigenous) people’, I am referring to general trends that could certainly be unpacked a lot further were one to investigate any of the topics raised here in more detail. Equally, certain issues that undoubtedly play important roles in the constitution of the *comunidad* (such as education, health, or questions about more specific trends which might be present among *comunarios* of different genders and/or ages or *karai* people from different social and/or ethnic backgrounds) are only touched upon tangentially or omitted altogether. In this sense, this thesis is – perhaps rather fittingly – itself a self-consciously ‘lopsided’ take on the ‘lopsided’ takes of others. While acknowledging these shortcomings, I am, however, representing at least such general trends as can be identified with as much accuracy and discretion as possible.

This being said, it is also important to bear in mind the factor of change. Bolivia, as Bret Gustafson (borrowing from Anna Tsing) reminds us, is an ‘unstable setting’ in which ‘the shifting strategies of movements and the fickle tactics of transnational aid and state actors’

create networked relations, channels, and practices that may persist at one moment in time, only to delink and reconfigure in a different way later. This draws attention to the... prospects that these contingent articulations may or may not generate durable transformations, and the possibility that what we observe is inherently unstable, ephemeral, and fragmented. (2009: 24)

This instability inherent in the Bolivian political scene was acutely tangible during the entire time of my fieldwork and has led me to develop an aversion against the ethnographic present. Not only has the time of the fieldwork passed, but with the end

of writing the thesis itself has passed on to become a closed history in itself and as such curiously unsuited to do justice to its dynamic subject matter. I am therefore recounting all events, encounters, and conjunctures to which I make reference in the main part of the thesis in the past tense. In the ethnography-based main part of the thesis, present tense is used exclusively where I perceive a particular trend to be particularly durable or where its use is demanded by direct quotations. I am using present tense in the document-based reconstruction of events leading up to the founding of the *comunidad* as a legal entity in Chapter 2 because it is, to my mind, in contrast with the constantly changing realities of the *comunarios*' lives, appropriate to the fixedness of the sources used.

The following chapters will explore the case of Cañón de Segura by eliciting and bringing together the various claims and perspectives that impact the *comunarios*' lives. Part I provides a reconstruction of the history of Cañón that marks its birth as an official '*comunidad*', in relation to how this concept of a *comunidad indígena* as it exists in its current form has been shaped historically. For this latter purpose, I am starting with a historical overview in Chapter 1 to provide a setting within which this particular history, as well as the ethnographic parts of the thesis that follow, can be understood. For reasons of space, I am here mostly referring to certain key trends and events, such as Toledo's reforms of the 16th century, the land reforms in the 1950s and 1990s, the founding of CIDOB and the APG, and the changes in international development policy at the beginning of the 1990s. The general historical overview is followed by a reconstruction of the events that pre-empted Cañón's founding as a *comunidad* in Chapter 2, based on the legal documents that were produced in the process and interviews with some of the *comunarios*. From here, I move into a discussion of the *comunarios*' own understandings of 'their' history as an object to be kept and used (Chapter 3), which brings up questions about authorship, ownership, the end of history (in the sense that 'history' is seen as something belonging to the past), and the relation between 'history' and memory that can be elicited from *comunarios*' own recollections of the 'historic' events.

Parts II and III are mainly ethnography-based. Part II shows the *comunarios*' ideas about what a *comunidad* is about and discusses how this was reflected in their daily lives, discourses, and actions at the time of my fieldwork. It deals with the idea of what is generally referred to in the ethnographic literature of South America as the 'good life', as it is implicated in *comunarios*' talk about 'living *tranquilo*' and 'being able to do what one wants'. These ideas are manifested in the organisation of the *comunidad* and life within it, such as work (Chapter 4), spatial organisation and kinship (Chapter 6), social reproduction and commensality (Chapter 5), as well as in people's worries about and aspirations for the future (Chapter 7). The aim of this part is to show that whereas 'history' may have finished with the establishment of Cañón as a legally recognised entity, the formation of Cañón as a *comunidad* is an ongoing process.

The last part explores the ways in which this process is bound up with the actions of outside agents and the ways in which those are interpreted by the *comunarios*. Chapter 8 discusses a particular vision of *comunidades* as 'businesses' to be developed as it is often found in the approach of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Chapter 9 explores non-indigenous Bolivians' ideas about 'Guaraní culture' and the way they relate to common racist beliefs about the nature of indigenous people that are held by the same people. From there, I move on to the positioning of the *comunidades* and their inhabitants within the shifting scene of local and regional politics in Chapter 10. In the final chapter, I look at a different kind of outsider with whom the *comunarios* negotiated their living space, that is, supernatural entities inhabiting the landscape around the houses known as '*dueños*' (masters or owners). The distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' here is to be understood as a helpful convention rather than reflective of a fixed state of affairs. On the contrary, the overlap and entanglements between them should become clear throughout the course of the final discussion, which aims at bringing together all the elements explored in the previous sections in order to show how the different perspectives on the meaning and purpose of a Guaraní '*comunidad*' all contribute to shape the actual realities of people's lives 'on the ground'.

**PART I: THE *COMUNIDAD* IN HISTORY – HISTORY IN THE
*COMUNIDAD***

CHAPTER 1. DEBATES AND BACKGROUNDS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background for the ethnographic part of the thesis. More concretely, it offers a historical overview of certain key events and developments in Guaraní and Bolivian history that will help situate the events and developments discussed in the following chapters. However, since anthropologists' takes on the role of history in anthropological writing can be very varied, it is also necessary to situate this text within a wider context of discursive practices in order to clarify the role which I see history as playing in this thesis. This is particularly important in the case of Bolivia's Guaraní people, whose own situation keeps being impacted by the way they are – either through discourses of their own or through those of outsiders – constructed as historical subjects in different ways (see Chapters 3, 9). In recent years, with the advent of a new indigenist politics in Bolivia, the question of 'origins' has become one of particular weight as people appeal to the idea of 'original peoples' (*pueblos originarios*) in order to claim certain rights for themselves (or, indeed, deny them to others; see Chapters 9, 10). The following subchapter outlines the 'problem' of 'origin' as it appears in the literature on Guaraní history and culture and clarifies my own take on the role of history within the context of this thesis.

1.1 Where Everyone Is Coming From

The fact that the Guaraní of south-eastern Bolivia (in the literature widely referred to as 'Chiriguano') are the descendants of Guaraní migrants (and – according to some theories – a local Chané population; see discussion below) has caused scholars to attempt to trace the migrants' origins by way of linguistic as well as archaeological studies.¹ There is some consensus that their ancestors came from the Brazilian coastal region around Santa Catalina and subsequently mixed with Guaraní from Paraguay, thus making the eastern Bolivian Guaraní language a combination of Brazilian Tupí and Paraguayan Guaraní (Gutiérrez 1965: 11-12, Dietrich 1986: 194-5, Combès 2005a: 72). There are today some 60.000 Guaraní people living in Bolivia (Gustafson 2009: 12), comprising three cultural-linguistic subgroups: the Ava (the most numerous), most of whom live in Cordillera Province; the Simba (formerly

¹ Curiously, these studies tend to highlight the supposed points of arrival of various different ethnic groups to a particular area and their points of departure, without engaging with the question of 'origins' as such (that is, the question of according to what criteria one decides to pinpoint a particular point in space and time above others as an 'origin').

Tembeta)², who live in the Department of Chuquisaca and are regarded as the most ‘traditional’; and the Ioseño, situated in the Bajo Parapetí. All of them speak the same Guaraní language, but with slight variations between them (Combès 2005a: 20).

As for the first Guaraní people’s arrival in the Bolivian Cordillera region, some scholars favour a relatively recent date around the same time as the arrival of the Spanish conquerors (Nordenskiöld 1917, Métraux 1930) or even later, when the migrations might have been undertaken under the influence of their presence (Combès 2005a: 69). That there were Guaraní migrations taking place in colonial times is certain, as can be seen from contemporary records (ibid.). However, some other authors believe in a series of migrations starting from as early as the 13th or 14th centuries (Renard-Cassevitz, Saignes and Taylor-Descola 1986; Combès 2005a; Melià 1988). Archaeological evidence found at Inca fortresses in the Andean Cordillera seems to confirm the presence of Guaraní people in the area at the time of their building (Pärssinen 1992; Siiriäinen and Pärssinen 1997; Alconini 2002). Some of the fortresses might even date back to pre-Inca times, when the Aymara federations already had to defend themselves against Guaraní attacks (Platt 1999), and some recent excavations rendered a possible date of as early as 400 AD (Pärssinen 2003). On the other hand, Xavier Albó lists several cases of small-scale Guaraní migrations taking place within Bolivia as late as the 1980s (Albó 1990: 38-43).

Concerning the reasons for these migrations, one hypothesis refers to the slash-and-burn agriculture which was traditionally practiced by Guaraní peoples, and which relied on expansion into new territories in order to relieve population pressures and saturation of cultivated soils (Melià 1988: 19). According to 16th-century Spanish records, on the other hand, their motivation was the search for precious metals for adornments and trade (Melià 1988: 21). However, the Guaraní tales of a land rich in metals lying to the west, in the documents sometimes referred to as ‘Kandire’, has most famously been interpreted by Hélène Clastres in terms of the Brazilian Tupí-Guaraní myth of a ‘Land without Evil’, where humans can attain immortality ‘without going through the ordeal of death’ (H. Clastres 1995: 76). The idea that its pursuit played an important role also in the Guaraní migrations towards the Cordillera used to be widely accepted (cf. Pifarré 1989, Combès and Saignes 1991) and has

² After the men’s traditional lip piercings. Guaraní: *tembe* = lip; *ta* = stone (Ortiz García 2002: 36).

only recently been challenged (see Julien 2007)³. According to Pierre Clastres (1977), the impetus for these often extensive migrations led by powerful shamans was the fact that Tupí-Guaraní society was undergoing changes towards the end of the 15th century that threatened to replace their egalitarian social structure with a system of centralised power reminiscent of the State. However, given that there were several Guaraní migrations towards the Cordillera, apparently stretching across a long time span, it seems unlikely that there can be a single explanation for these phenomena (Melià 1988, Combès 2005a). More contemporary migrations could, for example, be triggered by factors such as pressure exerted by *patrones* and other power groups (Healy 1982), unwelcome State attempts at integration of the region, or confusion caused by diverse agendas of different NGOs active in the same area (Albó 1990: 46-52, Lucero 2008: 67).

Apart from giving rise to different theories about origins and migration routes, the uncertain provenance of Bolivia's Guaraní population has also divided scholars on the question of their ancestry. The established position is today most famously advocated by Isabelle Combès, one of the leading experts on Bolivian Guaraní history. Combès and her followers maintain that Bolivia's Guaraní (to whom they refer as 'Chiriguano' in order to distinguish them from other Guaraní groups who do not share the same historical background) are a *mestizo* people that was formed out of the synthesis of the Guaraní migrants with the local Chané, an Arawak group already settled in the Cordillera that was subdued by the newcomers (Combès and Saignes 1991, Renard-Cassevitz, Saignes and Taylor-Descola 1986, Melià 1988). According to Combès, the 'integration' of the Chané was achieved through enslaving, marrying, and occasionally eating them (Combès and Saignes 1991, Combès 1992) and was thus not one on equal terms. This contradicts P. Clastres's vision of Tupí-Guaraní egalitarianism (Saignes 1990: 12). The Chané held a lower social status and were excluded from the Guaraní system of reciprocity (Melià 1988). Combès laments the fact that most studies prior to Combès and Saignes's of 1991 have ignored the Chané component of 'Chiriguano' society in favour of its Guaraní elements (Combès 2005a: 314, 331). That the Chané can nonetheless not be overlooked is, in her opinion, demonstrated by the case of the Isoleños⁴, whose political

³ Julien's argument is convincing in the careful way in which it deconstructs Clastres's theory in order to demonstrate how, from a combination of elements from various unrelated sources, Clastres constructed the theory that all migrations of all Tupí and Guaraní peoples of all times were inspired by the search for the Land without Evil, and that Kandire was the name they gave to it. See also Combès (2006).

⁴ It should be noted here that there is no mention of a *mestizaje* between Guaraní and Chané in Isoleño oral history (Combès 2005a: 75), and that this idea is in fact outright rejected by many Guaraní people.

structure to this day follows an Arawak model that protects and legitimates the interests of the Iyambae family currently in power in the Isoso (Combès and Villar 2004)⁵.

While Combès's mission in pushing the *mestizo* theory is thus one of promoting good scholarship, opposition to her position is currently arising from more politically-minded scholars. In a recent book on the indigenous struggle for bilingual education in Bolivia, Bret Gustafson tersely dismisses the entire debate in the first sentences of his foreword before moving on to more recent matters:

The Guaraní people and language in Bolivia are often called Chiriguano in academic literature. The term *Chiriguano* originated in colonial myth, and I see no reason to replicate it for academic purposes. Guaraní call themselves Guaraní. They call their language Guaraní (*guaraní*), "our language" (*ñandeñee*) or "mbia language" (*mbia iñee*). (2009: xix)

While this brief negation does not tell us anything about the reasoning behind it⁶, it does make it more than clear that – contrary to Combès – Gustafson is more interested in the actions, opinions, and situation of his informants than in explaining their current socio-cultural and political positions through recourse to ancient colonial documents.

Combès's and Gustafson's projects are, in short, two different ones, without one necessarily being more important or legitimate than the other. Thus, Gustafson deals with contemporary issues, with historical background information provided as relevant, while Combès's writings are a lot more focussed on the past.

The project of this thesis is more similar to Gustafson's work in that it attempts to provide a snapshot of a particular place at a particular time and the way it is embedded within a larger geographical and historical context, rather than tracing particular features of Guaraní culture or society back through the centuries. Accordingly, the following subchapters provide a brief historical overview that is, due to the constraints of this study, selective rather than exhaustive. Its intention is to provide a narrative through which the themes and events described in the main part of the thesis can be situated within a wider context within Guaraní

⁵ For a detailed study on the importance of descent and lineages in Isoleño politics and power claims over time see Combès (2005a).

⁶ Gustafson's Washington University of St Louis website informs us that an article in which he further elaborates this position is currently under review (<http://artsci.wustl.edu/~bdgustaf/research.html>).

and Bolivian history.⁷ However, by this I am not suggesting that every present-day situation can be seen as having been brought about by a particular and bounded number of events in the past, leading up to the present in neat succession. On the contrary: rather than the present being the logical outcome of a series of past phenomena, it is the needs of the present that impose their logic on the events of the past. There are, of course, always wider connections that go well beyond the scope of even the most careful study; however, I do believe that it is possible to identify certain key influences which have helped shape the present in particular ways, and that they can help us understand current phenomena more clearly.

Finally, a quick word on terminology: while I am in no position to contradict Combès, who bases her theories on the careful study of primary historical sources and ethnographic materials, I concur with Gustafson that the use of the colonially derived ethnonym ‘Chiriguano’ to refer to contemporary Guaraní people is not only unnecessary but wrong. Guaraní people today are showing great initiative in representing their own interests, and the continued use of a term that is widely regarded as derogatory⁸ and therefore rejected by the people to whom it refers shows a disregard for their position that casts them in the role of mere objects of study rather than political subjects with the agency to shape their own history. In this thesis, I am therefore using the term ‘Chiriguano’ only in instances where it appears in quoted texts; in all other cases, I am – in accordance with their own usage – referring to the people at the centre of this study as well as their ancestors as ‘Guaraní’.

1.2 Colonial Era: Establishment of Communities in the Highlands and ‘Irreducible Savages’ on the Eastern Frontier

In the absence of earlier written sources, the history of the Guaraní begins to be accessible to us with the documents produced by the first Europeans to come into contact with them. One

⁷ As Sahlins (1985) reminded us, the recounting of historic events is never disinterested in that what it presents as ‘factual’ already depends on the socially and historically shaped perspectives of those involved in the events and/or those recounting them (and, perhaps, an interaction between the two). This is a particularly good point to keep in mind when writing about Bolivia, whose history is not only convoluted and complex but also particularly hard to grasp due to the abundance of ethnic groups, social classes, and political formations and the continuously shifting relations among them, which afford a diversity of different historical perspectives.

⁸ The reason for the unpopularity of this name is that, according to the most popular theory regarding its etymology, ‘Chiriguano’ is derived from the Quechua words for ‘cold excrement’ (Combès and Saignes 1991:51-2). Combès and Saignes, on the other hand, are convinced that *Chiriguana*, the spelling that appears in most early records, is the auto-denomination adopted by the Guaraní migrants (*Chiriones*) who mixed with the Chané (*Guana*) and thus became *mestizos* with a distinct ethnic identity (Combès and Saignes 1991:53-4).

of the most commented-upon features of Guaraní society at the time of the first contacts with the Europeans is their strong inclination towards warfare. Warfare among groups of their own ethnic background was commonplace for the Guaraní (Combès and Saignes 1991), and local groups would enter into ‘circumstantial and temporary alliances’ against other groups that could just as easily end up setting ally against ally (Saignes 1982a: 90-1). However, the Guaraní also did not hesitate to attack even an ‘external’ enemy as powerful as the Inca Empire, which posed an obstacle to their advance to the west (Pärssinen 1992, Pärssinen, Siiräinen and Korpisaari 2003, Garcilaso 1966). Yet warfare was not the only option in the relations between Guaraní and Incas. As shown by recent archaeological findings at the sites of Inca fortresses (Siiräinen and Pärssinen 1997: 2, Alconini 2002), there also seem to have existed trading relations between the two groups, and the frontier between them was therefore not an impenetrable divide as it has usually been represented.

The same holds true for the Guaraní’s relations with the Spanish, in which we can again see the pattern of changing alliances described by Thierry Saignes. In other words, the whites were (at least in the beginning) not regarded as ‘other’ or even important enough to enter into a lasting intra-ethnic alliance against them (Saignes 1982a; see also MacCormack 1999, Schwartz and Salomon 1999, Guerrero and Platt 2000: 109)⁹. Rather, the Guaraní tried to make sense of them in their own terms (Melià 1988)¹⁰, while the Europeans were in turn busy setting up a divide between highland and lowland peoples that was largely based on their own value judgments of ‘primitive’ (= lowland) and ‘civilised’ (= highland) cultures (MacCormack 1999, Platt 1999)¹¹. The view of the Guaraní as savages is reflected throughout the Spanish documents of the early colonial period (Garcilaso 1966, Pagden 1982, Oliveto 2010). Yet their very ‘savageness’ could serve as a justification for taking their women as spouses, in order to ‘civilise’ them (Hennessy 1978: 20), and, as with the Incas,

⁹ For a contrasting view of the conquest, see Wachtel (1977). According to him, ‘a series of societies, hitherto completely self-contained, experienced with the arrival of the white man the impact of an event originating quite outside their world’ (1977: 2), in the course of which ‘[t]he Indians seem to have been struck numb, unable to make sense of events, as if their mental universe had suddenly been shattered’ (1977: 13).

¹⁰ Melià, for example, notes several cases in which missionaries working among the Guaraní were taken for *paje* (Guaraní shamans), due to their attested ability to make it rain (Melià 1988: 61).

¹¹ Considering that the ecology of the Andes not only shows variations along a vertical, but also along a north-to-south and an east-to-west axis (Troll 1968: 34), the emphasis on the vertical divide reflects what Michael Taussig has called the ‘moralised topography’ (Taussig 1987: 227) of the Spanish imperial perspective. In this perspective, the high and low of space are taken as an allegory for ‘high’ and ‘low’ human beings.

there also existed ‘trade relations’ between Spanish and Guaraní, namely, those of dealing in Chané slaves (Pifarré 1989, Saignes 1982a)¹².

Despite these sporadic contacts, the Spaniards predominantly saw the Guaraní as a threat to their colonial enterprise, as their warriors (*kereimba*) kept attacking Spanish settlements on the frontier. Thus, the Spanish decided to ‘pacify’ the Guaraní (Oliveto 2010). To this purpose, King Felipe II of Spain in 1568 despatched Francisco de Toledo, fifth Viceroy of Peru, with the only formal declaration of war ever to be issued by a Spanish monarch against an American indigenous group (ibid.). Toledo’s *entrada* (lit.: ‘entry’) against the Guaraní in 1574 was a spectacular failure, and similar expeditions undertaken in the following decades equally failed to definitively defeat the ‘savages’ (Pifarré 1989: 69-82).

Meanwhile, however, Toledo’s undertakings in the Andean highlands were crowned by more success: besides introducing a system of tribute consisting of labour (*mita*) and tax (*tasa*) contributions, which were exacted from the indigenous population with the help of native authorities (*curacas*) (Gose 2008: 129), Toledo resettled large parts of the Andean populations into so-called *reducciones* (settlements administered by Crown-loyal Jesuit priests) in the interest of evangelising them (Gose 2008: 119-123) and making them more controllable while at the same time checking the power of the *encomenderos* (Coello de la Rosa 2005). The *encomienda* was a system of indentured labour in which an *encomendero* appointed by the Spanish Crown (usually as reward for financial or military services rendered in the Conquest [Platt, Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris 2006: 240-1]) ‘took care’ of an assigned number of indigenous people (the *encomendados*) in return for their labour (Heath and Carballo 1969: 32). It was finally abolished in the mid-17th century after several unsuccessful attempts because of the abuses committed under it and the *encomenderos*’ unwillingness to comply with the rules set up for them (Salles and Noejovich 2008).

The Toledan resettlements were organised according to the contemporary Spanish ideal of ‘a geometric order, with rectangular streets that converged in a square *plaza* situated at the centre’ (Coello de la Rosa 2005: 5) – a setup that is still standard for towns and cities in

¹² The Spanish generally accused the Guaraní of ‘maltreating, killing and even eating the Chané’, while they themselves took them to work as slaves in the mines, and sometimes eradicated entire groups they had conquered (Pifarré 1989:54). Towards the end of the 16th century, Guaraní raids of neighbouring peoples, which had taken place since before the conquest, even increased as a result of the Spanish demand for slaves (Saignes 1982a: 83, ft 18).

Bolivia today. In other cases, indigenous communities' landholdings as they had existed under the Incas were confirmed by royal patent as the Spaniards superimposed their administrative apparatus on already existing structures (Heath and Carballo 1969: 31). Toledo's reforms are generally thought of as marking the beginning of '*comunidades indígenas*' (as opposed to more traditional forms of organisation such as the Andean *ayllu*, indigenous settlements without legal recognition, or haciendas) in Bolivia.¹³ While there is debate over how big a rupture of the spatial and social organisation that had existed under the Incas the imposition of these Spanish-style communities actually represented (cf. Guerrero and Platt 2000: 97, Platt, Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris 2006: 515-27), Toledo's reforms helped consolidate the creation of the colonial personage of 'the Indian' by lumping together people from all kinds of different groups in the *reducciones* (Gotkowitz 2007: 13-4, Schwartz and Salomon 1999).

The situation looked somewhat different in 'Chiriguano territory', where the fierce resistance of the Guaraní warriors ensured that '[i]n 1767, when the Jesuits were expelled from the Spanish Empire, they barely had one mission among the Chiriguanos, ... in contrast to the tens of thousands contained in their mission systems among other ethnic groups' (Langer 2009: 16). Unable to either 'reduce' or conquer the Guaraní, the Spanish resorted to a politics of damage control in that they 'boxed in the Cordillera and the warlike Chiriguanos' within a system of 'town-fortresses' as the Incas had done (Langer 2009: 14). While the Guaraní were thus little affected by the Jesuitic resettlement endeavours, the continual mutual raiding that ensued between groups of Spaniards and Guaraní in the 16th and 17th centuries did result in a change in their settlement structure:

The Chiriguanos evolved new military strategies after contact with the Spanish. Rather than living in huge longhouses that housed a whole lineage, they switched to smaller houses in which only the nuclear family and perhaps old parents or unattached individuals lived. Dispersed settlements made them less vulnerable to total devastation in a larger attack. They also made Chiriguano society less focused on larger kinship groups. (ibid.)

As the colonial frontier slowly encroached on Guaraní territory, the missions began to become a more attractive option. As a result, the Franciscans, who took over from the Jesuits after their expulsion, managed to rapidly found 24 missions throughout the Cordillera (Langer 2009: 16). However, this success was to a great extent due to the Franciscans' efforts

¹³ For a useful summary of Toledo's relocation policies, see Spalding (1975).

to please the Guaraní rather than their ability to coerce or control them. Thus, while the friars did their best to convert the Guaraní and educate their children in the Christian ways, the Guaraní conversely ‘forced the friars to give them clothes, food, and other such items with minimal work in what became essentially a one-sided exchange’ (Langer 2009: 17).

To sum it up, the strong focus of the colonial sources on the bellicosity of the Guaraní at the expense of any other relations that existed between the two groups led them to be cast either as fearsome warriors or as savages, which are two stereotypes that still find themselves reproduced in certain discourses today (see Chapters 10, 11). Further to note here is the much-commented-upon fact that the Guaraní at the arrival of the Spanish did not form a unified whole, which is interesting to bear in mind when considering present-day Guaraní people’s approaches to history (see Chapter 2). Thus, in the 16th century already we can see the emergence of trends that were to continue in changing guises throughout the following centuries. Those further included the reinvention of the indigenous populations of the *ayllus* as generic ‘Indians’ living in *comunidades*; and on the other hand, the use by privileged Spaniards of this ‘Indian’ population as cheap labour on their private estates (see Chapters 2, 4). Later developments, too, to a certain degree reverberate in Guaraní people’s present-day situation. For example, the breakup of the longhouses of the past initiated a trend towards households that were reduced to the size of the nuclear family (see Chapter 6). The situation that developed in the missions at the end of the 18th century meanwhile led to the emergence of another remarkably durable stereotype: that of the lazy Guaraní who only wants to take but does not want to work in return (see Chapter 10).

1.3 Early Years of the Republic: The Frontier Closes in

Around the beginning of the 19th century, political crises in Spain and the independence movements in Haiti and the USA created a new independence thinking in Upper Peru (the Spanish Imperial name of the region that is today Bolivia). The result was a series of Independence Wars¹⁴, beginning in 1809 and ending with the establishment of the Republic

¹⁴ There is generally little information on the role of the Guaraní in these wars (Saignes 1990: 157). However, one conspicuous case is that of Cumbay, ‘chief of seven communities of the Ingre’ (Pifarré 1989: 274). Cumbay is an ambiguous figure: he goes from peaceful relations with the whites (1799) to attacks on their *estancias* (1804), to signing the peace again (1805), to further hostilities (1807), to yet another peace treaty (1809), to supporting the Republican forces in their struggle against the Royalists (1813) (Saignes 1982a: 92-3). Thierry Saignes suspects this final decision to signify the expectation on Cumbay’s part ‘that the American

of Bolivia in 1825 (Klein 1982). During those conflicts, Guaraní settled in the largely royalist Franciscan missions chose the side of the Spanish, while the independent communities that had been involved in rivalries with the mission residents before (Pifarré 1989: 220) tended to ally themselves with the republicans (Pifarré 1989: 280). Once again, however, these alliances were of a fickle nature, and as the Franciscans, too, were expelled, ‘the Indians themselves put the missions to flame and returned to their former villages without lamenting much the demise of the vast Franciscan mission system’ (Langer 2009: 18).

As a result, ‘by the early nineteenth century the mission system in the region had disappeared and most of the land that the Spaniards and the Franciscans had claimed had reverted to Chiriguano control by 1825’ (ibid.). ‘During the middle of the nineteenth century the balance of military power was clearly on the side of independent indigenous societies’ (Langer 2002: 44) due to the State’s economic and military weakness caused by the Independence Wars and continuing internal and external conflicts (cf. Dunkerley 2007: Chapter 6). The Guaraní even managed to extract ‘tribute’ from frontier landlords and government authorities during those years (Langer 2002: 48).

However, with the increasing demand in cattle brought about by the revival of the silver-mining economy, the cattle breeders began to infiltrate Guaraní territories with increased persistence in the 1850s and soon pushed many off the most fertile lands (Langer 1989: 126-7, Pifarré 1989). In other cases, the indigenous population was conveniently regarded as ‘part of the landscape’ (Langer 2002: 54) due to their “‘inferior” evolutionary status’ (Langer 2002: 53), and Guaraní villages situated on land granted to colonists often passed into the possession of the new owner along with the land (Langer 1989: 135).¹⁵ This brought about a renewed interest in the missions (Langer 1989: 125, 127), which had returned to the area, this time staffed mostly by Italian priests (Langer 2009: 63). While the Guaraní during this time often requested missions to serve as refuges from their enemies, the missions in the long run ‘restricted Guaraní independence’ by ‘creat[ing] a system in which more and more of the Indian villages remained on the Creole side, whereas the independent villages kept fighting among themselves’ (Langer 2009: 60). In 1874-5, various *comunidades* coordinated a series

emancipation would grant the Ava [Guaraní] a place in the new international order’ (Saignes 1990: 161), and Combès speaks of his pursuit of a ‘pact of coexistence’ (*convivencia*) or a ‘pact of mutual respect’ (Combès 2005a: 123) with the whites.

¹⁵ Pifarré (1989: 315) also mentions in passing that various *comunidades* ‘disappeared’ by being converted into *karai* towns (in Cordillera, these include Charagua and Saipurú). In contrast, in the first half of the 20th century some new *comunidades* were created by the secularisation of former missions in Cordillera (Pifarré 1989: 406).

of attacks on haciendas and missions but were defeated by the army. Following a massacre of Guaraní people in 1877 and their defeat in the ‘Battle of Kuruyuki’ of 1892 (Pifarré 1989) (which is today generally presented as the Guaraní’s ‘united last stand’ against the whites [Combès 2005b]), a wave of migrations to Argentina began, where the Guaraní provided a welcome workforce for the sugar plantations (Langer 1989: 142-3, Healy 1982: 20). The kinship links that were thereby established still cause frequent border crossings between Bolivia and Argentina today (Hirsch 2003a: 91).

Meanwhile, tensions between the State and indigenous populations were escalating in the highlands. The Disentailment Act of 1874, which recognised private property as the only form of landownership, provided an opportunity for estate owners to amass large landholdings and turn indigenous people into a free work force (Rivera Cusicanqui 1987: 14, 30), thereby strengthening the trend towards feudal landholding that had replaced the system of slavery at the birth of the new republic (Antezana 1969).¹⁶ As a result, indigenous leaders saw a resurgence in their influence as they tried to defend their communities’ lands by recourse to colonial property deeds (Rivera Cusicanqui 1987; cf. also Platt 1992). Fearing for their property, the landowners reacted with violence, which was met with more violence by the indigenous groups. As a result, the ‘liberal’ period of 1900-20¹⁷ whose official indigenous policies were marked by discourses of inclusion was accompanied by a series of uprisings of Aymara and Quechua demanding the restitution of communal lands, the abolition of compulsory military service, the suppression of colonial forms of community schools, and free access to the market (Rivera Cusicanqui 1987: 37).

In short, Bolivia’s republican era started much like the colonial one had ended, that is, with groups of Guaraní people engaging in sporadic warfare with each other and the *criollos*. However, although the power balance at the frontier ebbed back and forth for a while, by the

¹⁶ For a critical in-depth analysis of the complex relationships between *hacendados*, free *ayllus* and landless peasants in the Bolivian highlands in the 18th and 19th centuries, see Klein (1993). For the impact of foreign markets on *ayllus* and haciendas in the 18th-19th centuries, see Spalding (1975).

¹⁷ About the contradictions of this period, during which the announced aim to integrate the indigenous population into the State became mixed up with strategies of their political exclusion, Nancy Grey Postero writes: ‘[T]he transformations of the liberal republican period cannot be understood merely by an analysis of the political sphere. Rather, the process of nation making was carried out through complex linkages between political reforms promising universal inclusion and cultural understandings about race that produced profoundly exclusionary effects’ (2007: 35). As a result, indigenous people ended up being effectively excluded from State practices while local *patrones*, conjuring up colonial power relations, took over the task of controlling them on behalf of the State (2007: 36; see also Albó 2008b: 15, Healy 1982).

late 19th century *criollo* presence in the Cordillera had become strong enough to either push Guaraní villages off their lands or take possession of them together with their land. This, then, marks the beginning of the phenomenon of the ‘captive communities’, as it is known today (see Chapter 2). Further contributing to the advance of the fragmentation of Guaraní communities were the massive defeats of 1877 and 1892, which basically marked the end of the Guaraní’s warrior culture. Especially Kuruyuki came to be perceived as a turning point in Guaraní history, which has come to be interpreted in different ways by different interest groups over time (see Chapter 3). In addition, the early 20th century saw an aggravation in indigenous people’s legal position, as their communal lands were declared illegal and large tracts of them sold off to private landowners.

1.4 The 20th Century: The New Nation and the Rise of Indigenism

In June 1932 a minor dispute between Bolivian and Paraguayan armed forces became the pretext for the Chaco War which lasted until Bolivia’s defeat in 1935 (Klein 1982: 182-5). The reason both countries had such an interest in the inhospitable Chaco region was that natural gas deposits were suspected to lie under its surface. The war brought about the ‘nationalisation’ of the Bolivian consciousness to a degree to which it had not existed before by bringing together people from all kinds of backgrounds to fight side by side (Rivera Cusicanqui 1987: 43, Antezana 1969: 272, Toranzo Roca 2008: 42-4). However, the Guaraní were affected particularly negatively, and not only because their territory provided the setting in which the war raged: as Guaraní is spoken by the majority of Paraguayans, ‘[t]he Bolivians, their own countrymen, considered them potential traitors, and the Paraguayans considered them potential spies’ (Maybury-Lewis 1999: 926). Given the ever growing trend towards migrations to Argentina, which was seen by the Guaraní as a ‘land of (freer and better-paid) work’, but also a ‘land of knowledge’ and ‘refuge’ (Combès 2005a: 260), many hacienda owners resorted to involving their workers in a system of debt peonage that practically enslaved them (Langer 1989: 148-9, Healy 1982), or procuring a work force by assuming guardianship of impoverished or ‘orphaned’ Guaraní children, under the pretext of wanting to teach them ‘the ways of “civilization”’ (Langer 1989: 150).

The postwar years saw the increased mobilisation of marginalised sectors of the population in trade and peasants’ unions and the emergence of new political actors such as the National

Revolutionary Movement (MNR), a reformist party founded in 1941, which appealed to the political currents of the time:

In 1945, highland Indians held their first national congress to articulate objections to ongoing Indian labor abuses, and Indians began organizing unions and militias to take over the large latifundios. Particularly in the Cochabamba valleys, peasants began to raise the possibility of destroying the hacienda system, employing the slogan 'land to those who work it' (Albó 1987)... In 1952, the MNR brought together the fragmented segments – labor, the miners, the middle class, and the Indian peasants – to institute a revolutionary republic under MNR leadership that promised to develop a national political economy based on economic development and modernization.¹⁸ (Postero 2007: 37)

In the interest of ending ethnic discrimination, Bolivia's indigenous population – up to this point referred to as '*indios*' – was renamed '*campesinos*' ('peasants'), thereby recasting issues of ethnicity in terms of class.¹⁹ The way to more equality promoted by the MNR was basically one of 'educating' their indigeneity out of people, thereby 'depriv[ing] people of their *originario* identity... The means to this end was the state school system... , the peasant unions supported by the *comandos* of the MNR, and the system of military service which rested essentially on recruiting young people of rural origin' (Albó 2008b: 21)

The tensions inherent in the MNR's reforms were also felt in their Agrarian Reform of 1953, which gave indigenous people the right to apply for individual land titles: while some parts of the highland's indigenous sector benefitted through the strength of their unions, others resented the imposition of union representation which they saw as conflicting with the more traditional representative institution of the *ayllu* (Postero 2007: 39).²⁰ While, however, the dissolution of the large landholdings (*latifundios*) (in which large proportions of the land tended to lie idle) did go ahead in the highlands, the same did not happen in the eastern lowlands (generally referred to as the *oriente*) (cf. Healy 1982, Rivera Cusicanqui 1987, Urioste 2003, Toranzo Roca 2008: 44, Healy and Paulson 2000: 7-8):

The MNR party had a tenuous hold on power at the state center and little capacity to impose radical change in the peripheries. There it relied on landowner support. Thus the land reform that swept the Andes did not liberate the Guarani from peonage. In fact, it stimulated a renewed rush on Guarani lands by outsiders [such as Quechua and mestizo settlers]. (Gustafson 2009: 53)

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the 1952 revolution and its advent and aftermath, see Gotkowitz (2007), Kohl (1978), Heath and Carballo (1969).

¹⁹ Following this logic, the political Constitution of 1967 only talks of 'peasant communities' but does not mention 'indigenous communities' (Roper 2003: 140)

²⁰ For a discussion of the relation between *ayllu* and State, see Platt (1982).

Thus, ‘the counterrevolutionary face of the MNR began to gestate in the eastern lowlands, with the development of a new landowning and agroindustrial oligarchy, the beginnings of what would become one of the country’s most important structural conflicts’ (Albó 2008b: 19). While settlers from the highlands (where land was getting scarce due to the increased division of smallholdings into so-called ‘*minifundios*’ [Healy and Paulson 2000: 8]) were streaming into the eastern lowlands in search of land²¹, the increase in industrial growth in the *oriente* during this period also caused another wave of migrations as thousands of Guaraní were drawn to the city of Santa Cruz in search of work in the sugarcane and cattle industries, which provided a ‘closer to home’ alternative to working in Argentina (Postero 2007: 47).

In 1964, the coup d’état of René Barrientos ushered in a series of military regimes while at the same time maintaining the structure of the 1952 State. The military leaders of this regime and those to follow were largely regarded by the *campesinos* as the successors of the MNR (despite the fact that they had removed it from power) and had the *campesinos*’ support (Albó 2008b: 20). Widely lacking popular support otherwise and pitted against the labour unions, Barrientos’s government entered into a pact with the peasantry – the so-called Military-Peasant Pact – which worked ‘by securing the continuance of land distribution under the 1953 agrarian reform and giving assurances to the peasants that their land titles would not be reversed’ (Roca 2008: 75) in return for their cooperation. However, already in the 1970s, a resurgence in indigenist ideologies in the highlands brought about a rupture between the ‘peasants’ and the government (Mallon 1992: 47, Healy and Paulson 2000: 9), and the ‘failed’ land reform of 1953 was abandoned (Urioste 2003, Rivera Cusicanqui 1987).

In summary, the Chaco War of the 1930s brought with it both a reconfiguration of Bolivia’s borders and the awakening of a national consciousness among its populations. At the same time, it resulted in the Guaraní being branded traitors on the one hand (see Chapters 9, 10), and engaged in forms of debt peonage in order to control their movements on the other (see Chapter 2). Meanwhile, increasing indigenous mobilisation and organisation in the highlands

²¹ As Kevin Healy has shown, relations with these new settlers, who often worked on the big haciendas alongside Guaraní peons, were often tense: ‘In effect, the Colla from the highlands, encountering the Chiriguano in an inferior social position, rapidly adopted the prejudice and the myth that the Chiriguano were “nomads” rather than agriculturalists, intrinsically inferior, infantile, and incapable of managing their own affairs without the paternalist protection of their “Christian” *patrón*’ (Healy 1982: 52). For this reason, Guaraní people tended to be excluded from the unions which the newcomers set up in order to better defend their interests (Healy 1982: 53).

ushered in the social revolution of 1952, in the course of which ‘Indians’ were renamed ‘peasants’ in an attempt to make society more equitable by removing the issue of ethnicity. A land reform in 1953 broke up the *latifundios* in the highlands but left those of the lowlands largely untouched. The migration of highland peasants to the *oriente* that resulted from the increasing division of lands in the Andes put further pressure on Guaraní lands. In the 1970s, a resurgence of indigenist ideology put an end to the indigenous peasants’ alliance with the government, and any attempts at further land reform were halted.

1.5 The Last 30 Years: Indigenous Mobilisation in the Lowlands and Neoliberal Reform

The 1980s saw the return of democracy to the country and of the MNR to power. They also, however, saw Latin America shaken by an international economic crisis in the course of which the tin mining industry collapsed in Bolivia (Klein 2011). As a result, many former miners ended up in the (illegal) coca industry, taking with them their more ‘modern’ forms of organisation and market rationality (Dunkerley 2007: 40). In order to boost the economy, the government adopted the kind of aggressive neoliberal policies that were being advocated by the World Bank at the time (Easterly 2005, Kohl 2002). With major economic support coming from the US, the government found itself in the paradoxical situation of having to adopt coca eradication measures in return for funding while at the same time trying to get as much as possible of the coca-derived profits reinvested into the national economy (Klein 2011: 52).

In the resulting ‘rapidly deteriorating socio-political climate [in which] workers and peasants vigorously opposed International Monetary Fund-inspired attempts at economic stabilization’ (Sanabria 1999: 537), indigenous groups began to mobilise in the eastern regions (Roper 2003). The result was the establishment of several indigenous organisations. The most overarching of these, the Indigenous Confederation of the Bolivian East (CIDOB), was founded in 1982 and represents the interests of Bolivia’s lowland indigenous groups. CIDOB’s main concern is the fight for the recognition of indigenous territories. In 1987, the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG) was founded, representing all Guaraní groups who had by then cast off the label of ‘Chiriguano’, which had so long been used by non-Guaraní

as almost synonymous with ‘savage’.²² The Isoseño have, since the early 1990s, further been represented by their own organisation, the Capitanía of the Alto and Bajo Iso (CABI)²³. The APG maintains close links with other Assemblies in Paraguay and, more recently, Argentina, where it has been involved in initiating the set-up of similar organisations (Hirsch 2003a). The APG’s principal points of concern are stated as ‘production, infrastructure, health, education and land-territory’ (generally known under the acronym of PISET), the last of which is given priority (www.cidob-bo.org/regionales/apg.htm:1).

The 1990s brought further political advances for Bolivia’s indigenous populations. In 1990 and 1996 respectively, the lowland indigenous organisations held two marches for ‘Territory and Dignity’ and ‘Territory, Dignity and Natural Resources’, which were joined by *campesinos* from the highlands (Padwe 2001, Postero 2007: 49)²⁴. These activities did not fail to make an impact on the government: an amendment to the political Constitution passed in 1994 officially declared Bolivia a ‘multi-ethnic and pluricultural State’ (Klein 2011: 57), and the ‘Popular Participation Law’ (LPP) passed the same year as part of President Gonzalo ‘Goni’ Sánchez de Lozada’s ‘Plan of All’ (*Plan de Todos*) gave more autonomy to the municipalities and recognised indigenous peoples (along with peasant communities and neighbourhood groups [*juntas vecinales*]) as OTBs (Territorial Grassroots Organisations) with juridical personality, which were to function as ‘territorially based popular representatives able to participate at the municipal level’ (Postero 2000: 2).

In the face of increasing – often conflictive – internal and international pressures, the *Plan de Todos* constituted the government’s attempt to improve the Bolivian economy in a way that would please everybody:

²² The APG was founded with the help of (N)GOs working with the Guaraní (cf. Hirsch 2003b). The form this representation ‘*karai*-style’ has consequently taken has not remained without criticism. See, e.g., Ledezma (2007: 25): ‘When contemporary Guaraní organisation is reconfigured in 1987 with the emergence of the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG), on the one hand a functional organisational structure is established for the currents of development of this era, and on the other hand an instrument that will allow to retake little by little “access to the spaces of power”, a focus which is, to this date, driven by the bulk of leadership and institutional political activists. That is, we have converted ourselves into “fishers of established power”, the power that is part of the structure of the State created in the image and semblance of those who control, manage, and dominate via this machine of homogenisation and subordination that is the Nation-State.’

²³ Since 1993, the CABI also has its own NGO, the Fundación Ivi Iyambae (‘Land without Masters’ Foundation) (Combès 2005a).

²⁴ The Bolivian example seems to have set a precedent among Latin American indigenous movements: there have been several other marches demanding ‘land and dignity’ since 1990, such as Paraguay 1998 (Guaraní and Toba) and Mexico 2001 (Zapatista Army of National Liberation).

The important innovation of the Bolivian *Plan de Todos* was that it simultaneously attempted to reconcile the demands of subnational regions for greater autonomy with those of international institutions for open markets. The *Plan* allowed regions to gain some degree of autonomy and financial resources to embark on local projects through the Law of Popular Participation, while multinational firms would gain access to Bolivia's natural resources through the Law of Capitalization and related economic policies. (Kohl 2002: 453)

To these factors were added the World Bank's official endorsement of grassroots approaches of development (Binswanger-Mkhize, Regt and Spector, eds. 2009) and the increased international interest in indigenous rights on the part of human rights organisations and transnational development agencies alike (cf. Anaya 2004), which promoted a combination of political decentralisation, popular participation, and indigenous autonomy as the winning formula in the empowerment of indigenous peoples worldwide (ibid., Davis 2002).

As a result of these internal and external pressures, a new agrarian reform law (the INRA Act) was passed in 1996, which for the first time made it possible for indigenous communities in Bolivia to apply for communal ownership of lands:

The state can expropriate land previously titled to private parties that has been abandoned without indemnization and can also expropriate land that does not meet a socioeconomic function with indemnization... Land expropriated by the state as well as remaining public land is to be either distributed collectively and free of charge in favor of indigenous or peasant communities or sold at market value at a public auction. The former process has priority over the latter. (Deere and Leon 2001: 37)

The titling of such 'Original Communal Lands' (TCOs)²⁵ involved the prior completion of a Spatial Needs Identification Study, carried out by the government, which used an algorithmic formula to determine the amounts of land considered necessary for a community's 'economic, socio-cultural and conservation needs' (Padwe 2001)²⁶.

²⁵ Note the ongoing circumvention of matters pertaining to ethnicity in this formulation. The TCOs were only recently renamed 'Indigenous *Originario Campesino* Lands' (TIOCs) via Supreme Decree 0727 (06 December 2010).

²⁶ The full titling process of a TCO is described by Padwe as follows (2001: 8-9): First, an indigenous organization has to present their claims to INRA (the National Institute of Agrarian Reform). VAIPO (the Vice Ministry of Indigenous and Original Peoples' Affairs) then prepares an official document of characterisation of the group making the claim, identifying its customs and traditions. Next, INRA conducts a 'geo-referencing' phase, measuring the demanded area and dividing it into 'polygons'. The Spatial Needs study is then carried out by VAIPO, after which INRA clears one measured polygon after the other, identifying third-party claims to the land. By the time the first polygon is designated for the indigenous group, it 'will look somewhat like "swiss cheese", with the third-party inholdings as the "holes"' (Padwe 2001: 9).

However, some authors have noted that these approaches are not sensitive to the cultural specificities of indigenous land-use. Rather, the Spatial Needs study ‘posits cultural identity as an epiphenomenal byproduct of a certain set of material variables’ (Padwe 2001: 4). It further provides a ‘scientific’ cover for political decisions through the ‘directionality of legibility’ caused by its complexity that obscures its processes to the indigenous people while enshrining them in a discourse of ‘unassailable rationality’ (Padwe 2001: 15-6). The kinds of developments the study foresees rest on the assumption that indigenous people will continue in their ‘indigenous ways’ in the foreseeable future, which sets up and serves to maintain a distinction between ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’ Bolivian citizens (Padwe 2001:19). The INRA Act’s general approach to land titling causes problems for highland peoples too in that it does not take into account that the highland valleys are more heterogeneous in ‘soil types, production systems and ways of accessing and owning land’ (Urioste 2003). A particular point of criticism here is the fact that the INRA Act does not allow for any forms of individual or mixed tenure, which would be more appropriate in certain cases (ibid.).

Similar criticisms have been expressed of the LPP: for one, the LPP is based on an erroneous assumption of homogeneous social participation and conditions of municipal management of the entire indigenous population (Hoyos and Blanes 1998)²⁷. In fact, as Ana María Lema found in a study published in 2001, it is often not even entirely clear to people what exactly this ‘participation’ is meant to entail. In other cases, the increased autonomy of the municipalities has failed to change previous power relations due to local elites’ firm grip on influential positions:

In Huacareta the *hacendados* continue to dominate local government... with one of them holding the office of mayor. Another interesting feature is that in Huacareta, the *hacendados* very quickly adopted the LPP by registering their property, including the Guaraní people who work on it, as an OTB, thus securing access to resources and projects... This resulted in projects that favoured particular communities... (Nijenhuis 2002: 156)

²⁷ While the municipality plays an important part in such things as the elaboration of education projects and participation in elections in Iupagasu (Hoyos and Blanes 1998: 27), it is less important in the Isoso (Hoyos and Blanes 1998: 28). This is explained by the different historical background of the two zones: Iupaguasu has been reconstructed as an indigenous zone with the help of NGOs and the Church after the dispersal of its original population. This has brought with it a change in the zone’s internal structure, such as the abolition of the *capitanías* and representation via assemblies on the regional and communal levels, whose members are elected by general vote (Hoyos and Blanes 1998: 21-2). The internal organisation of the Isoso, on the other hand, follows a pattern of consanguineal succession of *capitanes grandes* that can be traced back to at least the early colonial period (Hoyos and Blanes 1998: 18-9, Combès 2005a). Here, interactions with the municipal level are mediated through the *capitanes*, and ‘popular participation’ is thus a lot more limited than in the case of Iupaguasu.

Even where this is not the case, the political ‘decentralisation’ brought by the LPP has in fact increased the reach of the State’s structures and influence into the lives of rural people to a level unknown before, and the new rights given to them can even function to distract from other questions (Postero 2000). This also applies to the mechanisms of the market economy, in which newly established TIOCs find themselves immersed: after the titling of their lands, indigenous groups are required to come up with a management plan that details their intended use of the available natural resources (like timber and wildlife). The result is often ‘big-time commercial logging’ of local forests, carried out under such NGO-inspired headings as ‘sustainable development, participation and equal distribution of profits’ (Postero 2000: 9). Given the slowness of the land titling process, indigenous leaders often even resort to illegally selling off large tracts of forest to logging companies before they can be exploited by third parties still present in the area (ibid.).

Besides these complications that impeded the LPP from living up to the hopes of those who had seen it as a potent means for indigenous empowerment, Goni’s ‘Plan of All’ also failed to please the wealthy elites in the *oriente*: by focussing decentralisation measures on the municipalities, the government had gone against the desires of the civic committees, which had been promoting more departmental autonomy since their establishment by counterrevolutionary forces in the 1950s. Among them, the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz (or Pro-Santa Cruz Committee) had grown particularly powerful (Eaton 2007, Nijenhuis 2002: 47).²⁸ At the same time, however, the LPP’s empowerment of the newly recognised OTBs facilitated the rise of a new set of political actors in the *occidente*: the *cocalero* movement, headed by Evo Morales and represented by a new, peasant-union-based party, was taking advantage of the new possibilities for participation in formal politics ‘to capture municipal governments not only in the coca zones but throughout the department of Cochabamba’ (Klein 2011: 59).

In short, Bolivia’s economic and political situation was radically rearranged by the effects of an international financial crisis in the 1980s. The focus of its industrial activity shifted from the highlands (mining) to the lowlands (farming and livestock activities), with the illegal

²⁸ Kent Eaton maintains that ‘throughout the political volatility of the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s, support for either a change of government or change of regime in La Paz – rather than demands for autonomy from La Paz – was the consistent response by Santa Cruz elites to national governments they did not like’ (2007: 78). The Cruceño demand for departmental autonomy was thus not an uninterrupted phenomenon but rather disappeared and resurfaced according to the political realities of the time.

sector of coca production also gaining in importance. A similar thing happened with indigenous mobilisation, which had previously been concentrated in the Andean highlands. Responding to these new internal demands as well as international pressures, a series of reforms in the 1990s aimed to transform Bolivia into a decentralised showcase of Indian-friendly neoliberalism. However, while the Popular Participation Law sought to empower indigenous communities in their move towards ‘development’ (see Chapter 8) and the INRA Law of 1996 finally granted them communal land rights, the fact remained that communities were treated as if they were a) all the same, and b) internally homogeneous. At the same time, the LPP’s stress on decentralisation to the local level intensified the opposition between the national government and prefectures and civic movements in the east of the country (see Chapters 9, 10) while empowering the coca growers’ movements in the west.

1.6 21st Century: The Rise of Evo and the MAS

By the early 21st century, indigenous groups had gained enough political impact to contribute to the resignation of two Bolivian presidents – Sánchez de Lozada in 2003, after a massacre of Aymara and neighbourhood group protesters in El Alto; and his successor Carlos Mesa in 2005, after renewed massive protests by the same sector. These protests were related to the government’s policies on the exploitation of natural gas (which had replaced mining as the country’s main industry), which were seen to be benefitting foreign businesses at the expense of the Bolivian people (Eaton 2007: 73, Webber 2008a). Groups representing indigenist and class interests united in a common struggle against the government’s ever more aggressive attempts to privatise natural resources, and for the demand ‘to refound Bolivia through a revolutionary Constituent Assembly which would see the organic participation of representatives of all the popular sectors in the country, and reverse the internally colonial racial domination by the white-*mestizo* élite over the majority indigenous population’ (Webber 2008a: 61).

Notably absent from the scene, however, was a revolutionary party with roots in the key movements and a broad, cross-regional social base capable of unifying the multiplicity of popular struggles on the rise. Rather, the MAS [Movement towards Socialism], led by *cocalero* union leader Evo Morales²⁹, was the only popular party able to articulate some of the sentiments of the organised masses beyond a local or regional basis. (ibid.)

²⁹ For a more detailed study of the history and election of Evo and the MAS, see Webber (2008a, b).

In this highly charged climate, the rift between the largely indigenous highlands and conservative elites in the lowlands began to deepen as the latter saw their economic positions threatened and their political influence dwindle (Eaton 2007: 73). The response was an unprecedented amplification of demands for autonomy in the eastern departments of the so-called *media luna* ('half moon', for the crescent shape in which they encircle the western highland departments), which eventually forced the government to concede a referendum on departmental autonomy. The date was set for 02 July 2006 – the same day as elections for a Constituent Assembly that was to rewrite the national Constitution were to take place (Assies 2011: 106).

By that date, however, Bolivia's political scene had undergone dramatic changes. On 18 December 2005, presidential elections ended in a landslide victory for Evo Morales, thereby making him the first self-identifying indigenous leader of a Latin American country:

No previously democratically elected president had won by an absolute majority on the first round, and no democratically elected Congress had produced such a majority for a single party [as that achieved by the MAS]... The scale of Morales's victory therefore conferred on him a mantle of legitimacy that his predecessors had conspicuously lacked. (Crabtree 2008: 1)

In line with the promises made in his election campaign, on 01 May 2006 Morales announced the nationalisation of the hydrocarbons industry via Presidential Decree 28701. The decree was nicknamed 'Heroes of the Chaco' decree in allusion to the Chaco War which had become reframed in terms of 'a gallant defense' of the nation's patrimony (that is, its oil and gas fields) against capitalist foreign exploiters in the course of which many indigenous people sacrificed their lives (Perreault and Valdivia 2010: 696). The formulation employed here is illustrative of the political line the MAS has been following since its coming into power: that is, the promotion of a nationalism strongly tinted by populist-indigenist interests and the desire to go against the (national and international) status quo in the endeavour to right past wrongs and improve conditions for a larger part of the population.³⁰

In summary, in the 2000s both indigenous movements in the highlands and civic movements in the lowlands gained strength, the former demanding the 'refounding' of the nation according to more equitable rules and the latter calling for autonomy from La Paz. Reflecting

³⁰ This is not to suggest that the MAS as a party does not harbour its internal contradictions; however, an analysis of these is beyond the scope of this thesis. For an analysis of the tensions that have developed in the MAS's leadership structure, see Harten (2011).

the impact of the indigenous movements on other sectors of the population, in 2005 Evo Morales was elected Bolivia's first indigenous president. In 2006, Morales officially nationalised the hydrocarbons industry. It was these recent developments that shaped the social and political climate in Cañón and Camiri during the time of my fieldwork.

1.7 Comunidades Cautivas and the Question of '21st-Century Slavery'

While the MAS's programme to 'decolonise' Bolivia's political and legal system made it popular with popular movements and a large sector of the indigenous population, it continued to antagonise the elite opposition in the *oriente*. On the same day that Evo gained his historical victory, new prefects were elected in the nine departments. This, too, was a historical moment in that the prefects (who had until then been nominated by the executive) were for the first time elected by popular vote (Assies 2011: 106). In Santa Cruz, the winner was Rubén Costas, the former leader of the civic committee and one of the most fervent promoters of the *autonomía* movement.

Besides the ever-present issue of departmental autonomy (a proposition that had gained a majority of the popular vote in the referendum of 02 July in the *media luna* departments but had been rejected by a majority of Bolivians on the national level [Assies 2011: 106-7]), various of Evo's policies upset political and civic leaders in the *oriente*. One point of conflict was the above-mentioned nationalisation of the gas industry, whose profits *media luna* leaders would rather have seen return to their own treasuries than be redistributed among the departments and various national-scale projects. Another particularly unpopular policy was Evo's increased targeting of the land issue, complete with an updated legislation (Law 3545 of 28 November 2006) meant to facilitate and speed up the process of *saneamiento*³¹ in the lowlands that had been dragging along way behind schedule since the ratification of the INRA Law in 1996 (cf. Guzmán ed. 2008).³²

³¹ The process of assessment and titling of lands, including the potential expropriation of properties which are not in fulfilment of the 'socio-economic function' (see Law 1715, 18 October 1996, Articles 64-75).

³² The slowness of the INRA's land titling process was notorious. 10 years after the passing of the INRA Law, of 28,935,178 hectares requested on behalf of indigenous lowland communities by CIDOB, only 4,657,443 hectares had been titled, with another 4,000,000 or so still awaiting *saneamiento* (Guzmán ed. 2008: 33). I once heard a member of the APG suggest that the communities would in fact be better off buying land for the *comunarios* to live on and cultivate than hoping for help from INRA, which was not only hopelessly slow but also really favoured the landowners more than the *comunidades*.

Besides the failure of many *latifundios* to fulfil the ‘socio-economic function’ set out as mandatory by the Bolivian constitution (CPE 2009, Chapter 9), the existence of ‘captive’ Guaraní families on various haciendas in the Department of Santa Cruz made the inspection of landholdings even more pressing in this region.³³ Legally, all forms of ‘servitude’ had been abolished in 1938 (Grotkowitz 2007: 127), but forms of debt peonage that persisted in the Cruceño lowlands, and which tied Guaraní people to haciendas in a state akin to slavery, had thus far proved immune to any State attempts at land reform. This situation, since the 1990s known under the term ‘captive communities’ (*comunidades cautivas*) (Castañón Pinto 2011), increasingly attracted the attention and criticism of scholars (cf. Healy 1982, Kidd 1997, Gustafson 2010, Castañón Pinto 2011), the press (Presencia 1991, El Deber 2005), and national and international institutions.³⁴ In 2008, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) published a report in which it denounced the existence of ‘conditions of debt servitude and forced labour’ on some haciendas and concluded that ‘this phenomenon, which affects approximately 600 families, [and which] is known as “*comunidades cautivas*”,... undoubtedly represents contemporary forms of slavery that must be eradicated immediately’ (CIDH 2009). The report also deplores other violations of the Guaraní’s human rights, such as their continuing lack of access to their ‘ancestral lands’ and to ‘legal justice’, and urges the government to increase its efforts towards the speedy resolution of these issues (ibid.).

A report by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues published the following year came to similar conclusions: it denounces such abuses as ‘forced labour, child labour, poor working conditions, sexual abuse, the loss of – and consequent lack of access to – lands, the non-existence of social services, restrictions on the right to freedom of association, discrimination, and judicial bias’ (Ortiz 2009: 15), which stand in violation of 19 ‘international treaties ratified by Bolivia’ (Ortiz 2009: 4). This latter report was the result of an enquiry that had been requested by the Bolivian government itself in response to a series of violent confrontations in 2008 between landowners in the contested Guaraní TCO of Alto Parapetí and officials of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) and the APG. These incidents occurred in the context of the planned titling of a TCO in Alto Parapetí which

³³ More exactly, the latter condition legally implicates the former: according to Article 157 of Supreme Decree 29215 of 02 August 2007, ‘where there exists a system of servitude, forced labour, debt peonage and/or slavery of families or captive persons in the rural area,... they are contrary to the benefit of society and collective interest, which consequently implicates a non-fulfilment of the socio-economic function, even if effectively used areas should exist on the premises...’

³⁴ Besides the ones here mentioned, those included the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the German Development Agency (DED) (Gustafson 2010: 56).

the ranchers sought to impede until after 04 May, when a public vote would be cast on the ‘autonomic statutes’ which the Prefecture of Santa Cruz had drawn up in defiance of the national government. The confrontations of 2008, which were initiated by the landowners, included the takeover of the Camiri INRA office by cattle ranchers and members of the Santa Cruz Youth Union (UJC; a youth organisation tied to the Santa Cruz Civic Committee) and the subsequent expulsion of INRA officials; the armed ambush of an INRA/APG delegation en route to Alto Parapetí; and the seizure and public whipping of a Guaraní lawyer in the central square of Cuevo (Gustafson 2010).

The incidents of 2008 demonstrate some of the problems attached to the landtitling process in the Cruceño lowlands: for one, the involvement of civic movements from the capital shows the strong links that existed between local cattle breeders and the elites at the head of the Prefecture. Given the continually weak grasp of the national government on the eastern regions, this alliance constituted a considerable complication for the practical execution of the letter of the law.³⁵ Further, the confrontations were the violent manifestation of a clash of opinions between Guaraní and landowners that hinged on their different conceptions of their respective ‘rights’. While the APG was phrasing their demands for the titling of the captive communities’ lands in terms of a ‘liberation from slavery’ (Gustafson 2010: 54-7), the ranchers phrased theirs in terms of a ‘defence of land’ (Gustafson 2010: 57-8), with both parties stressing the ‘illegality’ of the other’s position.³⁶

According to a CIPCA report looking at the first 11 years after the passing of the INRA Law, its implementation is complicated by the fact that the law combines ‘communitarian as well as liberal components’ (Guzmán ed. 2008: 43), which means that ‘the law gives arguments to both social sectors (farming and livestock businessmen, and *campesinos*/indigenous people) to legally back up their right to lands which in many cases overlap’ (Guzmán ed. 2008: 44).

³⁵ In Bret Gustafson’s words, ‘The battle over authority and law-making was... reduced to a quite physical struggle over the presence of certain kinds of state actors in the region’ (2010: 58).

³⁶ Cf. Viceministerio de Tierras (2008): ‘[Various municipalities and cattle ranchers’ organisations in the Departments of Chuquisaca, Tarija, and Santa Cruz] have created an interinstitutional coordination committee to avoid the titling of lands in the entire Chaco and the creation of a Guaraní Original Communal Land (TCO) in the locality of Alto Parapetí. The... committee announced that it would make use of their constitutional rights to defend the natural resources of the region and promote cattle breeding activity... The committee... demanded the immediate derogation of the “illegal Law 3545 for being contrary to collective interest, outside the constitutional framework, an outrage against sustainable development, and for not adequately valuing the Socio-Economic Function, especially with reference to the animal load, the valuing of investments and social aspects.”’ The formation of this committee was only one among various pacts signed between municipal authorities, cattle ranchers, the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, and – perhaps more surprisingly – elements of the leadership of the Alto and Bajo Isoso (CABI) (ibid.).

Thus, despite the fact that the INRA Law and its amendments were specifically designed to sort out issues of landownership, who is ‘right’ in the eyes of the law may in fact not always be very clear. However, the subjection of the Guaraní lawyer to colonial-style ‘racialized public punishment’ (Gustafson 2010: 51) reveals that there is a moral dimension underlying the legal one in the landowners’ ideas about their ‘rights’ that presupposes race-based social inequality, not as a problem to be solved, but as a given.

After initial problems in the drafting process (cf. Assies 2011), the new Constitution was finally approved by popular referendum on 25 January 2009. The new Constitution recognises departmental, regional, municipal, and ‘indigenous *originario campesino* autonomy’. However, ambiguities remain as to what exactly each of these autonomies will look like, and how they will interact with each other. In the case of Santa Cruz, the departmental autonomic statute is, as of the writing of this thesis, still under revision to ensure its compatibility with the Constitution.

The following chapter deals with the legal battle between the *comunarios* of Cañón de Segura and a family of local landowners as it can be reconstructed from the documents which were produced in its course and the memories of the *comunarios* themselves. This conflict had its beginning in 1991, at a time before the INRA Law when Guaraní mobilisation was still gaining momentum. It thus constitutes a case of a community’s liberation from ‘captivity’ that was achieved through the collaboration of various local actors at a time when there was no generalised legal formula for the resolution of such conflicts. As such, it provides us with an idea of the various interest groups with investments in the *comunidades* and their agendas.

CHAPTER 2. FROM *CAUTIVERIO* TO *COMUNIDAD*: THE CASE OF CAÑÓN DE SEGURA

The first part of this chapter summarises the history of the *comunarios*' legal struggle with the Palenque-Vannucci family on whose property (Itakua) they were living at the time. This account is based on the various documents that were produced in the course of the legal case (or rather, series of cases). These documents are held in the archive of the Institute for Peasant Documentation and Support (IDAC), a local NGO concerned with land issues.¹ A great part of the documents used here are products of the Bolivian legal system (such as letters from lawyers, court orders, and witnesses' accounts). In addition, there are also a number of less 'official' documents (such as newspaper articles, letters to the Camiri public, and private letters). Together with the legal documents, these sources allow us to construct a narrative that not only provides an account of the legal coming-into-being of Cañón de Segura as a recognised *comunidad indígena*, but which is also highly emotionally charged. As the events unfold, they reveal ideas about 'rights' and 'being right' that are not exclusively based on the letter of the law but just as much reflect different actors' social positions and personal convictions.

The second part of the chapter consists – with one exception – of some of the *comunarios*' personal memories of the same events as they told them to me in a series of informal interviews. The intention behind this selection is to demonstrate the variety of different perspectives that existed within the *comunidad* among people of different genders, ages, and with different involvements in the occurrences. The account of 'Skinny Guy' differs from the rest in that it not only provides the opinion of an outsider to the *comunidad*, but of an outsider who had not been directly involved in the events. For lack of any statements from the party opposed to the *comunarios*,² I have decided to include this account because it gives us an example of a radically different view that was based on the perspective of one of the driving forces behind the eruption of the conflict, Sadoth Palenque Vannucci.

¹ I am grateful to Franz Michel of IDAC for granting me access to his NGO's archive. All references to unpublished documents from the IDAC archive in this chapter are marked with the qualifier 'IDAC'. A separate list of documents used here is given in the bibliography of the thesis.

² I was unable to gain access to the Palenque-Vannucci family during the course of my fieldwork. The 'memory' part of this chapter is thus conspicuously one-sided; however, I think that we can get a fairly good idea of the *patrones*' attitude on the subject from the 'documents' part in combination with the account of 'Skinny Guy'.

2.1 The ‘*Comunarios*’ of Itakua and the Fight over the ‘Chapel’

In the past year of 1991, between the months of April and June, the *comunarios* of Itakua requested and received permission from Sra. Olga Vannuci Zabalaga to construct a chapel/meeting hall in the yard (*patio*) of the hut (*rancho*) of one of the *comunarios*.

Noticing that the building, of wattle-and-daub, was big (10m x 5m), Sra. Vannuci ordered that it was not to be built where it had been started and that it was to be made next to her own house [instead]. The *comunarios* objected, and this was when the conflict began.

- Sr. Eloy Palenque threatened the *comunarios*, and his son (Sadoth Palenque Vannuci) completely destroyed the posts that had been put up.

- The public prosecutor (*Fiscal de Partido*) was appealed to with the demand of constitutional rights (*garantías*).

- In the face of this verbal and material aggression, the *comunarios* decide to ask for the takeover and reversion of the property of Olga Vannuci Zabalaga (Palenque’s sister-in-law), and initiate the demand on the date of 25 July 1991 before the Departmental Inspectorate of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law (*Inspección Departamental de Trabajo Agrario y Justicia Campesina*), which rules in favour of the Vannuci Zabalaga family.

- From the month of May onwards almost until the present day there are communications to the press from both parties.

- Eloy Palenque denounces the *comunarios* as cattle thieves before the National Guard and asks that this offence be investigated.

...

- The *comunidad* of Itakua appeals to the Presidency of the Republic for a REVISION, which is where the documents are [at the moment].

- **NOTE.-** the Presidency of the Republic to date has not resolved the appeal for revision raised.

- The Vannuci family appealed to the help of FEGASACRUZ³ in order to obtain the verdicts in their favour.

- Olga Vannuci and Eloy Palenque arrange for publications in which it is indicated that they completely won the social-agrarian court case, ignoring the Appeal for Revision.

- Eloy Palenque and Olga Vannuci proceed to have cut down (felled) the trees which are close to the huts (*ranchos*) of the *comunarios*, leaving them without any protection.

- The fences of the *comunarios’* *chacos* are destroyed by order of Palenque and Olga Vannuci.

³ The Santa Cruz Cattle Breeders’ Federation.

- In the month of April of the present year 1992, Eloy Palenque requests the dotation of lands with an extension of 1,744 hectares in the place entitled 'Cañón de Segura'... on behalf of his son Sadoth Palenque Vannuci.

- NOTE.- The Bruno siblings of ITAKUA are prisoners in the cells of the Judicial Police [in Camiri]. (IDAC: Michel 1992)

Thus begins the 'history' of Itakua as it was drafted by Franz Michel in his role as legal representative of the people who are today the *comunarios* of Cañón de Segura in September 1992. This document (a full translation of which is provided in Appendix I) was created during the course of the legal battle between the *comunarios* and the family of landowners on whose property they were living for presentation before the courts in support of the *comunarios*' case. In it, the author summarises the history of Itakua over a period reaching back to the 14th century and provides an outline of the events that sparked the conflict between the two parties and the legal proceedings that had resulted from it up to the time of the writing of the document. However, hidden underneath this neat summary lie a multitude of opinions and perspectives which, at a closer look, reveal Michel's 'history' as just one among a variety of versions about 'what really happened'.

Although the present story has its 'roots' in colonial history, a point in time worth pinpointing is the year 1959. In that year, after the death of their father David Vannucci, the siblings Manuel, Alfredo, Olga, Carmen, Elsa, and Amelia Vannucci Zabalaga request the registration of 691.50 hectares of 'workable land' each from the Agrarian Court in Camiri. Additionally, 400 hectares are to be titled to the 'peasants' living on their land after some of them denounce their *patrones* of 'violent despoliation'. The name of the property being divided is given as 'the ex-*fundo*⁴ Urundaiti or Itacua' (IDAC: Michel 1992).

The finalised titles are issued on behalf of the Vannucci Zabalaga siblings on 11 February 1965, consolidating on behalf of each one an area of 691.50 hectares as requested. The titles for the peasants are issued on the same date as 'community property in the ex-estate

⁴ The word *fundo* in Latin American Spanish refers to a large rural estate.

Urundaiti or Itakua'. However, their share of the land has, by this point, decreased to 268 hectares (ibid.).

Both Urundaiti and Itakua are Guaraní-derived names referring to features of the landscape: Urundaiti is a Hispanicisation of Urundeiti, composed of the words urundeí (name of a tree growing in the Gran Chaco called soto or quebracho colorado in Spanish) and ti ('much, abundant'), and translates as 'place of the sotos, or soto wood' (Ortiz 2004:249). Itakua is a combination of ita ('stone') with kua ('hole'), thus 'stone with a hole in it' (Ortiz 2004:93). To avoid confusion, it is worth keeping in mind that 'Itakua' (or Itacua, Ytacua, Itaca; various spellings)⁵ is used in the documents mentioned below to refer to the property as well as the community of peasant workers living on it at the time during which the following events took place, whereas 'Urundaiti' (also: Urundaity, Urundayti) refers to either the same property or the legally titled comunidad of the same name. The latter was created from a piece of land subtracted from the property at the time the Vannucci siblings obtained their land titles as a 'gift' to the Guaraní people who had until then been living en cautiverio (in captivity, i.e., on a private landowner's property).

As far as can be made out from the documentation, relations between landowners and *campesinos* had turned sour by 24 April 1991,⁶ when a letter signed by Olga, Carmen, and Amelia Vannucci Zabálaga, but written as though from a single point of view, is sent to Padre Iván Nasini, an Italian priest working with the NGO 'Teko Guaraní' in Camiri. The letter identifies the writer as the owner of 'Itacua', where the *peón* Rubén Bruno lives, and says that, unexpectedly, the Catholic Church has erected a shed (*galpón*) there for the purpose of reading mass to the *campesinos*. The author declares herself perplexed at the fact that 'men full of Christian holiness' would attack 'Christian women who have carried the faith in their soul for generations'. As a Christian, she says, she was very prepared to have the shed built next to her house (in order to ensure greater respect and seriousness during the pastoral visits), but the Padre should have consulted her first. She states that the place is not a *comunidad*, and the *campesinos* are workers of the house. The property itself is very small, and all the surrounding large areas belong to her siblings, who (like her) hold legal titles to

⁵ I have opted to maintain the various spellings of the names of places (and, as far as possible, features of the documents' layout) in the way they occur in the documents to which I am referring in order to preserve the 'feel' of the texts in question. Personal names have however been standardised in order to avoid confusion.

⁶ As we shall see further on in the chapter, the beginning of the conflict actually goes back to the end of the previous year (see interview with Elías Rocca).

their land. The *campesinos* live there for free and keep their animals, and they work for her whenever there is work, for which they are paid the legal fee. In line with the Agrarian Reform [of 1953], they (the Vannuccis) gave all the *campesinos* land in Urundaiti when being granted their titles, but unfortunately, some did not want to settle in the place that was assigned to them and voluntarily stayed in Itakua (IDAC: O. Vannucci, C. Vannucci and A. Vannucci 1991).

A startlingly rude reply letter from Padre Iván to Olga Vannucci dated 06 May accuses the family of having usurped the land from its rightful owners, the Guaraní, adding, 'Therefore, when you say that Itacua is your property, you are lying.' The State, he says, is racist and has always favoured a few privileged ones, and its land titles therefore mean nothing. He accuses doña Olga of acting in an un-Christian way and assures her that the shed will be built where the people want it, not she. In the end, he adds, 2x1m [the size of a grave] is enough space for everyone, which she should keep in mind rather than quarrelling over a piece of land. (IDAC: Nasini 1991a).

At the same time, first attempts are being made by both the Vannuccis and the *campesinos* to ground their positions in a legal framework. A letter from 20 May by the public prosecutor (*Fiscal de Partido*) of Cordillera Province instructs Olga Vannucci, her brother-in-law Eloy Palenque, and the latter's son 'Sadoc' to let the building of the chapel go ahead and further guarantee the *campesinos*' free access to their houses and stop all threats and intimidations against them so that peace (*tranquilidad*) may return to the *comunidad*⁷. This is the first mention in the documents of Sadoth Palenque, the nephew of the legal owner of Itakua, Olga Vannucci (IDAC: Pozo Vedia 1991).

The next thing we know, Olga Vannucci, Eloy and Sadoth Palenque have trumped the *campesinos*' effort by getting a higher authority (the district attorney [*Fiscal de Distrito*]) to annul the ruling of the public prosecutor, on the grounds that intervening in private property is beyond his competence and therefore represents an 'assault on the right to property protected by the State'. A letter to this effect reaches the chief of the provincial police guard on 15 June, in addition alerting him to the fact that the *campesinos* Rubén Bruno and his

⁷ The choice of words is interesting here in that it acknowledges Itakua's status as a '*comunidad*'.

brother Arsenio have publicly announced⁸ their intention to enter the property 'Urundaiti-Ytacua' and build the chapel on 17 June (IDAC: Peñaranda 1991).

On this very date, Padre Iván also sends a letter to the police chief to clarify the circumstances of the *comunarios*' fight with the Vannuccis:

1. The *comunarios* asked permission to build a 'chapel' of Olga Vannucci, and she first gave it, then withdrew it again after seeing how big it was going to be. 'Sadoc' Palenque destroyed it almost completely and threatened and insulted the *comunarios*.
2. The *comunarios* did not go to the public prosecutor to ask for land, but to denounce those abuses, which is why he was in fact the correct authority to approach.
3. They went to see the Fiscal three times, as ordered, but of the other party, once only Eloy Palenque came; on the second occasion, Olga Vannucci and Sadoc Palenque attended; and the last time they refused to show up altogether, announcing that they were not going to humour the *comunarios* in any way.
4. The Fiscal judged in favour of the *comunarios* because a) they are the original inhabitants of Itakua, which is proven by the cemetery that exists on the land; b) they wanted to build the chapel on the patio of a *comunario*, so they would not have taken up any of the owner's land; and c) a house's patio is private property, which means that Sadoth Palenque committed an offence in intruding there.
5. The *comunarios* denounce Eloy Palenque for accusing Rubén and Arsenio Bruno of cattle theft in the presence of a policeman, which they regard as slanderous (IDAC: Nasini 1991b).

Apart from spelling out the event that sparked the conflict (that is, the destruction of the comunarios' shed by Sadoth Palenque), this letter provides the first mention of the cattle theft issue, which was later to add a whole new dimension to the case. What is interesting to note here is Nasini's glossing of what is otherwise generally referred to as a 'shed' in terms of a 'chapel': prioritising one aspect of what to the comunarios was a multi-purpose building in this way recalls the Padre's previous denunciation of the patrones' 'un-Christian' behaviour, which – judging from Olga Vannucci's letter in which she stresses her Christian values – was a topic of some importance to them.

⁸ This could mean that they said it in front of a group of people in Itakua, or even on one of the radio stations in Camiri, as there are other instances of either party using the radio as a medium to broadcast their own perspective to a wider audience in seek of public support.

The minutes of an ‘extraordinary interzonal meeting’ of Guaraní authorities on 20 July show the concern raised by the Itakua case within the APG. In ‘Ytakua’, somebody explains, they say that the whites are the only defenders of the territory, but that is not true, it is really the Guaraní who defend the country, like they did in the Chaco War. A testimony by a *comunaria* says that since her early childhood, the Guaraní have been enslaved and mistreated by the *patrones*. Now, they are saying that the Guaraní are not from this place, when really ‘this *patrón*’ [likely Eloy Palenque] is not from here and does not know the history either. The Guaraní, on the other hand, are a permanent feature of this place because they know the history of their ancestors, and they have been and always will be here and therefore have to look to the future (*seguir adelante*) (IDAC: APG 1991).

In order to be able to ‘analyse the problem of their situation’, various ‘authorities’ are instated in representation of Itakua: Rubén Bruno is officially named *capitán*, with Arsenio taking the role of ‘magistrate’ (*corregidor*) and their nephew Eugenio being appointed secretary. They also vote for a ‘mayor’ (*alcalde*), a treasurer, and two ‘*vocales*’ (= board members without any other specified function) (*ibid.*).

It does not take long before the conflict is dragged into the public arena. A week after the APG meeting, on 27 July, an article entitled ‘Guaraní from Codillera Province Denounce Various Abuses’ appears in the Catholic newspaper *Presencia*. Among others, the article mentions Eloy Palenque, owner of the property (*finca*) Itakua, who does not let Guaraní people hold meetings and denies them any land rights. Allegedly, he also threatened the brothers Rubén and Arcenio Bruno with death and with taking them to court. The rationale he gives for his conduct is that ‘only the whites defended the territory during the Chaco War’. The APG demands that he be held responsible for his actions, including the refusal to let ‘the natives’ build a chapel (*Presencia* 1991).

On 31 July Olga Vannucci, after taking time to gather her thoughts, authors a response to Padre Iván’s accusations from 06 June in which she warns him of his dangerous lack of knowledge of the Bolivian ‘legal reality’ and addresses his accusations one by one, in the process giving us some snippets of family history:

FIRSTLY.- The world, she says, is a ‘changeable society’ in constant flux, in which ethnic groups move about constantly. Her grandparents arrived in Camiri in 1890, and her parents bought ‘Itacua’ in 1920 from the Vedia family. Since then, they have always contributed to regional development ‘in a Christian way’. Her father died in 1946, and in 1959 she and her siblings asked the Agrarian Reform [i.e., INRA] for titles for the lands which by then already belonged to them ‘by tradition’. She herself has never invaded anyone’s land; in fact, the Vannucci siblings left 500 hectares to the ‘native population’ to work when they got their land title, allowing four families to stay on their land because they did not want to go with the others. ‘Paradoxically’, it is now those privileged ones who are acting against her. Saying that the land was not really hers would be like saying that the Christian religion was also an ‘invasive doctrine’ that was replacing the ‘natives’ cult’. There is no difference between the Guaraní and her, apart from their different origins, but this is not her fault. According to the historians⁹, the Guaraní only came to the area shortly before the Spanish; they came as invaders and enslaved the local population. She has the same right to occupy the land as Nasini has to teach the catechism.

SECONDLY.- The fact that she has land titles and pays taxes means that the State of Bolivia has given her rights and obligations – trying to negate them is simply an ‘inadequate idea’ and not even worth analysing. It is not up to her to answer to Nasini’s allegations that the Bolivian State is racist. However, she won’t deny that the State always favours a few privileged ones and that the indigenous peoples are always being persecuted, seeing that she herself (just like her neighbours) is a victim of these injustices (as evidenced by the ‘deficiencies’ in the local infrastructure).

THIRDLY.- She is a Christian just like her ancestors and as such not to be judged by the Padre; she too has the right to work honourably for a living.

FOURTHLY.- She is only defending ‘that which costs her so much work’, and she asks Nasini and his ‘followers’ to respect her rights just as she respects theirs.

Nasini should remember the commandment that says, ‘Thou shalt NOT STEAL’, and should teach people to respect private property just as the Messiah did (IDAC: O. Vannucci 1991).

On a public level, the quarrel continues in the media: In an article from 01 August in the right-wing newspaper *El Deber* entitled ‘Priest Denounced for Inciting Indigenous People’,

⁹ She mentions Hernando Sanabria, Enrique Finot, Germán Coimbra Sanz ‘and others’.

Eloy Palenque accuses Padre Iván of encouraging the Guaraní to take over lands ‘that are being worked’ and hints at ‘subversive elements’ inside CICA [*sic* CIPCA], CIDOB, and the APG that are permanently pursuing the ethnic struggle (*El Deber* 1991a).

This is followed by an open letter to the people of Camiri published in the same paper on 06 April, in which Eloy Palenque defends himself against the accusations made against him by the ‘known agitator’ Silvio Aramayo (then the president of the APG):

1o.- He never destroyed a chapel, since there never was one built, and besides, his Christian faith would have prohibited him from doing such a thing anyway.

2o.- The *comunarios* did try to build a chapel, but permission was not granted because his sister-in-law [Olga Vannucci, the owner of Itakua] knew that they would use this as a pretext for claiming land rights to part of ‘Itacua’.

3o.- The Guaraní held a meeting inside the property, so he asked them to go and do it in their own *comunidad* [Urundaiti], since they did not have the owner’s permission. No threats were uttered; he only suggested to them that with their actions, they were risking clashes with the landowners.

4o.- He, Palenque, has all the [unspecified] evidence to show that Aramayo is a liar, and that serious problems will arise for the landowners if he is not stopped. Palenque calls on the public opinion to ‘decide the agitator’s character’ and judge who is ‘on the side of Truth and God’ (E. Palenque 1991).

As requested in a letter by the *comunarios*’ lawyer to the Departmental Inspectorate of Agrarian Work and Peasant Justice (08 August), an inspection of the property is set for 23 August. The letter paints a picture of the *campesinos*’ situation that is quite different from that evoked by Eloy Palenque: it talks about the Guaraní people who live in Itakua, where their ancestors have lived for 500 years until the Spanish came and usurped their land, then got themselves Agrarian Reform titles. [Note the conflation of the Spanish conquerors with the Bolivian landowners of today.] They brought about an unconstitutional state of servitude and created a *latifundio*, and they exploit the people settled on the land, who are definitely the ones cultivating the land and thus giving it the ‘social function of agrarian property’. The people live in a state of semi-slavery, together with their families, who in all number more than 90 persons; they are being threatened and attacked by the supposed owner, Olga Vannucci, whose arbitrariness and arrogance they suffer, and who is about to expel them from their territory at any moment. Thus, an ‘intervention and reversion’ of the property

should be held, so that the land can be measured properly. The letter ends with the lawyer repeating that his clients are the ones working the land, which gives them rights to it (IDAC: Montero 1991a).

One of the concepts introduced by the Agrarian Reform of 1953 was that of ‘the land to those who work it’, so that the right to landownership depends on its continual productivity. This is what the comunarios’ lawyer means by ‘social function’ – land left lying fallow ceases to fulfil such a function and thus its owner forfeits all legal rights to it.

In another *El Deber* article from 13 August (‘Priest Incites Invasion of Cattle Breeders’ Properties’), Olga Vannucci and Eloy Palenque denounce Padre Iván for inciting ‘the natives’ to invade *estancias*, ignoring their legitimate owners. Olga Vannucci says that she has workers who have been incited by Padre Iván to build a chapel inside her property without permission. She mentions the letter in which Nasini accuses her family of having usurped the Guaraní’s land and adds that he did not take into account the fact that her family had been adding to the region’s development for almost a century, and that they help the natives (*El Deber* 1991b).

As Kevin Healy has shown, the idea that the Guaraní are a type of ‘natives’ who are in need of the ‘paternalist supervision and protection’ of patrones is (or at least has been until fairly recently) deeply ingrained in the attitudes of the landowning classes of the oriente (1982: 75-6; see also Chapter 9).

At this point in time, another key player starts to appear in the documents: Franz Michel, a lawyer and historian from Camiri who runs the Institute for Peasant Documentation and Support (IDAC) which supports and publishes literature on the Guaraní of the region, has joined forces with Padre Iván in support of the *comunarios* (IDAC: Montero 1991b).

After a gap in the documentation where the most exciting thing we find is various *comunarios* registering their respective branding irons with a lawyer in Camiri (IDAC: Paredes and Bruno 1991, Paredes and F. Gómez 1991, Paredes and M. Gómez 1991, Paredes, M. Romero and A. Romero 1991, Paredes and Segundo 1991), some mysterious letters surface that were allegedly written by members of the Bruno family. They are addressed to a married couple employed by the Palenque-Vannuccis, and in them the Brunos announce

having stolen various of the Vannuccis' cows and ask for the couple's collaboration in butchering and selling them. The letters further hint at the *comunarios*' intention to take over the Vannuccis' land, along with threats should the employees tell them anything about it (for a more detailed account of the cattle theft case, see Appendix 2).

This is followed by a two-month silence in the documents (coinciding with the festive period of Christmas and New Year), which is broken on 17 February 1992 by a joint letter of Franz Michel and Padre Iván to the public prosecutor, denouncing 'Sadoc' Palenque's attempt to prevent the *comunarios* from holding any meetings or gatherings in Itakua. The Constitution, they say, protects people's right to hold meetings, and Palenque should be asked to adhere to it. The request is further supported by a representative of the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights of Cordillera (APDHC) because Palenque is also violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (IDAC: Michel, Nassini and Leyton 1992).

The letter is followed by a note from 18 February, signed by the public prosecutor, in which she tells Palenque to leave the *comunarios* alone (IDAC: Rioja 1992).

Shortly afterwards, on 23 February, one of the Vannucci sisters, Amelia, dies. In a 'testimony' from 25 March, her remaining siblings Alfredo, Carmen, and Olga state the legitimacy of their succession to her property, for which purpose they tell us some further details of their family background: their parents, David Vannucci and Corina Zabalaga, were married in Lagunillas on 27 December 1909. Of this marriage were born the children Amelia, Alfredo, Carmen, and Olga Vannucci Zabalaga (IDAC: Claire 1992).¹⁰

March passes quietly, but in April we suddenly find that Sadoth Palenque, Olga Vannucci's young nephew, has put in a request for a land title. 'For many years', the document reads, 'I have been settled on and in possession of the rustic estate (*fundo*) referred to as "Cañón de Segura"' comprising some 1,000 hectares. An outline of its limits, improvements made, and livestock grazing on the land is added to the letter. There are, he adds, no *campesinos* living in the place (IDAC: S. Palenque 1992).

¹⁰ Curiously, no mention is made here of Manuel or Elsa Vanucci; see IDAC: Michel (1992).

In response to this letter, a viewing of the place is ordered for 28 April, at which the claimant, owners of neighbouring properties, judges, and witnesses are ordered to attend. A topographer is put in charge of gathering relevant information. The resulting report, dated 11 May, gives the measurements of Cañón (1,744.93 hectares) together with a map. The document insists that the land is to be used purely for cattle farming, with no ‘cultivable surfaces’ indicated (IDAC: Centellas 1992).

In light of the vast fields which were being cultivated by the comunarios of Cañón at the time of my fieldwork, this assessment is, of course, an interested interpretation. See Healy (1982) for a description of similar tactics used by large estate owners in southeastern Chuquisaca to circumvent the regulations set out by the Agrarian Reform.

A judgment of 15 May confirms Sadoth Palenque as the new owner of Cañón on the base of the ‘fact’ that he has been in Cañón for ‘several years’, and that he has made ‘improvements’ to the place and has animals there. Cañón is ‘vacant land’ (*tierras baldías*), and therefore no one has more right to claim it than Sadoth, who has privileged rights due to the time he has been there. The document refers to the Agrarian Law (*Ley Agraria*; i.e., the INRA Law) and the Constitution, which ‘establish work as the fundamental source for the acquisition and holding of property’ (IDAC: Montalvo 1992).

On 08 June, the Palenque-Vannuccis approach the police to accuse three members of the Bruno family (Rubén, Arsenio, and Eugenio) of cattle theft (IDAC: C. Vannucci and O. Vannucci 1992). As a result, over the next month-and-a-half various witnesses are summoned by the police to give their statements on the matter, including the accused, who denounce all allegations. It soon becomes clear that the Vannuccis’ witnesses’ accounts do not really add up (see Appendix 2).

In the meantime, Eloy Palenque is busy campaigning publicly again. In a statement broadcast by Radio Sararenda, one of the local radio stations in Camiri, on 08 July, he denounces the APG for having denounced him on another radio station, Radio Santa Cruz, the day before. His defence consists of a counter-attack, presented point by point:

FIRSTLY.- Itacua is not a *comunidad*, it is a *propiedad* whose rightful owner is Olga Vannucci.

SECONDLY.- He has never threatened anyone, that is just the invention of two lying *campesinos*.

THIRDLY.- Olga Vannucci is the absolute owner of the property, so she can act as such; besides, she is affiliated to AGACAM, the Association of Camiri Cattle Farmers.

FOURTHLY.- A year ago, the *campesinos* started a court case against the Vannuccis, which they lost. The result said that they had already got their land from the Agrarian Reform [referring to the 268 hectares in Urundaiti], so that is where they should build their *comunidad*, instead of violently interfering in private property.

FIFTHLY.- There is a court case going against the *campesinos* for the theft of ‘more than 100 heads of cattle’.

SIXTHLY.- The cattle farmers of Camiri are not afraid of the APG – they, too, have power to defend themselves from the usurpers (*avasalladores*) of land; they are organised in defence associations (*grupos de choque*) and will defend themselves to the last.

He ends with a warning to the authorities that ‘lamentable events’ might occur (IDAC: E. Palenque 1992).

At the same time, Carmen and Olga Vannucci and Eloy Palenque are also publicly crusading against Padre Iván. In a letter to the public of 08 July, they write about how Iván Nasini is misinforming the Camireños when he should really stick to preaching. He speaks vulgarly on the radio. He is a ‘vagabonding foreign personage’ (*personaje extranjeril de vida trashumante*) who forgets that people who defame public functionaries get locked up. He is a liar, and the Camireños should judge for themselves whom to believe. Nasini says that the accusations of cattle theft ARE A STUPIDITY and has publicly insulted Eloy Palenque by referring to him as ‘el Palenque’. Nasini as a priest has no authority to interfere with Palenque’s private property. They add a list of the times Nasini has been told to back off before by various authorities, yet still Nasini keeps making fun of the legal system, even though he is nothing but a foreigner. The Camireños must judge who is to be scrutinised, ‘he or us’ (IDAC: O. Vannucci, C. Vannucci and E. Palenque 1992).

The final judgment in the cattle theft case is passed on 23 July, in which the accused are found guilty of all charges (IDAC: M. Justiniano and Torrez 1992).

The next document of any interest is a letter written on 9 November by Franz Michel to the sectional judge (*Juez de Partido*) on behalf of the *comunarios* of Itakua, in which he asks for

constitutional protection (*amparo constitucional*) for them. They are, he makes clear, not questioning the *patrones*' ownership of the land, they just want their right to life and work. For more than 60 or 70 years, their families occupied small pieces of land not surpassing two hectares per person within Itakua, and they had never had any problems before the past year, when they were suddenly denied their lands because they had put in a demand to get them titled for themselves. He adds how Eloy Palenque, 'using the old Roman property concept of "use and abuse"', had cut down all the trees around the *campesinos*' houses and destroyed the fences around the fields (*chacos*) so the cattle could 'circulate'. Even though Palenque has told the people to leave his property, he has never suggested paying them for the improvements they have made to the land. They just want to be allowed to sow their *chacos* and protect them from the cattle with new fences (IDAC: Michel and Comunarios 1992).

Finally, on 17 November, a request is phrased by one of the *comunarios*' lawyers in which the sentence against them is questioned on the basis of the incoherence of the 'evidence'. A whole list of such incoherences is followed by the conclusion that the accused are being incriminated not for what they have done, but for what is *said* they have done, and that the verdict is therefore in fact illegal and unconstitutional (IDAC: H. Justiniano 1992b).

What follows is a prolonged silence on the matter; then suddenly, on 15 March 1994, a letter by a lawyer acting for the APG tells us of their request for the annulment of Sadoth Palenque's land grant of Cañón de Segura. It states that the *comunarios*, 'members of the Guaraní Nation and affiliated to the APG', had 'always' lived on the land but had had no titles, apart from the 268 hectares that had been given to the *comunarios* of Urundaiti in 1961. The *patrones* are accused of committing various human rights violations and unconstitutional acts, such as the destruction of *comunarios*' fields, killing of their animals, fencing *comunarios* in with barbed wire, and preventing them from accessing water.¹¹ Since the *comunarios*' original lands (*tierras originarias*) had been granted to the Vannuccis by the State, the *comunarios* decided to leave the lands where their ancestors were buried and their children had been born. The *comunarios* were threatened by Sadoth Palenque, who claims a title to the lands [of Cañón], but this is really illegal and the title still under revision: there was no (official) notification of the neighbours, including the Guaraní communities of

¹¹ According to Healy, restriction of access (to vital resources, local markets, and information) constituted, along with debt peonage, the landowners' strategy for bringing Guaraní *comunidades* under their control by ensuring their 'total dependence' on the *patrones* (1982: 126-7).

Urundaiti and Guazuigua. Also, the land which Sadoth is claiming overlaps with that of a neighbouring landowner. Sadoth cannot have been working the land from Sucre, where he was studying, which is a disregard of the INRA law. He has lied about all his ‘improvement works’ and has never kept any cattle there. Further, according to the INRA Law, the ‘accumulation of land in few hands’ is illegal (IDAC: Avilés 1994).

The document contains an appeal to the President at the time, Sánchez de Lozada, to annul the land grant to Sadoth Palenque because of its legal defects. Alternatively, the title to the property ‘Urundaiti’ should be annulled. A viewing of Cañón and Itakua should be held to establish the bad situation of the *comunarios* and the situation in Cañón (where no work has been carried out yet). The *comunarios* should be officially told to move to Cañón, and the Vannuccis notified of this decision (ibid.).

A receipt dated 28 April, in which a contractor hired by Sadoth Palenque to carry out various improvements in Cañón confirms having received payment for them, alerts us to the fact that Sadoth has had these improvements done only recently – the contract was signed on 28 January (IDAC: Medrano 1994).

From a letter of 09 May addressed to ‘the public opinion’ and co-authored by the same contractor, we can infer that what happens next is the *comunarios*’ occupation of Cañón: the contractor talks about how ‘*comunarios* from Urundaiti’ damaged property of the Palenque-Vannuccis and threatened him and some 40 other ‘small cattle breeders and agriculturalists of the zone’ with axes and machetes when they went to see what was going on. In response, the cattle breeders joined the Vannuccis to set up the ‘Committee for the Defence of Private Property of Cordillera Province’ and appeal to the cattle breeders’ and farmers’ associations and the authorities to protect other ‘producing properties’ supplying the Camiri market. They denounce ‘foreign elements’ that provide capital and logistic help to destroy their properties and demand that institutions getting money from abroad should be closed. Otherwise, ‘there might soon be bloodshed’ (IDAC: Medrano and Verazain 1994).

After this, however, things happen rapidly. On 11 May, Eloy Palenque is still up in arms against the *comunarios*’ ‘invasion’ of his son’s property, which is preventing any work from being carried out there (IDAC: Suárez 1994). However, on 23 May, a letter by Franz Michel to the APG informs them of an agreement with Eloy Palenque which he has reached with the

mediation of the Camiri Cattle Breeders' Association (AGACAM): Palenque will give the *comunarios* Cañón if they leave Itakua; all seven court cases between the two parties will be closed; the *comunarios* will pay for the improvements carried out by Palenque on the land of Cañón de Segura (IDAC: Michel 1994a).

In the following month of June, there is a busy exchange of letters going on between Franz Michel, AGACAM, the APG, and a representative of the Programme for Peasant Development of Cordillera (PDCC)¹², in the course of which the APG accepts the deal offered to them, and the cost of the 'improvements' in Cañón are established (IDAC: Michel 1994b; Pinto and Del Río 1994; Córdova 1994; Cuéllar, Vaca and Antenor 1994; von Oven and Zarzycki 1994). After some bickering about the details (such as the exact length of the fence built by Sadoth Palenque's contractor [IDAC: Michel 1994c, Michel 1994d]), an estimate is fixed at US\$5.000.

A report of a viewing of Cañón by INRA and CORDECRUZ¹³ from 02 July mentions that there are 22 families working to build houses and fields. They have also cleared a road. Apparently, the *comunarios* and the neighbours have agreed that the move resolved their land problems, a solution reached between AGACAM, IDAC, and the APG. Palenque had got the title, but the APG had asked for its annulment. There are six court cases going on between the Vannuccis and the *comunarios*, one of which (the cattle theft one) has had two *comunarios* imprisoned for two years. The deal now is: Sadoth gives up his title to the *comunarios*; the *comunarios* leave Itakua to the Vannuccis; all legal action is stopped; the *comunarios* pay Palenque US\$5,000 for improvements; the *comunarios* take care of the legal registration of their new title etc. themselves. Cañón has been established to measure 1,744.93 hectares and borders on Yatiguigua (north), Guasuigua (south), Tobatiqua (east), and Calvimontes (Itakua) (west); boundary stones will be set up to avoid any future trouble (IDAC: Martinez 1994).

Thus, things seem to be going well when suddenly two letters (to the APG and AGACAM) from 08 November of the same year inform us of the fact that Franz Michel has left the

¹² A development programme for the Guaraní *comunidades* of Cordillera suggested by CIPCA and CORDECRUZ on the basis of a 1986 assessment. The programme was to be implemented via the newly created PISET teams of APG and *capitanías* (see Chapter 8).

¹³ The Regional Corporation for the Development of Santa Cruz, which was one of nine departmental development organisations (CORDES) established in 1979. The CORDES were dissolved again with the Administrative Decentralisation Law (LDA) in 1995 because of their increasing bureaucratisation and inefficiency (Nijenhuis 2002: 47).

negotiations between AGACAM and the APG. The letter addressed to AGACAM states as his reason his failure to raise the US\$5,000 demanded by the Palenques as compensation for giving up Cañón, which he had hoped to get from the Programme for Peasant Development of Cordillera. The letter to the APG only states that they have ‘not been able to reach the solution they were trying for’ (IDAC: Michel 1994e, Michel 1994f).

The process proves to be a longwinded one, as the ‘sale’ of Cañón is only formalised on 17 February 1995. On 12 March, the new official inhabitants of Cañón de Segura sign a formal agreement with the neighbouring *comunarios* of Urundaiti, in which they ‘grant’ them 25 hectares of their newly acquired land, on the condition that: they must only use them for agriculture, and only on flat land; a work party (*grupo de trabajo*, or GDT) must be formed, and no individual work is to be carried out; no trees must be felled for firewood or charcoal; the Urundaiti *comunarios* can keep the land as long as they work it (if it is not worked for one year, Itakua can take it back). The respective communal authorities are responsible for upholding the deal, but Itakua reserves the right to take legal action if necessary (IDAC: Romero, Demetrio and Altamirano et al. 1995).

The next couple of years or so pass with the *comunarios* getting their new land title formalised and registered with various institutions. A letter dated 13 May 1997 providing information about the buildings, crops, and animals in Cañón says that the objectives of the Titling of Original Communal Lands (SAN – TCO) have been fulfilled. At that time, the *comunidad* is made up of some 126 persons who have been ‘settled there for various decades’ – an interesting sleight of hand, since it conflates the fact of the *comunarios*’ longstanding residence in one place with the location of another, really unrelated one. They are said to be living off agriculture, cattle farming, hunting and fishing [which seems to be a convention for writing about indigenous people rather than any ‘realistic’ description of their livelihood, considering that there is no river nearby]. All agreements concerning limits have now been signed with the neighbours, and there are no conflicts, therefore the *comunarios* should be granted a communal title to Cañón (IDAC: Rengel 1997).

The formal registration of Cañón on 13 August 1997 marks the official end of the *comunarios*’ troubles – from here on, everything that happens is meant to be in their own hands (IDAC: P. Gómez 1997).

2.2 The Case of Itakua in the Memory of the *Comunarios*

What follows are several accounts of what different *comunarios* told me they remembered from the time of the land struggle. What is interesting here is, on the one hand, the difference in focus between them, which reflect individuals' different involvements in the events. On the other hand, however, there are certain recurrent elements in them which suggest that they were of particular importance to the people

Rogelio Torres

Don Rogelio was a man in his mid-forties who originated from Muyupampa, an area that is largely inhabited by Quechua people. He had held various official roles [cargos] in Cañón over time and at the time of my fieldwork occupied that of Education Officer [responsable para la educación]. Rogelio was happily married to a Guaraní woman, with whom he had five children; however, that did not stop him from feeling a bit like an outsider at times.

One day, I was talking to Rogelio about a planned project to build a new bungalow in the school. Wondering about space, I asked whether they would tear the central building down, which was very basic in its construction and therefore seemed most redundant to me. He said, maybe, but it had been the first building they had erected in the school and was therefore historical. I replied that I knew there was a lot of history to the place as a whole, and so we got talking about how they had first come over the hill from Itakua, in the night so as to avoid the *patrones*, to start constructing their houses. He said he had been the very first person to stay in Cañón, which had been very lonely. They had cleared spaces in the forest, as there had only been a narrow path through the canyon, and people had come from Urundaiti, Piedritas, and as far as Eiti and Alto Parapetí¹⁴ to help them clear the space for their *chacos* and houses. They had built the houses quickly, with the support of CIPCA who was helping them out with materials.

The *patrón* and his hired hands would come at times to try to get them out, but they just stayed on. The *patrones* were spending a lot of money on lawyers to get them out, but the *comunarios* had stayed because they were in the right, so before the *patrones* had to sell all their cattle to pay for the legal fees, they finally gave up. The land in Cañón didn't have an

¹⁴ Eiti and Alto Parapetí are different *capitanías*, or Guaraní districts, whereas Urundaiti and Piedritas are *comunidades* located next to Cañón.

owner, but the *patrones* were trying to get papers for it, which was, in fact, unlawful because there had been dispute over the land already before they got any papers of ownership, so they shouldn't have applied for them in the first place. Rogelio and Filomena, his wife, agreed that the dispute had already started in 1991.

Once, a truck (*camioneta*) full of the *patrón's* men had arrived and had wanted to cause trouble, but they hadn't realised how many Guaraní there had been working in the fields and everywhere, so they had left quickly when they found themselves surrounded by some 150 men with machetes. Someone tried pulling a gun as well, but the *comunarios* threatened to 'peel him like an onion' with their machetes if he didn't put the gun away, so he did.

Padre Iván, who was always defending the *comunarios* and helping them, was fearless, and one time someone had pointed a gun at his head too. Another guy working for Teko [Guaraní] had even video-documented a lot of what was going on in Cañón at the time.

After they had built their provisional houses, he and some others lived in Cañón for about two months before all the rest of the people followed. Again, CIPCA helped them in their final move by providing a *camioneta* in which everyone, inclusive of their animals and household belongings, was brought to Cañón.

They had all got together in the school building and decided who was going to build their house where. The only rule was to keep at least 100m distance between houses to avoid conflicts over chickens in neighbours' gardens and such things. I asked whether there hadn't been any disputes, and he told me that actually there had been one man who had wanted the spot of Filomena's mother's house so as to be closer to the centre [i.e., the school], but had ended up with a plot way at the other end of the village. I asked whether he still lived there, but Rogelio said that he had gone to Santa Cruz to live. A few other people had changed their minds about the location of their houses and so had taken their roofs and other things and gone somewhere else with them. I asked what had happened with the rest, and he said that at that point, the houses were built like his fence, with poles of wood only [wattle and daub], so it was easy to move them.

Caritas¹⁵ had given them the corrugated metal (*calamina*) for the roofs and some mesh (*malla*), but they were meant to provide concrete floors and doors and windows as well, which had never materialised because they had mysteriously run out of money before they could supply them. I asked how that could be, and what had happened to the money, and he said that the people in the organisation often went to work in them to put the money that went through them into their own pockets.

Rogelio referred to the two *comunarios* who had been in jail for two years, for allegedly stealing some 150 heads of cattle (which wasn't true), and how they had got them out in the end with the help of lots of lawyers (in his talk, there had been about six – two in La Paz, two in Camiri, and two in Santa Cruz).

At first, they had had no water in Cañón, so they had to go to Itakua to fetch it during the night, since during the day they were all working. They'd only got their own water supply in 1996.

Rogelio also told a story of how, still in Itakua, the *patrones* had killed one of don Germán's cows and burned down some trees which served as sleeping places for the chickens, so the poor chickens had to sleep on the ground.

I asked how the whole dispute had started, and he told me that they had wanted to build a school building [the shed or chapel of the documents], but that the *patrones* had said, 'If they're building that, they'll never leave from here'. I asked whether the *patrones* had wanted them to leave, and he said, '*Claro* – of course!' I asked why, but didn't get a clear answer. He went on to say how the community had been on the land long before the *patrones*, which made me suggest that it was they who should have left. He said, yes, that was the idea at first, but 'we' [he always kept saying 'we', even when referring to the Guaraní ancestors] thought that the land wouldn't be enough, so that's why we came to Cañón instead.

Just a little before this conversation, Filomena had told me how it had in fact been the *patrones* themselves who had suggested that they go to Cañón at first, because it was land

¹⁵ Rogelio also mentioned 'a project called "Visión Mundial"' in this context; this actually referred to an NGO rather than a project, i.e., the Bolivian incarnation of World Vision, which was conducting 'Areal Development Projects' (PDA) in Cañón geared especially towards the promotion of children's rights and wellbeing (see Chapter 8).

‘without owner’ (*sin dueño*), but then had changed their minds and tried to say that it was in fact their land.

Elías Rocca

Elías was one of the original three implicated in the case of cattle theft that was initiated by the Palenque-Vannucci family. At the time of my fieldwork, he was working for Caritas and took pride in the fact that he had been involved in the project that finally gave the comunidad its own water supply. Elías was the owner of the only horse in Cañón, which he called ‘Papirai’, (‘Little Daddy’). The following is the account of an interview which he gave me specifically on the topic of Itakua.

The *patrones* had had no title for their property, but then managed to get some documents somehow qualifying them as the owners of Itakua, even though the people who lived on the land had lived there for a very long time, as had their grandparents. There used to be more families in Itakua than there were now in Cañón, between 30 and 40. Some left earlier and moved to Urundaiti, which used to be part of the same property, but the land there was scarce, so soon there was no space left for people to move to and the rest of the *comunarios* stayed in Itakua.

They didn’t want to stay there, however, because the *patrones* didn’t want them to have cows, of which some families owned a few. This was not because of a lack of land, they simply didn’t want them to. So the *comunarios* decided to leave, but wanted the *patrones* to pay them for the work they had carried out on the land (such as the construction of *chacos* with neat wire fencing).

On the 25th of December of 1990, the owner (*dueña*) of the property, Olga Vannucci, requested a chapel to be built by the *comunarios*. They started work on it in April of 1991, but the *dueña*’s brother-in-law, Eloy Palenque, didn’t want them to build it because he thought that they would take the land away from the family if they did. Due to his influence, the *dueña* then changed her mind and denied ever having given authorisation for the building of the chapel, and both sides took lawyers to defend their rights in the matter.

There was a trial, which was lost by the *comunarios* because they had no written proof of the *dueña*’s authorisation, so in August the *patrones* tore the chapel down. They also told the

comunarios to leave, so they went to Santa Cruz to take a lawyer (who was working for, or paid by, CIPCA) to appeal. They won a trial entitling them to stay on the land, but the *patrones* appealed, and a ministry commission was sent from La Paz to see whether anyone really lived in Itakua and evaluate the situation. By then, the *patrones* had burned down all the trees around the houses, in the hope that the houses would catch fire too, which, however, they didn't. The commission decided that the *comunarios* should leave, but be paid for their work as requested; however, the *patrones* did not want that.

Christmas and New Year passed peacefully. In March, the lawyers went to Santa Cruz to see whether the Vannuccis really had a legal title for Itakua. They did have some documents, and the lawyers also found out that the Urundaiti land had been given (*regalado*) to the *comunarios* to live on in the course of the 1953 Agrarian Reform.

In August 1992, Arsenio, Pablo, and Eugenio went to La Paz to look in the office of the Reforma Agraria whether the Palenque-Vannuccis really had a title to Cañón de Segura as they were claiming, and found out that they did not. By that time, the *comunarios* had become interested in Cañón, which they had 'always known was there'. After their return, they called a meeting and told the rest of the *comunarios* that Cañón was vacant land (*tierra baldía*), and they all decided to go there to live.

In September, the lawyers found out that Eloy Palenque had put in a solicitude for the land to be titled to his family, which was, however, annulled.

Two days after Arsenio, Pablo, and Eugenio's return, the *patrones* returned with police to take Arsenio, Eugenio, Marcelo and Petrona Bruno to the prison in Camiri. They pretended to take them to Camiri to sign some documents, but this was only a pretext (*engaño*), and really they were locked up and accused of cattle theft. A woman employee of the Vannuccis wrote a letter of lies to claim that the four had stolen cattle, but none of it was true, and really they were taken because they were all leaders ['*capitanes*', that is, holding important positions in Itakua]: Arsenio was *capitán*, Eugenio secretary, Marcelo *vocal*, and Petrona leader of the women's group.

The *comunarios* decided that Germán Medina [at the time of my fieldwork a high-ranking official in the Guaraní district of Kaami] should be the new *capitán*, and he started to

organise the move. Don Marcelo only stayed in jail for three months, then he was released because he claimed not to know anything about the land problem. At that point, there were two court cases going on already, and the *patrones* had started the one about the cattle because they saw that they were losing the land battle. Petrona also didn't stay in jail long, but was released for being a woman and only had to report to Camiri once a week. The remaining two Bruno men stayed in jail as long as they did (two years) because the land battle had priority over the cattle case and was thus taken care of first.

In Cañón, meanwhile, the work had begun of clearing space for houses, which was carried out with the support of the APG and the resulting help of people from all kinds of neighbouring *comunidades*, so when the last two *comunarios* got out of jail, the houses were already built, of wattle and daub (*tabique*) at first. His family and those of Petrona, Germán, and Arsenio were the last ones to leave Itakua.

In the cattle case, lawyers came from Santa Cruz to interview the witnesses about the alleged theft, but those could not agree on the exact number, so they were revealed as liars. The accused went to Santa Cruz for a final hearing, but neither the Palenques nor their lawyers showed up, so the Brunos were cleared of the accusations. (One of their lawyers was from CIPCA and took care of the land case, another was hired by the accused themselves and took care of the cattle case.)

A transfer was done in La Paz, and the Vannucci's request for the title to Cañón was annulled. Padre Iván, CIPCA, and possibly other sources helped pay for the trials, and some unspecified 'organisation for the support of land matters' (*organización de apoyo de la tierra*) paid (or helped pay) the US\$5.000 which the *comunarios* had to pay for the wire fencing and other work carried out by the Vannuccis in Cañón. All this was settled in a meeting in Camiri. The *patrones* never paid anything for the *comunarios*' work on their land.

At the time of the move, various people left and went to live in other places because they were afraid. One of them was Jacinto who only returned in 2003. There is a video of the Itakua story (made by Teko Guaraní) that shows him cutting down trees for the *patrones*, as he was working for them at the time (*'cabalito se ve cortando árboles para los patrones'*). I asked why he had been allowed to return, and Elías said, for the benefit of his children.

In the end, it all worked out well for the *comunarios* though, because the land in Itakua over which they were fighting initially was only something like 100 hectares, whereas now they had close to 3,000 hectares.

In Elías's words, all this was part of a 'vision to accomplish' (visión a lograr): to live free of the patrones. What the comunarios had already achieved was the improvement of their housing, a Caritas project carried out in 2001; the cattle project started in 1998; and the water supply system (2000), which was another Caritas project. Don Germán's son Valerio also counted as one of the 'accomplishments', as he was a professional, the community's very own first vet. He was meant to be finished with his studies soon, and then the comunarios would start some sort of pig raising project. Of course, there was still a lot missing, but little by little things were improving.

Apolonia Medina

Doña Apolonia was the oldest person whom I interviewed about the Itakua case. She was a widow living next-door to her only son and his wife, accompanied by a granddaughter. Doña Apolonia ran a little business in Cañón, selling odds and ends such as cigarettes, sweets, and little plastic bottles of the ever-present sugarcane alcohol nicknamed 'trago'. During my stay in Cañón, I came to greatly admire her wicked sense of humour, and making pottery with her and one of her daughters is one of my dearest memories of that time.

When asked about Itakua, she unfortunately claimed to have forgotten most of the events of the time of the move, but I was still glad she told me more than the 'three words' she had initially promised me.

Sadoth Palenque did not want the *comunarios* to keep animals; he would tell them, 'This is not a *comunidad* (*aquí no hay comunidad*)'. He wanted them all to move to Urundaiti, but they were about 18 families, so there was no space for them all in Urundaiti.

In order to encourage the people to leave, Sadoth put barbed wire around the ravine where the people used to get water, and which was their only source of it. Don Jacinto was working for the *patrón* all this time, helping him do the dirty work because he paid him. To get the water which they needed to live, the people crawled underneath the barbed wire, and one time

Apolonia's shirt got ripped at the back, making her cry because of the pain. So she sent her little daughter instead, who could enter under the wire more easily, she herself holding up the wire for her.

Bubén Bruno was *mburuvicha* at the time.

In Apolonia's opinion, the owner (*propietaria*) of Itakua, doña Vannucci, was good, but it was her nephew who was trouble.

In Cañón, there was only forest (*monte*), with a lot of ticks and mosquitoes. Her family had built a house in the place of her current home when she arrived, but it was all made of sticks and mud. There was no water, and the children were suffering because of the many insects (*bichos*), which would crawl into their eyes and make them cry.

A *mburuvicha* from Camiri told the *comunarios* that they would have water in a few years' time, but they were doubtful. Meanwhile, they had to get water from far away, which they did at night. Nonetheless, the water was never enough, it was just enough to cook and wash one's face, but in the hot season one would have needed a lot more.

In the end though, things had turned out a lot better for them than they had been before, because now they had peace and quiet and lots of space for sowing crops and other things.

Luz Medina

Luz, the daughter of a high-ranking Kaami functionary, was the youngest person I interviewed. She had three young children and lived with them in the same house as her parents, since her husband lived in another comunidad. Luz was one of the best cooks in Cañón, and (together with her mother and younger sister) became my 'cooking instructor' for the duration of my fieldwork.

The *patrones* in Itakua did not want the *comunarios* to sow crops, so in order to impede them they put wire fencing around the houses of Arsenio, Eugenio, and Petrona's father Rubén. (The other houses were left outside, because the houses used to be further apart there.) They

accused the *comunarios* of cattle theft and tried to get them to leave, so they also cut down all the trees around the houses, which people used for shade, and burned them.

Luz was eight years old and was in the first year of school when the problems started. She went to school in Urundaiti, because the Itakua school had had to close for lack of students. Estefanía, her mother, did not want her to go because she was afraid, as the *patrones* had said they would kill the children if they met them on the road, they would run them over, because they hated them all.

Padre Iván Nasini of Teko Guaraní bought a cart and horse for the children to go to school in, and left Rubén Bruno in charge of it. For one week, he was driving them to school and back and everything was fine, but then an accident happened.

On the day before (*víspera de*) San Juan, Rubén Bruno dropped the children off as usual, but they found that there was no one at the school and classes had been cancelled. So the children started to walk back on foot.

At mid-day, Rubén wanted to go to pick the children up again, but he never arrived at the school: they found the over-turned cart halfway, but the horse had run off already. Rubén had died close to his own house, where he was encountered by his daughter Petrona's oldest son. The horse had smashed his head in so the brain was coming out of the skull, but the heart was still beating. The boy who found him had been his first grandson, and one of his sons, who now lived in Santa Cruz, was the same age as Luz; the two youngest were so small they probably hardly remembered their father now.

On the 9th of January, Iván came to celebrate a mass, during which Sadoth Palenque arrived and took the sheet from which the priest was reading from his hand. The priest and don Germán [Luz's father] sat down in a corner, to wait for Sadoth to go away.

Later, the *patrón's* own workers (*peones*) sold the *patrón* out, telling the *comunarios* that the *patrones* had brought a witch from Brazil to kill don Germán as well, so his family went to get him 'cured' [get a *curandero* to perform magic to counter the witch's magic] all over the place to save his life, and it worked.

The *patrones* even burned the cross on Rubén Bruno's grave and the *corona* ['crown' of plastic flowers adorning the grave that gets replaced on All Saints every year] and took off the candles which the *comunarios* had left there to replace them with red 'candles of evil' meant to bring more people down (*hacer caer a más gente*).

A week before they went to Cañón, Sadoth came out of his house and told them, 'Tonight, there will flow blood (*ésta noche va a correr sangre*)'. So the people locked themselves in well, but nothing happened. It seemed that he had found out about the *comunarios*' plans involving Cañón and got annoyed, as he and his family also wanted to build a corral and other things there in order to be able to claim the land as their own. Sadoth dug a well (*ñoria*) in which, however, there was only sand, no water, and also a water reservoir (*atajado*) that didn't have any water either and was very small.

The first to move to Cañón were Filomena, Apolonia and their whole family, who went in July or August. Luz's family was the last to go, in September. Luz went to stay with her uncle Virgilio Rocca for a little while because she and Aurelio's son were the only ones still left to go to school in Urundaiti, which was far, and they were scared. The *patrones* left them alone though, because the papers had already been signed to say that they had to.

The *patrones*' house was about the same distance from the *comunarios*' houses in Itakua as the abandoned house next to the football field was from their house now, so they would come to molest them at any moment (*venían a molestar cualquier rato*).

The last families to leave apart from the Medinas' were Arsenio's and Eugenio's.

'Skinny Guy'

The following came out of a chance conversation which I had with a couple of former school mates of my Camireña friend Viviana, who had met at her house to celebrate their school-leaving anniversary. As fate had it, this drunken encounter was to provide me with the only account that might be called representative of the perspective of the 'other side' involved in the Itakua case. Since I can remember neither of the guys' names, I have nicknamed them – in good Bolivian fashion – according to their physical appearances.

Sitting in Vivi's house with several bottles of beer in front of us, the two guys and I talked about all kinds of things happening in the world for a bit, and I was impressed by the knowledge of European history of the skinny guy. Then, the talk turned to the topic of Bolivia and its current state of affairs, from where it soon turned to Evo's government. They both agreed that Bolivia was 'under development' and had to be developed European-style, then the skinny one launched a speech that began like this:

'I'm not against the poor and indigenous people having better chances in life and wanting to better themselves, that's a good thing and totally okay...' (I should have seen it coming, but the vehemence of what followed took me by surprise) '... but this government of this *indio de mierda* isn't worth anything. I mean, I'm an accountant, but I only know the smallest bit about what there is to know about accountancy, so how can a Constituent Assembly made up of *campesinos* who don't know anything re-write the Constitution?' etc.

I was going to say to him that I agreed up to a point, but that a) the argument for having *campesinos* in the Constituent Assembly was that they knew a lot more about the needs of the (poor) people than any lawyer, that b) there were in fact quite a few lawyers in the Assembly (besides other 'professionals'), and that c) in my country we played the game of minister-swapping on a regular basis (so that a minister of something-or-other would often be re-assigned to a different ministry that had nothing to do with what they had done previously), so it was in no way guaranteed that 'professional' politicians always knew what they were doing; but I never got another word in. 'Skinny Guy' ranted on about how Evo's government was screwing the people, just look at what happened to our mate Sadoth in his court case...

At which point I interrupted him to ask what his friend's full name was; he replied, Sadoth Palenque.

I asked him to tell me more about this case, and (as was to be expected) the version he gave me was a lot different from those of the *comunarios*.

Basically, what he told me was that the *comunarios* had taken the land in Cañón away from his friend, who, out of the goodness of his heart, gave it to them in the end, even though he had won the court case over it. [The *comunarios* as well say they won the court case, but

according to the documents the case was dropped as part of the settlement between the two parties.]

I told them that I didn't think this was true, that the land had been bought, at which they both shouted that this was a lie. I told them about the US\$5,000 to pay for 'improvements' that had been made, and Skinny Guy asked me, did I think that was a justified price for such a big piece of land? He then started bitching about Padre Iván, who had caused a lot of hassle for the family and even banned one of the Vannucci sisters from going to mass. Poor Sadoth had had to interrupt his studies in Sucre and return home in order to sort things out.

There was some confusion as to the location of the old community – I mentioned Itakua, but Skinny Guy insisted that there had never been any people living in Itakua, but that they were all living in Urundaiti. He kept repeating how, out of the goodness of his heart, Sadoth Palenque had given the *comunarios* the land so they could go and live there, and how they weren't doing anything with it. Both guys alleged to have seen various tractors standing around there uselessly, which they said had been given to them *comunarios*. It was obvious from their talk, though, that they had only gone to Cañón de Segura once, so even if they had seen tractors standing idle ('*parados*') there, it might just have been a day outside of the sowing season. (Being located a fair way off from the nearest river, and having as yet no irrigation system, the *comunarios* were completely reliant on the arrival of the rainy season for their agricultural activities). They also told me how, when they had visited the *comunidad*, the *comunarios* had threatened them.

I told them that, obviously, I couldn't know what had happened 15 years ago, but that I had seen their *chacos* now and they were enormous. They said, maybe, but back then they weren't doing anything. I asked how the whole trouble had started, and they told me that it had been because of the *comunarios* wanting to take the land away from Sadoth, which was rightfully his.

CHAPTER 3. ‘TENEMOS NUESTRA HISTORIA’: A CASE OF HISTORY OBJECTIFIED

Different cultures, different historicities. (Marshall Sahlins 1985: x)

Guaraní people’s relationship with history is a tricky one.⁶⁹ The Guaraní’s lack of interest in past events too remote to concern people they themselves were familiar with has been documented in the writings of anthropologists and missionaries from the late 19th century onwards (Combès 2005b: 228). Likewise, the people of Cañón de Segura did not show much of an interest in the history of their local ‘ancestors’,⁷⁰ whose mortal remains, stored away in earthenware burial urns, were occasionally unearthed on the community’s land. Yet one thing I heard frequently during my stay in Cañón de Segura was the *comunarios*’ assertion that *they themselves* had ‘history’: ‘*Tenemos nuestra historia!*’ people would tell me proudly. When asked about this history, they would refer me to a document of a dozen typed pages, written by the lawyer-come-historian Franz Michel from Camiri who at one point represented them in their legal struggle with the *patrones*. A copy of this history existed in the community, which the *mburuvicha* kept in his house. This document roughly outlined the history of the old community (Itakua), along with an account of the fight with the *patrones* that had prompted the *comunarios* to move and a summary of the court cases between *patrones* and *comunarios*, which were still ongoing at the time at which the document was written.⁷¹

In order to better understand the *comunarios*’ enthusiasm for this document which they called ‘their history’, let us go back for a moment to the event that was to become regarded as the defining moment in the history of the Guaraní people of Bolivia (then referred to as ‘Chiriguano’); that is, the battle of Kuruyuki of 1892.⁷² The confrontation of 1892 is said to have been sparked by the assassination of a Chiriguano girl by the magistrate (*corregidor*) of Cuevo (then called Ñuumbyte) that went unpunished by the authorities. It was instigated by a young messianic leader (*tüpa*), Apiaguaiki, who had promised the Chiriguano invulnerability against the weapons of the Whites. Although only supported by one of the *capitanías* (Guaraní ‘districts’) (Combès 2005b: 226), Apiaguaiki managed to gain a large enough

⁶⁹ Cf. Gow (1991), Taylor (2007), Rappaport (1990) for contrasting models of historicity among South American indigenous peoples.

⁷⁰ I am using the word in inverted commas here because it is not actually one the *comunarios* of Cañón ever used to talk about those past inhabitants, while at the same time they did acknowledge that they had also been Guaraní and in that sense culturally similar to them (see Chapter 11).

⁷¹ A full translated version of this document is provided in Appendix 1.

⁷² For a more detailed account of Kuruyuki and its antecedents and aftermath, see Pifarré (1989: Chapter 24).

number of Guaraní for his cause to hazard an attack. Cuevo was razed to the ground, but the rebels were finally subdued by Republican forces in the hills of Kuruyuki, leaving some 800 Guaraní dead (Pifarré 1989, chapter 24; Saignes 1982a: 96). The overall number of those killed in the various skirmishes between December 1891 and March 1892 is given by Isabelle Combès as more than 6.000 (Combès 2005a: 39-40).

The reaction of historians concerned with Guaraní history to this crushing defeat virtually amounted to a proclamation of death: the Guaraní had come to the end of their celebrated history as warriors and thereby, it was largely agreed, had ceased to exist as a people in any meaningful sense (see, e.g., Sanabria 1972; Saignes 1990). Following the stereotypes of the Guaraní warrior and ‘savage’ that were set up already by the early colonial writers (see Chapter 1), the assumption that Bolivian Guaraní culture and society was indeed dead makes sense, and from there it follows naturally to agree with those who would interpret the recent emergence of a strong political Guaraní presence and unified self-representation in Bolivia as a ‘resurrection’ (cf. Pifarré 1992).

Notwithstanding the supposed ‘death’ of their society and culture, self-identifying Guaraní people in Bolivia today are a force to be reckoned with: not only do they represent (after Quechua and Aymara) the third-largest indigenous population in the country, but their political organisation, the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG), which was founded in 1987, is also one of the politically strongest of Bolivia’s indigenous organisations. Casting off the name of ‘Chiriguano’, which by then was regarded a derogatory term, the APG for the first time united all the *capitanías* under the common objectives of reclamation of lands and promotion of development in all the communities. The openly visible confirmation of the Guaraní’s ‘resurrection’ as a unified people came with the APG’s participation in the first commemorative event of the Battle of Kuruyuki in 1992, which had been organised as a celebration of a hundred years of Guaraní unity by local development organisations assisting the APG (Combès 2005b: 229). The event was a huge success: it united thousands of Guaraní from Bolivia as well as Paraguay and Argentina, sporting banners with slogans such as, ‘Dead of Kuruyuki, rise from your trenches, march with us to the Land-without-Evil’ (Pifarré 1992: 8).

Somewhat ironically, the bases for this presentation of a unified Guaraní people have been provided by the very literature that purports to reflect the past and present ‘realities’ of Guaraní culture – that is, the theories elaborated by ethnographers and historians (Combès 2005a: 2, 14; Combès 2005b: 230). Combès demonstrates this on the basis of the ‘Kandire’ myth, which, in its Clastrean ‘Land-without-Evil’ sense (see Chapter 1), has been adopted into present-day Guaraní culture, even though ‘no anthropologist has recorded the term Kandire among the Chiriguano before the 1980s’ (Combès 2005a: 2). While the coinciding of the emergence of the term in the usage of Guaraní leaders with the ‘birth of the indigenous organisations and an accelerated process of the (re)valuation of their culture’ (ibid) indicates a political motive, the fact that the term is only known among ‘indigenous elites, scholars and lawyers’ suggests that it has been adopted from ethnographic and ethnohistorical texts. However, as Combès recognises, these ‘inventions’ or ‘historical errors’ nonetheless

contribute in no small measure towards the moulding of a contemporary reality. The ‘sacred union’ of the Chiriguano, the ‘invention’ of Kuruyuki, is the ideological base of the current *Assembly of Guaraní People...*; and if Kandire was unknown to the Chiriguano of the Cordillera in the 16th century, today it does exist among their descendents, and this aspect of their discourse has to be reckoned with. (Combès 2005a: 14)

Land is often presented as linked to Guaraní culture and identity, as is exemplified by the APG’s usage of the concept of the ‘Land without Evil’. In recent APG discourses, the Land without Evil has taken on a political and ecological dimension in addition to the cultural one. It now also signifies Bolivia, and in particular the Chaco region, as the Guaraní’s ‘native land’, in which the notion of a place of origin blends with the vision of an idealised wealthy, egalitarian and ecologically intact State of the future that is to be attained through the development of Guaraní communities (Equipo Nizkor 2003). The Land without Evil in its current usage by the APG thus combines ideas about culture and nature, legitimate ownership, past, present, and future in one evocative concept that has become popular among non-Guaraní people within and without Bolivia.

There can be little doubt that the present-day portrayal of the Battle of 1892, too, is in fact an elaborate ideological construction. Although Guaraní resistance to the advance of the colonial and later the republican forces, colonists, and missionaries was continuously fierce, there was never a point in time when this resistance was organised in the unified form in which contemporary Guaraní discourses would have us believe. At the Battle of Kuruyuki itself,

only a fraction of Guaraní warriors (*kereimba*) actually went to fight in support of Apiaguaiki:

Of the six ‘great *capitanías*’ of the time, only one decidedly supported the *tumpa*: the chief Güiracota. Others, like Tengua, held a very ambiguous attitude; others, like Mandepora in Macharetí, guarded a ‘neutrality’ that was dangerous to the success of the movement. Others, like Chituri in Gran Parapetí, supported the Whites. The neophytes of the missions, the Chiriguano peons of the Ingre, and others from the zone of the Isoso also marched, sometimes obliged, sometimes not, against the *tumpa*. (Combès 2005b: 226)

The point of this historical reinvention is obvious: to provide a foundation for the APG on which to build its claims of a united Guaraní ‘nation’,⁷³ which can function as such for outsiders and Guaraní alike, a kind of ‘invented tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger eds. 1983) that will – at least for representational purposes – bind people together in the name of a united struggle and that will do so in a striking and visible way. As Combès notes on the subject: ‘in order to mitigate the forgetting [of one’s own history], history has to be reinvented, appealing this time not to the historical sources but to the present which one wants to shape, and to the future which one desires’ (2005b: 228).

However, at the same time as Kuruyuki is thus of considerable importance as a powerful symbol of Guaraní identity and unity, the enthusiasm people genuinely seem to feel for the event does not seem to have spread to ‘Guaraní history’ in general. The sympathy displayed towards the Battle’s victims is the projection of a very current political outrage rather than a feeling of nostalgia; such feelings continue to be reserved for people’s own beloved dead. Talking with some friends from the APG one night about the significance of having Kuruyuki as the place where Bolivia’s first Guaraní University was to be established,⁷⁴ they all agreed that it was important for its location in the ‘heart’ of Guaraní country as well as its historical meaning, since ‘our grandfathers died there’. At this point one of them cut in, chuckling, ‘Ah well, there are those who say, the grandfathers are dead anyway, so who cares!’

⁷³ The use of European-style denominators such as ‘nation’ for indigenous groups is widespread in South America and goes back to colonial classificatory practices that sought to understand the political scene in the New World by ordering it in terms of familiar categories (Schwartz and Salomon 1999).

⁷⁴ The University, which has been baptised ‘Apiaguaiki Tumpa’ in honour of the messianic leader of 1892, was inaugurated on 11 April 2009, together with the Quechua University “Casimiro Huanca” and the Aymara University “Tupac Katari”. As far as I am aware, courses commenced in August of that year. Further underlining the centrality of the Kuruyuki ‘myth’ in present-day Bolivian discourses on the Guaraní, Apiaguaiki himself was officially elevated to the status of ‘national hero and martyr in the fight for the liberation, sovereignty, and dignity of the Guaraní people’ via Law 4051 of 07 July 2009.

In this sense, today's representations of the events of 1892 as endorsed by the APG and its supporters have the character of a myth rather than that of 'history' in the conventional sense: they describe a bounded episode rather than constituting an ongoing, open-ended narrative, in which the protagonists and antagonists (that is, Guaraní and *karai*) stand firm, resisting any scholarly endeavour to set right the facts: the project, after all, is a political rather than an intellectual one and as such is interested in function rather than truth.

Much as Kuruyuki has thus become a kind of 'founding myth' of the 'Guaraní Nation', the 'history' of Cañón as it appeared enshrined in its document functioned as the founding myth of the newly established *comunidad*. Here, too, a particular event, complete with its own villains and heroes, had been isolated and elevated as foundational to a particular group of people. What is different in this case, however, is the fact that of the many versions of this 'myth' that circulated among the *comunarios*, most were based on particular individuals' first-hand experiences. The document, which so often became conflated with its content in the way people talked about it, in reality only constituted one version of the events it described, namely, that of a *karai* outsider from Camiri.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the foci which different witnesses' versions put on the events surrounding the *comunarios*' falling-out with the *patrones* diverge vastly from one another: while some stress the legal and bureaucratic aspects of the conflict, others abound in more personal accounts of the fear and hardship endured during this period. There are, however, certain aspects that appear as fixtures in all the versions I was told by the *comunarios*, those being the identification of 'good' and 'evil' forces that find their epitome in the figures of don Rubén Bruno and Sadoth Palenque, respectively. As can be gathered from my own document-based reconstruction and the opinions voiced by 'Skinny Guy' in the same chapter, the occurrences preceding and following the incident of Palenque's destruction of the communal shed were sparked as well as received by a large number of often opposing attitudes, all equally convinced of their own righteousness. Rather than constituting the only – or, indeed, arguably even the most central – of these oppositions, the one between Rubén Bruno and Sadoth Palenque thus only constitutes one of a series of oppositions that could be highlighted: Padre Iván Nasini vs. Olga Vannucci; Eloy Palenque vs. the APG; the Bruno 'brothers' vs. the Vannucci-Palenque family; the Bruno 'brothers' vs. the Bolivian legal system and its representatives; the *comunarios*' lawyers vs. the lawyers of the *patrones*; etc. Further, a number of mediating agents and helpers appear at various stages of the conflict

(Franz Michel, CIPCA, AGACAM, PDCC etc.). Albeit never completely neutral, these outside forces did not directly form part of the conflict but rather intervened in it with the aim of bringing it to a swift conclusion.

We can thus see that the setting-up as central of the conflict between Rubén Bruno and Sadoth Palenque is a reduction; its importance, I would argue, lies in its ability to fix in place the sides in an otherwise muddled and complex interplay of interest groups and ambitions and thereby rendering it comprehensible. ‘Mythic’ in character like the opposing parties in the Battle of Kuruyuki, the figures of Bruno and Palenque have taken on symbolic properties which allow them to stand in for – and further, to qualify – the two sides in the conflict that lies at the heart of Cañón’s coming-into-being as a *comunidad*: the *comunarios* and the Palenque-Vannuccis, Guaraní peons and *karai patrones*, and – ultimately – good and evil.

In the same way that these two positions are determined by being ‘spelled out’ in the document, the *comunidad*’s history itself is determined by the medium that contains it. By preserving the events which the *comunarios* had lived through in a written format, it bestowed a permanence and unity on their story that was lacking from their oral accounts. Its author, further, was not any old outsider but one who, as a lawyer, was endowed with the authority to produce texts that were powerful in a representational sense in a way that the *comunarios*’ memories were not. The way that people specifically referred to this document as ‘their history’ is telling in more than one way: on the one hand, it marks out ‘making history’ as something *karai* people do, a practice of powerful outsiders rather than the real-life experiences of the people who constitute its subjects. It also, however, qualifies the end result of this practice as a finished object that can be neither changed nor extended, but to which – like to a tool – a specific use-value can be ascribed.

It was clear that when people were saying that they ‘had their history’ this was to be taken quite literally: to have the document meant to ‘have’ the history, to be in charge of it and be able to present it should it become necessary. The fact that the document is, as its title informs the reader, a ‘historical-juridical investigation’ is fitting: this is not the kind of history that exists for its own sake, but a history that *does*, a sort of ‘multi-purpose history’ that is collective memory, political statement, and legal claim all in one.

Having experienced the problematics surrounding landownership in Bolivia first-hand, the *comunarios* were well-aware of the importance of having such a document at their disposal, which, together with their contract of purchase and an official map of the community's limits, provided them with a fair amount of legitimacy in the eye of national law. However, while to *have* history was clearly one of the important things which the *comunarios* of Cañón sought to stress to me in their statement of '*tenemos nuestra historia*', there is something to be said about the word *our* here as well: unlike the festival of Kuruyuki, which, although historically the commemoration of a defeat, has practically turned into a celebration of Guaraní courage and independence in the face of *karai* oppression, the history of Cañón is not one that seeks to speak for *all* of Bolivia's Guaraní. It is, on the contrary, the very particular history of a place and its people, the most important part of which many of the people whom I met during my fieldwork had lived through themselves. As such, it also functioned to set the people of Cañón apart from the inhabitants of other communities whose life histories were altogether different from their own. It was thus meaningful to the *comunarios* on a personal level which a generalised ideological construct such as Kuruyuki could not hope to reach.

It is, then, little surprising that the figures of the hero and the villain were not only central to the 'official history' as contained in the document but also became the pivot around which the *comunarios*' own versions revolved. Fixed in this way, their positions are not negotiable, and hence concurrence with the side of the 'villain' becomes unthinkable. The difficulty accompanying the attempt to hold such a position is demonstrated by the case of don Jacinto (mentioned in Elías Rocca's account in Chapter 2) who had been forced to live with his family at the edge of Cañón's residential area, a position that reflected their uncertain status within the community: although still situated on community land, their house was equally close to the first houses of the other *comunarios* as it was to the abandoned house of the *patrones*, and both Jacinto and his wife continued to carry out occasional work on the *patrones*' property such as, for example, milking their cows.⁷⁵ A friend of mine once pointed out their house to me as 'where the señora lives who looks after the Vannuccis' house', a description from which I at the time failed to gather that this señora was in fact one of the *comunarios*.

⁷⁵ See map 1 for the location of both houses.

However, unlike the inflexible positions occupied by the mythified hero and villain of Cañón's 'history', the positions of such 'real-life' characters as don Jacinto were a lot more flexible, and he and his family moved back into the centre of the *comunidad* during the time of my stay there. Considering that Jacinto's family was connected to those of other *comunarios* by various kin ties, this development is perhaps hardly surprising. What did, on the other hand, surprise me a great deal was to learn that relations between the *comunarios* and the arch villain of their history, Sadoth Palenque, had also calmed down over time and were now in fact even amiable. However, this piece of information was not volunteered to me but rather came to light only as a result of my specific inquiries on the topic. It was obvious from the responses I got that this current relationship was not one that greatly interested the *comunarios*: they were basically limited to assurances that things between themselves and Palenque were 'just fine' ('*tranquilo nomás*'), and the most detailed account I got on the matter was one that stated that Palenque occasionally came to visit the community and even gave *comunarios* lifts in his car when he encountered them in the road.⁷⁶ Accounts of Palenque's villainous behaviour during the time of the conflict were, on the other hand, always abundant.

The fact that, like with don Jacinto, things had also moved on between the *comunarios* and Sadoth Palenque since the time of the 'historical' episode but that the *comunarios* nonetheless only seemed interested in portraying the latter as a villain is revealing, not of any maliciousness on their part, but rather of the fact that Sadoth Palenque had since ceased to be of any particular importance to them. The role that had lent him his importance was precisely that of villain in the history-come-founding-myth of their *comunidad*, and it was as such that he had been immortalised in the *comunarios*' historical document. History, then, was opposed to lived experience in that it was a thing of the past, unalterable, permanent, and *finished*.

The idea of history as the finished product of the practices of powerful outsiders that finds its embodiment in the document in whose pages it is contained, and which can as such be owned and utilised, is one that cannot be separated from the historical background of the region. Within Latin America, the writing of history was a practice introduced by the agents of colonialism, which has been, and to this day remains, intimately bound up with legal issues

⁷⁶ I am not convinced how frequent such visits actually were, as I never even once encountered any member of the Vannucci-Palenque family in Cañón during the entire time I was there.

(such as, for example, the struggle for land). In the words of Echevarría, ‘Latin American history and fiction, the narrative of Latin America, were first created within the language of the law, a secular totality that guaranteed truth and made its circulation possible’ (1998: 10). In this sense, the history contained in the document was a piece of evidence that contained the ‘truth’ of the rightfulness and lawfulness of the *comunarios*’ position vis-à-vis the *patrones*, and which had been written specifically to be presented to the legal authorities in support of the *comunarios*’ case. For this purpose, its limited scope was sufficient, and the contract sealing the purchase of their land, together with the map outlining the *comunidad*’s current limits, were all that was necessary to put a full stop to the *comunidad*’s history altogether. Having fulfilled its designated role in the Camiri courts, the ‘history’ – in its legal function – had become obsolete except as a kind of ‘insurance policy’ for the *comunarios* against possible future abuses of their rights.

The use of village archives as a repository of legally powerful documents used to protect a community’s rights is a convention that has long been practiced in the Andean highlands (cf. Platt 1992). The same longstanding tradition of using documents in this way does not exist in the Bolivian lowlands, however, which differ from the Andean region not only in their ecological makeup but by extension also in their historical background: whereas indigenous groups in the highlands actually benefitted from the 1953 Agrarian Reform that dismantled the *latifundios* and gave indigenous people the possibility to apply for individual land titles, the same did not happen for the indigenous populations in the lowlands whose villages often found themselves located on a piece of land that had at one point or another passed into the possession of a nonindigenous landholder, often as a gift from a contemporary government leader (see Chapter 1). Considering the strong insistence of the *patrones* in the case with which we are here concerned that Itakua was a ‘property’ (*propiedad*) rather than a *comunidad* (see Chapter 2), and also considering what such a difference meant in terms of the rights (or, as it were, the absence thereof) of a place’s inhabitants, it is hardly surprising that a tradition of using archives for the legal defence of communities did not develop in the lowlands. For one, such documents would largely not even have existed in the first place; and further, it is unlikely that many *patrones* would have tolerated the existence of such an archive on what they considered to be their land.

It seems probable that this scarcity of documents that were available to the *comunarios* had caused their insistence in equating their ‘history’ with the one particular document while at

the same time disregarding anything that had happened before as well as after the events therein described. As an ‘insurance policy’, there was no need to expand it any further, and thus the writing of the history of Cañón had finished a long time before I started my fieldwork there.

In Part II, I explore the idea of the making of Cañón as an ongoing process and put forth the suggestion that – instead of ‘history’ which was seen as a thing belonging to the past – ideas about ‘living well’ had become a dominant idiom in *comunarios*’ understanding of this process, which were in turn bound up with ideas about ‘development’. This shift in focus coincided with the emergence of powerful institutions other than the Bolivian legal system as influential agents in the shaping of the community and the lives of its inhabitants; that is, governmental and nongovernmental development organisations.

PART II: LIVING *TRANQUILO*, DOING WHAT WE WANT:

***COMUNARIOS*' IDEAS ABOUT '*COMUNIDAD*'**

CHAPTER 4. ‘NO NOS DEJABAN TRABAJAR’: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ABLE TO WORK IN PEACE

... a man must work in the sowing of maize, he must engender, have women and children, he must know to take part in war and destroy the enemies, those who come to invade our territory and disturb our customs and traditions, he must drink the sweat of his labour and the juice of the maize he has cultivated, he must sing and dance in the banquets, get drunk on the precious *kägui*. (Giannecchini 1996:305, quoted in Sánchez 1998:220)

Given the fact that the *comunarios* had lived in Itakua ‘since time immemorial’ and thus had attachments of a spiritual as well as a material kind to the land there (I am thinking of the fact that a lot of their relatives lived, and still live, in the neighbouring *comunidad* of Urundaiti, and that their own dead were buried on Itakua land), I was curious to know how people felt about the move to Cañón on an individual basis. So I asked various people where they had liked living more, in Itakua or in Cañón. The result was unanimous: everyone I spoke to asserted that Cañón was much preferable to Itakua, even those few who expressed a certain nostalgia for their old home. As an explanation, they would tell me that ‘*Aquí, se puede vivir tranquilo*’ – ‘One can live in peace here’.

What people were telling me about, then, was their version of what it meant to be able to live well. Ideas of ‘living well’ (*vivir bien*), or ‘the good life’ (*vida buena*), are to be found all over the place in the literature on South American peoples. The topics under discussion here are manifold: we hear about the achievement of sociality and conviviality through the balance of positive and negative emotions in Amazonia (Overing and Passes eds. 2000); the maintenance of harmonious community life through the management of (female) reproductive power (Belaunde 2001); and new ideas about the ‘good life’ emerging as resistance to the power of the State (Sarmiento Barletti 2011), to give but a few examples.

Since the coming to power of Evo Morales and the MAS (Movement towards Socialism) in December of 2005, ‘living well’ (*‘allin kawsay’* or *‘suma qawsay’* in Quechua and *‘suma qataña’* in Aymara) has also become a political catchphrase in Bolivian politics. The notion forms the ethical principle of the new Bolivian Constitution⁷⁷, Article 8 of which states:

⁷⁷Ideas about living well even appeared in Evo’s National Development Plan. The plan, entitled ‘A Dignified, Sovereign, Productive and Democratic Bolivia for Living Well’, and which outlines the economic strategies for

The State assumes and promotes as ethical-moral principles of the plural society: *ama qhilla*, *ama llulla*, *ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar nor be a thief), *suma qamaña* (living well), *ñandereko* (harmonious life), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (Land-without-Evil) y *qhapaj ñan* (noble path or life). (CPE: 2009)

The use of concepts from different indigenous languages here can be seen as mainly an ideological statement (reflecting Evo Morales's indigenist politics rather than constituting concrete directions for how to conduct one's life) and is overall rather vague⁷⁸. The rendering of *ñande reko* as 'harmonious life', for example, stretches the concept of *teko* (which in itself is a neutral term meaning 'way of being', 'character', or 'custom') in that it presents an implicit value as explicit meaning, without, however, providing any explanation for this move. If we ask what exactly this 'harmonious life' may entail, we find that authors tend to stress the importance of reciprocity in the Guaraní *teko*, a concept that is increasingly being used as synonymous with the idea of 'living well' (see, e.g., Medina ed. 2002).

What is termed 'reciprocity' among Guaraní peoples is conventionally represented as a combination of positive reciprocity – the creation of alliances and kinship ties through the redistribution of goods by chiefs (*mburuvicha reta*) in the form of fiestas in exchange for women and their/their families' work – and negative reciprocity based on an ethics of vengeance directed against enemy groups. On the one hand,

Reciprocity assumes that someone offers a gift for free and voluntarily... The gift does not create necessary obligations of restitution, although it creates a relation that will in its turn motivate another gift... The best expression of reciprocity is... the generous banquet, [for which a chief will receive] multiple forms of generosity: moral support, delivery of women, participation in the work to be achieved, accompaniment in his enterprises. (Melià 1988: 42)

On the other hand,

The tribal universe of the Chiriguano rests on the confrontation between its parties: a completely negative reciprocity, vengeance engages the network of the relatives and allies of one generation and also their descendants. It creates a dynamic within the connections

the years of 2006-11, states: 'The propositions and orientations of the National Development Plan (PND) are the basis of the beginning of the dismantling of colonialism and neoliberalism in the country. They also constitute the result of the secular and actual demands of the people for the construction of a pluricultural and communitarian State that will permit the empowerment of the emergent social movements and indigenous peoples. Its principal aspiration is that the women and men of Bolivia *live well*' (my emphasis). Approved on 12 September 2007 via Supreme Decree 29272.

⁷⁸ For a reflection on the inadequacies of straightforward translations of concepts such as the above as 'living well' see Xavier Albó (2008a): 'Bien vivir = convivir bien'.

between the ‘obliged’ (*deudos*), some always being in debt of an offence or an affront. This unbalanced face-off permits the reaffirmation of the establishing tie of the society... However, founded on the settling of old scores that are rarely cleared between local and regional groups, it thereby opposes their fusion within a unified political whole. (Saignes 1982a: 80)

The common denominator between the two types of reciprocity is thought to have been the way in which both functioned as an ‘identity marker’ by establishing a group’s (ever-changing) position in relation to other groups, and – on an intra-communal level – through the procurement of personal prestige by distinguished men through the display of generosity and prowess in warfare.

However, interesting as these texts are as historical accounts, they are puzzling when presented as ethnographic accounts in that they hardly ever seem to engage with more recent ethnographies but rather tend to rely on colonial sources going back as far as the 16th century and – at best – classic ethnographies such as those by Nordenskiöld, Métraux, or Susnik. This happens particularly often in the case of ethnographic investigations that are carried out by NGOs and other similar agencies to function as a base for development projects, where researchers are often tempted to only consult the most well-known texts because of time pressure. A striking recent example is the study of the Guaraní *teko*, entitled *Ñande Reko – La comprensión guaraní de la vida buena*, carried out by the ‘Programme of Support for Decentralised Public Management and Struggle Against Poverty’ (PADEP)⁷⁹ of the German Society for Technical Collaboration (GTZ). The GTZ is an internationally active organisation with the declared aim of ‘support[ing] the German Government in... provid[ing] viable, forward-looking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalised world... on a sustainable basis’ (<http://www.gtz.de/en/689.htm>). The GTZ’s Camiri office was very active among the local Guaraní populations at the time of my fieldwork, working closely with the Capitanía Kaami to organise workshops, compile reports on development needs in the *comunidades*, and support them in their collaboration with the municipality of Camiri within the framework of ‘decentralisation’. The abovementioned study states as its objective the ‘divulgence of good information in order to facilitate an intercultural dialogue between the... GTZ/PADEP with its clients of the Chaco: the municipalities and the Guaraní Territorial-Based Organizations’ (Medina ed. 2002:7). This being its declared purpose, the selection of texts found in this compilation is surprising: about half of them deal with historical documents from the 16th century onwards (indiscriminately

⁷⁹ See <http://www.padep.org.bo>.

picking and mixing sources that talk about Guaraní peoples from all over the continent), and the text taken as the main reference for explaining the concept of the ‘good life’ among the Guaraní is Bartomeu Melià’s much-quoted *Ñande Reko: Nuestro modo de ser* (1988) whose arguments, again, mainly rely on historical (largely colonial) sources.⁸⁰

The weaknesses of unquestioningly applying the findings from such old texts to a contemporary context lie in the risk of ‘freezing’ Guaraní culture in time without taking account of people’s lived realities today, which tend to occur in contexts that are very different from those encountered by the ‘classical’ ethnographers, responding to different pressures from the outside and also operating according to different rules internally. Consider this extract from a recent study on the ‘good life’ among the Ashaninka people of Peruvian Amazonia:

[K]ametsa asaiki [the good life] is central to any understanding of Ashaninka social life and practices, especially in a context like that of the Bajo Urubamba. This context requires them to find new tools in order to be able to retake their pursuit [of] *kametsa asaiki* that was interrupted by the war [between the Shining Path and the government]. However, the objective in the post-war [era] is not to go back to an idealised past of abundance, sharing and peace but to re-structure and creatively adapt Ashaninka society to the current state of affairs in Peruvian Amazonia... *kametsa asaiki* is no longer a communal project of conviviality but it has become a tool for defiance of the Peruvian State and its impositions on their lives. It is a conscious political choice in their fight for the right to have rights. (Sarmiento Barletti 2011: 284-5)

While reading the efforts of the *comunarios* of Cañón de Segura purely in terms of resistance would be too restricted in the present context, the above quote draws attention to the importance of taking into account the various forces currently impacting on their society and thereby shaping their ideas of what life in the *comunidad* is (or should be) about.

This and the following chapters in this section take up the *comunarios*’ assertion about the importance of ‘living *tranquilo*’ and explore what it was they meant by this, and what it meant to them. Taking a more critical approach to generalised notions of Guaraní reciprocity by putting them in relation to the way people talked and acted should provide us with a glimpse of what ‘living well’ in Cañón entailed within the particular circumstances at the time of my fieldwork. What will become clear throughout this discussion is how these ideas

⁸⁰ An earlier case in point is the ‘Rural Development Programme for Cordillera’ (1986b) by CIPCA and CORDECRUZ, on the basis of which the organisational structure of the APG and many of the Guaraní *capitanías* and communities was established. See following chapter.

were in fact inseparable from the concept of *comunidad*, which not only provided a framework for people's daily lives but was in a way itself constituted by them.

Unsurprisingly, what had most detracted from people's tranquillity in Itakua were the *patrones*. Apart from general complaints about them, such as Luz's assertion that 'they would come to molest the people at any moment' (see Chapter 2.2), one of the main grievances people had about them was that they would not let them work in peace (the reference being in particular to agricultural work): they objected to the *comunarios*' keeping animals and only let them cultivate small patches of land, whereas the work they were obliged to do on the *patrones*' land was time-consuming and badly paid. In the words of one *comunario* who was about 35 years old at the time the trouble with the *patrones* started:

Itakua was a *propiedad*, and the children of the *comunarios* living there could not study enough because all the people had to work for the *patrones*. They were paid about 5 *bolivianos* a day at the age of 10. I myself started out earning 1 *boliviano* a day at the age of 10. I got up to 2.50 *bolivianos* a day but never reached any wage higher than that [while I was working for them].

In Cañón, people said, there was enough land to cultivate for everyone, and one could come and go as one pleased to take care of one's field. The keeping of animals, too, was not only possible but in fact encouraged by various projects provided by outside agencies, in which people could take part or not, depending on their personal circumstances and motivation (see Chapter 8).

Such freedom was also stressed to me whenever I asked about the rules for deciding the size and location of one's *chaco*: everyone could, people would tell me, make their *chaco* wherever one wanted, and as big as one wanted. When I asked my friend Lupe what happened if two people wanted to make their *chaco* in the same spot and maybe had a fight about it, she said that that didn't happen, as once someone had made their *chaco* in one spot it was already theirs and no one would be able to contest it. She said, '*Es una comunidad libre*' – 'This is a free community.' In this, Cañón was different from Itakua, which – being situated on a privately owned property – could at best qualify as a *comunidad cautiva*, even though from the point of view of the *patrones* the use of any such terminology was precluded by the

question of ownership: *Iakua* was their property, their *propiedad*, and as such talking about it in terms of *comunidad* was simply incorrect (see Chapter 2.1).

Like the *patrones* in their argumentation in support of their own case, the *comunarios* thus put life in a '*comunidad*' in opposition to life on a '*propiedad*': whereas the *patrones* had used this argument in order to justify their imposing restrictions and prohibitions on *comunarios*' lives, in the usage of the *comunarios* the distinction became a declaration of present freedom (as opposed to the unfreedom they had suffered in the past),⁸¹ as well as an affirmation of their rights (as lawful owners and inhabitants of their own piece of land), and to an extent even something of an idealisation of the harmony this free life entailed.

One of the most interesting characteristics of this 'freedom' people liked to stress to me when talking about their work was that it was not total but rather consisted in the fact that work was regulated by rules and prescriptions that were *acceptable* to people. For one, while it was true that there was great freedom for people to choose the location of their *chaco*, all new *chacos* were meant to be made within the same designated planting area since the community had been divided into zones assigned to different uses in 2001. The evaluation and measuring of the territory was carried out by the GTZ in line with their 'Project for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources' (MASRENA)⁸² supported by the Prefecture of Santa Cruz. The result was a Plan of Regulations (*Plan de Ordenamiento*) that identified the following eight zones, according to soil type and character of the vegetation:

1. Residential area: for building houses, smaller fields, raising smaller animals etc.
2. Clean intensive cultivations 1: mainly flat areas designated for making *chacos*.
3. Clean intensive cultivations 2:⁸³ “
4. Pasture: areas with natural and/or sowed pastures with chalky ground or medium inclination for cattle and other larger animals to graze in.
5. Forest pasture:⁸⁴ “

⁸¹ Interestingly, while people sometimes talked about their former exploitation being partly due to their ignorance (in terms of lack of school education), I never heard anyone phrase this shift in terms of 'becoming civilised'. 'Becoming civilised' is an idiom that has been widely documented in the usages of Amerindian peoples in reference to different scenarios of liberation from oppression (cf. Gow 1991, Sarmiento Barletti 2011, De la Cadena 1995).

⁸² See <http://www.mpl.ird.fr/crea/taller-colombia/FAO/AGLL/pdfdocs/catalogo.pdf>

⁸³ Designated cultivation areas 1 and 2 came with a set of recommendations attached to them (such as the installation of windbreakers, rotation of crops, and rotation of agricultural implements), with the difference that in area 2, soil samples should be taken before the clearing of new *chacos* (MASRENA 2001).

6. Forest production: can be used for wood production.⁸⁵
7. UPFPR (Protection areas for rivers or ravines): no cutting of trees, no grazing of large animals.
8. Protection: no cutting of trees.

The reason the *comunarios* welcomed this division – imposed, as it were, by agents from outside the *comunidad* – was that it produced a document that was a) in line with Forestry and Agrarian Reform Law⁸⁶, and b) included several maps rendering the outlines and limits of Cañón in great detail. Like the historical document discussed in Chapter 3, the MASRENA document thus represented a further legal ‘tool’ at the disposal of the *comunarios* that helped secure their territory within the realms of law and bureaucracy.

The fields (Spanish: *chaco*; Guaraní: *ko*) were located beyond the residential area at the ‘back’ of the *comunidad* (see map 1). Spaces for new *chacos* were cleared by first making incisions around the stems of trees, which made them dry out and easy to fell. The desired area was then burned, and the burnt tree stems sold as charcoal.⁸⁷ There were, however, also some *comunarios* who made use of a chain saw for the purpose.

Crops that were sowed included maize (*avati*), beans (*kumanda*), pumpkin (*guandaka*), chili peppers (*kii*), peanuts (*munduvi*), sugar cane (*tiriku*), and very occasionally melons (*sandia*) and yucca (*mandío*). What people sowed depended on them, but everyone planted maize. Maize was extremely important in the *comunarios*’ production of food, for their own consumption as well as for selling in Camiri, and people would talk about it with great fondness. Certain crops were often grown together, such as maize, beans and pumpkin, which aid each other (the bean uses the maize stem to climb up on, and the pumpkin keeps the ground moist with its large leaves, which in turn benefits the maize). Others were sowed

⁸⁴ Again, the forest pasture area was distinguished from the pasture area by a slight difference in the recommendations given for their management (e.g., in the pasture area, sowing of pastures was supposed to be done in shaded places and trees to be planted where these were missing) (MASRENA 2001).

⁸⁵ This area would mainly be used for the collection of firewood, as the *comunarios* of Cañón did not engage in timber trade.

⁸⁶ Forestry Law No. 1700 (12 July 1996), Article 16: ‘Lands with forest cover suitable for diverse uses’, and its by-law, the Supreme Decree No. 24453 (21 December 1996); INRA Law No. 1715 (18 October 1996), Article 3: ‘Constitutional guarantees’.

⁸⁷ It was only trees that were felled in the process of making *chacos* which were put to such uses.

apart, like peanut and yucca. Apart from the sowing and harvesting, *chaco* work basically comprised keeping *chacos* clear of weeds.

There was one tractor, shared between the neighbouring communities of Cañón de Segura, Piedritas and Urundaiti, that had been bought with the money these communities had received from the municipality as compensation for the inconveniences caused the inhabitants by the building of the Santa Cruz-Camiri motorway (such as, for example, cutting their water supply off for something like three months). However, the money had not been enough to also buy the necessary implements to go with it (such as a harrow or a plough), which consequently had to be rented from their neighbour (none other than the infamous Sadoth Palenque whose aunt owned Itakua). As mentioned, apparently things had cooled down by the time of my fieldwork and the relations between *comunarios* and *propietarios* were amiable (*‘tranquilo’*, as I was assured). The tractor was looked after by the *mburuvicha*, who tended to have it parked in his *oka* when it was not in use. Maintenance and repairs were the responsibility of the Production team (see PISET below), who, lacking technicians of their own, usually just got someone from Camiri to fix it.

Besides such technical restraints, the most obvious restrictions people faced in their economic activities were those imposed by environmental forces: there was, for example, no irrigation system of any sort, so if it did not rain in the rainy season there was not much people could do to save their crops. However, those were not the only difficulties encountered by the agriculturalists, as can be seen in the following example: I once asked don Elías how the work in his *chaco* was going, and he said that he was only planting maize, beans, and squashes. For more crops, he said, he would need more land – he only had 1 ½ hectares because he couldn’t manage more beside his work with Caritas in Camiri. He said he’d already sowed the maize, but that the ‘worms’⁸⁸ had eaten it all, so he’d have to do it all again, double the work. He said one could spray the plants with insecticide, but that that was bad for the soil. (Other *comunarios* had, less scrupulously, told me that they did not use insecticide because it was too expensive.) This example, then, already demonstrates four possible complications that could affect *comunarios’* ability to work: environmental forces, work outside the community, ethical concerns, and lack of money.

⁸⁸ *‘Gusanos’*; caterpillars that destroyed a lot of the harvest in Cañón in the season of 2007-8.

As a result of the MASRENA project, the community's *chacos* had been made close together and were mostly only separated by a row of distinct crops indicating the limits between one person's *chaco* and another's (such as a row of beans planted between two *chacos* of maize). People sometimes lamented the lack of wire for fences to keep the large animals out but always asserted that there tended to be no problems between the owners of neighboring *chacos*.⁸⁹ Besides the large *chacos* at the back of the *comunidad*, most families also had an additional field next or close to their houses. Those were used for the family's immediate needs and contained such crops as chilies, tomatoes, and herbs to add to *mate*, whereas produce from the further away (and usually larger) field was often sold as well. Some people, when asked, estimated that the relationship between produce consumed and sold was about half and half, whereby maize was the leading crop in both categories. As far as I could tell, the only crop that was produced exclusively for sale in Camiri was peanuts, a crop which had only recently made its way into the community and was now being planted by only a few families.

When I asked about the smaller fields and why they could be made outside the designated area, I was told, 'Oh, those are just gardens (*huertas*)', indicating that as such they did not fall under the regulations pertaining to *chacos*. These gardens were worked by the women more often than the larger and more remote *chacos*. Despite these multiple plantations, though, there was still a lot of cultivable land left in the community, which explains why *comunarios* could choose the location and scale of their *chacos* so freely. Part of the land was even still being used by the *comunarios* of Urundaiti, with whom – both populations being descendants of the same Itakua peons, and people still frequently intermarrying between the two *comunidades* – the Cañón *comunarios* shared close kin ties. However, whereas there were no papers involved with the organisation of the Cañón *comunarios*' own *chacos*, there existed a legal contract outlining the conditions on both sides for the Urundaiti people's use of Cañón land, thereby denoting their status as 'outsiders' to the community.

While legally the community as a whole owned the land on which it was located, individual families or people more or less informally 'owned' the right to use the space on which their houses, *okas*, and *chacos* were located – unless, that is, they left them. What I was told is that

⁸⁹ At the time of my fieldwork, there was only one *chaco* that had been fenced in, which, ironically, was part of a project called '*sin fronteras*' ('without frontiers') that had been initiated by the Spanish NGO 'Architects Without Frontiers' (see <http://asfes.org>). They had sent an agro-technician who was working together with CIPCA to design *chacos* with crops that could be rotated in order not to exhaust the soil.

if one left one's house and *oka*, one lost one's right to them, whereas if one stopped using one's *chaco* it still belonged to one and if someone wanted to use the land, they had to ask permission of the original owner (which was then usually granted). Further, the permission of the communal council (*asamblea*) – consisting of all *comunarios* who would attend any meeting that was called to discuss a particular matter – had to be sought before the clearing of space for a new *chaco* could begin. Once the *asamblea* had given its consent (which was generally the case), one could indeed use as much land as one wanted, or rather, as much as one and one's family could manage to work. As a result, family *chacos* rarely exceeded four hectares in size, the average being around two.

Every family was responsible for their own *chaco*. Men did a major part of the work, especially in the setting-up of new *chacos*, while women and occasionally children helped out when needed (especially during the harvest) but otherwise spent a lot of their time in the *oka*. The exception were frequent trips into Camiri where the women sold the family's produce in the markets. The fact that people would often refer to the designated planting area as the 'communal *chaco*' had confused me at first into thinking of it as one huge *chaco* that belonged to the *comunidad* as a whole, and – having read about the existence of 'communal work' among some Guaraní groups⁹⁰ – I asked the *capitán* whether such a practice existed in Cañón. As it turned out, even though communal work had used to exist in Cañón, it had been abolished in the not-so-remote past (it only stopped after the community's move), because it had not really worked: in the words of the *capitán*, 'If 12, 15 people were meant to be working, only eight actually would.'

What did exist, however, was the *motiro* (in Spanish usually translated as '*faena*', agricultural work), which, he said, was different from communal work per se in that it involved one man⁹¹ inviting those of the others whom he wanted to help him carry out a certain task that would exceed the capacities of just one family. The inviter then had to arrange for *chicha* (*kägui*) and food to be prepared (a task performed by the women), which were given to the helpers in recompense for their work after it was finished. Traditionally, it was the chiefs (*mburuvicha reta*) who would invite entire communities to partake in these work parties.

⁹⁰ See, e.g., Melià (1988), Plan Desarrollo Rural Cordillera (1986b).

⁹¹ It is always men who invite people for the *motiro*.

Their social importance lay in the reciprocal exchange involved in them, as the work necessarily had to be followed by big fiestas (*arete*):

The *arete* and the system of reciprocity are not a simple addition to Guaraní life, in the way of a reward for the good success of the work, but an essential element of the economic system in which interplay relations of kinship, of work and production, of the social and political relation, and of ritual celebration. (Melià 1988: 51)

Even in the small-scale *motiro* as it was still being practiced in Cañón, and which did not involve the organisation of fiestas per se, the *chicha* seemed to be by far the most important part of the entire enterprise. It was also named as one of the main differences when I asked how the ‘communal work’ proper had been different – there was no *chicha* involved with that, because no one was issuing an invite. Rather, it used to be *comunarios* working together for the good of the whole community – a practice that has been reported as difficult to organise among Guaraní peoples from colonial times onwards⁹². The only area where this kind of communal work still existed was in the cattle project, where, I was told, it did work for some reason.

Without wanting to make a definite claim, I suspect that the reason the communal work had been successfully maintained in the cattle project was that the cattle project was not only communally owned but also deemed particularly valuable (see the ‘event’ in the Introduction). Besides the economic value of the project, cattle breeding is an activity that is regarded as prestigious in the area (see Chapter 9), and the fact that not all families could afford to keep cows of their own made the communal cattle project all the more important. The idea that communal projects require the formation of communal work parties was first introduced by CIPCA, the first NGO to implement projects among the Guaraní (Hirsch 2003b: 90-1), and has since become established parlance in the Guaraní world (as, for example, in the *comunarios*’ insistence that their Urundaiti ‘tenants’ form work groups to work their rented land in Cañón). Therefore, communal work tied to particular projects may well have a different status from the kind of obligatory communal work ‘for the communal good’ which missionaries tried to introduce, or that imposed on people by the *patrones*. This theory is supported by the fact that a women’s workgroup existed in Cañón, whose leader doña Filomena – contrary to the assertion of the *mburuvicha* – assured me that the women’s

⁹² See, e.g., Melià (1988); Saignes (1990); Pifarré (1989).

group frequently engaged in ‘communal work’.⁹³ As it turned out, however, the communal work the women’s group did was almost exclusively tied to such projects as had funding at any time (such as the production of yoghurt, weavings, or pottery, the latter of which I discuss more closely in Chapter 9).

Be that as it may, what all of these forms of ‘communal work’ had in common was that they were different from the institution of the *motiro*. However, what is sometimes titled traditional ‘communal work’ in the literature is nothing else but today’s *motiro* on a larger scale, organised by the *mburuvicha* and involving the entire community, and not the kind of communal work which the *capitán* told me the *comunarios* of Cañón had abandoned for the difficulties in making it work. This usage of the label of ‘communal work’ to designate the *motiro* is misleading;⁹⁴ in fact, it was a pattern of work quite contrary to the *motiro* in that it did not involve any reciprocal exchanges. As such, I suspect the communal work that was discontinued in Cañón to have been a result of demands made by the *patrones* of Itakua rather than a form of organisation that emanated from the *comunarios* themselves (or, indeed, their NGO allies), which would also explain its disappearance shortly after the relocation of the *comunidad* and the resulting freedom from the *patrones*’ authority.

Interestingly, however, if we go back to the ‘classical’ literature on Guaraní sociality and its insistence on the importance of reciprocal relations, we find a correlation with this claim in the very absence of communal work and the large-scale *motiro* parties of the past. The reason for the disappearance of the latter is to be found in the changes the political structure of Bolivian Guaraní communities has undergone over time. That is, the fact that they are no longer dominated by (male) individuals distinguished by their prestige as orators, warriors

⁹³ Interestingly, both the *mburuvicha*’s and doña Filomena’s claims about the nonexistence/existence of communal work were based exclusively on their own gender group. The perception of male and female work among contemporary Guaraní, the relationship between them, and the influence (N)GOs have in shaping them is a topic well worth exploring further. However, such an exploration is beyond the limits of this thesis and will have to wait for another time.

⁹⁴ Cf. Melià (1996: 205): ‘If economically the *potirō* [*motiro*] is collective work, socially it is *pepy*, fiesta.’ The mistake, however, seems an easy one to make. See, e.g., this extract from a PADEP-GTZ development report from 2003 on the valuation of local people’s contributions to NGO projects: ‘The motivation of the communities for contributing labour power and local materials is principally the need of the infrastructure – self-benefit. Equally important is their socio-cultural predisposition for communal work – community activities of all for all. The Guaraní communities qualify their participation in public works as a... tool for negotiating benefits that correspond to it. There exists a high estimation of communal work and the return service [*contraparte*] is recognised as a contribution of all for the benefit of all – the *mōtiro*’ (Roduner 2003: 4).

and hosts of fiestas but nowadays tend to be organised according to more ‘democratic’ principles, with leaders being elected by the *asamblea* every two years. This leadership structure echoes that of the APG, not only in the practice of the frequent re-elections of *capitanes* as a means to preclude community members from monopolising power and/or wealth, but also in the division of leadership duties among a specialised team of ‘PISET’ officials who were (at least theoretically) subject to the same election cycle as the *capitán*.⁹⁵ PISET is the acronym of the ‘Peasant Development Programme’ that was cooked up by CIPCA and the then-departmental development agency CORDECRUZ, the two main entities responsible for the founding of the APG in 1987 (Hirsch 2003b: 91). Its initials stand for Production, Infrastructure, health (*Salud*), Education, and land/territory (*Tierra/Territorio*), which were the areas which a joint 1986 survey by CIPCA-CORDECRUZ identified as particularly important for the development of Guaraní communities (*Plan Desarrollo Rural Cordillera* 1986a). To these areas were more recently added those of natural resources, gender, and communication, thus extending the ‘PISET’ into a ‘PISETRNGC’ (Caballero et al 201?: 4); however, the acronym ‘PISET’ remains most commonly used.

Today, most *comunidades* and *capitanías* have a PISET team of their own, the latter of which is often (but not necessarily) made up of leaders from *comunidades* that belong to the *capitanía*. While some other *comunidades* and even *capitanías* had a female *mburuvicha*, the main trend (encouraged by the increased concern for gender equality of NGOs working with the Guaraní) was towards a female second *mburuvicha*, as was the case in the Capitanía Kaami. The Gender Official invariably tended to be a woman, which reflects Guaraní people’s understanding of ‘gender’ as ‘women’s work/issues’. In Cañón at the time of my fieldwork, only two of the PISET positions were occupied by women: that of Health Official and that of leader of the women’s workgroup, a position which amalgamated in itself the roles of ‘female *mburuvicha*’ and ‘Gender Official’. The explanation for this ‘underrepresentation’ of women in the PISET team which one of the *comunarias* gave me once was that the women were too busy looking after their families and houses to be PISET persons: ‘The officials (*responsables*) have to go to meetings in Camiri a lot, they are often even called away at night to attend to an emergency, but the women can’t do that very easily

⁹⁵ In practice, it often happened that the same people kept being reelected because no one else was prepared to take over their responsibilities. This was the case in both the leaderships of Kaami and Cañón, with the notable exception that a new *mburuvicha* tended to be elected in Cañón so frequently that there were hardly any eligible men left who had not held the position before. This situation had, by the time I left the field, resulted in a young man of 21 years of age being elected *capitán*, a move of which some *comunarios* were slightly doubtful (but obviously not enough to voice an objection in the *asamblea*).

because they have to look after the children.’ There were no officials for communication and natural resources, whereas the ‘Production’ and ‘Education’ Officials were each in charge of a team sharing their responsibilities.

With regard to the *motiro*, the effect of this new kind of leadership is a circle of absences that reinforces itself: with the absence of the necessity to distinguish oneself through the traditional means and the consequential absence of individuals with a large labour force at their disposal also vanishes the possibility of building the kinship alliances necessary for ensuring access to the labour power allowing for the procurement of the means to host fiestas and thus distinguish oneself.

However, given the mostly individualised character of work as it is carried out nowadays, can we safely infer from this abandonment of communal work due to the lack of the reciprocal relations still present in the small-scale *motiro* that reciprocity does in fact still play an important role in the social organisation of the *comunidad*? Or is the value disappearing along with the political organisation and large-scale *motiro* to which it used to be tied? As we have seen, work defined life in Cañón not so much because it tied people together in networks of reciprocal relations, but because it was – by allowing people to work in peace – directly opposed to work on the *propiedad*. The importance of work as a definitional feature of life in the *comunidad* thus remained, but for different reasons than in the past, when work was a function of the ability of distinguished males to create and maintain kin and affinal ties through the positive reciprocity of fiestas and the prestige gained through the negative reciprocity practiced in warfare. If we are to look for the importance of reciprocity, we may thus have to do so in other areas of the *comunarios*’ lives. The following chapter takes up this question of reciprocity in relation to fiestas, their social significance and resignification.

CHAPTER 5. THE FIESTA AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIALITY

[C]onsumption as a general phenomenon really has nothing to do with the destruction of goods and wealth, but with their reincorporation into the system that produced them in some other guise... [E]ven quite ephemeral items, such as the comestibles served at a feast, live on in the form of the social relations they produce, and which are in turn responsible for reproducing the comestibles. (Gell 1986: 112)

As mentioned before, in the pre-colonial and colonial periods the fiesta used to function as a ritual to maintain links of reciprocity within and among communities in the context of the *motiro*. However, at the same time it was also an integral part of the acting-out of the ‘negative reciprocity’ of vengeance and warfare: before going to war, the *kereimba* (Guaraní warriors) would gather their courage by dancing and drinking *chicha* in the fiesta, and after their return a fiesta would be prepared to celebrate their victory and seal new pacts of alliance (Sánchez 1998: 224). Giving expression to the huge importance the fiesta thus held in Guaraní social and political life, Wálter Sánchez refers to it as the ‘source of social cohesion’ and quotes Romano and Cattunar (1916:165): ‘In this way, unity and peace are maintained among the Indians; without these invitations and friendly reunions each one would go their own way [*se independizaría*] and the tribe would dissolve’ (Sánchez 1998:225).

Nowadays largely detached from the context of the *motiro* as from that of warfare, the fiesta nonetheless occupied a central position in the lives of the *comunarios* of Cañón de Segura, and it was also the context in which reciprocal relations among them could be seen at work most clearly. There were four main types of fiesta that would be celebrated with greater or smaller regularity throughout the course of a year, and which varied in their overall setup and the way in which they were organised while all revolving around a common ‘core’: children’s birthday parties; a series of set fiestas between Christmas and Twelfth Night; the fiestas of carnival in February; and the fiesta of the Virgen de Copacabana⁹⁶, the patron saint of the *comunidad*, in August. What all four types had in common was that they all functioned to draw the community together in a common social setting, usually aided by the consumption of copious amounts of *chicha* and the opportunity to dance to either hired or live music, and that the *comunarios* regarded them as a highly important aspect of their lives. In short, the

⁹⁶ The Virgin of Copacabana is a popular Latin American personification of the Virgin Mary whose cult originated in the town of Copacabana on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the 16th century.

historians who so essentialised the Guaraní warrior ethos that they declared Guaraní society to have departed along with the last of the *kereimba* of 1892 were wrong: the production and consumption of *chicha* may have become dissociated from warfare, but they remain practices of great social significance, and *chicha* a highly meaningful substance. What we are dealing with here is thus not so much a case of loss of meaning as one of resignification, what Marshall Sahlins has called the ‘functional revaluation of categories’ (Sahlins 1985)⁹⁷.

The following is an account of the first fiesta to which I was invited in Cañón, which I am using to demonstrate the general dynamics at play in these events. I will then go on to outline the differences between the different types of fiesta and what all these elements can tell us about the ways in which sociality was being produced and constantly reproduced in Cañón at the time.

The fiesta in question was organised by a couple, doña Filomena and don Rogelio, on the occasion of their little son’s birthday, which also fell around the period of the *comunidad*’s anniversary on 05 May. I went accompanying my friend Lupe and several other people who had been attending a mass in the school yard. When we arrived at the fiesta’s hosts’ *oka* (patio), there was a big group of men seated on two benches that had been improvised of wooden boards supported by blocks of wood in the shade underneath some trees, drinking, chatting, and smoking. Only some three women were sitting on chairs in front of the house. The newly arrived group with which we had come managed to fill another bench opposite those of the men and, a bit later, a second one that was quickly put up next to the first one. There were children of all ages running around, the smallest ones sitting on their mothers’ laps. I got a seat at the very end of the bench that was closest to the house.

I asked Lupe whether there was always this sex-segregation in the seating arrangements at fiestas, and she said, always. She said that in the *pueblo* (the town, i.e. Camiri) it was different – there, couples sat together, but here it was women with women and men with men. I kept looking around to see whether any of the women were smoking, but cigarettes, as far

⁹⁷ In Sahlins’s words, ‘If culture is as anthropologists claim a meaningful order, still, in actions meanings are always at risk... Culture is therefore a gamble played with nature, in the course of which, wittingly or unwittingly,... the old names that are still on everyone’s lips acquire connotations that are far removed from their original meaning’ (1985: ix).

as I could see, were only being passed among the men, so I asked Lupe whether the women did not smoke at all, and she confirmed that they did not. When I asked her why, Lupe thought for a bit, then suggested that they probably ‘just didn’t want to’. Funnily, I heard a lot of diverging opinions on the matter of women and ‘*vicios*’ (‘vices’; smoking, drinking and chewing coca) throughout my stay – while some men at the fiesta assured me that women did in fact smoke and drink (don Pedro: ‘*Toman!*’ Eduardo: ‘*Fuman!*’), a young man I spoke to on a separate occasion told me that people would get very upset if they saw a *comunaria* smoke,⁹⁸ whereas an older lady, after thinking about it for a bit, came to the conclusion that smoking was unheard of among women because ‘their mothers probably just don’t teach them to.’ Judging from later observations and conversations, the women really did not drink as much as the men, and generally only in the fiestas, and I never once saw a woman from the community smoke or chew coca.

In short, in the fiesta, the men had the smokes, the coca, and most of the hard drink, while the women had the little children, and the children had an opportunity to get together and play – but what they all had in common was the *chicha*⁹⁹. I was amazed to see even little children grab cups and drink out of the buckets, clay pots, and large metal containers filled with *chicha* freely and without anyone reprimanding them. I asked Lupe about this, and she said, ‘Ah yes, they love it – *Les encanta!*’ To my question of whether they did not get drunk on it she replied that the *chicha* didn’t make one drunk, only ‘this stuff’ (pointing towards a tetra-pack filled with wine) and the ‘alcohol’ did. What people called ‘*alcohol*’, or ‘*trago*’ (‘booze’), was the high-percentage cane liquor that seemed a constant companion of the men even when they went to the fields to work. It tended to be mixed with water when served out at fiestas, but it was still pretty nasty. It also happened frequently that the ‘owners’ (*dueños*; i.e., hosts) of a fiesta spiked their *chicha* with *alcohol* if they felt that it was not strong enough or that people were not getting drunk fast enough.

⁹⁸ Outsiders, such as myself and even visitors and kin from Camiri or Santa Cruz, had more license with regard to the *vicios*: the same young man who had told me that people would not tolerate it if a *comunaria* smoked also said that with me it was different, as I was from outside and people ‘accepted my difference’, and I often heard men comment wonderingly on the amount Carol, the Spanish engineer of Architects without Frontiers, was smoking, without there being any negative undertones.

⁹⁹ There are various alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages throughout South America that are known as ‘*chicha*’: ‘Drinks based on maize (boiled, chewed, and put in earthenware pots to ferment) of the *chicha* type were used from Mexico to Guatemala, Yucatan, and Darien, and to the high plateau of Bogota in the south; they are also found among the inhabitants of the Andes, in Ecuador, Peru, and Chile to Araucania and eastward from the Orinoco, and in Guiana as far as the territory of the Amazon’ (LaBarre 1938: 228). Guaraní *chicha* (*kägui*) is made of maize that is boiled and then partly chewed by the women to help the fermentation process, and a lighter form of it is often drunk as an everyday refreshment (*käguirai*; i.e., ‘little *chicha*’). A fiesta without *chicha* is absolutely unthinkable.

The *trago* and the wine were served out in tiny little portions, whereas the *chicha* was given out in mugs and cups. The serving system worked as follows: one person was given a container of *chicha*, or a carton of wine, or a bottle of *trago*, which they then had to finish by serving the contents out to the other guests. This was done one person after the other according to seating order. To start with, the person serving the drink had to invite another person by saying, '*Jeu kägui*' ('Take *chicha*!'), or '*Ndegua jau*' ('I'm inviting you', 'Cheers!'; lit.: 'I drink to you'), then drink themselves and then make the other person drink. I provided some entertainment by serving one jug of *chicha*, one carton of wine, then a bigger pot of *chicha* to everyone and making a number of mistakes: when Lupe asked me to serve out some *chicha*, I went and obediently supplied everyone on the benches on our side of the *oka* with a mugful, only to be told at my return by a laughing Lupe that one was only supposed to serve from one's own (or, in this case, from her) container, whereas I had been refilling my mug from whichever container was closest to the person I was inviting. Of course, no one had told me a word, but all had accepted my *chicha* smiling amiably.

I also offered wine to a couple of people I should not have offered it to, including Lupe's 14-year-old daughter, whom I invited twice, the second time because I didn't recognise her face in the dark. I then managed to give some women way too much wine, which they drank, but under protest. One of them got me back a little later by serving me half a mugful of the terrible *trago*. She even freely admitted that this was in revenge for the wine when I suggested that this was the case, but it was all in good humour. As I found out later, her name was doña Apolonia, and she was the mother of our host doña Filomena. Later that same evening, she told me that she had already been drinking for three days, as she had been to a fiesta in another community before coming to her daughter's one.

It got darker and darker, until the men, who had moved their benches closer now the sun was gone and people were getting animated to dance, were only voices in the dark and the occasional glowing of a cigarette.

After a while, Lupe told me that she was feeling sleepy, and I said I was too, as the unfamiliarity of the situation and my own blunders were starting to make me feel uncomfortable and I was looking for an excuse to go home. When doña Filomena came to ask me the same question, however, I didn't want to be rude, so I told her I was alright. This,

according to Lupe, had been a mistake, as now doña Filomena was going to bring me a new pot of *chicha* to serve out, which indeed promptly materialised. Doña Filomena also asked for a photo of me with the *chicha*. I took out the camera I had brought along, and we tried to take some pictures, first I of her with Lupe, then a young boy to whom I explained the camera of Lupe with me. It was tricky, however, as the camera's display did not recognise the minimal lights of the setting and only showed us blackness, so the exact position of the people to be photographed had to be guessed, the process and end result of which caused a lot of merriment. After taking another picture of a couple dancing I put the camera away again because a crowd of curious children was forming around me, and I did not want to lose sight of the camera this time.

A couple of people asked me to dance whom I rejected, telling them that I did not know how to. Later in the evening, and with a lot more *chicha* and *trago* buzzing round my head, I was persuaded to dance anyway by one of Lupe's cousins, Eduardo, who had been in charge of the music all evening. Unlike at some fiestas, where hosts got a DJ with an amplifier to come from Camiri, the music here consisted of a stereo connected to a car battery in a wheelbarrow (a setup which I had seen before in my 'host family's' house where it was used to power a small black-and-white TV around which the family would gather at dusk to watch their favourite soap opera, *Marina*). The repertoire consisted of all the usual fiesta 'classics' of *cumbia* and the odd *chacarera*. Lupe's cousin told me that dancing was easy, and that my dancing was just fine; I then managed to scrounge a cigarette off him, which was extremely strong, and which made me the object of the curiosity of some giggling children.

When I got back to my spot on the bench, Lupe told me to go serve *chicha* to the men, which she suggested I do with two mugs at the same time in order to empty our bucket faster. On my round I encountered some acquaintances, like don Pedro, my neighbour, and the father of my host family, don Germán, who introduced me to his nephew from Santa Cruz. The nephew, very drunkenly (as they all were by that time), asked me whether I would not forget about Cañón de Segura when I went back to my own country, and whether there was maybe a project that I could do with (or rather, for) them, and I told him that I would do whatever I could for them, but that I could not promise anything just yet. He went on about how we would stay in touch via e-mail after I left, and how the Capitanía Kaami could always use 'professionals' to work together with them. Don Germán said, wasn't it nice ('*lindo*') that I

was here with them, sharing *chicha*? and that I would have to remember this fiesta when I went back, and tell the people of my own place about Guaraní culture.

My ‘men round’ took a lot longer than expected, as several others also talked to me, some asking me about my country, my family, or my work, others just having a laugh with me. Don Germán’s brother don Sergio called me ‘*chekuña*’ and tried to tell me that it meant ‘my sister’ – I didn’t tell him I knew that it really meant ‘my woman’, I just said, yes, quite right, we’re all brothers and sisters. I was also forced back onto the dancefloor by Lupe’s brother Abel, who also told me that my dancing was fine, and kept making fun of doña Filomena and another woman who were dancing together for being so stiff.

Don Rogelio at some point intercepted me and talked at me for quite some time, telling me how this day was his birthday, his son’s birthday, and also the anniversary of the community, and how he always organised a fiesta to commemorate it; how three of the *comunarios* had gone to prison and don Rubén Bruno had died fighting for the land, and how he himself had actually come from Chuquisaca¹⁰⁰, but had met doña Filomena while working in Camiri years ago and settled here, and how he now had his fields and house here, all *tranquilo*, and how that was all due to the ones who had fought for this land, which now was his land as well, and how every year they read a bit out of the history of the community to remember this.

And then he suddenly changed the topic and asked me whether I would, if I could at all, maybe do something for their school, as they needed a roof for the children under which they could have their breakfast, and maybe if I showed them pictures of the poor little Cañón children having their breakfast in the rain, someone in Austria would want to give them a roof. Again, I said I would do what I could. I then made him drink a shot of wine and went on to my next ‘victim’.

As the night wore on, more couples danced, and the occasional man came over to the women’s side to sit for short periods of time and chat. There did not seem to be a problem

¹⁰⁰ Chuquisaca is an interesting department within Bolivia in that it is situated between the departments of Santa Cruz and Tarija, both of which were controlled by right-wing governments opposed to the central government of Evo Morales (the so-called ‘Media Luna’), but itself largely supported Evo and his politics. Rogelio himself was sometimes referred to as ‘Colla’ by other *comunarios* and even himself, which is a name the lowlanders in Bolivia give to the highlanders. (‘Colla’ can sometimes be – but is not necessarily – used in a derogatory way; see Chapter 9.) In this sense, Rogelio was both culturally distinct from and politically allied to the people of Cañón.

with people dancing together who did not form part of a formal couple. I asked Lupe whether it was always the men who asked the women to dance, and she said, always, unless it was two women dancing together, which could be done as well. The combination of two men, on the other hand, was a strict no-no.

When our *chicha* had finally run out, Lupe again suggested that we leave, and I agreed. She said we would have to sneak away, as otherwise they would not let us go but tell us to stay longer. A little earlier, there had been a discussion between her and her brother, who was utterly drunk but insisting that he was perfectly sober, and who wanted to take us down the road in his car¹⁰¹. Lupe did not want that because he was too drunk for her taste, so she tried to get out of it by using the *gringa* – me – as an excuse. In the end we all left on foot, and pretty openly, with doña Filomena even coming over to say goodbye.

So we walked down the road, Lupe with her two boys ‘Niño’ and ‘Bebé’, Abel’s wife Leticia with her little one, who had been woken up and was crying, and I. The moon was still quite bright, so finding our way was not too difficult. I left the others at the gate to the school and they walked on, whereas I had to go round the school wall to get up to my little house because the gate had been locked for the weekend. I went to bed without even bothering to light the gas lamp in my room. The music could still be heard in the distance, and it continued when I woke up in the early hours of morning.

Looking at the above account a little more closely, we can see how these fiestas were events that fulfilled social functions on various levels. For one, what was striking to me was how everyone was ‘put in their place’ by the seating arrangements (that is, the women on one side, the men on the other, with the children running wherever they wanted). I have observed similar seating arrangements in workshops and meetings of the *asamblea*, where the men would cluster at the front of the meeting room while the women generally sat further to the back. Again, children of both genders had license even here to roam about freely and even climb up on the laps of men who were speaking at the moment, and I was more than once

¹⁰¹ Some of the men in the community sometimes earned some money by driving taxis, which constituted one of the main occupations in Camiri, where most men seemed to either be taxi drivers or lawyers. Abel’s car, however, broke down not long after this, and he started a temporary job with the regional electricity cooperative (CRE) instead.

surprised at how much noise people were willing to tolerate from them. This, it seemed, was part of people's understanding of what children were like, which was something that people did not seem to feel they could (or, for that matter, should) do anything about.

While the fiesta thus on the one hand separated people in that it assigned each one their proper position (which came accompanied by certain patterns of behaviour) according to their age and gender, it also, on the other hand, drew the community closer together by uniting everyone in one place where food, drink, and activities could be shared. As we have seen, this, again, had to be done according to a set of rules, and the consumption of alcohol in particular was highly ritualised, the main focus being the more or less equal distribution of the available beverages among the adult guests.¹⁰² While with the stronger drink it was sometimes possible to negotiate the amount which one was to receive, refusing a drink altogether was hard to impossible if no very good reason could be given (see Lupe's daughter's refusal due to her young age). The result of this obligatory sharing was usually a pervasively inebriated body of guests, the drunker of whom would often provide involuntary diversion for the less drunk, without offence being taken if on occasion propriety went out of the window.

Fiestas thus also provided the *comunarios*' favourite form of entertainment, which included not only the event itself but also people's subsequent exchanging of gossip about what had happened at fiestas they had recently been to. They would comment on the quality of the DJ; the drunk guy from the neighbouring community who had made a fool of himself again; the fight that almost broke out between two brothers-in-law; the two old ladies who had fallen over dancing; or the *gringuita* who had missed the bench when sitting down and ended up on the ground. When passing the final verdict, it would often be the case that a fiesta was judged as unsatisfactory because the *chicha* had run out too soon or had not been up to standard, no matter how elaborately organised the fiesta had been in any other respect.

Chicha, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a substance of great social importance among Guaraní people (historically as today)¹⁰³. Its production already relies on the activation of social networks, as neither the sowing and harvesting nor the chewing of the

¹⁰² I am saying 'more or less equal' here because the men were usually ahead of the women in their alcohol consumption, especially with regard to the *trago*.

¹⁰³ For historical accounts of the importance of *chicha* among the Guaraní, see Melià (1988), Gutiérrez (1965).

maize that is performed by the women in order to help fermentation can be done by one person alone. When Lupe was making *chicha* for her daughter's *quinceaños* (see 'Children's Fiestas' further on), she thus recruited the help of some neighbours, relatives and friends. We gathered in her *oka* in the early morning after the maize had been boiling all night and sat before the buckets of boiled maize which Lupe had put in front of us, sleepily chatting as we fished out the coarser grains and spit them back into the bucket once they had been chewed.

A fiesta, thus, was an elaborate event from its planning phase to its aftermath, in which a lot of people were involved, and which was from start to finish pervaded by a spirit of sharing and reciprocity. Even antagonisms between *comunarios* had a chance to come out at such times, and – aided by the license-giving influence of alcohol – be resolved or at least expressed before again disappearing under the routine of daily life. Under the influence of *chicha* and the other alcoholic substances, *comunarios* (especially the men) would moan about the grievances in their lives, voice their resentments to or about each other, and even occasionally get into physical fights. From what I could tell, grudges were rarely held as a result of such drunken transgressions.¹⁰⁴

What follows is a brief outline of the specificities surrounding the different types of fiesta that were celebrated in Cañón on different occasions, and what they can tell us about the *comunidad's* functioning as a social unit.

5.1 Children's Fiestas

Children, as we have seen, were not fixed in the same way as grownups were but rather gradually grew into their respective roles, with adolescents occupying a position somewhere in between the two, as can be seen in the example of Lupe's young daughter who sat with the women but would not engage in all the activities of the adults (such as drinking and dancing). There were no special rituals tied to a young person's growing-up, except that some people would hold a special celebration for a girl's 15th birthday (generally referred to as '*quinceaños*', 'fifteen years'), which is a coming-of-age celebration that is popular all over Bolivia (and, indeed, large parts of Latin America). These fiestas differed from other

¹⁰⁴ Contrary to this view, Penelope Harvey has argued that the eruption of 'hostility and social tensions' as a result of festive drunkenness during the celebration of Peruvian Independence Day in a small Andean town undermines 'the fictions of social cohesion and community' created during the event (Harvey 1997: 38).

children's birthdays in that they were a lot more elaborately organised: while a regular children's birthday would consist of a children's party involving balloons, cake, soda, and the destruction of a *piñata*¹⁰⁵, followed by an adults' fiesta like the one described above,¹⁰⁶ a *quinceaños* celebration additionally required a dress and a gold ring for the debutante and keepsakes (*recuerdos*) for her and all the guests. In order to meet the expenses tied to such an enterprise, Lupe named a whole bunch of 'godparents' (*madrinas* and *padrinos*) among her friends and acquaintances who were to sponsor a particular element of the fiesta. (I was named '*madrina del recuerdo*', which required me to purchase a big cuddly toy for the birthday girl.)

Since the hosts of a fiesta were always under a lot of pressure to make a good job of it, this naming of 'godparents' to help pay for fiestas was common practice, even though it was also frowned upon by some.¹⁰⁷ It heavily relied on the activation of kinship and similar relations such as *compadrazgo* (relations between godfathers and –mothers), and requests for such sponsorship were (like the drink in the fiestas) hard to refuse. A fiesta could, therefore, be a collective event even in its organisational phase, and people who attended or asked for financial help from their *padrinos* could be sure to be expected to host a fiesta themselves at some point in the future or be themselves asked to act as *padrinos*. There was, then, a strong reciprocal element in the arrangement of fiestas, even if it was not as systematically regulated as the big chiefly banquets of the past might have been.

5.2 Christmas, New Year's and Twelfth Night

The three fiestas that were held on these three dates were identical in their overall makeup: each had an 'owner' (*dueño*) who had to organise the entire fiesta, and each was held in

¹⁰⁵ The *piñata* is a popular prop at children's parties throughout the Spanish-speaking world that comes in various shapes and guises. In the area of Bolivia where I did my fieldwork, it consisted of a large, colourful cardboard box filled with sweets and little plastic toys that could be made to spill its contents by the birthday child's pulling on a string attached to the bottom, at which the little guests would hurl themselves in a heap in order to try to snatch a piece.

¹⁰⁶ I have been to children's fiestas that – for financial reasons – were not followed by a 'proper' fiesta at night, but this was not the way it was 'meant to be' and invariably attracted criticism from some of the other *comunarios*.

¹⁰⁷ I heard people say on occasion that those who couldn't afford to pay for their own fiestas shouldn't be having them at all. If a person managed to secure a lot of sponsorship for their fiesta they also frequently became the object of the jealousy of others, especially if those others thought that they themselves should have been the beneficiaries. Such difficulties seemed inbuilt in the system without, however, undermining it in any serious sense.

honour of a '*Niño*' (a little plaster statue of Baby Jesus), which was ceremonially passed over from one year's *dueño* to the next at the point that marked the end of the religious part of the fiesta. The *Niño* of the fiesta would be displayed on a table, together with a couple of privately-owned *Niños* belonging to some of the families, and surrounded by little plastic figures of animals and other forms of decoration to form a sort of 'crib'. This display was the object of the 'adoration' of the children, which meant that they danced in front of it to the sound of a special tape of 'adoration music' played by the *comunidad's* catechist. It was the fiesta's owners' prerogative to decide the point at which the adoration part of the fiesta ended and the 'normal' fiesta with food, *chicha*, and dancing started, presided over by next year's fiesta's owners who, indicated by hats decorated with colourful paper, had the duty to serve out *chicha* to the guests until the morning.

These three fiestas, I was told, used to be communally organised, but that had been changed for the same reason as the communal work had been abandoned, namely, that some people always ended up contributing more than others. This change was interesting to me in that it constituted a move away from the collective organisation which one might think of as more 'traditionally' Guaraní, but at the same time it was meant to ensure greater equality among the *comunarios*. Thus, while the practice itself was being lost, the spirit behind it proved to be more enduring.

5.3 The Fiestas of Carnival (*Arete*)

The carnival fiestas, or *arete guasu*,¹⁰⁸ occupied a kind of middle ground between single fiestas of individuals and the joint fiestas of the past in that they were organised by as many individual families as could afford (or be bothered) to make *chicha*. The guests would move on from one fiesta to the next once the *chicha* had run out, which could theoretically go on for a very long time. The year I was in Cañón to witness the carnival celebrations (2008), only three women had made *chicha*. This, I was assured, was very little, especially when compared to the splendid fiestas of the past that used to involve several *comunidades* rather than just families within the same *comunidad*. Despite this decline, however, the carnival

¹⁰⁸ Guaraní: *ara* = day, time; *ete* = real; *guasu* = big, great. In the words of the Isoseño anthropologist Elio Ortiz, 'of all the regular fiestas, this one is the true one[,] the fiesta of all, where all are invited' (Ortiz García 2002: 26).

fiestas were still regarded as particularly ‘cultural’ events, as they involved a lot of traditional elements that were not present in the other fiestas (cf. Ortiz García 2002).

For one, instead of the usual hired DJ or tape player blasting popular local music through huge speakers, the musical accompaniment in the *arete guasu* was provided by musicians from the *comunidad* playing a combination of flutes and drums.¹⁰⁹ As it turned out, there were only a couple of accomplished flautists left in Cañón who were therefore in high demand during these fiestas; especially don Martín, originally from a *comunidad cautiva* in Alto Parapetí, did not get much sleep over the three days the fiesta lasted, during which he was forced to play and drink pretty much incessantly. People would dance to this music in the ‘traditional’ style (one slow step followed by two fast ones, with dancers holding hands in a circle) or skipping quickly around a cross decorated with the yellow ‘carnival flower’ (*cassia carnavalis*; Guaraní: *taperigua*), while masqueraded ‘devils’ (*aña*) and an ‘*abuelita*’ (Guaraní: *yari*; a man in a wooden mask depicting an old woman and wearing women’s clothes)¹¹⁰ would skip among them, howling, and pull people up from the benches to make sure that everyone was getting their share of the dancing in.

The carnival celebrations resumed after a break towards the end of February, to be concluded with a series of games. The first one was the fight between the jaguar and the bull (*yagua yagua* and *toro toro*), again impersonated by two masked men. Both were backed up by a group of devils egging them on. I was told that either one could potentially win but in the end the jaguar triumphed (apparently, he had bribed the other one’s devils to switch over to his side). While the fight was going on, a large round of people was skipping around the flowery cross, and inside it a group of four was going in the opposite direction, carrying a ‘tent’ made up of two blankets tied to poles. Inside, a man and a woman were hidden, who were then to emerge dressed in the opposite sex’s clothes. In the end, however, the tent simply disappeared into the house, and the two re-emerged unchanged. The devils, meanwhile, were handing out cobs of maize to each other. The dancing continued long after the game had

¹⁰⁹ There were four types of traditional flutes: the *mimbiyepiasa*, a type of transverse flute; the *mimbiyemboi*, a large double flute; the *pinguyu*, a small flute made from bamboo; and the *mimbiguasu*, a flute similar to the *pinguyu*, but larger than the *mimbiyemboi*. Of the percussion instruments, there were only two: the *anguarai* (made of wood) and the *anguaguasu* (a large drum covered with leather). However, while both types of drums were present in the *arete* of Cañón, most of the flutes were nowadays made from metal tubes with holes drilled into them.

¹¹⁰ According to the owner of the *abuela* mask, there used to be an *abuelo* mask to go with her which had, however, got lost.

finished, and there was a lot of laughter as people told funny stories and the devils kept performing their antics.

The next day, the fiesta continued at a different house, where more games were to conclude the *arete* celebrations. For the *kuchi kuchi* (Guaraní: *kuchi* = pig) some boys took a bath in a mud pool and rubbed themselves on the dancers forming a big wheel around a tree trunk in the middle of the *oka*. Then they came running after the onlookers to subject them to the same treatment. After this had been repeated a few times, a man and a woman danced inside and outside a circle of dancers in opposite directions, both carrying an improvised ‘flag’ and a maize cob. When the circle approached the tree, someone took the flags off them and they had to chase each other, the one being chased hiding among the dancers, and ‘rape’ each other with the maize cob. This, too, was repeated various times, then the dancers formed two long lines and the first couple started dancing at their end, then ran back and forth in between the lines a couple of times, twisting around each other at each end, and finished up on the other end of the line. This was repeated until all the couples were done. The last game consisted in people throwing the end bits of pumpkins at each other’s feet.

By the time the games finished, it was already quite late. A *comunaria* lamented the fact that nowadays, no one knew how to do the carnival well anymore – doña Sabina, the late *ipaye* of Cañón, had known, and Rubén Bruno too, who had known how to make people cry with his speeches. At this point, don Aurelio began talking about how in the next carnival some people might not be there anymore, followed by a similar speech by the host of the fiesta, and suddenly people were in fact weeping everywhere, including the speaker himself.

The *arete* finished with the ‘chucking’ (*botar*) of the carnival. Someone grabbed the flowery cross and the rest went after him in pairs. Doña Apolonia, who was going with me, got her foot stuck in a mud hole, but she didn’t seem to mind and forced me to dance up and down the road with her anyway, so I never in fact saw where they chuckled the cross, together with all the masks, they said. Some people went home at this point, but others returned to the fiesta, where the dancing continued with the usual popular music from a tape player – after carnival had been chuckled, there was to be no more flute and drum music.

While a detailed analysis of all the elements present in these fiestas is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is clear that the *arete* as it was celebrated by the *comunarios* of Cañón in

February of 2008 combines a range of elements pertaining to indigenous culture with Christian-Hispanic elements. For example, the pre-Columbian form of the fiesta as a fertility ritual can be discerned from the centrality of maize (in the form of *chicha* as well as cobs of maize used during the games), whereas the presence of European pagan and Christian symbols (the ‘chucking’ of the carnival; the cross as central symbol in the dances) and elements reminiscent of the conquest (the use of flags; the bull, an animal from the Old World, opposing the jaguar, who plays a central role in many Amerindian mythologies¹¹¹) shows the influence of post-conquest contacts with Spanish-Bolivian society.

All these were things that were of great interest to me; however, they did not seem to be of much relevance to my hosts. Rather, as a consequence of my curiosity, I was reminded several times during the *arete* celebrations of what the things were that really mattered. On one occasion, I was watching some people renewing the decoration of carnival flowers on the cross, as the old ones had started to wilt under the intense heat. Wondering what symbolism might be attached to them, I turned to doña Estefanía, the mother of my ‘host family’, who was standing next to me and asked her whether the flowery cross had some kind of meaning. She looked at me like I had asked something rather daft and replied, ‘I suppose it does have some meaning, otherwise it wouldn’t be used.’

The indication of this straightforward answer that seemingly told me nothing about what I wanted to know only struck me after a while. That is, the fact that *what* the things meant was of less importance than the fact *that* they meant something. Similarly, when I asked doña Apolonia about the motivation for playing the *yagua yagua*, she simply said, ‘It’s our culture.’ Thus, the significance of the various elements in the *arete* lay in the way they kept marking the people who celebrated them out as Guaraní rather than in a precise science of symbolisms and significations. Of course this is not to say that people did not know any stories about the symbols on display, but rather that they did not offer them as answers to my questions about meanings. Rather, the meanings that were given to me resided in the practices themselves, which reminded people of their shared identity as Guaraní people and as *comunarios* who could dance, laugh, and also mourn together. In short – paraphrasing a *comunario* whom I am quoting more extensively in Chapter 9 – the answer to the question of what the traditions played out in the *arete* meant to people was, ‘a lot’.

¹¹¹ Cf. Riester (1984), Saunders (ed.) (1998).

5.4 The Fiesta of the Virgen de Copacabana

The only fiesta in Cañón that was still being organised by the community as a whole was the one in honour of the Virgen de Copacabana on the fifth of August, a statue of whom was donated to the community by a Camireña woman with family links to the *comunidad*. (The people whom I asked were not sure why exactly she had done it, but they assumed that it had been in response to a promise she had made to the Virgin for a favour received.) The fiesta was preceded by a *novena* (a series of prayer meetings held over nine consecutive days) of people gathering to recite rosaries, culminating in a wake. The fiesta itself lasted for about three days, which were passed with sports events and games, a mass, and a feast with *chicha* and food during which the Virgin, clad in a fancy new gown, would be paraded around the schoolyard to the accompaniment of the banging of fire crackers, and people had the chance to approach her to ask for the granting of favours. The food and drink consumed was made by the women who sold it to those gathered, with the proceeds all going towards the building of a proper chapel for the Virgin, who at the time of my fieldwork only had a small shrine in the schoolyard for an abode.

Besides the general importance of fiestas as social events in Cañón, the fiesta of the Virgin was of particular importance to the people because it was another marker of their identity as free *comunarios*: even though it was not clear why exactly the statue had ended up with them, people agreed that she was an important asset. As one *comunario* put it, ‘Every *comunidad* has to have their saint; we never used to have one in Itakua but now we do.’ This special significance also explains why the *comunarios* had kept up the custom of collective organisation in this case: much ignored during the rest of the year, the Virgin would make a glorious appearance on this one day as a symbol of their status as inhabitants of a free and recognised *comunidad indígena*.

Moreover, it also identified the *comunarios* as Catholics, an identification that had – with the increased influx of Evangelist missionaries into the region – taken on a surprising link with the old-established tradition of the fiesta. I once mentioned to doña Estefanía that I had no religious denomination and thus might not be allowed to act as *madrina* to any of my friends’ children during the baptisms that were planned to be held during the Fiesta de la Virgen when

she suggested this as a possibility. At this, she replied that she didn't think that would be a problem, only if I were Evangelical, because the Evangelicals, it was said, were a different religion from the Catholics, with different traditions. 'They believe in nothing', she said, 'Not in the saints, not in the holy Virgin, only in Jesus Christ.' In Cañón, she said, there were no Evangelicals because the *comunarios* weren't interested; some missionaries had come a few times but left again because no one would listen to them. In Urundaiti, she added, there were some, which was causing problems because the people 'weren't the same anymore', and that the Evangelicals would criticise people for drinking alcohol in the fiestas and say that the Devil was sticking his finger up their arses to make them dance, and that they would all burn in hell for it. I remarked that even Jesus drank alcohol sometimes, at which Estefanía interjected, 'Exactly! How can it be of the Devil if Jesus drank it too? All food and drink is made by God to be consumed by the people, especially the maize – so how can the *chicha* be bad?'¹¹² Catholicism, then, was important for the *comunidad* because it assured that everyone remained 'the same', and especially with regard to the drinking of *chicha*. We can see here how the consumption of maize/*chicha* has undergone a resignification in terms of Christian Catholic ideology while at the same time retaining its central role in the lives of the *comunarios*.

In short, the fiesta with its obligatory sharing of *chicha* was one of the main means of consolidating the *comunidad* as a social unit. Given the uniting power of fiestas, their great entertainment value, and the social pressures attached to their successful arrangement, it is hardly surprising that people attached significant importance to them and went to great lengths to find the means for their organisation. What went into the production of the *chicha* was thus more than just effort and spit: made from maize that was the product of the *comunarios*' ability to work *tranquilo* in their *chacos* (see previous chapter), finished through the women's appeal to their social and kinship networks, and shared by everybody in the fiestas, the *chicha* made by the *comunarios* of Cañón was a substance that was meaningful not only for forming part of a longstanding Guaraní tradition but also for being the product of the *comunarios*' own lived experience, the fermentation of an identity and sociality that was

¹¹² Cf. Ortiz García (2002: 4): 'The generous one, the inviter, is he who enjoys the grace of **Tüpa**, God, the supreme being who thanks to his mercifulness bestowed upon them [the Guaraní] as their only and principal (and therefore sacred) nourishment the *avati* [maize]. **Tüpa omee ñandevera avati jese yaiko vaerä** – *God gave us maize so that we should live from it*' (bolds and italics in original).

both specific and general at once. Thus the meaningfulness of the event (fiesta) and the substance indispensable for its celebration (*chicha*) had endured despite the fact that circumstances had changed since the times of the valiant *kereimba* and the lavish banquets of the chiefs. The meaningfulness, but not the meanings themselves, which – as we have seen – were as flexible as the contexts that produced them.

CHAPTER 6. REFLECTIONS OF KINSHIP AND MOBILITY IN THE SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF CAÑÓN

Processes of spatial mobility among the *Mbya* [Guaraní] are of interest in anthropological... studies, as these processes are related to transformations in the landscape and the environment. Despite this, ethnographic literature usually focuses on the mobility of *Guaraní* communities from the perspective of population dynamics on a regional scale. (Crivos et al 2007)

As with the *chacos*, the spatial organisation of Cañón in general was on the one hand restricted by the MASRENA project (see Chapter 4) while on the other hand *comunarios* constantly stressed the freedom which they had in deciding its layout. This was particularly true of the houses, where basically the same rules applied as for the *chacos*: everyone, I kept being assured, could build their house wherever they wanted. It even happened that people moved from their old house and built a new one in a different location if they decided that they did not like their present one. This had happened to Lupe, who told me that she had moved three times since leaving Itakua: once from Itakua to Cañón, and then twice within Cañón. First, she used to live somewhere behind my ‘host family’s’ place, but there had been water coming down from the mountain. Then, they used to be a little further up on the other side of the main road, but there wasn’t enough sun, and one lived ‘like in a hole’, and there were big black ants there that bit people. The ruin of the abandoned house could still be seen there, adobe bricks slowly melting away under the onslaught of sun and rain. Lupe then moved to her current location, wedged in between her mother and brother Abel on the one side and her sister Valeria on the other, with a lovely view of the mountains opposite. This location, she said, was good now. The following discussion centres on two themes implied in the example above, and which were central in the spatial and social organisation of the *comunidad*: that of mobility and that of kinship.

6.1 The Spatial Layout of the Community

Besides the houses located within the ‘residential area’ there were a number of conspicuous places in Cañón that could be referred to as ‘public’, in the sense that they were not the property of individuals or families (as were the houses and surrounding patios) but of the community as a whole. The most central was the school compound, which functioned as the

social, administrative, but also in a sense as the spiritual centre of the community.¹¹³ Its main function was the teaching of children, which was done by six teachers only one of whom lived in Cañón (and that only during semesters). The school was, however, also used for holding *asambleas* or workshops, which tended to be called by sounding the school bell; for special events other than the fiestas organised by individual people (such as the event described in the Introduction); for communal projects such as the pottery project discussed in Chapter 9; for ‘friendlies’ with the football teams of neighbouring communities; and for attending the infamous church services of Padre Pío, who came to hold a mass in Cañón once a month.¹¹⁴

The school also housed a cistern and a water tank, where people could fetch water whenever the water supply to their houses got cut off. Further, there was a communal kitchen, which was also occasionally used to house guests (such as the ‘interns’ of the INSPOC institute, a school for bilingual teachers in Camiri, who regularly did placements in Cañón and other *comunidades*), and which also functioned as a storage room (for example, for pottery produced by the women; see Chapter 9). The video room next to it was often used for film presentations (mostly of martial arts b-movies with Spanish subtitles) at night, and occasionally for doctors’ visits. Next to the school, there was a playground for children with a climbing rack, slide, and swings.

Above the school was the ‘health centre’ (*posta sanitaria*), which was where doctors’ and nurses’ visits usually took place, and where I was living during my stay in Cañón. I occupied the smaller of the two rooms in the building, which had been constructed for a ‘live-in’ nurse (who had then, however, been moved somewhere else), and used the larger one as a kitchen. Since the community’s medicine supply and a few instruments were still stored in there from the days when it was used as a consultancy room, I had to remove all my personal things whenever a nurse or NGO doctor came for a check-up. The *posta* also had the only ‘modern’

¹¹³ Cf. Gow (1995: 230) on the centrality of schools for the status of *comunidades nativas* in the Bajo Urubamba.

¹¹⁴ ‘Padre Pío’ was an Italian priest based in Camiri who was in charge of delivering church services to the surrounding *comunidades*, and who came to Cañón every first Saturday of the month. He had a rather curious relationship with the *comunarios* that involved a lot of shouting and attempts at ‘blackmailing’ them into becoming better Christians, while the *comunarios*’ conduct towards him was marked by a lot of polite smiling. Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to discuss this relationship any further.

working toilet/shower in the entire community (which, however, didn't resist the frequent use by the schoolchildren for very long).

Further inside the forest, there was a huge concrete water tank, which was where the *comunarios* got their tap water from. Before the installation of this tank, they used to use a water pump inside a well, which also still existed but had fallen out of use. Even this pump, however, had been a huge improvement from not having any water supply at all, which had been the case when the *comunarios* had first moved to the place, and people tended to remember that time as one of particular hardship. What was still missing, however, was an irrigation system for the *chacos* which would make people less dependent on the rainy season.

Apart from the *chacos*, the *comunidad's* 'productive units' included the cattle corral where the cows of the community's joint cattle project were kept, and two enclosures with beehives. The beehives consisted of wooden boxes on stilts inside a fence to keep children and animals out. According to Carol, an agrarian engineer from Spain working with CIPCA, the bee project worked best in Cañón of all the communities she had seen, but the beekeepers had constant trouble keeping their bees alive or from migrating elsewhere due to the lack of flowering plants in the area. There were only a few *comunarios* involved in the production of honey, which was then sold in Camiri.

There was a cemetery not far from the main tank, which was still rather small due to the fact that the community had only existed for some 14 years when I got there. Graves were mostly humble and only marked by iron crosses, and were decorated with the usual *coronas* (lit.: 'crowns'; wreaths of coloured plastic flowers that are renewed on the graves on All Saints' Day every year). There was another cemetery in Itakua, which the *comunarios* visited on All Saints to pray by the graves, exchange *masitas* (maize flour biscuits and sweet bread made only for this occasion), and leave new *coronas* on the graves. Some few *comunarios* who had been able to afford it had transferred their dead from Itakua to the new cemetery, but most of them had remained where they had been buried.

These public places as structures were more or less fixtures, but many had, nonetheless, a high ‘internal’ mobility, as exemplified by the constant oscillation of purposes, and the resulting flux of objects and people, of the *posta sanitaria* and the school. What first alerted me to the *comunidad*’s high internal mobility was when on one incidence in the early stages of my fieldwork I went looking for doña Estefanía’s house and, failing to remember the way, asked another woman about its location. ‘It’s just down the road and to the left’, she replied. ‘Where they sell bread.’ Bread was about the only food product in Cañón that was both produced by the women and regularly sold to other *comunarios*. Houses where bread could be bought were marked with a stick with a white rag or plastic bag wrapped around the top, which could be propped up or stuck in the ground next to the road outside the house. These markers were removed again as soon as the bread had run out. ‘Where they sell bread’ was thus an indicator that could only be used as long as the selling of a particular batch of bread was ongoing, rather than a permanent marker of location. In order to understand this kind of directions, you thus had to either know who of the women had recently been making bread, or physically go out looking for the stick with the plastic bag. This kind of mobility was even more conspicuous when it came to the organisation of particular houses.

6.2 Living Spaces and Lived-In Spaces

The houses (Guaraní: *o*, *tëta*) in Cañón were located relatively far from one another, surrounded by forest (except for the patio, which was cleared), and connected by footpaths. They were mostly small, with entire families sharing one to two rooms. Their main function seemed to be as ‘storage facilities’ for clothes and other belongings and providing shelter from the rain; most houses did not contain much more than a bed or two, a wardrobe, and some adornments on the walls. In short, thinking of a house in Cañón as the kind of living space ‘Westerners’ (or even townspeople in Bolivia) are used to would be misleading – in fact, they hardly even constituted the centre of the lived-in space, but rather formed one of the components only of the patio (*oka* – see below). A lot of the integral parts of the household were situated outside, like the ‘kitchen’, ‘bathroom’, and living/eating area, and I hardly ever saw anyone invite a visitor into their house. Social life (except for cases in which it was being deliberately hidden from others) largely happened outside in the *oka*.

The houses as they were at the time of my fieldwork had been built by the *comunarios*, using mostly (but not exclusively) local materials. They were mostly made of adobe bricks and wood, with donations of corrugated metal sheets for making roofs, nails, mesh (to put in front of windows to keep insects out), and lime by Caritas. When the people had first moved from Itakua in 1994, they had built preliminary houses made of wattle-and-daub¹¹⁵, which in most cases had been replaced by adobe buildings later on. Even the building of the adobe houses was a gradual process; as the *capitán grande* put it, ‘We are building the houses little by little – you see, they don’t even have windows yet.’

There were plans by the local government to build brick houses for the *comunarios*, along with providing them with electricity and then gas, but not everyone was happy about that. Some people were worried that with such a change ‘bad habits’ from the town would make their way into Cañón, inspired by things seen on TV, and that the *tranquilidad* they so appreciated in Cañón would be lost. These examples seemed to be the expression of a generalised concern about *comunarios* becoming more *karai*-like rather than specific worries, as the ‘bad habits’ people talked about remained mysteriously vague, and TVs in fact existed in various households without evidently having caused any particular problems. This concern was echoed in the worry that the new houses would bring a new spatial order with them, in the image of an urban centre with a central plaza and houses that were located close to one another, which, people said, had caused a lot of trouble already in other communities – in Cañón, one didn’t have any problems raising chickens, for example, whereas where the houses were too close together these things could cause fights if one family’s animals invaded another’s gardens.

One person also uttered the concern that the current freedom of movement would be lost with the construction of solid brick buildings. As it was, abandoned houses (like Lupe’s) could just be left to slowly make their way back to being part of the natural environment as the adobe disintegrated, which would not be possible anymore with houses built of brick. The concept of houses was thus one that was undergoing a process of change at the time I was living in Cañón, from another potentially mobile element of the *oka* to a more central and more firmly

¹¹⁵ Wattle-and-daub, although a common material for building houses throughout the Chaco region, has the great disadvantage of attracting *vinchucas* (*triatoma infestans*) to nest in the walls, which can pass on Chagas disease. At the time of my fieldwork, there was a government-sponsored eradication and prevention campaign that involved the counting of *vinchucas* and spraying with insecticide of constructions at risk in the *comunidades*.

fixed position. From the concerns that the *comunarios* had voiced about this shift, it was clear that they perceived it as a negative – or, at best, a risky – development which would involve the adoption of a more town-like, *karai* order. This, people felt, would impinge on their current ‘*tranquilo*’ way of life, and they therefore anticipated it with a sense of loss.

As indicated above, the main living space of the Cañón inhabitants was not the house but the *oka*, a space that had been cleared of the forest where most of people’s ‘domestic’ activities took place (such as cooking, eating, doing laundry, and receiving guests) – a ‘human space’ within the forest.¹¹⁶ It usually included a fire place, or kitchen (people did use the Spanish word ‘*cocina*’ for these spaces), made up of some bricks or stones with iron bars laid across them to place pots on, as well as the pots, kettles, and pans themselves, which people bought in Camiri. The kitchen was usually, but not always, surrounded by a wooden frame with a roof and spaces on which to hang utensils up called a *chapapa*.¹¹⁷ In one household, I saw the bottom of the *avatio* (lit.: ‘house of maize’), a raised wooden construction used for storing dry maize, being used in such a way.

While pretty much all houses had a fire place, there were other elements that could be found in the *oka* or not, such as a shower¹¹⁸, which was often just another wooden frame surrounded by opened-out sacks or pieces of tarpaulin, or (more rarely) brick walls; a toilet (that, however, was a rare luxury indeed; normally, people just used the surrounding forest); a baking oven made of adobe bricks in which people made bread, *humintas*¹¹⁹ and other things; a little hut for chickens to lay their eggs in; an eating space with a table; an *ita* (lit.: ‘stone’; a stone mortar consisting of a stone slab and a rounded grinding stone with which vegetables, maize, charqui etc. were ground); a *takú*, which was a mortar of a different kind, made out of a piece of tree trunk that had been hollowed on top, in which one could pound maize (or, indeed, pottery shards; see Chapter 9) with the help of wooden poles; and the above-

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gow (1991: 78): ‘The house site and the remote primary forest are the opposite poles of a spectrum which leads from most intense to least intense human landscape modification.’

¹¹⁷ As far as I am aware, *chapapa* is a Quechua word which was, however, the word which was used by the *comunarios*.

¹¹⁸ After years of constant struggle to find the water which the *comunarios* needed for their day-to-day use, Cañón finally got its own water supply in 2000.

¹¹⁹ Guaraní: *mbiape*; maize cakes made of soft ground maize, some sort of fat, salt, and sometimes sugar or cheese.

mentioned *avatio* for storing maize. Many people also had water tanks to use when the piped supply broke down, which did happen rather a lot due to such interferences as repairs, road works, and cleaning of the tank. Those without tanks had to fetch water from the school or use the ravine next to the Santa Cruz motorway to wash their clothes in and bathe, but the water there was not very clean.

Chairs, benches, and all kinds of kitchen utensils always moved about the *oka* – visitors were often given a chair where they stood, sometimes in the middle of the *oka*, sometimes even almost with their backs to the hosts or quite a distance away from them. There did not seem a fixed rule for this, except that chairs were usually put in the shade. Things were also often left lying around on the ground (such as machetes, cups, cutlery, clothes, or school books) and were picked up and cleaned when needed. This mobility even applied to the larger features of the *oka*, such as the kitchen or table, so that the appearance of the *oka* could change almost completely from one day to another. Besides this constant physical movement of objects, they were also ‘mobile’ with regard to their uses, and things were frequently diverted from their intended purposes: *takú* could, for example, be put onto their side to serve as ‘legs’ for additional benches at fiestas, blankets could be made into hammocks for babies, and rucksacks could be transformed into carnival masks.

The ‘human space’ constituted by the *oka* was also inhabited by certain animals, whereas there were some categories that belonged more to the *oka* than others, such as chickens, ducks, cats (which were, however, quite rare), and dogs. The bigger ones, such as pigs, cows, and goats, were only occasionally permitted in to drink or feed, and were often driven out with the help of the dogs. Wild forest animals (except for toads, lizards, and insects of all kinds) did not usually come close to the *okas* or immediately surrounding forest, which was mostly inhabited by the larger domestic ones that roamed freely during the day and either came back to their owners at night or had to be fetched by them. Occasionally, one might encounter a snake or scorpion, but these were usually killed by the *comunarios*. Like the arrangement of the *oka*’s features, what was ‘human’ and what ‘animal’ space within the *oka* was constantly being redefined: certain spaces, such as the *ita*, were only ‘human’ and prohibited to animals when they were being used by the people whereas the rest of the time the animals were free to climb about on them. Others, such as tables, were always prohibited to any kind of animal. People and animals were, however, in constant close contact with each other, and people would often eat or drink things that had been pecked at by chickens or even

tried by one of the dogs. Chicken feathers, but also insects, leaves and other forest materials, frequently landed in the food as well so that most meals included a certain dose of ‘non-human environment’ as an unintentional ingredient.

Due to this close proximity of the non-human realm, human spaces constantly had to be reclaimed from ‘nature’ (cf. Gow 1991: 78), which quickly invaded not only the *oka* but also the houses if given the opportunity. I once left ‘my’ house for about a month when I went home over Christmas, and when I came back, I not only found spiders and all kinds of other forest creatures in it, but also a substantial amount of dust. The space in front of the house had completely overgrown and had to be cleared with a machete. As for the *okas*, they were swept first thing every day and cleared of all animal waste, leaves, but also rubbish that had accumulated during the previous day, all of which would be expelled into the forest every morning. The organic waste products that were produced during cooking were normally instantly cleared up by the animals (chickens and dogs inside the *oka*, and additionally pigs at its outer edges).¹²⁰

Natural features were often used as part of the ‘home furniture’: trees and shrubs could make do for cupboards and shelves on which to hang things up and store things stuck between their branches, and holes in the ground served as rubbish dumps. However, the *oka* was nonetheless a constructed space, as even trees were sometimes planted specifically where people wanted them in order to provide storage space, shelter from rain, and – most importantly – shade: an *oka* without shade was not really deemed fit for inhabiting, and *comunarios* often recalled Sadoth Palenque’s burning of their trees in Itakua as one of his most despicable acts.

The immediately surrounding forest was mostly used for collecting firewood. Hunting seemed to be the only activity people would carry out in the deeper forest farther from the houses, but it was not very common: there were only about three people in the entire community who owned rifles, and nobody hunted with bows and arrows. Animals hunted included wild boar (*taitetu*), deer (*guasu*), some species of birds, and apparently very occasionally wild cats, to which people referred as ‘lions’ (*leones*) and which, I was told, had

¹²⁰ Unfortunately, the non-human realm, which tends to be the only ‘rubbish disposal system’ in the *comunidades*, has no way of disposing of other types of rubbish, and thus older communities that have inhabited their territory over a longer time period are often swamped with rubbish (such as for example Itanambikua on the outskirts of Camiri).

a very ‘strong’ meat, in the sense that it made one strong when eaten. Certain plants of the forest were also used, but overall very little. Those included edible ones, such as custard apples (*chirimoya*) and other fruits, spices and herbs (such as a wild variety of chili (*kii*), and certain leaves used to mix with the *yerba mate* to make it milder), and medicinal plants. I was once given some leaves and twigs from which to make a tea to cure an upset stomach, but generally people claimed ignorance of these things; there was, at the time of my fieldwork, only one very old *abuelita* in the *comunidad* who was said to know about curing with plants.

6.3 Extraordinary Places within the *Comunidad*

While the forest constituted a non-human space, with human presence decreasing as you moved into it to a similar degree as animal presence decreased the closer you moved into the *okas*, it was nonetheless not an uninhabited space by any means. Besides the forest animals, there were other beings living in various locations around the *comunarios*’ houses. It all started with Lupe telling me about a tree located in the main *chaco* area (which she christened the ‘tree of death’) under which a fugitive woman was said to have killed her husband. The husband had pursued her and reached her at this point, where the woman had killed him and put him in a sitting position and left him there. He was later found by someone passing by (who, however, was not a *comunario* as this story stemmed from a time before the existence of the *comunidad*).

Other extraordinary places within the *comunidad* were the locations of sightings of supernatural beings. I will discuss the *comunarios*’ relationships with the various entities found in these places in greater detail in Chapter 11; however, it seemed important to mention them here because a) they form part of the spatial layout of the *comunidad*, and b) they show that Cañón was never an uninhabited wilderness even before becoming a *comunidad* but rather came with various histories already ‘implicated’ in its topography. Several of these places were marked by the discovery of old clay pots, which were frequently found in ravines and some of which contained burials. The terrain in Cañón was arid and unstable, and not only did the main road get pretty destroyed every year with the arrival of the rainy season, but the opening of new ravines and shifting of old ones sometimes brought pottery to the surface that had been buried or left long before Cañón existed. People were generally scared of the *dueños* (owners) of such pots, many of whom were evil and would haunt people in their dreams and could even make them fall ill or die when disturbed.

In the ravine crossing the main road, a white ‘ghost pig’ used to appear at night to scare people who were walking by. It could also appear in the shape of other animals, whereby there arose some confusion about whether this pig was the same as all the other creatures that had been sighted around that area or not. Sometimes, it would only be heard but not seen. When I asked about the origin of these creatures, I was told that they were often the deceased owners of vessels filled with money, or silver (*‘plata’*), which they had buried in the place where they appeared and were now guarding. On the same main road, a ‘widow’ (*‘viudita’*) had appeared to people driving by at night. In one account I heard, she was dressed in white with long hair hiding her face, in the other she was dressed in black with glowing eyes.

The *abuelita* who died shortly after I arrived in Cañón had, I was told, once seen a huge snake in one of the hills, which almost scared her to death. This *abuelita* also socialised with a mysterious man who lived in the hill behind her house (*‘dueño del cerro’*). He had noticed that she was living alone and wanted her to come live with him to keep him company, as he too was alone, even though he was rich and kept all kinds of animals. Apparently, she used to be reluctant to tell people too much about this *dueño*, but it was known that he appeared to her a lot in her dreams.

There also used to be a sort of goblin (*duende*) that lived in the school, where it scared the children and sometimes also stole babies, who were usually found again when they started to cry. Another one used to live in one of the smaller *chacos*, where it used to follow one of the girls around because it had fallen in love with her. She had had to get it ‘exorcised’ by an *abuelita* to get rid of it. *Duendes* are creatures commonly known to people in the area and not limited to the Guaraní universe. They are usually described as tiny little men with huge sombreros.

Two things which all these creatures seemed to have in common were that they inhabited spaces that belonged to another realm, which was the reason their houses were generally invisible to people, and that they seemed to be disappearing one after the other. Where they appeared to people, it was usually in their dreams, or when they were walking home drunk from a fiesta at night.

There were also other mysterious places people could not tell me much about, such as a landmark (*mojón*) indicating the location of a house that had existed before the *comunarios* came, and a stone in the shape of a mortar (*itangúa*, ‘stone mortar’) hidden deep in the forest and about whose origin they could only speculate. These, however, were generally thought to be the remnants of former human presence rather than the products of present-day supernatural activity.

While their own ‘history’ was what had first brought the *comunarios* to Cañón (and was thus, in a sense, itself a history of movement), these local histories were taken up by the *comunarios* to fulfil a role similar to that of memories described by Peter Gow for a community of Piro people in the Bajo Urubamba (Gow 1991, 1995). There is, however, at least one fundamental difference between the two cases: For the Piro people described by Gow, their community was a landscape that had been (and was being) shaped by the constant place-making activities of adult people in their performances of relationships of kinship and affinity (such as garden making or building houses). Consequently, to local people, their landscape was ‘historical’ in that in it, those who remembered could discern the traces of the work and relationships of past generations. In the case of Cañón, however, the landscape-shaping efforts of its inhabitants had only started little over a decade ago, and thus the process of relationships being implicated in its landscape was still in its beginnings. While the role of ‘history’ had been taken on by one particular document (see Chapter 3), the stories about ‘*bichos*’ in the *comunidad* functioned, in the absence of people’s memories of their own, to form connections between the land and the people, differentiate the space of the landscape, and enable people to relate to it on an inter-personal level (see Chapter 11).

6.4 Kinship

As in Lupe’s case, the place where people had chosen to build their houses often reflected their kinship relations within the *comunidad*. Rather than representing a fixed state of reality at any point in time, however, the position of houses only gives an indication of such a reality in that the composition of the particular households tended to be in a constant state of flux (cf. Gow 1995). While some people tended to stay more put than others, others came and went on a regular basis. This also constituted a problem for the compilation of censuses and

other such records meant to provide an overview of the population of Cañón at any time: did, for example, the 14-year-old granddaughter of the house's main owners who spent most of her time living with other relatives in Camiri (whose house in Cañón, incidentally, had been standing empty for years) because there was no money for her daily bus fare to get her to school and back, constitute a regular 'inhabitant' of the *comunidad*? Or what was the situation of the young man whose wife lived alone with her little children because he was working as a contractor in Santa Cruz? It even happened with the most 'steady' *comunarios* that they moved away for a while to take on work outside the *comunidad* when the need arose for them to earn some money quickly, and while households were mainly based on the cohabiting of nuclear families, people often 'lent' or 'outsourced' their children to relatives in such situations, or indeed in cases where those relatives were in need of company.

Despite the fact that, as a legal-geographical entity, Cañón was a precisely defined space with fixed boundaries, mobility was thus a feature that was inbuilt in the *comunarios*' lifestyles on many levels.¹²¹ It was reflected in the movements of people, animals, and objects (and their purposes) in and out of and within the *comunidad* and was even reflected in the uses of the space within people's own 'domestic'¹²² domains. However, as with the MASRENA project ordering the community's supposedly 'free' internal space (see Chapter 4), there were certain factors that limited this freedom in the cases of people. To a certain extent, the flexibility of *comunarios*' movements was limited by the forces of kinship (in its sense of blood, conjugal, and affinal relations), which tended to pull people together in clusters of nuclear families. However, since most of the *comunarios* were related in one way or another, and since there was no discernible pattern indicating a preference for either uxorilocal or virilocal residence, the way they chose to place themselves in relation to other *comunarios* was still largely a reflection of preference. As we have seen, however, kinship was not the only influence in the organisation of Cañón as a social space: in some cases, people were compelled to leave the *comunidad* out of necessity, whereas in others, people's choice of location could even be seen as a political statement. Some families had built their houses deeper in the forest than others, and seemed to play a more marginal role in the goings-on of communal life; recall also the case of Jacinto and his family, who had been 'ostracised' from the community centre because

¹²¹ See Crivos et al (2007) for an exploration of the importance of such intra-communal mobility among the Mbya of northern Argentina.

¹²² A word that, given the centrality of the *oka* rather than the house as central living space, seems a bit inadequate.

of the roles they had played in the struggle with the *patrones* (see Chapters 2 and 3) and only moved back into a more central location when the woman's mother died in 2007.

In short, to the outsider it was plain to see that behind all their 'freedom' there were various forces pulling the *comunarios* in different, sometimes opposing, directions which constantly had to be negotiated. In the light of all this, the *comunarios*' assertions of their freedom seem all the more striking: to them, Cañón, despite all the limitations I could see in it, was a space of peace and quiet, a 'free *comunidad*' – a label that, used in the self-explanatory way in which Lupe had used it, was charged with the power to evoke and describe an entire way of life. Part of this power can be explained by the fact that the much-mentioned freedom of movement put Cañón as a *comunidad* in opposition with the *propiedad*: in Itakua, people had needed the *patrones*' permission if they wanted to move, and the available space had been very limited. In a sense, then, the move from Itakua to Cañón had also been a move from a not-so-good life to a better life that was traceable in the local geography as well as in *comunarios*' memories and the documents produced by the bureaucracy of the legal institutions and the State.

At the same time as the traces of kinship became visible, or – in the words of Peter Gow (1995: 56) 'implicated' – in the space of the *comunidad* through the decision to construct their houses in certain patterns and the daily movements and activities of the *comunarios*, this space also became a reflection of their ability to live *tranquilo*. If we recall the violence directed against people's lived-in space by the *patrones* in Itakua that sparked off the conflict which ultimately resulted in their move to Cañón (burning of the trees surrounding the *comunarios*' houses, destruction of the communal meeting hall) the significance of this becomes clear: living in Cañón meant inhabiting a space that was defined by the *comunarios*' present ability to 'live *tranquilo*' and 'do what they wanted' to such a degree, not because this ability was unlimited but because of their memories of its *absence* in their previous location. In that sense, Cañón space was lived and lived-in 'good life', and inhabiting it a daily enactment of *comunidad*. In other words, the concept of *comunidad* was important to people not because it described a fixed entity of a particular character (as that represented in the documents containing its 'history', title, and outlines) but, on the contrary, because it contained in itself the potential of movement and flexibility which the *comunarios* saw as so crucial to their ideal of what it meant to 'live *tranquilo*'. In the next chapter, I expand on the

issue of ideal vs. reality by looking at the *comunarios*' notion that, though a lot better than the *propiedad*, Cañón as a *comunidad* still had room for improvements. Besides asking of what these envisioned improvements consisted, the chapter also looks at some current influences that detracted from the *comunarios*' ability to live '*tranquilo*'.

CHAPTER 7. TENSIONS AND ASPIRATIONS: THE MAKING OF CAÑÓN AS AN ONGOING PROCESS

As already hinted at in the discussion above, the formation of Cañón as a free *comunidad* where people could ‘live *tranquilo*’ had not come to its complete conclusion with the signing of the documents of ownership or even the *comunarios*’ physical move to their new home. While ‘living *tranquilo*’ and ‘being able to do what we want’ were the dominant discourses people used to describe life in Cañón, they were, to some degree, ideals rather than reflections of an already attained reality. While there was thus certainly a sense that life in Cañón afforded the *comunarios* more freedom than life on the Vannuccis’ property had done, this went hand in hand with a certain sense of lack. This expressed itself either directly, in people’s talk about what was still needed in order to make Cañón the kind of functioning place which they envisioned it to be, or indirectly in people’s daily struggles. This chapter deals with these discrepancies between discourse and reality on two levels: firstly, it uses the example of jealousy to demonstrate that despite the efforts that the *comunarios* put into living well together (as epitomised in the fiesta), life within the community was not always harmonious. Secondly, it discusses what the *comunarios* themselves said was still missing in Cañón. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to show how both tensions and aspirations in daily life in Cañón can shed some more light on people’s ideas of how *comunarios* were meant to live together.

I have shown in the previous chapters how the move from Itakua to the community’s current location became a defining event that produced the *comunidad*’s identification in opposition to the *propiedad*. This, however, was not the only opposition which the *comunarios* of Cañón used in this way. Rather, they would say very similar things about the difference between life in the *comunidad* and life in the town: Cañón, people would tell me, was a lot better than Camiri because here, one could do what one wanted, whereas life in Camiri was all about money (*‘Camiri es pura plata’*). Without money, a young girl from a different community who was doing her teacher training in Cañón told me once, you didn’t eat in Camiri, whereas in the *comunidades* people shared food and sometimes even money and helped each other out. Or, in the words of my neighbour don Pedro: ‘I don’t like towns, I can only stand Santa Cruz for a week, no longer. I’ve been to La Paz as well, it’s better than Santa Cruz, but it’s also *pura plata*, and so is Camiri: they’ll charge you for going to the loo there.’

This concern about money reflects a sort of double standard in the lives of the *comunarios* in that they liked to make a point of stressing their independence of and dislike for the money economy at the same time as the performance of their daily lives required them to engage in it. While it was true that the use of money in the *comunidad* was very limited in comparison with the town, this limitation was offset by the *comunarios*' limited capacity to earn money, which they needed in order to buy household goods and suchlike from the Camiri market and pay for medical treatments, and (perhaps most importantly) for the organisation of fiestas (see Chapter 5). This discrepancy resulted from the fact that, despite their demonstrative aversion towards the money economy as it was practiced in 'the towns', the *comunarios* of Cañón were in fact very much a part of it: the taxis that provided rides to and from Camiri at cheap rates several times a day were always filled with women carrying products that were destined for sale in the urban markets. The same women would then return having done the necessary shopping for foodstuffs, clothes, petrol and whatever else they needed at home but couldn't get a hold of in Cañón.¹²³

In addition, Cañón itself was not a completely market-free zone either: for emergency needs, *comunarios* could, if they were lucky, fall back on the 'shops' that two of the women had established within the *comunidad*, each of which sold particular items which they acquired in Camiri and stocked in their houses. Doña Estefanía, my 'host mother', specialised in foodstuffs such as rice, pasta, and packets of *refresco* (powdered soft drinks that were popular as alternatives to *kägui-rai*), while doña Apolonia was the one to approach if the *vicios* (alcohol and cigarettes) ran out during a fiesta or if one needed cigarettes to smoke out malignant spirits. Much like the breadsellers (see Chapter 6), however, these 'shops' were unpredictable and could not be relied on to have any particular item in stock, and it happened frequently that children who had been sent to buy things from one of the 'tradeswomen' had to go home empty-handed.

Much as the *comunarios* might help each other out, there were a number of items that they simply could not get hold of without money. These ranged from small occasional luxuries such as chewing gum for the kids, and daily necessities such as metal pots and pans, to comparatively huge items such as the implements for the tractor which the *comunarios* had to

¹²³ For elaborations on the coexistence of monetary and nonmonetary forms of exchange in the Andes, see Harris (1995), Ferraro (2011).

rent every year in order to be able to put it to its intended use of ploughing the fields. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 5, one way of dealing with the more immediate money crises was the activation of kinship and friendship circuits for the purpose of borrowing money. I myself (who, as a European, was generally perceived as relatively affluent) soon found myself involved in this convention, which – common though it was – was not without its political complexities. On one occasion, for example, it happened that three people borrowed money off me within two days (one to buy remedies for an ongoing health problem, and two in order to be able to take loans out in Camiri which they needed to finance a fiesta) at the same time as another couple cautioned me not to lend people money, unaware that one of their children already owed me a substantial sum. While I tried to be as discrete as possible about these occasions, there was no way to avoid gossip altogether, and I was acutely aware of the jealousy that was sometimes sparked by my giving (or even lending) things to people who other people thought should not have received them.

Jealousy, in fact, seemed to be one of the things that generally most detracted from the *tranquilidad* in Cañón. People were jealous of each other not only insofar as money was concerned but also in relation to personal achievements and romantic relationships. The disruptive and antisocial force of jealousy is of course one that has been widely documented in the ethnographic literature not only of Latin America (cf. Sarmiento Barletti 2011, Overing and Passes eds. 2000) but all over the world, in particular with reference to the so-called ‘evil eye’ which can be found in any number of cultures (cf. Dundes 1981). While ‘evil eye’ was not a term that the *comunarios* were in the habit of using, I frequently heard mentions of the negative impact of jealous behaviour within the *comunidad* which could, but did not have to, involve recourse to magic. The harmful potential of jealousy is illustrated by the following example in which magic did play a role: A woman went to Camiri, leaving her then 10-year-old daughter home alone, and when she got back, the girl was gone – she could be seen out in the path but refused to come to the house and only sneaked into her bed once it was already dark. The same happened the next day, so the mother went to fetch her, but the girl ran off into the forest. A witchdoctor (*brujo*) whom the worried parents consulted in Camiri discovered the source of the girl’s strange behaviour: while tending some animals, the girl had stepped on something evil which an older girl had left in the path for another girl with whom she was fighting over a boy, and whatever had been left in the path had entered the little girl’s body. Her sister, who told me the story, said that these things were like worms, and that one had to go to a *brujo* to get them removed because they could sometimes even kill

the victim. The little girl had had to go several times and she was alright now, but this kind of thing never completely left one once one had it. We can see in this case how jealousy let loose had the potential to harm not only those whom it was intended to harm, but whomever chance happened to throw in harm's way.

As far as 'romantic' jealousy went, jealousy between couples was particularly common. Sparked by malicious rumours spread by other persons (whose reason was often jealousy as well), or simply a result of certain people's tempers (which tended to be aggravated by excessive drinking), it could cause rifts within families and high degrees of domestic violence. This latter phenomenon was frowned upon but nevertheless not uncommon, and while others sometimes intervened by trying to talk sense into the perpetrators, there seemed to be no standard procedure for settling these disputes. In one case, I was told that the reason an older man whom I had missed at the fiestas did not go to them anymore was that the consumption of alcohol unalterably made him go crazy with jealousy and beat his wife. Chastised by the then-*mburuvicha*, who told him to moderate his behaviour as the wife wasn't an animal to be treated in this way but a human being with parents who loved her, he had stopped attending the fiestas altogether. In other cases, however, well-known wife-beaters just seemed to be left at liberty to carry on as they pleased, and people would restrict themselves to negative comments about their behaviour rather than direct intervention.¹²⁴

In cases where *comunarios*' jealousy was directed towards the possessions of others, people would comment on their jealousy in terms of their 'badness', predicting that they would 'get annoyed' if they found out about such-and-such a thing, which sometimes caused people to hide things from each other. In other instances, allegations were voiced that certain people were resentful of someone else's status achievements and 'did not want them' to hold a particular post, even though on the other hand people would often comment on how individuals within the leadership of the community and the *capitanía* kept being re-elected because 'no one else wants to do it.' The *raison d'être* for these two opposing points of view was that people often seemed to view posts held outside the *comunidad* with a degree of

¹²⁴ The phenomenon of drunken wife-beating constitutes an instance in which the cathartic function of the fiesta is undermined. However, seeing that – unlike in other Latin American settings (cf. Harvey 1994) – it is not a practice that is generally seen as acceptable, I would stand by my interpretation of the fiesta as maintainer and reproducer of sociality within the community. This interpretation is further supported by the aforementioned man's self-removal from the fiestas because of the anti-social effect which participation in them had on him.

suspicion and assume them to be particularly lucrative and/or prestigious, whereas internal posts (at least theoretically) rotated every two years and were not tied to any financial gains.

While holding prestigious or influential positions outside the *comunidad* (such as positions in the leadership of the *capitanías*) was not necessarily connected with financial gain, the suspicion of people in the *comunidades* that this was the case was not completely unfounded. *Capitanes grandes* as well as the leaders of the APG not only spend a lot of time away from the *comunidades* but they are also the ones who have the most to do with outside funding bodies of all kinds, which puts them in a position in which corruption becomes not only possible but in some cases even easy. One particularly prominent example of this phenomenon is found in the Capitanía of the Alto and Bajo Isoso (CABI), where the present-day situation requires the *capitanes* to perform the double function of ‘communal mediator, arbitrator and leader in the Iloseño communities[, and of] representative and mediator towards the outside, vis-à-vis civil authorities, financiers and institutions’ (Combès 2005a: 310). This has led to an increase in authority of the *capitanes* and a corresponding decrease in authority of the communal *asambleas*, which are traditionally meant to stand above the *capitán* (ibid.). Further, it has had the effect of *capitanes* spending a lot of time away from the communities, which has caused a rift between them and the people whom they are meant to represent: on the one hand, the CABI has to apply for projects that are ‘trendy’ with the funding bodies at any point in time, which means that they do not necessarily correspond to communities’ real needs (Combès 2005a: 320); on the other hand, CABI leaders are being accused of hoarding power and money for their own benefit (Combès 2005a: 325-6).

During my own fieldwork experience, I also came across various cases in which corruption was suspected on the part of *capitanía* and even community leaders. On one occasion, I happened to be sitting next to the former *capitán* of a *comunidad* during a fiesta who had just been voted out of power by the *asamblea*. Already rather inebriated, he started lamenting the fact to me that he had been ‘demoted’ (*degradado*) by his fellow *comunarios* because they had accused him of corruption. He said that they had said that he’d been misappropriating money to spend on girls. I asked, as jokingly as I could, ‘Well, is it true?’, and he replied: ‘Nobody’s saying that it’s a lie – *No dice nadie que es mentira.*’ While in this case the communal *asamblea* had been able to act on the corruption charge against their *capitán*, deposing leaders at the level of *capitanía* or APG is more difficult, as is even finding out about and proving cases of corruption among them since they tend to spend so much of their

time in the towns. This lack of transparency with regard to the outside dealings of influential *comunarios*, then, makes it understandable that there should be a high degree of mistrust against them (especially in cases where people are in a position to pocket money for themselves that was really meant to benefit all *comunarios*).

Mistrust and jealousy, however, were not the only forces disrupting people's lives in Cañón, but – ironically – the very attempts of people to earn more money that could spark such jealousy in others could prove to be highly disruptive themselves. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 6, *comunarios* sometimes left the *comunidad* in order to take jobs in the towns. Besides borrowing money, this was another way of acting on urgent financial needs. However, as mentioned in the case of don Elías, whose work for Caritas drastically limited his capacity for working in his field in the *comunidad*, it was also one that could seriously affect the lives of those left behind: children of working mothers had to be left with other relatives, wives of working men struggled to manage on their own, and entire houses could stand empty for years and have to be looked after by younger siblings or other family members. Besides, leaving the *comunidad* (if only for a short time) for financial reasons was not always a choice born out of preference, but often a result of necessity. My friend's 15-year-old daughter Ángela, for example, was unhappy about having to go to live with one of the Cañón teachers in Chorety (a suburb of Camiri) where she was going to school because her parents could not afford her daily taxi fare into town and back. 'Being able to do what one wanted' was thus not always an option even in '*tranquilo*' Cañón, but rather an ideal to which people aspired but which they never quite managed to reach.

The literature is full of accounts of how the 'good life' among Amerindian peoples is not a given, but rather something that has to be actively pursued and constantly recreated. Take, for example, Belaunde on the Airo-Pai of Peruvian Amazonia:

Practices of reclusion for menstruating women, alimentary and sexual restrictions for the parents of recently born children, and practices of generosity, reciprocity and solidarity in the daily activities of adult women and men have for an objective the management of one's own rage and that of others, converting it into a positive element... Another key element in the maintenance of conviviality is commensality, or the repeated and reciprocal sharing of foods and drinks, since together with the food and drink a series of positive physical and moral characteristics are shared that further

unite the people. Generosity, control of emotions, and commensality are indispensable elements for the achievement of a *paihueña*, ‘the place of the people’, that is, a *comunidad* where people ‘know how to live well’. (Belaunde 2001: 17)

As we have seen, generosity, reciprocity and commensality also played an important role in the active efforts of the *comunarios* of Cañón to live well together as a free *comunidad*. However, there were other ideas that people had with regard to how life in the community could be improved yet further. One main theme here was that of the Guaraní ‘professionals’ mentioned by don Rogelio in the event described in the Introduction to this thesis. Having their own teachers, nurses, and technicians was seen as desirable because in the *comunarios*’ opinion it would reduce their dependence on outside sources: if one of the *comunarios* knew how to fix the tractor, one wouldn’t have to take the risk of getting ripped off by a mechanic in town; a local doctor or nurse would eliminate the need for *comunarios* to have to walk into town in the middle of the night to seek the help of a *karai* doctor in the case of emergencies, as had happened in the past; and having their own vet would broaden the possibilities for community livestock projects, which for the time mostly relied on the vets who were sent by the various organisations that were conducting projects in the *comunidad*.¹²⁵

While independence was thus a part of the *comunarios*’ vision of their improved future *comunidad* as far as ‘human resources’ were concerned, what was particularly interesting to me was the talk of ‘autonomy’ that had become fashionable beyond the circles of the Santa Cruz elites at the time of my fieldwork. When I first heard talk about ‘indigenous autonomy’ (which was later ratified in Articles 289-296 of the new Constitution of 2009), I had assumed that the concept somehow involved a notion of economic independence. However, what it turned out Guaraní people meant when they said they wanted to be ‘autonomous’ was ‘to be able to dispose of the money we get from the government and other sources without being accountable to anyone.’ Financial independence, then, was not part of their vision; or rather, only insofar as the *use* of specific funds was concerned, but not their *procurement*.

This attitude again reflects the ambivalent relationship which the *comunarios* had with money: on the one hand, they did not want to worry about where the money for the improvement of their *comunidad* came from, whereas on the other hand they were adamant that they wanted control over it. This statement may read like the anti-indigenist discourses of

¹²⁵ For a more in-depth discussion of the economy of projects in Cañón, see Chapter 8.

the opponents of Evo Morales's government, of whom there were many in Camiri and who liked to portray indigenous people as lazy freeloaders (see Chapter 9); however, I believe that what is behind this kind of attitude is something else entirely, namely, a different understanding of the market economy that is perhaps best explained through the following example: talking about the municipality's planned improvement of the houses with my neighbour don Pedro one time, he told me that they were to be built of bricks, and when I asked whether the *comunarios* would be making the bricks themselves he said that they were to be provided by the municipal government. He said the *comunarios* would put in the work but materials would be paid for by the municipal government and added, 'Of course, if I work, I have to be paid for it [in this case, in materials], even if it's to construct my own house.'

Although not as markedly as perhaps in more isolated communities (as, for example, the Paraguayan community described by Reed [1995] in which money transactions were restricted to trade with outsiders altogether), exchanges involving money in Cañón were associated with the outside to the degree that only goods purchased from the town were sold on to other *comunarios*; local produce, on the other hand, tended to be given away.¹²⁶ While Pedro's logic with regard to work thus did not apply to the kind of work which people did of their own accord every day (such as work in the *chacos* for subsistence purposes), the kind of work that was prompted from the outside fell into the category of 'payable work'. This perspective was encouraged (and had perhaps been shaped) by the local government and various NGOs that implemented projects in the *comunidades*, whose representatives would talk about the *comunarios*' work in terms of their 'return service' (*contraparte*) for the livestock, seeds, building materials, or whatever else the project needed which they were providing. Accepting projects from these agencies was thus not like the acceptance of a gift, but rather like the agreement of a deal, and those taking part in such projects often put a lot of effort into making them work.

Further, the fact that Guaraní people in Bolivia were campaigning for more control over the resources invested in their communities to decide for themselves what improvements they wanted to carry out suggests that the passivity with which they were in the habit of accepting all kinds of (usually unrelated) projects from different outside agents was a result of the

¹²⁶ The exception to this rule being bread, which – although produced by the women locally – for some reason fell under the category of 'sellable items' (see Chapter 6).

system rather than of the people's lack of interest in these matters.¹²⁷ In Cañón, a good example of this issue was that of the planned improvement of the houses: as I mentioned earlier, some people were concerned about the changes which this improvement might bring about (an urban-style layout with a main plaza and houses that were too close together for people's comfort, as well as a decrease in people's internal mobility). These fears, however, did not prevent people from being excited about the prospect of having houses made of higher-quality materials, as well as the promised gas and electricity. While it might not have been a way of completely resolving the tensions between these two perspectives (which, it should be added, were often held simultaneously rather than being mutually exclusive), giving the *comunarios* authority over the way in which the redevelopment of their houses was to be carried out would at least have rid them of their concerns about the layout. As we shall see, however, there were issues of politics attached to the relationship between municipality and Capitanía that put obstacles in the way of advancing decentralisation in this way (see Chapter 10).

In short, what all of these latter cases demonstrate is that what was needed and desirable from the *comunarios*' point of view was more of a fusion of outside and inside forces than development agencies were at the time able or willing to provide: rather than only having professionals provided to help out with projects, the *comunarios* also wanted their own people to be educated in the necessary skills; and while projects were on the whole welcome, their implementation was something which the *comunarios* wanted to be able to decide for themselves (or at least have a say in). What should be stressed here is that I am not suggesting that all outside interventions were entirely unwelcome in the *comunidad*; rather, the point is that what the *comunarios* envisioned for their future was a continuation of the interactions with outside agencies that was not diminished but rather balanced differently.

While the kind of jealousy that often results in wife-beating is perhaps indicative of a traditional macho culture in which drinking strong liquors has become a sort of social obligation among men, the envy that people felt about the possessions and statuses of others

¹²⁷ This desire for more self-determination in the field of development is an ongoing one that predates Evo's coming-in-power. Consider the following extract from a 2003 'Declaration' by Justa Cabrera of the Capitanía Santa Cruz: 'We see how in the name of globalisation we are offered what we do not want and at the same time the little land we have is taken away from us... Globalisation should achieve that all human beings are able to live in dignity instead of serving the ambitions of a few people or transnational enterprises... We know that globalisation is something that has occurred and that we cannot control, but we ask for the respect of our cultures and of our right to decide what the development is that we ourselves wish for.'

could be interpreted as the reaction of the Guaraní's oft-mentioned egalitarianism to material and social inequalities creeping in from the outside. Reed describes a case of a Paraguayan Guaraní family that was forced to leave their community as a result of becoming too much like *patrones* and 'not sufficiently "Guaraní"' (1995: 142) in the eyes of their fellow *comunarios* after opening a shop in their house. The problem in this case, Reed stresses, was not the fact that the family was engaging in the market economy as such but that they had by the end largely replaced the reciprocal exchanges that are usual among kin with commercial exchanges revolving around monetary transactions.

The unease of the relationship which the *comunarios* of Cañón had with money can perhaps be explained by the fact that, while the personal jealousies between people could be counter-balanced (if not resolved) by the uniting forces of reciprocity, kinship ties and the fiesta (or even, as in the case of the bewitched girl, with magic), there was no mechanism in place for ensuring that any possible encroachment of *patrón-peón*-like relations that might develop between *comunarios* with greater financial power and those with less would be checked successfully. While the egalitarianism that is practiced by Guaraní people like the *comunarios* described in this thesis may not be a complete one,¹²⁸ there was nevertheless a notion that it was important. We may, for example, recall doña Estefanía's discontent with the Evangelical conversions in the neighbouring community that had resulted in people 'not being the same anymore' (Chapter 5), and there had in fact been the attempt to fight the *karai*-style inequalities described above with *karai*-style means by incorporating a prohibition of *patrón-peón* relations between *comunarios* in the statute of the *comunidad*.

A similar point can be made about education: whereas education had for a long time been firmly in the hands of *karai* (colonists and, later, their *criollo* descendants), at the time when I began my fieldwork the Pluriethnic Superior Teachers' Institute of the *Oriente* and Chaco (INSPOC) in Camiri had been training bilingual teachers for over 10 years (cf. Gustafson 2009), several of whom I got to meet when they were doing their teacher training in Cañón.

¹²⁸ I am particularly thinking of gender relations, which are often said to be highly unequal among Guaraní people. The Camiri education woman's remark that Guaraní men were '*muy machistas*' (quoted in the Introduction) was one I often found echoed by people working for NGOs, but also Guaraní people (chiefly women) themselves. These, however, seemed inequalities which the *comunarios* were willing (or, at least, more willing) to accept because they were not seen to threaten the way that *comunarios* were meant to live together but were to a certain degree even part of it (think of differentiated gender roles in work and fiestas). Financial inequalities, on the other hand, at least had the potential to severely disrupt the relations between *comunarios* and turn them into something other and less desirable.

Guaraní was used alongside Spanish as language of instruction in the school in Cañón, with the first couple of years being taught purely in Guaraní. From the beginning of secondary school onwards, however, students had no choice but to transfer to one of the schools in Camiri if they wanted to carry on with their studies, where teaching was provided exclusively in Spanish, and the same applied to those who were planning to continue their education at the university level. The future professionals of the *comunidades* were thus still the product of the *karai* educational system.

However, shortly before I was leaving Bolivia, word began to spread about a planned Guaraní University in Kuruyuki, the location of the legendary Battle of 1892 (see Chapter 3). The University, which has been baptised ‘Apiaguaiki Tumpa’ in honour of the messianic leader of 1892, was inaugurated on 11 April 2009, together with the Quechua University ‘Casimiro Huanca’ and the Aymara University ‘Tupac Katari’, and the teaching of courses commenced in August 2009. The choice of courses offered by the ‘Apiaguaiki Tumpa’ is telling: fossil fuels, forest engineering, pisciculture, and veterinary medicine and zootechnics. Putting the education of the longed-for professionals itself into Guaraní hands thus promises a ‘de-colonisation of intellectuality’, to borrow a phrase from Joanna Overing (2008), on top of the de-*karaisation* of community economies promised by the arrival of the professionals and financial autonomy.

In a way, then, the oppositions between *comunidad* and *propiedad* on the one hand and *comunidad* and town on the other hand were in fact related in that a town was seen as a place where people engaged in *patrón-peón*-like relations (that is, unequal relations between those who can pay and those who are paid). Work that was initiated from the outside (such as projects) had to be paid for because it was part of the town system and this was how the town system worked, whereas *motiro* work that *comunarios* could request of each other was meant to be recompensed exclusively through the substances of reciprocity, food and *chicha*, which were exchanged between equals. We can now see what made the ideas of Guaraní professionals and financial autonomy so appealing – that is, the reassurance that the economic development of the *comunidad* was firmly in the hand of the *comunarios* themselves and thereby not threatening to turn *comunarios* into *patrones* and *comunidades* into towns.

Part III discusses some cases of outsiders to the *comunidad* impacting on the lives of its people through their different perspectives on what *comunidades* are, or should be, about. Through showing the great variety of takes which *karai* people could have on this subject, I suggest that rather than seeing *comunidades* as particular entities that can be positioned in certain ways we can understand them as possessing a range of potentialities which different actors seek to activate for their own ends.

**PART III: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: NEGOTIATING
DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF ‘*COMUNIDAD*’**

CHAPTER 8. (N)GOs AND THE ECONOMY OF *PROYECTOS*

Early supporters of the LPP envisioned the law would strengthen rural development municipalities through strong local community organizations collaborating with NGOs... [However, m]unicipalities where NGOs are strong and local organizations are weak offer challenging environments due to the slow pace of building grassroots administrative and decision-making capacity. The tendency is for even the best-intentioned NGOs to take over and control the process. (Kohl 2003: 161)

As I have shown in the previous chapter, a preoccupation with the quality of the interactions with outside agencies was a theme that was present as a constant undercurrent in *comunarios*' daily lives, and it was the quality of these relations that tended to generate criticism rather than the fact of these agencies' presence and interventions in the *comunidades* themselves. In fact, the ever-increasing presence of governmental and non-governmental organisations (GOs and NGOs) in Cañón since its establishment in the 1990s had led to the development of a system of project-implementation whose dynamics at first puzzled me a great deal. What struck me as strange about this system was the way in which *comunarios* seemed happy to accept any project at all that was offered to them, without seemingly discriminating between the merit and even usefulness of the offered projects, let alone whether they made any particular sense when considered in their relation to others that were being implemented simultaneously. At the same time, this last point did not seem a concern of the agencies themselves either, which largely tended to limit themselves to 'doing their own thing', and among whom there was, as a rule, very limited communication. On the contrary, NGOs working within the same region often stood in a relationship of competition with each other, and they often sought to implement their programmes independently even of the State (cf. Kohl 2003: 157-8). This chapter, then, seeks to shed some light on the agendas of GOs and NGOs operating in Cañón during the time of my fieldwork and their relationships with the *comunarios*. As will become clear in the course of the discussion, these relationships largely operated on the basis of contradictory assumptions about the nature of *comunidades* and the purpose of projects that impeded the successful implementation of the latter in the former.

The following is a selection from among the various organisations that were active in Cañón at the time, and the ways in which their respective agendas were described to me by their representatives.

PDA Arakavi: The PDAs are the ‘Areal Development Programmes’ of World Vision Bolivia (Visión Mundial).¹²⁹ There were at the time 32 PDAs in Bolivia which addressed specific regional needs independently of each other (for example, the PDA Tekove working with the Capitanía Gran Kaipependi specialised in water-related projects, as scarcity of water was an issue in that area). What all PDAs had in common was the focus on Christian values (manifested in such practices as beginning capacity-building workshops with a 10-minute prayer session). The PDA Arakavi worked with the *capitanías* of Kaami, Alto Parapetí, and Ivo, where it implemented projects of sheep breeding, honey production, maize growing, and promoting leadership qualities in children. In Cañón, 15 sheep had been lent to the six families that were involved in the project, on the condition that after the sheep had reproduced enough for the project to keep going they were to return the same number of sheep to the PDA, which would then lend them to other families. The PDA Arakavi was financed by World Vision Germany, which looked for ‘godfathers and –mothers’ willing to sponsor children in the *comunidades*. This money did not go to the children directly; rather, it was invested in projects. These projects were decided upon by a ‘Community Assembly’, which was constituted by representatives of each of the *comunidades* in which the PDA was active.

Caritas: Caritas is one of the organisations with the most longstanding involvement in Camiri. Having been present since the days before the founding of the APG, it had become part of a kind of ‘development-organisational PISET’ (with CIPCA taking over the field of production, the Health Convention¹³⁰ that of health, Teko-Guaraní that of education, the APG that of land/territory, and Caritas that of infrastructure). The Caritas office in Camiri was responsible for the entire Chaco region. There were three main themes to its activities: 1) the improvement of housing (including the construction of new buildings and vinchuca eradication programmes);¹³¹ 2) water (for consumption and irrigation); and 3) promotion of human rights (such as capacity building courses, information transmission via workshops and meetings, promotion of human-rights-friendly values, and advice pertaining to legal problems). Caritas projects, too, were implemented at the demand of those whom they were to benefit, often in collaboration with municipal projects (‘the *comunidades* make demands to the municipalities who usually tell them that they can only give them part of the money that’s needed, so they come to Caritas to apply for the rest’). Unlike with the PDA, however, religious issues did not usually come into the implementation of projects, in which, however, a lot of Guaraní technicians were involved. The lady to whom I spoke lamented the fact that, although as an old-established and well-known NGO Caritas did not have to compete with

¹²⁹ These programmes (Spanish: Programas de Desarrollo de Área) are defined on the website of Visión Mundial Bolivia, World Vision’s Bolivian branch, as follows: ‘intercommunity organisation created through the political volition of the representative leadership of the organised groups within civil society, which assume the binding commitment of initiating proposals and lead processes of sustainable change focusing on childhood, starting from their reality of poverty and their vision of the future, in the approach of Transforming Development, with Christian values where justice and solidarity are necessary conditions for living in dignity and hope’ (<http://www.visionmundial.org.bo/visionmundial.php?id=326>). We can find reflected in this one statement several of the points discussed in this chapter (i.e., their focus on leadership, sustainability of projects, and the assumption of the poverty of those to be developed). Unfortunately, it is beyond the limits of the present thesis to discuss World Vision’s activities in the *comunidades* in greater detail.

¹³⁰ The Convenio de Salud, a collaboration between the Apostolic Vicariate of Camiri and the Ministry of Health and Sport, promotes the improvement of health in the Chaco region via capacity building and direction of financial support.

¹³¹ Vinchucas are blood-sucking insects that can carry the parasite *trypanosoma cruzi* which can cause infection with Chagas disease in humans. Since vinchucas are often found in the wattle-and-daub structures that are common throughout the Chaco region, they frequently become the object of eradication campaigns in those areas.

others in the *comunidades*, sometimes an NGO with a lot of money at its disposal would come in and try to ‘outbid’ them. These new NGOs, she said, always ran to whatever topic was fashionable at any particular time (indigenous peoples, women, ‘*interculturalidad*’...), and when the current changed, they all ran on to the next one, whereas the old NGOs stayed where they were.

CIAT: The ‘Centre for Tropical Agricultural Investigation’ is a decentralised non-profit organisation of the Prefecture of Santa Cruz that specialises in the research and development of the two areas of cattle breeding and agriculture. In Camiri, CIAT worked with private cattle owners as well as *comunidades*. In the latter, CIAT had various projects pertaining to the conservation of forage and sowing pastures for cattle, the provision of infrastructure and medical care for larger animals such as pigs and goats, and the keeping of chickens. Whereas normally only infrastructural help was given, in the case of the chickens CIAT in fact provided 20 birds per participating family, along with materials such as nails, mesh, and wire designated for building hutches for them, which, I was told, dramatically increased their survival rates. In addition, CIAT technicians came to vaccinate the birds every four months. In Cañón, CIAT had such a chicken project as well as an agricultural project for which it had provided seeds. In Charagua, CIAT also collaborated with the Guaraní in geneticist research into the ‘purification’ (meaning, the breeding-back) of maize to the ‘purer’ forms that had disappeared because of the increased mixing of seeds, and which were supposedly better adapted to specific soil types. Funding for local CIATs usually came from the Prefecture and municipalities; however, the Camiri branch also had funding from the Diputación de Valencia¹³², which the municipality had arranged. The implementation of projects in the communities was coordinated with the Capitanía Kaami, but CIAT did not collaborate with the APG.

CIPCA: One of the ‘old NGOs’ of the region, the ‘Centre for the Investigation and Promotion of the Peasantry’ for Cordillera with head office in Camiri supported indigenous *capitanías* and *comunidades* in the areas of farming and livestock projects (such as apiculture, deforestation of new *chacos*, fences for cattle corrals, and forest management), political empowerment (by, for example, promoting their participation in local, regional, and State politics), and access to land, which was seen as the precondition for any kind of development being possible in the *comunidades* in the first place. One of CIPCA Cordillera’s main activities was the organisation of ‘formation and capacity building workshops’ in the areas of production and politics, activities that were implemented with funding from the Spanish government and other international sponsors. Contrary to CIAT, CIPCA was working together closely with the APG in whose founding it had had a significant involvement, and whom it supported in the areas of production, land/territory, and empowerment. The latter point was not exclusively aimed at political representation but included support in legal matters (as had been the case with Cañón de Segura). A more recent case in which CIPCA was taking legal action on behalf of a Guaraní community was a case of land theft which the mayor of Camiri had allegedly committed in the *comunidad* of Puente Viejo on the outskirts of Camiri. The person to whom I spoke commented that the involvement in such land conflicts could be dangerous, and that he himself had received various death threats during the 12 years he had been engaged with the issue.

¹³² I.e., the administrative body of the government of the autonomous region of Valencia in Spain.

While all of these agencies influenced the lives of the Cañón *comunarios* in some way, there were three in particular whose activities had a large impact on people's lives due to their long-standing involvement with Cañón and the Capitanía Kaami: CIPCA, the GTZ (beginning of Part II), and the PDA. For the sake of brevity, I will limit myself here to an example provided by a workshop that was organised by CIPCA, which to my mind is representative of the kinds of activities in which the various (N)GOs were engaged in Cañón at the time of my fieldwork, and the problems bound up with them.

As one of the outside helpers that came to the aid of the *comunarios* in their struggle with the *patrones* (see Chapter 2), CIPCA had had a particularly longstanding relationship with the people of Cañón. It can also be said to be one of the organisations with the most serious interest in the indigenous cultures which it seeks to support, as its activities are not limited to simple project-implementation but include the publication of materials dealing with said projects as well as other aspects of indigenous and peasant life. In a way, this thesis itself can be said to be a product of CIPCA's activities in the *comunidades* of Kaami, as it was one of their investigator-activists whose good connections with the leaders of the Capitanía helped me gain access to my fieldwork community in the first place.

In the communities, the role in which I predominantly encountered CIPCA staff was as the leaders of workshops.¹³³ Often, these workshops concerned organisational issues of *capitanías* and *comunidades*, such as the one which I had attended in Charagua, and often the presenters acted as 'motivators', seeking to inspire enthusiasm for a particular issue and its proposed solution in the participants and thereby propel them into action. Given the drawn-out nature of Guaraní *asambleas* (which, in my experience, can go on for whole days and well into the night after characteristically having started a couple of hours late) and their conventions of debate (which tend to involve participants remaining a long time in silence after listening to speakers before they start engaging in any discussion), it was not really surprising that workshop leaders could get impatient with their audiences on such occasions.

This, then, often resulted in their adopting an authoritative or 'schoolmasterly' tone towards the participants, as was frequently the case with the young CIPCA agro-engineer, nicknamed

¹³³ It should be pointed out here that the following analysis focuses on CIPCA's dealing with the *comunidades*, and with communal leaders as representatives of *comunidades*. Organisations such as the APG or even Kaami had their own internal dynamics and relationships with NGO workers; however, for reasons of space these are not discussed here.

‘El Gato’ (‘the Cat’), who was in charge of many of the capacity building workshops which CIPCA was organising both within individual *comunidades* and jointly for select representatives from various places. In one such instance, at a ‘conflict resolution’ workshop in Cañón, El Gato told the *comunarios* that they needed to change their ‘way of thinking’ in order to get rid of internal problems (such as gossip, misunderstandings, or speculations about what people thought other people thought) and also commented that they were ‘losing their culture’ (in this case, referring particularly to the abandonment of communal work) and their identity, and that that would have to change.

While people seemed used to being addressed in this way and El Gato’s lectures did not impede the good relationship which he had formed with them, the *comunarios* tended to resort to a kind of ‘passive resistance’ to unwelcome advice in that they would listen to it all politely and patiently and then simply ignore whatever they disagreed with or regarded as irrelevant. The same strategy was applied to less well-liked outsiders, such as the Italian priest – nicknamed ‘Padre Pío’ – who came to celebrate mass in Cañón once a month, and whose disrespectful behaviour had made him unpopular with the *comunarios*. This convention undoubtedly contributed to the frustration experienced by the (N)GO workers but also prevented them from finding out what the *comunarios* really thought about their proposals.

The following is a summary of an inter-communitarian CIPCA workshop on ‘social control’ and ‘natural resources’ that took place in the Guaraní community of Guirarapo in June of 2007, and which demonstrates some of the dynamics at play in these events.

After all the participants had been given some bread and some very sugary tea, the workshop started. El Gato had put up a poster with some questions that he wanted to discuss, the first of which was, ‘What is social control?’ The answer he was looking for was ‘vigilance’. He talked about the municipality being like a parent to the communities, which were its children, who worried about their children’s well-being, with the organisations acting like the communities’ aunts and uncles.

El Gato said that the *comunarios* all knew their rights by now, but that knowing one's rights without putting them into practice was like having an axe which one never used, and that rights as well as axes were meant for working with them. CIPCA, he went on, had been going to the *comunidades* for a long time already, but they were still struggling with the same problems: the *comunarios* were valiant when it came to fighting among themselves, but when there was a problem with a third (*karai*) party, they seemed to be afraid and just kept quiet.

Don Cleto, the Vice-Sub-Alcalde of Kaami,¹³⁴ responded that things were in fact advancing (not only those with money had land now, Bolivia had an indigenous president, the Guaraní people had their own engineers and technicians), and that it wasn't that they were afraid of others but that the Guaraní always sought the dialogue, which was what had always characterised them.

El Gato said that the life of a leader (*dirigente*) didn't have a manual, where what was needed was listed point by point, but that a leader needed the capacity to take decisions independently, to evaluate a situation and decide what was needed. He also – somewhat ironically, given his own previous admonition to the *comunarios* of Cañón that they had to stop 'losing their culture' – said that no one had the right to tell the Guaraní how to be, but that they had to decide that for themselves. The word '*comunidad*', he said, meant a group of people who had something in common and who lived together, but that frequently *comunarios* went as far as the APG about issues which they should really resolve internally.

While El Gato thus stressed *comunarios*' needs for more independence, it was lack of support from outside that was seen as a problem by a number of the workshop participants: in the groupwork session before lunch that followed El Gato's opening speech, the first thing that one member of the Kaami leadership in the group which I had joined suggested as a 'problem' with regard to natural resources was 'lack of capacity building'. Several of the other posters produced in this session were also written in a way that invoked lack of external support as the core problem.

¹³⁴ *Sub-alcalde* translates as 'sub-mayor'. In the words of Nancy Postero, '[The Popular Participation Law (LPP) of 1994] makes provision for the creation of what are called *Distritos Municipales Indígenas* (DMIs), or Indigenous Municipal Districts, in areas where the entire municipality is within indigenous lands. In this case, the sub-alcalde, or sub mayor, who directs the district is elected by the indigenous organization rather than being appointed by the mayor' (2000: 3, ft.9). Don Cleto's position was thus that of deputy to the Sub-Mayor of Kaami.

At the end of the morning session, El Gato again put people into groups, with delegations from the communities of Imbochi and Alto Camiri forming groups of their own, so that problems could be compared. I joined the Imbochi group, which was formed by doña Marina, the second *capitana* of both Kaami and Imbochi, doña Eldy, who was in charge of gender issues in Kaami, and the first *capitán* of Imbochi, Agustín Justiniano.

The question to be discussed was what the communities were doing to regulate/manage their natural resources. I asked what resources they had in Imbochi, and they said the River Parapetí, trees, and boulders. One of the Imbochi *comunarios*' main problems was that the site of the community was being used as a rubbish dump for Camiri, putting people at risk and contaminating the river on which the community's water supply relied. The dump had been there for some 10 years already, and only now had the Alcaldía decided that it would clean up its mess and promised to remove the rubbish. Not all *comunarios*, however, agreed with getting rid of the dump, as some took their pigs there to feed.

With the boulders, the problem was that people took out rocks without permission to use for building houses and also to sell. The same happened with the trees – they were sometimes clandestinely felled to be sold as timber, or made into 'firewood' and also sold. People were meant to apply for permission for the number of trees and the purpose for which they wanted to cut them down to the community authorities, who then signed a permit with which they were meant to go to the '*Forestal*'¹³⁵ for further approval. But the *comunarios* didn't always follow these procedures; on the contrary, sometimes they got annoyed if they were told that they should.

After a lunch break with soup and *chicha*, we stood around some more chatting then went back inside for more poster presentations. One Kaami representative talked about how one needed 1. order, 2. strategy, and 3. politics: order, to look at what resources there were; strategy, to hold regional meetings of *comunarios*, implement social control, look at what activities needed to be organised, and go to the relevant places to look at them; and politics, to strengthen the development of natural resources and to look for allies who would provide capacity building.

¹³⁵ The *Cámara Forestal de Bolivia* ('Bolivian Forestry Chamber'), a non-profit organisation that functions as the umbrella organisation and regulating organ of Bolivia's forestry industry.

El Gato held a speech on how the communities needed to decide what it was they wanted and what they wanted to focus on instead of accepting everything that they were being offered by organisations, because in that case they would ‘fill’ (*llenar*) themselves with projects and in the end wouldn’t be able to go through with any of them. He said they shouldn’t compare themselves with the *karai* to decide what to wish and ask for but look what was really needed instead.

The meeting finished with the announcement that a community meeting was to be held subsequently.

Going through this instance step by step, we can see various assumptions about the meaning and functioning of *comunidades* unfold in this event that go a long way in explaining the discrepancies between *comunarios*’ simultaneous desire for both more independence and more support from the organisations on the one hand, and the organisations’ somewhat contradictory approach in trying to deliver both on the other hand. We can see how the basis of the relationship between organisations and communities is set up as a paternal one in El Gato’s initialising speech, in which he likens the *comunidades* to ‘children’ and the municipality and organisations that work with them to parental figures. This move at once assures his audience of CIPCA’s good intentions (they, like the municipalities, are there to support the Guaraní people) and justifies the paternal way in which he reproaches them for their failure to learn to stand up for themselves. Don Cleto’s response offers an alternative view of the situation, namely, that what to the CIPCA activists appears as the Guaraní’s failure to advance is rather their own failure to recognise the advances which there are, and that what they perceive as cowardice is in fact diplomacy (‘always seeking the dialogue’ was an expression that was commonly used by people, especially Guaraní leaders when speaking in public, as a particularly characteristic trait of ‘Guaraníness’).

In the next part of El Gato’s speech, the need he sees for the Guaraní ‘children’ to grow up is personified in the figure of the leader. Let us take a step back and for a moment recall the ‘traditional’ position of Guaraní leaders as we find it described in various historical and anthropological sources from colonial days onwards – that is, a man distinguished by his prowess in warfare and eloquence as a speaker whose main role is that of binding a

community together through exchanges of women, work, and *chicha*, and whose authority to exert real power over others is limited to periods of war (Saignes 1982: 179; see also Chapter 4). Far from being an exclusively Guaraní phenomenon, this figure of the ‘powerless chief’ was one that was frequently encountered by the first Europeans to arrive in the New World, and which greatly puzzled and exasperated them because it made it impossible for them to clearly identify individuals who were entitled to speak for ‘their’ people and negotiate on their behalf – in short, someone in a position to represent them.¹³⁶

As we have seen in Chapter 4, present-day Guaraní leaders have become precisely that, representatives of their communities. They fulfil this role when it comes to attending *asambleas*, workshops, or other meetings outside the community, or when it comes to receiving anthropologists eager to work in their *comunidades*. However, ‘representing’ being an activity geared almost exclusively towards the outside,¹³⁷ there was still no sense in which leaders had any ‘real’ power, and the positions which to represent they went to meetings with outsiders were meant to be ones that had been decided by their communities as a whole. The *asamblea*, not the *capitán*, remained the highest authority within a *comunidad* (cf. Caballero et al 201?: 3), and (as had happened in the example recounted in Chapter 7) *capitanes* who failed to live up to the other *comunarios*’ expectations could be stripped of their nominal authority by the real authority of the *asamblea*.

The modern-day Guaraní *capitán* thus constitutes an attempt to ‘have it both ways’, that is, to satisfy the need of *karai* and their institutions for clearly identifiable representatives while at the same time honouring the authority of the *asamblea*. El Gato’s characterisation of a leader as someone with the ‘capacity to evaluate a situation and take decisions independently’ was thus not an idea that coincided with the reality of Guaraní leaders’ lives, or, in fact, with Guaraní people’s ideas of good leadership. Rather, it reflected CIPCA’s own concerns and ambitions as an institution that had come to see ‘capacity-building’¹³⁸ as one of its main

¹³⁶ Sabine MacCormack writes about these early encounters: ‘Some nomadic groups... appeared to have no chief at all. Other chiefs, whatever their ceremonial and military role might have been, were not obeyed in any way that Europeans found intelligible’ (MacCormack 1999:109). See also Clastres (1977) for a classic, if meanwhile controversial, treatise on the role of Tupi-Guaraní chiefs in the colonial era.

¹³⁷ Since anyone is meant to be able to talk in the *asamblea comunal* to make their voice heard, the *comunarios* do not need representation of themselves to themselves. There is a sense in which *capitanes* represent outside agencies to the *comunarios*; however, as this is done from an outside position, it might make more sense to talk about the *capitanes*’ role as that of ‘mediator’ in this context.

¹³⁸ ‘Capacity building’ is a concept that has become fashionable among GOs and NGOs working in development since the 1990s. Its meanings are manifold and defy exact definition. However, ‘[w]ithin the many

activities, while El Gato's rhetoric was reminiscent of that of a life or business coach trying to train their clients to be dynamic, successful individuals. It should be pointed out at this point that the people working for CIPCA and other NGOs involved with the *comunidades* whom I encountered during my fieldwork were by and large well-informed and well-meaning individuals who were all more or less familiar with the local people's ways of life, and that perhaps these 'capacity-building' programmes had a rationale behind them that took these factors into account in some way. I do, however, see a certain discrepancy between these organisations' aims and the internal workings of the *comunidades* in that there was not really any room for individuals' going forth and dynamically and singlehandedly making decisions which concerned the entire community – which was, perhaps, why the CIPCA people to whom I had spoken about this matter had been so frustrated with its previous results.

My impression is, therefore, that what was really happening was that communal *mburuvicha reta* were being cultivated to be better *representatives* to the organisations rather than better leaders to 'their' people; in other words, that what was being built and developed was leaders' capacity to be better-functioning interlocutors for the organisations. This desire to create the people with whom the organisations worked as a kind of 'comprehensible Other' was pervasive in El Gato's speech: on the one hand, Guaraní people must learn to be independent ('no one can tell you what to do'), but on the other hand they must do so only in ways that fit in with the organisations' ideas ('leaders must act in such-and-such a way', 'these are conflicts for you to resolve internally', 'you must preserve your culture').¹³⁹

While I am sure that this was not an effect that was intended by El Gato or any of the other representatives of CIPCA and the other NGOs working in the area, the need for organisations to cast people in specific ways that are convenient for their own agendas is nonetheless a common phenomenon in the development business. We can see at work here what James Ferguson has famously termed the 'anti-politics machine' of development – that is, the way in which development agencies cast their 'clients'' realities in terms of technical problems to

definitions, there seems to be an emerging consensus that CD involves the long term, contributes to sustainable social and economic development, and is demand driven [and also increasingly focussed on] enhancement and strengthening of existing capacities' (Lusthaus, Adrien and Perstinger 1999: 5).

¹³⁹ As David Mosse has shown, development organisations' desire for 'comprehensible Others' is often born out of a necessity to prove the 'success' of their projects rather than mere convenience: '[I]t is not uncommon for agency staff to select those people who already possess the characteristics that a project aims to create – the educated, the organised, the innovators, independent, solvent, modernising peasants; that way a measure of success is guaranteed' (2005: 211).

be solved and thereby often sweep questions of history and politics under the rug because they are not equipped to deal with them (Ferguson 1994; see also Uvin 1998, Li 2007). In the case of Cañón, 'history' was something that was required as evidence by the courts during the *comunarios*' land struggle but became obsolete once the land was obtained and the struggle finished (see Chapter 3). As we have seen, the *comunarios* had, by the time I arrived in Cañón, taken on board ideas about 'development' as part of their own vision for the further improvement of their *comunidad*, and I have argued that this vision had supplanted 'history', as a thing of the past, in people's ways of thinking about their *comunidad* in terms of the present and the future. The organisations catering to these desires came with requirements of a new set of 'evidences': instead of history, the *comunarios* now had to demonstrate their interest in such things as 'capacity', 'gender relations', or 'natural resource management'.

If we take a look at the result of the poster session in the workshop described above and especially the Kaami representative's speech following it, we can see that the Guaraní representatives who were attending the workshop had taken on board these categories, as demonstrated (among other things) by their demand for more 'capacity building'. This demand was indirectly echoed in the Imbochi delegation's discussions of the natural resource management in the *comunidades*, where the main focus was on the various problems that occurred as a result of new resource management efforts rather than the efforts themselves. Again, we can see at work here the communal dynamic in which there is no space for authoritarian leaders: both in the case of the rubbish dump and that of the boulders and trees, no consensus had been reached among the *comunarios* because some wanted to take advantage of these 'resources' in their own way and resented being told to do otherwise. While *capitanes* and PISET representatives were thus well versed in NGO speak and familiar with the conventions of workshops, these episodes point towards another problem which the system of individual representation glosses over; that is, the fact that *comunidades* are units that – despite, or perhaps because of, their emphasis on communal decision-making – harbour the potential for internal discord.

The demand for more capacity building as a response to these internal difficulties is, to my mind, indicative of the way that *comunarios* (including the members of communal leadership) saw the organisations that worked with them on the improvement of their *comunidades* as responsible for the projects which they sought to implement. This is reminiscent of the Cañón *comunarios*' differentiation between work on such projects and

their own agricultural work as payable and non-payable work respectively (see Chapter 7).¹⁴⁰ There is some irony in the fact that ‘capacity building’ from the point of view of the organisations is seen as a way of educating people into independence while for the *comunarios* it was just another service that came attached to their various projects; however, as we have seen, it is only one among numerous differences in perspectives that existed among representatives of organisations and inhabitants of *comunidades*.

What both positions agreed on was the way they saw the *comunidades* as recipients of projects. In line with the predominant trend within the development world of the time, projects were what GOs and NGOs were willing and able to offer the communities, and projects were what the communities had come to expect from the organisations (and, as in my case, sometimes even other outsiders about whose status and intentions they were unsure). Again, the difference lay in the approach to these projects rather than the primary issue of their implementation. Here, El Gato’s final speech is revealing: to paraphrase his words, the message was basically that *comunidades* had to carefully pick and choose between the projects available to them in order to be able to come up with a common ‘course of action’ that would allow them to specialise in an ultimately profitable way. The idea is one that is in line with current ideas about sustainable development; that is, a kind of development that invests in people temporarily in order to enable them to take over the maintenance of their own livelihoods after an initial ‘starting-up’ period. One of the problems with this approach is one that is common in the development world, namely, the fact that project design often tends to be formulaic and does not take sufficient account of local specificities. In other words, El Gato expected the *comunarios* to run their *comunidades* like a business, an expectation that, however, was doomed to failure because of the anti-hierarchical nature of their social structure and the complexities surrounding their internal organisation.

¹⁴⁰ See also Lowrey (2008: 71) for the Isoso: ‘The centerpieces of the two projects – Isoleño cultural knowledge [in the case of a traditional medicine project], and the Isoleño ecosystem [in the case of a National Park project], are not produced in fixed units by wage laborers. Isoleño culture and Isoleño nature are instead collective products of the cooperative labor of many generations of Isoleño people... I would suggest that – with respect to these outside projects – Isoleño have come to think of their nature and their culture, and their involvement in the production and reproduction of these entities, as “subject to the value regime of wage-labor”: in other words, as forms of endeavor commensurable with money compensation. They realize very well that every member of the community participates in this work and, because they have locally created Isoso’s nature and Isoso’s culture over many generations, that there are “back wages” owed to them from the outset by the outside world interested in these goods.’ As Lowrey has noted in another article, in the Chaco region, more traditional forms of ‘work’ are increasingly being replaced by ‘the “project” market’ altogether because of the bigger security the latter offers to indigenous people (2007: 4).

Comunidades are not businesses.

If we are willing to accept this as a fact, what, then, can we say about the *comunarios*' way of dealing with the projects which they were being offered? Frustratingly for El Gato, and surprisingly to me, the *comunarios* of Cañón (as *comunarios* elsewhere in Kaami) had taken up a strategy of seemingly blindly accepting whatever project was being offered to them. As mentioned before, these projects rarely involved the entire community but were usually open to whoever was willing to partake in them. There was thus room for individuals and single families to follow their own interests rather than a consensus having to be reached among all every time; however, all these activities would – where reasonably successful – be seen by the *comunarios* to be contributing to the improvement of Cañón as a whole. The reason behind what to El Gato and me appeared as a chaotic way of organising the community economy was, I would argue, that the *comunarios* took an approach to the improving of their community whose strength lay in its flexibility rather than its being planned in a calculating way. The *comunarios* accepted these projects, not out of indifference, but because they saw them as a way to take advantage of the possibilities that were offering themselves to them at a particular point in time *and perhaps only then*, and which to refuse would therefore seem unwise.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the *comunarios* of Cañón were highly inventive in the ways they organised and re-organised their living spaces and utilised and adapted objects of every-day use. This kind of flexibility and sensitivity to the needs and opportunities of the present moment have received a great deal of attention among the anthropologists of Amazonian groups (cf. Feather 2010). We also encounter it in the writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who found the same adaptability in many indigenous peoples' treatment of myths, and who himself adapted for this phenomenon the term '*bricolage*'¹⁴¹: 'The set of the "bricoleur's" means', says Lévi-Strauss,

cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project... It is to be defined only by its potential use or, putting this another way and in the language of the 'bricoleur' himself, because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that 'they may always come in handy'. (1966: 17-8)

¹⁴¹ French: handicraft, DIY, or makeshift work.

This is also the way in which the projects brought to them by (N)GOs were treated by the Guaraní people of Kaami: not, as it were, 'in terms of a project' (that is, as means to a specific end), but as a collection of elements of potential use. If we look at the *comunarios*' approach to 'development' in this way, it becomes a lot less puzzling that these projects should be taken on more or less indiscriminately – nor, indeed, that they were often dropped by those who had taken them on when they were either seen not to be working out or people's labour and/or time was being engaged in something else.

Nor could the organisations' efforts to 'capacitate' the people be any more successful than they were as long as they remained in *karai* activists' hands: as expressed in the desire of the people of Cañón for Guaraní professionals, capacity building was not seen as something whose success would be marked by its eventual cessation but which, in the end, would be provided by Guaraní professionals for the people of their *comunidades* rather than by skilled outsiders. The idea that the kinds of skills and knowledge necessary to make any project into a sustainable one will be passed on from one person to the next and thus diffused throughout the *comunidades* is in theory a good one. However, it disregards certain aspects of how 'knowledge' is treated within Guaraní culture. For one, people can sometimes be jealous of the knowledge they possess, which often keeps them from passing it on to anyone else. When, for example, I enquired about the existence or not of a shaman (*ipaye*) in Cañón, my friend Lupe told me: 'There is no shaman. There is now only one old *abuelita* who knows about curing and those things. There used to be another one, but she recently died, and she was so jealous of her knowledge that she didn't even tell her own daughter the things she knew.' Whereas this kind of jealousy is possibly a phenomenon exclusive to shamanic and healing knowledge whose divulgence can be risky (see Chapter 11), there was a strong sense among the *comunarios* of Cañón that obtaining a formal education was an important career move. When people spoke of their desire for their own 'professionals', this quite literally referred to young people from among themselves who would go and obtain a formal education at a formally recognised institution.¹⁴² Ideally, not only the professionals would be Guaraní, but also the institutions educating them (such as the new indigenous university 'Apiaguaiki-tumpa' in Kuruyuki); however, failing this, the important thing was still that they held an officially recognised degree that not only qualified them as 'professionals' in terms of their skills but also in terms of their legitimacy to call themselves thus.

¹⁴² For a detailed study of Bolivian Guaraní people's relationship with the issue of education, see Gustafson (2009).

The idea of institutionalising knowledge that was often promoted by the organisations relies thus on the notion of a kind of ‘DIY knowledge’ that people will eventually pass on to each other independently of outside initiatives, whereas the Guaraní vision of having professionals from among themselves appeals to the possibility for young people to go and acquire specialist knowledge from the outside. Ironically, it is the former approach that is incompatible with the system of ‘*bricolage*’ because it relies on the institutionalisation of knowledge, whereas the Guaraní vision entails the education of individuals who would then constitute another addition to the *bricoleur’s* toolkit. This, however, is not something which to provide is within the organisations’ capacity. Again, we can see here how projects tend to be designed according to the limitations (in funds, time, personnel, knowledge etc.) of the organisations that try to implement them.

CIPCA is an interesting case here in that it publishes studies about the lives of the people with whom it works at the same time as it shapes them (and has done both these things for a long time), and one might feel inclined to argue that using one of their workshops as an example is a little unfair. On the other hand, however, while I have neither the material nor the space to engage in an in-depth critique of the internal workings of CIPCA at this point, and while CIPCA’s engagement with Bolivian *campesinos* over time has undoubtedly been a fruitful and often mutually beneficial one, it strikes me as particularly interesting that the same problems should occur here that also mar the endeavours of organisations which are a lot less concerned with their ‘clients’ history. This points towards the difficulty of reconciling the theoretical and applied sides of CIPCA’s mission of ‘investigating and promoting’ – a difficulty that has, of course, sparked a longstanding debate within the field of anthropology itself over what exactly is (or should be) the relationship between those engaged in the production of knowledge and those engaged in its application (cf. Ferguson 1997, Escobar 1997, Mosse 2005). The paradoxical situation of CIPCA, then, is one in which some of its elements attempt to reinforce indigenous people’s lifestyles (by conducting research into them as well as providing such pragmatic support as legal representation) at the same time as other elements seek to transform these lifestyles in order to better adapt them to the requirements of capitalist markets and Nation-State politics. Or, to put it the other way around: the paradox of the *comunidades* is that they are being impelled to change in order to be able to stay the same.

CHAPTER 9. BEAUTIFUL CULTURE, ‘SHITTY INDIANS’, OR WHAT HAVE THE GUARANÍ EVER DONE FOR ME?: KARAI TAKES ON ‘COMUNIDAD’

‘[I]s it not the case that people can hold alternative views simultaneously as well as being skeptical and credulous in quick succession?’ (Taussig 1987: 85)

As we have seen, ideas about what to do with Guaraní *comunidades* in Cordillera diverged even as far as the issue of ‘development’ was concerned: while *comunarios* had a vision of living ‘*tranquilo*’ in their *comunidades*, free to work on their own land and decide what to do with ‘their’ money independent of the need for outside specialists, development organisations working in the area came with plans to ‘capacitate’ the *comunarios* into entrepreneurs and turn the *comunidades* into successful ‘businesses’. This latter vision was one that was also of interest to the governmental ambitions of developing their indigenous population: to insert *comunarios* more firmly into the market economy, or in some cases even to make them into a market of their own by promoting the production of ‘cultural’ items that could be sold to locals and tourists alike. The idea of ‘culture’ was pervasive in the relationships between *comunidades* and State agencies not only in the context of economics but also in the realm of Cruceño *autonomista* identity politics. This chapter looks at *comunarios*’ and outsiders’ ideas about ‘culture’ and the way the production of ‘culture’ in the department of Santa Cruz was – rather than constituting a purely economic activity – bound up with colonial-type issues of hierarchy, ownership, and control.

One of the things that first captured my attention when I arrived in Cañón de Segura was the making of pottery by the local women. This was first organised by the women’s workgroup in early January of 2007 to produce ceramics that were to be sold at the festival being held annually on 28 January in remembrance of the Battle of Kuruyuki of 1892 (see Chapter 3). Passing a group of three women who were sitting together in the central building of the school one day, I noticed that one of them was busy mixing what looked like mud with a fine grey powder in a plastic tub, so I stopped to ask what they were doing. ‘We’re making clay for pottery’, one of them told me. ‘How interesting,’ I said, ‘And what is it you’re mixing?’ ‘*Barro y polvo* – mud and powder’, was the straightforward (and to me equally unsatisfying) answer.

Being unfamiliar with people's conversational conventions at the time, in which giving seemingly obvious answers to questions was a common feature,¹⁴³ I took this as a hint to leave them alone, and so it took me a while longer to find out the origins of the ingredients of the pottery clay: while the 'mud' had been extracted from a site in one of the hills in a neighbouring community, the powder had been made by grinding up the shards of a large vessel the *comunarios* had come across in a close-by part of the forest where the heavy rains of the rainy season had caused a minor landslide. While this discovery at first dealt a certain blow to my 'Enlightened' sensibilities, which had been conditioned into regarding ancient objects as something that needed to be preserved and investigated, the fact that pottery-making in Cañón involved this kind of 'recycling' of old pots became an interesting fact in itself the more I thought about it.

The women of Cañón had not been in the habit of producing pottery prior to the time at which my encounter with the potters took place in January 2007. If ever their ancestors had been potters (and the presence of several large *chicha* pots outside the *patrones'* old house opposite the *comunidad* suggested that they were), the technique had been lost sometime during the years of the captivity. Guaraní pottery, however, has become a sellable commodity that can be found in the market stalls of Camiri as well as the tourist shops of Santa Cruz, and thus when a woman was sent to Cañón from what was then the Bolivian Viceministry of Cultures¹⁴⁴ in order to initiate a pottery project, the women's workgroup leaped at the opportunity to invite doña Graciela, an old lady (*abuelita*) from the neighbouring community of Urundaiti, to come and teach them what she knew. She was the one whom I had encountered in the school that day mixing 'mud and powder' to prepare the mixture for the pottery clay, accompanied by two of the local women.

Making pottery was clearly a lot of fun for the women, and, as was usual with communal events, provided the setting for a lot of socialising, gossiping, and laughter, while the ever-present *poro* (*mate*) made its rounds among the project participants. Since I had only recently arrived in the community, I was pleased to be allowed to help with the polishing of a jug, which was done with a smooth black pebble that the women had picked up by the river in

¹⁴³ One frequent example was having people answer questions of where somewhere had gone with the rather vague words: 'Over there!', pointing in the indicated direction. This even happened once when I asked some children where a certain path was leading. As Peter Gow has remarked about imprecision in Piro narratives: one either knows where 'over there' refers to, or it doesn't matter to one in the first place (1995: 51).

¹⁴⁴ Since February 2008 this ministry has been known as the Ministry of Cultures.

Camiri, and to be included in their *poro* round. I even learned a new word on the occasion: listening attentively in order to catch something of the conversation, I noticed that one particular word, which sounded like '*jeikua*', was being repeated over and over, followed by a lot of laughter, as one of the women held up a small pot that had just been fired. When I asked what *jeikua* meant, this caused another burst of laughter, until finally someone explained to me, 'It's a vulgar word, it means "arse"; she's saying that the little arse of this pot has got burned.' Notwithstanding such minor accidents, by the end of the pottery session the women had produced a good number of pots, flowerpots, jugs, plates, *hüitimimeros* (pots to make *hüiti*, a form of maize cake) and *yerberos* (vessels for keeping *yerba mate* and sugar), which they proudly presented to the Viceministry's 'Culture Lady' at her next visit. Culture Lady was impressed, but had suggestions for improvement: out of her governmental 4x4, she produced an illustrated volume of pottery styles of the world, some of the pages of which she had marked for the women's reference. There were pictures in it of European, Chinese, and Indian pottery of the Neolithic eras, with captions like: 'From the period when the most beautiful pottery was produced in Europe'.

The Culture Lady pointed out one pot in particular, which she told the women was similar to theirs. I asked whether it was Guaraní and she said that it was not, but very similar, and that she was showing the women these things so they could get ideas of how to make their pottery more marketable. The women listened, looked, and nodded politely – and unperturbedly continued to make their pottery the way *abuelita* Graciela was teaching them. This rejection of Culture Lady's suggestions happened matter-of-factly and did not seem to involve any particular aversion against foreign techniques *per se*. Apart from the traditionally used red and white paints derived from the ground particles of a particular stone (*ita pñta*) and white clay respectively, there were several tubes of acrylic paint in different colours which the women used quite happily to paint their finished pots. When I lamented the lack of any more white paint to put the finishing touches to the jar I had made, the response was, 'Just use the green – this paint goes white during firing anyway.' The idea of making innovations to the production process thus seemed to be acceptable – as long as they fit into their ideas about the way things should be done, and the authority to be followed in this respect was clearly *doña* Graciela rather than Culture Lady.

From the way the people in my fieldwork community used the Spanish word for 'culture' (*cultura*), I got the impression that there were in fact at least two different ways in which it

was being applied. One was more or less the Spanish equivalent of the Guaraní concept of *ñande reko*, meaning ‘our way of being’. This was the way I often heard people talk about ‘our culture’ or ‘Guaraní culture’ in fiestas, or even just visiting them in their *oka*. ‘Isn’t our culture beautiful!’, or, ‘When you leave, you will tell everyone in your home about the beautiful Guaraní culture,’ were typical phrases that I got to hear on such occasions. This started with my very first communal event, the feast described in the Introduction, which had been prepared in honour of the Camiri mayor who had come to lend an official touch to the anniversary of the community’s cattle project, which had been sponsored by the municipal government and which was obviously going well. At one point during the meal, a middle-aged man sat next to me and started asking me questions about myself – where I was from, what my country was like, and what my purpose was in coming to Cañón. I told him I was doing an investigation into life in the community for my thesis, at which he told me that there had been a few investigators before me, none of whom, however, had stayed in the community for any length of time. Rather, he said, they would come during the day to visit the houses and ask people questions, then leave again to go back to Camiri for the night. ‘The first question they used to always ask us,’ he said, ‘was whether our culture was important to us.’ ‘And what do you tell them?’ I asked. ‘We tell them, very important!’ he replied. When I tried to find out, however, what exactly he meant by ‘culture’, I did not succeed in getting any kind of clear answer. It only dawned on me after a while that there simply was no clear answer to this question – the kind of ‘culture’ to which people would refer when they said ‘our culture’, or ‘Guaraní culture’, was not anything that could be put in words, but a way of living, *their* way of living, which was Guaraní because they were Guaraní, and which set them apart from other people because they wanted it that way.¹⁴⁵

The other way in which people used *cultura* was as more or less a synonym of *artesanía* (craftsmanship), that is, to talk about what could be translated as ‘material culture’, and this

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ingold (1994: 330): ‘... culture is not something that we can ever expect to encounter “on the ground”. What we find are people whose lives take them on a journey through space and time in environments that seem to them to be full of significance, who use both words and material artefacts to get things done and to communicate with others, and who, in their talk, endlessly spin metaphors so as to weave labyrinthine and ever-expanding networks of symbolic equivalence. What we do *not* find are neatly bounded and mutually exclusive bodies of thought and custom, perfectly shared by all who subscribe to them, and in which their lives and works are fully encapsulated... The isolated culture has been revealed as a figment of the Western anthropological imagination. It might be more realistic, then, to say that people *live culturally* rather than that they *live in cultures*.’

was the kind of ‘culture’ the Culture Lady had come to promote. Consisting of objects rather than an elusive ‘way of being’ that was hard to put into words but had to be experienced instead, this kind of culture could be promoted in the same sense as it could be consumed: you could tell people to ‘produce’ it. For one, reified culture is a valuable commodity for indigenous people because it is marketable and people buy it (cf. Clifford 1988). This is basically the idea behind projects such as Culture Lady’s; however, more importantly, these kinds of projects also reveal an equation of indigenous people with ‘culture’ that is present in the attitudes of the Bolivian population in general. People like to dress their children up in indigenous dress on certain national holidays and decorate restaurants and hotel lobbies with items reminiscent of and made by indigenous people, such as the pots that the women of Cañón de Segura were making, while simultaneously rejecting the way of being about which the *comunarios* had talked with such pride as inferior and undesirable. Tangible, manageable culture like pottery, weavings, jewellery, or woodcarvings is thus what makes indigenous culture into Bolivian culture in the eyes of the self-proclaimed non-indigenous population, an attitude which indigenous people are well aware of and have learned to use to their advantage in different ways.¹⁴⁶

Producing cultural items, then, is what indigenous people are good for in the eyes of non-indigenous people, thus if one wants to promote their economic situation one has to promote culture. This plays into a further dimension of the importance of material culture; that is, the way in which producing cultural items affirms, and indeed confirms, indigenous people’s identities as indigenous people. This in turn is useful in a setting where the possibility of maintaining one’s culture as a ‘way of being’ depends on the recognition of one’s indigenous status by such institutions as State authorities and NGOs.¹⁴⁷ The use of the shards of the old burial urns by the women of Cañón in their own pottery could, in this sense, be seen as a reproduction, a kind of ‘cloning’, of the culture of the ancient people which would come back to life in a new yet no less ‘authentic’ or legitimate form.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ See Conklin (1997) and Frankland (2001) for discussions of more overtly ‘strategically essentialist’ self-representations of indigenous groups in Brazil and Uganda.

¹⁴⁷ For a discussion of Ecuadorean and Bolivian indigenous organisations’ need to demonstrate cultural ‘authenticity’ in order to achieve ‘representativeness’ in the eyes of national and international institutions, see Lucero (2006).

¹⁴⁸ For an exploration of changing ideas pertaining to the ‘authenticity’ of indigenous material culture and the ways in which they affect indigenous people, see Clifford (1988).

The Cañón women's experience of pottery-making involved the acquisition of a 'traditional' skill which they, however, experienced as new, utilising material that had been produced by Guaraní people who had lived and died in the area a long time before them and with whom they claimed no kinship other than the acknowledgment of their socio-cultural similarity (see Chapter 11). The incorporation of the ancient materials was thus at the same time an incorporation of Guaraní 'culture', something that the old people were thought to have had aplenty but which contemporary Guaraní people were often said to be lacking since the proclaimed 'death' of their society following the Battle of Kuruyuki. The pottery itself was, in turn, produced to be sold at an event that was equally made up of elements belonging to remote Guaraní history, assembled in such a way as to serve a particular purpose at a particular point in time, where it would function as the reified proof that Guaraní culture was in fact alive and kicking. When the Bolivian President Evo Morales finally made an appearance at the Kuruyuki festival in 2008, one of the presents he was given by his Guaraní hosts was a pot, presented to him by a smiling woman in traditional attire. Both historical and cultural practice thus became tools for reasserting and making visible a specific sense of identity, of a 'Guaraníness' that had not previously existed in this form but which was also not constructed out of nothingness – in short, a *reinvention* of the self, tailored to the specific circumstances of the time.

To complicate matters a little, however, borrowing from the Guaraní also proved a useful strategy for Camireños as well as Santa Cruz *autonomistas* to create an identity for themselves that was a) identifiably 'Camba' and b) able to convey their objective of gaining more independence from La Paz. People's use of the word 'Camba' had confused me at first because of its double significance of 'person from Santa Cruz (Department)' (in which case it was often used in opposition to 'Colla', meaning 'person from the highlands'), and 'Guaraní person' (in which case the usage became derogatory).¹⁴⁹ As it turned out, 'Camba' was a term that had only fairly recently been adopted by the Cruceño intelligentsia to give expression to a shift in the Cruceños' popular narrative that occurred after the 1952 Revolution and gained momentum with the following intensification in the opposition between highlands and *oriente* (Plata 2008: 135-6). This shift, intended to increase the Cruceños' legitimacy as a

¹⁴⁹ To avoid confusion, I am using the spelling 'Camba' when referring to the idealised Cruceño stereotype and '*camba*' when referring to the term in its derogatory usage to denote 'Guaraní person'.

region with an identity of its own, involved the reframing of Cruceño identity – which had been defined in terms of a ‘pure’ Spanish ancestry (Plata 2008: 134-5) – in terms of a mestizaje that was supposedly superior to that which had occurred in the highlands (Plata 2008: 136).¹⁵⁰ The suggestion was, for one, that the Cruceño Cambas combined in themselves all the best attributes of the races that constituted them while the Collas had inherited all the negative qualities of theirs (Plata 2008: 136); and further, that the Cruceños’ indigenous people who were now part of their identity were better than the highland ones in the first place. The latter point was demonstrated by reference to (and exaggeration of) the fearsomeness and bravery of the Guaraní’s ‘Chiriguano’ ancestors (Plata 2008: 137-9).

During my fieldwork, an event in which the use of Guaraní cultural elements in local and regional (identity) politics was particularly visible was the ‘Day of Camireño Tradition’¹⁵¹ of 2007. The spectacle started in the morning with dancing around the plaza. A large group of young people in colourful *tipois* and white shirts, and some even with masks on, danced the so-called ‘*arete guasu*’.¹⁵² As I found out later, they were the dance troupe from the Guaraní *comunidad* of Itanambikua (located at the outskirts of Camiri) that had earned some renown within the region for its elaborate performances. The dancers came accompanied by two large figures in the shape of the mythical jaguar and bull (see Chapter 5) that were carried by several people and moved about like Chinese dragons. At the lower end of the plaza, some of the carnival fraternities were getting ready to march, among them a delegation from the Capitanía Kaami. The Prefecture was represented as well, by a contingent of people sporting banners and sombrero sleeves in green and white, the colours of the Department of Santa Cruz. They revealed a ‘monument’ in the plaza that consisted of a stele with AUTONOMÍA

¹⁵⁰ See, e.g., (Mercado Chávez 2011: 145-6): ‘The *criollo* and *mestizo* society [of the Andes], because of the degrading sociological situation and the aggressiveness of the environment [*naturaleza*], is constituted by two-faced individuals of traitorous, false, and hypocritical qualities... The aggression of these two-faced individuals of the Andean home country is carried forward against the *mestizo* nation and cosmopolitan ethnic group [made up] of Spanish and other peoples such as the Tupi-Guaraní... Because our cosmopolitan society is [a] welcoming [one] for its inclusion, without any discrimination of race and culture, of people from all over the world, and moreover developed under the hospitable influence of the descendants of the great autochthonous nation of the Tupi-Guaraní peoples. Also, for having lived since [the time of] our ancestors in balance with the benignity of nature itself, because the nation of the plains and the Chiriguano Cordillera to which we are referring was populated by savage tribes who lived free, taking advantage of the goodnesses of nature and its ecology’.

¹⁵¹ *Día de la tradición camireña*; a holiday commemorating the founding of Camiri in 1935 that is celebrated every first Sunday in November.

¹⁵² *Tipoi* are traditional women’s dresses of the Guaraní. They are nowadays mostly worn on special occasions. ‘*Arete guasu*’ is Guaraní for ‘big fiesta’, the biggest Guaraní festival of the year that was traditionally celebrated at the time of maize harvest and has since become conflated with the celebration of carnival. Camireños use the phrase metonymically to refer to a Guaraní-derived dance that is done with one slow step followed by two fast ones which is often danced in a circle at fiestas.

written down its side and danced round it with a group of beauty queens. There was also a group of traditionally dressed Guaraní from Tentayapi who posed in front of the monument for pictures, in a style reminiscent of old photographs from a couple of centuries ago.

This sudden burst into public visibility of Guaraní people as the celebrated bearers of ‘culture’ disrupted their otherwise low-key presence in Camiri everyday life. A similar observation about the Camireño ‘Day of Tradition’ has been made by Ana María Lema, who quotes an informant as saying, ‘One day each year, those who hate the Guaraní dress in *tipoy*, they put sandals on and walk with their *cambas* [in the sense of ‘Guaraní person’] by their side playing their drums; but for the rest of the year, they keep treating them badly’ (2001: 222). However, even in this exceptional celebration of Guaraní-ness the signs of an underlying inequality shone through. The scene that unfolded around the monument is telling: noisy *autonomía* activists waving flags and dancing round their idol while next to them the bearers of culture remain static and silent. The hierarchy implicit in the relationship between the two groups finds its expression in the Cruceño colours displayed by the *autonomistas*:

As Cruceños learn in school, green evokes natural abundance, the rural and frontier riches of the region. White symbolizes purity (*la pureza del linaje*) and nobility (*hidalguía*), a rather transparent invocation of racial distinction inherited from Spanish colonialism... these symbols are encapsulated in representations of the ideal Cruceño-Camba bodies, whether that of virile men or ‘beautiful’ women, all implicitly ‘white’ in relation to Andean Bolivia and local indigenous peoples. (Gustafson 2006: 356)

If Cruceño-Camba bodies encapsulate the ‘white’ of the flag, Guaraní *camba* bodies encapsulate the ‘green’ in that they belong within the realm of rural and frontier resources to be ‘harvested’ by their ‘white’ counterparts (as producers of culture and workers on haciendas).¹⁵³ What appears as a celebration of Guaraní culture is thus really an appropriation, as the celebration only takes place within the context of Camireño and Cruceño self-promotion.

What was happening at this event, then, was a conflation on various levels. For one, elements of the *arete*, the source of the reproduction of the Guaraní *teko* par excellence, appeared out

¹⁵³ Cf. Taussig (1987: 23): ‘[The situation at the Putumayo rubber frontier in the early 20th century] seems to have been a situation in which rights to Indians were similar to rights to farm the forest. The Indians were there for the taking... The first white to get into one of the large communal houses with perhaps upwards of one hundred Indians and press trade goods upon them brought to fruition his “rights of conquest”.’

of context in a setting that allowed them to be reframed in terms of *cultura* in the sense of cultural objects or objectifications. Secondly, this ‘Guaraní culture’ was being appropriated as part of ‘Camireño culture’, and as such recruited in the Camireños’ endeavour to create a distinctive identity for themselves. A popular slogan relating to the subject that often found itself reproduced on T-shirts was, ‘*Ni cambia, ni colla, ni chapaco – camireño, carajo!*’ (‘Not Camba [in the sense of Cruceño], nor Colla [= highland Bolivian], nor Chapaco [= person from Tarija] – Camireño, dammit!’). The trouble Camireños have with the question of identity is rooted in the fact that Camiri has experienced extensive in-migration from all over Bolivia since it gained importance as a gas-producing town in the first half of the 20th century. While the population’s loyalties were thus to some degree divided, general consensus had it that Camiri was part of the Chaqueño cultural realm,¹⁵⁴ whose symbolism – most notably the use of a lot of leather in ‘traditional’ clothing and arts and crafts – was closely associated with the activities of cattle breeding (which had retained its status as a highly desirable occupation) and a romanticised image of country life. As both country dwellers and ex-peons of the local landowning classes, the Guaraní and their culture fit right into this picture (cf. Gustafson 2006), but only in their capacity of silent extras, or even – like the delegation from Tentayapi posing before the *autonomía* monument – picturesque props.¹⁵⁵ There was no space in the Camireño popular imagination for Guaraní people as speaking subjects (even though with the growing importance of the APG their assumption of this position had long since become a political reality).¹⁵⁶

However, with the revelation of the *autonomía* monument Guaraní culture was also given a political significance that marked it out more generally as ‘Camba’ culture, and which placed it at the heart of the Cruceño *autonomista* project. This had been gaining in fervour since my arrival in Bolivia in June 2006, when displays of pro-autonomy propaganda in Santa Cruz had dominated the city centre in the weeks prior to the election of the Constituent Assembly

¹⁵⁴ Geographically speaking, Camiri is in fact located on the outskirts of the Chaco region, between the eastern foothills of the Andes and the River Parapetí.

¹⁵⁵ This reflects what Bret Gustafson, writing about Santa Cruz, has called the urban elite’s ‘gendered and raced codes for the legitimate occupation of public space’ (2006: 372).

¹⁵⁶ See also Gustafson (2009: 63): ‘For karai the region is imagined as one of centers of *cristeros* or *blancos* and peripheries of rural *campesinos* (derogatory, Indians, Guaraní). Karai centers extract labor, agricultural commodities, and cultural symbols from the Guaraní periphery. In this spatial template, the *campesino* subject must remain in its place and under control. *Campesinos* may only enter karai spaces as silent labourers or spectators.’

and the concurrent autonomy referendum. Following the trend in the departmental capital, by the time I left my field site in September 2008 Camiri was in a regular *autonomía* frenzy that had been building up amidst tensions caused by Evo Morales's land redistribution policies (see Chapter 10) and his handling of the country's petroleum production. While people were generally happy with the nationalisation of the industry, Evo's policies had not gone far enough for them. Especially the continued dominance of transnational concerns in the exploitation of the local gas deposits and the redistribution of the IDH (Direct Hydrocarbons Tax, a tax on oil and gas production created by the Hydrocarbon Law 3058 in 2005) caused a great deal of upheaval among the local population, who would rather have seen the revenue created by the IDH come back to the departmental government than be spent on funding universities, land reform, and old people's pensions, and – most crucially – subsidising the non-gas producing departments of Bolivia.

In August 2008, I listened to a meeting of one of Camiri's Civic Committees. Two such committees existed as a result of a split between government-loyal and *autonomista* factions which had occurred over petroleum-related matters sometime in April of that year. Among other matters, the possibility of joining the upcoming hunger strike that had been announced by the president of the civic committee of Santa Cruz, Branco Marinkovic, in protest against the redistribution of the IDH was discussed, and tempers were flaring. Standing at the back of the room, I noticed the T-shirt that a woman in front of me was wearing, which sported anti-Evo and pro-*autonomista* slogans ('No MAS Evo, Rubén es autonomía'¹⁵⁷). When she turned around, I saw that the front was adorned by a Guaraní design above which stood the word: 'Iyambae'.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Iyambae is the name of an old and powerful family in the Isozo. However, because of its symbolic capacity (literally translated, it means 'without master'), *iyambae* has also become one of the favourite catchphrases of the APG which is presented, depending on the context, as one of the characteristics of Guaraní-ness or as an ideal to be achieved in future.¹⁵⁸ During the time of my fieldwork, *iyambae* was also often used to designate indigenous autonomy, for which the APG was campaigning at the time:

¹⁵⁷ The first part of the slogan is a wordplay on the name of Evo Morales's party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) and translates as 'No more Evo'. The second part ('Rubén is autonomy') refers to the Prefect of Santa Cruz, Rubén Costas, who was one of the most fervent proponents of the idea of departmental autonomy.

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Caballero Espinoza (2008: 8): 'In our historical context, we have always thought of the Iyambae, that is... autonomy... an autonomy to be able to manage our own affairs by ourselves, and it has been thanks to

The Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG) poses indigenous autonomy as a strategy founded on the principle of *Iyambae* (to be free... without master) which implies the dismantling of the colonising powers and the reconstruction of the State. (Caballero Espinoza 2008: 19)

‘Indigenous *originaria campesina* autonomy’ was finally ratified in Chapter VII, Articles 289-296 of the new Constitution of 2009, where it is described as ‘the self-government as the exercise of free determination of the indigenous *originaria campesino* nations and peoples, whose population shares their own territory, culture, history, languages and juridical, political, social, and economic organisations or institutions’ (Article 289). The next article specifies ‘ancestral territories, currently inhabited by those peoples and nations, and the willingness of the population’ (Article 290) as the basis for the conformation of indigenous autonomy in any one municipality.

However, opinions in Bolivia vary on what should count as an ancestral territory and who should count as an indigenous person (cf. Albó 2008, Toranzo Roca 2008, Zavaleta Reyes 2008). Shortly before leaving the field, I came across a new artifice devised to deny the Guaraní any land rights altogether on the grounds of their migratory past. As one employee of the municipality of Camiri put it, ‘There is something you should know about your friends, the Guaraní. According to a very renowned historian, they only got here very shortly before the Spanish, so they are not *originarios* of this region, which, according to the new Constitution, means that they also have no legal basis for the land claims they are making.’ Notwithstanding the fact that he was wrong (Article 30 of the Constitution defines *pueblos originarios*¹⁵⁹ as ‘any human collectivity that shares a cultural identity, language, historical tradition, institutions, territoriality, and world view whose existence is *prior to the Spanish colonial invasion*’; my emphasis), by this sleight of hand the Guaraní’s own strategy of using history as a tool in their struggle for land rights was turned against them in the eyes of the local government and population. The municipal employee, whom I had previously encountered various times at fiestas held by the Kaami leadership with whom he had been

the effort of our grandfathers, of our *capitanes*, that a project has been set up, a statute is set up, a PDDI [*Plan de Desarrollo del Distrito Indígena*, i.e., development plan of the indigenous district] is set up, and then on this base it has been possible to keep working...’

¹⁵⁹ The term *originario* has its roots in the Andes of the colonial era, when forced labour obligations (*mita*) caused many indigenous people to escape from their communities and settle on the lands of others. These so-called ‘*forasteros*’ were opposed to the ‘*originarios*’ who remained in their home communities (*comunidades de origen*) (Chocano Mena 2000: 181). Today, the word is often used interchangeably with *indígena*.

very friendly, had phrased this opinion in a way that made it sound simply informative. However, in other cases expressions of the same idea were a lot more hostile:

The Guaraní are invaders of the northern Chaco region... they arrived some 100 or 200 years before the Spanish invaders; this proves and certifies that they are neither autochthonous nor *originarios* of the BOLIVIAN NORTHERN CHACO... how is it possible that the departmental authorities of Camiri permit that this part of "CORDILLERA" PROVINCE is DECLARED GUARANI TERRITORY... Where agricultural and cattle producers will be damaged; this will bring about fatal consequences of a fight to the last, there will be confrontations and even deaths... (Undated document 'For the Attention of the People of Camiri and the Local and National Authorities', signed 'The Defenders of the Chaco Region'.)

Apart from the explicit aggression, what is striking in this document is the way of reasoning that it proposes: rather than an affirmation of *one's own* rights (WE have the right to live here because...) as was the case with the *comunarios* of Cañón, this claim works on the basis of a negation of the *other's* rights (YOU DON'T have the right to live here because...).

The assumption implicit in the above examples that the presumed non-existence of the Guaraní's rights to the land automatically confirms those of any *karai* with a similar claim is indicative of an attitude that was widespread among the Camireño and Cruceño populations, and which I would call colonial.¹⁶⁰ It is the same attitude that makes people celebrate Guaraní culture at the same time as looking down on the people who produce it, and it is the same attitude that made *autonomía* campaigners print 'iyambae' on their T-shirts when what they were campaigning for had nothing to do with the kind of autonomy the Guaraní had in mind. This seems paradoxical at first, considering that in the one instance the Guaraní's indigenous status was celebrated as a source of identity-bestowing 'culture' whereas in the other it was denied as a fraudulent ruse to lay claim to lands to which they were not entitled. However, the contradiction only exists on a semantic level: the point is simply that indigenous people have a place in *karai* society only as long as they fulfil their supposed functions vis-à-vis the *karai*. Failing this, they forfeit their *raison d'être* as indigenous people, in which case it is up to the *karai* to take that status away from them and reclassify them as 'invaders'. In other words, indigenous people are free to produce culture and other useful products (for the benefit of the *karai*) as long as this does not interfere with *karai* interests. This attitude was

¹⁶⁰ Cf, Gustafson (2006: 373): '[T]he Cruceño model [of 'culture'] relies on a colonial understanding of identity as racial hierarchy, and of polity as a corporatist spatial and social order reliant on heavy-handed authority with state-like sovereignty and administrative power (over education, health care, policing, land tenure, natural resources) centralized in the hands of regional elites.'

summed up rather well in the remark of a Camireña friend's brother-in-law with whom I found myself in a drunken argument about Guaraní work ethics one night: 'I'm not a racist,' he started, 'but – what I wanna know is, what have the Guaraní ever done for me?'

This idea that Guaraní people's purpose in life was to do something for the *karai* was one which I encountered over and over when speaking with friends and acquaintances in Camiri and Santa Cruz about my work. Further, instances of Guaraní people's refusal to fit this designated role were seen as something reprehensible. Illustrations of the supposed problems that existed between *karai* and Guaraní were often formulaic. One popular example was, 'Today, when you say to a Guaraní woman, "You can work for me, you can wash my clothes", she'll tell you, "No, *you* can wash *my* clothes".' This statement is crushing in its simplicity: there is no need to spell out why the Guaraní woman's response is outrageous because her role in life (that is, as domestic worker of a *karai* woman) is implicit in her ethnicity. Her suggestion that the *karai* woman should work for her instead thus constitutes an upsetting of what is perceived as the natural order of things, and it implies that she is obstinate, lazy, or in fact too well-off to know her place in life, all options that were seen as equally deplorable.

Karai in Camiri sometimes resented the wealth which they saw NGOs as pouring into the *comunidades* because it was a widely held opinion that any investment in them was a waste of money. As another standard example had it: 'The *comunidades* have all this money from abroad nowadays, they are better off than us (*karai*), but the people in the country are very lazy, they don't work. I myself have seen the tractors standing idle in [insert name of a *comunidad*].' The resentment expressed in such statements exposes the Guaraní's situation as a Catch-22: on the one hand, they are to be resented because of the easy money they are making through NGO funding. On the other hand, however, they are also to be resented because of their unworthiness of this money.¹⁶¹ Again, the implication is that really, Guaraní

¹⁶¹ Kathleen Lowrey has noted very similar attitudes towards Guaraní people among non-Guaraní Paraguayans: '[T]he Guaraní who live in the Paraguayan Chaco generally enjoy higher incomes than their Bolivian counterparts: their houses are made of bricks instead of mud, many families own one or more motorcycles, [and] it is equally common to have a TV... Such possessions would be unthinkable for the great majority of the Bolivian Guaraní, as also for a majority of the other indigenous groups of the Paraguayan Chaco. Because of this, one commentary that is often heard from the non-indigenous residents of the area is that "the Western Guaraní don't seem to be indigenous", or even more critically, that they "aren't" indigenous. This last comment

people should be not only diligent but also poor. And in particular, they should be poorer than *karai* people, for whom they should – ideally – be working in order to make a living.

Whenever I argued with someone against such assertions of Guaraní people's laziness, the answer I ultimately tended to get was that I, as a foreigner, simply did not know what I was talking about. Despite the fact that those Camireño friends who were the most convinced that 'my *cambas*' were a bunch of loafers ('*unos flojos*') never went to the *comunidades* themselves, they were insistent that they knew better what was happening in them because it was 'their people' they were talking about.

Consider, for example, this short exchange with my friend Matilde from Camiri:

M: My poor cousin is having a hard time in Spain.¹⁶² She says the people there are very racist.

I: Ah well, unfortunately there are racist people everywhere. Bolivians, too, can be quite racist.

M (slightly taken aback): What? Are you saying that anyone has been racist towards you?

I: No, not towards me, but people are always saying, 'This shitty Indian!' and such things.

M (laughing): But that's different – that's our people!

I (also laughing): Oh, that's alright then, is it?

Despite the lightness of the tone here, the issue is a serious one. Words like *indio* ('Indian') in the *oriente* today almost come with the qualification *de mierda* ('shitty') inbuilt. Nonetheless, Matilde's jocular admission of her racist attitudes was in fact a rarity, as most people would vigorously deny any such accusations. In their opinion, racism did not enter into it since what they were stating was simply facts. While there was thus a certain acknowledgement of a shared nationality and/or regional identity in the notion of 'our people', it also expressed an idea of ownership when applied to indigenous people.

is related to the fact that nowadays being "indigenous" can bring with it certain advantages, advantages from which some critics think the Western Guaraní should not benefit' (2007: 3).

¹⁶² Spain has, since the early years of the 21st century, grown in importance as a destination for economic migration from Bolivia. It has thereby partly replaced more traditional destinations such as Argentina and the US, a shift that is possibly due to a combination of economic crisis in Argentina and difficulties with language and visa requirements in entering the US. Until 2007, Bolivians could enter Spain without a visa (Fernández García 2009).

I was given a prime example of just how considerable people's ability to 'double-think' in this way was when I stayed with the family of a *karai* friend on a visit to Santa Cruz for a few days. Relatively wealthy upper middle class and of a fair complexion, this family embodied many of the Cruceños' favourite virtues. On this particular visit, doña Mina, a friend of my friend's mother's from Camiri, also happened to be visiting, and when the two women were talking at night a lot of comments were made about the lazy people in the country. Her father, Mina told me, had been very poor when he was little but had decided of his own free will to leave his village in the country and – only a child of 11 or 12 – had gone to the city all on his own, where he worked his way up to a position of some prosperity. So in her opinion, there was no excuse for poor people to be poor, and moreover, all the talk of people still living in slavery on certain haciendas was rubbish – if one wanted something, one could go and get it, no matter what the circumstances. I disagreed, suggesting that not everyone was born with the same chances and dispositions, but was silenced with the argument that people here knew much better what they were talking about than I.

The same evening, my friend's mother doña Mercedes told us how she had gone to Argentina once and been confronted with some racist attitudes towards the 'Indian' Bolivians there. In response to this, she had proclaimed how she herself was just as 'Indian' as the rest of Bolivia, which, however, was really the wrong word anyway, 'Indian' being a misnomer that had resulted from Columbus's mistake about where he had landed; so really if they wanted to call her anything, it would have to be 'Guaraní' – and yes, she was Guaraní and proud of it. From this, she and Mina somehow got into a discussion of the shortcomings of Evo, this *indio de mierda*, and how the Collas in general were ruining Santa Cruz, which used to be such a clean and liveable city before migrants had arrived from the highlands and, sadly, had taught the locals their dirty habits instead of picking up the proper Camba ways. This negative depiction of the 'Collas' echoes the Cruceño elite's sense of a threat that is aesthetic as well as political: 'Regionalists see urban Andeans as a spatialized aesthetic threat to Cruceño order and beauty' (Gustafson 2006: 362), and further, 'the discourse against Andean "avasallamiento" invokes racial fear and disgust by linking it to the wider MAS expansion in the country, which is viewed as a threat against "Cruceño" resources' (2006: 363).

On a different occasion, I overheard a conversation which doña Mercedes was having with another friend, in which she criticised the laziness of their domestic worker, a Guaraní girl nicknamed 'Alambrito'. As it turned out, Alambrito, who had lived with the family since she

was a young girl, had a daughter by Mercedes's brother, whom she was raising with the support of the family since the father showed no interest in looking after them. Mercedes's complaint was that Alambrito had sometimes used to act like the 'mistress of the house', but she had told her off for that, pointing out that, 'You are no relation of mine, and just because you've had my brother's child doesn't make you one either.'

The above examples give us a hint of the complexities involved in inter-ethnic relations in the *oriente*. For one, from a *karai* perspective, Guaraní identities were up for the taking whenever it was strategically convenient for them (for example, to set them apart from 'racist' Argentines or 'dirty' Collas). The same rules, however, did not apply in the opposite case, and although my friend would refer to Alambrito's child as her 'little sister', Alambrito herself would always remain an outsider to the family because of her perceived inferiority. While poverty was thus something that was seen as superable, ethnicity was not, and while in reality people in Bolivia switch between ethnic identities all the time (cf. Schwartz and Salomon 1999, De la Cadena 1995), being perceived as belonging to any particular ethnic group came with a series of expectations attached to it that blurred the boundaries between 'innate' qualities (Guaraní are lazy) and learned behaviours (Collas are dirty). As my friend once told me, 'Alambrito has already forgotten her heritage; she doesn't speak Guaraní anymore', completely bypassing the fact that, as a *criada*¹⁶³ of the house, Alambrito had been surrounded by monolingual Spanish speakers from an early age and thus had never really had the opportunity to practice her 'native' language in the first place. In the eyes of her employers, Alambrito's Guaraní-ness was an established fact, and any divergence from the behaviour which they consequently expected of her was easily put down to acculturation rather than sparking any suspicion that their own assumptions might be mistaken.

In short, *karai* people in the *oriente* claimed a knowledge of 'their' indigenous people that was more complete and authoritative than those people's knowledge of themselves. These claims, which were rarely based on first-hand experiences but often drew on the supposed experiences of third parties (such as 'Skinny Guy's' story recounted in Chapter 2) or on

¹⁶³ Spanish: maid. The term has a double meaning in Latin America, where the practice of taking in children from poor (often indigenous) families and raising them (Spanish: *criar*) in return for their labour is widespread (cf. Ortiz 2009: 20).

superficial eyewitness accounts (tractors standing idle in such-and-such a *comunidad* as proof that all Guaraní people are lazy), formed a narrative tradition that constantly reaffirmed itself through repetition and whose sole requirement for verification was that those partaking in it belonged to the right ethnic and social category. The setup was thus one in which Guaraní people's opinions even about themselves did not need to be listened to because they could only either conform to those of the *karai* or be simply wrong. In the eyes of a large part of *karai* society, Guaraní people were there to produce and provide (culture and labour) but not to own (land, the labour of others, the products of their own efforts). Ownership was a privilege of the *karai*, and attempts by Guaraní people to claim this privilege for themselves was often met with objection or even hostility, especially when the claims of the latter were seen to impinge on those of the former. To sum it up, it could be said that *karai* 'Camba' identity and culture sought to *contain* Guaraní 'camba' identity and culture, both in the sense of 'encompassing' or 'incorporating' its products (*cultura*) as well as in the sense of 'keeping in check' the lives of the people who produced it (*ñande reko*).

CHAPTER 10. CHANGING ALLIANCES: THE ELUSIVE ‘POSITION’ OF GUARANÍ COMUNIDADES WITHIN LOCAL AND REGIONAL POLITICS

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, the Guaraní featured in the daily lives of many Camireños as a silent presence at best. However, one brief interruption to this trend came in Rubén Costas’s election campaign preceding the recall referendum (*referéndum revocatorio*) called by President Evo Morales in August 2008. A main feature of the *autonomistas*’ propaganda, Guaraní people were suddenly brought into the Camireños’ public consciousness as ‘speaking subjects’. However, events earlier the same year expose these appearances of Guaraní people in the service of the Prefecture, if not as political ventriloquism then at least as ideological filtration. During these events, the ‘colonial’ attitude towards indigenous people that was common among the *karai* populations of the region (especially the landowning classes; see previous chapter) manifested itself in perpetrations of physical violence in response to attempts by the MAS government and the APG to carry out a long-overdue inspection of haciendas in the contested zone of Alto Parapetí. This chapter looks more closely at the infiltration of municipal and departmental politics into local social configurations. The consequences of the activation of these links during a time of national crisis challenge the idea of a decentralisation of power to the municipal level as envisaged by the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) of 1994, and further demonstrate the inherent instability of the alliances between Guaraní organisations and local governments that had been brought about by this decentralisation. This instability makes it difficult to give any account of how the community of Cañón de Segura ‘fits’ into a broader politics, which leads us to question the extent to which indigenous communities can be *positioned* in this political landscape.

The recall referendum, the first of its kind ever to be held in Bolivia, in which Bolivians were asked to either confirm or reject the mandates of the President of the Republic and eight of the nine departmental prefects,¹⁶⁴ was a response to the increasing cries for autonomy coming from the *media luna* departments. Beginning with Santa Cruz the previous December, these departments had drawn up their own ‘autonomic statutes’, declarations of their political self-determination within the Bolivian state. These were, however, met with rejection by the National Electoral Court, which declared them unconstitutional (Assies 2011: 109), as well as

¹⁶⁴ The prefect of Chuquisaca Department, Savina Cuellar, had only been elected in June of the same year and was therefore exempt from the referendum.

wide-ranging international disapproval. The ballot paper used in the referendum contained two questions, arranged one below the other:

‘Do you agree with the continuation of the process of change led by President Evo Morales Ayma and Vice President Álvaro García Linera?’

and

‘Do you agree with the continuation of the politics, actions, and management of the Prefect of the Department?’

Each of these questions then offered the options of answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’ by ticking the relevant box.

Campaigning was fierce on both sides, as well as slightly misleading: since at least in Santa Cruz the MAS stood in opposition to the Prefecture, and the Prefecture of Rubén Costas was certainly opposed to the government of Evo Morales, neither party restricted their campaigns to advertising their own cause but took the opportunity to campaign against the opposition at the same time. As a result, the slogans *‘No arriba, sí abajo’* (‘no above, yes below’) and *‘Sí arriba, no abajo’* could be heard and seen everywhere in the weeks before the referendum, creating the erroneous impression that it was only possible to vote ‘yes’ on one of the questions and ‘no’ on the other. In order to make sure that the population of Santa Cruz Department knew exactly where to place their crosses, the Prefecture broadcast a range of television ads several of which featured Guaraní people. In one, a Guaraní man visits a Guaraní woman standing next to an open fireplace in a typical *oka* setting, to whom he shows a ballot paper and explains that she has to tick *‘no arriba’* (to say no to Evo) and *‘sí abajo’* (to say yes to the Prefect). This is repeated several times to make the slogan of *‘no arriba, sí abajo’* stick; the man then tells the woman, ‘So, you know what to do on the 10th’. Another ad shows the mayor of Camiri, Gonzalo Moreno, giving a public speech in which he praises Rubén Costas, thanks to whom the rural population now has electric light – this, he says, really is progress!

On the ground, things looked slightly different. Costas’s ‘progressive’ electricity project, which promised electricity to all the *comunidades* within the municipality of Camiri, had first

reached Cañón in August 2007 and was projected to finish in October. As with the *alcaldía's* housing project about which I had been hearing, people awaited the arrival of the electricity with a mixture of worry and anticipation. Everyone agreed that 'it wouldn't be the same anymore' after the *comunarios* could stay up all hours and watch TV in their own houses, but while some looked forward to the benefits being able to use appliances such as refrigerators would bring, others worried about the potential increase of unspecified 'bad habits', as if the wires connecting Cañón to the town might carry the negative aspects of the *karai's* lifestyles along with their electricity. Besides, people were not very clear about how this new luxury was to be afforded – the message was that each family would have to pay for their own consumption, but how much that would be, or how the poorer ones would afford it, were issues that remained unresolved. Such worries aside, however, people remained excited about the prospect, and the more NGO-accustomed *comunarios* assimilated it into their discourses about the *comunidad's* 'development' and 'achievements' (see Chapter 2).

As was the case with other projects, the *comunarios* were expected to contribute a 'return service' (*contraparte*) towards the execution of the electricity project. Thus, men from the *comunidad* were working in collaboration with employees of the regional electricity cooperative (CRE) to put up poles along the main road and closer to the more secluded houses and draw the cables between them. October came with some work still left to do, so a new target date for completion was set for Christmas 2007. However, although the poles and cables had been finished by the time I left Cañón for a couple of months in March of 2008, there was still no sign of any electricity, and by the time I finished my fieldwork in mid-September of the same year, the 'electrification' of Cañón was only just beginning. This delay did not fail to make an impression on the *comunarios*. On the first day of the Fiesta de la Virgen de Copacabana on 04 August I found myself standing next to don Aurelio and the *karai* husband of one of the APG leaders whose family lived in Cañón as I watched the procession of the Virgin in the schoolyard. Chatting about this and that, the conversation at one point turned to the upcoming referendum, so I asked for whom they were intending to vote. Both asserted that it would have to be Evo. The generally highly popular 'Juancito Pinto' (a yearly bonus of Bs. 200 for all schoolchildren in their first 8 years of schooling) was given as one of Evo's merits: both men agreed that such a thing had never been seen before, under any president. Rubén Costas on the other hand, the APG woman's husband said, was using the *comunarios* for his political purposes; for example, he had promised them

electricity, but only two families had it thus far, so it all looked like a big swindle.¹⁶⁵ Besides, Costas was telling lies to discredit Evo, such as that it was Evo's fault that prices in the Camiri market had been rising of late. Really, he said, it was the vendors putting the prices up, not Evo.

The 'contract' between the *comunarios* and the Prefecture that was implied in the electrification project – that is, electricity in return for votes – thus seemed to have broken down because of the Prefecture's perceived failure to deliver the promised electricity.¹⁶⁶ However, neither the fact that, as the date of the referendum approached, there were mostly only poles with cables to show for the Prefecture's efforts but no electricity, nor the fact that the *comunarios* were on the whole unimpressed with the outcome of the project and were therefore not inclined to give their votes in return, stopped the Prefecture from using the electrification project in their television ads in a rather over-enthusiastic way ('Thanks to Rubén Costas, the rural population now has electricity...'). Leaving aside the suspicion I could not shake, that the entire project had been part of the campaign in the first place, within the context of the campaign what had really been done in the *comunidades* was clearly not all that important. Notwithstanding that the Prefecture may have lost some *comunidades* due to the non-fulfilment of its promises, the televised images of men putting up poles, supported by the local mayor's assertion that 'this truly was progress', could still serve for trying to convince others.

The heavy targeting of Guaraní people in the Prefecture's televised propaganda was not arbitrary but tactical. It was aimed to win over a part of the population that had already been alienated by the Prefecture's *autonomía* antics and later outright antagonised by the actions of *media luna*-affiliated landowners earlier the same year. The APG disapproved of the Prefecture's plans because it saw it as incommensurate with the Guaraní's own plans for autonomy, which was to be built on ideas of solidarity, egalitarianism and freedom (APG ed.

¹⁶⁵ The view that the Prefect had 'lied' about the electricity was also expressed by a member of the Kaami leadership in a zonal meeting the same month.

¹⁶⁶ It should be added that Guaraní people are notorious for their unpredictability as voters and the way representatives of political parties often leave with the impression that their cause is being received with favour along with their campaign present, while the Guaraní merely see them as bringers of 'free stuff' (cf. *Plan Desarrollo...* 1986b: 55-6). Thus, it is impossible to say whether the actual completion of the electricity project within the promised timeframe would in fact have changed the *comunarios*' (electoral) minds.

2007). The force of these sentiments is demonstrated by this extract of a speech given during an APG meeting that was held in July 2007 to discuss the formulation of a Guaraní autonomic statute:

The *karai* is individualistic, there is always someone who wants to be in authority, and this is what's happening with the departmental autonomy. The *karai* call this monarchy, that is, the concentration of the power of decision making. How is it possible that we should all be peons of the Prefect of Santa Cruz? That would mean a step back, if what we want is to live in freedom.

...

The departmental government that wants this departmental autonomy has an aristocratic attitude. What does an aristocratic government mean? It's the government of a few; it brings together a few; it doesn't include all. That's why we say, 'Death to the oligarchs!' (Montenegro 2007: 10-11)

The imagery of the Cruceño leadership as aristocrats under whose autonomy the Guaraní would live as peons sums up the unequal standing on which the Cruceño elites were used to dealing with the indigenous people of the department. The Guaraní were not the only ones who worried about the impact of the Cruceños' proposed autonomy: on 31 March 2008, representatives of the five indigenous groups of Santa Cruz (Chiquitano, Ayoreo, Yuracaré-Mojeño, Guarayo, and Guaraní) got together in the departmental capital to sign a resolution rejecting the Cruceños' autonomic statutes, which they called 'exclusionist, separatist, racist, illegal, and unconstitutional' (Resolución de Rechazo... 2008). Along with this they presented their own declaration of autonomy, which included a call to the national government to ratify this autonomy by law and a declaration that the five groups would not be participating in the 'arbitrary and unconstitutional referendum' (Resolución de Autonomía... 2008) that had been called by the Prefecture for 04 May to vote on the ratification of the departmental autonomist statutes.

Among the criticisms made of the Cruceño Autonomic Statutes at the time, one particular bone of contention was its treatment of the issue of land ownership. While the central government was taking a line of increased scrutiny of the legality and use of private estates with the prospect of expropriation of unproductive properties and those found to be employing workers under conditions of servitude, the Cruceño Statute was formulated in a way that brought the regulation of land ownership and redistribution under the authority of

the departmental government.¹⁶⁷ While current indigenous territories were to be respected (Article 103, II), the Prefecture's specification of 'local citizens' with a 'farming and livestock vocation' (Article 108, II) as the preferred recipients of State-owned lands made it clear that the kind of large-scale expropriation of *latifundios* (often owned by cattle breeders) to the benefit of indigenous and peasant communities as envisioned by Evo and the indigenous organisations was not within its scheme.

The land issue had put a strain on relations between the Cruceño elites and the government of the MAS from the start; however, the situation began to escalate after INRA decreed the titling and *saneamiento* of a TCO in the disputed area of Alto Parapetí in February 2008. On 27 February, a delegation of 'municipal authorities, cattle ranchers, and the Civic Committee of Cordillera [Province] proceeded to expel the [INRA and APG] functionaries [from the INRA office in Camiri], using psychological violence via intimidations and death threats' (Valle Mandepora 2008). When the officials nonetheless tried to go ahead with their planned inspection, they were ambushed by a group of armed men on the property of a US-American landowner and eventually forced to turn back (Valle Mandepora 2008, Gustafson 2010: 58). The conflict reached its culmination on 13 April, when INRA and APG made a renewed attempt to enter Alto Parapetí. Near Cuevo, the convoy was attacked by a crowd of locals that included cattle breeders as well as district officials and schoolteachers, among the latter the mayor of Cuevo (Gustafson 2010: 61). The attackers separated a young Guaraní lawyer from the group and dragged him into the main plaza of Cuevo, where they tied him to a tree and insulted, threatened, and severely beat him for being an ally of the MAS and a traitor to the region (Gustafson 2010: 51).

Apart from being a prime example of the 'colonial' attitudes that were deeply rooted in Cruceño life, these incidents further demonstrate the collusion of economic and political elites in the *oriente*. In the words of the Vice-minister of Lands, Alejandro Almaráz, who was with the convoy when it was ambushed:

¹⁶⁷ Article 171, III of the Statute of the Autonomous Department of Santa Cruz states: 'The Departmental Institute of Land is a decentralised institution of the Departmental Executive, under the tuition of the corresponding Departmental Secretary, and is responsible for the execution of the ordering (*saneamiento*) of farming and livestock property, regulation of land ownership laws, and application of the policies pertaining to the possession, dotation, awarding, distribution, and expropriation of lands in the Autonomous Department of Santa Cruz.'

The mayor [of Cuevo] is married to the regional army commander. The local military leader is also a landowner. The district attorneys are controlled by the landowners. The landowners are ready to defend their lands with bullets, since that's how they acquired them. The police are pissed that they now have to serve the Indians. Sure, they do not earn much, but their pockets are filled thanks to these local powers. [Despite the fact that we are attempting to support indigenous claims] we are working from within a state structure that was designed to do the absolute opposite. (Quoted in Gustafson 2010: 59)

The situation in Camiri was much the same. The spokesman for the cattle breeders who had expelled the INRA officials from their office, Ronald Moreno, was one of three deputies of opposition parties to the MAS who were called by the Parliamentary Brigade of Santa Cruz to form a commission to 'investigate' the accusations of Guaraní slavery on Alto Parapetí haciendas (Viceministerio de Tierras 2008b). They did so with the stated intention of 'show[ing] the lies that Almaráz tells about the topic of slavery' (Moreno, quoted in Viceministerio... 2008b). Needless to say, the commission found no evidence of slavery, only 'extreme poverty', and its findings were disqualified by the national government for 'lack of impartiality' (Ortiz 2009: 14). At the same time, Moreno, himself a landowner as well as a deputy for PODEMOS¹⁶⁸, was one of an official multi-party delegation in charge of the investigation of the same problem (Viceministerio... 2008b). He also happened to be the brother of the mayor of Camiri, Gonzalo Moreno (ibid.), who owned two radio stations in Camiri, and both were close allies of the Prefect of Santa Cruz.¹⁶⁹ Compelled by motivations of supposed ethnicity (Camba vs. Colla) and civic solidarity, and informed by an opinionated local media, the mood among the *karai* population in those days was mostly tense.¹⁷⁰ While the violence committed against a delegation that included government officials had cost the hacendados a fair degree of support among the Camireños, there was also a lot of confusion about Evo's planned land reform, which resulted in even small local landowners fearing for their property. As with the formulaic examples of Guaraní laziness mentioned in the previous chapter, objections to Evo's land policies were often standardised, popularised phrases such as, 'Giving to those who don't have anything is good, but it mustn't be done by taking away

¹⁶⁸ The 'Democratic and Social Power', a right-wing party opposed to the MAS that was created out of the 'Nationalist Democratic Action' (ADN) in 2002. The name is a pun: '*podemos*' in Spanish also means 'we can'.

¹⁶⁹ For an arresting snapshot of the socio-political entanglements among the Camiri and Cruceño elites at the time the aforementioned confrontations took place, see UPIC-Tierra and ABI (2008).

¹⁷⁰ Having said this, the hold of the Santa Cruz Civic Committee on the civics of Camiri was already waning by the time the recall referendum was coming up, as was made manifest by the split of the Camiri Civic Committee earlier that year. However, rather than easing the tense atmosphere among the population, this development only added an additional layer of confusion to an already chaotic situation. When, for example, the *autonomista*-loyal Civic Committee called a general strike at the beginning of August, people were unsure about what to do, as according to the other Committee the strike was not happening.

from those who do', or 'If you've worked hard to build yourself a big house with many rooms, would you say that it's right to force you to take in a bunch of homeless people?'

The above gives us an idea of the complex situation in Camiri at the time. The connections between different sectors of the population blurred the boundaries between matters of local, regional, and national politics, economics, public opinion, and social life to such a degree as to make these categories almost meaningless. As a result of these connections, the aggravated relations between the Prefecture and the national government also had an impact on the relations between the municipality and the Capitanía Kaami, which had been working together quite amiably on the implementation of various projects in the *comunidades* when I first arrived (cf. Delgadillo Terceros 2008). One project that seemed to be working particularly well, and which was very popular within the *comunidades*, was that of the school breakfast (cf. Caballero Espinoza 2008: 45-6). The school breakfast was part of Kaami's 'Intercultural Governance' programme, which it had begun in 2002 with the assistance of PADEP-GTZ. The school breakfast was financed by the municipality and coordinated by the Sub-Alcaldía and the Capitanía which decided how to divide the designated sum up among the *comunidades* that were part of the Capitanía. Once the supplies bought by the Capitanía had reached the *comunidades*, the breakfast (usually consisting of a gruel made from oats or maize) was prepared by the mothers of the school children, who took turns to cook it and dish it out to the children. The school breakfast was a prime example of the workings of the decentralisation process initiated by the LPP, which the Kaami leadership hoped to see developed into the kind of autonomy that was also envisioned by the *comunarios* of Cañón (see Chapter 7), which would grant them more direct control over the financial resources at their disposal.

However, with the deterioration of the relations between INRA and landowners in the region, relations between Kaami and the municipality too took a turn for the worse in 2008. This development manifested itself in various ways, such as the adoption of new discourses about the Guaraní by members of the municipal government that portrayed them as 'invaders' of the region with no real legal claims to the land (see previous Chapter). While, however, this historically-based attack bore direct relevance to the land issue, the municipality leadership also resorted to accusations of corruption in order to undermine the Capitanía's autonomic

ambitions. As was denounced in a zonal meeting in August 2008, the Alcaldía had accused the Sub-Mayor of Kaami of pocketing money that was intended for the implementation of projects in the Kaami *comunidades*. The Sub-Mayor was very upset about the issue and firmly denied the allegations; according to the Kaami leadership, the problem had arisen after some *comunidades* had complained about a cut-back in the provisions they were receiving, which had become necessary due to a general increase in food prices. Nonetheless, however, there was talk of reversing the process of the decentralisation of projects and putting the municipal government back in charge of the management of resources, which greatly alarmed the Kaami leadership. Concurrently, accusations against the mayor were being voiced by *comunarios* of Puente Viejo, a *comunidad* on the outskirts of Camiri: according to them, the mayor had illegally sold part of their community land to a private landowner.

The situation between Capitanía and municipality seems to have calmed down again after I left the field, as indicated by more recent reports by PADEP-GTZ in which Kaami still appears as one of their most important showcases in successful decentralisation and ‘intercultural governance’.¹⁷¹ There are, however, two important points that can be gathered from the above examples. Firstly, there is the issue of how the State-led process of decentralisation was reversed in Camiri through the particular constellation of power relations in Santa Cruz Department at the time. Rather than bypassing the Prefecture, as was the criticism of the Cruceño Civic Committee when the LPP introduced decentralisation to the municipal level in 1994, it was effectively the national government and its legislation that were being bypassed in this case. It was, in the words of Bret Gustafson, ‘a battle over de facto and de jure rule’ (2010: 49), in which, however, both sides claimed to be on the side of the law and the Constitution. Thus, at the same rate as Evo’s government and the Constituent Assembly were churning out laws for the new ‘decolonised’ State which they envisioned, the opposition in the *oriente* kept coming up with arguments that declared their legal reforms illegal in order to justify their increasingly aggressive resistance.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ A 2010 report quotes Modesto Condori, the Director of *Comunidades* of the Ministry of Autonomy, as calling Kaami ‘the best experience there is in Bolivia in the field of intercultural and indigenous governance’ (Condori, quoted in PADEP-GTZ 2010: 15).

¹⁷² These included the following: – The new Constitution is illegal because the MASistas were keeping Constituent Assembly members of opposition parties away from the voting sessions having armed guards keep them from entering the building or secretly organising meetings in remote places. (In the MAS version, those opposition members deliberately kept away to boycott the sessions.) Besides, the Assembly should have discussed the issue of the departmental autonomies, on which there had been a public vote, instead of talking about regional and indigenous autonomies, on which there had been none. – The recall referendum is illegal because it will take more votes to vote Evo out than it took to vote him in. – The redistribution of the IDH to

Even more notable was the echoing of classical *indigenista* forms of organised resistance by the eastern autonomy supporters. As the national government, itself the product of decades of indigenous struggle, resorted to ‘social movement tactics’ in order to consolidate its support base among the population (Gustafson 2010), the departmental and local governments in the *oriente* responded by adopting such means of pressure as the road block (*bloqueo*), which were historically associated with Aymara and later peasant-union-led resistance to (first colonial and then republican) oppressive State leaderships.¹⁷³ For almost the entirety of my fieldwork, life in Camiri (and, by extension, Cañón) was frequently interrupted by one protest or another (such as road blocks, civic strikes, or hunger strikes) against Evo’s policies and leadership. While the main issues at the heart of these protests were related to the local petroleum industry (such as demands for a ‘proper’ nationalisation of the industry, opening of new drilling sites in Camiri, and a restoration of the IDH redistribution to its previous form), these tended to get mixed up with issues about departmental autonomy, land distribution, and protests against the Constituent Assembly and the MAS in general, as all the intimately connected interest groups tried to make their concerns heard.¹⁷⁴ Despite the fact that the ones who were most strongly affected by their actions were the local populations,¹⁷⁵ those Camireños who were involved in these protests saw this adoption of traditionally indigenist measures of resistance as ‘giving Evo a taste of his own medicine’.

such uses as the old people’s pension (*renta dignidad*) is illegal because it robs the people of money that was designated to the improvement of the infrastructure of departments and municipalities in previous legislation (i.e., the Hydrocarbon Law 3058 of 17 May 2005 and modifying Supreme Decrees).

¹⁷³ In the 1980s, the *cocalero* movement came to the forefront of organised union action in the highlands and, by enlisting the support of other peasant unions in the highlands, managed to organise numerous road blocks and other protests which in various cases succeeded in causing the State to modify its policies in areas such as ‘market control, local rural development, and programs for cocaleaf eradication’ (Healy 1991: 91).

¹⁷⁴ Occasionally, these more overtly political protests were also interspersed by protests of more defined sectors of the population, such as, e.g., a market vendors’ protests against the restriction of imports of used clothes in 2007.

¹⁷⁵ The modern-day roadblock is a curious animal that really deserves a study of its own: since towns often opt to block the access to roads in their immediate vicinity, their own population tends to end up at least as inconvenienced as those coming from outside. In the case of Camiri, this frequently resulted in the spontaneous emergence of trading relationships between inhabitants and those they were blocking as the inhabitants ran out of food supplies and lorry drivers immobilised on the motorway saw their cargoes threatened by the heat. Apart from complicating the lives of the Camireños themselves, the road blocks also aggravated the situation of people in the surrounding *comunidades*, who had to either go through considerable trouble to get their produce to the Camiri markets or accept a reduction in their incomes that in many cases put a serious strain on the household.

The second point that I want to raise with reference to the events described above is related to this perceived reversal of roles between the highland indigenous sector and the non-indigenous elites in the *oriente* (in which the former relegated the latter from a position of practically unquestioned power to that of ‘underdog’); that is, the inherent instability of political alliances within the Bolivian context. As mentioned, the antagonism against Evo and the MAS that was driven by civic and political leaders in the Prefecture with close links to local politicians, civics, and landowners, had resulted in the demonisation of Guaraní people (and in particular the APG) as traitors to the region (allies of the MAS), invaders of land (trying to take away landowners’ property), and false *originarios* (descendents of recent arrivals to the area). This had culminated in a series of attacks on Guaraní people and their organisations and supporters: violent, in the case of Alto Parapetí, and moral/ideological in the case of Kaami. The severity of the violence perpetrated in the former case, however, in turn caused many Camireños to distance themselves from the landowners’ actions, and, consequently, from the increasingly radicalised departmental and provincial Civic Committees, thereby deepening the rift within Camiri itself that was expressed by the split of the local Civic Committee earlier the same year.¹⁷⁶ Thus, while most Camireños seemed to agree on the two (unrelated) points that departmental autonomy was a good idea and that Guaraní people were naturally inferior to *karai* people, many now took the stance that the expelling of government officials from their offices and public beating of Guaraní people went beyond the entitlements of the autonomy-propagating elites in the area. Thus, who was on whose side was by no means always clear, and – echoing the situation in the colonial and early republican eras – alliances between Guaraní and *karai* interest groups could appear, dissolve, and reappear in quick succession, depending on the political requirements of the moment.

In this confused and increasingly anxious climate, Guaraní people were suddenly hauled out by the Prefecture of Santa Cruz to appear in Costas’s televised pre-referendum campaign.

¹⁷⁶ One of the most dramatic demonstrations of the conflict of interest that could be created for individuals who were invested in both the *karai* and Guaraní sides at this time was the case of a friend of mine who not only had a longstanding involvement with Guaraní organisations and a deep interest in Guaraní culture, but who was also a local landowner and convinced *autonomista* and as such played an important role in the provincial civic movement. While he maintained both these positions for a while, it appears that he got swept away by the pro-Santa Cruz current in the end: one of the last times I met him, he told me that he was doubtful whether there were in fact any Guaraní people in Bolivia anymore, as most had lost their traditions and language by now. Later, I found out that the APG had denounced him (along with other political and civic personages in the department, province, and municipality) as ‘servants of CONFAGRO [the National Farming and Livestock Confederation], the COMITÉ PRO SANTA CRUZ, and the separatists of the MEDIA LUNA’ (APG 2008; capitals in original).

Although some Guaraní *comunidades* and *capitanías* did in fact support Costas's politics, the tenor in Kaami was largely oppositional. Nonetheless, the work that the men from the *comunidades* around Camiri carried out alongside the technicians of the CRE in the Prefecture's electrification project also featured in the televised propaganda in support of Costas. Their voices, however, remained hidden behind that of Gonzalo Moreno praising the 'progress' brought by Costas's project. The only Guaraní voices for which there was room in the *karai*-dominated public sphere were those that proclaimed their approval of the existing *karai* leadership, within a context that was controlled by the latter. While I am not suggesting that the Guaraní people who appeared in Costas's ads were 'fake', the ads were certainly a means to 'filter' Guaraní discourses for those suitable for public consumption. In short, only those in agreement with the Cruceño power base were allowed a voice; the others were silenced with stones, whips, and accusations of corruption.

Like the *karai* uses of Guaraní 'culture' discussed in the previous chapter, the political situation in Camiri and Santa Cruz in 2008 revealed the colonial attitude that was prevalent among the Cruceño power elites (and, by extension, large parts of the *karai* population) in that Guaraní people's work and voices were only given visibility and audibility within the margin of *karai* approval. The issue was not so much one of giving the subaltern a voice as of having a chosen subaltern give a voice to the Prefecture, an indigenous voice that could speak for the Prefecture on behalf of a population, parts of which were being deliberately alienated by factions from among the Prefecture's own power base. What is striking here is the constant reconfiguration of 'realities' in which the described events took place, which made it possible that conflicting messages were given out by the same interest groups not only in quick succession, but at times even simultaneously. Thus, rather than thinking about the changing positions of the various parties in play with each other in this setting as a constant ebb and flow, it may be more helpful to look at them in terms of the alternating activation of different potentialities that co-existed within the same general framework (see Conclusions).

This is similar to a point that Marilyn Strathern has made in relation to people's capacities to act in different ways: Strathern argues that a focus on the *positions* of subjects is theoretically problematic because it entails people whose identities at any one time are fixed, independent of the perspectives that other people take on them. The notion of *capacity* suggests the different roles or relationships in which a person may act. Acting 'in the capacity of an indigenous person' implies the *potential* to enter into certain kinds of relationships without

making any claims on the ‘actual’ identity of persons (Strathern 1988).¹⁷⁷ In the case of the Guaraní, the overall trend was for politically motivated *karai* actors to treat the *comunidades* and their inhabitants as tools to further whatever their current ambitions, which could mean either beating them up in order to keep them in check, or allying themselves with the Guaraní in order to promote their own public image. It should be emphasised here, however, that the people involved in politics in the APG and Kaami whom I encountered were on the whole by no means prepared to simply serve as pawns in *karai* politicians’ strategy games. On the contrary, the Guaraní leaderships, too, strategically allied themselves with such national and international groups and organisations (be that INRA, NGOs, human rights organisations, or, indeed, the municipal and departmental government) as they felt could be of use to their project. The result of this was a high degree of unpredictability because of the way in which the relations between different interest groups could change rapidly from that of friends to that of foes, whereby such a change in attitude towards any respective other was not necessarily mutual.

In short, the political situation that Guaraní people in and around Camiri were facing during the time of my fieldwork was changeable and therefore highly unpredictable. This was especially noticeable in the crises surrounding *media luna* demands for autonomy. On the one hand, this political fluidity recalled the shifting alliances of the colonial period, in which Guaraní groups could be the allies of other Guaraní or Spanish groups at one moment and attack them as enemies at the next. However, on the other hand, the Guaraní people who formed part of the constellation of changing alliances in the Department of Santa Cruz in the 2000s were not the same ‘savages’ of old that could be understood by simply relegating them to a box marked ‘*indios*’, in the sense that they were active participants of the emerging ‘decolonised’ State whose presence and influence on the political scene could not be ignored. This contemporary political reality, however, was one that clashed with the ‘colonial’ attitude of the elites. As a result, these elites saw themselves forced to acknowledge the Guaraní as political agents to be taken seriously at the same time as they sought to position them in line with their understanding of them as ethnically ‘inferior’. To put it another way, the attitudes of the Cruceño elites were somewhat lagging behind the political reality within the country,

¹⁷⁷ I am indebted to Will Rollason for pointing this out to me.

which perhaps explains their ‘bipolar’ approach to the Guaraní in alternately subjecting them to colonial-style violence and ‘wooing’ them with electricity projects. In this context, questioning where the *comunidades* ‘fit’ into the local and regional political landscape is a relatively fruitless exercise. Rather, I suggest that the difficulty in determining their position on the part of the local and regional elites is an interesting fact in itself, as it reveals the Guaraní as people whose significance within local politics was sufficient that *karai* parties’ claims on them granted them multiple and often conflicting capacities for political agency. It may be that the effect of the empowerment of *indigenista* politics in Bolivia in recent years has been precisely to erode the ‘position’ of indigenous people in order to free exactly these capacities.

CHAPTER 11. *DUEÑOS, DUENDES, BICHOS*: SUPERNATURAL AGENTS IN CAÑÓN AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE-MAKING

Given the fact that Cañón de Segura was a relatively new community that was only officially founded in 1997, the question of its coming-into-being as a *comunidad* was – besides its legal aspects – also one of taking possession of a previously ‘wild’ space and making it into a social place. However, the fact that Cañón had no human inhabitants at the time of the *comunarios*’ move there does not mean that it was entirely uninhabited. What I am looking at in this chapter are various instances of interactions between *comunarios* and ‘spirit’ entities found in the forest around Cañón. These interactions were establishing connections between the people and the land that had not existed before, at the same time as they were profoundly political. The aim of this chapter, then, is to open up the idea of ‘the political’ and show how besides the *comunarios*’ involvement with Alcaldía, Prefecture, and State there was a level on which political engagements with outsiders to the *comunidad* happened within its own limits.

A little over a year after I had first come to Cañón to live, I got the chance to make pottery with my friend doña Apolonia.¹⁷⁸ It was a hot day, and we were sitting in the shade underneath some trees in her *oka*, struggling with the clay which she had prepared from the usual mixture of mud and powder made from the ground shards of ancient pottery, and laughing a lot as our creations kept cracking and falling to bits. Doña Apolonia teased me about how it seemed that the clay, or rather its ‘master’ (*dueña*) the Pachamama, had something against me. I asked, ‘Why doesn’t she like me?’, and Apolonia said, ‘Because you’re a white, green-eyed *gringa*.’ So I told her that this had not been a problem the year before when I had first tried my hand at pottery and suggested that the problem was instead that her mixture just wasn’t very good. She laughed, then looked at me, smiling, and then she said: ‘You don’t believe in the *dueños*, do you? *But they do exist.*’

¹⁷⁸ This was my second attempt at pottery-making; I had helped the women’s workgroup the year before, when they had jointly produced ceramics for the annual celebration at Kuruyuki on 28 January (see Chapter 9). The second year, however, there was no joint pottery project, and doña Apolonia, her daughter doña Filomena, her granddaughter Margarita and I were among the few women who had taken it upon themselves to make pottery to be sold in Kuruyuki.

I only gradually realised throughout my stay in Cañón how much a part of people's lives these '*dueños*' as well as other non-human 'persons' (cf. Viveiros de Castro 1998; Djup 2007) actually were because it took me a long time to get people to talk to me about them in the first place. Part of this was, as so often, due to the anthropologist asking the wrong questions; I had started out by asking about the *kaa iya reta*,¹⁷⁹ as I knew from the literature the 'masters of the forest' were called in other Guaraní zones such as the Isoso (Combès et al 1998, Riester 1984), and people had constantly assured me that they had never heard of them. I had almost given up on the idea of encountering anything similar in Cañón when one day I received some interesting information from an unexpected source.

I was sitting outside my house writing fieldnotes one late afternoon when two of the children, a boy and a girl, came up from the school to pay me a visit. I offered them juice, and we chatted about my country, my family and such things for a while, then they started telling me 'ghost stories'. They asked whether I was not afraid to live in the *posta* all by myself, and I said that I wasn't. The boy told me that there was a pig in the ravine next to the house where my 'host family' lived, which came out at night, 'as if the ground were rising up': huge and white, it appeared out of the darkness to scare the people who walked past there. In the children's opinion, it was the ghost of some pig that had been buried there, possibly because it had died from snakebite and thus had become inedible. I asked whether there were any other such creatures around, and they told me of various other examples before they had to go home because it was getting late.¹⁸⁰

After this serendipitous discovery, I decided to find out more. Taking the story of the pig as a starting point, I ventured to ask doña Estefanía, the mother of my 'host family' with whom I cooked and had lunch every day, about it the next time I saw her. After at first wrinkling her forehead and looking like she didn't know what I was

¹⁷⁹ Guaraní *kaa*: forest; *iya*: master, owner; *reta*: plural marker.

¹⁸⁰ These included a man who appeared nearby another ravine close to the motorway where there was a huge clay pot half-stuck in the ground. The boy said he had tried to dig it up once, but that he hadn't been able to, and after someone had seen the man (who was either really black, or really white, or '*moreno*', there was some confusion about this in the children's account), people had told their children not to go near the place. They also told me about a beautiful *señorita* one of the men had seen in the forest once, and then there was a huge anaconda in the forest covering the hills on the other side of the village. Some other apparitions are described in Chapter 6.

talking about, she suddenly said, ‘Ah! Yes, there used to be a pig here in the past, but that’s now gone.’ She told me how in the beginning no one had wanted to build their house in this place because of this, but then, once more houses had been built, these ‘*bichos*’, as she put it, had started to disappear.¹⁸¹

According to her, the *bichos* appeared where money, or silver (‘*plata*’),¹⁸² was hidden somewhere, of which they were the guardians. She explained that in the olden days, the Guaraní didn’t know money, so people didn’t know how to spend it and so collected it all, and when they had enough, they put it into pots made of clay, like the ones we had made with the women’s workgroup, and buried it. Then, the *bichos* would come (which could be pigs, dogs, and all kinds of animals), and they would appear to people who came too close to the place where the money was buried to scare them off. Sometimes, the *bichos* would also get tired of guarding these places and leave, and sometimes they would decide to give the money to a poor person and appear to them in their dreams in the shape of an ‘*abuelita*’ or other old person.

Estefanía said that these days, the *bichos* were often driven from the places that they guarded by tractors and other such modern tools used to work the land. She also said that people today had invented ways of ‘cheating’ them and go looking for buried treasures with implements (indicating with her hand the movement of searching with a dowsing rod) instead of waiting for dreams, but that these implements had turned treacherous as well after a while (‘*mintieron*’) and would indicate treasures where there were really only buried pieces of wire or such things.

I asked whether these *bichos* had any other name, perhaps in Guaraní, waiting to hear the word ‘*iya*’, but she said that they did not, they were called ‘*bichos nomás*’ – ‘just *bichos*’.

One of doña Estefanía’s neighbours was a tiny, white-haired *abuelita* called doña Ester, who had the reputation of being the only healer left in Cañón. There was no

¹⁸¹ ‘*Bicho*’ is a Spanish word that can loosely be translated as ‘creepy-crawly’, although it is also frequently used for larger animals and even people in certain contexts.

¹⁸² There is an ambivalence in doña Estefanía’s use of the word ‘*plata*’ here, which in local Spanish slides between the meanings of ‘silver’ and ‘money’. See discussion further on.

shaman (*ipaye*) in the community,¹⁸³ and the only other person who had known about such things, another *abuelita*, had recently died before I had had the chance to meet her. Thus, doña Ester was my best bet for finding out more about the *dueños*. She kindly agreed to see me and Lupe, my friend and ‘field assistant’ whom I had asked to come along and translate for me, for an informal interview. When I started asking about the *kaa iya reta*, doña Ester understood what I was talking about but told me that they were called ‘*ivítipo reta*’ here instead.¹⁸⁴

This name, however, did not seem commonly known in Cañón; don Aurelio, who had himself been contacted in a dream by a *dueño* who wanted to give him money from a buried treasure, gave me the name *ñana iya* (‘master of plants’), but generally people just referred to them by the Spanish ‘*dueños*’. This might have to do with the fact that doña Ester was not originally from Itakua, but from another community further to the south. As transpired from the accounts which different *comunarios* gave me about their encounters with entities inhabiting the environment, the terms ‘*dueño*’ and ‘*bicho*’ were often used interchangeably, although not all *bichos* could be assumed to be *dueños*. This categorical confusion seemed – at least in part – to stem from the fusion of mythological elements derived from different cultural spheres of influence (remember, for example, doña Apolonia’s referring to the master of the clay as ‘Pachamama’, which is actually the name of a deity from the Andean highlands who seems to have become incorporated into the Guaraní spiritual realm).

Combès et al (1998) have described similar mythological hybrid forms for the Isoso, where the *kaa iya reta*, or ‘masters of the forest’, have become incorporated into Christian mythology as rebellious angels who, similar to Lucifer, were hurled down to earth to look after the animals as a divine punishment (Combès et al 1998: 12). According to this study, the *iya reta* are the terrestrial guardians of animals appointed by the *tumpa reta* (‘creators’, ‘eternal principles’ or heavenly prototypes of earthly animal species), who reside in sacred places and can appear to people in animal

¹⁸³ People I asked disagreed about whether doña Ester was *ipaye* or not, some saying that she was, others that she was not, which might have to do with the fact that Guaraní shamans predominantly tend to be men.

¹⁸⁴ People in Cañón were unable to translate the word for me; however, the first part could either be *ivít*, meaning ‘earth’, ‘land’, or *ivít*, meaning ‘mountain’. It has also been suggested to me by a friend who speaks Paraguayan Guaraní that the ‘*po*’ part might be derived from ‘*pora*’, ‘ghost’, which would give the word the meaning of ‘mountain ghost’.

(preferably snake) or human shapes, often in dreams (ibid.). There are several types of sacred places: places ‘where there exist riches’, which are the holy places of hunters where a generous *iya* lives with whom they are in contact, and who gives them plenty of animals to hunt; ‘places of fear’, that is, those where evil *iya reta* live who like to appear to humans at night and scare them; and the ‘places where good and evil can be discerned’, the holy places of shamans, which are the ones where they experience the revelation that makes them into a shaman (Combès et al 1998: 13-4). We can here see a great deal of overlap between the Isoleño *iya reta* and the *dueños* of Cañón de Segura, albeit the Isoleño’s classificatory system appears to be a lot neater.¹⁸⁵

European (if not necessarily Christian) influences were also discernible in the pantheon of Cañón, where the list of apparitions sighted by *comunarios* included a couple of *duendes* (goblins), which were described to me as little men with huge sombreros (see Chapter 6). *Duendes* are widely known within Latin American mythology and have their roots in European folklore (cf. Callejo Cobo and Canales Torres 1994); they are, therefore, quite different from the *dueños* of the Guaraní, who to my knowledge only ever interacted with Guaraní people. People in Cañón sometimes seemed puzzled by the fact that no *dueños* ever made me dream and no *bichos* ever appeared to me at night, and they would muse about why it was that the ‘gringos’ were so utterly unaware of their existence. I for my part did not find this that surprising, as I got the impression that Guaraní *dueños* generally had an aversion to *karai* people and their ways, as indicated by such things as their great dislike of the use of modern agricultural implements such as tractors.

Apart from the *duendes*, there were also a few cases of what seemed to be sightings of ‘ghosts’, that is, souls of dead people that had appeared to some *comunarios* in more or less terrifying forms. In one case, these apparitions were auditory rather than visual, as people told me that the sounds of passing wagons used to be heard by the main road when the *comunarios* had first moved to Cañón. It was the general

¹⁸⁵ It is, of course, entirely possible that the system was a lot neater than I could discern from the things people told me. However, as with everything else, my approach to these stories was to learn as much as I could from what the *comunarios* were willing to tell me rather than trying to ‘investigate’ things detective-style. Indeed, when people said they didn’t know something, or that they wouldn’t tell me any more about something, it seemed only right to respect their positions, especially when it came to potentially dangerous knowledge such as that about the *dueños*. There is, in the end, quite enough that can be said about what people did choose to tell me about these things.

consensus that these were the ghosts of salt merchants whose trading route between Tarija and Santa Cruz de la Sierra is said to have led through the canyon. These apparitions also did not seem to be *dueños* as such, even though souls of the dead *could* under some circumstances be referred to as *dueños* (for example, if they were guarding buried treasures or ancient burial sites). The other type of *dueños* was that of the masters of animals, plants, and natural phenomena or places to whom *abuelita* Ester had referred as *ivítipo reta*.

As for the interactions in which such *dueños* engaged with people, according to what doña Ester and later others as well told me, they could broadly be summed up in three categories. First of all, in some cases the *dueños* would contact people (usually in their dreams, and then usually in the shape of a human being, whereas they would appear in animal form when encountered during the day) to offer them something from within their domain of authority. These could be things like healing knowledge, game animals, or buried treasures, which were always to be given in exchange for something else – offerings of tobacco, alcohol, or coca seemed to be most highly sought-after by the *dueños*. Any breach of such an agreement would usually result in unpleasant consequences (such as illness or even death) for the human party.¹⁸⁶ Heightening this risk inherent in interactions with the *dueños* was the fact that some *dueños* did not play fair and tricked people into giving away more than they intended: doña Ester told me how they might ask for a chicken in return for a treasure, but when it came to settling the debt, the ‘chicken’ would turn out to have really been a code for the soul of a child who would then fall ill and die.

Trying to capture humans for company was commonly done by *dueños* (cf. Djup 2007) and constitutes my second category of human-*dueño* interactions. This could be done by snatching away a person’s soul, or by abducting the person as a whole. The most vulnerable to soul loss were children. This could happen if a child entered a place that was inhabited by a *dueño* and the child was ill and therefore in a weakened

¹⁸⁶ See Harris (1995: 312) for similar relations of exchange between humans and ‘devils’ (‘the mountains; the dead; powerful, unnamed places such as gullies and waterfalls; and shrines where lightning has struck and killed an animal or human being; as well as the tío [guardian of a mine] and the pachamama’) in northern Potosí.

state. The *dueño* would then make it even more ill until it died and take away its soul. The child then had to stay in the *dueño*'s place with them and become a *dueño* itself, thus being removed from the sociality of its human kin. 'The next time you dream', Lupe said about these cases, 'it'll already be the child you dream of (instead of the original *dueño*).' Sometimes people also disappeared as a whole and were taken to a *dueño*'s house inside a mountain – these houses were like houses on the inside, often fitted with stupendous gold furniture, but appeared as mountains on the outside. There, the humans stayed for a while to be taught '*brujería*' (witchcraft). When I asked whether it was good magic or bad magic that they were taught that way, Lupe said, both, as there were both good and bad *dueños*.

While killing a child by taking its soul seemed to be a side effect of a *dueño*'s desire for human company rather than the result of deliberate ill will, it also happened that *dueños* deliberately tried to harm people, usually if they felt disturbed by them but occasionally even for no apparent reason whatsoever. The white pig in the ravine near doña Estefanía's house seemed to be a case in point, as it could be assumed that it appeared there in order to keep people away from a treasure buried somewhere in that place which it was trying to protect. While this pig only scared people who walked past there at night but did not otherwise harm them, there were several *dueños* attached to ancient burials within the community of whom people were rather more afraid. These *dueños* lived near places where the bones of a dead person had been discovered inside huge clay pots, which used to be how Guaraní people in the past buried their dead.¹⁸⁷ The discovery of such pots was usually due to new ravines opening up when the ever-changing terrain shifted under the force of the torrential downpours during the rainy season. Sometimes it was possible to extract the shards of such pots, which, ground into a powder, would then be used by the women to produce the clay mixture for making new pottery. However, people were always very cautious about approaching such sites, and some of the *dueños* inhabiting them were said to be so 'bad' that no one was prepared to take the risk of disturbing their peace, as they

¹⁸⁷ This custom was still encountered among Bolivian Guaraní people by Erland Nordenskiöld in the early 20th century. Nordenskiöld was of the opinion that direct urn-burial (in which the entire body is inserted into the pot) had originally been a European custom that had been adopted by the Guaraní, as opposed to the also practiced secondary urn-burial in which only the bones were buried in pots (Nordenskiöld 1920: 184-90).

were almost sure to make anyone who dared to do so dream, which would be followed by the illness and/or death of the perpetrator.

What first struck me about these stories was the degree to which these non-human forest inhabitants were present in people's everyday lives. Whatever the name that people used to refer to them, once I had heard of the *dueños* similar stories kept coming up all around. The interesting thing to me was that people would speak of them in a very down-to-earth manner: sure, it was exciting when something involving a *dueño* or other forest entity happened, but while there was a certain uncanny quality to these occurrences that was lacking in encounters between humans, people did not seem to mystify them. They were very much a part of their lived realities and were almost talked about in the same way as other gossip.

Seeing that these interactions between humans and non-humans were taking place quite frequently, it could be tempting to regard the non-human realm of the forest creatures as an extension of the social realm of the *comunarios*. However, if one looks at the nature of these interactions, it becomes clear that they constituted something rather different from, and in a way even opposed to, human-human relationships: there was always a danger involved for the human being, even in the cases in which *dueños* volunteered their treasures to humans (be they money, game animals, or shamanic knowledge), as there were always conditions attached to these offers that bore a threat to the health or even life of their human interlocutors should they be disobeyed. Even doña Ester after talking to me for a while grew reluctant to tell me any more, so I decided not to push the issue and respect her own judgment – she said the *ivitipo reta* might get angry if she told me too much, and who was I to argue with that.

There was also the danger of soul loss, or loss of identity, which removed an individual from the social networks of their human kin altogether. Humans whose souls and/or bodies were snared by the *dueños* were doomed to keep the *dueños* company within their own world, or even turn into *dueños* themselves, thus becoming not only unreachable and unrecognisable to their own former kin but even a potential threat to them. It seemed, therefore, that humans and *dueños* could never become kin to one another, unless one of them (and that would, by all appearances, invariably

have to be the human) gave up their own identity and sociality in order to be wholly absorbed into that of the other. Thus, while the *dueños* of Cañón may have been longing for the sociality of their human neighbours, their desire was highly asocial from a human point of view.

There were certain perspectivist elements to these encounters as those that have been described by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro for Amazonian cultures, in which humans also run the risk of losing their human status in forest encounters with other species (Viveiros de Castro 1998). According to Viveiros de Castro's theory, animals (and even certain plants, and natural phenomena) are fellow 'agents-in-the-world',¹⁸⁸ who are all united in that they all have culture and they all have souls, that is, an 'internal human form' that makes them appear as humans to each other. However, because of the diversity of their bodies, and the different viewpoints which these bodies afford, they appear different to the eyes of other species (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 471, 478). Appearances are relational according to an opposition between 'predators' and 'prey': 'animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (as prey) to the same extent that animals (as prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators)' (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 470), so that, for example, any human 'subject' might be seen as a peccary by a jaguar, but as a jaguar by a peccary. Adopting the perspective of such an 'other' subject is dangerous, as it carries the risk of transforming one into a being of that species, be it an animal, spirit, or dead person. Only shamans can transit the various perspectives without losing their condition as human subjects (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 483).¹⁸⁹ The term coined by Viveiros de Castro to describe this kind of philosophy is 'multinaturalism', which he uses to establish an opposition to the 'multiculturalism' he sees as central to 'Western' thought (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 470).

The most conspicuous example of a perspectivist element in what I learned from the *comunarios* of Cañón was that of the *dueños*' houses in the forest. It happened on

¹⁸⁸ For similar 'interagent' relationships with the environment in the Andes, see, e.g., Harrison (1982); Howard-Malverde ed. (1997).

¹⁸⁹ See Overing (1990); Gow (1995) for other accounts of interactions between humans and environment in Amazonia and the role of shamans in these.

several occasions that, when enquiring about the subject, I was told by a *comunario* that that forest over there, or those hills there (pointing in the indicated direction) were ‘all houses’. Those houses were ‘invisible’, but they were so only to humans: where humans saw hills and trees, the *dueños* residing in them saw large, luxuriously furnished houses. In short, as in Viveiros de Castro’s model we here encounter species-dependent differences in the perception of what was presumably the same environment; entities that sometimes appeared as animals and other times as humans; an inherent instability of the human condition due to which humans were in constant danger of being turned into something other; and the inevitable loss of humans’ original kin ties which such transformations brought about.

However, it must also be noted that Viveiros de Castro’s model poses several problems when viewed in relation to the *dueños*. First and foremost, there was never any indication in anything people said to me during my fieldwork that animals generally saw themselves as humans when among members of their own species. ‘Normal’ animals also did not normally pose a threat to people’s identities as humans;¹⁹⁰ rather, such existential transformations were provoked by the *dueños* where they managed to ensnare a human’s soul and bind it to their own realm. The shape-shifting of *dueños*, who were generally said to resemble the species of which they were the master, but often appeared as snakes when encountered by humans during the day and as human beings when appearing in dreams, further seemed more deliberate than the relationally dependent changes in appearance described by Viveiros de Castro.

There are, however, two important points in Viveiros de Castro’s argument that are relevant to our discussion. They are, firstly, the recognition of non-human personhood, and secondly, as a corollary, the problematisation of the nature/culture divide that remains prevalent within Euro-American thought. As we have seen, non-

¹⁹⁰ I am saying ‘normally’ here because there was in fact one exception to this ‘rule’, namely, where a person encountered an animal under circumstances that provoked a reaction of fright. Such occasions seemed most dangerous to pregnant women, whose babies might take on the physical attributes of the creature who caused the mother to be scared. However, one of the men also told me of an incident that suggests that fright could be dangerous to people in general: he said that a snake had appeared to him near one of his fields once, a huge green snake with a yellow belly and neck, and that it had almost ‘defeated his courage’ (*‘casi me ganó del coraje’*), which, had it happened, might have caused him to fall ill because it was dangerous to let those *bichos* scare you.

human persons, whose subject nature was undisputable despite their ontological differences from human beings, constituted a considerable proportion of the ‘inhabitants’ of Cañón (even though they were not part of the *comunidad* as a social unit), and interactions with them were frequent. Rather than being purely ‘supernatural’ beings, they pertained to what in a Western-style model of the world would be called the realm of ‘nature’, which was especially apparent in the case of the masters of animals. On the other hand, they also possessed a level of culture that was comparable or, in some cases, even superior to that of human society, and their desire for human company demonstrated that they were essentially social beings, even if the results of this imprudent sociability could be rather unfortunate.

It would be tempting to drift off into a discussion of epistemological categories and their relevance at this point; however, since this is not the concern of this chapter, I would here like to borrow a concept from the work of Tim Ingold which seems helpful to me in order to make sense of human-*dueño* relations within Cañón, namely, the concept of ‘interagentivity’. The term was introduced by Ingold in a 2000 collection of essays on *The Perception of the Environment*, where he takes inspiration from James Gibson (who sought to get rid of the Cartesian notion of the mind as an entity separate from the body and instead suggested that perception involved the organism as a whole) and Gregory Bateson (who suggested that the mind is not confined within the limits of a person’s skin but extends into the environment through multiple sensory pathways) (Ingold 2000: 18; 222-3). Ingold questions the obviousness of the viewing subject as separated from a passive, objectified, viewed environment by a superimposed layer of ‘culture’, which is the realm of the ‘mind’. Rather, he says, in some hunter-gatherer accounts, there are not two worlds (nature and society) but only one, in which humans exist as undivided beings, ‘organism-persons’ that relate as such to humans and non-human entities alike, both of whom are equally endowed with agency. In other words, human beings not only perceive the environment around them, but this environment is perceiving them right back. Therefore, instead of ‘intersubjectivity’, it makes more sense to speak of *interagentivity* in these cases (Ingold 2000: 47).

Ingold's use of the word 'environment' here is worth noting. 'Environment', he says, is a term relative to the being whose environment it is: '*my* environment is the world as it exists and takes on meaning in relation to me, and in that sense it came into existence and undergoes development with me and around me' (Ingold 2000: 20). Further, the environment is never complete: as long as life goes on, it is continually under construction (as are organisms). Lastly, and most significantly for our purposes, 'environment' should not be confused with 'nature': while 'nature' is what we perceive as on the outside (external to humanity as well as to history), environments are historical in the sense that we constantly shape them as they shape us (ibid.).

The relevance of Ingold's approach for the present investigation lies in the fact that the *comunidad* was a setting in which 'nature' could not be easily separated from 'culture' or even 'society', and where human beings engaged in 'interagent' relationships with non-human entities resident in the landscape around them. These interactions established connections between people and the land that helped transform what used to be an unfamiliar space into an inhabited and familiar place.¹⁹¹ One might want to say that engaging with the *dueños* was a way in which people took possession of the land and made it theirs – were it not for the 'inter-' in the 'agentivity'. This to me seems one of the most important insights we can derive from Ingold's theory: that it was in fact not exclusively the people who were making the land their own, but that the land in turn actively established links with the people and drew them into its own realm through the activities of its *dueños*.

Yet if we are really to take the idea of an 'interagent' relationship with the environment seriously, it is not even necessary to evoke the *dueños*, who so conveniently bridge the presumed gap between 'nature' and 'culture', as mediators. As has been pointed out by Mark Harris in an essay on *ribeirinho* (river-dwelling) people in the Brazilian Amazon, not all societies battle nature in a constant attempt to tame and control it like 'Western' people do, but some rather react to changes in the environment as much as they act on it (Harris 2005; see also Gow 1991, 1995). To a degree, the same can be said about Cañón: while its people did manipulate the

¹⁹¹ This is not to say that connecting the land with the people and vice versa was everything human-*dueño* relations did, as indeed they also exist in much older communities, but it certainly was one aspect of them that seems particularly relevant in the case of Cañón.

environment for their own purposes (as, for example, in agriculture or cattle farming), they were at the same time also being acted upon by environmental forces. One of the most notable examples of this was the rainy season, as even the feasibility of any agricultural endeavour depended on the abundance of rain because of the lack of an irrigation system. When they did occur, rains could be torrential, rendering the dirt road leading up to the community's houses from the nearby motorway unnavigable, even cutting people off from other houses in the community for short periods of time and opening up new ravines where the unstable terrain caved in under their force.

The instability and 'shiftiness' of the ground was most often the cause for the resurfacing of the large vessels containing ancient burials that seemed rather common in Cañón, and which could be inhabited by the often evil *dueños* whom people tended to treat with great respect. So rather than the *dueños* establishing a link with the land, these were cases in which, on the contrary, the environment itself created the conditions for an interaction between *comunarios* and *dueños* in the first place.

In the case of these vessels, land and *dueños* joined forces to create a further link, namely, that between the people and the land's history.¹⁹² As mentioned, Guaraní people do not tend to be too sentimental about long-dead 'ancestors', and especially not if they are afraid of becoming the victim of a dream attack by them. However, the *comunarios* of Cañón did consider the owners of the bones inside the vessels their ancestors in the sense that they acknowledged that they too had been Guaraní people and in some ways similar to themselves. They would, for example, often remark how in the past, the Guaraní did not seem to have used sugar, as the skulls of the skeletons all had 'really good teeth' which they would then jokingly compare to their own. Thus, while not providing the *comunarios* with specific genealogies of descent and the like, the bones of the dead were an assertion that their land had in fact been Guaraní land for a considerable length of time, which, in the light of the ongoing

¹⁹² I should point out that when I am talking about the 'history' of the land here I am using the word from my own perspective, and that this is not the same 'history' to which the *comunarios* had referred when they spoke about 'their history', which I discussed in Chapter 3.

tensions between land owners and indigenous groups in Bolivia, can be an important claim to be able to make (cf. Castañón Pinto 2011).

As we have seen, however, it was not only the bones of the dead that were buried in clay pots underground but also hidden treasures. I should mention at this point that the word ‘treasure’ is mine, and that the *comunarios* themselves never spoke about ‘tesoros’, but always of ‘*plata*’ when referring to them. ‘*Plata*’ is a Spanish word literally meaning ‘silver’, but it also functions as a slang word for money in Bolivia. This semantic ambiguity is intriguing in that it opens up several possibilities of interpretation here. If we translate *plata* as ‘silver’, it is possible that we are dealing with a narrative tradition that precedes the time of the conquest. According to 16th-century Spanish records, the motivation for the migrations that first brought Guaraní people to the Andean Cordillera was the search for precious metals for adornments and trade (Melià 1988: 21), a version that is supported by their archaeologically and historically documented repeated invasions of and trading relations with the Inca empire (Alconini 2002), which was known for its wealth of metals far beyond its borders.¹⁹³ If, in contrast, we take the meaning of *plata* to be ‘money’, we are likely dipping into a tradition stemming from colonial days. It could be that the tale of the buried treasure itself had arrived with the conquistadors, whose interest in precious metals probably even exceeded that of the Guaraní, or even that it referred to a more locally specific situation: according to a local historian, a colonial expedition allegedly carrying with them a large quantity of precious objects was rumoured to have buried them before being killed off to the last man, which would explain the popularity of tales of buried treasures in the entire region (Franz Michel, pers.comm.). Whatever the case may be, the tales of buried *plata* in Cañón and the surrounding area point to an overlapping of discourses from either highlands and lowlands, or the Old and New Worlds, or in fact all of these, which demonstrates Cañón’s position as a

¹⁹³ Interestingly, similar ideas exist in the Andean highlands today. According to Olivia Harris, Laymi miners in Northern Potosí talk about the money of the *chullpas*, pre-Incaic ancestors living inside mountains: ‘[F]or many people, chullpa money is not so much money, as what they call “treasure” (*tesoro*, *tapado*) and it is buried underground... In the month of August, which... is the devil’s month, people say that this treasure comes to the surface and that those who are brave enough and who make a blood sacrifice – even a human sacrifice – will gain access to it’ (1995: 321). Although doña Estefanía did not use the word in her account, local traditions dealing with buried treasures also often refer to them by the term *tapado* (or *tapao*, in local colloquial Spanish).

unique node of historical connections at whose core its *comunarios* find themselves today.

What doña Estefanía had told me about the nature of the *plata* buried in the pots was that it was very old, and that it was not like today's money and one had to go to Argentina to get it changed. The money which the pig in the ravine was guarding is, apparently, still underground. As for the pig itself, it was said to have appeared to various *comunarios* over time, although I could never find one who would admit to having seen it for him- or herself. One friend of mine told me that she had heard it once when passing the ravine with a group of other women, which had given them a fright and made them run off quickly, and another man had seen a strange white shape ('*bulto*') there once which definitely had not been a cow, but he had been unable to see it clearly because the light was already fading. In general, it seemed that the pig had mostly appeared to people who were walking home from a fiesta drunk late at night. This circumstance seemed highly amusing to me at first; however, when I started to think about it more, it occurred to me that it might be related to the *dueños*' connection with dreams in that dreaming and being drunk are similar 'liminal' states of consciousness that might make people susceptible to such apparitions.

There are various other instances of links with history created through *dueños* and other *bichos*, such as the example of the salt merchants' ghost treks that were still following the old trading routes that they had followed centuries ago when the *comunarios* had already settled in Cañón. Reminiscent of what Joanna Overing has described for the 'mythic before time' of the Piaroa, the past in Cañón thus could not be trusted to remain in the past, but had a habit of erupting back into the present (Overing 1990). Again, this process of connection was a mutual one: while it was often the environment and/or its entities that established the contact with the people, these incidents were then taken up and discussed by the *comunarios* who put their own spin on them and wove their own narratives around them.

From the interactions between people and *dueños* that have been described here we can see that place-making in Cañón was, on some level, literally a 'personal' matter.

There were two sets of ‘owners’ in Cañón from the start; that is, the *comunarios* (as the legally recognised owners of a measured and limited piece of land, and as informal owners of their family houses and *chacos*), and the *dueños*, owners of mountains, animals, *plata*, and burial urns, who inhabited the same piece of land but who were outside the *comunidad*’s social network. It is this aspect of the human-*dueño* relations that I would call ‘political’, in that it entailed the *comunarios*’ engagement with a set of ‘internal outsiders’ whose motivations were different from those of the *comunarios*, and with whom the *comunarios* therefore had to arrange themselves in different ways. The making of Cañón as a *comunidad* was, then, not a case of a group of people taking possession of and transforming a previously unoccupied piece of virgin land as much as it was a negotiation between new and old occupants. Rather than an ‘appropriation of nature’, this process was a give and take that connected place with people and people with place, in the course of which the land became imbued with a mixture of old and new meanings, like the powder made from the shards of ancient vessels mixed with clay in the pottery of doña Apolonia.

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have explored the history of Cañón de Segura, a Guaraní *comunidad* in the southeastern lowlands of Bolivia. Both of these notions, history and *comunidad*, are contested: there is no one version of history, any more than there can ever be a definitive *comunidad*. One aspect of this thesis has therefore been to examine the politics of specific claims on the history of *comunidad* and the uses to which the notions of ‘history’ and ‘community’ are put. Nevertheless, the *comunidad* of Cañón is home to very real people: a second aspect of the thesis has been to describe the ways in which their lives and activities constitute *comunidad* as they see it. Taken together, these two lines of discussion make the concept of *comunidad* highly problematic: it is both created in a specific history of claims and contests, and embodied in the lives that people lead.

In Part I, I present three different takes on ‘history’ as it relates to the subject of the *comunidad*. Chapter 1 outlines the emergence of this concept in Bolivia within a wider setting of national and ethno-history with the aim of providing a background for the chapters to follow. It thus constitutes my own deliberately partial version of ‘Bolivian and Guaraní history’, pieced together from the works of other scholars in order to provide a narrative with a particular capacity and function. Chapter 2 draws on this background information, ‘zooming in’ on the issue of captive communities to reveal a historical narrative of a different order. This second narrative, while also being a product of my own assembling activity, draws on a different type of sources: that is, documents that were produced (or appropriated) by the workings of the Bolivian legal system. On one level, this narrative tells us something about the legal situation of (and complications for) *comunidades cautivas* and their inhabitants before the passing of the INRA Law. However, on another level, it also alerts us to the high degree to which ideas about ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ relating to the notion of a ‘*comunidad indígena*’ as they were held by the people involved in the particular case of Cañón de Segura were informed by moral orders other than the law (such as, for example, Christian values, national and regional solidarity, and remnants of colonial attitudes about ethnic difference). These different moral orders in turn informed people’s representations of the events which the documents describe, and which simultaneously constituted the reason for their coming-into-being. In the

representation of the case that is in turn created through the combination and juxtaposition of the various documents, we can see how these different moral orders intertwine in a way that makes it impossible to separate ‘the legal’ out from ‘the rest’.

In the case of the *comunarios*, representations of their position appear in the documents mostly in a collective form (with the exception of the testimonies given by certain individuals in court). This general position is opened up by the memories of the *comunarios* in the second part of the chapter. While the main tenor of these more personal representations is the same (that is, the fact that the *comunarios* were justified in their claims and the *patrones*’ treatment of them was wrong, and that the move to Cañón constituted a great improvement of their situation), there is great variety in the details remembered by different people and the foci they put on different aspects of the occurrences. Thus, while some mainly focussed on the legal proceedings, what was most memorable to others was their personal experience of fear or hardship. These personal perspectives could not be conveyed in this form by the generalised statements of the various representatives purporting to talk for the *comunarios* which we find reproduced in the documents. In short, the memories alert us to the fact that a *comunidad* is not only inhabited by *comunarios* (as the official and supposedly ethnically similar¹⁹⁴ inhabitants of a legally recognised and defined place) but also by *people* with different experiences and perspectives. In short, the fact that all the people living in a *comunidad* are *comunarios* should not lead us to assume that they are all the same, or that, indeed, a *comunidad* is a homogeneous and undifferentiated field of human interaction.

Having demonstrated this, Chapter 3 takes a step back again to look at how the shared elements of *comunarios*’ experiences of the events described in Chapter 2 had created a historical tradition within Cañón that understood ‘history’ as a finished object with a particular use value. To the *comunarios*, then, ‘history’ was a thing of the past, both in its content and in its making (that is, as the scriptural practice of powerful outsiders). This raises the question of what, if not the making of history, was going on in the *comunidad* today. For even though the historical project had ended with the

¹⁹⁴ As illustrated by the memory of Rogelio Torres, non-Guaraní people can in some circumstances become *comunarios* of Guaraní *comunidades*.

establishment of Cañón as a legally recognised *comunidad indígena*, it would be a mistake to therefore take Cañón itself as a finished project.

The argument of Part I suggests the community as both located within a specific history and a site from which to take a perspective on that history. We might say that Cañón is both contextualised by history and the context for it. This means that the community, while it takes a particular form as a result of particular happenings and actions in the past and is therefore ‘subject to history’, also serves as a resource from which particular kinds of histories can be written, remembered and used.

Following on from the question posed in Chapter 3, Part II deals with some of the meanings which the *comunarios* themselves attached to the concept of ‘*comunidad*’, with particular reference to the areas of work, fiestas, spatial organisation, and tensions among the *comunarios* as well as their aspirations for the future. In the first instance, my aim here has been to show the dangers inherent in the continuing regurgitation of ‘classic’ ethnographic sources about Guaraní culture and society, and to demonstrate that these sources are best used in their capacity of historical documents. Used critically in such a way, they can provide useful background information to contemporary ethnographies and indeed serve to help us identify what changes have occurred within Bolivian Guaraní culture over time. In the case of Cañón de Segura a rupture that produced a dramatic change in the *comunarios*’ circumstances is clearly identifiable in their move from one location to another and the accompanying change in their legal position. This rupture is also discernible in the everyday activities and attitudes of its inhabitants in that it had become one of the defining features of the ways in which *comunarios* talked about what it meant to live in a ‘free *comunidad*’. The ultimate aim of Part II, then, is the identification of these activities and attitudes and the way they related to the concept of ‘*comunidad*’.

Chapter 4 discusses the centrality of work to *comunarios*’ lives on the basis of the opposition between the *comunidad* and the *propiedad* of the *patrones*, as it was expressed in people’s emphasis on their ability to work ‘*tranquilo*’ (in one’s own field, according to one’s own timing and capacities). Working *tranquilo*, then, was the kind of work that was performed by *comunarios* (as opposed to *peones* of a *patrón*) and as such a marker of their identity as ‘free’ people. However, while the types of

work that were carried out by the *comunarios* of Cañón were often recognisably ‘Guaraní’ (such as the strong emphasis on maize in the arrangement of *chacos* and production of food items), the larger organisational patterns of the past (*motiro*) had diminished so as to be mostly reduced to their practical function. As such, the idea of work had become removed from its former position at the centre of reciprocal inter- and intra-village relationships and taken on a new significance that better reflected the *comunarios*’ lived experience.

Chapter 5 takes up the theme of reciprocity within the context of the fiesta. While again removed from the contexts which we still find reproduced in many texts on ‘Guaraní culture’ (that is, warfare and chiefly banquets), the fiesta continued to be of central importance to the reproduction and fortification of community sociality. This was expressed by the activation of kinship and friendship ties in the financing and organisation of fiestas; the positioning of *comunarios* in relation to each other in the ritualistic order of the fiesta as an event; and the cathartic resolution (or at least expression) of conflicts under the license of drunkenness. The ‘active ingredient’ of the fiesta was the *chicha*, a highly meaningful substance in that it was the product of the combined work of the *comunarios* (sowing, harvesting, chewing and brewing of maize) and as such a symbol of the *comunidad* itself. In short, it could be said that fiestas reinforced the *comunarios*’ sense of ‘belonging’ (in the sense of reminding them of their unity as a group as well as ascribing each their proper place within it).

In Chapter 6, I look at the *comunidad* in its capacity as a place. While the positions of *comunarios*’ houses in relation to each other expressed people’s relationships to each other to a certain degree, even more notable in the makeup of Cañón as a place was its high internal mobility. Guaraní people are often represented in the literature as possessing a high tendency towards ‘nomadism’ and their *comunidades* a high degree of instability (cf. Albó 1990, Healy 1982). However, considering how many *comunidades* nowadays either possess a title to their land or are trying to obtain one, this description is another one that should not be accepted at face value. While I do not doubt that there are cases even today in which communities break up or new ones form, the norm in Kaami was certainly for *comunidades* as a whole to stay put while their internal makeup was in a constant flux due to the movements of individual *comunarios*. This internal mobility further expressed itself in the movements of

animals and objects, and in the reappropriation of objects and structures to whatever use was in demand at any one time. While Cañón as a human settlement was relatively new and therefore not yet marked with the traces of generations that could symbolise people's attachment to the place, the very fact that these movements of people, animals, things, and purposes were possible expressed this attachment by constantly reminding people of their status as owners of their own land.

Chapter 7 reverses the focus of the previous chapters to approach the meaning of *comunidad* from a perspective of absence rather than presence. On the one hand, I discuss the upsetting of the '*tranquilidad*' which people liked to propose as one of the defining attributes of Cañón through expressions of jealousy between *comunarios*. This observation is largely my own. The point I am making here is, however, closely tied up with *comunarios*' ideas about what the *comunidad* was still lacking and what, therefore, needed to be developed in that both these points had to do with money: while *comunarios* often negated the fact that money formed an integral part of the *comunidad*'s economy, money was in fact often at the root of *comunarios*' jealousies of each other, and being more financially autonomous further constituted one of their main goals for the future of their *comunidad*. The importance in this lay partly in the *comunarios*' concern about outside forces wanting to turn their *comunidad* into the semblance of a town, complete with the '*patrón-peón*-like' relationships typical of a town.

While the ways in which it stood in opposition to both *propiedad* and town was one of the central defining features of their *comunidad* in the eyes of the *comunarios*, what the discussion in Part II shows above all is that '*comunidad*' is a complex, multidimensional reality that appears in different ways in different contexts. Rather than as an entity possessing certain specific properties, the *comunidad* is thus perhaps better seen as being constituted by different potentialities that can be activated at different times and by different actors. However, these actors were not necessarily the *comunarios*: much as they stressed 'freedom' in their assessments of life in the *comunidad*, this freedom was not total but limited by various different factors, many of which were due to pressures that originated from outside the *comunidad*. This, then, alerts us to the fact that *comunidades* do not exist in a vacuum but within a wider political and economic context that cannot be disregarded.

Part III expands the focus of Part II to consider instances of outsiders' perspectives that were impacting on the lives of Cañón's inhabitants. Chapter 8 deals with governmental and non-governmental development agencies' aims to 'develop' the *comunidades* according to ideas derived from the domain of international development. These agencies' strong focus on 'capacity building' and the role of leaders revealed certain presuppositions about the organisation of *comunidades* that often co-existed with (N)GO workers' more specific knowledge about Guaraní society and culture. This alerts us to the generic way in which issues pertaining to 'development' were approached by employees of even the most thorough organisations (such as CIPCA). This generalised notion of development was reflected in the ideas of Guaraní people themselves, who had come to see project implementation, workshop organisation, and capacity building as 'things that were provided by organisations'. Whereas organisations' aim in providing these services was the encouragement of a greater degree of autonomy among the populations of the *comunidades*, the *comunarios* rather saw the training of more 'professionals' from among their own ranks as the means to this end.

Chapter 9 takes a project initiated by the national government as a starting point to discuss the cultural projects of Guaraní and *karai* people in the Department of Santa Cruz as different and indeed largely opposing projects of identity politics: while the Guaraní produced material culture (*cultura*) in order to be able to continue their *ñande reko*, their way of being, the *karai* cared for the *ñande reko* only inasmuch as it contributed to their own identity project in the service of regional politics, a role that was more easily fulfilled by the products of Guaraní material culture. While to contemporary Guaraní, their ability to work (in peace, on their own land, without the oppression of the *patrones*) constituted one of the most important aspects of their *ñande reko*, *karai* continually sought to undermine their move towards more independence by denying the existence of this ability and only regarding work that was carried out within the margins of the established power structures as valid. I have suggested that we can look at this phenomenon in terms of 'containment', in that *karai* mainstream culture continuously sought to incorporate the products coming from the *comunidades* (*cultura*) at the same time as it tried to control the lives of the

people who inhabited them (*ñande reko*) according to colonial-style ethnic hierarchies.

Chapter 10 expands on the latter theme to show its workings within the field of regional and local politics. The same ‘colonial’ attitudes as described in Chapter 9 can be seen at work in the frequent attempts of local and departmental elites to relegate the inhabitants of *comunidades* to a subordinate position in the service of their own political projects. However, here the matter is complicated by the Guaraní’s strong presence as political actors in their own right, which makes reducing them to the position of political pawns (or perhaps ‘*peones*’) an ultimately impossible endeavour. Consequently, as the political landscape of the *karai* elites keeps shifting along the lines of their connections with each other and other sectors of the population, the *comunidades*, too, change position within these constellations according both to the manipulations of the aforementioned elites and their own political strategies. On the basis of this discussion, I have proposed that rather than looking at *comunidades* as entities whose positions within any political landscape we can try to determine, it is more helpful to see their varying positionings as the activation of different potentialities by different actors and/or at different points in time.

The last chapter puts a different spin on the subject of ‘politics’ by using it as a lens through which to look at the interactions of the *comunarios* of Cañón with supernatural beings (‘*dueños*’) inhabiting the space of the *comunidad*. Framing the *comunarios*’ interactions with these ‘internal outsiders’ in this way allows us to see the process of place-making in Cañón as the ongoing negotiation of a shared space between a set of old and one of new ‘owners’ (owners of animals, places, and *plata* as opposed to legal owners of land). These negotiations had the effect of creating connections between land and people on an interpersonal level, and thereby connecting the new inhabitants with local histories about the *comunidad* as a place. They also remind us of the fact that *comunidades* cannot be assumed to be internally heterogeneous (or, for that matter, conflict-free).

To sum it up, there are almost as many perspectives on what a ‘*comunidad*’ is/should be/should do as there are people with an interest in them. While I have identified certain larger trends in this thesis as were present at the time of my fieldwork, the

comunidad itself eludes us. Whether we see it as a legal entity, a physical place, a group of people, a symbol of culture, an embodiment of rural poverty, or a political unit, none of these perceptions exist completely independently of each other, nor of the actions of those who would see the *comunidad* in a different way. As a consequence, perceptions too are in a constant state of flux. However, in a way the way that people cannot quite agree about what a *comunidad* is about perhaps tells us more about the lives of people in it than trying to come up with an integrated theory of what a *comunidad* is about could.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albó, X. 2008a. 'Bien vivir = convivir bien'. Available at CIPCA: http://cipca.org.bo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=248:zdpa&catid=78:zdpa&Itemid=114
- 2008b. 'The "Long Memory" of Ethnicity in Bolivia and Some Temporary Oscillations', in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (eds.) J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- 1990. *La Comunidad Hoy*. La Paz: CIPCA
- Alconini, S. 2002. *Prehistoric Inka Frontier Structure and Dynamics in the Bolivian Chaco*. Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Pittsburgh
- Anaya, S. 2004. 'International Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples: The Move Toward the Multicultural State', in *Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law* 21: 13-61
- Antezana, L. 1969. 'La Reforma Agraria Campesina en Bolivia (1956-1960)', in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 31, 2: 245-321
- APG 2008. 'Pronunciamiento'. 08 April. Available at CIDOB: http://www.cidob-bo.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=137&Itemid=1
- Assies, W. 2011. 'Bolivia's New Constitution and Its Implications', in *Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia: The First Term in Context, 2006-2010* (ed.) A. Pearce. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas
- Belaunde, L. 2001. *Viviendo Bien: Género y fertilidad entre los Airo-Pai de la Amazonía peruana*. Lima: CAAAP/BCRP
- Binswanger-Mkhize, H., J. de Regt and S. Spector (eds.) 2009. *Scaling Up Local and Community Driven Development (LCDD): A Real World Guide to Its Theory and Practice*. E-book available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1237844546330/5949218-1237844567860/Scaling_Up_LCDD_Book_rfillesize.pdf
- Bonilla, H. (ed.) 1991. *Los Andes en la Encrucijada: Indios, comunidades y estado en el siglo XIX*. Quito
- Caballero, G., J. Ramírez Mattos, V. Villalta, M. González Lelarge, and S. Ruíz 201?. *Buenas Prácticas: Un camino hacia la autodeterminación – Distrito Indígena Guaraní Kaami, Bolivia*. Camiri: PADEP-GTZ
- Caballero Espinoza, A. 2008. *Iyambae: Gestión pública intercultural para el autogobierno*. Camiri: PADEP-GTZ

- Callejo Cobo, J., and C. Canales Torres 1994. *Guía de los seres mágicos de España: Duendes*. Madrid: Edaf S.A.
- Castañón Pinto, P. 2011. 'Guaraní ¿Cautivos?: Espacio y auto/representaciones', in *Anales de la Reunión Anual de Etnología n. 22, Sem. IV: Antropología Social y/o Cultural*. Available at MUSEF: <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/283>
- Chocano Mena, M. 2000. 'La comunidad entre la realidad económica y el discurso', in *Estado-nación, Comunidad Indígena, Industria: Tres debates al final del milenio* (eds.) H. König, T. Platt and C. Lewis. Cuadernos de Historia Latinoamericana No 8. AHILA
- Clastres, H. 1995. *The Land-Without-Evil: Tupí-Guaraní Propheticism*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press
- Clastres, P. 1977. *Society Against the State*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Clifford, J. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press
- Coello de la Rosa, A. 2005. 'Espacios de Exclusión, Espacios de Poder: La reducción de indios de Santiago de Cercado a la Lima colonial (1568-1590)', in *Estudios sobre América: Siglos XVI-XX* (eds.) A. Gutiérrez Escudero and M. Laviana Cuetos. Seville: AEA
- Combès, I. 2006. 'De los Candires a Kandire: La invención de un mito chiriguano', in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 92, 1: 137-64
- 2005a. *Etno-historias del Isoso – Chané y chiriguanos en el Chaco boliviano (siglos XVI a XX)*. La Paz: PIEB/IFEA
- 1992. *La Tragédie Cannibale chez les Anciens Tupí-Guaraní*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France
- 2005b. 'Las Batallas de Kuruyuki: Variaciones sobre una derrota chiriguana', in *Bulletin del Institut Français d'Études Andines* 31, 2: 221-33
- Combès, I., N. Justiniano, I. Segundo, D. Vaca and R. Vaca 1998. 'Kaa Iya Reta: Los Dueños del Monte'. *Proyecto Kaa Iya*. Santa Cruz: CABI/WCS
- Combès, I. and T. Saignes 1991. *Alter Ego - Naissance de l'identité chiriguano*. Paris: Cahiers de l'homme, NS XXX
- Combès, I. and D. Villar 2004. 'Aristocracias Chané: "Casas" en el Chaco argentino y boliviano', in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 90, 2: 63-102
- Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos 2009. 'Comunidades Cautivas: Situación del pueblo indígena guaraní y formas contemporáneas de esclavitud en el Chaco de Bolivia'. OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 58

- Conklin, B. 1997. 'Body Paint, Feathers, and VCRs: Aesthetics and Authenticity in Amazonian Activism', in *American Ethnologist* 24, 4: 711-37
- Crabtree, J. 2008. 'A Story of Unresolved Tensions', in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (eds.) J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- Crivos, M., M. Martínez, M. Pochettino, C. Remorino, A. Sy and L. Teves 2007. 'Pathways as "Signatures in Landscape": Towards an Ethnography of Mobility among the Mbya-Guaraní (Northeastern Argentina)', in *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 3, 2. Available at: <http://www.ethnobiomed.com/content/3/1/2>
- Davis, S. 2002. 'Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Participatory Development: The Experience of the World Bank in Latin America', in *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy* (ed.) R. Sieder. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan
- Deere, C. and M. Leon 2001. 'Institutional Reforms of Agriculture Under Neoliberalism: The Impact of the Women's and Indigenous Movements', in *Latin American Research Review* 36, 2: 31-63
- De la Cadena, M. 1995. "'Women Are More Indian": Ethnicity and Gender in a Community Near Cusco', in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (eds.) B. Larson, O. Harris and E. Tandeter. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press
- Delgadillo Terceros, W. 2008. *Chaco: Experiencia de descentralización intercultural en el distrito indígena guaraní de Kaami*. La Paz: PADEP/GTZ
- Dietrich, W. 1986. *El idioma Chiriguano – Gramática, textos, vocabulario*. Madrid: Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana
- Djup, A. 2007. *Personhood and Human-Spirit Relations among the Yuracaré of the Bolivian Amazon*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis
- Dundes, A. 1981. *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishers
- Dunkerley, J. 2007. *Bolivia: Revolution and the Power of History in the Present*. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas
- Easterly, W. 2005. 'What Did Structural Adjustment Adjust? The Association of Policies and Growth with Repeated IMF and World Bank Adjustment Loans', in *Journal of Development Economics* 76, 1: 1-22
- Eaton, K. 2007. 'Backlash in Bolivia: Regional Autonomy as a Reaction against Indigenous Mobilization', in *Politics & Society* 35, 1: 71-102
- Echevarría, R. 1998. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Cambridge – New York – Melbourne: Cambridge University Press

- El Deber* 1991a. 'Denuncia: Sacerdote incita a invadir propiedades ganaderas'. 13 August
- 1991b. 'Denuncian que sacerdote instiga a indígenas'. 01 August
- 2005. 'Guaraníes, esclavos del siglo XXI'. 02 May
- Equipo Nizkor 2003. 'Pronunciamiento del Pueblo Guaraní'. Available at: www.derechos.org/nizkor/bolivia/doc/guaranibol.html
- Escobar, A. 1997. 'Anthropology and Development', in *International Social Science Journal* 49, 154: 497-515
- Ferguson, J. 1997. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization and Democratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge – New York – Melbourne: Cambridge University Press
- Fernández García, M. 2009. 'Bolivianos en España', in *Revista de Indias* LXIX, 245: 171-98
- Ferraro, E. 2011. 'Trueque: An Ethnographic Account of Barter, Trade and Money in Andean Ecuador', in *The Journal of Latin and Caribbean Anthropology* 16, 1: 168-84
- Frankland, S. 2001. 'Pygmic Tours', in *African Study Monographs*, Supplement 26: 237-56
- Garcilaso de la Vega 1966. *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*. Austin: University of Texas Press
- Gianotten, V. 2006. *CIPCA y Poder Campesino Indígena: 35 años de historia*. La Paz: CIPCA
- Gose, P. 2008. *Invaders as Ancestors: On the Intercultural Making and Unmaking of Spanish Colonialism in the Andes*. Toronto – Buffalo – London: University of Toronto Press Inc.
- Gotkowitz, L. 2007. *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880-1952*. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press
- Gow, P. 1995. 'Land, People, and Paper in Western Amazonia', in *The Anthropology of Landscape – Perspectives on Place and Space* (eds.) E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- 1991. *Of Mixed Blood: Kinship and History in Peruvian Amazonia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Guerrero, A. and T. Platt 2000. 'Proyecto Antiguo, Nuevas Preguntas: La antropología histórica de las comunidades andinas cara al Nuevo siglo', in *Estado-nación, Comunidad Indígena, Industria: Tres debates al final del milenio* (eds.) H. König, T. Platt and C. Lewis. Cuadernos de Historia Latinoamericana No 8. AHILA

- Gupta, A. and J. Ferguson 1997. 'Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology', in *Anthropological Locations* (eds.) A. Gupta and J. Ferguson. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press
- Gustafson, B. 2009. *New Languages of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia*. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press
- 2006. 'Spectacles of Autonomy and Crisis: Or, What Bulls and Beauty Queens Have to do with Regionalism in Eastern Bolivia', in *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 11, 2: 351-79
- 2010. 'When States Act Like Movements: Dismantling Local Power and Seating Sovereignty in Postneoliberal Bolivia', in *Latin American Perspectives* 173, 37, 4: 48-66
- Gutiérrez, M. 1965. *Las lenguas de la familia tupí guaraní en Bolivia*. Cochabamba: Marcos Feliciano Gutiérrez
- Guzmán, I. (ed.) 2008. *Saneamiento de la Tierra en Seis Regiones de Bolivia, 1996-2007*. La Paz: CIPCA
- Harris, M. 2005. 'Riding a Wave: Embodied Skills and Colonial History on the Amazon Floodplain', in *Ethnos* 70, 2: 197-219
- Harris, O. 1995. 'The Sources and Meanings of Money: Beyond the Market Paradigm in an Ayllu of Northern Potosí', in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (eds.) B. Larson, O. Harris and E. Tandeter. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press
- Harrison, R. 1982. 'Modes of Discourse: The Relacion de antigüedades deste reyno del Piru by Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamayguas', in *From Oral to Written Expression: Native Andean Chronicles of the Early Colonial Period* (ed.) R. Adorno. Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University
- Harten, S. 2011. 'Towards a "Traditional Party"? Internal Organisation and Change in the MAS in Bolivia', in *Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia: The First Term in Context, 2006-2010* (ed.) A. Pearce. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas
- Harvey, P. 1994. 'Domestic Violence in the Peruvian Andes', in *Sex and Violence: Issues in Representation and Experience* (eds.) P. Harvey and P. Gow. London & New York: Routledge
- 1997. 'Peruvian Independence Day: Ritual, Memory, and the Erasure of Narrative', in *Creating Context in Andean Cultures* (ed.) Rosaleen Howard-Malverde. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Healy, K. 1982. *Caciques y Patronos: Una experiencia de desarrollo rural en el sud de Bolivia*. Cochabamba: Ediciones El Buitre

- 1991. 'Political Ascent of Bolivia's Peasant Coca Leaf Producers', in *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 33, 1: 87-121
- Healy, K. and S. Paulson 2000. 'Political Economies of Identity in Bolivia, 1952-1998', in *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 5, 2: 2-29
- Heath, D. and M. Carballo 1969. 'Bolivia's Law of Agrarian Reform', in *Land Reform and Social Revolution in Bolivia* (eds.) D. Heath, C. Erasmus and H. Buechler. New York – Washington – London: Frederick A. Praeger Inc.
- Hennessy, A. 1978. *The Frontier in Latin American History*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd
- Hirsch, S. 2003a. 'Bilingualism, Pan-Indianism and Politics in Northern Argentina: The Guaraní's Struggle for Identity and Recognition', in *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8, 3: 84-103
- 2003b. 'The Emergence of Political Organizations Among the Guaraní Indians of Bolivia and Argentina: A Comparative Perspective', in *Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America* (eds.) E. Langer and E. Muñoz. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc.
- Hobsbawm, E. and T. Ranger 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: University Press
- Howard-Malverde, R. (ed.) 1997. *Creating Context in Andean Cultures*. Oxford: University Press
- Hoyos, M. and J. Blanes 1998. *La Participación Social y Política en el Mundo Guaraní. Estudio de Caso: Los Pueblos de Izozo y de Iupaguasu. Documento Preliminar para la Discusión*. La Paz: CEBEM
- IEG 2010. 'Ten Years of Social Fund Activities in Bolivia'. Available at World Bank: <http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/5F548B94FB509F04852567F5005D8F5B?opendocument> (accessed 23/08/2011)
- Ingold, T. 1994. 'Introduction to Culture', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture and Social Life* (ed.) T. Ingold. London: Routledge
- 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge
- Julien, C. 2007. 'Kandire in Real Time and Space: Sixteenth-Century Expeditions from the Pantanal to the Andes', in *Ethnohistory* 54, 2: 245-72
- Kidd, S. 1997. 'The Working Conditions of Indigenous People in the Chaco', in *Enslaved Peoples in the 1990s: Indigenous Peoples, Debt Bondage and Human Rights*. Copenhagen: Anti-Slavery International
- Klein, H. 1982. *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Oxford: University Press

- 1993. *Haciendas and Ayllus: Rural Society in the Bolivian Andes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Stanford: University Press
- 2011. 'The Historical Background to the Rise of the MAS, 1952-2005', in *Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia: The First Term in Context, 2006-2010* (ed.) A. Pearce. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas
- Kohl, B. 2002. 'Stabilizing Neoliberalism in Bolivia: Popular Participation and Privatization', in *Political Geography* 21: 449-72
- Kohl, J. 1978. 'Peasant and Revolution in Bolivia, April 9, 1952–August 2, 1953', in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, 2: 238-59
- LaBarre, W. 1938. 'Native American Beers', in *American Anthropologist* 40: 224-37
- Langer, E. 2002. 'The Eastern Andean Frontier (Bolivia and Argentina) and Latin American Frontiers: Comparative Contexts (19th and 20th Centuries)', in *The Americas* 59, 1: 33-63
- 1989. *Economic Exchange and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia, 1880-1930*. Stanford: University Press
- 2009. *Expecting Pears from an Elm Tree: Franciscan Missions on the Chiriguano Frontier in the Heart of South America, 1830-1949*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Lathrap, D. 1970. *The Upper Amazon*. London: Thames and Hudson
- Ledezma, J. 2007. 'Elementos y base territorial para la construcción de la propuesta de autonomía indígena', in *Ñamometei Ñande Ñemongeta: Construcción del estatuto de la autonomía de la nación guaraní* (ed.) APG. Camiri: Ñeeñope Grupo Editorial Guaraní
- Lema, A. 2001. *De la Huella al Impacto: La Participación Popular en municipios con población indígena*. La Paz: Fundación PIEB
- Li, T. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Lowrey, K. 2003. *Enchanted Ecology: Magic, Science, and Nature in the Bolivian Chaco*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago
- 2007. 'Estrategias Socioeconómicas de los Guaraníes del Chaco Boliviano Comparadas con las de los Guaraníes Occidentales del Chaco Paraguayo'. Unpublished paper presented at the XXVII Encuentro de Geohistoria Regional, Asunción, Paraguay, 16, 17 and 18 August
- 2008. 'Incommensurability and New Economic Strategies among Indigenous and Traditional Peoples', in *Journal of Political Ecology* 15: 61-74

- Lucero, J. 2006. 'Representing "Real Indians": The Challenges of Indigenous Authenticity and Strategic Constructivism in Ecuador and Bolivia', in *Latin American Research Review* 41, 2: 31-56
- 2008. *Struggles of Voice: The Politics of Political Representation in the Andes*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- Lusthaus, C., M.-H. Adrien and M. Perstinger 1999. 'Capacity Development: Definitiona, Issues and Implications for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation'. Universalía Occasional Paper No. 35
- MacCormack, S. 1999. 'Ethnography in South America: The First Two Hundred Years', in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas, vol. III: South America, Part 2* (eds.) F. Salomon and S. Schwartz. Cambridge: University Press
- Mallon, F. 1992. 'Indian Communities, Political Cultures, and the State in Latin America, 1780-1990', in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, Quincentenary Supplement: The Colonial and Post Colonial Experience. Five Centuries of Spanish and Portuguese America: 35-53
- MASRENA 2001. 'Plan de Ordenamiento Comunidad Cañón de Segura, Municipio de Camiri'. Camiri: Prefectura del Departamento de Santa Cruz / Cooperación Técnica Alemana (IP/GTZ)
- Maybury-Lewis, D. 1999. 'Lowland Peoples of the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas, vol. III: South America, Part 2* (eds.) F. Salomon and S. Schwartz. Cambridge: University Press
- Medina, J. (ed.) 2002. *Ñande Reko: La comprensión guaraní de la vida Buena*. La Paz: FAM-Bolivia/PADEP
- Melià, B. 1988. *Ñande reko, nuestro modo de ser y bibliografía general comentada*. La Paz: CIPCA
- 1996. 'Potirõ: Las formas del trabajo entre los Guaraní antiguos "reducidos" y modernos', in *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 22. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones UCM
- Mercado Chávez, O. 2011. *Genocidio Camba Cruceño: Genocidio contra la nación cautiva camba cruceña*. Santa Cruz de la Sierra 450 años de fundación. Available at: <http://www.orlandomercadoch.com/Genocidio%20Camba%20Cruceño.pdf>
- Métraux, A. 1930. 'Etudes Sur la Civilisation des Indiens Chiriguano', in *Revista del Instituto de Etnología de la Universidad Nacional de Tucumán* I: 295-493.
- Montenegro, F. 2007. 'Elementos conceptuales y antecedentes históricos organizativos para el debate sobre autonomía guaraní, in *Ñamometei Ñande Ñemongeta: Construcción del estatuto de la autonomía de la nación guaraní*. Camiri: Neeñope Grupo Editorial Guaraní

- Mosse, D. 2005. *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*. London & Ann Arbor: Pluto Press
- Nijenhuis, G. 2002. *Decentralisation and Popular Participation in Bolivia: The Link Between Local Governance and Local Development*. Utrecht: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap / Faculteit Ruimtelijke Wetenschappen Universiteit Utrecht
- Nordenskiöld, E. 1920. *The Changes in the Material Culture of Two Indian Tribes under the Influence of New Surroundings*. Gothenburg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag
- 1917. 'The Guaraní Invasion of the Inca Empire in the Sixteenth Century: An Historical Indian Migration', in *Geographical Review* 4, 2: 103-21
- 1912. *Indianerleben – El Gran Chaco (Südamerika)*. Leipzig: Albert Bonnier
- Oliveto, G. 2010. 'Chiriguano: La construcción de un estereotipo en la política colonizadora del sur andino', in *Memoria Americana* 18, 1: 43-69
- Ortiz, I. 2009. 'Forced Labor and Servitude of Guaraní Men and Women'. United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1814261>
- Ortiz García, E. 2002. *Mbarea – Invitación*. Cuadernos de Investigación de la Cultura Guaraní no. 1. Camiri: APG/Teko-Guaraní
- 2004. *Toponimia Guaraní del Chaco y Cordillera – Ensayo lingüístico, etnográfico y antropológico*. Camiri: Teko-Guaraní
- Overing, J. 2008. 'The Backlash to Decolonizing Intellectuality', in *Anthropology and Humanism* 31, 1: 11-40
- 1990. 'The Shaman as Maker of Worlds: Nelson Goodman in the Amazon', in *Man* (N.S.) 25: 602-19
- Overing, J. and A. Passes (eds.) 2000. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. London: Routledge
- PADEP-GTZ 2010. *Experiencias Destacadas para el Proceso de Cambio. Programa del apoyo a la gestión pública descentralizada y lucha contra la pobreza de la Cooperación Técnica Alemana PADEP-GTZ 2002-2010*. La Paz
- Padwe, J. 2001. "'Development With Identity": The "Spatial Needs Identification Study" And Indigenous Land Titling in Bolivia'. Paper submitted to the workshop 'Conservation and Sustainable Development: Comparative Perspectives', Yale Centre for Comparative Research, 30-1 August
- Pagden, A. 1982. *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*. Cambridge: Iberian and Latin American Studies

- Palenque, E. 1991. 'Solicitada', in *El Deber*. 06 August
- Pärssinen, M. 1992. *Tawantinsuyu: The Inca State and Its Political Organization*. Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura
- 2003. 'When Did the Guaraní Expansion Towards the Andean Foothills Begin?', in Pärssinen, M. and A. Korpisaari (eds.). *Western Amazonia – Amazônia Ocidental: Multidisciplinary Studies on Ancient Expansionistic Movements, Fortifications and Sedentary Life*. Helsinki: Renvall Institute for Area and Cultural Studies
- Pärssinen, M., A. Siiriäinen and A. Korpisaari 2003. 'Fortifications Related to the Inca Expansion', in Pärssinen, M. and A. Korpisaari (eds.). *Western Amazonia – Amazônia Ocidental: Multidisciplinary Studies on Ancient Expansionistic Movements, Fortifications and Sedentary Life*. Helsinki: Renvall Institute for Area and Cultural Studies
- Perreault, T. and G. Valdivia 2010. 'Hydrocarbons, Popular Protest and National Imaginaries: Ecuador and Bolivia in Comparative Context', in *Geoforum* 41: 689-99
- Pifarré, F. 1992. 'Guaranís: El derecho a ser pueblo', in *Cuarto Intermedio* 23: 3-19
- 1989. *Historia de un Pueblo*. La Paz: CIPCA
- Plan Desarrollo Rural Cordillera* 1986a. *Diagnóstico-Estrategia*, vol. 1. Santa Cruz: CORDECRUZ / CIPCA
- Plan Desarrollo Rural Cordillera* 1986b. *Diagnóstico-Estrategia*, vol. 2. Santa Cruz: CORDECRUZ / CIPCA
- Plata, W. 2008. 'El Discurso Autonomista de las Élités de Santa Cruz', in *Los Barones del Oriente: El poder en Santa Cruz ayer y hoy* (ed.) X. Soruco. Santa Cruz: Fundación TIERRA
- Platt, T. 1982. *Estado Boliviano y Ayllu Andino: Tierra y tributo en el norte de Potosí*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos
- 1999. 'Imagined Frontiers: Recent Advances in the Ethnography of the Southern Andes (Review Essay)', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 18, 1: 101-10
- 1992. 'Writing, Shamanism and Latin American Identity; or Voices From Abya-Yala', in *History Workshop* 34: 132-47
- Platt, T., T. Bouysse-Cassagne and O. Harris 2006. *Qaraqara-Charka: Mallku, Inka y Rey en la provincia de Charcas (siglos XV-XVII). Historia antropológica de una confederación aymara*. La Paz: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos / Plural Editores / University of St Andrews / University of London / Inter American Foundation / Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia

- Postero, N. 2000. 'Bolivia's *Indígena* Citizen: Multiculturalism in a Neoliberal Age'. Paper prepared for the Latin American Studies Association Meetings, Session: *Indigenismo/Mestizaje: New Views on Key Concepts*, 16 March
- 2007. *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford: University Press
- Presencia* 1991. 'Guaraníes de provincia Cordillera denuncian diversos abusos'. 27 July. La Paz
- Rappaport, J. 1990. *The Politics of Memory: Historical Representation in the Colombian Andes*. Cambridge – New York – Melbourne: Cambridge University Press
- Read, J. 2002. *The Rough Guide to Bolivia*. London & New York: Rough Guides Ltd.
- Reed, R. 1995. 'Household Ethnicity, Household Consumption: Commodities and the Guaraní', in *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 44, 1: 129-45
- Renard-Cassevitz, F., T. Saignes and A. Taylor-Descola 1986. *L'Inca, l'Espagnol et les Sauvages - Rapport Entre les Sociétés Amazoniennes et Andine du XVe au XVIIe Siècle*. Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations
- 'Resolución de Autonomía de los Pueblos Indígenas de Santa Cruz' 31 March 2008. Santa Cruz. Available at ANMCLA: <http://www.medioscomunitarios.org/bolivia/pag/index.php?id=33&idn=6246>
- 'Resolución de Rechazo a los Estatutos Autonómicos de los Pueblos Indígenas de Santa Cruz' 31 March 2008. Santa Cruz. Available at ANMCLA: <http://www.medioscomunitarios.org/bolivia/pag/index.php?id=33&idn=6246>
- Riester, J. 1984. *Textos Sagrados de los Guaraníes en Bolivia: Una cacería en el Izozog*. Santa Cruz de la Sierra: APCOB
- Rivera Cusicanqui, S. 1987. *Oppressed But Not Defeated: Peasant Struggles Among the Aymara and Qhechwa in Bolivia, 1900-1980*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
- Roca, J. 2008. 'Regionalism Revisited', in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (eds.) J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- Roduner, D. 2003. "Valoración Fiscal de la Contribución de Mano de Obra y Materiales Locales en Inversión y Mantenimiento de Obras Públicas Municipales", in *Documento de Trabajo: Casi-Impuestos Comunes: Una fuente de financiamiento subestimada*. Parte A: Estudios de Caso - Uncía, Caripuyo, Villamontes, Lagunillas y Macharetí. La Paz: Padep/GTZ
- Roper, J. 2003. 'Bolivian Legal Reforms and Local Indigenous Organizations: Opportunities and Obstacles in a Lowland Municipality', in *Latin American Perspectives* 30, 1: 139-61

- Sahlins, M. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Saignes, T. 1990. *Ava y Karai: ensayos sobre la frontera chiriguano, siglos XVI-XX*. La Paz: Hisbol
- 1982a. 'Guerres indiennes dans L'Amérique pionnière: le dilemme de la résistance chiriguano à la colonisation européenne. (XVIe-XIXe siècles)', in *Histoire, Economie, Société* I: 77-103
- 1982b. 'Métis et Sauvages: Les enjeux du métissage sur la frontière Chiriguano', in *Mélanges de la Casa de Velásquez* XVIII, 1: 79-10
- Salles, E. and H. Noejovich 2008. 'Las Lecciones de la Historia: Repensando la política económica del Virrey Toledo', in *Economía* 31, 61: 27-50
- Sanabria, H. 1972. *Apiaguaiqui-Tumpa. Biografía del pueblo chiriguano y de su último caudillo*. La Paz & Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro
- 1999. 'Consolidating States, Restructuring Economies, and Confronting Workers and Peasants: The Antinomies of Bolivian Neoliberalism', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, 3: 535-62
- Sánchez, W. 1998. 'La Plaza Tomada: Proceso histórico y etnogénesis musical entre los Chiriguano de Bolivia', in *Latin American Music Review* 19, 2: 218-43
- Saunders, N. (ed.) 1998. *Icons of Power: Feline Symbolism in the Americas*. London & New York: Routledge
- Schwartz, S. and F. Salomon 1999. 'New Peoples and New Kinds of People: Adaptation, Readjustment, and Ethnogenesis in South American Indigenous Societies (Colonial Era)', in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas, vol. III: South America, Part 2* (eds.) F. Salomon and S. Schwartz. Cambridge: University Press
- Siiriäinen, A. and M. Pärssinen 1997. 'Eighty Years After Erland Nordenskiöld: The Question of the Eastern Frontier of the Inca Empire', in *Revista Xaman* 4/97 (The web based newsletter of the Iberoamerican Centre of the University of Helsinki, <http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/ibero/>)
- Spalding, K. 1975. 'Hacienda-Village Relations in Andean Society to 1830', in *Latin American Perspectives* 2, 1: 'Confronting Theory and Practice': 107-21
- Strathern, M. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press
- Taussig, M. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University Press
- Taylor, A.-C. 2007. 'Sick of History: Contrasting Regimes of Historicity in the Upper Amazon', in *Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia* (eds.) C. Fausto and M. Heckenberger. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

- Toranzo Roca, C. 2008. 'Let the Mestizos Stand Up and Be Counted', in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (eds.) J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- Troll, C. 1968. 'The Cordilleras of the Tropical Americas: Aspects of Climate, Phytogeographical and Agrarian Ecology', in *Geo-Ecology of the Mountainous Regions of the Tropical Americas*. Bonn: Geographisches Institut, University of Bonn
- UPIC-Tierra and ABI 2008. 'Camiri: Terratenientes aislados'. 11 April. Available at Bolpress: <http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2008041113>
- Urioste, M. 2003. 'International Land Coalition – News – The Abandoned Agrarian Reform: Valleys And High Plains'. 03 August. Available at Fundación TIERRA: www.landcoalition.or/ne_Aug03_abagriform.htm
- Uvin, P. 1998. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press
- Valle Mandepora, R. 13 March 2008. 'Proceso de Saneamiento TCO Alto Parapetí'. Available at CIPCA: http://www.cipca.org.bo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1367:zdpa&catid=85:zdpa&Itemid=124
- Viceministerio de Tierras 2008a. 'Ganaderos de la "Media Luna" Crean un Comité de la Defensa de las Haciendas del Chaco Integrado'. Bulletin no. 45. La Paz. 20 May
- 2008b. 'Guaraníes Cautivos: No tiene valor legal la investigación de diputados opositores en haciendas del chaco cruceño'. Bulletin no. 37. La Paz. 28 April
- Viveiros de Castro, E. 1998. 'Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism', in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, 3: 469-88
- Wachtel, N. 1977. *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes, 1530-70*. London: The Harvester Press Limited
- Webber, J. 2008a. 'Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia. Part II: Revolutionary Epoch, Combined Liberation and the December 2005 Elections', in *Historical Materialism* 16, 3: 55-76
- 2008b. 'Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia. Part III: Neoliberal Continuities, the Autonomist Right, and the Political Economy of Indigenous Struggle', in *Historical Materialism* 16, 4: 67-109
- Zavaleta Reyes, D. 2008. 'Oversimplifying Identities: The Debate over What Is *Indígena* and What Is Mestizo', in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (eds.) J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press

Unpublished documents from the archive at IDAC (Calle René Moreno 58, Camiri, Bolivia):

- APG 1991. 'Acta N°'. 20 July.
- Avilés, G. 1994. 'Dr. Guido Avilés Cueto: Asesor Jurídico Agrario de la Presidencia de la República'. 18 March. La Paz
- Bruno, A. 1992a. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Arcenio Bruno Segundo'. 26 June. Camiri
- 1992b. 'Acta de Audiencia Pública de Recepción de Declaración Indagatoria'. 23 October. Camiri
- Bruno, A., E. Bruno and S. Miranda 1992. 'Señor Juez de Instrucción: Licencia bajo garantía Personal'. 29 October. Camiri
- Bruno, E. 1992a. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Eugenio Bruno Segundo'. 26 June. Camiri
- 1992b. 'Acta de Audiencia Pública de Recepción de Declaración Indagatoria'. 29 October. Camiri
- Bruno, M. 1992. 'Acta de Audiencia Pública de Recepción de Declaración Indagatoria'. 29 October. Camiri
- Bruno, P. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Petrona Bruno Meriles'. 26 June. Camiri
- Bruno, P. and family 1991. 'Señor Leonidas Chilo y Señora Vilma Guzman'. 10 November. Itacua
- Bruno, R., E. Bruno and A. Bruno 1991. 'Señor Leonido Chilo y Señora Vilma Guzman'. 13 December. Itacua
- Centellas, E. 1992. 'Al Señor Juez Agrario Móvil del Departamento'. 11 May. Camiri
- Chilo, L. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Leonidas Chilo Bonilla'. 12 June. Camiri
- Claure, V. 1992. 'Testimonio'. 25 March. Camiri
- Comunarios de Itacua 1992. 'Señora Vilma Guzman'. 22 May. Itacua
- Córdova, J. 1994. 'Señor Dr. Roderich Von Owen'. 10 June. Camiri
- Corcuy, E. 1992. 'Sr. Juez Instructor'. 08 October. Camiri
- Cuéllar, E., A. Vaca and A. Antenor 1994. 'Señor: Rodrigo Von Owen'. 10 June. Camiri
- Gómez, P. 1997. 'Registro de la Propiedad Inmueble Rural'. 13 August

- Guzman, E. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Elena Guzman García'. 16 June. Camiri
- Guzman, V. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Wilma Guzman García de Chilo'. 11 June. Camiri
- Inojosa, A. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Adela Inojosa Charques'. 02 July. Camiri
- Justiniano, H. 1992a. 'Doctor Henry Justiniano Vargas Juez Instructor de la Provincia Cordillera'. 21 August. Camiri
- 1992b. 'Camiri, 17 de Noviembre de 1.992'. 17 November. Camiri
- Justiniano, M. and V. Torrez 1992. 'Informe en Conclusiones de Diligencias de Policía Judicial'. 23 July. Camiri
- Martinez, S. 1994. 'Ref: Informe de Inspección Ocular por Parte de Intervención Concejo Nacional de Reforma Agraria y el Departamento Recursos Naturales CORDECRUZ Consorcio IP/CES/KWC'. 02 July. Camiri
- Medrano, L. 1994. 'Recibo'. 28 April. Camiri
- Medrano, L. and A. Verazain 1994. 'A la Opinión Pública de la Provincia de Cordillera'. 09 May. Camiri
- Michel, F. 1992. 'Itakua: Investigación histórica jurídica'. 22 September. Camiri
- 1994a. 'Ref.: Su conocimiento'. 23 May. Camiri
- 1994b. 'Señores Delmar Artunduaga, Armando del Río'. 06 June. Camiri
- 1994c. 'Señores Armando del Río, Arturo Pinto'. 10 June. Camiri
- 1994d. 'Señor Dr. Rodrigo Von Owen'. 11 June. Camiri
- 1994e. 'Señores Comité Ejecutivo A.P.G.'. 08 November. Camiri
- 1994f. 'Señor Delgar Artunduaga, Armando del Río'. 08 November. Camiri
- Michel, F. and Comunarios 1992. 'Señor Juez de Partido: Amparo Constitucional'. 09 November. Camiri
- Michel, F., and S. Miranda 1992. 'Señor Juez Instructor'. 27 October. Camiri
- Michel, F., I. Nassini and H. Leyton 1991. 'Señora Fiscal de Partido'. 17 February. Camiri
- Montalvo, A. 1992. 'Sentencia'. 15 May. Camiri
- Montero, J. 1991a. 'Comisión Instruida'. 08 August. Santa Cruz

- 1991b. 'Dr. Franz Michel'. 13 August. Santa Cruz
- Nasini, I. 1991a. 'Estimada Señora'. 06 May. Camiri
- 1991b. 'Ref.: Testimonio de los Comunarios de Itacua y del Párroco de la zona acerca del conflict con la señora Olga Vannucci y el señor Eloy Palenque'. 17 June. Camiri
- Palenque, E. 1992. 'Solicitada: A la Opinión Pública'. 08 June. Camiri
- Palenque, S. 1992. 'Demanda dotación de tierras fiscales'. 07 April. Camiri
- Paredes and Bruno 1991. 'En la ciudad de Camiri...'. 03 October. Camiri
- Paredes and F. Gómez 1991. 'En la ciudad de Camiri...'. 03 October. Camiri
- Paredes and M. Gómez 1991. 'En la ciudad de Camiri...'. 03 October. Camiri
- Paredes, M. Romero and A. Romero 1991. 'En la ciudad de Camiri...'. 03 October. Camiri
- Paredes and Segundo 1991. 'En la ciudad de Camiri...'. 03 October. Camiri
- Peñaranda, M. 1991. 'Señor Jefe de la Guardia Provincial'. 15 June. Camiri
- Peñaranda, M., C. Vannucci and O. Vannucci 1992. 'Señor Juez de Instrucción'. 24 July. Camiri
- Pinto, A. and A. Del Río 1994. 'Señor Franz Michel Torrico'. 07 June. Camiri
- Plata, S. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Silvia Plata de Guerra'. 18 July. Camiri
- Pozo Vedia, A. 1991. 'Ref: Abstención de amenazas y libre transitabilidad'. 20 May. Camiri
- Rengel, C. 1997. 'Señor Director Departamental del Instituto Nacional de Reforma [Agraria]'. 13 May. Santa Cruz
- Rioja, E. 1992. 'Señor: Sadoc Palenque'. 18 February. Camiri
- Romero, D. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Dora Romero Álvarez'. 04 July. Camiri
- Romero, M., V. Demetrio and J. Altamirano et al. 1994. 'Convenio Transaccional entre las Comunidades Itakua-Cañón de Segura y Urundaiti'. 12 March. Camiri
- Rueda, T. 1992. 'Declaración Informativa Prestada por Telesforo Rueda Alpíri'. 27 June. Camiri
- Suárez, A. 1994. 'Orden Instruida'. 14 May. Camiri
- Vannucci, C., and O. Vannucci 1992. 'Señor Jefe de la Policía Provincial'. 08 June. Camiri

- Vannucci, O. 1991. 'Ref.: Respuesta Avuestra de Fecha 06/05/91'. 31 July. Itacua
- Vannucci, O., C. Vannucci and E. Palenque 1992. 'Desmentido Público'. 23 September. Camiri
- Vannucci, O., C. Vannucci and A. Vannucci 1991. 'Señor: R.P. Ivan, Parroco del Servicio Religioso en el Campo, Presente'. 24 April. Camiri
- Von Oven, R. and A. Zarzycki 1994. 'Señores Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní – APG'. 17 June. Santa Cruz

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ITAKUA

ITAKUA HISTORICAL-JURIDICAL INVESTIGATION

Franz MICHEL

No.	014/92
Date initiated:	20/01/92
Date concluded:	22/09/92
Addendum:	20/09/93

1. ANTECEDENTS ORIGINATING THE INVESTIGATION.-

In the past year of 1991, between the months of April and June, the *comunarios* of Itakua requested and received permission from Sra. Olga Vannuci Zabalaga to construct a chapel/meeting hall in the yard (*patio*) of the hut (*rancho*) of one of the *comunarios*.

Noticing that the building, of wattle-and-daub, was big (10m X 5m), Sra. Vannuci ordered that it was not to be built where it had been started and that it was to be made next to her own house [instead]. The *comunarios* objected, and this was when the conflict began.

- Sr. Eloy Palenque threatened the *comunarios*, and his son (Sadoth Palenque Vannuci) completely destroyed the posts that had been put up.

- The public prosecutor (*Fiscal de Partido*) was appealed to with the demand of constitutional rights (*garantías*).

- In the face of this verbal and material aggression, the *comunarios* decide to ask for the takeover and reversion of the property of Olga Vannuci Zabalaga (Palenque's sister-in-law), and initiate the demand on the date of 25 July 1991 before the Departmental Inspectorate of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law (Inspección Departamental de Trabajo Agrario y Justicia Campesina), which rules in favour of the Vannuci Zabalaga family.

- From the month of May onwards almost until the present day there are communications to the press from both parties.

- Eloy Palenque denounces the *comunarios* as cattle thieves before the National Guard and asks that this offence be investigated.

- The *comunidad* appeals the ruling before the National Director of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law, who via judicial decree (*auto de vista*) no. 09/92 of 20 January 1992 confirms the ruling of the inferior instance and raises consultation proceedings (*eleva*

obrados en consulta) before the M.A.C.A.¹⁹⁵, leaving the appeal for revision with the Presidency of the Republic.

- The M.A.C.A., via ministerial resolution no. 106/92 of 26 May 1992, approves the judicial decree of the General Director of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law.

- The *comunidad* of Itakua appeals to the Presidency of the Republic for a REVISION, which is where the documents are [at the moment].

- **NOTE.-** the Presidency of the Republic to date has not resolved the appeal for revision raised.

- The Vannuci family appealed to the help of FEGASACRUZ¹⁹⁶ in order to obtain the verdicts in their favour.

- Olga Vannuci and Eloy Palenque arrange for publications in which it is indicated that they completely won the social-agrarian court case, ignoring the Appeal for Revision.

- Eloy Palenque and Olga Vannuci proceed to have cut down (felled) the trees which are close to the huts (*ranchos*) of the *comunarios*, leaving them without any protection.

- The fences of the *comunarios*' *chacos* are destroyed by order of Palenque and Olga Vannuci.

- In the month of April of the present year 1992, Eloy Palenque requests the donation of lands with an extension of 1,744 hectares in the lands entitled 'Cañón de Segura' (part of the estate Itakua, Yativigua and Cañón de segura) on behalf of his son Sadoth Palenque Vannuci.

- **NOTE.-** The Bruno siblings of ITAKUA are prisoners in the cells of the Judicial Police [Name missing] through the standard legal channels (*en vía ordinaria de hecho*), demanding the vacation and handover of plots of land, take [legal] action against Ramón Gómez Barrientos, Arsenio Bruno Segundo, Eugenio Bruno, Guillermo Alvarez Gómez, Rubén Bruno Segundo, Tomasa Bruno, Emiliana Meriles, Florinda Suarez, Julia Aramoyo and Luciana Meriles.

2. HISTORICAL-JURIDICAL FACTS:

The zone which comprises the actual territories of: Aquio, Lagunillas, Gutierrez, Choreti, Camiri, Boyuibe, and Cuevo were [*sic*] originally inhabited by the Chané, and guaranized at the end of the 14th century.

This zone was very difficult to access for the Spanish, so much so that no missions and/or towns could be founded in it.

¹⁹⁵ The Ministry of Peasant and Farming and Livestock Affairs (Ministerio de Asuntos Campesinos y Agropecuarios).

¹⁹⁶ The Santa Cruz Cattle Breeders' Federation (Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz).

The *entrada* of Ruiz [*sic*] Diaz de Guzman for a short while got as far as the fort of Pipi, being expelled by the Guaraní.

The promontory and the foothills of the Cordillera served as secure refuge for the Guaraní who saw their lands invaded from Tomina, Tarija, and Santa Cruz.

The first documentary evidence we have on Itakua indicates that its chief (*mburuvicha*), Moretagua, granted asylum in the community of Itakua to 200 armed Spaniards who, converting the community into a fortified stronghold, defended themselves in it in the year 1727 during the rebellion of the *mburuvicha* Aruma (ANS EC 5).

The warriors (*kereimba*) of Aruma devastated and attacked the community of Itakua three times, destroying it completely (ANS EC 5).

The expedition against Aruma of the Governor Argamoza of 1729 finds the community completely desolated and empty, a fact the Spaniards take advantage of to raise an encampment; from Itakua, Argamoza leaves for Cuevo (ANS EC 5).

At the end of the 18th century, the Governor Don Francisco de Viedma arranges the creation of the fort of San Miguel de Membiray (on the banks of the River Parapetí above the hamlet of Membiray, on one side of the town of Choreti and opposite the location of the actual city of Camiri), one of the founders of this fort being the Spanish commander Don Alejandro Salvatierra, who [was] moreover rewarded (*beneficiado*) with lands within the area without an indication of boundaries. (Biographical data of MONSEÑOR SALVATIERRA, Roca.)

The community of Itakua participates in the rebellion of 1789-1800. (La Guerra de los malos pasos, H. Sanabria, about the report of Viedma to the district council of Santa Cruz (AGI, Charcas, 582) 1985 Revista Historia y Cultura).

The priest José Andrés Salvatierra, in the year of 1808, is designated chaplain of the fort of Membiray, [and] takes charge of the cattle ranches inherited from his father. (Monseñor Salvatierra. Roca).

1810 The fort of Membiray rises up in favour of independence.

The colonial government, at the petition of Col. Becerra, confiscates all properties of the priest Andrés Salvatierra.

1827 The Republican government returns with honours the lands and cattle ranches that had been taken away from José Andrés Salvatierra.

1838 Monseñor Andrés Salvatierra presents Juan Anzuategui with his lands, cattle ranches, and cattle in the Province of Cordillera (AD IDAC, bill of the sale made by M.I. Talavera to v.M. Antezana, file 2 1855).

1840 Juan Anzuategui sells the lands to Manuel Ignacio Talavera (AD IDAC, file 2, 1855).

1855 Manuel Ignacio Talavera sells the lands of Itakua, Yatiguigua and Cañón de Segura to Victor Manuel Antezana. (AD IDAC file 2, 1855).

1885 At the death of Víctor Manuel Antezana, he is succeeded by his wife Maria Manuela Victoria widow of Antezana and his son Victor Manuel Antezana, jointly with the heirs: Juan Evangelista, Mariano, Gregoria, Juana, Reimundo, Mariano, Feliciano, and José Manuel Antezana, who sell their rights and shares to Octavio Padilla (AD IDAC file 5, 1885).

1895 Maria Manuela Victoria widow of Antezana transfers the property to Sinforoso Vedia (AD IDAC file 1, 1895).

1907 Juana Montero widow of Vedia, together with her daughters Carmen and Julia, inherit the property from Sinforoso Vedia. (AD IDAC file 4, 1907).

Possibly in the year 1920, the married couple David Vannuci G. And Corina Zabalaga acquire the property from the Vedia family. (Response from Olga Vannuci Zabalaga of 31 July 1991) (annex).

1946 The wife Corina Zabalaga and the children Manuel, Alfredo, Elsa, Corina Olga and Carmen inherit the possessions of David Vannuci (AD IDAC, file 9, 1946).

1959 Manuel Vannuci Zabalaga requests the delimitation and consolidation of the property Itakua-Urundaiti from the agrarian court of Camiri on behalf of himself and his siblings Alfredo, Amelia, Elsa, Olga and Carmen Vannuci. The peasants Marciano and Angel Villarroel request the dotation of lands (*piden del proceso dotación*), arguing that they had been despoiled in a violent way by the *patrones*.

The Vannuci siblings demonstrate literally before the trial judge (*Juez de Partido*) of Lagunillas that the process of despoliation was not violent but legal. The first-degree sentence by which 651.50 hectares are awarded to each of the six siblings and 400 to the peasants is pronounced on 10 November 1959 (AD IDAC, file 25, 1962).

1961 The reconsideration of the transaction in the first instance is ordered by Supreme Resolution 107008 of 18 September 1961 (AD IDAC, file 25, 1962).

1962 In observance with the Supreme Resolution, and in the presence of Manuel Vannuci, the Secretary of the Peasant's Union of Camiri, and the personnel of the court, a hearing is carried out during which the names of three peasants are changed and the plot awarded to the peasants is measured, dividing the same into 33 plots with a total surface of 400 hectares (AD IDAC, file 25, 1962).

The finalised titles (*títulos ejecutoriales*) of document 6315, Supreme Resolution 107008, are issued on behalf of Manuel, Alfredo, Olga, Amelia, Elsa, Carmen Vannuci Zabalaga on 11 February 1965, consolidating on behalf of each one the quantity of 691.5000 hectares, with a total of 4,149 hectares for the Vannuci Zabalaga family (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Urundaiti-Itakua).

The titles for the peasants with the same Supreme Resolution number (107008 of 18 September 1961) located on the map in plot no. 7, document 6315, are issued on the same

date (11 February 1965) as community property in the ex-estate Urundaiti or Itakua, awarding them 268 hectares (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Urundaiti-Itakua). Annexes.

1970 Sra. Carmen Vannuci de Palenque initiates an indictment trial of despoliation against three peasants before the First Instance Criminal Court of Camiri; abuses and threats by Eloy Palenque are denounced (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Urundaiti-Itakua) annex.

The peasants Guillermo Rueda, Benito Lino, Leucadio Lino, Ricardo Cabrera request the takeover of the property Urundaiti or Itakua; the Inspector of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law of Cordillera declares the takeover appropriate and sends proceedings to the Head Office for Agrarian Work and Peasant Law (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Urundaiti Itakua).

1971 The takeover document is returned to the original Inspectorate for faults in its processing (*tramitación*) (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Urundaiti-Itakua).

1991 The new trial of takeover and reversion is initiated by the *comunarios* (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Itakua).

1992 In conformity with the settlement [pronounced] by Supreme Decree 22407 of 22 January 1990, article 69, an appeal for revision of the verdict of the Director-General of Agrarian Work and Peasant Law, approved by the ruling of M.A.C.A., is made before the Presidency of the Republic for definitive Supreme Resolution (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Itakua).

1992 April, Eloy Palenque applies for 1,744 hectares in the ex-estate Itakua-Yativigua, Cañón de Segura to be awarded to his son SADO TH PALENQUE VANNUCI, university student in the third year of his law degree at the University San Francisco Xavier of Chuquisaca. The registration of the cattle brand (two) with the police carries the date of April 1992.

The neighbouring *comunarios* of Urundaiti [sic] – Itakua are not notified of the hearing; Sr. Eduardo Centellas acts as topographer; the sentence in the first degree is pronounced in the month of May 1992; proceedings are presented to the National Council of the Agrarian Reform (Consejo Nacional de Reforma Agraria), the lands of Cañón de Segura were nominally in the possession of the heirs of Elsa Vannuci de Ardaya (AD IDAC, *comunidad* Itakua).

3.- TERRITORIAL OCCUPATION OF THE COMUNIDAD

The *comunidad* of Itakua, in the possession of the different owners of the land shown by the report presented before, has been continuous, which is shown by the requests for possession to judicial authorities in which the summons of the *capitanes* of the towns of Itakua, Yativigua is requested (annex).

Beginning with the possession of the Vedia family, the *comunidad* continues to possess *chacos* [which are] reduced [in size] and to serve the owners as peons; this continues with the Vannuci family and even after the Agrarian Reform.

The indigenous cemetery that exists in Itakua is of an antiquity of more than 100 years.

The 1991 census indicates the existence of 19 families, with a total of 91 persons and an area of 34 has. of familial *chacos* cultivated by the *comunarios* which the owners traditionally allowed them to make; because of this we declare that this land, plus [the land] assigned for the school, sports fields, and housing should be titled to the benefit of the *comunidad* in observance of the postulate of the Agrarian Reform according to which the land belongs to those who work it, and Article 138 of the Civil Code, which says that possession of real estate is acquired by continued possession over 10 years. Annex.

The *comunidad* of Itakua has been in possession of their *chacos* since before the year 1900, without anybody disrupting it.

4.- THE VERDICTS OF THE DEPARTMENTAL AND NATIONAL INSPECTORATES FOR AGRARIAN WORK AND PEASANT LAW AND MINISTERIAL RULING

We maintain that these verdicts have been passed due to pressure from FEGASACRUZ, because of the following:

a.- In the application for consolidation initiated by Manuel Vannuci in 1953, he requests delimitation and consolidation without indicating the approximate extension of the estate.

b.- There has been no violence on the part of the *comunidad*; they [the *comunarios*] have possessed and still possess their *chacos*, and the intimidating violence has been used by Sr. Eloy Palenque, a violence that goes back to the year 1971 (annex).

c.- The verdicts have been based on the assumption that plot no. 7 in Urundaiti, with an extension of 400 has., had already been gifted to the *comunarios* of Itakua, a claim which is not true since the donation to the *comunarios* and/or peasant union has been made to the extension of 200 has. (ANNEX). There are, consequently, 132 has. missing.

d.- Offers of Sale: This year, Elsa Vannuci's successor, Luis Ardaya, plot 5 of the map (supposed unlawful holders of Cañon de segura) offers for sale 691 has. and a total extension of 2,000 has. (annex). Rosario Vannuci, on behalf of Alfredo Vannuci, offers 970 has. [of which] 60% [are] flat (lot 2 on the map) annex.

e.- Eloy Palenque processes a new donation in the name of his son Sadoth, of a total of 1,744 has. Annex.

It is not clear what is expressed in the verdicts that favour the Vannuci family because there has been no violence and no 400 has. were gifted to the peasants, and moreover because they [the peasants] have continuously possessed their pastures, houses, and *chacos*.

c.- The land titled to the Vannuci family, 6 plots, is 691,5000 has. (annex:

Legalised copy of the title, map, and letter from Elia Vannuci [sic]), it is shown that in reality they possess more than that quantity; we suspect the complicity of agrarian

authorities in the deceit, or of the topographer acting in the proceedings, Eduardo Centellas.

d.- The Assembly of the Guaraní People demanded before the [Intervención?] of the National Council of the Agrarian Reform on 27 May 1993 the LEGAL AUDIT (*auditoría jurídica*) in the trial of the donation of the estate 'Cañón de segura' led by Sadoth Palenque before the Council of the Agrarian Reform, with a date of receipt of 20 08 92 and document no. 57653.

5.- EXPOSITION:

Based on all the above we deduce:

1. The *comunidad* Itakua has always occupied the site on which it is currently located.
2. We believe that the property Urundaiti or Itakua in its seven plots has not been measured honestly by the acting topographer, and that there are more than 691,500 has. for each of the titleholders of the Vannuci family, which also proves that the other *comunidad* which is located in Urundaiti only is the owner of 268 has., for which reason we propose that the trial be resolved in its current instance by the renewed remeasuring of the seven plots and the surplus of each of them; those surpluses, should they be encountered, should be consolidated to the *comunidad* of Itakua.

This exposition respects the right to private property consolidated for the Vannuci family by the verdicts of the agrarian judiciary and the legal titles issued in 1965.

Camiri, 22 September 1992

**BY THE INSTITUTE OF PEASANT DOCUMENTATION AND SUPPORT,
IDAC.**

NOTE 1.- The donation of the lands of Cañón de Segura to the *comunidad* of Itakua would conclusively resolve the problem.

Camiri, 21 September 1993

NOTE 2.- In May 1993, a legal audit appeal against the request for the donation of the lands of cañon de Segura by Sadoth Palenque Vannuci was presented; the intervention of the Agrarian Reform, although it is known to have resolved the case in favour of the *comunarios*, has not yet given an official verdict, nor has the corresponding Supreme Resolution been issued.

Cordecruz¹⁹⁷ in October 1993 offered to construct an access road and a school and help with the settlement of the *comunarios* of Itakua.

Camiri, 01 December 1993

¹⁹⁷ Corporación Regional de Desarrollo de Santa Cruz.

Franz Michel
DIRECTOR of IDAC

APPENDIX 2: THE UNLIKELY CASE OF THE CATTLE THEFT

In a mysterious letter dated 10 November, of confused contents and bad grammar, ‘Petrona Bruno [Rubén Bruno’s daughter] and family’ tell a certain Vilma Guzman and her husband, Leonidas Chilo, about several of the Vannuccis’ cows which they have tied up, and which they intend to sell in Camiri. The letter urges the couple not to tell the ‘misers’ (*mezquinos* – i.e., the Vannucci-Palenques) anything about it. The authors of the letter ask whether they can butcher the cows at the Chilo-Guzmans’ house and also talk about how they have ‘almost won’ [unexplained, but presumably referring to the court case], and about each family having received US\$200 from ‘the Bolivia Libre guys’¹⁹⁸, which they are willing to share in exchange for the couple’s help. They have, they say, already got a tractor with equipment and are ready to start working on the plots which have already been measured for each family, because they are close now to becoming ‘owners’ (*dueños*; the implication being that they will take the land away from the Vannuccis) (IDAC: P. Bruno and family 1991).

A month further on, on 13 December, there is a second letter, again addressed to the Chilo-Guzmans by the Brunos (this time in the name of ‘the *comunidad* of Itacua’), asking Chilo to declare that the Vannuccis threw him out of their house, for which ‘the Padre’ [Iván?] would pay him US\$100. This he should do because the Vannuccis only laugh at him and ‘don’t love him’. With this second letter, an interesting detail becomes clear: Vilma Guzman and Leonides Chilo are in fact employees of Olga Vannucci (IDAC: R. Bruno, E. Bruno and A. Bruno 1991).

A third incriminating letter from 22 May (supposedly written by the ‘*comunarios* of Itakua’ to Vilma Guzman) in a confused tone bemoans the fact that she didn’t want to collaborate with the *comunarios*, who are now only asking that she should not show any letters to the Vannuccis because that would only complicate things, and suggesting that they would pay her for her silence. The tone oscillates between being solicitous and slightly threatening in places (‘don’t think that your pride will last’; ‘you’ll see who’s going to win, you or us’) (IDAC: Comunarios 1992).

¹⁹⁸ The Free Bolivia Movement, a progressive political party.

Finally, on 08 June, the Vannucci sisters act on this ‘evidence’ and approach the police. Their letter to the chief of the provincial police establishes them as ‘agriculturalists/cattle farmers’ (*agricultoras-ganaderas*) working in ‘Itacua-Urundayti’. They talk about a small number of ‘illegal’ *campesinos* on their land who have been stealing their cows for some time. They say that they always assumed it was some unspecified ‘other people’, however, now they have found out that Rubén, Eugenio and Arcenio Bruno have stolen six of their cows and a bull. They also threatened to kill them, and made them the victims of ‘injuries’ and ‘defamatory libel’ (saying they starve the people [the *campesinos*] to death and take advantage of them). The letter ends in a formal accusation against the three Bruno men of the stated crimes and the expectation that action will be taken against them (IDAC: C. Vannucci and O. Vannucci 1992).

As a result, over the next month-and-a-half various witnesses are summoned by the police to give their statements on the matter. On 11 June, Vilma Guzman declares how she received letters from Rubén, Arcenio and Eugenio Bruno in which they told her they had stolen several cows from the Vannucci property; that Rubén Bruno had told her that he was going to kill Sadoc Palenque and assault Olga Vannucci because she lives alone; that he had once stolen a cow from Luis Ardaya [a neighbour of the Vannuccis]; and that Eugenio Bruno had been stealing all kinds of animals (including cows) from Urundayti and taken them to Itakua, cut them up, then taken them to Camiri to sell them. Rather than having received the letters in person, however, three of them were delivered via intermediaries (one by a man named Bautista Cuellar, one by her mother-in-law Enriqueta Bonillas, and one by her *comadre*¹⁹⁹ Genara de Siñagui), whereas one was thrown to her out of a bus window (IDAC: V. Guzman 1992).

A day later, her husband, Leonidas Chilo, confirms that his wife had received said letters and declares that Rubén Bruno had told him he would shoot Sadoc Palenque if they tried to expel the *comunarios* from the property. He also claims that Rubén Bruno tried to persuade him to get cows from the Vannucci corral, which Chilo refused; that the Bruno brothers even stole the Vannuccis’ turkeys, and entered the corral at night to milk the cows and steal the milk; that his wife had caught Eugenio Bruno doing this one time, at which he ran away and left his lasso in the corral; that they surprised Rubén Bruno with one of the Vannuccis’ bulls once,

¹⁹⁹ *Comadre* is a term used to address people who stand in a relationship of being the godmother of one’s child, or the wife of the child’s godfather.

and that a team (*yunta*) of bulls with another branding also disappeared; that they ‘live from cattle theft and stealing maize from the neighbours, and they don’t dedicate themselves to nothing’; that they are in a habit of perforating the pipes of the gas pipeline passing through the property with drills to stock up on fuel, then say that the pipes have burst; that they had threatened to assault Olga Vannucci and set fire to her maize granary; and that he had seen a cow’s footsteps leading away from Rubén Bruno’s house (IDAC: Chilo 1992).

These testimonies are followed by further accusations:

- Vilma Guzman’s mother, Elena Guzman, a domestic employee (*empleada*) originally from Itakua, says she saw Arsenio Bruno and another unidentified man lead three cows from Itakua one early morning in December 1991 when she was sweeping the ground in front of her employer’s house in Camiri (IDAC: E. Guzman 1992).
- Telesforo Rueda, an ‘agriculturalist’ from Itakua, says that he saw Eugenio Bruno steal pigs from another property ‘some two years ago’, and that a longer time ago he saw Marcelo Bruno [Rubén and Arsenio’s brother and Eugenio’s uncle] steal a cow from Olga Vannucci. He adds that the Bruno brothers have a ‘bad reputation’ throughout the region (IDAC: Rueda 1992).
- Adela Inojosa, a merchant (*comerciante*) from Camiri, says that she was approached by a *comunaria* in the market, who asked her to hand a letter over to Vilma Guzman which she said came from Itacua. The witness says she passed the letter on the next day (IDAC: Inojosa 1992).
- Dora Romero, a friend of Vilma Guzman’s, says she was coming out of the Camiri hospital with Guzman one day in May when a bus (*flota*) passed by and a man – Eugenio Bruno – threw a letter out of the window addressed to Vilma Guzman, which the latter picked up and commented that it came from Itacua (IDAC: Romero 1992).
- Silvia Plata, a housewife originally from Itakua, says that sometime in the previous year, Petrona Bruno gave her a letter for Vilma Guzman, which she passed on to her brother-in-law, Leonidas Chilo; and that she witnessed by chance, passing by the place where the minibus (*trufi*) to Itacua stops, how in December 1991 Rubén Bruno gave a letter to Bautista Cuellar, asking him to pass it on to Vilma Guzman (IDAC: Plata 1992).

Starting with Petrona Bruno (who is accused of having written the incriminating letters) on 26 June, the accused parties also give their statements, in which they deny all charges. Petrona points out the fact that their own cows sometimes disappear as well (IDAC: P. Bruno 1992).

This point is reiterated by Arsenio Bruno, who adds that rather than they uttering threats against the *patrones*, it was the *patrones* threatening them (IDAC: A. Bruno 1992a; see also E. Bruno 1992b).

The final judgment in the cattle theft case is passed on 23 July. Reiterating the ‘evidence’ provided by the witnesses, the document ends in the conclusion that:

- Vilma Guzman did receive letters talking about the cattle theft.
- Eugenio Bruno was surprised milking Vannucci cows and also stole a bull. [Note the conflation of Eugenio and Marcelo Bruno’s personas.]
- Adela Inojosa delivered one of the Bruno letters. [This letter, in Vilma Guzman’s original account, was delivered to her by her *comadre* Genara de Siñagui.]
- Dora Romero had seen Eugenio Bruno throw a letter to Vilma Guzman.
- Silvia Plata received one of the Bruno letters to give to Vilma Guzman and also saw Rubén Bruno give a letter to Bautista Cuellar. [This witness does not appear in the original account at all, but instead the testimony of Vilma Guzman’s mother-in-law Enriqueta Bonillas is missing.]
- Elena Guzman saw Eugenio Bruno with three Itacua cows.
- Telesforo Rueda saw Marcelo Bruno steal pigs in Irenda [again, this was meant to have been Eugenio] and steal a cow from Itacua.
- Rubén, Eugenio, Arcenio, and Marcelo Bruno are the ones stealing cattle from the Vannucci sisters, as well as the authors of death threats and injuries against them.
- The present case is to be passed on to the *Ministerio Público* (Public Prosecutor’s Office) so that the law can be enacted (IDAC: M. Justiniano and Torrez 1992).

What is notable here is the extreme casualness with which facts and figures are being treated: the statements of the two ‘crown witnesses’ (Vilma Guzman and Leonidas Chilo) only partially match up with the ones given by further witnesses, and there is no agreement as to how many cows actually went missing. All of this, however, was ignored by the prosecuting lawyers and the judge alike when it came to passing a verdict. Indeed, the final verdict further conflates various of the indicated actors, strongly giving the impression that who did what exactly is not in fact very relevant.

What is important, however, is that the alleged perpetrators be brought to justice, which is what is demanded by Carmen and Olga Vannucci in a letter to the examining judge (*Juez de*

Instrucción) of 24 July. This letter, apart from repeating the already familiar accusations against the ‘Bruno brothers’, as the accused are frequently referred to (in a rather sloppy manner: Eugenio is in fact the others’ nephew), contains an important bit of news, mentioned in passing: Rubén Bruno, the main protagonist on the side of the *comunarios* at the start of the conflict, is dead (IDAC: Peñaranda, C. Vannucci and O. Vannucci 1992).

An order from 21 August finally instructs the Camiri judges to summon Arsenio, Marcelo, and Eugenio Bruno to court in order to give a declaration (IDAC: H. Justiniano 1992a). The dispatched official is, however, unable to locate them anywhere (IDAC: Corcuyl 1992), so as a result the court decides to have them apprehended.

Consequently, on 23 October, Arsenio Bruno appears before the court to give a declaration. In it, he basically repeats that the accusations are lies, and asks to see the judge’s proof showing to what butcher he was meant to have sold stolen meat (IDAC: A. Bruno 1992b). Meanwhile, Eugenio and Marcelo Bruno are being held by police (IDAC: Michel and Miranda 1992) before appearing in court on 29 October (IDAC: M. Bruno 1992, E. Bruno 1992b). A sentence of ‘preventive detention’ is passed on Arsenio and Eugenio, which they request to be postponed until after the All Saints celebrations because they as ‘religious men respectful of their traditional customs’ want to be able to assist in the event in Itakua (IDAC: A. Bruno, E. Bruno and Miranda 1992).

Finally, on 17 November, a request is phrased by one of the *comunarios*’ lawyers in which the sentence against them is questioned on the basis of the incoherence of the ‘evidence’. The Vannucci sisters, he states, have started a trial against the Bruno brothers based on testimonies but without fulfilling the requirement of ‘*tipicidad*’ [correspondence between acts committed and the legal characterisation of the offence in question], and all the police ‘evidence’ does not constitute sufficient proof for any of the suggested crimes: the authorship of the letters has never been proven (not even a satisfactory comparison of handwritings has been carried out), and there are no statements by some of the people mentioned by Guzman and Chilo, but instead there are statements by some informants whom they do not mention. There is no objective evidence of the crime (such as cows’ hides, persons to whom stolen meat was sold etc.). The accused, therefore, are being incriminated not for what they have done, but for what is *said* they have done, which constitutes a ‘lack of *tipicidad*’, a violation

of the ‘juridical-political guarantees of liberty’, and a violation of the Constitution according to which one is innocent until proven guilty (IDAC: H. Justiniano 1992b).