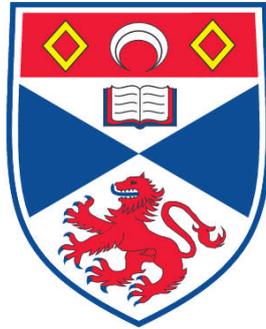


**THE TWO SHAMANS AND THE OWNER OF THE CATTLE :
ALTERITY, STORYTELLING AND SHAMANISM AMONGST THE
ANGAITÉ OF THE PARAGUAYAN CHACO**

Rodrigo Villagra Carron

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



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**THE TWO SHAMANS AND THE OWNER OF THE
CATTLE**

**Alterity, storytelling and shamanism amongst the Angaité of the
Paraguayan Chaco**

Rodrigo Villagra Carron

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St.
Andrews**

April 2009

ABSTRACT

My thesis examines from an ethnographic account how history has been made, told and interpreted by the Angaité people of the Chaco since the Paraguayan nation-state effectively carried out the colonization of this territory in the 19th century until the present day. The key elements of this account are the Angaité's notions and practices on alterity, storytelling and shamanism and how they interplay with one another.

I explore the notions of alterity and its counterpart similarity in the context of multiple material transactions in which the Angaité engage both among themselves and with outsiders. I also examine the inseparable socio-moral evaluations attached to such transactions. I show how certain transactions such as exchange or commoditisation do not necessarily conflict with good social relations. Nevertheless, the closest relationships – preferably evoked in kinship terms - are constantly constructed by the combination of several practices including sharing, pooling, cohabitation and companionship and the relational morality that underpins them.

This relational morality, I argue, is both inscribed and enacted through the telling of *Nanek Any'a* narratives –“Old news/events”. I analyze some of these narratives in order to show how the Angaité people interpret the consequences of the colonization of the Chaco. For this I provide an intelligible context for the *Nanek Any'a* that may otherwise appear contradictory or incomprehensible to a non-Angaité listener. The Angaité's versions of history compared to the official accounts challenge the simplistic of the Angaité as “acculturated” and a homogenous indigenous people and situate them as main actors of their own lives. Rather than the Angaité being the victims of history the *Nanek Any'a* emphasize that it was the mistakes and failing of their ancestors in their original encounter with the Paraguayans that resulted in an unbalanced relationship with the latter in socio-economic terms. In addition to this, I describe in the light of the historical processes undergone in the lives of the Angaité, how the shamanic discourses and capacities and Angaité cosmology have changed. I explore how they have constantly incorporated external elements, and thus such shamanic elements pervades contemporary areas of life and interactions that include not only the paradigmatic indigenous shaman, but unusual figures such as pastors, powerful outsiders and leaders.

I, Rodrigo Villagra Carron, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100.000 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 2003 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in Social Anthropology in the same date; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2009.

date signature of candidate

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

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A NOTE ON ANGAIITÉ AND GUARANI ORTHOGRAPHY

Due to the lack of an established Angaité alphabet and orthography, I have used in this thesis when possible the Enlhet-Enenlhet orthography developed by Kalish and Unruh in their work group *Nengvaanemquescama Nempayvaam Enlhet*. I present here a substitutive guide for the pronunciation of the letters based on the one Kidd (1999b:viii) has presented for the Enxet, although with small modifications. The letters can be pronounced as follows:

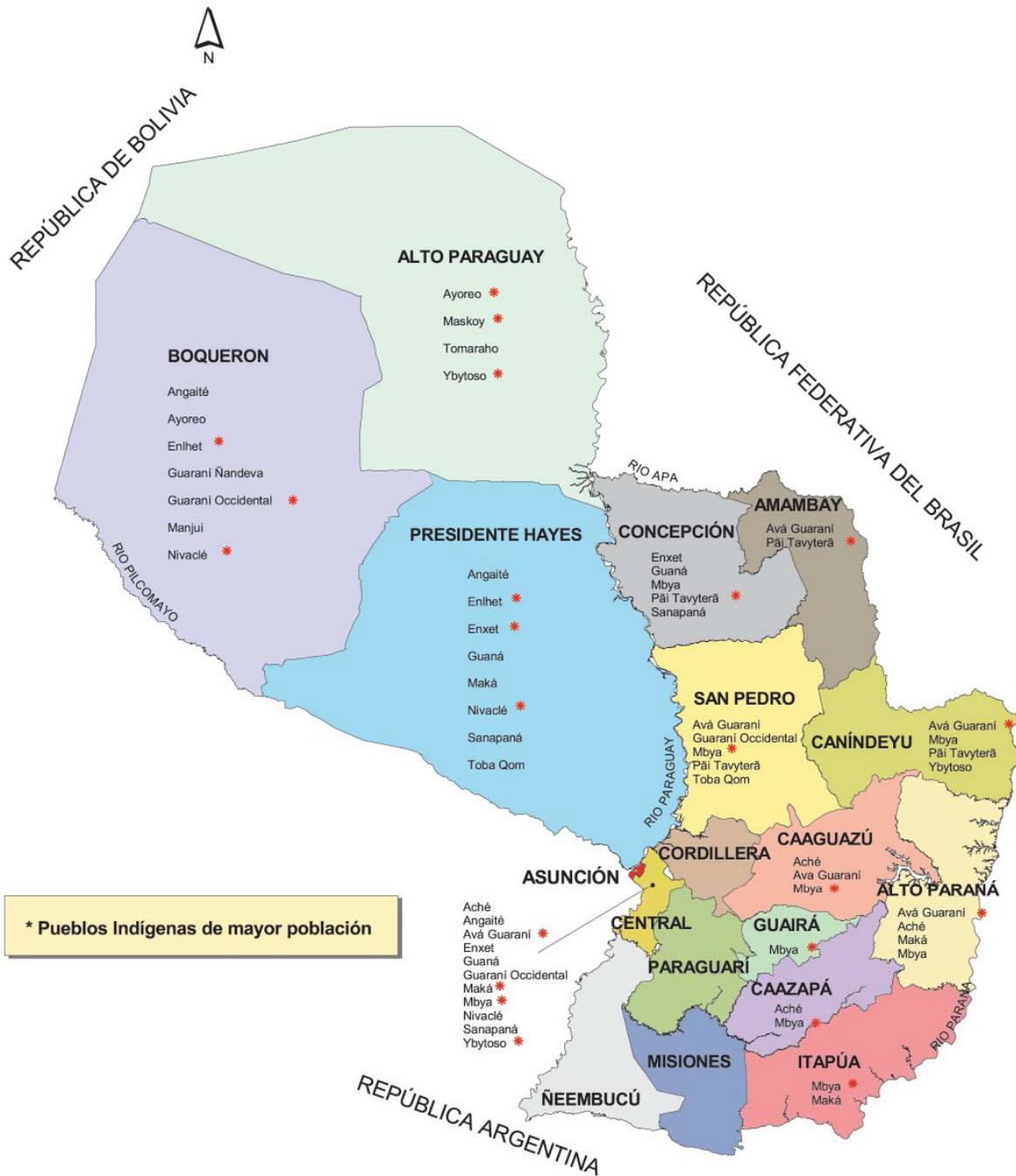
<i>a</i>	“a” as in <u>ba</u> g
<i>e</i>	either “e” as in <u>eg</u> g or “i” as in <u>in</u> n
<i>g</i>	“ng” as in <u>so</u> ng
<i>h</i>	“h” as in <u>hu</u> t
<i>k</i>	“k” as in <u>ke</u> pt
<i>l</i>	“l” as in <u>li</u> d
<i>m</i>	“m” as in <u>mu</u> d
<i>n</i>	“n” as in <u>nu</u> t
<i>o</i>	“o” as in <u>bo</u> ttle
<i>˘</i>	“oa” as in <u>bo</u> at
<i>p</i>	“p” as in <u>pe</u> n or “b” as in <u>ba</u> g
<i>s</i>	“s” as in <u>asp</u> ect
<i>t</i>	“t” as in <u>ta</u> p
<i>v</i>	“v” as in <u>va</u> n
<i>lh</i>	lateral fricative
<i>y</i>	“y” as in <u>ye</u> s

For the transcriptions in Guarani, I have partially followed the phonetic rules adopted by Antonio Guasch (1961) and the Guarani online interactive dictionary (Guarani Ñanduti Rogue 2005) of the University of Mainz (Available at <http://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/lustig/hisp/guarani.html>). I indicate throughout the word whether a word is from the general vocabulary of either Guarani or Angaité, or if it belongs to a specific variant (e.g. *Kovalhok*; Chaco Guarani).

To both my Paraguayan and Angaité families

MAP 1. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF PARAGUAY

Source: DGEEC 2002



Source: DGEEC 2002

MAP 2. PARAGUAY, ANGAITÉ TERRITORY AND COMMUNITY LA PATRIA



Source: Rodrigo Villagra 2008 © based on Google Images.

INTRODUCTION

A. On the Angaité People and their surroundings

The Angaité people are members of the Enlhet-Enenlhet language family¹ (formerly known as the Maskoy, see Map 1). They have historically inhabited the northern and eastern part of the low Paraguayan Chaco from the western margin of the Paraguay River to approximately 250 kilometres inland (see Map 2 and 6). Their neighbours include other members of the Enlhet-Enenlhet family as well as the Nivacle and the Yshyro peoples.

A.i The Chaco

The history of the Angaité and other Chaquean peoples is – in so far as they are considered natives of this area - unquestionably linked to their environment: the *Gran Chaco*. This vast plain – around 1.000.000 square kilometres - is the second most expansive lowland South American ecosystem after the Amazon and also includes, apart from the Paraguayan Chaco, the southeast and northeast territories of Bolivia and Argentina respectively. The Chaco plain was shaped between the east of the Andes and the west of the Brazilian massif and was filled by alluvial sedimentation. Further materials flowed down by the Pilcomayo and the Parapiti Rivers, which formed its flat landscape and created different types of topsoil and vegetation (Leake, 2006:2). Its climate is defined “as ‘seasonal humid tropical’, characterised by alternating wet summers and dry winters, and an annual precipitation level of less than 2000 millimetres” (Koppen cited by Leake, *ibid.*). Chaco temperatures can reach nearly 50 degrees centigrade during the summer (November until March) and go below zero during the winter (April until July). According to the annual rainfall and related environmental characteristics, the Chaco is divided into three distinct climate zones: “The ‘semiarid’ climate of the dry western region [known as *Alto*]”high” Chaco]; the “dry humid” climate of the central Chaco, and the “moist-humid” of the eastern region [limited by the Paraguay River]” (Golfari cited by Leake, *ibid.*). The Paraguayan administrative division of this region vaguely correspond with the respective

¹ The linguist Hannes Kalish and his Enlhet stepfather, Ernesto Unruh (1999, 2004) proposed this classification and I adopt it here. Six different peoples currently compose this family language: the Enxet, the Enlhet, the Angaité, the Sanapaná, the Guaná and the Toba Maskoy or Enenlhet. In this work I will refer to these six peoples when mentioning the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples.

climate zones. The eastern or Low Chaco is thus roughly covered by the *Departamento* of Presidente Hayes, in which most of the Angaité people live (see Map 2). The vegetation of the Low Chaco alternates between high-ground patches of *Quebracho* (*Schinopsis balansae* and *Astronium*) with Gallery forests and grass lands known as “espartillares”; and low-ground Algarrobo (*Prosopis spp*) and shrub forests, and palm savannahs (ibid.4-5) the latter two being prone to seasonal flooding. The fauna of the Chaco is quite diverse and rich although unevenly distributed because of its different types of habitats, the current and increasing pattern of intensive land exploitation for cattle raising in the Low and High Chaco, and also mechanical agriculture in the Central Chaco. An index of such diversity in the Chaco is, for example, the 53 species of medium and large mammals registered so far in this ecosystem, “17 of which are large (over 10 kg.)” and include jaguars, pumas, peccaries, capybaras, tapirs and deer.

A.ii The Chaco colonization and the Angaité

As the *Gran Chaco* inhabitants and territory remained largely unconquered by the Spanish colony and not immediately occupied by its subsequent nation-states (i.e. Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay) little reliable information is available concerning its earlier native population and beyond the Bermejo and Paraguay Rivers, which were its long unchallenged boundaries. Most first-hand written accounts are of singular peoples (e.g. Dobrizhoffer, 1967-1968 [1783], on the Abipones and Mocovies) or gross generalization based on second hand sources (e.g. Azara, 1904[1790]).

In the particular case of the Angaité, they were only known (singularized as an ethnic group by non Indians) by the middle of the nineteenth century, when they reached the banks of the Paraguay River and initiated contact and trade with Paraguayans. Such unbinding and sporadic exchange between the riverine peoples and Paraguayan and international ships that navigated the Paraguay River at that period, changed radically with the establishment of the national project for integrating the eastern Chaco into the Paraguayan sovereignty. The official data available indicate that the Paraguayan occupation of the Chaco took a decisive step circa 1887 – with the establishment of the first tannin²-extraction company, Carlos Casado S.A., by the western bank of the Paraguay

² Tannin – in this case - was the organic acid extracted from the *Quebracho Colorado* tree (*Schinopsis*

River (see chapter 2). Over the next decades several other companies followed. The companies first attracted the Indians in search of manufactured goods (e.g. axes, cotton clothes, rum) which they were forced to exchange for their labour power. Gradually—through several means including the direct use of violence with the help of the Paraguayan army - companies forced them to relocate from their inland and river villages to the tannin factories-ports – known as *puertos* -, inland timber-labour camps - known as *obrajes* - and ranches – known as *estancias*. The companies progressively gained control over the indigenous land and its natural resources through a hierarchical labour system of which the impoverished bottom line were the Indians.

During the first decades of the 20th century, cattle ranchers and Mennonite (descendants of German Protestants) settlers established themselves in the Low and Central Chaco respectively. This nationalization and colonisation of their land affected the predominantly horticulturalist, hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the Angaité and other indigenous people. They then were caught up in the semi-enslavement of the debt-patronage system of the Tannin companies. After the 1932-1935 Paraguayan-Bolivian War, they were recruited as cheap labour by the landowners (cf. Delport, 1999). The present social, ethnic and linguistic reconfiguration of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco is generally understood as a result of the nationalization of the Chaco and particularly of its most critical period –i.e. 1890-1940 (Braunstein, 2005:10-12).

The preceding account of the historical events from that era is primarily taken from official chronicles. As will be demonstrated, this type of account proves to be biased and unsatisfactory when confronted with the Angaité's own accounts.

A.iii The recent and current situation of the Angaité people

The lack of in-depth or detailed and reliable historical records on the Angaité is not just a problem of the pre-colonial period of the Chaco. Even without question *a priori* any official chronicle, we can find gross incongruences in the recent data available about them. In 1972 the Paraguayan anthropologist Miguel Chase Sardi, estimated the Angaité population at 1.390 individuals (Biedermann and Zanardini, 2005). The official

balansae) to make animal hides into leather. Its extraction declined with its replacement with chemical tannin.

Paraguayan Census of the year 1981 registered 2.060 individuals, the Census of 1992 just 1.647 individuals of mixed Angaité, Toba Maskoy and Guana ethnicity (of whom only 84 were distinguished as Angaité); and the 2002 Census, 3.694 Angaité individuals (DGEEC, 2003:20).³ Certainly, these inconsistencies in numbers is a product of the different standard and precarious means in which the first two national indigenous census –i.e. 1981 and 1992 – were carried out. This is, for example, acknowledged officially in the most recent census (ibid.11). The figures of the 2002 Census are generally accepted as being more reliable for two reasons. First, they were gathered with the participation of indigenous peoples themselves. Second, the census questionnaire offered individuals the option of marking whether they were or not indigenous, and in case of the latter, to indicate their respective ethnic group. However, the inconsistencies in numbers still suggest that the population of the Angaité has been shifting with the contingent circumstances in which the Angaité individuals found themselves at the time of each survey, and these shifts determined whether or not they wanted to define themselves (or were defined by surveyors) as Angaité. In the same line, the abrupt differences between census data also suggests that for many individuals of, for instance, mixed parenthood or multiple group and residence membership, Angaité was one possible identity among many that they could indicate.

Nonetheless, the self-designated Angaité population is currently distributed in *Comunidades Indígenas* (indigenous communities) with land, some of which are of Angaité ethnic predominance⁴. Several groups of families, however, are located in settlements within private ranches and *caleras* (lime quarries),⁵ or in poor suburbs of Chaquean, Mennonite or eastern Paraguayan towns – including Asunción. According to the 2002 Census (ibid.14) most of this population live in rural areas (98,1%) and the majority in the Chaco (97,5%). Since the sanction of Law 904 in 1981, the state defined legally and located geographically the *Comunidades Indígenas* as the socio-legal units that

³ Of this figure just 30%, 1.030 individuals over 5 years old, declared ability to speak their vernacular (ibid.29).

⁴ These are San Carlos (3 villages, 3.686 hectares), La Patria (16 villages, 22.520 hectares), Diez Leguas (5 villages, 4.994 hectares), Santo Domingo y San Martín (2 villages, 5.104 hectares) and Kora'i (5 villages, 15.114 hectares); see Map 3. Other communities in which there is a proportion of Angaité people mixed with other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples are, for instance, the village Kurupaity of San Fernando community, and the village Machete Vaina of Riacho Mosquito community.

⁵ Such as the settlement of Kelyemaga Tegma (within the limits of the ranch ex-Puerto Colon, currently owned by the firm “El Algarrobal”) or the indigenous compound of *Calera* Guyrati, located by the left bank of the Paraguay River where people still live within a debt-patronage system close to slavery.

compose the different indigenous ethnic groups. Law 904/81 marked a shift in the state policies. Such shift resulted from the movement for indigenous rights initiated by the outrage against the genocide of the Ache people in the early 1970s, and the national and international campaigns to stop it. During the decades following the passing of Law 904 in 1981, several Angaité communities have received land from Mennonites, NGOs and the state, and, some even possess their own land titles (see Map 3). These communities and their land are known under a singular name (e.g. *Comunidad Kora'i* of 15.113 hectares), although they are generally composed of and divided up into or by several villages (e.g. the *Comunidad Kora'i* is composed by five villages: Nepolhen, Sania, Pañuelo, Tajamar Kavayu and 25 de Marzo). However, in the common usage both the community as a whole and its internal villages can be equally and generally designated as *comunidades*, for villages can be recognised as socio-legal units with their respective leaders by the state if they have twenty or more families. In order to avoid confusion I will follow the terminology of the 2002 Census, which designates as *comunidades*/communities the individual or entire landholdings and as *aldeas*/villages its internal settlements. The indigenous communities usually neighbour private ranches and sometimes other settlements, such as those of poor *Paraguayans*,⁶ Mennonites, or other indigenous peoples, with whom the Angaité engaged in different types of relationships, including trade.

In the case of the temporal Angaité migrants to Chaquean or eastern towns such Concepción or even Asunción, their subsistence activities vary according to their particular situation: they might work in the construction sector or, in the worse scenario, beg or prostitute themselves on the streets – particularly children and women. Nonetheless, even in these towns one often finds social networks and organization similar to the communities of the Chaco, as the communities reconstruct themselves in part along indigenous lines. For example, indigenous slums of mixed ethnic populations - like the Villa Redención of Concepción – sometimes count with the state's recognition as a

⁶ In general for the indigenous peoples, the Paraguayans belong to a specific ethnic category that applies to the members of the Paraguayan nation state and tradition (descent of the antique Guaraní-Spanish mixture, see chapter 1). The Paraguayans who inhabit the Chaco – excluding the rich landowners who do not actually live in their ranches but in Asunción or Concepción - have migrated from the eastern region of the country. Some of these poor Paraguayans already migrated in the early tannin companies' era (1890-1920), some in the following decades and some very recently. The ones who have been there since a generation ago prefer to call themselves *Chaqueños* (Chaconians) instead of *campesinos* (peasants). From the perspective of the state, the term Paraguayans, in a broad meaning, includes the indigenous peoples, Mennonites and whoever shares Paraguayan citizenship.

comunidad indígena. Finally, the Angaité, like other Paraguayan Indians, move and migrate between indigenous communities and other places not only for economic reasons but simultaneously for social, economical, personal and entertainment purposes; the bigger the social networks between people the greater the flow.

B. Research Objective

The original objective of this research was to investigate how the present situation among the Angaité people of the Paraguayan Chaco has come into being historically. Particularly, my primal aim was to find out from *within* – i.e. not solely in sociological terms - what motivated the language shift of the Angaité from vernacular(s) to Guaraní, accounting for the fact that this shift questioned the ethnic classification of the Angaité from the current and dominant linguistic criteria of the nation-state. This primal objective has proven to be methodologically difficult for multiple reasons: 1) It is accepted in the anthropology of the South American Chaco (Braunstein and Meichtry *et al.*, 2008; Braunstein 2005:4; Kalish & Unruh 2004), that the present ethnic groups are a social and linguistic reconfiguration of former pre-colonial ethnic groups which were more numerous in diversity, but smaller in population and it was only after colonization that they came to be as they currently are;⁷ 2) Lack of reliable historical data due to very limited contact by chroniclers before the nationalization of the Paraguayan Chaco – particularly with inland peoples; 3) In pre-nationalization historical documents the Angaité are not mentioned as such and even their linguistic family, the Enlhet-Enenlhet (as Maskoy), cannot be clearly identified; 4) The Angaité people like most Amerindian peoples have not developed a writing system and their own historical and mythical accounts (mostly recently recorded) seem to refer to as far back as the late pre-nationalization period: this is more or less five generations from now; 5) The Spanish colonial and Paraguayan classification of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco have changed throughout the centuries. This has also happened with the Chaco's ethnography, which was more systematically developed over approximately the last 100 years. The changes of perspectives have been reflected in the very constitutive form adopted by present ethnic groups; 6) There are some ethnographies (Susnik, 1981

⁷ In this work I will refer, unless stated otherwise, to colonization as interchangeable with nationalization of the Chaco region by the Paraguayan nation-state. Therefore, when referring to the pre-colonial era, I am not referring to the general processes that occurred in other parts of the world previous to European arrival and conquest, nor to Pre-Columbus and the native era on the American continent. This means that the term refers to the various types of people through which this nationalization process was carried out.

based on Cominges, 1882) that describe pre-nationalization history (i.e. 17th and 18th centuries) of Angaité, but little evidence is presented for this conjectural history.

In regards to my objective and preceding account, there were two common assumptions I was trying to avoid. First, the idea that the Angaité were an ethnic group that identically reproduced itself throughout time until the colonization of the Chaco and since then they has decayed both as a society and culture.⁸ Second, that the Angaité as an ethnic group was *just* a by-product of the nationalization process enforced on its former pre-colonial groups. The first assumption has been generally made by ethnographies and recent official reports; the second assumption was more problematic for me because I had this perspective until very recently.

Let me explain how I arrived at this assumption. When I did my first intended fieldwork with the Angaité for the specific purpose of learning their language, I spent twenty days in the community of San Carlos between February and March of 1999 (see chapter 2). There I learnt that my language mentors distinguished former socio-linguistic groups and thus different ways of speaking their language amongst members of their own community. The groups they mentioned were the *Kovalhok* – “those who come from the marshes”, the *Koeteves* – “those who come from the black *Algarrobo* tree (*Prosopis Nigra*) area” - and the *Konhongnava* – “those who come from the *Quebracho Blanco* tree (*Aspidoperma Quebracho Blanco*) area”. With time, I learned the names of other former groups, like *Koyelhna*, “those who come from the place of fruits”, and *Kelyakmok*, literally “the constipated”. However, nobody identified themselves as being *Koyelhna* or labelled another person as such. In the same vein, nobody explicitly referred to themselves as *Kelyakmok*, which is not surprising considering it is clearly a derogative connotation. However, people said that *such and such* a person or group were *Kelyakmok* and those referred to as such, would refer to themselves exclusively as Angaité without further

⁸ Many people hold the idea, including anthropologists and social scientists (see Brun et al. 1990; Chase and Susnik, 1995; Susnik 1953), that the Angaité are one of the indigenous peoples most “deprived” of their own culture and “acculturated” in contemporary Paraguay (from 1989 onwards). According to their logic, this is evident because they do not speak their own language anymore - except for adults and elders – speaking Guaraní instead; and, they have apparently dropped most of their own distinctive material and cultural traits (i.e. garments, tools, ritual) and thus they have “assimilated” to the cultural ways and socio-economical situation of the poor Paraguayan *Chaqueños*. In this regard such “assimilation” resulted from the Angaité’s earlier semi-enslavement in the Tannin-factories ports on the Paraguay River and later from their engagement as cheap-labour on cattle-ranches.

reference to any former social groups. Furthermore, people (and not only Angaité but Enxet as well) would assert that the group of people referred as *Kelyakmok* were actually part of the Sanapaná people.

I noticed, for instance, that only elders and middle age adults spoke Angaité in San Carlos and the other Angaité communities I visited at the time. According to my observations, other outsiders' and the Angaité's own declarations, a clear generational gap was present between adult people on one side, and youngsters and children on the other side. This gap seemed to cut the transmission and use of the vernacular, thus Guarani constituted the main language between people of all ages. Additionally, when I learned to formulate to my adult interlocutors the question of their respective ethnicity they would answer first saying that they were Angaité. If I rephrased the question, however, (see chapter 1) they would declare to be either *Kovalhok*, *Koeteves* or *Konhongnava*. In the same vein, I observed that people who belonged to different former groups did not use vernacular but Guarani to communicate with each other. In fact, even people reported as being from the same former group mostly used Guarani to communicate with each other. Exceptionally, I heard some couples – husband and wife – talking in vernacular, or sporadically a grandmother or grandfather addressing their grandchildren in Angaité, though even in the latter case their grandchildren responded in Guarani. Only after observing this myself was I willing to conclude that there was not such a thing as a “common” Angaité language but different dialects that remained as such and were undermined by Guarani's role as *lingua franca*. Taking into account that the use of distinctive a common language – in spite of possible dialects – was the main criterion in modern Paraguay to identify a concrete ethnic group, and considering that my preliminary data casted doubts on the existence of such a thing amongst the Angaité, I asked myself: which were the mechanisms in which the Angaité's common ethnicity was based upon? Furthermore, later on I learned that the term *Angaité* was from vernacular but originated from Guarani, meaning literally “in a short while”.⁹ Nonetheless, it was adopted by Angaité as their auto-denomination and remained as such even when other Enlhet-Enenlhet groups changed their former exogenous and often derogative denominations for their respective terms for “Person/People” (see chapter

⁹ Around the year 1995 Santiago Riquelme, an old man who was living on the ranch Kora'i (which two years later was bought by the state and became the community Kora'i), told me the origin of the name Angaité. During the Chaco War, a Paraguayan official asked an Angaité leader/shaman when the war was going to end and the latter answered “Ángaite opata” (In Guarani: “It will finish in a short while”), so thereafter his people were labelled as the Angaité, literally the *short wholes*.

1).

Further Data seemed to confirm my suspicions. A basic linguistic study by missionaries of the Summer Linguistic Institute (c.f. Grimes, 2003), which compared the Angaité and the Sanapaná languages, concluded that they were almost the same language as they shared more than 90% of their vocabulary. However, such similarities are not extraordinary, according to more comprehensive and long-standing linguistic research amongst Enlhet-Enenlhet languages such as those of Kalish and Unruh (1999, 2004; see also Fabre, 2005), which show that the closer the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples (and former groups) were and are to each other geographically the greater the crossover between their languages/dialects. Nonetheless, it was not the linguistic similarities between different groups in itself that puzzled me, but how those similarities worked – under the circumstances of colonization – to unify certain people into single ethnic groups and separate others. If the case of language relatedness could work more or less for any set of neighbouring pre-colonial groups, why then were the *Kovalhok*, *Koeteves* and *Konhongnava* joined under the Angaité ethnic label, and the *Kelyakmok* (who were also neighbouring those groups) were not clearly incorporated into such ethnic label. Moreover, today the Enxet and the Enlhet peoples have made explicit that their former separated groups shared a similar language and that they pertained to a common linguistic nucleus (Kalish and Unruh, 2004:8). There is also some evidence of socio-political relatedness between former groups of the Enxet (Grubb, 1904), although not enough to represent an overarching socio-political organization or a common ethnic denomination. However, in the case of the Angaité, such previously shared linguistic “commonality” between former groups has not been stated by anyone I have spoken to, nor is their evidence of socio-political alliances or clear relatedness between former groups available today.

Taking all the preceding arguments into account, I concluded that the union of those three (or possibly more) aforementioned ethnic groups into one was a contingent phenomenon produced by certain common features (i.e. vicinity, related dialects), *ad hoc* social strategies, and circumstantial events (reduction, migration and concentration in the same ranches and river ports). In other words, I sustained that the Angaité rather than being a historical ethnicity predetermined by a linguistic commonality, was a social construction produced by both alternative internal strategies and outside pressures. I have argued elsewhere (Villagra, 2005) that the nation-state adopted the term Angaité, which was a

term used locally by Paraguayans on the banks of the Paraguay River to designate a particular group of Indians with whom they had permanent contact (cf. Cominges, 1882; see chapter 2), and then the former extended this label to neighbouring Indians situated to the west.

In the aforementioned article (Villagra, *ibid.*) I questioned Kalish's and Unruh's idea of the existence of a pre-colonial "linguistic nuclei" (Kalish and Unruh, 2004:1,7) amongst the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples and particularly their possible socio-political consequences as a means for ethnic amalgamation. By arguing this, I had in mind my perception of the contingent nature of the Angaité as an allegedly linguistic and therefore ethnic unit. I later realised, after discussing the matter personally with Kalish, that there was something I could not argue against. We basically agreed that the Angaité and each of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples were composed of several former groups, and that these former groups had very few noticeable and common socio-political traits (although some more than others) that might have alluded to their later ethnic amalgamation into six distinct ethnic groups. However, as Hannes indicated to me, I was overlooking an important fact. Today, all the members of the Enlhet-Enenlhet family strongly identify and distinguish themselves from each other with those ethnic labels: Angaité, Sanapaná, Enxet, Enlhet, Guana and Toba Maskoy. This cannot merely be the effect of colonization. It may be true that the nation-state has somehow arbitrarily classified and named the Angaité and other indigenous peoples. It may also be true that we do not know precisely what internal strategies and reasons led the precariously registered former groups to amalgamate themselves into ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the Indians themselves maintain and refer to those labels. I also came to admit that my own data used to distinguish, for instance the *Kovalhok* from the *Koeteves* languages/dialects, was not grounded on in-depth linguistic analysis but only on my interlocutors' manifestations about their respective differences. There has not been a proper comparison between the languages of the former groups of the Angaité. In fact, there was never such a comprehensive linguistic comparison between the former groups of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples and it is impossible to do it now.¹⁰ Moreover, there is a lot of data missing regarding how many ethnic groups existed when the Chaco nationalization process began.¹¹ Regarding the names of the former, it is also

¹⁰ Kalish and Unruh's (2004) is a preliminary comparison between the six current Enlhet-Enenlhet languages.

¹¹ However, the research projects and publications under the level of *Carta Étnica del Gran Chaco*, led by

unclear up to what extent they reflect concrete ethnic groups or overlapping names according to each group' classification and location. It is also uncertain whether some of these names associated several groups with particular environmental features under one label while disregarding ethnic differences between them. For instance, names such as *Chanawatsan* or *Konavatsom* "those who live by the Paraguay River" could have been known, according to inland people, as one ethnic group but could in fact have been several different groups (ibid. 15), and thus merely designated a geographical location but not an ethnic or linguistic difference. Also, I must recognise that the search for the ethnic units is a search for clear boundaries that might not have existed as such, or which operated with contextual conditions that escape our knowledge and imagination. As we will see in the first chapter for the current Angaité people, and as argued by Viveiros de Castro (2006), Amerindian words for "person" and "people" are enunciative markers rather than substantive terms, and thus they are highly contextual in the extent of their connotations and applications. In the same token, ethnonyms of the past seem not to be so self-enunciative, but are/were generally applied to others although there are some exceptions, such as individuals today that declare themselves to be ethnically and originally *Kovalhok* or *Koeteves*.

At this point I cannot avoid asking myself the same question Roy Wagner (1974) raised while examining sociality among Daribi of Papua New Guinea. Am I assuming and thus deceiving myself with the idea of former, ethnically and permanently bounded social groups amongst the Angaité and other Chaco Peoples? Am I narrowing down my vision and taking for granted that native sociality existed along clear-cut ethnic social groups? Thus, am I simultaneously dismissing and uncovering one illusion, namely the Angaité ethnic group, to just readily replace it with what seems to lie historically underneath it, this is to say, the pre-colonial groups? I can fairly agree with Wagner's proposition for the Daribi, which may as well be applicable to the Angaité, that "Sociality is a 'becoming' and not a 'become' thing" (ibid.112), so when I mention former pre-colonial groups I am referring to highly contingent and fluid associations. Like the Daribi, it seems that pre-colonial names in the Chaco (e.g. *Kovalhok*, *Koeteves*) are social distinctions, based on similarities/differences of several and variable aspects: social, linguistic, geographical and

Dr. José Braunstein (cf. Volumes I 1990, II 1991, III-IV 1992, V 1994, VI 1995, VIII 2009) and carried under the scholarship of the Argentinean research institute CONICET have successfully shed light and valuable information on an approximate ethnic distribution at that time.

so on, which might have had the effect of eliciting groups by drawing boundaries between them (ibid.109). However, unlike Wagner's point for the Daribi,¹² such social distinctions, however fluid, contextual, overlapping and/or ephemeral, could also represent an "intentional" association at certain given points. Precisely, Braunstein (1983, 2008:35) has argued, while focusing on the relation of ritual, adornments and chieftainship amongst the Chaco Indians and their former groups, that certain norms and practices have not necessarily had relevance in terms of external/internal distinctions. He said that "chants, scalps, feathers" (ibid.) were not used as diacritical signs of the ethnic difference, but they had a symbolic value that related to an internal institutional structure. Thus, such symbols and practices endowed organic solidarity to pre-colonial groups. Let us leave this debate for the time being.¹³

Taking the preceding arguments into account, I could only conclude definitively that the Angaité name is arbitrary and its creation and use is contingent upon the expansion of the nation-state into the Chaco. Nonetheless, I acknowledged that the configuration of the former known Angaité sub-groups into one present ethnic label that differentiates them

¹² "Thus *Zibi*, clan, and community are not groups in the sense of deliberately organized or ideologically regularized constructions. Terms like "clan" and "community" may be helpful ways of referring to these associational groupings, provided that we keep in mind they have generally denoted fairly 'unintentional' associations of this kind and that we do not try to make them into representations of our own corporations and consciously socio-political bodies" (ibid.:111-112). In the cases of both the Daribi and the Angaité the fluidity and dynamicity of social groups in space and time speak of historical processes that were later coagulated under the symbolic and material dominance of the respective nation-states. Due to this process, indigenous social groups have become - at least superficially - more like our corporative socio-political groups.

¹³ I have enough material to produce a fragmentary view of how the process of socio-political and linguistic reconfiguration worked out in the western territory of the Angaité, by showing the distribution of people and villages - however fluid - according to the overlapping ethnic and geographical classification of each former group. Such distribution reflected the existing ethnic differentiations at some given historical point - late pre and early post colonial era - but it was later going to collapse and collided with the processes of redistribution and mixing of people under the new settlement pattern established by upcoming Anglican missions and the companies' *estancias*, *obrajes* and *puertos*. I was hoping to carry this out by mapping out former villages and determining as best I could who lived there with whom by cross-referencing the information of genealogies, life histories and each particular classification of ethnic groups given to me by my Angaité interlocutors. Complementary information was at hand of other indigenous accounts and historical reports such as those of the Anglican missionaries that present some data on the different groups that existed and gathered around the missions (cf. SAMS Magazine 1930:128, 1934:100). Certainly, it can be argued for the Angaité, similarly to what Gow (1991) describes for the case of the Piro in Peru, that "the relations between people and land and the relations they have with each other are conditioned to almost perpetual movement" (ibid.:205). In the same token, it appears that for the Angaité, as much as for the Piro and other Amerindians, "kinship is history" (ibid.), and thus kinship, looking at it as a process involving the point of view of particular individuals or Ego, have a lot to say about "group making" and thus common history. Taking into account that such social and spatial fluidity might as well have a sense of direction and showing where, when and how persons declared to be from different groups (i.e. *Kovalhok* and *Koeteves*) became co-residents and kinspeople (by virtue both of external influences and personal choices and actions) I could then further explain how they reshaped their previous social and ethnic distinctions. Due to issues of time and space I will leave this task for future research.

from other contemporaneous ethnic groups is a phenomenon actively caused by the Indians themselves. In being able to grasp the practices and ideas underpinning such phenomenon, I was hoping that I could represent the Angaité's coming into being as a contemporary ethnic group in a much more meaningful and realistic manner in terms of their own perceptions.

However, it was not only in the process of having provocative questions, producing written preliminary conclusions and discussing those conclusions with fine researchers like Kalish that my ideas shifted. On the contrary, the very act of discussing and formulating those questions in the field, and relating with particular people like Agapito Navarro, my mentor (see chapter 1) allowed me to drop excessively speculative and unworkable hypotheses. For we first have to make sense of what interests us, how we formulate that and how then we transmit and translate those questions to our interlocutors. But it is a common situation that we – the anthropologist - ask (and see) what we want to know and believe it is worthwhile knowing, and people respond (or show/act) what they want to tell us and believe it is worthwhile knowing. In the process of asking questions and getting responses we realise that not only do we have preconceptions and thus misled conclusions, but that our own questions are – tautologically - questionable. The process can work the other way around and in the same manner, that is to say: people ask, we answer and they may come up with their own particular conclusions.

At first glance, the Angaité people seemed to partly accept some of the facts included in the official version. They recognised the partial loss of many of their own distinct cultural traits such as the dropping of their language, the ritual celebrations and the adoption of Paraguayan “ways” e.g. Guaraní and white food (cf. chapters 1 and 2). However, by no means do they perceive themselves as ethnically “assimilated” to poor Paraguayans; nor do they consider themselves as being undifferentiated from other related and non-related indigenous groups, i.e. the Enxet, Sanapaná or the Nivacle. Here there is already a basic difference between an official and external view of the Angaité with the way they perceive themselves. They attributed certain effects in their current life to things and events that happened the past. They also associate themselves to certain places and geographies, e.g. present communities and past territories, and to former ethnic groups. By the same token, they see the non-indigenous ethnic groups, like Paraguayans and Mennonites, in a dominating and asymmetric position in relation to themselves and to other indigenous

groups. The Angaité, in making sense of their present, also refer to the past. They refer to it in several ways, but the most important is storytelling, *Nanek Anya* –“old news/stories” (cf. chapter 2). However, what these narratives stress is not necessarily the coming into being of their complex ethnicity or identity. Even if old people know and can tell about former groups and how they have intermingled, or how they spoke only their language (and middle aged parents openly complained that their children do not know or want to speak Angaité but Guaraní) the narratives emphasize more than anything former ways of sociality and socio-cosmological practices (or the disruption of them) in relation or contrast to present ones. In doing so, many of the narratives refer to circumstances and actions lived by the *Enyatau'a* (In Angaité: “our grandparents”), and some refer to the particular involvement of “others” (e.g. Paraguayan and spirits) in those events, and how these incidents have determined their current situation as people, e.g. the lack of sufficient food, the differentiation from and social asymmetry before the Paraguayans.

Here is a particular connection between knowledge of the past and relationships to others; and here is where and how I intersect myself with the Angaité. Such intersection is not merely anecdotal but intimately related with the research objective and the ongoing process of knowledge production. For only through establishing relationships with concrete individuals was the knowledge produced in and for this thesis made possible. Here it is worthwhile to cite Bourdieu's (2003) reflection on the matter, which goes as follows:

“Participant objectivation [instead of observation] undertakes to explore not the ‘lived experience’ of the knowing subject [the anthropologist] but the social conditions of possibility – and therefore the effects and limits – of that experience and, more precisely, of the act of objectivation itself.” (ibid.282).

The social conditions of possibility stemming from that [my] experience amongst the Angaité people are the ones that determined my historical role in the Paraguayan and indigenous milieu. This was particularly true regarding my membership in a land rights advocacy NGO *vis á vis* indigenous communities and leaders claiming land before the state. This has been possible through my shifting and evolving roles – from my position as a certain kind of outsider to a type of member of a community/family - and representing multiple personas –outsider/insider, lawyer/anthropologist, shaman apprentice/kin. To

such personas my social and familiar (middle) class backgrounds and Paraguayan ethnicity could be added. Undeniably, my historical role and evolving personas were relevant for the type of knowledge that was produced and the kind of relationships I established with people, and particularly with the shaman Agapito Navarro. This is why this particular relationship and the experiences, events and dialogues generated through and/or around it gravitates so much throughout this work. If the events and examples, which refer to such particular relationship (i.e. anthropologist and shaman), are burdensome and copious within the thesis, I extend my apologies, for my intent was not to fall into an oblique biography and personal saga but to explore the very “act(s) of objectivation” of such experiences. For I consider myself and Agapito, and the rest of the Angaité and non-Angaité individuals as full social actors. And we are social actors not in a vacated social milieu but inserted both in our personal and collective histories, which inform us as we “engage[d] in the construction of social reality” (ibid.282). The act of objectivation goes back to my initial involvement in the pro-indigenous NGO Tierraviva (1994), and since then it has been progressively built-up through my advocacy work, through the fieldwork and, more acutely, by the writing up process. Blaser (forthcoming:139) argues that knowledge for the Yshyro of the Paraguayan Chaco “implies enmeshing oneself in potentially transformative relations”. Certainly, such was the case for me and Agapito, as our relationship evolved the growth of knowledge transformed our identities. However, in the process of writing-up I have not just presented and described the “folk theories” (Bourdieu, ibid.289) of my Angaité interlocutors purely in the particular terms they have told them to me. I have attempted interpretations and analyses for those theories and folk explanations for otherwise they would not have made sense to me, let alone the reader who is likely less familiar with the Angaité people.

Finally, both in my description and analytical endeavours I have been trying to explain social change without dismissing continuities, to show the Angaité’s socio-historical agency without denying social-asymmetries between the former and the dominant society. I have intended to portray particular indigenous practices and symbols but not at the cost of fixing ethnic and social boundaries and categories. I have also tried to describe diverse individuals’ accounts and particular events of personal life histories while simultaneously showing the commonalities between them. Furthermore, I have attempted to focus on particular cases and phenomena while also leaving space for future engagement with other regional ethnographies and disciplines. All of the aforementioned may as well stand as an

analytical and methodological credo, which I may have betrayed more than once in this work. If this is the case, it is worth stating that I have written this in good faith and if blatant ignorance and poor writing skills inhibit the reader, I apologize.

C. Literature review

As I have indicated previous ethnographic research and data on the Angaité are random and marginal in extension (Boggiani, n.d.; Métraux, 1963[1944]) and most of them have been developed just recently (see Delport, 1999; Amarilla, 2006; Franco and Imaz, 2006; Villagra 1998, 2005a, 2005b, 2008a, 2008b). Due to the fact that earlier ethnographers were working alongside the colonial system, they can be reliable only in terms of this specific period of time. Beyond that point, as there are no firsthand reports, (i.e. written from actual experiences with the Indians in the Chaco), I have evaluated them as too speculative. For an up-to-date ethnographic literature review on the Chaco, see Grant (2006:22-25).

The works and information concerning the former neighbouring and related groups, such as the Enxet and the Enlhet and other Chaco peoples, are highly relevant and are a complementary tool for the analysis of the Angaité ethnographic context and the particular topics of this thesis, such as shamanism and mythology. I will repeatedly refer throughout this work to these ethnographies, research, and published mythologies both for comparative and complementary purposes.¹⁴

D. Fieldwork

My familiarity with the Angaité, Sanapaná and Enxet people goes back to the year 1994, when I started to work as a junior lawyer-to-be in the NGO Tierraviva. This is a Paraguayan NGO, which sprang from the former land purchasing programme of the Anglican Church in the Chaco (from the late 1970s until early 1990's), which aimed to relocate Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité communities living at the time in private *estancias*.

¹⁴ However, I have not referred enough in this work to the recently submitted thesis of Valentina Bonifacio (2009) on the Maskoy of Casado, a research that undoubtedly has many relevant points and arguments in relation to my own thesis. This is due both to lack of time and the methodological need to concentrate in my own ethnography. Both Valentina and myself deal with very similar issues in our research. Once I completed the thesis I will be ready to engage in a proper cooperative dialogue.

The Anglican programme gradually came to an end in coincidence with the beginning of the Paraguayan political transition towards democracy (initiated with the coup d'état of 1989 against the dictator Stroessner) and the new legal framework then established. Stephen Kidd, an Englishman and former member of the Anglican programme, who later became a professional anthropologist, was searching at the time for both internal and external support to continue the land rights campaign. As a result of Stephen's enthusiastic efforts, several people joined in his project and founded Tierraviva. I was recruited by Stephen to join the project and later he encouraged me to study anthropology. Tierraviva was constituted in order to allow greater socio-political participation of leaders and communities in pursuit of their ongoing land claims and other ignored rights before the Paraguayan nation-state. Tierraviva also aimed and still aims and struggles to demand by all possible legal and practical means – e.g. lobby with state representatives; national and international campaigns with media and the public - the compliance of the Paraguayan State and its successive governments for the recognition of indigenous and human rights granted to the indigenous peoples of the country (cf. Amnesty International 2009 campaign for the cases of the Enxet communities Yakye Axa and Sawhoyamaya).

I worked continuously with Tierraviva as an employee from November 1994 until I took a leave of absence during the years 1997-1998 to undertake a master's in social anthropology at the University of St Andrews. After finishing the degree I resumed my position. In September 2003, I left definitively my position as employee to initiate my PhD at St Andrews. By working in Tierraviva I became acquainted with leaders, families and members of a great number of communities of the Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité peoples. I also gained a general knowledge of communities of other indigenous peoples and their leaders both from the Chaco and the Eastern region of the Country. Particularly related with this project, I carried out short periods of fieldwork with two other Angaité communities, with Cora'í (1995-1997) and with San Carlos (1999, cf. chapter 1). I also improved my Guaraní while working with the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, which was necessary because my Paraguayan ethnicity and middle class up-bringing did not grant me a communicative competence in this language.

I carried out the official fieldwork towards the production of this thesis by living in the

Angaité village of Karova Guasu,¹⁵ one of the 16 villages of the community of La Patria (see Map 4). This *in situ* research lasted an intermittent period of 6 months carried out during December 2004 until January 2007. Subsequently, I made two short visits to Karova Guasu (March and July-August 2008). However, the fieldwork experience was extended and enriched all the more even during the times that I returned to Asunción. I often came back to the capital in order to work on several projects (basically to self finance my fieldwork) and volunteer for Tierraviva as its president. On many of these occasions I was accompanied by Agapito Navarro and sometimes by other members of his family.

During my stay at the village of Karova Guasu I set up an Angaité language learning routine, kept daily field notes, participated and took notes in several village and community meetings, documented historical and present events, and gathered toponyms. Additionally, I gathered information about the spatial, temporal and kinship arrangements of Karova Guasu and other neighbouring villages; on top of this, I produced genealogies and kinship charts. I also interviewed leaders and members of the communities and outsiders on particular topics with the aid of a professional friend, José Elizeche, who recorded on video some activities of the village. Finally, I kept records of official and private development projects carried out within Karova Guasu and in other villages of La Patria. When I was not in the field during that period, I searched for additional information in national and private institutions regarding historical documents, maps and unpublished literature of the Chaco Indians and particularly the Angaité. I also did some short visits to other communities of the Enxet, Sanapaná, Aché, Maka, Mby'a and Ava Guarani peoples located both in the Chaco and the Eastern region of Paraguay. Some of these visits were made with Agapito's companionship. Additionally, I travelled for two months over separate periods to the Venezuelan and Peruvian Amazon. There, I visited indigenous communities of the Kurripaco, Piaroa, Jivi and Nahua peoples, where I accompanied fellow researchers from St Andrews and NGOs in their assistance and support to those communities.

¹⁵ The community is named after a tree. The Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) as is it generally known in Guarani language, is also known as Karova in the same language. Here the word Guasu (big in Guarani) stands for a supposedly big Jacaranda tree that is found in this place. The name of this tree in Angaité-Kovalhok is *Akpehek* (fem.). However, the original toponym of the place is *Mopaia Enyetet* (In *Kovalhok*: white neck) after an event that took place there, which I will describe later on in this work.

D.i The fieldwork setup

Before I started my PhD, Félix Navarro, then one of the leaders of Karova Guazú, knew that I wanted to learn the Angaité language (see chapter 1) and that I had started to study it in the community of San Carlos. Once I came back to Paraguay after my first year of PhD research at St Andrews, he invited and convinced me that it was better to start my studies in his village rather than the Sanapaná community of La Esperanza as I had previously planned. He said that his father, Agapito Navarro also leader of Karova Guazú, was willing to teach me the language, and that such undertaking would help them to recover the use of their language and eventually produce writing material for that aim. Félix was involved in a series of discussions and initiatives that the villages of Karova Guazú, Karovaí, Paraiso and Carpincho of the community of La Patria had initiated regarding the revitalization of the Angaité language, and specifically the *Kovalhok* language/dialect. These discussions coincided with two different external projects regarding the revitalizations of Angaité language. One of them started with Escuela Viva (Live School), a special department of the Ministry of Education, which organized a committee with some of the Paraguayan teachers and indigenous leaders of the aforementioned villages to prepare primary school texts in Angaité. The other project was started by a team of people hired by the *Centro de Estudios Antropológicos de la Universidad Católica* (CEADUC) which gathered people of different villages in La Patria and other Angaité communities in order to promote the use of Angaité in community meetings and to record myths and elders' narratives.

Once I started to spend time at Karova Guazú I tried to explain the purposes of my presence to Félix, Agapito and whoever else asked me or was interested. I declared that apart from learning the language, I was also interested in knowing about their everyday lives and history. In doing so I was trying to match my own expectations – not absolutely clear to myself at the beginning- to their expectations about my presence and possible contributions towards the recovering of the language. I was perfectly aware of the fact that due to my own limitations – i.e. short period of residence, great linguistic limitations in Angaité - and external circumstances related to the language shift, my participation could do very little to reach Félix's hopes and projects. Therefore, I confronted Félix with my limitations most of important of which was the fact that I was not a linguist like the people with whom he compared me (Fieldnotes 30/1/2005). I further discussed with him what I

understood to be the external and internal conditions that produced language-loss among younger generations of Angaité and what I thought might be feasible measures to overcome it. I believed – and I still believe - that the introduction and use of Angaité in the school system was the least important of possible alternatives considering the current inadequate and poor quality of official education even in the Spanish and Guaraní languages. I also stated that written materials by themselves are not much help if the use of the language is not a lived experience: any project for language revitalisation should be supported primarily by the interest of Angaité children and youngsters, and by the initiative of their senior relatives to teach and speak to them. Félix was not completely unaware of all these issues but he had had in mind, when asking me to help the Angaité, the practical example of two linguists that had been working respectively with the Enxet and Enlhet peoples. He considered these linguists' success in learning, using, and writing, and therefore “externally” promoting those languages as a good example. It should be said that the percentage of members of Enxet and Enlhet peoples who currently speak their language is far higher than the Angaité. So, in Félix's eyes, I was supposed to become the Angaité “expert” at some point who would join their own efforts to strengthen the use of their language.

In this way, from the beginning my fieldwork was set up as a “negotiated” ground for knowing each other. I felt that there were some reciprocal intentions between myself and the people of Karova Guazú, but some differences in interests and expectations, and also a great deal of uncertain areas that nonetheless were tolerated or deemed manageable for both sides. I believe that in the end I succeeded in establishing a good relationship with the people of Karova Guazú – obviously with some persons and families more than others – beyond even my ethnographic agenda. I also related to many Paraguayans who permanently or occasionally lived in La Patria. Naturally, I did not manage to visit several villages of La Patria (particularly those located in the east side of community) as frequently as others, and thus both their people, who I could sometimes vaguely identify, and myself remained as familiar strangers.

In Karova Guasu, regarding age and gender, I got along with the youngsters of both sexes (playing football and volleyball with them), and I could engage in conversation with most men of all ages. With women of my age or younger certain social distance was expected (with exceptions, see chapter 1), but I could insert myself in improvised circles of women

to practise my Angaité and crack jokes with them. I was in constant interaction with the children as I lied in my hammock during my siesta and they played around my dwelling, which was also the community school. By the end of my fieldwork toddlers lost their fear of me, which I consider one of my greatest achievements. They would come close to me to ask me for sweets or just to tease me repeating my name for fun. Additionally, I managed to take part in many events and visit many people of other villages (those located in the west side of the community and closer to Karova Guasu) often with the companionship of Agapito, but sometimes even on my own. That is the fluid social network of people in which I enmeshed myself, and I am most grateful for the many happy times they gave me.

E. Outline of the thesis

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis is divided in four long chapters. In chapter one I explore material and moral aspects of relationships both amongst the Angaité and between Angaité and outsiders. I discuss different anthropological categories – exchange, sharing, pooling – under the examination and comparison of my own ethnographic data. I approach this discussion from the perspective of the concrete relationship between the shaman Agapito Navarro and myself, the anthropologist. Then, I present the different ways the Angaité people individually and collectively address and define themselves and others. Finally, I describe the types of transactions and relationships that might take place amongst Angaité individuals and families and between the former and outsiders. I discuss whether these diverse and multiple interactions may be means to foster sociality – best achieved through the practices and discourses of kinship – or whether they underpin social distance and/or current ethnic separations between the parts involved.

In chapter two I explain storytelling as it takes place in everyday life. I situate storytelling within the context of determined events and particular dialogues between the narrator and his/her listeners (including myself) to further elucidate the intentional - although implicit - messages of his/her telling. Then, I focus on a particular narrative told during several occasions by Agapito Navarro, which I provisionally named “The Arrival of the Paraguayans”. I analyze and compare this narrative with other similar ones, to explore how the Angaité understand and explain – in broad terms - their present circumstances. Particularly, by speaking about the unfortunate decisions, actions and omissions made by

the ancestors when they first faced the Paraguayans, the tellers suggest that the Angaité's current socio-economical position in relation to the Paraguayans derives from such primordial encounters. I also show - with the aid of historical data - how these narratives without being totally at odds with official historical accounts, are best considered – like other Amerindian myths - as socio-moral indexes for proper sociality within both the internal and external realms of life .

In chapter three I present the myth of “The Two Shamans and the Chief of the Cattle” and analyze it as a historical object that, on the one hand, introduces historical innovations of a diverse nature – sociological, economical and cosmological -; and on the other hand erases previous historical circumstances. For this purpose I compare different versions of such narrative, and I interpret the contents and their differences between the versions with the aid of historical records and a structural approach to the analysis of myths. I further interpret such variations by situating the particular context, such as life experiences of the storytellers, and how this relates to the particular messages conveyed through the narratives to their listeners.

In chapter four I describe and analyse the historical transformations of Angaité shamanism and leadership (and, by extension, other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples) also in relation to outsiders. First of all, I describe the common features of the ancient shamanism concentrated in the figures of the indigenous *veske* and *apyoholhma* from which disseminated a diversity of figures like foreign shamans, indigenous pastors and non-shamans leaders. By discussing the Angaité's associated ideas of knowledge and capacities linked primarily but not exclusively to the shamans and their auxiliary spirits, I show how those diverse and multiple cotemporary figures share in common what I precariously call the *shamanic potency*. I further examine how such shamanic potency was perceived by some of my indigenous interlocutors as present in interactions and contexts apparently devoid of any shamanic presence or relevance, such as those between indigenous political leaders and members of NGOs. Finally, I describe and discuss everyday episodes that involve reputed shamans, their apprentices, and leaders. In doing so, I attempt to move away from the assumption that shamanism is a declining phenomenon. I propose instead that the shamanic potency and actual shamans are latent and unpredictable forces in the current life of the Angaité people, and I expect they will continue to be so in the future.

CHAPTER 1. THE SHAMAN AND THE ANTHROPOLOGIST: A DISCUSSION OF MATERIAL TRANSACTIONS AND ALTERITY

“A material transaction is usually a momentary episode in a continuous social relation” Marshall Sahlins, Stone age economics.

In this first chapter I explore relationships amongst the Angaité and with outsiders. Such relationships have both material aspects (e.g. the transference of goods such as food, money, durable objects) and moral aspects (e.g. friendship, trust, love, care, etc.) by which they are created, enhanced and maintained. For this purpose, I draw on ethnographic accounts of the Angaité and, as a case in point, the concrete relationship between Agapito Navarro – a shaman and leader of Karova Guasu, one of the villages of the Angaité community of La Patria – and myself, the anthropologist. I describe a number of episodes that mark the course of this relationship, using them to illustrate the potential fluidity – or fixity – of ethnic and kinship categories. What emerges is a combination of practices and actions that, on the one hand, transform ethnic differentiation and/or alterity (as between an Angaité and a Paraguayan) into closeness, and, on the other hand, reproduce the historical interactions by which such ethnic boundaries remain conspicuous, marking what, for the Angaité, borders on the realm of the asocial.

Many of the practices I describe can be related to analytical and comparative concepts already discussed in the ethnographies of lowland Amerindian people – including indigenous peoples of the Chaco – such as conviviality (Overing and Passes et al. 2000), egalitarianism (Clastres 1975), sharing and emotions discourse (Kidd 1999b), sociality, commensality and knowledge (Grant 2006). These are mostly considered to be internal features of indigenous social relations, the enactment of which diminishes in intensity in indigenous relationships with others/outside, where another set of practices appears. The latter practices are encapsulated in concepts like exchange, trade, barter, commoditisation and inequality (linked also to predation and negative emotions) (Kidd, 1999b:6-7, Gordillo, 1992:168, Renshaw, 1986:202). Although in general terms the conceptualization

of such practices may seem applicable to the Angaité and the situations I refer to, there is no precise or straightforward correspondence between such descriptive and analytical concepts and the ways in which the Angaité act and describe their own practices. Certainly, the two sets of practices mentioned are present in the internal and external spheres of Angaité life but it is not possible to isolate them as independent phenomena exclusive to separate domains.

Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to refer to these anthropological elaborations in order to establish a comparative and critical basis for the study of Angaité practices, both as I understand them and in terms of the Angaité's own perspectives and discourse.

1.1 How social relations are formed and understood

1.1.1 The moral logic of indigenous relations

In ethnographies of Amerindian peoples there is a general contention that it is the degree of intimacy, caring, commensality and sharing that creates kinship amongst them (see for instance Overing, 1976; Gow, 1991; Grant 2006). According to this contention, kinship is seen not as a pre-established phenomenon or normative charter but as a process created through the actions and choices of the conscious, moral knowledgeable Ego/person.¹⁶ Grant (2006:127), for instance, argues for the Nivacle of the western Chaco - an argument applicable to the rest of the Chaco Indians - that "kinship should be understood as a spiral...where individuals slide between different types of relationship, from 'otherness' to friendship, from non-kin to affine, and from affine to kin to 'close' kin". She stresses that "whilst a 'biological' rhetoric on relatedness does exist [amongst the Nivacle], this should not overshadow the predominantly relational qualities of kinship that they stress so much" (ibid.).¹⁷

¹⁶ I use the term knowledgeable in the same sense as Grant (2006) and Kidd (1999b:51.). Grant explains that "Someone who is 'knowledgeable' could therefore be said to be equipped with the necessary skills for leading a productive life in the community" (ibid.36).

¹⁷ Grant prefers to use the term "relatedness" instead of "kinship" "in order to avoid 'the biological' associations of the latter term and the "social" associations of the notion of affinity" (ibid.9). The term, she explains, enables her to approach kinship within the "broader socio-cultural context" and to draw on

Grant endorses the position of other Amerindianists who have related “commensality and co-residence to the creation of intimate, kin-like relationships. Food is said to be imbued with the agency of those who have produced it, and eating together is said to create ‘sameness’ and hence ‘relatedness’ between those who eat together on a daily basis” (ibid.10).¹⁸ Without denying the validity of this argument, it should be added that, while the giving and receiving of food and its communal consumption may be the most important acts for enhancing relationships amongst kinspeople and/or co-residents, the list of actions which may have similar consequences is extensive. It includes, among other things, playing, working, sleeping (in the same house) and travelling together.

If we turn to the relationships between indigenous people and outsiders/others, something similar can be argued: the social categories involved are not pre-defined but created and recognized through processes and actions in which the agents participate. In this matter, Blaser (Forthcoming:141) observes, with reference to the Yshyro of the north-eastern Paraguayan Chaco, that “the relational moral logic embodied by the Yshyro and other Indigenous people, operates on the basis of ‘relational knowledge’ that is necessarily contextual, partial, and therefore, always open to be revised in lieu[*sic*] of new experiences being brought into the relations that make up knowledge”. He also states that “what they [the Yshyro] call knowledge precisely implies enmeshing oneself in potentially transformative relations with human and non-human others” (ibid.139).

In the same vein, Salamanca (2007:7), whose work is also based in the Chaco, stresses the relational qualities of the indigenous peoples’ relations with others. Particularly, he shows how the Toba deal with the Argentinean nation-state through different “relational political devices”¹⁹ – e.g. national citizenship, evangelism, political activism, etc. – by which a polyvalent frontier is historically and contextually produced. This boundary is not unilateral but is also framed by the national society through various mechanisms such as marginalization, exclusion, differentiation and exoticism (ibid.).

comparative “regional material” beyond the concept of kinship (ibid.9-10). In what follows, both terms are used interchangeably.

¹⁸ As exponents of this theory, Grant mentions Overing (1995), Ellis (1996), Belaunde (1992) and Gow (1991).

¹⁹ In the original Spanish, “dispositivos políticos relacionales” (my translation).

1.1.2 The human “I” and “we”, kinship/relatedness and “sameness”, and the “other(s)” in Angaité discourse

Whereas at the level of kinship/relatedness the process of establishing social relations is engaged in by the knowledgeable Ego/person, at the level of ethnic relations the process is amplified, meaning that it is engaged in not only by the Ego/person/ but also by groups of kin, co-residents and related villages. These groups see themselves as a particular “we” distinguished from others. The fact that these “we/us” see themselves and are recognised by others in collective terms does not imply that they can be consistently pinned down and mapped out, whether historically or in the present. The taxonomy of different ethnic groups is problematic owing to the dynamics of their configuration, a problem exacerbated by the colonisation of the Chaco. As I pointed out in the Introduction, the Angaité as an ethnic group are the result both of internal dynamics and subsequent colonial influence, and their identity cannot be reconstructed simply by identifying the pre-colonial groups – e.g. *Koeteves* and *Kovalhok* – which progressively came to merge under the ethnic label “Angaité”. The problem is that we cannot assume that the *pristine* condition of such (poorly identified) pre-colonial groups was ever that of separate geographical, linguistic and sociological units. Neither did they consider themselves to be homogeneous geographical and ethnic groups, nor did the ethnic labels they are recorded as having used – mostly to name “others” rather than themselves - necessarily correspond to exact ethnic boundaries. For example, western Angaité groups referred to the groups that lived adjacent to the right bank of the Paraguay River as *Konavatsam* (“those who live by the Paraguay River”).²⁰

With the aforementioned precautions in mind, however, we must examine the Angaité idiom of ethnic sameness/differentiation and the practices that make, transform or erase “our” sameness and “our” differentiation from “others”.

²⁰ Branislava Susnik (1977:9) suggests that one of the pre-colonial Enxet groups, the Maskeapto, lived on the west bank of the Paraguay River, where they mixed with the pre-colonial Angaité group *Koeteves*. For this reason they were referred to by other Enxet groups as *Koñàwatsom* (original spelling). According to my own data it is clear that the *Koeteves* lived to the west of the Paraguay River but that other Angaité groups, such the *Kovalhok* and/or *Koyelhna*, possibly cohabitated with Enxet groups along its right bank.

When referring individually and collectively to themselves, in their own language, the Angaité say *Koo enlhet/enenlhet* (“I am a person”) or *Enenkoo enlhet/enenlhet* (“we are people”).²¹ To refer to many people they use the expression *enlhet’aok* or *enenlhet’aok* (“many people” or a “group of people”).²² This usage in relation to indigenous concepts of “person/people” is extensive to all Enlhet-Enenlhet languages (Kalish and Unruh, 2003), suggesting that the human social condition was almost exclusively attributed to their own social world – a world which did not go beyond their kinspeople, co-resident villagers and related villages. This is a relatively common feature among Chaco (and other Amerindian) peoples (Richard, 2008:36, 41). However, as Viveiros de Castro (1998:476) argues:

“Amerindian words which are usually translated as ‘human being’ and which figure in those supposedly ethnocentric self-designations do not denote humanity as a natural species. They refer to the social condition of personhood, and they function (pragmatically when not syntactically) less as nouns than as pronouns. They indicate the position of the subject; they are enunciative markers, not names... Indigenous categories of identity have that enormous contextual variability of scope that characterizes pronouns, marking contrastively Ego’s immediate kin, his/her local group, all humans, or even all beings endowed with subjectivity: their coagulation as ‘ethnonyms’ seems largely to be an artefact of interactions with ethnographers”.

As I will show, the use of the Angaité word *enlhet* is subject to contextual variability. However, its use does not extend to “all beings endowed with subjectivity”, for there are non-human spirits which are referred to as *askok* (“thing(s)”) in contrast to *enlhet* (see chapter 3).

If by saying *enlhet* or *enenlhet* one implies *person* or *people*, then by saying that someone is not *enlhet* or *enenlhet* one implies that he/she is not fully human in a social and moral sense. We have, then, a general negative definition of the “other” as non-*enlhet* – that is to

²¹ The terms *enlhet* and *enenlhet* correspond to different dialects of the Angaité language. Other Enlhet-Enenlhet languages use one or other of the two variants. I write the terms in lower-case italics, except when using them as an ethnonym or as the name of a specific language, in which case they are written in normal type with an initial capital.

²² The speaker uses this expression when referring to a group of people in a certain place or in the context of a certain event: for example, “there are/were many people (*enlhet’aok*) there”.

say, someone who does not achieve personhood – as expressed in the phrase *athave enlhet/enenlhet* (literally “he/she is not a person”).

Nowadays, when referring to other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, the Angaité say *pok enlhet/enenlhet* (literally “other person/people”).²³ If the speaker identifies himself/herself as *Kovalhok*, the expression can refer to someone either from another former Angaité group, for example *Koeteves*, or from another ethnic group, for example Enxet. It is a general expression used to refer to another Enlhet-Enenlhet indigenous person or people without mentioning their specific ethnonym. It implies that the Angaité speaker shares an ethnic identity in common with the person/people to whom she/he refers, but it is an identity that is at the same time different. It also implies - if we give the term its literal meaning – that the person/people thus referred to share(s) the social human condition.

The Angaité refer to other indigenous people who are not part of the Enlhet-Enenlhet ethnic group by their specific name: e.g. *Kemme peyem* (Ayoreo-Yshyro), *Seugen* (Nivacle). Occasionally, elders would say that those non Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples were *pok enlhet/enenlhet*. However, I understood them to be using the term in the same sense as the Guarani-Spanish expressions *otro(s) indio(s)* or *otro(s) indígena(s)* (“other Indian(s)”), thus using the word *enlhet/enenlhet* as a synonym of “indigenous person”.²⁴ These *pok enlhet/enenlhet*, if we follow the literal meaning of the expression, are more socially human (and indigenous) than the person or people referred to as *athave enlhet/enenlhet* (“non (indigenous) person”).

If in the past, in everyday language, the term *enlhet/enenlhet* was an “enunciative marker”

²³ Kidd (1999b:78) notes that this could be another way of referring to non-kin.

²⁴ The Angaité’s Guarani frequently uses Spanish words. The Paraguayans call the mixture of Guarani and Spanish in everyday speech *Jopara* (in Guarani: “mixture”). *Jopara* is a way of speaking rather than a pidgin language as such, for speakers combine expressions in Guarani and Spanish in a way which obeys no regular, predictable pattern. Nonetheless, many Angaité are unaware of the mixture, just as they are unaware of the origin of the loan words they use: e.g. an Angaité would refer by name to a place, such as *Laguna Misión*, without specifying that it is a Spanish-language place-name. It does not necessarily follow, therefore, that they speak *Jopara*. Moreover, Kalish (2007b:3) suggests that some of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples have modified Paraguayan Guarani with linguistic forms of their own, producing what might well be defined as a “*guarani enlhetizado*”. He recognizes, however, that the phenomenon has not been adequately studied. In my opinion, the difference between Angaité Guarani and that spoken by Paraguayans does not warrant either their definitive separation or the former’s characterization as a degraded form of the latter.

that distinguished ontologically between “human beings” and other less human or non-human beings, it has, since the colonization of the Chaco, been adopted as a self-referential ethnonym by some of the Enlhet/Enenlhet-speaking peoples. Its adoption as such is not due solely to ethnographic invention. The (southern) Enxet adopted it early on as their name, encouraged by Anglican missionaries who found it convenient to give a common name to territorial groups that were under their influence and ethnically related to one another. The (central) Enlhet have recently adopted the name, spelling it in a way that distinguishes them from the Enxet. In the case of the (northern) Angaité, individuals who still speak their language would, as mentioned above, primarily respond to the question: *sek enlhet alhiapke?* (“What kind of person/Indian are you?” – a question addressed to a male speaker) by saying *koo enlhet* or *koo enenlhet*. If I repeated the question in an attempt to obtain a specific ethnonym, their answer would be: *koo angaité*. If I then rephrased the question by mentioning the ethnonyms of former Angaité groups – for example, *kovalhok’ia lhiap?* (“Are you *Kovalhok*?”) – they either said whether they were *Kovalhok* or *Koeteves*, or simply re-stated *koo angaité* or *koo enlhet/enenlhet*. For the Angaité, then, the term *enlhet/enenlhet* is still more a noun than a pronoun and is not used as an ethnonym with which they identify themselves to members of the national society.

With regard to kinship, or “relatedness”, the generic Angaité term *émok* (1st person singular) can be translated as “my kinsperson”. It is similar to the Enxet equivalent and literally means “my other”.²⁵ . As Kidd (1999b:78) notes “this should not be confused with ‘the Other’ and is, instead, similar in meaning to the English term ‘another’ which indicates **sameness**” (my stress). In Guarani, an Angaité will refer to his/her relative(s) as *che gente*, “my kin/relative” (1st person singular), and *che gente kuéra*, “my kinspeople”. To deny relatedness with a particular individual, a person of either sex would say in Angaité *athave émok* and in Guarani *ndaha’éi che gente*, “he/she is not my relative”; referring to a group of people, the person would say in Guarani *ndaha’éi che gente kuéra*, “they are not my relatives/people”. Another Angaité expression that expresses the notion of “we” - although not limited to a group of kinspeople - is *enyanko kasek*, “our folks/people” (see also Franco and Imaz, 2006:197). Additionally, I heard expressions in Angaité like [-]*nemolhema* (“relative”) and *nentenhia* (“our similar”), both implying, in

²⁵ Kidd (1999b:78) notes that in Enxet the plural of *émok* is *énmökkok*, “my kinspeople”. Susnik mentions several related connotations for the term: *enàmökkok*, “my people/my fellow tribe[s]men”; *apnàmökkok*, “his friends/fellows” and “fellows/relatives” (1977:1, 157, 167).

the context of their utterance, similarity.

Although the Angaité terms *enlhet/enenlhet* (which contextually define ethnicity/social humanity) and *émok* (which defines kinship/relatedness) share a common nuance that indicates “sameness”, they are not synonymous. Not everybody who, from the point of view of the speaker, is an Enlhet/Enenlhet – a fellow ethnic member - is also a relative to him/her. Conversely not everyone that is a relative to Ego would necessarily be Angaité. However, members of a village would affirm – according to the context - that all the people of the village are relatives and also Angaité/Enlhet, thereby emphasizing their “sameness” over and above existing distinctions that might be made. Even by saying *pok enlhet/enenlhet* - either with reference to other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples or to different indigenous people of the Chaco - the Angaité speaker implies that there is a certain commonality between the speaker and those other indigenous peoples: i.e. that they share a social humanity.

On the other hand, the Guarani-Spanish term that defines humanity, *cristiano*, is not conditioned by ethnic differences. It refers to humans in contrast to non-humans (i.e. animals and spirits) and is always used in the third person. The use of the category *cristiano* to define humanity has a colonial origin, originally connoting attributes of civilization in opposition to heathenism, but in the Chaco it does not necessarily mean that the person referred to as such is Christian. In other words, it has a cultural rather than a religious connotation. In this sense Indians, Paraguayans and Mennonites alike are all *cristiano*. The terms, therefore, that mark humanity in Angaité and in Guarani are not reciprocal in meaning. The divergence derives from different conceptions of what it is to be a human/person. To distinguish in Guarani-Spanish between an indigenous and a non-indigenous person, the Angaité will say that the former is *paisano/a*, *indígena/a* or, less likely, *indio/a* (which term, as used by Paraguayan Chaqueños, has derogatory connotations).

In general discursive terms, as we have seen, the Angaité define and distinguish the “Other” negatively, as not being a person/human (or not fully so) because he/she is neither kin nor of the same ethnic group. More specific definitions identify “others” according to

whether they belong to other ethnic groups which originally inhabited the Chaco or are foreigners and outsiders who came and took over the land.²⁶ The Angaité refer to Paraguayans as *valayo*, a term which appeared early on in the history of colonization, as Susnik (1977:152) and other reports tell (Sanderson, in SAMS 1944:56).²⁷ In Guaraní they say *paraguayo/a* or even *paraguay* (whether the subject of reference is singular or plural). In referring to foreigners, the Angaité terms *valayo* and *lenko* are used, as well as the Guaraní labels *paraguayo* and *meno*. The general Guaraní-Spanish label *blanco*, “white”, is rarely used and, if so, it is used more in the plural (*blanco kuéra*) than in the singular. The Spanish language – little associated with Paraguayans in the Chaco, who mostly speak Guaraní – is known in Angaité as *machoma apaivoma*, the “ugly words”.

The Angaité recognize that there are differences amongst the *Valayo* according to their particular characteristics, activities, geographical origin, power, wealth and so on. For instance, the military that came to fight the Chaco War were generally called *Kempohakme*, “the angry ones”, a term which applied equally to the Bolivian military (Villagra 2007:67-98).²⁸ On the *estancias*, where the lingua franca is Guaraní, the Angaité share with Paraguayans the different terms used to designate specific ranks and functions: *patrones* are the owners of the *estancias*; *mayordomo*, “foreman”; *retirero*, the person in charge of an outpost attached to a particular sector of the *estancia*; *estanciero*, “cowboy”; *playero*, a person who performs tasks on foot, such as clearing the grazing fields of trunks and mending fences; *contratista*, a person hired to build fences, corrals and houses, usually with his own labour force. Indigenous workers occupy the lower ranks, from *retirero* to *playero*, and, as such, work alongside Paraguayans.²⁹ However, the speaker would be prompt to clarify whether he/she is speaking about a *paraguayo* or a *paisano* (Enlhet). Indigenous women who work permanently on the *estancia*, in charge of cooking for the personnel, are called *machu*. There is no specific term, however, for the indigenous

²⁶ Enlhet elders in the Central Chaco refer to colonists with a term which literally denotes their “eventful” character: *sengelpaalha’vay*, “the ones who appeared amongst us” (Kalish and Unruh, 2008:118-119).

²⁷ This term is similar across all Enlhet-Enenlhet languages: *wale* (Enxet), *valay* (Enlhet), *valayo* (Angaité and Sanapaná).

²⁸ For the Enxet they were called the *Chanpahakme* (Villagra *ibid.*). The Enlhet of the Central Chaco called Paraguayans *valay senga’heem*, literally “murderous Paraguayans” (Kalish and Unruh 2008:104). To this day the Enxet call soldiers *selpextetamo*, literally “those who oppressed us”. The Angaité term *sopkelo* is probably a derivative of the Spanish word *soldado*, “soldier”.

²⁹ See Susnik (1977:161-166) for a study of the idioms and values linked to work on the *estancias* and *obrajes* amongst the Enxet, and Bonifacio (2009:37) for the different occupations of the Maskoy employees of the Casado tannin company. See for data on the Angaité in *estancias* (Delpont, 1999).

women who milk cows or wash the clothes of higher-ranking Paraguayan employees.

For the *patrones* the Angaité also use the word *vese/veske* “leader/chief”³⁰. In the past this term referred to indigenous leaders but it now applies mostly to “powerful” outsiders such as ranchowners, military officers, politicians, missionaries and prominent members of NGOs (see below).³¹ Poor Paraguayans may be identified as such, using the Guaraní term *mboriahu*, “poor”, but this is rarely said because the Angaité consider even the poorest Paraguayans to be better off than indigenous people (as they generally are). If his/her place of origin is known, a Paraguayan may be identified as, for instance, *Ceibeño* (from Colonia Ceibo) or *Asunceño* (from Asuncion).³² Other foreigners, such as the Mennonites, are usually called *Meno* or *Lenko* (Guaraní-Spanish and Angaité terms, respectively).³³ English and American missionaries – also known as *Lenko* – are sometimes identified by means of the Spanish word *inglés* (“Englishman”) and its derivatives *ingle*, *inle*, *ile* and *ele*, terms used not only in Angaité but also in Guaraní and Enxet (cf. Susnik, 1977:152). An alternative designation for Americans is *yanginle*, which translates as “almost English”, by analogy with the category *yangvalayo*, “almost Paraguayan”, with which the Angaité refer to Bolivians.³⁴

To summarize this description of Angaité “alterity” discourse, a useful comparison can be made with the Nivacle. According to Grant (2006:127), the Nivacle have a biological rhetoric with regard to their kinship relationships but this rhetoric is overlaid by a relational morality. In the same way, I would argue, the Angaité recognize in discourse the “sociological” and “historical” facts that inform their ethnicity and the ways in which they are distinguished from specific “others”. However, in their relationships with the latter – for example, at the kinship level – the relational qualities of their sociality also operate. In other words, the Angaité recognize differences between themselves and others according

³⁰ *Veske* is an alternative pronunciation and spelling of this word in some of the Angaité dialects. Agapito used *veske* rather than *vese* in our dialogues.

³¹ See Kidd (1999a:5ff, 1999b:195) and Susnik (1977:154) for a discussion of the transformation of the use of this term among the Enxet.

³² Colonia Ceibo is a community of Paraguayan *Chaqueños* located 45 kilometres west of La Patria. Although the colony occupies its own land, it has not yet gained definitive legal title.

³³ The term *Lenko* is also used in the Enxet and Enlhet languages.

³⁴ Angaité who knew I spoke English would sometimes call me, jokingly, *yanginle*, “almost an Englishman”. The categorization also had to do with the fact that I was associated with an NGO whose founder, Stephen Kidd, was an English ex-missionary, and that like Anglican missionaries I was learning and using the indigenous language (rather than Spanish or Guaraní), which is not normally the case for Paraguayans.

to social, historical and biological “facts” such as migration, segregation, the mixing and reconfiguration of ethnic groups, physical features and so on. Nonetheless, these differences are not fixed parameters, nor are they mere adaptations of external categories. The Angaité – Agapito Navarro, in particular – vary their statements about “others” according to context and specific relational contingencies.

1.1.3 Is it possible to transform the other(s) into *enlhet/émok*?

In order to address the issue of whether it is possible to transform others into *enlhet/émok*, a series of points need to be stressed:

1) For many lowland Amerindian peoples, kinship or relatedness is not predetermined but, rather, a relational process created by the moral knowledgeable person through particular actions and practices like food-sharing, commensality, caring, nurture, etc. These actions create closeness, intimacy and sameness (see Gow, 1991; Kidd 2000);

2) Ego does not receive a biologically and socially fixed group of kinspeople but defines his/her relatives – and their relative closeness or distance along the spiral of relatedness (following Grant’s metaphor) – through the contingent, dynamic process in which the aforementioned kinship-generating actions and practices operate;

3) This moral logic of relations, as it is defined by Blaser and Salamanca (see also Kidd, below) seems to apply also to relationships with outsiders/others and even non-human beings. First, though, we have to determine who are “others” for the Angaité. In discursive terms, both in the Angaité and Guaraní languages, the “other” is generally defined negatively, as a non-person and non-kin. This goes from an ontological distinction – i.e. the other is asocial or less a person – to an ethnic difference – i.e. the other is non-Angaité – to a kinship distinction – i.e. the other is a non-relative. However, the Angaité and Guaraní-Spanish terms for defining humanity and ethnicity do not translate symmetrically: *enlhet/enenlhet* is not equal to *cristiano*. In spite of the differences between the pair of terms that, in either language, refer, on the one hand, to humanity/ethnicity (*enlhet/indígena*) and to kinship (*émok/che gente*), on the other, both sets share a common connotation of “sameness”. In contrast, different “others” are distinguished by ethnic labels which do have semantic equivalence: e.g. *valayo/paraguayo*, *lenko/meno*. More specific distinctions are made, with reference to Paraguayans, on the basis of salient

characteristics such as wealth, profession and/or place of origin.

This raises a number of questions. If kinship can be described for the Angaité, as it is for the Nivacle as a dynamic spiral in which the category of relationship changes and becomes closer (or more distant) according to certain actions, does this same relational moral logic apply to relationships with the different types of “others”, such as *valayo/inle/lenko*? By means of actions like eating together, behaving properly and establishing intimate relationships with Angaité individuals – without those relationships involving biological or affinal ties - can “others” slide down the metaphorical spiral and become kin? In other words, can someone defined as *athave Enlhet* and *athave Emok* become *Enlhet* and/or *Emok*? Conversely, is it the absence of such practices that creates or reproduces “otherness”? What are the terms for denoting “sameness” and “closeness” with “others”? Kinsperson? Brother? Brother-in-law? Friend? Are different degrees of “closeness” with others reflected in different terms?

It has to be said that the possibility of creating sameness and of eroding otherness does not depend solely on Angaité actions and perspectives. I would argue that the interaction is largely informed by the way in which the Angaité and other indigenous peoples have been “constrained” to relate to “others”. In other words, the “others” - with particular reference to Paraguayans - have their own perspective on, and their own interpretation of, the effects of their interactions with the Indians, both in the past and in the present. For them, the concrete actions that, for the Angaité, may create sameness – e.g. eating together, working together, living together, companionship and intimacy – have different effects and do not necessarily erase the “ethnic difference” historically constituted. The denial of sameness, or conversely the emphasis on ethnic difference, is sustained by Paraguayans even when they have married Angaité women and/or have had children with them.³⁵ Nonetheless,

³⁵ Several male Paraguayans –mostly Chaqueños – have married indigenous women in La Patria, and most of them would be prompt to make clear that they are still non-indigenous Paraguayans. The Angaité who live with them only remark on their ethnic origin if they “behave/live like Paraguayans” (in Angaité: *malha valayo apyáhekamaha*; in Guaraní: *Paraguayó portepe oiko*): that is to say, if they act with violence, greed, drunkenness and other asocial behaviour attributed to their ethnicity. If, on the other hand, the in-married Paraguayans conform to Angaité precepts of correct moral behaviour, they are considered to be *malha Enlhet*, “like people”. If they act with respect, generosity, kindness and so on towards their families and fellow co-residents, the Angaité – without ignoring their “original” ethnic difference – say that “they

such a denial - despite the existence of appropriate moral actions by which distant relationships may be transformed into close ones in terms of kinship and even ethnicity - is not solely attributed to the Paraguayan. As I show in chapter 2, Angaité narratives recognise a degree of misunderstanding in their first encounter with the *Valayo* which could be interpreted as an original impediment to the transformation of their reciprocal “otherness” into “sameness”.

With regard to the discussion of alterity and sameness among the Angaité, my ethnographic experience indicates that it is not really possible to establish certain practices and certain types of material transaction as definitive indexes of types of relationship. The starting-point for this discussion is the current trend that identifies certain related practices (e.g. sharing, pooling, commensality) as intrinsic to the *internal* moral economy of indigenous people and other practices as pertaining more to their relations with “others”/outsiders (e.g. exchange, trade, barter, commoditization). I would argue that many of these practices overlap and combine in any given relationship: e.g. at different times, kinspeople share food and also trade with one another. By the same token, Indians and Paraguayans exchange labour and produce but they also *share* food. It is the predominance of certain practices and actions in a given relationship – whether amongst Angaité or with “others” – that contributes to the degree of closeness between the individuals in question. Repeated actions of caring, sharing and conviviality do create kinship over time, though they have certain limitations with regard to erasing ethnic differences.

It is necessary at this point to express some concerns about certain anthropological concepts that are frequently used as analytical tools in Amerindian ethnography. In the first place, it is important to note that the distinction between a moral economy and a

live/behave like Enlhet” (in Angaité: *malha Enlhet apyahekamaha/keltaihekamaha*; in Guaraní: *indigenaháicha oiko*). There is an ambiguity with regard to the children of mixed couples. The Paraguayans call them *mestizo* and, therefore, not fully Paraguayan, even when they grow up among Paraguayans on an *estancia* (and not in an indigenous village). For their part, the Angaité – and neighbouring indigenous peoples - consider those children to be simply *indígena*, without denying their mixed parenthood. What we have, then, regarding uxori-local interethnic (indigenous/non-indigenous) marriages is that the Paraguayans emphasize their own ethnic origin, which is not modified by living with the Angaité and/or having affinal ties with them, whereas for the Angaité the ethnicity of their in-married Paraguayan in-laws is better defined in terms of moral actions than ethnic origin. The marking of their own ethnic difference by Chaqueño-Paraguayan affines of the Angaité (or of other indigenous peoples) clearly goes along with a national class- and “race”-based ideological system which locates the indigenous peoples at the bottom of the ladder.

market-oriented economy as being *internal* and *external*, respectively, with regard to indigenous peoples is based on the primordial distinction between the *subsistence* economy of Hunter-Gatherer societies and the *capitalist* economy. Sahlins (1988[1972]:187), for instance, proposes that “exchange in primitive communities has not the same role as the economic flow in modern industrial communities”. Thus, indigenous economies, in which food “holds a commanding position” (*ibid.*), differ from the modern capitalist economy – particularly in respect of features such as commoditization and exploitation, which are phenomena that only occur beyond indigenous society. However, I agree with Hugh-Jones (1992:44) who, in his explanation of business and barter in northwest Amazonia, argues that:

“I do not find it useful or advisable to draw a sharp line between Western Capitalist and aboriginal economies as ideal types characterised by opposed pairs such as exchange value/use value or market exchange/indigenous reciprocity... Such contrast obscures both the relationship and articulation between the peripheries of such economies and the cultural determination of wants and needs... Instead, I argue that, in practice and at a local level, there is a continuity or ‘fit’ between capitalist institutions and Indian exchange practices”.

Hugh-Jones’s “fit” between the big market and indigenous trade is also applicable to *Angaité* practices and the indigenous peoples of the Chaco area in general. The continuity is perhaps more conspicuous today as the national “global” economy has reached areas and peoples that previously functioned beyond its main sphere of influence.³⁶ Nowadays, the indigenous world has been incorporated into the Paraguayan nation-state and the market economy. Nonetheless, as Hugh-Jones (*ibid.*) also argues, indigenous peoples and

³⁶ As modernity that has become into globality (Blazer, forthcoming) has both economic and ideological consequences. The greater circulation of capital, goods and labour affects the present circumstances and lives of indigenous peoples worldwide. Simple observation in the Paraguayan Chaco, for instance, shows as that the land for cattle-raising has gone progressively from an extensive to an intensive pattern of use following an increase on its demand. Such increase is in turn fuel by soya production in the eastern region of the country. Accordingly, the pattern of use of the labour force has changed: ranchowners nowadays restrict residence on their premises to their non-indigenous and indigenous employees, forbidding the presence of unemployed relatives of the latter. In the past (from 1940 to late 1980), entire indigenous villages – whose members mostly did not work for the ranches but were related to ranch employees – could live off hunting and gathering within the far-reaching limits of the ranchowners’ land-holdings. In turn, they constituted a handy reserve workforce for the ranchowners when replacements were needed or when extra hands were required for large tasks.

their economies have their own logic, values and agency both in the way they interact with outside forces and in the manner they perform material transactions amongst themselves. As we will see below, trade and barter existed amongst the Indians – both among themselves and at an *interethnic* level, including trade with foreigners for their goods – prior to the colonization of the Chaco. Internally, for example, it manifested itself in certain transactions such as the payment of shamans’ services. There is, then, not just an economic continuity in the flow of indigenous and foreign goods but also a historical one, without this continuity denying the reality of transformations and radical changes that occur in the way such goods have been obtained, traded and valued by the different actors.

The dichotomy between opposed ideal types – western economy vs. indigenous economy – associated with fixed characteristics – exchange vs. reciprocity – also entails ethnic and geographical concomitants: i.e. Whites vs. Indians, national frontiers vs. forest-isolated areas. Although I recognize that in the past such an ideal division was conceptually and practically easier to make, a more actor-oriented approach rather than an all-encompassing systemic one facilitates, in my opinion, our understanding of how material transactions work amongst the Indians themselves and with outsiders. If we look at the level of Ego’s interactions, relationships and transactions we can better understand with whom he shares and/or trades and when. We can thus appreciate the extent to which the collective is the contingent product of the actors. If, instead, we focus on the collective as a coherent, *enclosed* system – focusing, that is, on the village, the extended family and/or the kindred as the necessary locus for one exclusive type of transaction (sharing), as distinct from other types, such as exchange and trade – we might overlook other significant phenomena.

My point is that there are new circumstances to be taken into account when describing and analysing an “indigenous moral economy” as an idiosyncratic *system* of practices. I find it easier to speak of indigenous economic *practices* rather than of an indigenous economic *system* as such. In the first place, this is because I ground the description in what people do rather than in the abstract principles to which an economic system can be reduced. Secondly, to say that certain practices are economic is not to define them categorically, for they may well also have, among other things, political and cultural implications. In other words, the methodology I employ does not presume to exhaust the multifaceted,

interconnected character that actions have in the indigenous world.

I now turn to the ethnographic situations that have a bearing on these theoretical concerns – in particular, my relationship with Agapito, which is both a point of departure and the centrepiece of a wider web of relationships.

1. 2 Learning Angaité and dealing with money

As I mentioned in the Introduction, through my contact with Félix Navarro and by virtue of the fact that he knew of my intention to spend a couple of months in an Angaité community, I was persuaded by him to take up residence in his village, Karova Guasu, and to take Angaité lessons with his father, Agapito Navarro.

In fact, my lessons in Angaité had begun several years previously, during a twenty-day stay in the summer of 1999 (January-February) with Juan Mendoza, a fluent Angaité-speaker, in the community of San Carlos on the bank of the Paraguay River. Several circumstances prevented me from returning to San Carlos for a longer stay and further Angaité lessons with Juan and his brother Otacio. Both of them were the main Angaité teachers of an American New Tribes missionary, Juan Tucky, who was a resident of the mission at San Carlos and had spent seven years learning the language with them.³⁷ The results of the missionaries' efforts in learning the language were a couple of materials: a brief illustrated dictionary, a collection of narratives and the Gospel according to Mark translated into Angaité. At the time, therefore, of my first lessons in Angaité – the *Kovalhok* language/dialect, specifically – my teacher Juan and his brother Otacio were quite used to teaching their language –using Guarani as a means of communication – and to relating to a foreign “student”. Indeed, other missionaries were also trying to learn the language. One such, for instance, was Ña Ruty, another American missionary. She, however, told me – during my stay in San Carlos – that she was unable to learn the language properly, adducing the fact that, at the time of the New Tribes' arrival (circa 1967) in the ranch Tuparenda (see map 5), Guarani was already the main language of communication amongst the Angaité who lived and worked there. In addition, she was

³⁷ Juan Tucky is the name by which he was known to the indigenous residents in San Carlos.

perhaps not as devoted to the task as Juan Tucky. Juan Tucky, for his part, also became known in La Patria, which he visited with Juan and Otacio Mendoza. During their visit, they reached several villages and met many Angaité speakers, amongst them, Agapito.

My staying in Karova Guasu in order to learn Angaité with Agapito was not, then, a totally new experience for Agapito and the Angaité of La Patria. Other foreigners – my predecessors – had been interested in learning Angaité, known as one of the endangered indigenous languages of Paraguay.³⁸ Although our express intentions were ostensibly different – Bible-translation in the case of the New Tribes missionaries; more accurate anthropological knowledge of the Angaité in my case – I cannot assume that we were interpreted by our indigenous instructors and their co-villagers as intended.

One of my personal apprehensions before starting fieldwork was that I would be seen as the “rich provider”. Primarily, I was afraid of being asked for things beyond my means and inclination, although I accepted that it was normal to a certain point to be seen as rich by my neighbours in the village, who would therefore ask for things (including mediation with the outside society). But, by doing fieldwork in a community little frequented by my NGO Tierraviva, I was hoping to step aside from my previous role as an active NGO member and immerse myself in community life. My intention, then, was to be “low profile” in the community in terms of mediator and provider, while acknowledging nonetheless that, in some instances, I would have to assume such roles.

My fears encountered some echo in my first conversation with Félix Navarro, at the beginning of my fieldwork (Fieldnotes 19/12/2004), when he mentioned that we could and should eventually run a “project” with the four villages of La Patria which were involved in a revitalization process of the *Kovalhok* language/dialect of Angaité (see introduction). Félix (and others) believed that the recent interest shown by different external actors responded to an opportunity to attract resources.³⁹ Why otherwise would Paraguayans and

³⁸ Branislava Susnik paid a short visit in 1953 to an Angaité community enclosed by an *estancia* on the Riacho San Carlos. Previously, an Anglican missionary at Campo Flores, F. Train, had reported: “Among several visitors to the Mission this quarter were two Americans, one an anthropologist, who stayed two or three days, and the other an ethnologist, who remained three weeks” (SAMS Magazine 1942:7). I have been unable to discover who the two Americans were and whether they wrote about their visit to Campo Flores.

³⁹ Félix and other Angaité were not the only ones to hold that view. The foreman of a ranch neighbouring La Patria, called *Estancia* Riacho Gonzalez, once commented sarcastically: “So you are going to learn the indigenous language, and make a lot of money by selling it abroad” (Fieldnotes 22/3/2005). (I was visiting

foreigners alike be interested in learning a language in apparent decadence? My response to Félix's vision of the possible outcomes of my Angaité-language-learning endeavours was evasive, but his ideas were not far from the truth. After all, the language-revitalization programmes had means for their activities, and people like Juan Tucky, myself and other linguists must necessarily have had financial support in order to spare time learning Angaité in the communities. Félix, though, was never overdemanding with respect to his proposal, and he let me carry on with my own agenda, throughout the fieldwork period, without much interference.⁴⁰

Equally challenging was the question of defining my relationship with Agapito within a mutually agreed framework. I feared that he - and others - might see our relationship as being of the *patrón/peón* type, which is the typical relation that has historically been established between "wealthy" non-indigenous individuals and indigenous people in the Chaco (see Blaser, forthcoming:63-77).⁴¹

An aspect of the *patrón/peón* relationship – one equally stained by hierarchy – is that of provider-protector (the anthropologist, in this case) vis-à-vis protégé (Agapito). This manner of relationship dates back to the earliest historical records of the Chaco (see chapter 4). My formula for avoiding such pitfalls, however, did not escape my own preconceptions about what constitutes a good and fair relationship. I proposed to Agapito a kind of contract whereby the apprentice-teacher relationship would be ruled by a "liberal" transaction between equal participants.⁴² That is to say, Agapito would give me Angaité lessons and I would give him a mutually agreed, monthly amount of money. On that basis, I expected no further claims, on behalf of either party, in excess of the agreed lesson-time-salary equation. In response to others in the community or elsewhere, both of

the ranch with Oscar Ayala, director of Tierraviva, in order to discuss a formal complaint by a member of Karova Guasu, who had been fired from the ranch without pay.)

⁴⁰ On several occasions Félix stressed the importance of my work, remarking that it was through his intervention that I had settled down in Karova Guasu for my fieldwork. Occasionally, while joking he pointed out in front of fellow villagers (and myself) that "he [the anthropologist] first wanted to go and live with the Sanapana, but I convinced him to come and live with us" (Fieldnotes 30/1/2005).

⁴¹ Relationships between Paraguayans and indigenous persons are typically based on social asymmetry and class separation. In their dealings with ranchowners, loggers and travelling salesmen, the relationship shares in common with Amazonian debt-peonage (see Hugh-Jones 1992:44,71) the practice whereby food is paid in advance as credit for indigenous labour and/or produce (wood, honey, etc.). Payment in cash when the work finishes is reduced to a minimum. At present, indigenous workers can quit their jobs without fear of punishment, but this does not lessen the overt or disguised exploitation to which they are subject in terms of low pay (in money and/or kind), lack of credit and arduous work conditions.

⁴² As will be seen below, this type of transaction is not strange to the indigenous peoples of the Chaco. Shamans, for example, have always been paid for their services (Grubb 1993[1911,1925]:95).

us could claim that he was my Angaité teacher and I was his student, for which he received a fair salary. I do not recall the exact date on which I proposed the contract to Agapito but I remember that he did not object either to the amount of money offered or to the system of payment. He replied to my proposition, saying and repeating the same phrase both in Guarani and Angaité: “*Nde atu...Lhiapanauka*” (“It is up to you”). He also remarked: “I am not asking you for money, just a little **help**”.⁴³ Immediately thereafter, I repeated the terms of the deal to Agapito’s daughter Maria and to his son Remigio, in the belief that, due to their youth, they would be more familiar with numbers and money affairs and could bear witness to the transparency of the deal.

I was mistaken in assuming unilaterally, on the basis of preconceived ideas, how the economic uncertainties of my relationship with Agapito should be dealt with. Moreover, I was probably trying to define not just one aspect but the whole relationship in my own “safe” economic terms. This attitude led to erroneous assumptions such as that to learn Angaité implied merely the acquisition of linguistic skills, and that working with Agapito would situate him in the role of informant and me in that of researcher. In time, I learned that the economic side of our relationship did not consist simply in the fulfilment of a contract, nor indeed was it the main aspect of the relationship. I discovered also that learning Angaité involved acquiring another type of knowledge (see chapter 4), and that, as regards Agapito, our relationship would not fit into an informant-researcher mould. When dealing with money, finally, I could not isolate him from his family and social context.

After several weeks of fieldwork, Agapito told me what he used to say to other people about our relationship and our financial arrangement: “I tell people that you are not my boss and that I don’t have a salary, that you just give me some money from time to time, out of goodwill, but I don’t ask for it. I’m not rich, I tell them” (Fieldnotes 8/3/2006). His

⁴³ Agapito was making it clear that he did not want to disturb me with excessive requests, expecting me instead to oblige of my own “free will”, out of affection for him. Agapito’s attitude illustrates Kidd’s (1999b:192) distinction between two different types of sharing: “The first, ‘voluntary sharing,’ can be defined as sharing that is undertaken on the initiative of the giver while the second, ‘demand sharing,’ is characterized by the receiver taking the initiative...these two types of sharing are provoked by quite different motivations and can generate diverse emotional responses in givers and receivers. While voluntary sharing is usually constitutive of ‘love’ and sociable relations, demand sharing can provoke discomfort and exacerbate divisions between people”. Thus, as Agapito would have it, our relationship was not to be based on obligations or measured in quantitative terms – i.e. the amounts given or received. Rather it should consist in voluntary sharing/help and mutual affection, thus giving it a qualitative, moral foundation. As John Palmer has pointed to me, arguably both demand and voluntary sharing have a moral and relational foundation.

comments puzzled me, and I was tempted to say to him that he did have a salary; but, as our relationship developed, he proved to be right.

On a couple of occasions he asked me to buy specific things for him, such as a bicycle and, much later, barbed wire. In his own words, he needed the bicycle “in order to be able to go faster together to visit other villages. My legs hurt if we walk for too long” (Fieldnotes 2/10/2005). He requested the barbed wire “in order to extend the paddock fences. There is not enough grass there for the community’s cattle [five head] and for my own cow [which I bought for him], specially during the drought season” (Fieldnotes 27/7/2006). In my first year of fieldwork I took my bicycle with me to the village, so there was some justification for his first request – although I left my bicycle in the care of his son, Remigio (who took the assignment quite seriously, to the point of considering the bicycle to be his own). However, Agapito did not know how to ride a bicycle and, once his request had been met, the newly purchased bicycle ended up in the hands of his 12-year-old grandson, Mario, who lived with Agapito almost as his own child. The barbed wire suffered a different fate. Until I left the field in 2007 (as well as during the short visits I made in 2008), no extra fences were built and the paddock remained as it was. I reckon that this was due not simply to a failure to build the fence but to more complex matters related to the managing of the community’s cattle (see chapter 3).

When Agapito asked me for these items, he would say: “I’m asking you for this thing ... you can discount it from my money, but you should get it only if you can afford it”. In the end, the money given exceeded my estimations, and the original schedule of payments also altered, such that I ended up giving money to Agapito (or to his wife) – whether in the village or during his visit to Asuncion – according to the cash I had at the time. Our “contract”, therefore, came to follow more closely the terms in which Agapito described the arrangement to other people.

It should also be mentioned that Agapito warned me not to send messages by Radio Pai Puku in which I might let him know, in Guarani, the amount of money or the things that I would be giving him.⁴⁴ And he reproached me for mentioning to some Paraguayans who

⁴⁴ Radio Pai Puku is an AM radio station based in the Paraguayan Chaco. It is owned by the Catholic Church and broadcasts national and regional news, including indigenous affairs. There are several programmes in which indigenous people take part in the broadcasting (e.g. a weekly programme called *Mundo*

live in La Patria how much I was willing to pay for the cow I wanted to buy for him.⁴⁵ He said they would think me to be rich and that they would think the same of him, which could expose both of us to jealousy and possible assault and robbery (Fieldnotes 8/10/2006).

Agapito used to say that, thanks to the money I gave him, he was able to feed his family. However, at an early stage in fieldwork (during the first months of 2005) he – or his family - decided also to set up an *almacén* (store, small shop) with that money. The *almacén* consisted in no more than a few basic provisions (rice, *yerba mate*, pasta, salt, flour, cigarettes and, occasionally, canned beer and *caña/rum*) which he kept in his own 2 mt x 2 mt hut amongst his family's scattered belongings. Maria and Remigio were in charge of dispatching the goods. They wanted to take advantage of the presence of a group of Paraguayan workers who were camped in the village in connection with an official water-supply project. The workers would resort to the *almacén* when they ran out of provisions (particularly cigarettes and alcoholic drinks) and did not care to go further afield to Paraguayan *almacenes*. Agapito's other children, like Félix or Gregorio, as well as fellow members of the village or relatives from other villages, would also buy or retrieve provisions, sometimes asking to pay them later (Fieldnotes 29/5/2005). On one occasion I was given some free supplies from the shop, and I was surprised to notice that Maria and Remigio were not at all happy about their father freely disposing of goods bought with "his own" money.⁴⁶ Eventually, a combination of administrative problems and a shortage of supplies – which Remigio and Maria used to buy from *macateros* (travelling merchants) or from Ña Eulalia, a Paraguayan resident of La Patria – brought

Indígena/"Indigenous World"). Radio Pai Puku is widely used, on a daily basis, for sending messages – either transmitted "live" by the sender or read by the radio presenters – to communities, families and individuals throughout the Paraguayan Chaco.

⁴⁵ There were several Paraguayan families and individuals in La Patria. They came both from different parts of the Chaco – including families from Ceibo Colony – and from the eastern region of the country, particularly the Departments of Concepción and San Pedro. Most families occupied patches of land along the main road, while a number of individuals were in-married to indigenous women in different villages. On the whole, their presence was a matter of frequent controversy amongst the indigenous inhabitants of La Patria, due not only to the dubious legality of the occupation of indigenous land by non-indigenous settlers, but also to problems linked to logging and trading and the generally "abusive" behaviour of the Paraguayan settlers.

⁴⁶ The incident involved two boxes of canned beer that had been bought from a *macatera* known as "La Concepcionera". Although bought with Agapito's money, the beer was considered to be Remigio's. Agapito suggested in confidence that I should offer to pay Maria, who was in charge of the store at the time, three-quarters of the price which she and her brother were charging (and which was twice what they paid to La Concepcionera). As I did not have sufficient cash, I asked for the beer on credit, at which point Maria – manifestly annoyed with us – closed the door of the hut as a way of refusing further requests.

the *almacén* to a close.⁴⁷

Once Agapito's money, or salary, had been handed over – either to his children for the *almacén* or to his wife – or transformed into items such as the bicycle, Agapito himself lost control of it and had to negotiate his share or part with the receiver(s). [...] My original “liberal” contract failed *a priori* to acknowledge his position as a husband, father, leader and friend who has to mediate between pleasing his loved ones, coping with the speculations of Paraguayans and fellow villagers about his wealth, and making a profit from the Paraguayan workers.⁴⁸ For all its supposed “liberality”, the contract failed to recognize that Agapito was part of a social network, in which “his” money would be used with and by others. It also failed to recognize that, as a result of our relationship, he would be seen in a different light by the members of that network. In short, I tried to confine the relationship within the limits of a certain type of material transaction instead of seeing the material transaction as part of a chain of ongoing and transforming relationships.

In a sense I was at one end of the chain – the provider of sorts - but I was also in-between, as I sometimes gave the money directly to Agustina, Agapito's wife. This was always done at her request – without objection on Agapito's part – in order, as she explained, to avoid his taste for easy expenditure (basically *caña*). When Remigio or Maria wanted money to go to Asuncion or to purchase particular goods, Agapito usually acted as mediator (Fieldnotes 27/8/2006). Given the opportunity, though, Agustina would mediate, and sometimes Remigio and Maria themselves approached me (Fieldnotes 12/9/2006). On such occasions we discussed what I could give them or arrange for them (e.g. free tickets for the bus to Asuncion).

⁴⁷ Kidd (1999b) discusses at length the use of money in intra-community relations and the operation of indigenous stores in communities. He reckons that Enxet store-owners “continue to maintain ‘loving’ relations with their ‘close’ kin by sharing and helping, even if they also have a commercial relationship with the same people. Although commerce is not generative of ‘love’, it does not nullify the ‘love’ that is created by other ‘loving’ forms of interaction” (ibid.283). Particularly complex for the store-owner is the balance between credit-requests from relatives and co-residents, the availability of cash, the maintenance of supplies and the consumption of the merchandise within his/her own household. Neither intrinsically amoral in itself nor necessarily a step to overt inequality, having a store in a community, as Kidd proposes, does situate the owner under pressure, and his or her success in keeping the business going depends on how well he/she can deal with all aspects of the activity.

⁴⁸ Agapito was conscious that, as a result of our relationship, Paraguayans and fellow villagers might think that he was better off and would therefore look upon him with jealousy and greed or face him with demands to share his “wealth”. On the other hand, he also said that, whenever I was absent from his community, he was trusted when asking for credit in Ña Eulalia's store or from the *macatera* “La Concepcionera”, because he mentioned to them that “my partner will respond for me” (in Guarani: *che socio orespondeta che rehe*). Agapito's bills for goods purchased on credit in my absence were never exorbitant.

The point is that our relationship, in so far as money and goods were concerned, could not be circumscribed to a one-to-one relationship, in isolation from the interactions and networks in which Agapito was inscribed, and with which I was associated as a particular kind of powerful inside outsider.

1.3 Types of transaction and types of relationship

Turning to the conceptualization of the different types of transaction in terms of which indigenous peoples' internal and external relationships have been described, I here refer to ideas regarding practices such as exchange, reciprocity, commoditisation, sharing, pooling and commensality, with specific reference to transactions involving food.

A good point of departure is Sahlins' general proposition (1988[1972]:186) that "The connection between material flow and social relations is reciprocal. A specific social relation may constrain a given movement of goods, but a specific transaction – 'by the same token' – suggests a particular social relation". Which one constrains the other – whether it is the social relation that constrains the material transaction or vice versa – is what is at issue here. Drawing on Sahlins' formal "typology of reciprocities" (ibid.191ff), Overing (in Kidd 1999b:4) elaborates the following argument on the concept of sharing:

"... **exchange and reciprocity** are more likely to be characteristic of the type of relations that pertain between strangers. In fact, **sharing**, which is the dominant form of material transaction within lowland South American indigenous communities, is **non-reciprocal** in nature and implies a donation from a giver to a receiver with no calculation of returns...'**sharing**' ...encapsulates transactions that are clearly asymmetrical in nature as well as those that appear to be characterized by a degree of mutuality" [my emphasis].

In this sense, Overing's idea of **sharing** reflects Sahlins' "generalized reciprocity", understood as referring to "transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the lie of assistance given, and if possible and necessary, assistance returned...Other indicative

ethnographic formulas are ‘**sharing**’, ‘hospitality’, ‘free gift’, ‘help’, and ‘generosity’” (1988 [1972]:193-194; my emphasis).

Overing (1992) argues against Lévi-Strauss’s (1969) contention (following Mauss) that “exchange and reciprocal transfer of things and people” are the means by which “both peace and social relationships are created among ‘primitive’ peoples” (ibid.180). According to Overing, Piaroa exchange entails the dangers associated with strangers and may even lead to conflict and war (ibid.191). Sharing, on the other hand, is the practice “critical to the achievement of safety in daily social relations, for it ensured that those who lived together became over time ‘of a kind’ with one another”. The Piaroa, she explains, did not conceive of exchange between members of the same village, because exchange pertained to the realm of their foreign politics, characterized by competition and “predation” between different communities and other indigenous people (ibid.191). Exchange, that is, contributes to “differentiation and the potential creation of relations of hierarchy”.⁴⁹ In the regional network of indigenous trade, the Piaroa specialized in the production of certain items, e.g. manioc graters, which they exchanged for foreign items of value such as indigenous blowguns and “white” axes. The process, known as *palou* (ibid. 181), involved the transference of different agencies and potencies associated with the products exchanged and their producers. It therefore required the intervention of specialists and shamans (ibid.189). To differentiate between sharing as an internal practice (between kinsmen and co-villagers) and exchange as external (between communities and other indigenous peoples) is an analytical device based on contingent historical fact. At the time of Overing’s research the Piaroa lived in small, scattered communities whose economy was largely autonomous, with only selective participation in the regional trade. Geographically and ethnically they were clearly separated from other indigenous peoples and the *mestizo* population. The Angaité, in contrast, currently live in greater proximity to non-indigenous (Paraguayan) outsiders, with whom in many cases they are co-resident. Their communities have larger populations (than, for instance, those of the Piaroa studied by Overing), their subsistence relies heavily on foreign goods, and most material transactions are deprived of conspicuous rituals. With these differences in mind, it can be said that neither sharing nor exchange corresponds unequivocally either to the internal or

⁴⁹ In the same vein, authors such as Gordillo (1992:168) and McCallum (1989:201f) add to exchange and reciprocity practices such as commoditization and employment of fellow indigenous people as proper to the types of relationship with non-kin, enemies and strangers.

to the external domain of Angaité social relations.

Kidd (1999b:144) argues that what makes sharing possible among the Enxet is the fact that they consider that personal property exists and that it can be alienated. His position contradicts the “labour theory of personal ownership”, according to which “the investment of labour creates a metonymical relationship between producers and their products” (ibid.).⁵⁰ The latter theory implies that a person can appropriate an object only by making or producing it (e.g. tools, food) and that such an object can never be completely detached or alienated from its owner. Kidd, in contrast, claims that such alienation is possible and that there are means of appropriation other than one’s labour. For example, he considers that the alienability or non-alienability of objects, particularly hardwood, is “contingent on the degree of intimacy” in the relationship between the transactors (ibid.148).

In the case of food, Kidd (ibid.154) states that “at the point of its initial appropriation – either killing, harvesting, receiving or purchasing – food is regarded as personal property; once individuals return to their own households any food they bring with them becomes the property of all the household members. In effect, individuals hand over their food to the rest of the household in a process that can be defined as ‘**pooling**’” (my emphasis). Kidd here follows Sahlins (1988[1972]:188-189), who characterizes pooling as a “within relation” and sharing as a “between relation”.⁵¹ That is, while *pooling* takes place among the members of a household, *sharing* takes place between co-residents and related members of different households.⁵²

Kalish (2007a) expands on the meaning of sharing, which, among the Enlhet of the central Chaco, had in the past a significance that went beyond its material connotations:

“Sharing used to determine Enlhet communal life: people shared their food, shared

⁵⁰ On the “labour theory of personal ownership”, see for instance Thomas, 1982:54: “As a general rule, whatever a person makes or produces with his or her own labor belongs to that person to dispose of as he or she deems fit, with the exception of food. Food belongs to the household as a whole, and no member would contemplate withholding or barring other household members’ access”. See also Ingold 1986.

⁵¹ To be precise, Sahlins (1988[1972]:188-189) distinguishes between *pooling* and *reciprocity*, with pooling being understood as “a *within* relation, the collective action of a group” and reciprocity as “a *between* relation, the action and reaction of two parties”. He characterizes pooling as the complement of social unity and centrality, whereas “reciprocity is social duality and ‘symmetry’”.

⁵² For reasons of space, I do not consider here the practice of borrowing durable goods and money (cf. Kidd 1999b:249ff).

their time, shared their whole life, and wanted everybody to be satisfied in the same manner, everybody would be included, in the same manner everyone would participate in a joy created together. The Enlhet refer to this manifestation of sharing as *nengelaasekhammalhcoo*. Linguistically speaking, *nengelaasekhammalhcoo* is related to the verb *nengaasekhay'oo engmooc*, which means 'to do mutually *nengaasekhay'oo*'. *Nengaasekhay'oo engmooc* ... refers to the objective of having a good relationship with one another" (ibid.6; my translation).

He goes on to explain that *negaasekhay'oo* translates as "we respect him/her" and *negaasekhay'oo engmooc* as "we respect him/her, the other" (ibid.). This more comprehensive aspect of the meaning of sharing has resonances with the concept of *conviviality* (see Overing and Passes 2000), understood as an aesthetic of a peaceful, joyful communal life created through the actions of autonomous individuals who emotionally and intellectually invest time and effort in the construction of such a life.

With regard to one aspect of sharing, Grant (2006:123) describes how, for the Nivacle, "mutual feeding is an integral aspect of creating kin and 'similarity'". This **commensality**, the act of "eating together", has social implications that are not limited to the internal sphere of Nivacle life but, as Grant shows, extend to the realm of the relationship between Nivacle workers and their Mennonite bosses. We will come back to her example later.

Turning now to the concepts of *exchange* and/or *reciprocity*, they seem to differ from the types of practice and transaction previously described, inasmuch as they appropriately take place with strangers. In this regard, Renshaw (1986:202) claims that "the practice of giving in the **expectation of a return** [my emphasis] is more characteristic of the way the Indians of the Chaco deal with outsiders, such as missionaries or visiting anthropologists, who are never permanently integrated into the networks of generalized exchange, than of the way they operate among themselves". Kidd (1999b:4) adds to this comment that:

"In fact, the relationship with such people is usually asymmetric since such powerful 'outsiders' are expected to provide gifts for the indigenous people with **no material return expected** [my emphasis]. Such a situation does not contradict the fact that exchange is more characteristic of relations with outsiders but, instead, necessitates a re-assessment of our conception of alterity among indigenous American peoples".

He also states that “categories of both the missionary and the politician are conceived of, by indigenous people, as forms of leader and, as a result, are expected to be generous” (ibid.14). In order to clarify the discussion it is important to emphasize that we are dealing here with two kinds of *asymmetry*. One relates to the asymmetry of the things given and received, which is an asymmetrical transaction in which one or other party gives more than he/she receives: in others words, the return is not calculated or equally reciprocated. The other type of asymmetry involves an asymmetrical social relationship between the parties to the transaction and implies that one of them is better off than the other. The authors cited above refer to the first type of asymmetry, though their arguments have connotations proper to the second.

Elsewhere, when examining the employment of indigenous people by their fellows, Kidd (ibid.286) recognizes that exchange can also apply to internal relations. Giving as an example the employment of shamans, midwives and cotton-harvesters, who are paid for their services by fellow Indians, he stresses that “the Enxet conceptualize employment as a form of *exchange* [my emphasis] or, in other words, a relationship between equals... By exchanging labour for money, an equilibrium is maintained and, indeed, employment is often described in terms of an employee ‘helping’ an employer, an action that is both indicative of and constitutive of a ‘loving’ relationship”.

Let us briefly re-examine the concepts. *Pooling* – the transformation of personally owned food into supplies that are available for the collective consumption of the household – is a “within” relation. *Sharing* is characterized as an asymmetrical, non-reciprocal transaction – though also mutual in nature – that occurs in relations *between* households. Kalish associates the idea of sharing with the Enlhet concept *nengelaasekhammalhcoo*, the act of mutually respecting each other, a more broadly defined concept which is similar to the idea of *conviviality*. *Commensality*, the action of eating together, enhances social and emotional ties between the participants. When it comes to defining *exchange*, a wide variety of transactions –from trade and barter to paid labour – is included, with the focus particularly on relations with foreigners and outsiders. However, the concept has contradictory features: is it equal and reciprocal or asymmetrical and non-reciprocal? According to Renshaw, exchange is symmetrical, because there is an expectation of

return; according to Kidd, it is *asymmetrical* for what is given carries with it no obligation for the indigenous people to return, as the “powerful outsiders” are expected to be generous. Nonetheless, Kidd contradicts himself when he refers to exchange among indigenous people, asserting that it is a “relationship between equals” in which “equilibrium is maintained”. In this case, therefore, it is *symmetrical*. There appear, then, to be two types of exchange transaction, the distinguishing features of which depend on the participants involved.

The analytical confusion lies, I believe, in Renshaw’s restriction of exchange practices to relationships with outsiders almost exclusively. Kidd shows that, both among themselves and with outsiders, indigenous people engage in different types of exchange transaction. However, he argues that the exchange becomes asymmetrical – in contradiction with its main characteristic. Both authors seek to adjust their analyses to the fact that outsiders/strangers/colonists are almost by definition - at least in the Chaco – better off than the indigenous people, which is to say that they stand to them in an asymmetrical social relation. It follows from this that the indigenous people, well aware of such foreign advantage, are implicitly assumed to respond solely to their own “economic” self-interest in their material dealings with the outsiders, always expecting either a return or free gifts from them. In this sense, Renshaw’s assumption falls within Sahlins’ typological category of “balanced reciprocity”, in which “the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay” (ibid.194).⁵³ Kidd’s argument corresponds to Sahlins’ “Negative reciprocity”, which consists in “the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, the several forms of appropriation, transactions opened and conducted toward net utilitarian advantage” (ibid.195).⁵⁴

According to both authors, the opposite happens amongst the indigenous people themselves, for whom a material transaction like sharing is a moral and social virtue endowed with altruistic intentions, and exchange is marked by mutuality and equality.

⁵³ “Much ‘gift-exchange,’ many ‘payments,’ much that goes under the ethnographic head of ‘trade’ and plenty that is called ‘buying-selling’ and involves ‘primitive money’ belong in the genre of balanced reciprocity. Balanced reciprocity is less ‘personal’ than generalized reciprocity” (Sahlins, 1988[1972]:195).

⁵⁴ “Indicative ethnographic terms include ‘haggling’ or ‘barter,’ ‘gambling,’ ‘chicanery,’ ‘theft,’ and other varieties of seizure” (Sahlins, ibid.). Hugh-Jones and Humphrey (1992:7) criticize Sahlins’ approach by saying that “barter is not an archaic prototype of capitalism, any more than is gift exchange. It is a mode of exchange in its own right”.

Therefore, as Sahlins (*ibid.*193) puts it, “The spirit of exchange swings from disinterested concern for the other party through mutuality to self-interest”. According to this logic, the more distant the social relation, the less altruistic and the more self-interested will the exchange be. Although this is partially true, it condemns the outsiders to remaining immovably at one extreme of the indigenous spiral of social relations, whatever transactions, such as sharing or exchange, they may engage in with the indigenous people. Conversely, it condemns indigenous people to a moral standpoint of self-interest, oddity or enmity towards outsiders.

In response to the foregoing, I suggest that, in practice, both symmetrical and asymmetrical material transactions are possible between indigenous people and outsiders, just as they are amongst indigenous people. Exchange in the Chaco should be understood, at least in formal analytical terms, by focusing on its more commonsensical feature: namely, that it is reciprocal and (by design, at least) symmetrical – which does not necessarily mean fair - whether it takes place within the indigenous community or with outsiders. However, in the case of exchanges between foreigners and Indians, objects/things move between different “regimes of value” (Appadurai cited by Hugh-Jones and Humphrey, 1992:1).

On the other hand, the practice of sharing, which is readily observable in the indigenous community, is asymmetrical, for there is no expectation of return – save that of mutual caring. Does it, though, apply to their relations with outsiders? Here the problem of social and economic asymmetry seems to place the outsiders in the position of unilateral givers in the transaction, and it is this circumstance that detaches the indigenous side from all social or moral engagement. Following on from this, my second point is that material transactions of any type are neither uniquely focused on self interest nor morally disengaged, whether they happen amongst indigenous people or with outsiders. On the one hand, as we have seen, Kidd shows that exchanges among the Enxet are frequently understood in terms of the moral principle of “helping” the other (see also below). As I will demonstrate, exchanges with outsiders can also convey this idea. On the other hand, as Kidd also shows, sharing is arguably altruistic if we take “demand sharing” into account (see footnote 28). In the case of sharing with outsiders, it cannot be said that the indigenous motivation is always self-interest. Nor, as I will illustrate below, is the free

giving by outsiders always endowed with altruistic intentions.

The motivations for any type of material transaction, regardless of its point of origin (indigenous or non-indigenous), cannot easily be singled out. As Hugh-Jones and Humphrey (1992:2) note for barter, the most we can say is that material transactions involve “a constellation of features not all of which are necessarily present in any particular instance”. In order to read into the actions and glean their moral meanings, it is more reliable to count on the interpretations of the actors. Therein resides the answer to whether a gift – given or received - is motivated by generosity, and whether an exchange – for example, goods for labour and/or money – satisfies the reciprocal terms expected.

1.3.1 Historical continuities and differences in Angaité exchange

Kidd (1999b:272) notes that “the Enxet word for ‘to pay’ - [-]yagmagkásó - is clearly derived from the verb ‘to change/exchange’ - [-]yakmagkásó - and suggests that the Enxet conceive of barter, exchange and commodity transactions as almost synonymous”. Susnik (1977:155) translates the same Enxet word as *cambio* (“exchange” in Spanish) and as price/payment/barter in the context of working relationships between Indians and *patrones*. A similarly encompassing concept of exchange is found among the Angaité. For instance, on one occasion when Agapito and Maria were explaining to me the use of the word *Apiamongkeskama*, they gave the example of a bus driver who used to pass through La Patria en route to Colonia Ceibo, and who *Apiamongkeskama nentoma mangkoma’ak yeyema solyaklye* (in Angaité: “just wanted to **exchange** honey for provisions but does not want to give money”; Fieldnotes, 11/12/2004). In general, money is preferred to reciprocation in kind, not because the Indians do not want the provisions but because with money of their own they may be able to secure a better deal: i.e. more and better-quality provisions or other manufactured objects, purchased from a more trusted trader/*macatero*. As the examples show, exchanges such as wage labour, barter and buying-selling are linguistically and conceptually related practices in the present-day lives of the Angaité.

Although it is known that in the past the Angaité bartered and traded with Paraguayans on the bank of the Paraguay River (see chapter 2), there is not much information about indigenous trade networks in the Chaco. Through Métraux (1963[1944]:301) and other

early ethnographers, we know that such networks were active, and records exist of certain of the items and parties involved. Métraux mentions Enxet-Enlhet (“*Lengua*”) merchants who “visited the *Chorotí* [Manjuy] to exchange shell disks for blankets or domesticated animals”. Shell necklaces – made and used by several peoples, including the Angaité (ibid. 278) – played the part of money, in the sense that they were a measure of exchange: e.g. a five-metre necklace was equivalent to a sheep (Alvarsson 1988:216,218; Kidd 1999b:260; Nordenskiöld 1929:1926133f; Grubb 1911:71). We cannot assume, however, that the necklaces were a general exchange parameter. Nor is it known in detail under what circumstances the Angaité, specifically, participated in such networks: i.e. with whom they traded, what (other) items they may have traded, and the nature of the relationships involved (cf. Kidd, 1999b:266).

It is probable that the pre-colonial circumstances in which indigenous trade operated were similar to those described above for the Piaroa. Such exchanges probably followed ritual procedures in order to deal with the potential antagonism of the parties involved and the power with which the exchange goods were endowed. We deduce the formality and rituality of these former exchanges both from the example of other Chaco peoples and from “traces” that remain in the Angaité narratives analysed in the following chapters. On the basis of these narratives, Paraguayans appear to have replaced other indigenous peoples in the role of trading partner for the Angaité. The theme of the breach of reciprocity with the Paraguayans provoked by the Angaité’s failure to recognise an original exchange of food for land, is central to the explanation of historical change and causation.

Nowadays, the ritual elements of former exchanges – as well as the potential enmity of the exchange partners – are less conspicuous due to the physical proximity of the parties involved, the increased flow of produce and goods as commodities, and a reduction in the visible intervention of ritual/shamanic observances in relation to the transactions. Nevertheless, today’s exchanges bear a resemblance to past indigenous trade in that the things wanted from outsiders – white food and manufactured goods – can be reduced to a limited, more or less standard inventory. Also, despite the fact that the Chaco economy is monetarised, money (as we will see in last chapter) – is in certain contexts “animated” by the agency of its non-human owner (cf. Hugh-Jones, 1992:46; Kidd, 1999b:266). Money,

that is, is seen as an “empowered object”, in keeping with the notion that trading objects – e.g. bullets, paper – have potencies associated with their original owners (cf. Hugh-Jones, 1992:37). Thus, what looks like an overwhelming and absolute expansion of the market into the lives of the Angaité and the rest of the Chaco Indians, can be seen from the latter’s perspective as a transformation of their own exchange practices. That is to say that, much though the market has taken on, engulfed or hijacked (Hugh-Jones and Humphrey, 1992:11) indigenous exchanges of the past, the latter have conditioned the ways in which the former operates today.

Today the idea of reciprocity still remains basic to indigenous exchange practices: the things given and received – indigenous produce (wild meat, honey, wood, etc.) or labour for *white food* (see chapter 2), goods or money – are supposed to be fairly and proportionally equal in value. Needless to say, in many instances such proportionality and fairness (by non-indigenous standards) are not achieved. This is particularly the case with exchanges that take place between Indians and outsiders. When the former sell their labour they receive low wages that are mostly paid in kind and at rates that are fixed on the basis of local arrangements rather than by market standards or, far less, in accordance with the national labour legislation (see Kidd, 1997a). Also, when the Indians sell or barter their produce, e.g. honey and *quebracho* wood, it is undervalued in relation to the foreign goods they receive in exchange, which are often much more expensive than elsewhere in the country (Fieldnotes 30/3/2006). However, the Indians may consider the exchange satisfactory even when they do not receive market prices for their things.⁵⁵ This can also apply to exchanges between Indians, where the things exchanged are sometimes conspicuously disproportional.⁵⁶ To account for this we need to bear in mind what was mentioned above regarding the different “regimes of value” between which these exchanges occur, as well as the fact that the role of money as a stable measure of exchange is not pervasive. Hence, the exploitation and abuse that occur in exchanges with outsiders, and the lack of proportionality observed in exchanges with “insiders”, do not erase the fact that Indians exchange things in return for something. The transactions are therefore reciprocal and, although the things exchanged are unequal in kind and share little or

⁵⁵ On one occasion I was surprised to observe that people in the village of Las Flores, community of La Patria, were apparently happy to sell *Palo Santo* logs (*Bulnesia Sarmientoi*) to a civil engineer who ran the official water supply programme there for nearly 10 times less than the price that could be fetched, for instance, in the Mennonite area (Fieldnotes 24/1/2005).

⁵⁶ Remigio and Maria’s *almacén* added between 30% and 50% to the price of their merchandise, which they bought at an already high price from the *macatera* La Concepcionera.

nothing in the way of a common standard of value, they still create, as Hugh-Jones and Humphrey put it with reference to barter exchange, “equality out of dissimilarity” (1992:11).

And yet, exchanges between Indians and outsiders are grossly disproportional and unfair. They take place in a context of “wider political relations of inequality” (Hugh-Jones and Humphrey 1992:11) which have been historically developed by the prevailing system of national and foreign landownership. Invariably they reproduce the asymmetry that characterizes relations between Indians and Paraguayans. *Patrones* and merchants profit from the disadvantages to which the indigenous population is subject and which derive from their limited land tenure, natural-resources exhaustion, food scarcity, unemployment and other handicaps such as geographical isolation, which in turn leads to cash shortage and a lack of homogenous market prices and government control.

Despite their exploitation by the outsiders – and despite also the existence sometimes of greedy interests on both sides – current exchanges between Indians and outsiders are not devoid of moral and social meaning. In general, they take place on good terms both at the internal kinship level and at the external inter-ethnic level. But it is also true that the precarious conditions for realizing “satisfactory” exchanges with colonists, where the thing exchanged in return (money, food, and so on) is given on time, in the right quantity and at a good price, make such exchanges a common and frequent source of disruptive sociality. And there is always an underlying suspicion on the part of the Indians that the traders may lie, cheat or fail to meet their obligations due to the latter’s greed or duplicity.

Where a close social relationship exists, based on kinship or friendship (including the friendship that is sometimes established with outsiders), exchange transactions not only occur but they can also be accompanied by another kind of transaction between the parts – in the form of a gift or asymmetrical return. Typically, their business-like purpose is diminished and the actions are described as being motivated by goodwill and affection – whether on the part of the indigenous or the foreign partner. Here the idea of “helping” is prominent, appearing over and over again in different situations. I once witnessed a situation, for instance, in which Gregorio, one of the leaders of Karova Guasu and a son of Agapito, proposed to another Angaité to go into partnership in cutting *quebracho* posts around the

area of Karova Guasu. The other man, from the nearby village of La Paciencia, owned the chainsaw; Gregorio would contribute the fuel and find a buyer. The chainsaw-owner agreed to the terms of the deal, repeatedly affirming: *Che na che problema asalva che rapicha mboriahu* (in Guarani: “I don’t have a problem with **helping/saving** my poor fellowman”; Fieldnotes 7/5/2006).

1.3.2 Sharing with and “helping” the *veske*

Sharing, as Overing defines it (see above), applies to material transactions in which the items given or received among indigenous transactors are not measured. They are asymmetrical transactions in which *mutual affection and care* among the participants predominate. Kidd adds that sharing is an in-between-households relation. But what kinds of relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous transactors admit the possibility of transactions that are at the same time materially asymmetrical and morally mutual? And what type of transaction is it in which one of the participants, namely the “powerful” outsider, is expected to provide more according to his/her better-off condition? A provisional analytical term for this type of transaction is “protective sharing”, despite the fact that the concept of “sharing” has no counterpart in Angaité discourse.

In the interests of comparative analysis, it is useful to look at Grant’s description (2006) of the relationship between Nivacle workers and their Mennonite bosses. In their own language the Nivacle refer to their Mennonite bosses as *c’utsfa*, “friend”. Linguistic analysis of the term also renders the meaning “companions in the action of eating together”. Grant contends that the use of the term *c’utsfa* gives expression to the Nivacle’s egalitarian social philosophy, because it denies the “underlying relationship of debt or socio-cultural separation” with their Mennonite bosses and converts it into a relationship that “like any other [...] is based on moral values such as trust and care” (ibid.126). The material aspect of the relationship is not limited to the exchange of labour for money, but also includes the giving of food – in addition to the Nivacle worker’s payment (of which it may also form part) – and the disposition of *mutual help* between the Mennonite and the Nivacle involved. Grant notes that “the term *c’ustfa* is not reserved only for Mennonite bosses and can be used as a term of friendship to refer to any White person with whom one has a social relation”. It also serves to create “safe relations with members of other

communities”. In sum, the use of the term belongs to “a continual process of incorporating different human beings into ‘the social’ and into the human”, as a result of which “the Mennonite boss becomes closer to the centre of the ‘spiral of intimacy’ described earlier through participating in a social relationship” (ibid.).

Grant’s description of the relation between Nivacle workers and their Mennonite bosses rings true of the Angaité relationship with outsiders. It also makes Kidd’s aforementioned call for a discussion of ideas of alterity among Amerindians all the more pertinent. Today, “powerful outsiders” such as missionaries, anthropologists and *patrones* are referred to as *veske* in Angaité, a term which is cognate with the corresponding Enxet category *wese* (cf. Kidd 1999a; Susnik, 1977:154). The fact that this term applied in the past to their own leaders implies that such outsiders are seen as a kind of leader and are expected as such to be as generous as the former. In Guarani they are referred to, particularly in the case of ranchowners and loggers (of mostly Paraguayan origin), as *che patron*, *che jefe* or *che ruvicha*, “my patron”, “my boss” or “my superior”.

The use of the terms mentioned (*vese/patron/jefe/ruvicha*) stresses that the indigenous individuals and those to whom they refer have a relationship – they are not strangers to one another – but, at the same time, it marks the social asymmetry between them.⁵⁷ The asymmetry, in my opinion, is due not simply to the conspicuous difference in wealth between the Indians and their *vese/patrones*.⁵⁸ Many of the *veske* – in particular, landowners or missionaries – live close to the Indians, but this does not count as co-residence, as their houses and compounds are clearly differentiated and separated. Besides, the landowners generally visit their ranches only at weekends. By the same token, the *veske* do not eat in the same place – except during common celebrations such as national holidays. Therefore, the possibility of “closer” relationships is limited because the

⁵⁷ In the past, indigenous *vese* were mostly male. Nowadays, in the majority of cases, the *vese/patron* is male and therefore addressed as such. I have never heard the term addressed to a female outsider (and as far as I know the word is a male noun). Powerful outsiders such as missionaries, government officials and NGO representatives are more or less evenly distributed between male and female individuals, but landowners are largely *patrones*, although their spouses may be *patronas*. There are a few instances in which ranches are owned and run by prominent *patronas*. I should mention that my data are the result of greater interaction with male Angaité individuals.

⁵⁸ When Angaité leaders and individuals greet a known “powerful outsider”, they sometimes comment humorously: “my patron has a lot of money” (in Guarani: *iplata heta ko che patron*) or “you are a *patron*, you have a lot of money” (in Angaité: *vese lhiap, aplhany’e solyaklye apankok*). They may add that “my *patron* is stingy” (in Guarani: *ijopy che patron*) or “he doesn’t want to give money away” (in Angaité: *mankoma’ak solyaklye pangkok*).

combination of practices that contribute to creating “closeness” and “sameness” – cohabitation, commensality and the sharing of social time – is reduced to the giving and receiving of goods. It is the limits placed on co-residence, commensality and time-sharing, rather than the asymmetrical wealth *per se*, that impede greater closeness with the “powerful” outsiders and the transformation of difference into “sameness”. It could of course be argued that it is precisely because the outsiders are wealthier that they do not share space and time with the Indians with whom they relate. From the indigenous point of view, however, the opposite applies: wealth should stimulate sociality rather than the reverse. [...] Thus, if the *vese/patrones* were more generous, they would, by indigenous criteria, become closer to the people with whom they shared.⁵⁹

To what extent, then, does indigenous “demand sharing” operate in relation to outside *veske*, in the manner described by Kidd (1999b:249)? Does it serve, as among relatives and co-residents, as a “levelling mechanism” (see Woodburn, 1982:436), in accordance with an “egalitarian” indigenous ethic? If so, such demands should make everybody equal in the short or long run, such that, in this case, the powerful outsiders would become as poor as the Indians or the Indians as well off as the outsiders. In the case of the Angaité, I would suggest that their requests and/or the things they receive are not a “function” of a levelling mechanism designed to achieve equality – as Kidd (1999b:267) suggests with respect to Enxet internal relationships. The Angaité certainly expect generosity and care from their outside *veske*, and these relational qualities are naturally demonstrated by material gifts. But they do not expect the achievement of an “equal” material condition. As the wealthy outsiders are perceived as having more than enough to be able to give effortlessly – unless proved otherwise – the requests are not supposed to *exhaust* the *veske/patrones*’ wealth nor even to *abuse* their goodwill or generosity. The ulterior motive, so to speak, is to maintain harmonious relations with the latter, through the receipt of gifts which, besides their material value, are tokens of the donors’ constant care and affection. I frequently heard Indians comment on a *patron*’s good character by saying *mba’e porã la patron ome’ê oreve tal cosa* (in Guarani: “the patron is good, he gave us such and such a thing”).

⁵⁹ In the context of community land claims affecting private ranches, government officials who oversee the cases are criticised when they come to visit and stay at the *patrones*’. Community members object that “they don’t come and stay amongst us, they don’t come to see us, they don’t eat with us, they just stay in the ranch, sleep in the ranch, they don’t know what the Indians go through” (in Guarani: *ha’e kuéra ndou’i ore apytépe, ndou’i orevecha, ndokaru’i ore apytepe estanciainte opyta, estanciainte oke, ndoikuái mba’epa la indigena ohasa*).

The indigenous perception of the patron's good character also has a lot to do with his being a man of his word as regards the fulfilment of a deal, as Susnik (1977:156) shows in respect of Enxet cowboys. As long as the wealth of the *veske* is not seen as inversely proportional and a cause of indigenous need and exploitation – which often is the case – this abundance is not questioned as such. *Veske/Patrones* are criticized, for instance, on the grounds that *ha'e okaru pora ha ore atu ore vare'a* (in Guarani: “he eats well and we are hungry”) or *ha'e ndopena'i ore rehe, noipytyvôse la indigena, ndo hayhu'i la indigena* (in Guarani: “he has no pity on us, he does not want to **help** the Indians, he does not **love** the Indians”).⁶⁰

Having said which, I should clarify that I do not mean to deny the existence of an egalitarian indigenous philosophy whose tenets can also be directed towards those outside the indigenous community. However, that philosophy combines respect for personal autonomy with the creation of appropriate social relationships through actions of love, care and generosity. What is desirable, therefore, is more a state of “sameness”, which is an *ongoing, ever-in-the-making* state of welfare and sociality, rather than a social and economic “equality”, which seems to be more a *final* state in which both parties are levelled.

Indeed, there are other means by which outside *veske/patrones* can express their care, apart from giving things or abiding by an agreement. On one occasion I was told that the civil engineer responsible for the group of Paraguayan workers doing the water-supply project in Karova Guasu “loved the Indians” (in Guarani: *ohayhu la indigena*) because he admonished his subordinates with firing them if they molested the young girls of the community (Fieldnotes, 19/12/2005). Similarly, there are other ways for the Indians to express closeness with a *veske/patron* (i.e. not simply declaring a working tie) which are expressed in terms of “knowing” him/her well. To say of someone – whether Paraguayan or indigenous – *aikuaa porâ ichupe/asiansankoe* (in Guarani/Angaité: “I know him/her well”), giving details of the circumstances in which such intimate knowledge arose, is to claim a relationship of close friendship with that person.

⁶⁰ On emotion discourse, cf. Kidd 1999b. Susnik (1977:156) gives examples of what Enxet ranch workers say when they are angry with the ranchowner: “my patron is bad, he does not compensate my work, nor does he give me clothes or food” (author's translation from Enxet to Spanish; my English translation).

The possibility, then, of close relationships with outsiders is contingent on a combination of material elements (e.g. free giving), physical proximity (e.g. co-residence, time-sharing) and moral aspects (e.g. mutual care, affection, trust). The permanent enactment of these different features is what determines the intensity of the relation.

A warning is necessary here. That the indigenous Ego may at a certain moment consider that he has a “good”, close relationship with his *veske/patrones*, because the latter give him “generous” gifts, may be seen from another perspective as outright discrimination and exploitation disguised by an “alienated” indigenous point of view. As was said above, exchanges of indigenous labour for food and money are grossly unjust in many situations. Moreover, the generosity shown by the *veske/patrones* (landowners, politicians, missionaries, NGO members) – e.g. handing over old clothes, running a small, ineffective project, slaughtering an old cow from time to time – may seem like token gestures unworthy of indigenous esteem. It does not require much for rich landowners to be generous, given the indigenous “state of poverty”. Indeed, they can appear to be generous even when they are effectively exploiting indigenous workers. However, we should not underestimate the different interpretations and “regimes of value” that apply (even when they give rise to extreme profit differentials), just as it should not be assumed that the indigenous sociopolitical agenda is equivalent to a project of ethnic/class redemption. The Indians too can manipulate situations in their own favour, despite the impediments of structural inequality, by deceiving their exploiter when necessary and required. All in all, this does not invalidate indigenous aspirations for a relationship with outsiders which is contingent on actions of care and trust, in fulfilment of better social coexistence.

In this connection, it should be noted that the making of requests by indigenous people and the giving of goods by outsiders do not automatically establish a bond between them. Distance between the parties involved will remain – in spite of the exchange – if there is a lack of knowledge or trust on either side: i.e. if one or other (or both) perceives the transaction as opportunistic and selfish. Where the basis for a close relationship is lacking, the indigenous request may be made without commitment to veracity, by adducing, for example, that *ndarekoi la ha'u hagua* or *ndarekoi la amongaru haguã che familia kuéra*

(in Guarani: “I do not have anything to eat” or “I don’t have anything to feed my children”). It is often said of requests made to a stranger or to an outsider known to be of an adverse character that *atantea ichupe* and/or *mboatavy ichupe* (in Guarani: “I tried [to fool] him” and/or “I fooled him”). It is seen as perfectly acceptable to lie to “outsiders” when the possibility of mutual respect, trust and care is obstructed by an unbridgeable distance separating the latter.⁶¹

From personal experience in indigenous advocacy, it bears mentioning that the emphasis in indigenous discourse on affective states and the idea of help is taken up by some *patrones*. Ranchowners legally confronted by the NGO Tierraviva for their ill-treatment of their indigenous employees would often argue: “I don’t know why they complain if I **help** them, I gave them *such and such* things. I feel affection for the indigenous people” (In Spanish: “Yo no se porque ellos se quejan si yo les ayudo. Les doy *esto y aquello*. Yo les tengo aprecio a los indígenas”). This discourse can be labelled as cynical, but it reflects nonetheless that for some *veske/patrones* it is important to defend themselves in *moral, relational terms* as proof of their just, lawful treatment of their indigenous employees. In face-to-face confrontations over disagreements with their bosses, indigenous workers would say: *che ro respeta rupi and roipytyvôse rupi ajopo ndeve tal cosa* (in Guarani: “as I respect you and I wanted to help you I did *such and such* thing for you”). What underlies the labour relationship, therefore, is not merely the requirement that both sides meet their formal obligations but the good faith and care shown by a mutual desire to help each other. This principle is reflected in situations in which the Angaité sometimes decline

⁶¹ When indigenous leaders request provisions and other valuable items – corrugated iron, blankets, tools, and so on – from government departments such as the National Committee for Natural Emergencies (*Comite de Emergencia Nacional*), their depiction of the critical conditions endured by their respective communities may or not be accurate. The giving of food and other items by governmental institutions and the reception of those items by leaders and communities do not necessarily create a mutual “bond” or affective links between them. This is mainly because the government disperses its responsibilities and actions through many different and diverse agents – parliamentarians, directors, public officials and so on. Long-term relationships may arise when leaders establish contact with particular individuals within the government to whom they may refer as their *vese* (as likewise occurs in indigenous relations with private institutions). Leaders may resort to those individuals more frequently and for things that even go beyond the latter’s responsibilities. In such cases, the objects or services provided – although officially under the rubric of government aid or institutional support – are claimed by the successful petitioners to be the result of their “close” personal relationship with a particular “powerful” *vese*. Thus, a leader might say: “Thanks to my personal dealings with the governor, we got these provisions” (in Guarani: *Che ajerure rupi gobernador oñeme’e ñandeve provista*). Indigenous attitudes of this nature should be correlated with the historical conditions of development policy and practice, which has tended to perceive as the cause of indigenous “poverty” a cultural “incapacity” for “progress” on the part of the indigenous people. Conversely, the solution has been thought to lie in unilateral, paternalist responses prompted by the attitude that “something must be given/done”, regardless of what.

occasional job offers from certain landowners or *patrones*, even when they are unemployed and in need of cash and food, because they are waiting the call of their usual *vese/patron*. They reserve their “help” for specific preferred *patrones*.⁶² They reserve their “help” for specific preferred *patrones*.

As material transactions are episodes in continuous social relations, it is almost inconceivable for long-standing relationships to exist between indigenous people and “powerful outsiders” solely on the basis of one type of material transaction, be it exchange or free giving. Different practices combine in the course of such relationships, as I will illustrate with personal ethnographic data. At the same time, the transactions remain open in nature, their distinction being more an analytical exercise than an empirical reality. By the same token, the relationships themselves are in a continual process of creation, maintenance and dissolution, with their “closeness” being dependent on the permanent manifestation of moral qualities such as care and trust.

1.3.3 Others as “friends”

It is exceptional for the Angaité to refer to their *veske/patrones* as “friends”, as they do in respect of certain missionaries, anthropologists and poor Paraguayan *Chaqueños* (*hae che amigo/a*; in Guaraní: “[so-and-so] is my friend”). The Angaité term *émok* (“my kinsman”), unlike its Enxet cognate, is not recorded as connoting relational qualities of friendship over and above its categorical meaning.⁶³ The Angaité word [-] *lhiakma* (“companion”) refers to a person with whom one travels and/or enjoys spare time.⁶⁴ Its colloquial Guaraní-Spanish equivalent is *socio* (“partner”), which might denote the intimacy of occasional drinking partners.⁶⁵

When speaking in Guaraní-Spanish, the Angaité use separate terms to designate kin

⁶² In the village of Karova Guasu several young adult males were inactive for long periods, accepting only the temporary work provided by a particular patron to whom, they said, “we have become accustomed” (in Guaraní: *rojepokuaa hese*).

⁶³ Kidd (1999b:79) notes for the Enxet that “the term *émok* is polysemic and has a wider meaning than ‘kin.’ It also includes the connotative notion of **friendship** which is, in itself, further evidence of the conceptual link between kinship and ‘love.’ Consequently, if people develop an affective (non-sexual) relationship they often refer to each other as *émok*. Indeed, people who are not particularly close could refer to each other as *émok* as a means of making a moral statement about how their relationship should be” (my emphasis). Among Angaité speakers I did not come across the use of the term *émok* with respect to friends.

⁶⁴ The Enxet equivalent is [-] *xegexma* (Kidd, 1999b:169).

⁶⁵ Agapito also used this word to indicated his auxiliary spirit (see chapter 4)

(*gente*) and friend (*amigo*), which are not coterminous. However, they often do use the expression *che gente* or specific kinship terms (e.g. *che sobrino/che tío*, my uncle/my nephew) to address or refer to those indigenous non-kin with whom they want to stress a friendly relationship. The question remains as to whether an Angaité might think of a non-indigenous friend as a relative – as happens amongst Angaité friends.

Through living and working together on *estancias*, Indians and non-indigenous *Chaqueños* have the basis for possible friendship. Multiple examples can be given of how working together for a certain length of time – in the same paddock, in the ranch store and so on – contributes, like cohabitation, to creating bonds between Indians and Paraguayans (Fieldnotes, 8/5/2006).⁶⁶ Neither the *patrón* nor the foreman (*mayordomo*) necessarily intervenes in the organization of everyday tasks on the ranch. In some cases, the lower-ranking employees – e.g. *estancieros*, *playeros* and *contratistas* – decide for themselves with whom they will carry out the day's assignments, thereby allowing for personal preference and the exercise of friendship at work. To an extent, the work groups that are formed on ranches resemble hunting partnerships.⁶⁷ Both are based on personal choice and require not only specific joint skills but also moral qualities of trust and care in the execution of the tasks, as well as a mutual predisposition to companionship and banter.⁶⁸ It is not only the indigenous workers who establish friendships with their non-indigenous ranch mates. Paraguayans frequently express and show affection for their indigenous co-workers. The remark *Aikuaa porâ fulano/a* (in Guaraní: “I know him/her well”) is as likely to be made by a Paraguayan about an Angaité as by an Angaité about a Paraguayan.

Close relationships with “powerful outsiders” – whether *veske/patrones* or *amigos*, and however long-standing the relationship – are best defined as a constant attempt to

⁶⁶ The Angaité readily understand cohabitation as being synonymous with kinship. A case in point concerns a Paraguayan *macatero* called Miguel and his assistant, Osvaldo, a friendly young Paraguayan in his early 20's. Both of them were from the city of Villa Hayes, capital of the Department of Presidente Hayes. As they worked together and were far away from their respective homes, they shared the same hut during their long stays in La Patria. When Osvaldo accidentally drowned in the Riacho Gonzalez, my Angaité hosts reported that “the **brother** of Miguel has died”. They assumed that the unfortunate victim was Miguel's close relative because the two of them lived together.

⁶⁷ Similar to hunting partnerships are the groups which form to carry out activities that imply a joint effort, such as building a fishing dam, carrying posts or other items in an ox cart, taming horses on a ranch, and so on. A great deal of storytelling and many personal narratives centre on the eventful episodes that characterize such group activities (Interviews with Andres Tomen, 23/5/2005; Agustina Aguilera, 26/4/2005; Capata'i and Isacio Segura, 28/3/2005). See also Amarilla, 2006:584,601; Franco and Imaz, 2006:110, 117,119.

⁶⁸ See Susnik (1977:157-161) for a discussion of the work ethic of Enxet ranch workers.

incorporate the other into a more sociable and desirable relationship. It is true that the “other” may be seen as wealthier and more powerful and thus more capable of sharing or doing things for those indigenous persons with whom he/she relates. However, the asymmetrical material aspect – differences in wealth - is morally balanced through generosity in the giving and sharing of food and goods, and through spending time together. It is this companionship that contributes to generating mutual emotional ties and a kind of “sameness” between the parties involved.

From what has been said so far, it would appear that the sameness advocated by the Angaité (as by the Nivacle) does not go beyond the creation of friendship. Although in some cases friendship is comparable to kinship, the correspondence is not exact. In a word, relations of friendship do not reach the centre of the social spiral. Paraguayan friends remain *valayo* and, therefore, *athave émok* and *athave enlhet* (non-kin/non-person). To what extent, then, is it possible for friendship to convert into kinship through the sharing of goods and time with Angaité friends?

1.4 Overlapping material transactions

We have seen how for the Angaité –as for other Amerindians - individual property and its alienation are possible and that the ample exercise of personal autonomy extends to the way individuals dispose of their goods and items. Taking these considerations into account, we can delineate the manner in which goods, particularly food, circulate among the Angaité: there is intra-household pooling, sharing/exchange between different households (which implies both kin and co-residents who do not live in the same house), sharing/exchange between individuals/families from different villages and sharing/exchange with outsiders (who are sometimes co-residents, e.g. Paraguayan schoolteachers). While acknowledging that the arguments of Kidd and other authors – on which this schematic outline draws – may be more complex, I would argue that the practices of pooling, sharing – voluntary or demanded - and exchange overlap in the ethnographic context which concerns us. Which practice occurs at any given moment depends on the relationship at stake, the agreements made and the context.

Within households – for instance, those of Agapito, Lito and Cristina – food was generally “pooled” daily amongst the members, although different objects belonged to different individuals.⁶⁹ Sharing frequently took place between Agustina’s household and her children’s nearby households – e.g. those of Gregorio and his family, Félix and his family, and Cristina and her family – and, to a lesser degree, with other kin and co-residents of Karova Guasu. For instance, on a few occasions Agustina’s half-brother Lito and his wife Ña China sent her meat, either hunted or obtained on the Riacho Gonzalez ranch where Lito’s sons-in-law worked permanently (Fieldnotes, 31/9/2005 and 25/8/2006; see Figure 1). To add two further examples: Félix and/or his children – especially the younger boys – would sometimes eat at Agustina’s. And before Victor, Agapito’s third son, built his own permanent dwelling in Karova Guasu, he and his whole family stayed at his parents’ whenever he was back from temporary jobs on neighbouring ranches or the Mennonite colonies (Fieldnotes, 3/10/2005).

Pooling was also common in other households in the village, including those in which more than one family lived under the same roof: e.g. the households of Pele Avalos and Lito Padron (Fieldnotes, 16/12/2006 and 29/9/2005). In such cases, the extended family typically comprised three generations of lineal descendants: elder parents, their married and unmarried children (including single mothers), and their children’s children. Sharing was frequent and varied in form, including among its modes of operation the distribution of meat as in the example given above of Lito and the harvesting of garden produce in groups generally composed of mothers, their daughters and their daughters-in-law (Fieldnotes, 20/12/2006).

⁶⁹ At the beginning of my fieldwork Agapito’s household consisted, besides himself, of Agustina (Agapito’s wife), Remigio and Maria (two of the couple’s children), and the two grandchildren Mario and Lorena (Maria’s children). Later on, Maria became the wife of Dionisio, a *mestizo* former logger of Paraguayan/indigenous parenthood who came from Puerto Casado (Fieldnotes 24/9/2005), and they built their own hut a few feet from Agapito’s. Maria and Dionisio roofed their hut with corrugated iron sheets that Agapito had originally asked me to buy for his own hut. Maria then started to cook in her own pot and no longer pooled her food with her mother. This nonetheless did not impede intensive sharing between their two huts. Remigio, Mario and Lorena, for their part, would oscillate between eating at Agustina’s and at Maria’s. In turn, Remigio became the husband of Carolina, who came from the neighbouring village of Laguna Hu, and they lived together in Agapito’s hut. Two and a half years later Maria and Dionisio split up, and she moved back with Agapito (Fieldnotes 28/3/2008). Remigio and Carolina – who had recently become pregnant – moved into Maria’s hut. Carolina had a dangerous miscarriage and the childless young couple built their own house a few paces away (Fieldnotes 6/8/2008).

As regards the alienability of personal property, this is contingent on the intimacy of the relationship between the transactors and their open or tacit agreement to the transaction. For example, the bicycle I bought for Agapito was immediately transferred by him to his grandson/son Mario. In the case of my own bicycle, it was not clear to Remigio whether it had been lent to him, entrusted to his care or given to him as a gift. Inasmuch as they can be alienated, durable goods belong to specific individuals, even within a household. However, the degree of intimacy between those involved in the transfer – as well as the context in which the object is transferred – leaves room for ambiguity with regard to the question of ownership. Objects that belong to the household, such as tools and sheets of corrugated iron, are used freely by all the members of the household. In the event of a request to borrow such belongings, any member will feel entitled to lend them. If an object is not communally owned, the request to borrow it will meet with a reply to the effect that it belongs to another member of the household. If the named owner is absent, other household members will be reluctant to give the object away for fear of abusing the owner's will and autonomy (Fieldnotes, 20/12/2006). In this way, the Angaité stress the value they place on individual property and personal autonomy.

In some instances, sharing would also occur between Angaité and Paraguayans. For instance, the schoolteacher at Karova Guasu frequently shared her cooking and provisions with Agapito's family and other families in the village (Fieldnotes, 12/5/2006 and 1/9/2006), she herself being granted garden produce and, occasionally, a share of hunted animals. Even the not-so-close Paraguayan family of Don Teofilo and Ña Eulalia would give meat to Agustina or to other members of the village. Among the Paraguayan residents of La Patria, sharing was a relatively common practice (Fieldnotes, 31/8/2005), as was their receiving meat or other produce from relatives and acquaintances living on nearby ranches or Colonia Ceibo.⁷⁰

It is perhaps worth mentioning that, in terms of my relationship with Agapito, we religiously used to eat together the meals that were prepared with my "pooled" provisions, which were always served for both of us. Of course, this is a *sui generis* commensality, in the sense that I did not live in Agapito's household, but, when necessary, I could partake

⁷⁰ Ranch employees usually received a share of the cattle periodically slaughtered on the ranch. Paraguayan workers normally received a better share of the meat than their indigenous counterparts.

of his household food, just as I could take grapefruits from the big tree located in front of his hut – grapefruits that would be occasionally sold to other people - or simply ask him for cigarettes when I did not have any left. By the same token, Agapito could ask me for pocket money which was not to be discounted from his “salary”.

The pooling and sharing aspects of our relationship would seem to have been determined by the sheer fact that I was a “powerful outsider”. As such, I may have been considered generous but, none the less, socially separated. Rather than exchanging reciprocal services with Agapito, my position could therefore be seen as that of a generous *patron/veske* who is supposed to give and share more than he receives. In fact, though, our relationship was defined by neither of those alternatives – neither equal exchange nor asymmetrical sharing. As already mentioned, Agapito clearly and repeatedly affirmed that I was not his *patron/veske*. More importantly, as I show below, I was to become a relative, a category by no means determined by a single type of material transaction nor given within fixed parameters, but constituted and confirmed by appropriate moral attitudes on both sides of the relationship.

In the indigenous social context, the overlapping of material transactions and practices is exemplified by Agapito’s *almacen*, or better said Agustina’s *almacen*.⁷¹ In their dealings with this resource outlet, even close relatives – including Agapito’s household members – engaged in some form of exchange and trading, as for example when Félix would ask to buy things on credit or when Agapito suggested that I buy beer. Relatives in Karova Guasu and from other communities normally bought things at the store, as did the Paraguayan workers on the water-supply project. The extent to which Agustina, Maria or Remigio allowed credit, condoned debts or dispensed goods free of charge depended on the degree of intimacy in the relationship. As a case in point, Agustina herself used store

⁷¹ That the wife is the “administrator” and sometimes the reputed “owner” of an *almacen* is a quite common phenomenon in Angaité communities, so elsewhere (e.g. the Sanapaná community of Karanday Puku). Ownership may also remain ambiguous, thus conveniently transferring responsibility between husband and wife in order to avoid credit demands from relatives and others. Additionally, by assuming the administration and/or ownership of an *almacen*, a wife can make sure that her husband does not squander the income generated. She is thus able to secure food for the children and redistribute it amongst her close and chosen relatives and affines. In this way the wife’s administration of the *almacen* resembles the parallel process explained by Palmer (2005:92-94) in relation to the Wichi of the Argentinean Chaco, whereby women transform their husbands’ hunted meat and their semen into cultural products in the form of cooked food and babies. Similarly, in the Angaité context, the husband’s asocial or individualistic use of money is transformed by the wife into a social use where the money serves as a means of household subsistence and as a basis for the redistribution of goods to kin and co-residents, in the form of cash, credit or gifts.

provisions for her own cooking, thus “pooling” them for her own household consumption.

In synthesis, the relative closeness of the category by which an Angaité defines his/her relationship with a given person – e.g. as kin, affine, co-resident or outsider - is largely predicated on the degree of commensality, caring and intimacy that accompanies the relationship. While in practical and moral terms those relational aspects are most immediately associated with pooling and sharing practices, close relationships are not necessarily disrupted by other kinds of practice such as exchange and trading.

1.5 The transformation of the “other” into affine or relative

If sharing and commensality create kinship ties and enhance “friendship” between the Angaité and outsiders, as they do for the Nivacle, can these practices erase the otherness of the latter?

When I started fieldwork I arranged with Victor (Agapito’s third son) and his wife Damiana for them to cook for me each day. I was supposed to give them provisions and a small payment and they in return would keep a plate of food for me from their meals. Following a couple of unpleasant incidents, I realized that Damiana was not keen on keeping to the deal and I decided to give my provisions and the payment to Maria. She at the time was single and accepted. Soon it was being rumoured that Ña Eulalia was saying that Maria was my *serviha* and *machu*, both terms referring to a female who cooks and gives sexual favours to the person whom she “serves”. I mentioned the gossip to Maria and she answered with a nervous laughter, saying that it was nonsense and that she also had heard about it. Subsequently, however, I realized that Ña Eulalia’s remarks expressed common assumptions (held, among others, by Maria herself and by Agapito). When Maria coupled Moreno a couple of months later, she almost immediately complained that the provisions and the money I gave her were not enough. Realizing where her complaints were coming from – mainly Moreno’s jealousy – I was left in no doubt as to the implications of having someone cook for you. At which point, Agapito remarked: “I have a very pretty grand-daughter, Zunny, who can cook for you”. So it was that Zunny became my cook.

As it transpired, Agapito and members of his family were seeking to consolidate our relationship affinally. However, being fed by Agapito's daughter and by his granddaughter failed to make me his in-law. Instead, circumstances led him to place himself in the role of "father" to me.

Agapito met my parents on several occasions, but of particular relevance was a trip that we made with my father and a friend of his to the south of the country's eastern region. After that trip, Agapito began to say that my father had "handed" me over to him (in Guarani: *itua o'entregama cheve*), stating for instance that my father had obliged him with the exhortation: *eña'tendepora nde ra'y* (in Guarani: "take care of your son"). The first expression is the same as that used with reference to children who are given in adoption to relatives.⁷² Agapito repeatedly told people that I was his "son".⁷³ And he used to urge me to heed his advice – as, for example, when enjoining me not to go to "dangerous" places such as Colonia Ceibo – as I had become his charge by virtue of the fatherhood delegated to him by my father. It should be noted, none the less, that on other occasions he would say that we were like brothers or associates.

Agapito's use of kinship terms has figurative, relational connotations rather than literal, categorical ones. Nevertheless, their use as markers of intimacy – between the shaman and the anthropologist – indicates that, for the Angaité, kinship ties are, ideally and in practice, the closest possible social relation of all. I realize that it may appear self-apologetic to use personal experience as an example of foreign otherness turning into indigenous kinship/sameness. However, it is Agapito's point of view – itself illustrative of Angaité cultural perceptions – that the example is intended to convey. For my own part, I would happily describe the relationship as one of mutual help, "friendship", or even "*compadrazgo*", without detriment to the emotional reward it provided.

⁷² The expression is heard with considerable frequency. To give but one example, Vidal (4 years of age) was Maria's biological child by Carlos, a Paraguayan teacher who taught for a time in Karova Guasu's school. When I asked Victor, Agapito's third son, how Vidal became his youngest (and much spoiled) son, he said that "she [Maria] handed him to us [him and his wife Damiana] after he was born" (in Guarani: *ha'e o entregama oreve onaserire*; Fieldnotes 16/12/2004, 5-6/10/2005).

⁷³ Agapito repeated this even to my parents. In one of my recent visits to Paraguay (31/3/2008), he followed me to Asuncion and said to my mother on our farewell: "this is my son, I'll cry when he goes away from me" (in Guarani: *koa ha'e che ra'y, che raseta anga oho ramo chehegui*).

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter it has been shown that different *ideal* types of material transaction – pooling, sharing, barter and commercial exchange – occur simultaneously in the lives of the Angaité, both internally and at the (ill-defined) current external level. These material transactions no more constitute benchmarks for defining Angaité social relations – either amongst themselves (*enlhet/emok*) or with “others” (*pok enlhet/valayo*) – than they place absolute constraints on those relations. They do, nonetheless, act as pointers with which to identify and describe different facets of Angaité sociality. In order to understand this flexibility, we have to take into account the relational logic of the Angaité, according to which: 1) the ethnic self-designations are enunciative and contextual rather than fixed categories, as are kinship and the associated terminology, which are not normative but contingent on Ego’s choices and actions; 2) the other(s) – e.g. *athave enlhet/valayo/veske* – is(are) defined as such not necessarily or uniquely by biological, geographical, economic or ethnic criteria. As with internal relations, those with outsiders exist, persist or cease to exist according to moral and social criteria such as trust/distrust, care/indifference, love/hate, closeness/distance.

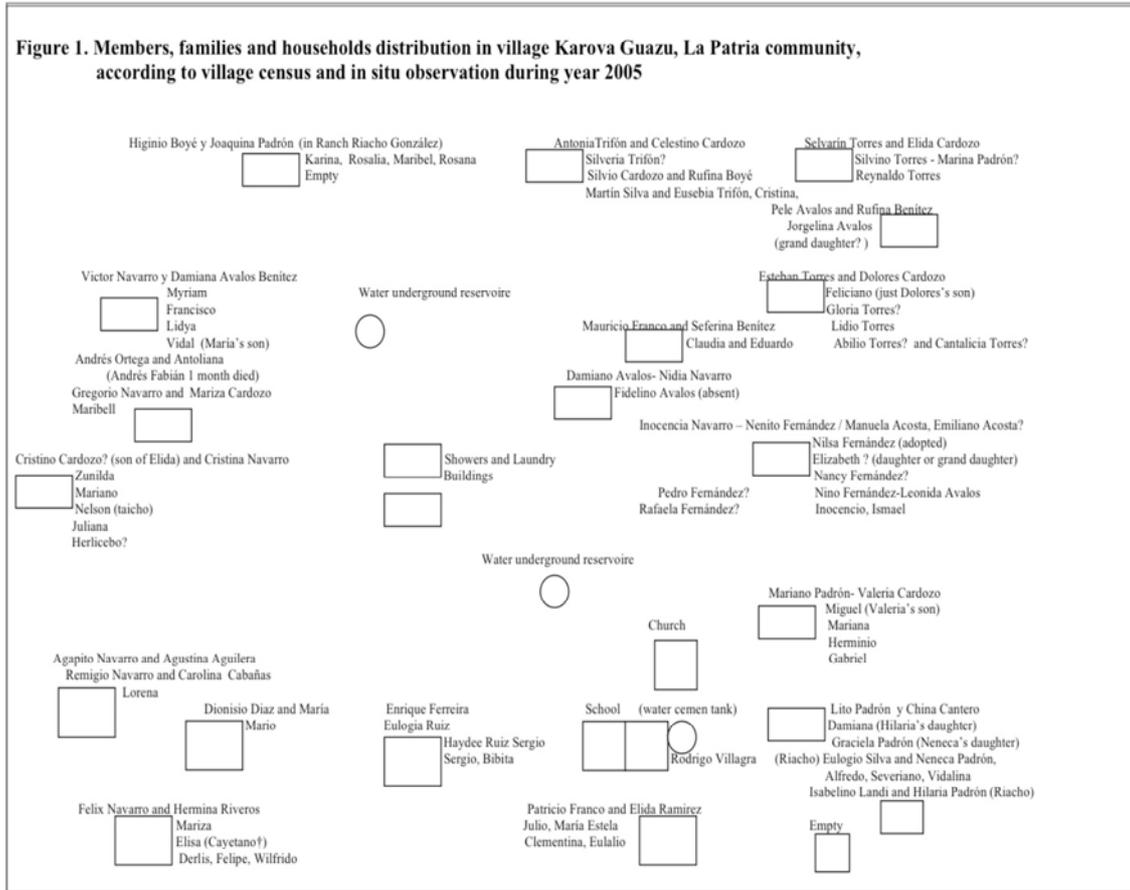
In contrast to general assumptions held about Amerindians, exchange and trading can be carried out on good terms with relatives as well as with outsiders/strangers. Nevertheless, I agree that, in order to create or maintain close relationships, whether with relatives and/or outsiders, it is necessary to privilege certain practices like co-residence, commensality and the sharing of food and time together, and that these practices need in turn to be associated with positive moral qualities, e.g. trust, care, love. It is also true that food is still of great relevance in all types of exchange and that there is a certain continuity in the operation of traditional indigenous barter exchanges in the current monetarized market. This is indicative of transformations of the two systems rather than drastic oppositions between them, a point that needs to be qualified by taking into consideration sociological explanations of the context of inequality and exploitation in which indigenous people are immersed, as well as the particular “regime of value” that informs their material transactions.

Angaité relational logic does not supply rigid categories of who is who for whom.

Categories are applied in consonance with ongoing processes of establishing relationships. In the case of social relations with *valayo*/Paraguayans, practices such as cohabitation, sharing and commensality may occur, and kinship and affinity may be established, but such practices, with few exceptions, do not succeed in erasing ethnic difference and social asymmetry. The desired “sameness” is not achieved. This is partly due to the systematic denial by the outsiders of the social consequences that the Angaité and other indigenous peoples attribute to such practices. However, as will be seen in the following chapter, in which the narrative of “The Arrival of the Paraguayans” is analysed, the Angaité assume that the origin of the historically constituted “otherness” by which they are confronted is, to some extent, the result of their own ancestors’ actions: to be precise, their ancestors’ asocial behaviour in relation to the desecration of a primordial exchange with the *valayo*/Paraguayans.

Figure 1. Members, families and households distribution in village Karova Guasu, La Patria community, according to village census and in situ observation during year 2005

Figure 1. Members, families and households distribution in village Karova Guazu, La Patria community, according to village census and in situ observation during year 2005



CHAPTER 2. THE ANGAIITÉ VERSION OF THE ARRIVAL OF PARAGUAYANS

2.1. The ethnographic context of storytelling

After a short break in fieldwork, I returned to Karova Guazú with my two eldest nephews, Adolfo and Francisco, who spent a few days in the community. On the morning of their departure, they had to make their way to the earth road and from there to the paved road – 90 kilometres from the community – which leads to Asunción, a further 340 kilometres away. We managed to stop a four-wheel-drive truck coming from Ceibo Colony, and the driver agreed to give them a ride. I felt relieved that they would make it to Asunción on time despite the previous days' rains, which had left the earth road muddy.

After an afternoon siesta, Agapito came over to the school, where the community had allocated me the use of one rooms. “What has happened to you?”, he asked. “It seems that you are not happy”⁷⁴ (Fieldnotes 18/1/2005). I answered by saying that I was feeling tired and drowsy. Looking back, I think he expected me to be sad because of the departure of my nephews. For the Angaité, to miss our close kin, our loved ones, when they are absent and far away – to “search for them” (in Guaraní: *ahéka ichupe/chupe kuéra*) – is an undesirable state of being. It manifests itself in uneasiness and social withdrawal on the part of the person affected. If not checked, it can expose the person to illness. For this reason, it awakes compassion in others, who then attempt to help the person to recover.⁷⁵

We drank *tereré* and Agapito began to tell a *Nanek Anya* (in *Kovalhok*: old news/stories).⁷⁶ It was a story with which I was familiar, for it is similar to a Nivacle myth recorded by Clastres (1987 [1975]: 130-139). It also resembles the narrative in which a grandfather deceives his granddaughter in order to rape her.⁷⁷ In the Angaité version the gender roles

⁷⁴ In Guaraní: *Mba'e ojuhu ndeve? Ha'ete nderevuai*.

⁷⁵ Gow (2001:47ff; in Overing and Passes, 2000) explains how, for the Piro of Peru, *wamonuwata* (“to be helpless”) elicits in others *getwamonuta* (“to be compassionate”). Being alone and in mourning is one of the causes of such “helplessness”. In the case of the Angaité, not only the death but also the absence of kinspeople provokes a subjective state of sadness and, therefore, elicits compassion from others.

⁷⁶ *Tereré* is a cold infusion prepared with leaves of the *mate* plant (*Ilex Paraguayensis*). This social drink, traditional among Paraguayans, became popular amongst the indigenous peoples of the Chaco shortly before the Chaco War (1932-1935).

⁷⁷ The Wichí of the Argentine Chaco relate the myth of “Moon and his great-granddaughter”, in which the Great-grandfather (Moon) takes his great-granddaughter by force (Palmer 2005:265ff.).

are reversed. It is a grandmother who deceives her grandson – by lying to him that she cannot get rid of a thorn in her foot – and thereby manages to sit on top of him in order to have sex with him. An improvised gathering of people began to surround us. Among the community passers-by who stopped to hear the tale was Feliciano, one of the few young men who publicly and proficiently spoke in *Kovalhok*. Agapito's account combined Guarani and *Kovalhok*. Everybody present seemed to know the story and awaited the punchline. Upon Agapito's vivid representation of the mischievous granny shouting "I feel it all! I feel it all!" (in *Kovahlök*: *Asiasankoe! Asiasankoe!*) as her grandson penetrated her, the crowd burst into laughter.

Football followed – with Feliciano and other young men of the community – and later I joined Agapito for an evening meal in front of his hut. As normal at that time of day, Agustina, María, Remigio, Mario and Lorena were present (see chapter 1, Figure 1). The conversation touched on several issues, with Agapito at one point complaining about a "fake" Enxet shaman who, in his opinion, was favoured by the NGO Tierraviva. He claimed that the shaman received money without doing much to deserve it. He went on to argue that shamans were different in the past, and this led to his telling a series of narratives. He repeatedly pointed out that the narratives were *Nanek Anya*, though he did not make any distinction between the types of event narrated. From my perspective, some of them looked at first like myths, others like descriptions of traditional Angaité customs and yet others like "factual" historical events. Throughout his narration he indicated where a given story began and ended, allowing interruptions, questions and comments from the rest of us.

At one point, Agapito interrupted his narrative with the remark: "Our friends [my nephews] must have arrived in Asuncion by now". I realized that, from the time of his afternoon visit, he had been leading me away from nostalgic reminiscence and back to Karova Guazú and the comfort of a familiar milieu. Agapito's narrative performance relocated my intellectual and affective focus on the community, the Angaité and the world that was the subject of my research.

2.1.1 Storytelling in everyday life

Storytelling – as described above – typically takes place in the evening, when a final round of *terere* begins after the last meal of the day.⁷⁸ At this time most members of the household are generally present – seated around the fire in winter and in the clean, open space in front of the house in summer – and an occasional visitor (or visitors) may join the family group. If there are many visitors, the conversation may remain focused on affairs of mutual interest and importance. Equally, attention may be scattered by other matters that occupy the evening gathering: adults listening to football matches or music on the radio, younger people exercising their self-taught skills on the guitar by playing religious tunes or *Polcas* and *Guaranias* (Paraguayan folk music), children sitting and playing around their parents, babies crying for their mothers’ breasts. There is no set schedule for storytelling. It is a spontaneous event, one amongst many that entertain evenings in the village. Particularly, though, it is the lack of a busy atmosphere in the immediate surroundings that elicits the willingness of the storytellers – mostly elder members, male or female, of the assembled group – to come up with their stories, just as it predisposes those present – including young children – to listen.

Evenings nonetheless are not the exclusive scenario for the narration of *Nanek Anya*. In the past, storytelling was performed during boys’ and girls’ initiation rituals (*Vaingka* and *Yammama*, respectively). This, as Andres Tome of the village of La Leona (La Patria) explained, was “to make people laugh throughout the night, until dawn” (Fieldnotes 23/5/2005). Agapito gave one such storytelling recital in the village of Karova’i, on the night of 19 April 2006. That date is officially recognized as the “Day of the Indian” in most countries throughout the Americas, and was chosen by several Angaité leaders, along with the people involved in the Angaité recovery programme, as a commemorative occasion on which to hold a traditional gathering. The event attracted over 300 people from almost all the Angaité villages of La Patria. As part of the two-day festivities, which included traditional foods (*Nanek nentoma*) and the traditional game of *Latse ava*,⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Susnik (1977:11) refers to storytelling amongst the Enxet as (formerly) an evening activity conducive to “emotional relaxation” before sleep. She also mentions the prestige that good storytellers enjoyed in the past.

⁷⁹ *Latse ava* (in Angaité: “maize leaves”) is a projectile made of folded maize leaves, which are plugged with American ostrich feathers to give the object its aerodynamic properties. It is similar in form to a badminton shuttlecock, but with a somewhat square nose. The game is played by two or more players and consists in throwing the *latse ava* into the air and, by striking it with the palm of the hand, knocking it from one player to another without it touching the ground.

several elderly singer-drummers – including Agapito – gathered for the occasion to play the *vaingka* (in Angaité: “short drum/pot”).⁸⁰

At such public gatherings, the storytellers have a more conspicuous role and they perform with great enthusiasm, sometimes purposely trying to elicit their audience’s laughter and approval. The fact that there are not many who are able and willing to talk in public in Angaité enhances their role. The people present usually respond to the performance, with someone audibly repeating a phrase or detail of the narration, all of which serves to strengthen and prolong the general laughter. Others nod or chip in with interjections such as *Hae* (in Guarani: “It is so”) or *Naksoye* (in Angaité: “It is true”). Sometimes the storytellers take turns, stringing their narratives together by referring back to the previous speaker. These serial performances have more the air of a *cooperative contest* to cheer up the audience than of an individualistic competition for crowd preference. Such was the case during a meeting held in the community of Huguá Chini, formerly part of the New Tribes Mission of San Carlos by the Paraguay River (Fieldnotes 4/1/2006). The meeting was held in the context of a visit that Agapito and I were making in order to exchange views about the situation of the Angaité language. The leaders of Huguá Chini opened the assembly with brief introductions, after which Agapito, Otacio and Juan Mendoza took turns to stand up and tell their stories, which consisted in flamboyant descriptions of the preparations and procedures traditionally involved in *Vaingka* celebrations. Such storytelling – in conjunction with its associated audience participation – serves as a collective re-enactment of the good life to which the Angaité aspire, in the past as at present.

The stories and myths discussed throughout this work were gathered in the context of specific ethnographic circumstances such as those described above. Those circumstances seem sometimes to have little to do with what the stories actually tell. However, the narration follows a line related to what is being discussed in the context of an everyday situation or gathering – however erratic that line may seem. During the course of the performance, the participants – both narrator and listeners – manifest their emotions, experiences, and reciprocal expectations. Thus, Agapito’s narrative about the first encounter between the Angaité and Paraguayans, which I will call “The Arrival of

⁸⁰ *Vainkga* it is both the name of the instrument and the boys’ initiation ritual in which it is played.

Paraguayans”, was addressed to me not only as a historical lesson but also as a metaphorical moral guide. It pointed to how he and I should relate: namely, by overcoming the mutual misunderstanding that marks the encounter described in the narrative. In other words, storytelling is entertaining and pedagogic in the sense that it strengthens interpersonal relations and boosts the communal good life.

2.1.2 How people talk about *Nanek Anya*: life histories and the trajectory of life

A common introductory phrase to the telling of *Nanek Anya*, whether the narrator is male or female, is “my *grandfather* [or “my *grandmother*”] taught me” (in Angaité: *seta/eyata* [*sema/eyama*] *heltesnaskama*) or “my *father*, my *mother* taught me” (in Angaité: *ata heltesnaskama*, *ame heltesnaskama*). In practice, the transmission of stories is not lineal in terms of gender and descent, but rather depends on the circumstances of each person’s upbringing, whether male or female. In other words, narratives can be transmitted, for example, by a grandmother to her grandson or by an uncle to his niece. The Angaité’s flexible nurturance arrangements are instrumental in determining the person(s) from whom Ego hears the stories and those to whom he or she will tell them.⁸¹ The point to be stressed, though, is that the storytellers learned the *Nanek Anya* as children, and they were taught them by close senior kin. The narratives are therefore part of their life histories. The memory of their older kin is linked to the stories they tell. Storytellers would say, for instance, “I used to listen to what my grandparents said and what they told us” (in Guaraní: *Ajapysaka jepi mba’epa oñee che abuelokuéra ha mba’epa omombe’u*). That listening in the past is the source of their present knowledge.

In their storytelling the Angaité, like other Amerindians (Gow, 2001:82), stress the importance of personal experience in relation to knowledge. In the course of relating the *Nanek Anya*, narrators often refer to lived experiences of their grandparents or parents. They might say, for instance, “I want to tell what I know from my grandmother when she went to collect cactus” (in Angaité: *Maa kolha oltenamaha koo asyassenkoye temakha sema’nya altenyaya maa ketetma*; Franco and Imaz, 2006:128). If they are old enough, they may also refer to their own past experiences. Such knowledge is built on their life

⁸¹ Space does not allow here for a discussion of Angaité kinship practices, but it should be mentioned that the adoption and fostering of children of close relatives – grandchildren, nephews and nieces – is a common phenomenon.

history. At the same time, the knowledge accruing from the lived experiences transmitted by successive generations of kinspeople constitutes the *trajectory of life*. At one end of this trajectory are remote, unknown ancestors; at the other end are the children yet to be born.

The personal experiences which are related in household gatherings enrich the conversation with a mixture of events from the recent and distant past, the most remote of which are labelled as *Nanek Anya*. On one occasion, for instance, Agapito's son Victor recounted several episodes from his adventures while working in the Mennonite colonies. Many of the stories turned out to be humorous narratives about an Angaité playing tricks on his Mennonite *patron*. In this sense, *Nanek Anya* shape and transform everyday situations into stereotypical narratives, whether we understand them to be comic tales or myths. Thus, the making of myths and other narratives, or *mythopoeisis* (Gow, 2001:86ff), is linked to the ability – an ability that increases with age – to repeat and renovate the narratives and experiences heard in the past from older relatives and to transform personal experience into mythic mould. We will see a good example of this in Agapito's narrative of the Arrival of Paraguayans. Of particular interest also, as we will see in chapter 4, is the connexion between travel experiences and the songs and storytelling evocative of those journeys, which are in turn linked to the shamanic practices of travelling to other layers of reality and trance singing.

There are several terms and phrases the narrators use to guide their listeners in the understanding of their stories. When narratives refer to people who are unknown to the living, the protagonists are the Angaité's ancestors in general, referred to as the “ancient people” (in Angaité: *Nanoye Enlhet*) or “our grandparents” (*Enyatau apnea*).⁸² The original source is unknown, and the narratives are introduced with the phrase “It is said” (*Ndaje* in Guarani; *Alhnak* in Angaité). The veracity of such narratives, involving remoteness in time and the absence of a known ancestor as a protagonist, is not claimed by the storyteller, and the listener is left to judge whether they are true or not. Other phrases in Angaité that indicate temporal distance are “in the beginning” (*Ampayakha sokhoye*)

⁸² The expression “our grandparents” (in Guarani: *ore abuelokuéra*; in *Kovalhok*: *enyatau*) applies both to known members of previous generations and to unknown members of distant generations (cf. Grubb 1911:86, with reference to the Enxet). When used to refer to remote relatives, in the sense of “our ancestors/forefathers”, the term is synonymous with the expression *nanoye enlhet* (“ancient people”), equivalent as such to the *tsrunni* (“ancient people”) of the Piro (Gow, 2001:80-81).

and “long ago” (*Nanoye elhta*). To end a story the narrator says “Up to here I speak” (*atakvanlha*), “It is good” (*taseta*), or “Enough from me” (*vanlha koo*).

In everyday storytelling, the stories are either recent (*kelhoe*) or old (*nanek*) but, in a single performance, recent experiences may combine with old stories. The terms and phrases mentioned – e.g. “It is said” (*Alhnak*); “I heard this old story” (*Asnealhtha nanek anya*); “My grandfather told me” (*Eyata helhtenasekama*); “I got to see it when I was little” (*Askelvetayalhtha astimakha eyetko*) – help the listener to identify the stories as being of an unknown source or as referring to the experiences either of older relatives or of the teller him/herself. There are certain narratives that because of their features – the narrative structure, the *meta-reality* of the episodes and the nature of some of the protagonists (i.e. human and non-human agents) – coincide with the genre of myth. Such narratives are not distinguished in any way from other *Nanek Anya*. The narrator may launch directly into the story without any prefatory indicators. Even if he/she specifies having “heard” the story from an older relative, the reiteration of the phrase “It is said” highlights that the narrative is of unknown origin.

The fact that storytelling, whether in a domestic context or at public gatherings, is not a formal activity does not lessen its importance, for its gravity is inscribed in the memory of the young listeners, some of whom, as time passes, will become the storytellers. Above all, the events narrated in the *Nanek Anya* have a moral and relational relevance for the narrators and the listeners, as well as creating a sense of continuity between the past and the present.

2.2 A changing myth

As I recall, I heard Agapito narrate the myth of the “Arrival of Paraguayans”, or refer to partial sequences of it, on seven occasions. Sometimes I was the only listener; at other times there were others present. Usually, an omission or an addition altered the details of the narrative. Some of the modifications are small and apparently irrelevant, but others are significant enough to offer a distinct version of the myth. In any event, they exemplify *mythopoeisis*, the re-elaboration of a myth by the same narrator over time and in different contexts. According to the relevance of the modifications, I have distinguished three different versions of the myth, here referred to in order of appearance.

Agapito narrated the myth to me on my first day of fieldwork in Karova Guasu. Although I transcribed the narrative in my fieldnotes, as well as the conversation in which it was inserted, the fact that it was told on the day of my arrival resulted in that first version fading from my memory. However, it has aspects that deserve attention: the Paraguayans came in an **ox-cart**, they were “good” and it was a pity, as Agapito emphasized, that the ancestor did not know the Guaraní language. After relating the myth, Agapito remarked that he wanted to teach me enough Angaité for me to be able to go and talk to people of other communities. He also mentioned that some of the outsiders working in the Angaité recovery programme were not learning the language properly. Was Agapito suggesting the “good” behaviour expected of me as a new arrival in his community? Was he also pointing at the danger of miscommunication between us? We shall return to these questions below.

The second time I heard the narrative was in the circumstances described at the beginning of this chapter. The version Agapito gave on that occasion is the second of the three variants which I have identified. The following morning I asked Agapito to repeat the series of myths which he had narrated the previous evening (see Appendix 1) in order for me to be able to record them on tape. He eventually did so later that day, in the afternoon, but he omitted the “Arrival of Paraguayans” and added other narratives to the series. The only reference he made to the “Arrival of Paraguayans” came in the context of a list he gave of Angaité toponyms, among which was included the name of the place where the Paraguayans arrived.

A little over eight months later, some functionaries of the *Gobernación* of Villa Hayes brought provisions for the community’s school, which were quickly distributed between the families. Agapito and I were translating into Guaraní Dolo Benítez’ account of his experiences in the Chaco War, which I had recorded on tape.⁸³ At a certain moment, Agapito shifted the conversation to his father Florencio’s experiences during the war, which then led to his narrating once again the myth. On this fourth occasion I did not register any particular changes to the narrative – taking the second version as the point of

⁸³ Dolo Benítez was an elder of the village of Yryndey, also part of the La Patria community. I recorded his testimony about the Chaco War and other *Nanek Anya* almost by chance in the course of a visit to his village six months previously. He died the month before the events to which I refer in the text.

reference – but Agapito added a series of observations about the consequences of the events narrated in the myth. The fifth occasion on which Agapito referred to the myth was when – almost fifteen months later, while we were once again checking a list of toponyms – he again mentioned the location of the story. The sixth reference occurred a couple of weeks later, during a trip to the Angaité community of 10 Leguas. At a small gathering of people in the village of 12 de Julio, Agapito and I were explaining the purpose of our visit and gathering information and testimonies from the few elders who still spoke Angaité. As at our meeting in the community of Hugua Chini, the conversation centred on past rituals, e.g. *Vaingka*, which prompted reflections on the fact that Angaité children today are brought up speaking only Guaraní. Agapito then told how the Angaité originally came from a place called *Yelhvase Lhepop* (Red Land) on the right bank of the Paraguay River. From there they moved to the west, where they were reached by five Paraguayans who came from *Yesvasa Yetemema* (Red Cloth – the name given in the narrative to the Paraguayan capital, Asunción). This is Agapito’s third version of the myth, and it is one that blends with the “Origin of Peoples” (see Appendix 1), to which I refer below.

The seventh (and final) occasion on which Agapito talked about the myth was during a short, three-day return trip to the field, a fifteen months after completing fieldwork. Agapito and I were accompanying my former Tierraviva colleagues on a visit to the new settlement of the Sanapaná community of Xakmok Kásek. During the visit, I took Agapito to one side in order to clarify a number of matters with him, including certain details of the myth. Taking his third variant as our point of reference, Agapito added, as a point of detail, that the five Paraguayans who navigated the Paraguay River from Asunción did so by means of a boat that had a “propeller”.⁸⁴

2.2.1 The “Arrival of Paraguayans”

The variant of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” on which the following analysis is based is the second, which I first heard – and recorded in my fieldnotes – on the evening of the events described at the beginning of this chapter. It goes as follows:

⁸⁴ Agapito used the Spanish word *hélice*, which is not of common use in Guaraní.

One day some *valayo* arrived by **canoe** at the bank of the *alvata* [in Angaité: small river, stream]. There was a village there where a lot of our people lived. The people were scared and nobody approached the *valayo*. Then the *valayo* spoke to the people, but nobody understood because the people only spoke our language [Angaité]. **Nobody spoke Guarani**, so nobody could answer the *valayo*. **Our grandparents** asked one another: “What are they saying? What do they want?” The *valayo* left some provisions on the bank of the *alvata* – flour, *yerba mate* and so on – and then they left. But the people did not know the food of the *valayo*, they knew only our food: fish, palm heart, sweet potato ... One villager said to his people: “It may be poisoned, do not eat it”. So they threw away the bags and scattered the food on the ground. The *valayo* must have been asking our people for a small piece of their land, and they gave the provisions as payment. But nobody understood them because our grandparents did not know Guarani or *tembi’u morotí* [in Guarani: non-indigenous food]. That must have been the reason why they lost their land.

Agapito later gave an extensive list of the “white food” brought by the Paraguayans: *pataktek*, *cheche*, *natalhkapok*, *harina*, *azuca*, *juky*, *ñandy* (in Angaité combined with Guarani: rice, a type of hard bread known as “galleta”, pasta, flour, sugar, salt, oil). He also specified that, when the Paraguayans told them to eat the provisions, “our people remained silent because they didn’t know Guarani and then threw away the provisions because they did not use them, *mevatek angkok* [in Angaité: ‘they did not eat that’], they ate *peia*, *yaktepa*, *semone*, ***akleklakme*** ... *peyam*, *nanaksehe*, *kelyekhava*, *popiet*, *kelasma*, *yelhem* [in Angaité: ‘sweet potato, pumpkins, water melon; **they were satisfied** ... honey, armadillo, collared peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*), fish, lungfish]”. Agapito once introduced a variant according to which half of the provisions (in Guarani-Spanish: *a la mitad*) that the Paraguayans placed on the ground were thrown into the *alvata* by an old woman.

When I heard this narrative, two things caught my attention. The first was that, according to Agapito’s body gestures, the story seemed to take place somewhere close to our location. There is an *alvata* – the *Riacho González* – that meanders through the 22,000 hectares of the La Patria community, which it crosses from west to east on its way towards the Paraguay River. Indeed, the next day Agapito referred to *Makhakma Apmaskema* (in

Angaité: “where death occurred”) as the name of place where the provisions were thrown away. On a subsequent occasion, almost two years later, he again identified the location of the story, which this time he named as *Yetna Apmaskema* (in Angaité: “where death is”) ⁸⁵. On both occasions he located the site on the left bank of the Riacho González, where the community of Karova’i is currently situated, three kilometres east of Karova Guasu (see Maps 4 and 6).

The second element of the story that caught my attention was Agapito’s concluding remark: “our grandparents did not know Guarani or ‘white food’. That must have been the reason why they lost their land”. On many of the occasions on which Agapito referred to the myth he repeatedly emphasized the same point (Fieldnotes 29/9/2006, 4/1/2007). It was as though he were making his ancestors responsible for the Paraguayan invasion of the Chaco and the unjust appropriation of indigenous territory. To discover that the Angaité seemed to assume the blame for their land dispossession called into question an important assumption underlying indigenous land-rights advocacy, which is that the indigenous people are the victims, alienated of their territories by the colonists.

Leaving the narrative’s political connotations aside for the moment, it is important to question whether the “Arrival of Paraguayans” is about events of a historical nature *strictu sensu*. Firstly it should be said that the history/myth distinction situates the focus of analysis in a culturally biased epistemological framework that is far removed from the Angaité’s way of thinking. The value of *Nanek Anya* for the Angaité is consistent with Overing’s (1997) theory of myth, according to which the events narrated do not represent what “truly” happened in the past but, rather, have social and moral consequences for everyday reality. Their significance lies not in the presentation of an *objective* linear sequence of events, but in their socio-moral meaning. Thus, Overing (1997:10-12) argues:

“History in our world-view tells of true events that take a linear and progressive course, whereas the events of mythology are but phantom realities which are assumed to have little relevance to any real world of action and experience [...]. The confusion arises from the contrasting of theories of existence that are, by and large,

⁸⁵ My translation of the word *Apmaskema* as “death” is tentative. When Agapito first mentioned the toponym, I did not ask for a translation; on the second occasion, the meaning I registered was imprecise (Fieldnotes 18/12/2007).

social theories of existence, and theories about the physical universe that are *asocial* both in scope and intent. [...] myths express and deal with a people's *reality postulates* about the world, and [...] mythic truths pertain more to a *moral universe of meaning* than to a 'natural' one (in the sense of the physical unitary world of scientists). [... In the] mythic universe [...] even the most absurd of happenings has a moral and ontological implication for what it means to be a human being alive today on this earth."

However, *Nanek Anya* narratives are not arbitrary – as if anything could have happened in any way – and their moral consistency is supported by their verisimilitude. There has to be a certain correspondence between the facts, events and agents of the narrative and the way in which they are (or used to be) thought and experienced by people – and non-humans – in reality. In myth, for instance, as in traditional reality, people eat certain foods, such as sweet potato and fish, and they hunt with spears and arrows. And, as in shamanic thought, other beings besides humans (*Enlhet*), such as animals, plants and spirits, have agency and certain capabilities. Mythological reality, although accessible shamanically, has been separated from ordinary human reality, often as a result of the asocial actions of different kinds of human and non-human agents. In showing how the world has been transformed into what it is, at least some of the events in the narratives have to be “historically liveable” for the listener, as in the first encounter between the Angaité and Paraguayans.

In the official history of the Chaco, certain events are more relevant and more “truthful” as, by objective chronological and economic criteria, their consequences are still felt to the present day: e.g. the foundation of Puerto Pinasco in 1907 and the construction of its tannin factory in 1918. It is interesting, therefore, to look for data that support the likelihood of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” being an “experienced” event. In particular, this means searching for possible temporal and geographical locations in which Angaité encountered Paraguayans for the first time, however marginal and insignificant these episodes may seem to Paraguayan historiography. By this means, I believe that the remarks made by Agapito, by way of socio-moral indexes of historical change, become more intelligible.

To this end, I analyse the changes that appear in Agapito's three different versions of the myth in the light of the available historical data, with a view to establishing its possible

spatial and temporal location(s) (see Figure 1). In addition, I will compare Agapito's versions with those of other Angaité narrators, in order to provide a more extensive account of the "Arrival of Paraguayans". Since, finally, as Lévi-Strauss (1995:59) argues with regard to the structural analysis of myths, "any detail, no matter how insignificant, fulfils a function", my task is to try to provide an interpretation of such details.

Figure 2: Agapito's three versions of the "Arrival of Paraguayans"

First version

The Paraguayans arrived at an inland Angaité village in an ox-cart.

Second version

The Paraguayans arrived at an Angaité village by the *alvata* in a canoe. (The name of the place, located at 70 kilometres west from the Paraguay River, was *Makhakma Apmaskema* or *Yetna Apmaskema*.)

Third version

The Angaité departed from *Yelhvase Lhepop* to the west, where they were reached by five Paraguayans who came from *Yelhvasa Yetemema* in a steamboat.

The Paraguayans offered white food and asked for a piece of land. The ancestors didn't know Guarani or white food. They thought the white food was poisonous and threw it away. (An old woman threw half of the provisions into the *alvata*.)

The Paraguayans offered white food and asked for a piece of land. The ancestors didn't know Guarani or white food. They thought the white food was poisonous and threw it away. (An old woman threw half of the provisions into the *alvata*.)

The ancestors were afraid and ran into the forest, thus abandoning their land. The Paraguayans were respectful.

"The Paraguayans were good. It is a pity the ancestors did not know Guarani."

"That is how and why the ancestors lost their land."

"There and then we lost our land. It is a pity that the leader didn't know Guarani, otherwise we would have had money, we would have had stores, many things..."

2.2.2 The temporal and geographical location of the story

Bearing in mind that the content and meaning of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” are tied up with the narrative’s current moral and social implications rather than with historical accuracy and causality, it is pertinent to ask what kinds of event might have been “inspirational” to the narrative. To begin with, let us consider the generational transmission of the story as a means of determining, on a chronological scale, its temporal setting. It is known that Agapito was born in the year 1943, the middle brother of five siblings. His father, Florencio Navarro, would have been at least 20 to 30 years older than him and was probably born, therefore, between the years 1913 and 1923.⁸⁶ This is speculative, but the estimation of Florencio’s age is helped by the fact that he worked in Puerto Pinasco during the Chaco War (1932-1935), when he was “still young and single”, according to Agapito. Florencio is not mentioned as a witness to the events of the story. By the same token, Pablito Yryndey, Florencio’s father and Agapito’s grandfather, would have been 20 to 30 years older than Florencio, meaning that, at a guess, he was born between 1883 and 1903. Agapito mentioned “our grandparents/ancestors” as the protagonists of the story. Although he did not mention his own grandfather Pablito by name, this, as a rough calculation, situates the events of the story at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (1890-1910). The pace of colonization and other Angaité narratives which refer to the same first encounter support the hypothesis.

In the eastern region of the Chaco, known as the Bajo Chaco, high grounds are not abundant, because of the flat topography. Huge areas flood during the wet season. The banks of the rivers – formed of sedimentary alluvial deposits – are usually slightly higher than the surrounding areas. With vegetation combining gallery forests (Leake, 2005:5) and small areas of savannah grassland (*espartillares*), the land in such areas is the most fertile in the humid Chaco and the most suitable for cultivation. For these reasons, riverbanks – like the edges of lagoons – have always been preferred for human settlements, be it an indigenous village (permanent or seasonal) or the residential compound (in Spanish: *casco*) of a ranch. In particular, the population density of indigenous riverbank villages

⁸⁶ The 20- to 30-year age-range for first paternity among the Angaité is calculated on the basis of a census I made of 18 fathers in the village of Karova Guasu in 2007. The results of the census gave an average age for first paternity of 22, with a minimum age of 16 and a maximum age of 29.

increases during certain periods of the wet season (December to March:cf. Leake, 1998:28), when garden produce is more abundant and the *alvata* water – in its surface - is less saline due to incoming flood water.⁸⁷ The said residence pattern also coincides with the seasonal cycle of the Angaité's former subsistence economy based on horticulture, hunting and gathering.⁸⁸

According to Agapito's second version, the village in the story was located in the hinterland of the Chaco, approximately 70 kilometres from the Paraguay River, at a site called *Makhakma* (or *Yetna*) *Apmaskema* (see Map 6, end of the chapter). The site is located on the banks of the *Riacho Gonzalez*, near the current location of the village of Karova'i. This location is identified only in the second version, though it is not contested in the other two. Today, seven of the fifteen villages of La Patria are located on the banks of the Riacho Gonzalez (see Map 4).⁸⁹ The named location is consistent with the ethnic identity of Agapito's father, Florencio, from whom Agapito heard these stories and who was *Koeteves*.⁹⁰

What differs between the three variants is the means by which the Paraguayans arrived, though this in itself vouches for the location. In the first version they reached *Makhakma/Yetna Apmaskema* in an ox-cart and, in the second, by canoe. Despite the apparently contradictory character of these details, it is possible to establish a clear correspondence between them and the historical circumstances in which colonization took place. The third version dislocates the possibility of a direct correspondence with the colonization process, for it reveals the *origin* both of the Angaité and of the Paraguayans.

⁸⁷ Bridges (1990:110) notes that in the Chaco "drier areas are characterised by the accumulation of soluble salts in the soils". The salt is washed into the watercourses along with other alluvial sediments.

⁸⁸ As among almost all the indigenous peoples of the Chaco, the seasonal cycle of generally dry winters and wet summers implied a spatial mobility conditioned by the availability of natural resources according to environmental and climatic conditions (Braunstein, 2005:7-8). Mobility and changes of residence also occurred for social and political reasons, such as the celebration of feasts and initiation rituals (Arenas, 1981:92-100), which are more likely to have taken place during the rainy season when, as mentioned, garden crops are available.

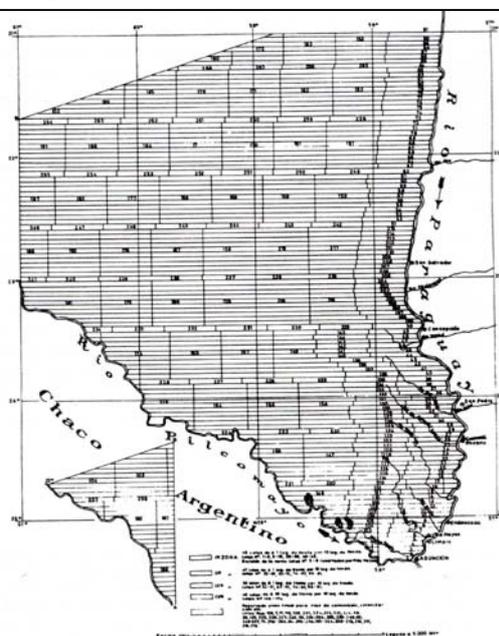
⁸⁹ Las Flores, La Paciencia, Karova Guazú, Karovaí, Laguna Hú, Carpincho and Monte Kué. At the beginning of 2007 I was informed that Agapito's son Félix formed a new (sixteenth) community in La Patria. The small settlement is called *6 de Marzo* in honour of Félix's birthday.

⁹⁰ Preliminary examination (see Introduction) of my own ethnographic records (based on the life histories of several elders and on genealogical links between individuals, villages and groups), along with documents such the Anglican missionary reports from Campo Flores, indicates that the *Koeteves* lived in an area approximately 70-80 kilometres west of the Paraguay River. To the west and south they neighboured and overlapped with other groups such the *Kelyakmok* (possibly southern Sanapaná) and the *Koyelhna* (possibly another Angaité group). Their eastern neighbours were the *Kovalhok*, whose territory reached the banks of the Paraguay River.

2.3 The nationalization process of the Chaco

Before, during and after the Spanish colonial period (1537-1811), the Chaco was indigenous territory populated by diverse ethnic groups. The appropriation of the Chaco by the Paraguayan nation-state began as a juridical act which was subsequently projected onto a map in which the land was divided up into blocks for sale (see Map 5).⁹¹

Map 5. State land sale in the Paraguayan Chaco (1885-1887)



Source: Kleinpenning, 1992: 138 (following Rivarola, 1982)

⁹¹ The Chaco became State property by force of a decree issued in 1825 by the Dictator Francia (1811-1840). The decree was subsequently reinforced by further measures implemented by President Carlos Antonio Lopez (1842-1862). After the Triple Alliance War (1865-1870), which pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, the Paraguayan State had an enormous deficit. To pay its war debts, the Government of the time decided to sell most of the land belonging to the State, an area which then amounted to nearly 98% of the physical and “imagined” national territory: i.e. 16,329 square leagues out of a total of 16,590. The massive land sales, which attracted large foreign investors of British, American and Argentine origin, among others, boomed with the *Ley de Venta de tierras públicas* (Public Land Sale Law) of 1885. This – and subsequent laws – resulted in “latifundista” land-concentration: by the turn of the 19th century, over 13 million hectares in the Chaco belonged to 79 (mostly foreign) individuals or companies. The impact on indigenous peoples was to condemn them to land dispossession (Kleinpenning, 1992:119-120, 121, 139, 143-144; Pastore, 1972).

The advance and pace of the nationalization process in the Paraguayan Chaco varied according to the different agents of colonization, such as tannin companies, landowners, missionaries, Mennonites and militaries. The colonists advanced from east to west, moving inland from their establishments on the right bank of the Paraguay River. The speed of their progression and the area they covered depended on the size of their properties, their resources and their interests.

Colonization of Enxet territory began in the late 19th century. Anglican missionaries were the first to intrude, followed by private entrepreneurs who took advantage of what had become a “safe” vicinity (Kidd, 1992:62). Further north, during roughly the same period, the Carlos Casado tannin company advanced into the territories of several indigenous peoples, such as the northern Angaité, the Sanapaná, the Guaná and the Yshyro, opening a railway line that would extend 160 kilometres to the west.⁹² In so doing, the Casado Company also penetrated Enlhet territory. It was the same railway line that later enabled the Paraguayan army (1920s onwards) and the Mennonites (1928) to occupy Enlhet land (Kalish, 2008:102, 8-9; Paredes, 2007:319-321). In between these two “spears of progress”, the middle inland territory of the Angaité (and partly of the Sanapaná) remained for a couple of decades – until the early 1910s – unscathed.⁹³ Thereafter, the International Products Corporation (IPC) based in Puerto Pinasco and the ranch of Puerto Cooper, both located on the right bank of the Paraguay River, began their hinterland occupation with

⁹² The Angaité were first reported in the literature in the early 1880s, when Cacique Michi had a trading post opposite Colonia Apa (Cominges 1882: 97). It was probably near to Michi’s village that a few years later, in 1887, the Carlos Casado company established its headquarters, Puerto Casado (Kleinpenning, 1992:261). By October 1887 the town already had 600 inhabitants (of whom Kleinpenning does not specify how many were indigenous and how many non-indigenous). Not surprisingly, the Angaité’s pre-existence in the vicinity is not considered in the official memory. However, some Maskoy (as the old, mixed Enlhet-Enenlhet population of Carlos Casado and the nearby indigenous community of Riacho Mosquito identify themselves) claim to be descendants of Michi (Bonifacio, 2009:17,39).

⁹³ Until 1910, the only non-indigenous inland settlement – apart from the Anglican missions – was Maroma ranch, situated in Enxet territory, to the south of the Angaité territorial groups, 50 miles from the Paraguay River. Other ranches appeared further west, up to 65 miles from the Paraguay River, after 1921 (Kidd, 1992:65). Amongst the Sanapaná, western neighbours of the Angaité, the first Anglican mission was *Yave Saga* (in Sanapaná: “round lagoon”). Founded in 1914, it was located 50 kilometres northeast of Makxawayá (the central mission) and lasted intermittently for around six years (Hunt 1933:279; Farrow, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1914: 88, 146). Amongst the Angaité, the Anglicans founded two missions: Laguna Rey, which was situated 70 kilometres north of Makxawayá and lasted only a few months, from October 1928 till January 1929 (Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1929:55), and Campo Flores mission – known in Angaité as *Maskoykaha* – which was established in 1930, 60 kilometres northwest of Makxawayá, and abandoned in 1946 (Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine 1930:127; Kidd, personal communication; see Map 6 for the missions). It is important to notice the inconsistency in early references to the Angaité and the Sanapaná. The Anglicans identified as Sanapaná all the people who lived north of the Enxet, from the Paraguay River. However, there are other reports from the same period that situate the Angaité – and not the Sanapaná – to the northeast of the Enxet (see Cominges, 1882; Kemerich, 1903).

greater vigour (see Appendix 2).

This image of the westward advance of colonists does not mean that the indigenous peoples were simply “reached” by them in their villages. Mobility was a feature of the indigenous Chaco peoples well before colonization.⁹⁴ However, in the episode at stake, the encounter occurred with the arrival of the Paraguayans at the indigenous village – not the other way round. It was an external initiative whose aftermath for the Angaité was the alienation of their land. But, if western Angaité territory was largely unscathed during the two first decades of the colonization process (1890-1910), who might have arrived at the remote *Koeteves* village of *Makhakma/Yetna Apmaskema*, in an ox-cart or canoe? My hypothesis is that the event that “inspired” the myth was an expedition undertaken by surveyors and/or explorers.

2.3.1 Explorers, missionaries and surveyors

The sale of the Chaco by the Paraguayan State was followed by extensive land-surveying. Until then, the State, landowners and other agents of colonization had not physically occupied the region (Robins cited by Kidd, 1992:60). It is interesting to note that some of the pioneers who travelled inland, i.e. explorers, missionaries and topographers, were acquainted.⁹⁵ We find such a connexion, for instance, between the pioneer Anglican missionary Barbrooke Grubb and Pedro Freund, a Danish citizen and senior official land surveyor both in the Chaco and in the Eastern Region of the country (Hunt, 1933:61). In a report to the Government, Freund wrote:

⁹⁴ The Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples migrated in the 18th and 19th centuries from the central and north-eastern area of the Paraguayan Chaco to the region adjacent to the Paraguay River (Métraux, 1963[1944]:226). Besides their seasonal movements within specific areas for foraging, political and social purposes (see Braunstein, 2005), these peoples also took the initiative to encounter the “whites”. Numerous groups from distant western areas travelled to the Paraguay River, where they built transitory camps on the right bank in order to trade their wild produce – hides and feathers – for tools, tobacco and clothes from merchant ships and towns on the opposite bank. The Enxet were reported opposite Concepción as early as 1841 (Susnik, 1981:146), and Cominges (1882:97) tells that western Angaité frequently visited cacique Michi for the purposes of trade. As colonization advanced into the Chaco, the flow of indigenous people to and from riverine Paraguayan settlements – and to the Anglicans missions – increased both in terms of numbers and in terms of the distances travelled. For instance, the ethnographer Guido Boggiani took a photo of the Angaité cacique Vicente in 1900 in a logging camp on the middle reaches of the Paraguay River. In 1928 the same leader was found with his people by General Belaieff, along Casado’s railway (Richard, 2007:320).

⁹⁵ They became acquaintances on boat journeys up and down the Paraguay River and may also have met in the Paraguayan town of Concepción (Cominges, 1882; Grubb, 1993[1911,1925]; Kemmerich, 1903; Hunt, 1933:63; Craig, 1935:116).

“I took with me fifteen specially selected men, all armed with Remington rifles and revolvers, and I never allowed anyone to go alone to seek water or to explore our road. We always rode in company and armed, and never went far from our encampment. At night we set sentinels, and slept with our weapons at hand. When measuring, if we saw smoke, we fell back on our main body, and any signs of the Indians made us advance with redoubled caution. In the Indian village of the chief called Mechi, near the Monte Lindo River, our horses disappeared, and while a portion of our party sought them the remainder, who were in camp, were surrounded by a company of naked Indians, painted and adorned with feathers, who certainly had no peaceable or friendly intentions” (cited by Grubb, 1911:23 and Hunt, 1933:65).

Grubb quoted Freund’s report to depict the supposed perils which awaited his attempt to penetrate Enxet land. The depiction of the hostile character of the inland “Indians”, which Grubb (*ibid.*) and Cominges (1882) present at length as background information about their expeditions (see also Hunt, 1933:63-64), is an example of how the non-indigenous imagination shaped the unknown inland Chaco. This perception is mirrored in Agapito’s narrative: the Angaité and the Paraguayans who first met saw one another as a potential danger, despite their mutual lack of aggressiveness.⁹⁶

How, then, do we make sense of the different means of transportation – the ox-cart, the canoe and the steamboat used by the Paraguayans in Agapito’s various renderings of the story? Most of the sources mention that the main means of transportation for surveying in the interior of the Chaco were horses and mules, as we see in Freund’s report. Ox-carts were also used if conditions permitted, but this was only feasible where roads had been opened for such purposes and when the passages through wetlands and marshes were sufficiently dry. By 1910 the Anglicans had built an extensive network of cart-roads, covering a total distance of 700 kilometres, which interconnected their missions (Grubb 1911:294). This network was progressively used by landowners and Paraguayans to colonize the Chaco but, again, it was to the south of Angaité territory. An ox-cart could probably have made it to *Makhakma/Yetna Apmaskema*, but only during the dry season

⁹⁶ Non-indigenous expeditions in the Chaco date back to the arrival of Spaniards and Portuguese. In particular, Alejo Garcia and Juan de Ayolas were acknowledged by both Cominges (1882) and Grubb (1911:19) as their (albeit unsuccessful) predecessors.

and with great difficulty.⁹⁷

What about a canoe? It is known that certain early expeditions were made along the waterways of the small *alvata* rivers, which are navigable only during the rainy season. For instance, in July 1890, Grubb, two other missionaries and three Enxet explored the course of the Rio Verde in the mission steamboat, looking for Enxet settlements and “carrying provisions, firewood, and presents for the Indians” (Hunt, 1933:59). Some months later that year Grubb and the surveyor Freund adventured together in the same boat along the Riacho Monte Lindo, located further south but still in Enxet territory.⁹⁸ Both expeditions covered only a few miles, and Grubb later concluded that “waterways had proved unserviceable as a means of penetration to the heart of the country, where the real Indian population lived, untouched by civilization and consequently not yet estranged from the simple ways and primitive customs” (ibid.65).

If, then, a group of Paraguayans did indeed reach *Makhama/Yetna Amaskema* by canoe between 1890 and 1910, they achieved what an intrepid missionary and a senior surveyor were together unable to accomplish elsewhere with much success. Additionally, it should be noted that, in contrast to other expeditionaries, the Paraguayans arrived, according to the narrative, without an indigenous guide.⁹⁹

All in all, it is improbable – though not impossible - that the Paraguayan explorers/surveyors travelled a distance of 70 kilometres to the west of the Paraguay River, around 1890-1910, in a canoe or ox-cart and without indigenous guides.¹⁰⁰ Everything else, however, in Agapito’s first two variants of the narrative seems to be “historically” feasible. Grubb and his fellows, for instance, carried presents (including provisions) for the indigenous people they were hoping to meet along the course of the

⁹⁷ Grubb mentioned that he arrived at *Thlagnasinkinmith* mission, safe but with difficulty, in a bullock-cart which he had hired from a woodcutter by the Paraguay River (1911:90).

⁹⁸ Hunt 1933: 60. Hunt (ibid.) adds that Freund and a German surveyor named Haug were “the two persons at the time who possessed reliable, though limited, knowledge of the Chaco lands and what they contained”.

⁹⁹ On his first inland expedition from the Riacho Fernandez mission, Grubb had as guides the cacique Francisco Camba, Ramon (son of Cacique Fernandez) and some of Cacique Fernandez’s men (Grubb, 1911:32; Hunt, 1933:67-68). Cominges (1882) had indigenous guides on his two Chaco exploration attempts: Cacique Michi for the first, and Cacique Keira (in Guaraní: *Kyra*, “fat”) of the Guana people for the second.

¹⁰⁰ There are, however, examples of expeditions without indigenous guides (see Pittini, 1924:89-116). It should also be remembered that the *Rosarina* company established Puerto Pinasco in 1907, on the same latitude as the alleged location of the story (see Appendix 2).

Rio Verde, and this seems to have been common practice among explorers (see also Cominges, 1882).

I suggest that Agapito created a location for the narrative whose proximity to Karova Guasu would make it more convincing in my eyes. Moreover, he narrated the first version during a long drought, for which reason it was more realistic to say that the Paraguayans came in ox-cart. The detail of the canoe in the second version appeared at the beginning of the rainy season, when the water level in the Riacho Gonzalez was beginning to rise.

Agapito's third version of the narrative arose in the context of a final return trip to the field, when I asked about the role of the canoe. Agapito responded by introducing a new narrative feature: that of the *steamboat*. However, this was the means of transportation of the *original* five Paraguayans, who came from Asuncion, up the Paraguay River, to the point where they entered the Chaco. He did not specify how the Paraguayans subsequently completed their inland journey to the Angaité village.

My hypothesis is that the changes in Agapito's three versions reflect a concern on his part to ensure the credibility of his story for a foreign listener. Thus, when I raised the question of the canoe, Agapito exclaimed with surprise: "It seems that Dolo Benitez lied to us! It [the story] is not like he told us!" (in Guaraní: *oiméne Dolo Benitez ijapu oreche! ndahaei la hae hei hagueicha!*). He was referring to the fact that the first Paraguayans came by boat and did not slide down through a rope from the sky – as Dolo told in his version of the "Origin of Peoples".

The point is that the changes between the different versions of the "Arrival of Paraguayans" are products of the dialogue between the teller and the listener(s). The different aspects of the narrative are neither ahistorical nor are they descriptive accounts of what happened in the past. Angaité storytelling is dialogical and conveys what the Angaité narrators interpret as meaningful and valuable about their past and present.

2.3.2. Mirroring the legend of the hostile Chaco “Indians”

One of the characteristics that Agapito’s story attributes to the Angaité’s ancestors is their fear of the Paraguayans. How can it be that people repeatedly described as hostile and fierce (Hunt, 1911:30; Grubb, 1911:19) were afraid of the arrival of a few outsiders whom they easily outnumbered?

This question calls for a more critical approach to the subject of the encounter between indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Chaco, as well as that of warfare, violence and feuding amongst the indigenous peoples. The need is to distinguish between a historical perspective concerned with particular events and a symbolic perspective of more general bearing. In the reports of the pioneer missionaries and land surveyors who, in the late 19th century, ventured into the Chaco and, specifically, the territory of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, we have seen that they expected an aggressive response in their encounter with unknown “Indians”. They also believed that warfare amongst those “Indians”¹⁰¹ – at least on the western and northern frontiers – had been frequent in the past (Grubb, 1911:105; Cominges, 1882:154). Among Paraguayans, this view was a heritage of the pre-colonial and colonial periods – 16th to 18th centuries – characterized by bellicose relations between, on one side, the Guarani and their Spanish allies and, on the other side, the Mbaya and Payagua, both riverine Chaco peoples¹⁰². The Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, as has been said, came more into contact with Paraguayans in the 19th century, due to the retreat of the Mbayas to the north and the progressive incorporation of the Payaguas into Paraguayan society (Métraux, 1963 [1944]:225-226). The contact was established on the basis of peaceful trading.

There were, nonetheless, violent episodes in the first decades of the colonization process, when the social order – indigenous vs. non-indigenous – had yet to be stabilized.¹⁰³ For instance, the Enxet fought against a Paraguayan cavalry corps that crossed the Paraguay

¹⁰¹ Grubb himself acknowledged that this non-indigenous perception of indigenous hostility was exaggerated and that any danger that existed was “not so much on account of their enmity as from misunderstandings on both sides, and superstitious fears on theirs” (ibid.22).

¹⁰² The antagonistic relationship had periods of truce and peaceful coexistence during which the Mbaya and the Payagua engaged in trading with the Paraguayans (Métraux, 1963 [1944]:216, 225).

¹⁰³ With reference to post-encounter conflicts, particularly those involving the Angaité and disputes over cattle-hunting/stealing, see chapter 3, in which it is shown how such conflicts are effaced by the myth of the “Two Shamans and the Owner of the Cattle”.

River during the Triple Alliance War (Grubb, 1911:106). Although there were probably more episodes, on the whole they are but isolated events. Indeed, the accounts that remain of such episodes – mostly outsider-biased – obscure their motives and circumstances and promote the image of ancient indigenous bellicosity (Grubb, 1911:22).¹⁰⁴

One incident in particular – less well remembered than the deaths of Boggiani or Crévaux¹⁰⁵ – could arguably be the source of Agapito’s story. It is the slaying by unspecified “Indians”, in 1902, of two German explorers and their two Paraguayan aides. Agapito’s narrative is silent with regard to the killing of the expeditionaries, but there are several coincidences.¹⁰⁶ The ill-fated German expedition was undertaken, according to unofficial accounts, towards the close of the 19th century, which coincides with my estimated time frame for the story. Both episodes occurred on the banks of the Riacho Gonzalez, and the name of the location in the Angaité narrative, *Makhakma/Yetna Apmaskema*, explicitly associates the site with the presence of death. In both cases, the outsiders are said to have been looking for land. And last but not least, the victims’ bodies in the historical incident were thrown into the stream, along with those of their belongings which “contained sickness”; in Agapito’s story, the foreign goods were thrown into the *alvata* because they were poisonous. Despite the coincidences, however, it is impossible to say, in the absence of further evidence, whether they outweigh the fundamental difference consisting in the fact that the outsiders who were put to death in reality are transformed into “good” people in the narrative.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ For instance, in the skirmish between Enxet and the Paraguayan army, the latter attacked first, according to Grubb’s indigenous informants.

¹⁰⁵ Circa 1890-1900, Crévaux and, later, Ibazeta were killed by Toba and Wichí, along with most of their companions, in the course of their (in)famous expeditions down the Pilcomayo River (cf. Palmer, 2005:158). Boggiani died at the hands of Yshyro-Arrebytosó (Richard, 2007:322).

¹⁰⁶ The incident became official and the Government blamed the *Towothli* people (the Enxet name for the Toba) for the killings. The Anglican missionaries heard a different version from indigenous residents at their western station: the episode took place not far from the Paraguay River, in Enxet (not *Towothli*) territory (Hunt, 1933:221). Yet another version was given in 1930 by Robert Eaton, foreman of the IPC ranch Riacho Gonzalez, to Thurlow Craig (1935:173-175). Thirty-five years previously, according to Eaton, his gardener “Cacique Siete Alemanes” (“Seven Germans” in Spanish) persuaded seven German surveyors – not two, as the official version has it – to take him on as their guide. In the course of the expedition, after crossing the Riacho Gonzalez – which is to say, in Angaité territory – the Cacique and his people betrayed and killed the Germans and their companions. For Eaton, the motive for the killing was the alleged indigenous culprits’ desire for the Germans’ possessions. He claimed that, after the killing, the Cacique and his people “buried the Germans and divided the spoil” (Craig, 1935:175). For Hunt, on the other hand, it was an “evident act of self-defence” in response to an offence committed by the Germans. Hunt indicated that the “bodies were thrown into a stream and various articles, which the natives thought contained ‘sickness’ were destroyed; the clothes, guns and horses were preserved” (1933:221).

¹⁰⁷ Cacique “Siete Alemanes” is not known or remembered as such in La Patria. Cacho Lima and his wife, Otacia Ataliano, lived around the 1940s on the Riacho Gonzalez ranch, but Otacia only remembered her

In so far as internal warfare is concerned, there are reports dating from the same period (late 19th century) of conflicts between, for instance, the Enlhet and the Ayoreo (Kalish, 2007:2), the Kisapang (Sanapaná) and the Enxet (Grubb, 1991:106), the Angaité and both the Guana and the Mbaya (Cominges, 1882:154) and between two pre-colonial Angaité groups, the *Koeteves* and the *Koyelhna* (Villagra, 2005:36, 2008:94). On the whole, such conflicts do not represent a permanent state of warfare but, rather, local quarrels with particular causes. Internecine warfare should be understood, then, not as an *a priori* attitude but as an *a posteriori* response to offences and grievances that had a particular context and specific causes. Amongst the Enlhet-Enenlhet, at least, interethnic aggression served as a balancing mechanism, in the manner of a vendetta. It is worth mentioning that such conflicts could also be dealt with by shamanic means, thereby diminishing the need for actual physical violence.

Kalish (2007) has worked on the idea of *Enlhet peace* – applicable also to the other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples – as not only a conceptual but also a factual reality, already predominant amongst them before the colonial process and still present, though disrupted by contemporary conditions under non-indigenous domination. We have already seen the Enlhet concept of *nengelaasekhammalhcoo* (“the reciprocal act of respecting each other”: see chapter 1). This concept is reflected in several related social practices, such as the lack of social stratification and the intense (but fluid) relationship between groups, a relationship mainly contingent upon the initiation rituals of boys and girls (Kalish 2007:5,6), events at which large numbers of people from different villages gathered together. Other related social values and practices are food/time sharing, reciprocity in terms of inter-subjective responsibility and initiatives designed to build harmony and equilibrium (ibid.7). If, then, warfare and feuding were context-specific and of restricted incidence, and if *nengelaasekhammalhcoo* provided a moral framework for relationships within and between groups, we can better understand and interpret the indigenous response to the arrival of Paraguayans in the Angaité narrative.

Consistent with the *Enlhet* concept, Agapito’s story – despite its possible correspondence with the incident involving the German surveyors - presents an example of a non-violent

grandfather, Martin, as the leader there. The name “Siete Alemanes” was probably a non-indigenous nickname, but there is no knowing whether the cacique to whom it was given was Martin or a fellow leader.

response towards the unknown “Other”.¹⁰⁸ The Angaité response is depicted as an (albeit unsuccessful) effort to understand the Paraguayans: What are they saying? What do they want? The *Enyatau* (“our grandparents”) wondered why the *valayo* had arrived in their community, and what they were doing so far away from their original dwellings.

2.4 The reading of the story

I previously stated my discomfort with Agapito’s interpretation of the outcome of the story. He appeared to blame his ancestors for the alienation of their territory, instead of holding the Paraguayans and colonists responsible for the invasion and appropriation of indigenous land. At first, I considered his attitude to be a sign of self-deprecation on the part of the Angaité, who, due to a mechanism of ideological domination, were inverting the cause of their impoverishment and exploitation, by attributing it to their own historical deeds rather than to the abuses of their *patrones*. However, I realized that my interpretation did not consider the meaning that the narrative has for the Angaité themselves: namely, in Agapito’s case, that of a retrospective reflexion on the mistakes made by the Angaité in the course of losing their land.

First of all, my reading of the story overlooks a number of important points. For one thing, it is – and always was – unintelligible to the indigenous population of the Chaco that, from 1825, the Paraguayan State should have claimed sovereignty over the Chaco (see above) and that later on (1887) it sold most of that territory to foreign investors whose properties and tannin factories started to develop progressively at the end of the 19th century.

The indigenous peoples of the Chaco were unaware of the sale of their lands by the Paraguayan state, nor were they officially compensated for the dispossession brought upon them. It is true that the concept of property in the juridical sense was alien to them. Land was open space which no one owned (Grubb, 1993[1911,1925]:119; see also Braunstein, 2005). However, there was property in the sense of garden plots, as long as they were cultivated (Braunstein, 2005:7; cf. Susnik, 1977:175-179). There was also an indigenous sense of association with specific areas, despite social and ecological mobility (ibid.8-9). It is this sense of association that lends weight to indigenous claims of land-ownership. It

¹⁰⁸ There are many Enlhet, Enenlhet and Angaité accounts of peaceful first encounters with non-indigenous newcomers (Kalish, personal communication; cf. Franco and Imaz, 2006).

also explains why the State's sale of the lands of the Chaco, had it been known to the indigenous inhabitants, would have been contrary to their customary law.

The point is that, from the indigenous perspective, the occupation of their homeland by "others" – i.e. *athave enlhet, valayo, lenko, ingle* – began with the physical arrival of people (Paraguayans, Mennonites or Anglicans, depending on the area). It was an "experienced" event, not an abstract occurrence originating in an unseen land-sale. The explorers, cowboys and soldiers were the ones who appeared before the "Indians", not the big landowners (with the exception of the missionaries and the Mennonites, who collectively owned land). And it was from their actions – and omissions – that the "Indians" had to make sense of what was going on around them. Most of the outsiders came either fleeing from their places of origin, seeking their fortune or pursuing religious purposes. This means that, although the colonists felt ideologically and legally justified in entering indigenous territory, by virtue of the authorization they had received from the State or from the landowners, they knew that they had somehow to negotiate or even pay for their presence on indigenous land.¹⁰⁹ They had to compromise with the "Indians" in order to ensure that their presence was "amiable" and tolerated, for many of them understood that violent means – although at times resorted to – were not a good strategy for a long-standing relationship which would necessarily imply the use of the indigenous labour force.

For the Angaité, therefore, the question of when and how they were deprived of their land is answered by referring to the people who first arrived in their territory, not to those who "legally" sold it and bought it. In fact, very few people are familiar with the historical details of how State sovereignty came to be extended over the Chaco.¹¹⁰ For instance, the

¹⁰⁹ Hunt (1933:58) tells that, in the course of a visit that the Anglican bishop Rev. Stirling made to Riacho Fernandez, he "gave instructions for a mare or two to be given to the chief in acknowledgement of the Mission's occupation of the land of his forefathers and of the simple rights of the people as fellow-creatures". Elsewhere the bishop himself writes: "It is not reasonable that vast territories should be left in possession of a sparse population of so-called savages. I acknowledge this. But I maintain that even so-called savages have their rights, which should be measured fairly and respected" (cited by Hunt, *ibid.*). In the same vein, a conference of Mennonite teachers discussed the possibility of paying the indigenous people for the dispossession of their hunting areas with the teaching of the Gospel (Kalish, 2008:117). Such acknowledgements – born of a combination of Christian ideas and the colonial guilt that accompanied the appropriation of indigenous lands – serve to show that the indigenous inhabitants were not mistaken in understanding the "gifts" of cattle and provisions that they were offered by the first colonists, whether Paraguayans, missionaries or Mennonites, as a kind of compensatory payment for their land.

¹¹⁰ Most Paraguayans recognize that the indigenous peoples were the original inhabitants of the Chaco (and of the Eastern Region of the country) and that their land was taken from them. The recognition does not

peasant settlers (“Chaqueños”) justify their presence and national sovereignty in terms of the participation of their ancestors in the Chaco war. The Mennonites and others of foreign descent legitimize their presence on the basis of the “hard work” and consequent economic progress that their forefathers achieved in the region.

The ancient Angaité understood that the first Paraguayans were looking for a small piece of land, they were few in number, they were asking for permission and they were willing to give something in return. At the time, land was not a scarce resource, nor for that matter did it have a fixed price or a private title-holder. Nevertheless, the price offered – a few provisions – appears all the more absurd, not only in view of all the land that was eventually taken by Paraguayans, but also because the Angaité had no means of evaluating the deal. Precisely, Agapito’s final remarks do not so much justify the invasion and the dodgy deal imposed by the Paraguayans as imply that the ancestors would have negotiated better had they known Guarani and the value of “white food” as a form of payment. Agapito acknowledges that the Paraguayans have since abused the conditions of the deal, by taking more than they originally requested. However, his opinion is that the ancestors could have done something about it but they did not know how to respond because they did not speak Guarani or appreciate the value of the gifts they were offered. Through their ignorance of Guarani and their refusal of the outsiders’ food – in itself is a breach of sociality and a denial of reciprocal exchange – the forefathers lost the opportunity to gain access thereafter to the latter’s wealth (“we would have had money, we would have had stores, many things...”). Agapito’s narrative, then, explains the Angaité’s present-day poverty and land-deprivation, in contrast to non-indigenous wealth and land-ownership, in a way that is characteristic of certain Amerindian myths, which at times “describe the world as it is in a highly problematic way, and thus make the obvious paradoxical” (Taylor, 1996:204). The paradox in this case is that an apparently trivial episode – i.e. the ancestors’ ignorance of Guarani and the failed exchange of land for mistrusted foreign provisions – caused the present asymmetry between the Angaité and Paraguayans. As we will see below, however, the paradox finds in the structural analysis of myth a further source of explanation.

imply knowledge of how that historical process occurred, a subject which is not officially taught in national schools.

For now it is sufficient to stress that Agapito's retrospective critique should not be understood – as I at first understood it – as an alienated interpretation of history which justifies present domination. Rather, it places the Angaité in the role of protagonists of their own history. That is to say, it presents them as autonomous agents who, as such, can make mistakes or take wrong decisions, and read into those decisions the foundations of the course of their lives.

2.5 The “Arrival of Paraguayans” and cattle: another Angaité narrative

In their collection of Angaité myths and elders' narratives, Franco and Imaz (2006:55) include a story similar to Agapito's. Entitled “When Paraguayans arrived looking for land” (in *Kovalhok: Akvayakha sokhoye valayo tenyaya lhepop*), the story goes as follows:

I am going to speak in my language, my own language, it is hard for me to speak the Paraguayan's language, your language, and you [the collectors] want to know when we saw the Paraguayans. My grandfather told me the story. The Paraguayans arrived and brought provisions and they asked my father if he would give them a small piece of the land where he lived. My father said: “I do not know, I will ask my father if he wants to give it to you”. My father knew very little Guarani. Then he told his father: “Those Paraguayans want our land, a small piece by the banks of the lagoon. They want to exchange it with us for cows and food.” “I don't know, it is all right to give them a small piece, maybe they live well,” said my grandfather. They talked and came to an agreement. The Paraguayans brought calves with them. Then our grandfathers went to the forest to look for vines with which to tie up the calves. When they came back they found that the Paraguayans had already made a corral by the edge of the forest [thus close to the lagoon] and let the calves in. Our grandfathers did not eat the flour and the *aramiron* [manioc flour] as you call it in Guarani, *seppo mapanko* in our language. They threw it away, they thought they would die if they ate it, because the white food was poison. We did not know Paraguayan food. It is said that this is the way we used to live; this is what you want to know. Up to here I speak [my translation].

This narrative is both strikingly akin to and, at the same time, slightly different from Agapito's. In all probability, they are not two versions of the same event but independent accounts inspired by similar events which took place in villages situated in areas distant from the Paraguay River, as yet unreached but about to be occupied by Paraguayans (or other colonists).

To begin with the differences between the narratives, this second account diverges from Agapito's in the following ways: the narrator's father and grandfather were eyewitnesses to the events described; the narrator's father spoke sufficient Guarani to allow for dialogue and the making of an agreement between his people and the Paraguayans; the Paraguayans came overland, on foot or by an unspecified means of transport, bringing cattle with them; and they came with the intention to stay. As I will show, these differences place the event that "inspired" this narrative closer in time than the events of Agapito's story. In particular, the mention of a known eyewitness lends greater credibility to the story for the Angaité, thereby underscoring the historicity of the event described. Nevertheless, the importance of the narrative, as in the case of Agapito's story, lies less in its "historical" accuracy than in its stress on moral meanings and its mythical style of discourse.

Since the narrator's father witnessed the event we can situate it one generation before the narrator's, whose identity is unknown. In the collection in which the story is published, the storytellers – including Agapito – are collectively named and listed, but it is not said who told each myth or story. Most of them I know personally and they are Angaité "elders" – self-identified as members of one or other of the former ethnic groups, *Koeteves* and *Kovalhok* – who come from the communities of La Patria, San Carlos and Hugua Chini. They resettled in these communities in the 70s and 80s, having previously lived, in the majority of cases, on ranches that belonged to the area covered by IPC properties. Prior to that, they lived on land freely inhabited by their ancestors. The father and grandfather of the narrator of the story in question belong to the fourth and fifth ascending generations, respectively, counting from the present. The life-span of those two generations covered a period beginning somewhere between the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. At the time of the incident to which the narrative refers, the narrator's father would have been a teenager or young adult, judging by the fact that he initially wanted to consult with his father about the Paraguayans' request for land.

One detail that gives a more approximate idea of the event's location in time is the protagonist's incipient knowledge of Guarani. In order for him to have acquired that knowledge, he must have already been trading or temporarily working with Paraguayans. This would have been possible after the foundation of any of the ports, ranches and lumber camps (*obrajes*) adjacent to Angaité territory: Obraje La Novia 1901, Puerto Cooper 1905 and Puerto Pinasco 1907 (see Map 6, Appendix 2).

The fact that the Paraguayans built a corral close to the lagoon means that they could secure a water supply for themselves and for their cattle, a prerequisite for establishing a permanent dwelling – i.e. a ranch – in the area. Bearing this in mind, we need, then, to trace back the foundation of the first ranches in the area in order to arrive at a hypothetical location for the events of the story.

The IPC company took over the *Rosarina* company and Puerto Pinasco circa 1917-1918 and, by 1931-32, had three well established ranches: the Main Ranch (also known as Km 80 and, later, as Tuparenda), Riacho Gonzalez and Laguna Tigre (Craig, 1935:137-8,155-6; see Map 6 and Appendix 2). Two of them were established beside lagoons, e.g. the Main Ranch/Tuparenda and Laguna Tigre, and the third by the homonymous stream, Riacho Gonzalez. Craig mentioned that at least two of the ranches (Main Ranch and Riacho Gonzalez) neighboured indigenous villages.

The Main Ranch/Tuparenda was established almost at the end of the 80-kilometre railway that extended westwards from Puerto Pinasco – hence the ranch's other name, Km 80 – and which had been built circa 1912. The other two ranches, Laguna Tigre and Riacho Gonzalez, were established later on, probably as offshoots of the Main Ranch. Under IPC control, timber exploitation, tannin production and cattle-raising activities intensified – well beyond the levels achieved by the *Rosarina* company.¹¹¹ In order to reach unexploited *quebracho* forests and grasslands, they expanded their activities to the west and south-west, laying another 50 km of railway line. The size of the population living on

¹¹¹Janis (1945:150) speaks of the early, rapid and “great” construction of Puerto Pinasco as a tannin-factory: “It was a factory built in the wilderness. With bandits and savages for workmen, a huge quebracho extract plant was built in the heart of the forest of Paraguay. In nine months Kerr built a dock, an iron and brass foundry, a huge carpenter shop, made seven million bricks, laid a railroad line 60 miles long, rigged up 200 new oxcarts, and then built a plant covering two acres, which turned out 70 to 80 tons of quebracho liquid daily”.

company land increased accordingly.¹¹² However, as late as 1943 the western limits of the property remained unfenced, such that Angaité territory was still partly open. By that year, the IPC began to fence off the area and stock it with cattle, due to the passing of the Agrarian Law in 1940, which required that large unused estates be partitioned (Train [¿DATE?], cited by Kidd, 1992:67). Sanderson (in *SAMS Magazine*, 1944:56) gives a vivid description of the ensuing impact on the area surrounding Campo Flores Mission, which was situated on IPC land:

“The Indians’ hunting grounds are cut across by fences; the stealthy tread of the camouflaged ostrich hunter has given place to the galloping cowboy and bellowing cattle; the ring of the lumberman’s axe is heard in the forest instead of the hunter’s calls to his dogs; **palm log corrals and houses now stand on the edges of the best swamps and lagoons – the Indians have had to give way to cattle**”.¹¹³

Sanderson’s last remark reveals a striking similarity between the general *modus operandi* of the IPC Company in establishing outposts and the particular episode of the second narrative. The similarity suggests that the Paraguayans whom the narrator’s father encountered were part of the IPC Company’s expansion to the west. In view of other indicators – the possible timeframe of the episode (between 1910 and 1930, according to the protagonist’s probable age and his knowledge of Guarani), the testimony of Erasma Fernandez (Amarilla, 2006:526), who spent her childhood at *Mokho Makha* (the Angaité name of the Laguna Tigre ranch), and the fact that her brother Alejandro Gonzalez was one of the narrators of the collection to which the narrative belongs – it is tempting to say that the story refers to the establishment of Laguna Tigre by Paraguayan employees of IPC in the late 1910s or early 1920s. However, Alejandro is not identified as the narrator nor is *Mokho Makha* specified as the location. Besides, Alejandro and Erasma declared themselves to be *Kovalhok*, and Laguna Tigre was located in *Koeteves* land.¹¹⁴ The data,

¹¹² Kleinpenning is probably overestimating when he says that in 1930 “about 7,000 people lived on the company land, 3,000 Indians worked in the *obrajes* and the size of the cattle herd was 50,000 head” (1991:272, see Appendix 2). According to Craig’s personal account of the indigenous population at that time, there were indigenous villages near both the Main Ranch and Riacho Gonzalez, and a group headed by Kambara’i was camped near to the Km 14 ranch (1935:175, 205-206). To be fair, Craig does not give an overall account of the IPC population and the associated indigenous presence, but rather refers to the particular people he encountered through his activities for the company.

¹¹³ My emphasis. Susnik (1977:169,193) writes extensively about the impact – e.g. changes in settlement pattern – provoked by the overrunning of Enxet lands by ranches.

¹¹⁴ Such inconsistencies are relative, due to the fact that there were mixed marriages between *Kovalhok* and *Koeteves*. Accordingly, one of the parents of Erasma and Alejandro may have been a *Kovalhok* resident in

therefore, do not support the hypothesis that Laguna Tigre was the location of the narrative. We can venture other possible indigenous villages and ranches of the time, for example the Main Ranch/Tuparenda (1920s) and Riacho Paraguay (1930s), both of which occupied *Koeteves* territory. Alternatively, if the narrator is *Kovalhok*, we should perhaps consider ranches in *Kovalhok* territory – closer to the Paraguay River – as the location of the story: for example, *Estancia 14 de Mayo*. Apparently, though, these ranches began to be established much later, in the 1940s.

The narrator's omission of the name of the location can be attributed to various circumstances. It may be that his grandfather did not mention it to him, just as it may be that he himself simply forgot to include the detail or was not asked for it by the researchers who compiled the collection of narratives. However, rather than embark on that line of enquiry, it is more pertinent to the present analysis to make a few remarks about Angaité village names.

Angaité settlements are always named and geographically located by the people themselves. As, however, they are abandoned over time – often as a result of internal social dynamics – disused village sites become things of the past and are known in the present only if they are remembered by former inhabitants or by others who can testify, directly or indirectly, to their former existence. For one thing, the sites preserve almost no visible signs of their previous existence, as their physical remains – including the ruins of houses made of wood or palm trees – are readily consumed and erased by the Chaco environment. Furthermore, as people move and change settlements, social groups are rearranged. New villages create new spatial and referential settings, which include the abandonment of certain geographical or symbolic sites and the renaming of others. The names of former sites become irrelevant in the present if they are not remembered by elders and, as a result, their knowledge is not shared with present generations. In addition, successive generations of the Angaité people have experienced the encroachment of ranches and Paraguayan villages, which has brought with it the displacement and amalgamation of their own autonomous villages. What they now confront is not just a new geographical and social map but a new symbolic territory which privileges Paraguayan places with Spanish and Guaraní names. Whatever the reason for the lack of a

Koeteves territory. Alternatively, the siblings and their parents may later have moved to a *Kovalhok* village where they adopted the latter's identity, e.g. the 14 de Mayo ranch.

named location, the narrator tailored his rendition of the narrative to satisfy the interests and understanding of his listeners.¹¹⁵

2.5.1 The social meaning of the second narrative: Do the *valayo* know how to live well?

Crucial to an understanding of the Angaité's perspective in the second narrative are the protagonist's dialogues with the Paraguayans and with his father. The Paraguayans ask the protagonist if the members of his village will exchange a small piece of their land close to the lagoon for some cows and provisions. The request surprises him, as can be inferred from his initial response, which loosely translates as "I don't know, let's see" (in *Kovalhok: Hayelhaha*). The expression – which I repeatedly used to hear – denotes surprise and uncertainty about something being asked or proposed. The protagonist goes on to say that he will ask his father, a detail that suggests that his father was the leader/shaman of the village. But his hesitation and surprise derive also from the nature of the proposal. As I explained above, the Angaité had no concept of land ownership – except with regard to their gardens. The protagonist was therefore being asked for something untoward, in return for something almost as strange. When he asks his father, the latter repeats the expression *Hayelhaha*, and then adds: "it is all right to give them a small piece; **maybe they live well**". The father hesitates but gives his consent to the exchange on the grounds that the Paraguayans could turn out to be good neighbours and co-residents.

The Angaité concept of "living well" (*takmelak yahekamaha*, literally "to have a good way of being") is eminently meaningful for it encapsulates their philosophy of desirable social practice. As for other Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples (Kalish, 2007; Kidd, 1999b) – as well as other indigenous peoples of the Chaco (Renshaw, 1986; Palmer, 2005) and Amazonia (Gow 1991, Overing and Passes, 2000) – to live well means a peaceful life among kin and co-residents that encompasses a wide range of concepts and practices of positive material and affective value, such as amity, love, respect, commensality and

¹¹⁵ In my experience, storytellers adapt their narrative technique to the listener. The details that are included or omitted depend on whether the listener is considered capable of fully understanding their content. For example, when interviewing elders on the subject of toponyms and their locations, they would indicate the locations but, as those place-names belong to an ancient geography, I could not relate them to present-day reality. The explanations they gave therefore proved to the elders to be a fruitless exercise.

sharing (see chapter 1). Living well requires constant commitment on the part of Ego, a requirement whose fulfilment can never be achieved beyond a certain degree. It should be added that the meaning of the expression and the associated social practices may have been different in the past. As we have seen, Kalish (*ibid.*) argues that the concept and practice of *nengelaasekhammalhcoo* was predominant in the past for the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, though it is now being challenged and modified by their dependence on colonists, such as the Mennonites. Kidd (1999b, 2000) also illustrates how the main goal of the Enxet is the attainment of tranquillity in both their personal and social lives, and how their discourse in relation to emotion words like love (*ásekhayo*) and hate (*taknagko*) encapsulates the social processes and relationships by which such tranquillity is achieved. At the same time, he argues that these values are contested, adapted and distorted by the new conditions under which the Enxet live.

Today the Angaité sometimes use the analogous Guaraní expression *jaiko porâ, jaiko tranquilo* (“we live/do well, we live with tranquillity”) to convey the idea of a desirable social life. The expression implies for them the expectation of peaceful and productive relationships – whether within the realm of the community or with other people – in a sense that is not alien to their traditional culture. The protagonists of the second narrative believed that this “living well” with the Paraguayans might be possible, and at first there was no attitude on the part of the newcomers that might have led the Angaité to think ill of them. The Paraguayans asked kindly if they could have a piece of land and offered something in return, giving every appearance of having good intentions and manners.¹¹⁶ This left open the possibility that the *valayo* might have the knowledge to live well, as the Angaité understand it. The Angaité therefore accepted the *valayo*’s proposal in good faith.

In contrast to Agapito’s narrative, the exchange of land for cattle and provisions in the second narrative of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” was not a tacit deal, but an explicit agreement, given that somebody in the village knew Guaraní and could deal with the Paraguayans’ request. There was also agreement amongst the Angaité themselves to go ahead with the exchange, as indicated by the narrator’s reference to the fact that “then our grandfathers went to the forest to look for vines with which to tie up the calves”. It bears mentioning, however, that the Angaité were interested only in the calves, not the non-

¹¹⁶ The Paraguayans’ kindness can be inferred from their request for a “small piece” of land.

indigenous provisions, of which, as in Agapito's narrative, they were still suspicious. This in itself is a historical reference in the sense that it indicates that, at the time, known ancestors were already familiar with cattle, which roamed free on their land even at the very beginning of colonization (see chapter 3).

Closer in time than Agapito's account, the second narrative similarly portrays an episode that proliferated throughout Angaité territory and possibly the Paraguayan Chaco. The Paraguayans were coming inland, passing for the first time through indigenous villages or stopping to establish ranches on the banks of rivers and lagoons in the vicinity of the villages. That episode, historically experienced by the ancestors, is here being told and retold in particular kinds of social interaction, through its transmission among kin and co-residents. It is because of the similarities between the stories – the circumstances described, the embedded remarks and interpretations, the social context in which they are told (and repeatedly retold) – that I now turn to consider their common features in order to capture the significance that the narratives have for present-day Angaité.

2.6 Many stories and many episodes: is there a common Angaité reading to the “Arrival of Paraguayans”?

Agapito's version(s) and the second narrative share in common the following characteristics: the Paraguayans arrive for the first time in an Angaité village; in their language, Guaraní, they ask for a small piece of land, offering food in exchange; a deal takes place (unknown to the villagers in the first case, agreed by them in the second); the Angaité do not eat the Paraguayan food for fear of death. What emerges is an account of similar facts, which are understood to have had a great impact on the lives of the Angaité and their relationship with Paraguayans. The two narratives highlight a critical turning-point in Angaité history.

In referring to the past, the Angaité frequently repeat the phrase “there weren't any *valayo*” (in *Kovalhok: meike makha valayo*), alluding to the original absence of Paraguayans in their territory and in the Chaco in general. In the narratives under analysis, the in-coming Paraguayans needed the approval of the Angaité in order to occupy their land, a scenario which constitutes a reverse image of the present state of affairs.¹¹⁷ Of

¹¹⁷ In 1975 – one hundred and fifty years after Francia's decree (see relevant footnote) and more than half a

what the *valayo* offer in return, the unfamiliar provisions are not accepted because they look suspicious and dangerous. Here the myth points up another historical inversion, inasmuch as traditionally the Angaité did not need the Paraguayans in order to feed themselves. They had their own food and could move freely throughout their territory in order to obtain ^{it.118} In other words, contemporary Angaité perceive the relation between their ancestors' lifestyle and their former independence from the Paraguayans. Traditional foods are enumerated (“sweet potato, pumpkins, water melon ... honey, armadillo, collared peccary, fish, lungfish”), and those foods are considered to be proper food – the food, as elders put it, that “made us grow up well” (Franco and Imaz, 2006:130). The Angaité also constantly stress (cf. *ibid.*106, 125; Amarilla, 2006:437, 443, 515) the abundance in the past of “our food” (in Angaité: *Nentoma enyangkok*). The grandparents were not hungry as are their present-day descendants, whose diet is predominantly based on “Paraguayan food” (in Angaité: *valayo aptoma*).¹¹⁹

There is, then, a marked contrast for the Angaité between “our food” and *valayo* food, as between food that is good and that which is poisonous.¹²⁰ The grandparents' rejection of non-indigenous food in the narratives can therefore be interpreted as a sign not so much of ignorance as of the self-sufficiency which is tantamount to “living well”. It is in this sense that these two narratives (in their different versions) – along with other, similar narratives¹²¹ – are of relevance to the Angaité. They mark two distinct epochs: on the one

century after Paraguayans, Mennonites and other colonists had begun to assert control over the indigenous territory – Paraguayan law established administrative and parliamentary procedures allowing officially recognized indigenous communities to make land claims before specific State institutions. However, the vested interests of landowners and politicians who benefit from the highly concentrated land regime – and who exert great influence on the government – have resulted in claims being reduced to inadequate extensions and in indigenous land-titles being withheld (see Kidd, 1995; Villagra, 1998). Additionally, despite legal recognition of their right of access to their traditional hunting grounds, members of indigenous communities throughout the country have on a daily basis to ask the landowners for permission to hunt on their properties. More often than not permission is denied them (cf. Susnik, 1977:168-169).

¹¹⁸ In their collection of Angaité narratives, Franco and Imaz (2006:68) include a story that highlights the fact that in the past “there were no prohibitions on going anywhere” (my translation). The same point was made to me by several elders.

¹¹⁹ Leake (1998) has carried out thorough research on subsistence patterns amongst the inhabitants of a number of villages of La Patria. From a study of the food-intake of three different households of extended families over a period of almost two years, he found that 45% comes from purchased food, 32% from garden products and domestic livestock (30% and 2%, respectively), and just 23% from wild meat, plants and fish (*ibid.*190-191).

¹²⁰ Elsewhere we find the same precept that the healthier life of the past has been undermined by new products and habits. A Nivacle elder explained to Grant (2006:41) that his people's hair never used to turn grey, as it is nowadays caused to do by the use of shampoo.

¹²¹ Andres Tome tells of a time in his childhood when two military officers and a soldier appeared in his former village, *Yave Saga*, and asked for some roasted sweet potato, which they were duly given. In return the people of the village were given *yerba mate* (see above, n. 3) and *galleta* bread. None of the people knew

hand, a pre-existing time of territorial and linguistic autonomy, and of economic self-sufficiency; on the other hand, a contemporary state of affairs consisting in land deprivation, dependence on Paraguayan food and the progressive replacement of the Angaité language by Guarani. As the myth explains, the causal link between the two is the ancestors' failure to enter into an exchange relationship with the first Paraguayans – a failure due to the ancestors' ignorance of the Guarani language and/or their refusal of the newcomers' food.

2.6.1 The discarding of the “white” food: an inverted image of the violation of a food taboo

The perception of “white” food as being dangerous or poisonous reflects ideas related to shamanism, food taboos and the power and perils that relations with “Others” – i.e. *valayo/athave Enlhet* – and their possessions entail.

Several authors have noted, both in the past (Grubb 1911 quoted by Kidd, 1999a:11) and in the present (Arenas, 1981:41), the idea among Enlhet-Enenlhet and other Chaco peoples that objects can be vehicles of the spiritual properties of their human owners or producers and that such properties can have consequences for those who touch or manipulate those objects or, in the case of food, eat them. The power of the objects can relate either to malign spiritual interference, such as acts of sorcery, or to a positive influence, e.g. protection, wealth-generation. Their effect is produced both among kin and among non-kin.

From the perspective of other Amerindians, Hugh-Jones (1992:46) tells that, with regard to foreign, manufactured goods, the Barasana speak of them as being “imbued with *ewa*, an irresistibly and attractive potent force which leads them to act in an uncontrolled manner and to do things against their better judgment”. In a similar vein, Overing

Guarani and they did not eat or drink the provisions they were given “because they thought that they may be poisonous” (Villagra, 2008:82). Ricardo Jimenez, also from La Patria, testified to a similar episode with soldiers (Amarilla, 2006:595-600). I do not draw a comparison here with these stories, for it is only food that the Angaité exchange, not land. However, the same pattern is repeated where the Angaité throw away the produce they are given, on the ground that it is poisonous. It is worth recalling that Hunt (1933:221) mentions that the indigenous people who allegedly killed the two German surveyors and their Paraguayan *peones* (“assistants”) destroyed “various articles, which the natives thought contained ‘sickness’” (see above).

(1992:184-185) notes for the Piaroa that:

“The dangers of exchange entailed more than the mere physical relationship between the traders, for the **goods themselves carried power** ... By accepting an article in exchange, **a trader was in danger of being poisoned** by the powerful alien capacities (thoughts) incorporated into the object by the one who produced it ... Exchange was always a matter of taking the power of another, and therefore a danger to the self” [my emphasis].

With reference to the Enxet, Kidd (1999b:266) remarks that, although they do not speak of a similar power to the *ewa* force mentioned by Hugh-Jones, they maintain that their *wáxok* are caused to “speed up” by “the temptation of purchasing highly desired goods, a term that implies a temporary loss of inner equilibrium”.¹²²

Although, like the Enxet, the Angaité do not speak of a similar power to the Barasana’s *ewa*, they consider that certain foreign items, such as money, can have a spiritual owner (see chapter 4). Moreover, we can clearly see from the narratives at issue that they understood and understand that “Paraguayan food” embodies both the danger and the power of the *valayo*. The ancestors throw it away in order precisely to avoid being poisoned. In so doing, they fail to acquire the power of the *valayo*, as symbolized by the latter’s wealth. Had they accepted the food, as Agapito indicates, “we would have had money, we would have had stores, many things”.

Just as objects are endowed with the agency of their producers/owners, there are (in the ethnographic present) several eating taboos which reflect the particular properties – some harmful some beneficial – that attach to certain types of food. Certain of those taboos apply to specific people, according to their age, gender or physical condition. For example, pregnant women should avoid eating the heads of animals; children, the meat of young animals. Eating the thigh of a *rhea* (American ostrich) gives a rhea-hunter good aim (Amarilla, 2006:707-714). Other taboos connect the actions of a person in a certain condition with the fate of another person in a different condition: e.g. a menstruating woman who drinks from the same receptacle as an apprentice male shaman can cause him

¹²² The Enxet *wáxok* is both a physical and metaphysical concept and, in the latter sense, is “both the cognitive and affective centre of the person” (Kidd 1999b:47).

madness or even his death (Franco and Imaz, 2006:97-98). Furthermore, if a women in the same condition eats meat, her husband may not be able to kill game with his shotgun and will succeed only in causing his prey to bleed (Arenas, 1981:50). Arenas (ibid.) adds that a suitable remedy under such circumstances is for the husband to “cure” his firearm with the fat of a snake or the sap of *pa’ag* grass (*Trithrinax biflabellata*). There are also generic taboos that apply to everyone. For example, a person who eats the *kiltik yoksa’a* plant (*Ximenia Americana*), provokes not his/her own death but that of a close relative (ibid.87). Illness – including contemporary diseases – may result from the ingestion of certain foods: e.g. tuberculosis can be introduced into the body through ingestion of meat (ibid.33-34). Elsewhere in the Chaco we find resonances of the idea that an unknown food or drink could be poisonous or endowed with danger. In a Mataco (Wichí) myth recorded by Métraux (cited by Lévi-Strauss 1973:107-108), an old man makes mead by mixing honey and water. He himself is too old to be afraid of dying, but his people do not want to try the mead because they think it might be poisonous.¹²³

The relevance of food taboos and eating habits is also manifest in certain Enlhet-Enenlhet ethnonyms which evoke the distasteful food practices of “other people” (*pok Enlhet/Enenlhet*) or their consequences: e.g. the “Black food” (*Pasei apto*) and the “Bad eating” (*Maskepto*) (Susnik, 1977:148) or the “Constipated” (*Kelyakmok*). In such cases, “others” are, by definition, people who eat badly.

Last but not least, the narratives we have been looking at may reflect the Angaité’s increasing awareness of the new epidemics which appeared at the time and as a result of colonization. Those new diseases may have enhanced their suspicions of the poisonous nature of *valayo* food, perceived as causing the deaths of indigenous workers at the tannin ports and lumber camps. As in the case of the Yshyro (Baldus cited by Blaser, forthcoming:59), the Angaité may have associated those diseases with the abandonment of their own food and the ingestion of foreign victuals.

There are, then, several alternatives – which are not necessarily mutually exclusive – as to what the Angaité thought was the cause of the poisonous quality of “Paraguayan food”: 1)

¹²³ The possibility that the Wichí data here are inaccurate (Palmer, personal communication) is strengthened by comparing their myth of the origin of mead with the Enlhet equivalent, according to which a man who is looking for honey in the forest finds it mixed with rainwater in a hollow tree. He tries it and gets drunk, then goes and tells his people about it, and they drink it without fear (Arenas, 1981:63).

it was contaminated because it conveyed the dangerous powers of the outsiders; 2) it contained malign elements that the outsiders introduced into the food by means of sorcery; 3) it contained disease; 4) it was distasteful. Centrally, the Paraguayans were not properly known and, even though they were tolerated (as long as they proved willing and able to live well) – even though, moreover, their cattle, by one account, was accepted – the Angaité still considered them to be strangers and even potential enemies. In short, the Angaité were conscious of the perils the *valayo* represented on their arrival and, therefore, metonymically associated those dangers with the *valayo*'s food.

This is where, I suggest, the interpretation of the Angaité narratives in question as an inverted image of the violation of a food taboo gains ground. Amerindian mythology frequently posits the theme of asocial conduct – of which the transgression of a taboo is a prime example – as having in the ancient past caused certain things to be the way they are now. To give just a few examples, the violation of a taboo gave rise to man's mortality (Taylor, 1996:203), the separation of humans from non-humans (Gow, 1991:105) and the features of certain animals.¹²⁴ By and large, the world as it is today is the product of asocial behaviour in the past on the part of human or non-human agents. How, then, can the Angaité narratives in question be accommodated within this paradigm? If to eat something forbidden implies the breach of a taboo, then to throw away forbidden food implies the opposite. In the case under consideration, however, that very action – although the inverted image of a taboo violation – has had similar negative consequences which continue to the present: i.e. the poverty of the Angaité and their dependence on the Paraguayans. My interpretation draws on the methodology of Lévi-Strauss (1995: 135-136), whose structural analysis follows a procedure consisting in:

“the search in the same geographical area for the possible existence of a myth containing a motif with a recognizable inverted image of the one that posed the problem when encountered in an isolated state. From the fact of their opposition, the two motifs make it possible to map a semantic field. Taken separately, each instance seems to say nothing; the meaning comes to light through the relations we detect between them.”

¹²⁴ For instance, the myth of “The boy who became a stork” tells of a boy abandoned on top of a tree by his stepfather. The boy eventually becomes a stork and announces electric storms, one of which avenges him by killing his stepfather (Felicia Roa, narrator, in Amarilla, 2006:356).

We do not need to go far in Angaité mythology in order to discover the motif of taboo-violation and asocial behaviour in the past as the cause of certain features of present-day Angaité reality.¹²⁵ Unless understood in this light, Agapito's final remarks in his version of the narrative seem obscure and exaggerated. How could an apparently trivial incident such as the throwing-away of food given to the "grandparents" by strangers have had such a dramatic effect on subsequent generations?¹²⁶ The semantic field here is beyond the scope of our understanding of historical causation. An apparently historical episode – the arrival of Paraguayans in remote Angaité villages in the first decades of the 20th century, as our evidence suggests – is interpreted by the Angaité in terms of mythological causation and according to culturally defined moral and social meanings. Throwing the food away becomes tantamount to violating a taboo. The ancestors may have saved themselves from dying by not taking the risk of eating the "Paraguayan food", but they consequently lost the opportunity to gain the Paraguayan's productive power.

An alternative reading which sheds light on the matter is that, due to their mistrust of the outsiders, the ancestors neglected a primordial exchange and, as a result, lost the possibility of establishing a closer, egalitarian relationship with the Paraguayans, a theme which goes back to the issues of relatedness and material transactions discussed in chapter 1. Their refusal of "Paraguayan food" was a denial of sociality and reciprocity, paralleled only by present-day Paraguayans' denial of relatedness and "sameness" – even despite the kinship ties, coresidence and commensality they enter into with the Angaité.

2.7 The correlation between gustatory/auditory senses and vitality/productive wealth

Certain elements of Agapito's narrative merit comparative analysis. To this end, a convenient starting-point is Lévi-Strauss's analysis of a set of myths dealing with the loss of immortality (1970:162):

¹²⁵ For instance, the Angaité tell of a man who interrupted his shamanic training with plants by drinking *ammen* (fermented honey). He was transformed into a jaguar and later became a monster called *Tomoyauhan* which wanders in the forest (Fieldnotes 19/1/2005; see Appendix 1).

¹²⁶ Taylor (1996:204) proposes that "certain kinds of myth are in fact anti-causal propositions" as they present as the outcome of a "trivial deed of transgression" important features of the present, e.g. human mortality, and thus create a "huge, indeed a monstrous disproportion between cause and effect, between an act and its consequence".

“In the set of myths dealing with the loss of immortality, the mortality of man is viewed from two different angles: it is looked at prospectively and retrospectively. Is it possible to avert death -that is, to prevent men from dying sooner than they want to? And, conversely is it possible to restore men’s youth once they have grown old, or to bring them back to life if they have already died? The solution to the first problem is always formulated in negative terms: do not hear, do not feel, do not touch, do not see, do not taste... The solution to the second problem is always expressed positively: hear, feel, touch, see, taste”.

Strictly speaking, the “Arrival of Paraguayans” does not share with the myths analysed by Lévi-Strauss (e.g. Caraja, Apinaye) the motif of the loss of immortality.¹²⁷ It deals, rather, with the fear of death as a potential result of eating strange foodstuffs. That fear, combined with a failure to understand a “call” from the Paraguayans, resulted in misfortune. Nonetheless, an analogy can be drawn between the two sets of myths.

To begin with, the Angaité “grandparents” were concerned to avert death, and their solution was “do not eat [i.e. taste]” the food they were offered. The negative rule mentioned by Lévi-Strauss is explicitly stated in the myth: “It may be poisoned, **do not eat it**”. A positive rule is also present, albeit implicitly: the “grandparents” should know and eat their own food (“fish, palm heart, sweet potato ...”). Elsewhere elders assert that their own food is what “made us grow up well”, thereby giving to understand that it served to prolong their lives. Thus, the Angaité myth and those cited by Lévi-Strauss share a similar gustatory code, linking different types of food (hence, cooking and fire) with the related issues of longevity and immortality.

In the set of myths analysed by Lévi-Strauss, a process occurs whereby one sensory code is transformed into another. The “call of rotten wood”, for instance, represents the transformation of an element of the gustatory code, i.e. wood (the means whereby fire is produced for the cooking of food), into an element of the auditory code, i.e. a “calling” wood (ibid.151).

¹²⁷ The Angaité myth of the creation of the moon, the loss of immortality and the origin of the life cycle, including women’s menstruation, tells of a consummate liar *Pelhten* (Moon), who killed his wife. In revenge, he was burned in an earth oven by his bothers-in-law. He ascended to the sky as smoke – which became the moon – and, in so doing, cursed men to die of old age. Women were additionally afflicted with menstrual bleeding (Fieldnotes 30/1/2005; see Appendix 1).

The Angaité myth in question establishes an (albeit less sophisticated) association between the same two sensory codes. Here the *valayo* spoke to the “grandparents” but “nobody understood, because the people only spoke our language [Angaité]. Nobody spoke Guarani, so nobody could answer the *valayo*”. By not understanding/answering the Paraguayans, the Angaité were following the negative auditory rule mentioned above by Lévi-Strauss: i.e. “do not hear”. In an Apinaye myth studied by him (ibid.66-69), the human hero mistakenly answers “the call of the rotten tree”, against the warning of his jaguar-stepfather. Instead he should have answered the earlier call of the rock or the aroeira tree (to achieve the long life of those two elements). Due to hero’s mistake men became mortal. The mythical pattern that emerges is that, if the protagonists of the myth hear and answer the call of other “beings” (e.g. a rock, a rotten tree, the *valayo*), they acquire a quality characteristic of the latter, be it immortality/mortality or wealth and productive power. Lévi-Strauss (ibid.161) reminds us that “in order to enjoy prolonged life, or immortality men must not respond to a faint noise: the ‘gentle’ and ‘low’ call of the rotten tree, the distant cry of the seriema, or the call of the spirit of old age”. In the Angaité myth, the Paraguayans’ call was “gentle”, or at least not violent, but the “grandparents” did not answer it.

Here, clearly, there is a contradiction. The “grandparents” twice followed the negative rule, by “not eating” and “not hearing”, but the final outcome was negative. Better said, the outcome itself is contradictory and unbalanced, for “not eating” allowed the “grandparents” to live longer (by not dying), but “not hearing” prevented them from becoming like the Paraguayans. In this myth, the issue of vitality – prolonging life by eating one’s own proper food – clashes with attaining the *valayo*’s productive power. Due to their lack of knowledge (of the strangers’ food and language), the ancestors failed successfully to resolve the clash, although they were right in the sense that their own food was proper food. The myth, then, makes manifest the dilemma of colonization for the Angaité. The arrival of Paraguayans presents them with a clash of criteria that is not susceptible to an unproblematic solution. Choosing one of the terms of the opposition implies losing the other, and eventually both terms are denied them. This is what we discuss in the next point but one.

2.8 The vertical and horizontal axes and their mediatory means

The comparative method of structural analysis opens up the possibility of other interpretative approaches to the Angaité narrative of the “Arrival of Paraguayans”. Let us recall briefly their myth of the “Origin of Peoples”, narrated by Dolo Benitez (Fieldnotes 22/4/2005) and referred to by Agapito on other occasions (Fieldnotes 19/1/2005). Dolo tells that “we the *Enlhet*” came from above by climbing down a “beeswax rope” (*Yauham tamma*): “the *Koyelhna* climbed down, the *Konhongnava* climbed down, we *Koeteves* climbed down; the *Kemme Peyem* [Ayoreo] as well”. (His list of peoples includes different pre-colonial Angaité groups and one other ethnic group, to which Agapito, in his version, added “five Paraguayans” – see Appendix 1) As they descended, the people looked like bees.¹²⁸ Then a parrot climbed down but, unintentionally, he cut the rope with his sharp beak. This caused some people to fall and die and others to stay forever in the sky, without ever again having the possibility of going up or down. The different groups that had already reached the earth dispersed to their respective territories and homelands.¹²⁹

A similar version of this myth – which I have presented here in abbreviated form – was recorded in the first quarter of the 20th century by Pittini (1924:77-80). It also figures amongst the myths of the Angaité and Sanapaná recorded by Cordeu (1973, in Biedermann and Zanardini, 2001:143-150).¹³⁰ There are small differences amongst the versions. For instance, Cordeu, like Agapito, includes the Paraguayans amongst the ethnic groups which descended to earth. He also tells of a group of double-headed people who got trapped in the hole through which they passed on leaving the sky. The introduction or omission of such motifs is a contingent variable – dependent on the particular historical and contextual situation of the narrator – and does not affect the narrative’s basic structure.

In turn, the Angaité “Origin of Peoples” bears a close resemblance to the Kayapo “Descent of Men to Earth”. According to Métraux’s summary of one version of this

¹²⁸ A similar image appears in a Kayapo version of the myth: “They looked like a line of ants running down the length of a tree trunk” (Wilbert, 1978:105).

¹²⁹ Biedermann and Zanardini (2001:108) record a fragmentary Enlhet variant in which men search for honey in the upper world, climbing up and down a rope in order to do so. The sky-animals do likewise but, as Parrot cuts the rope, the animals fall. According to the manner in which they hit the ground, they acquire their respective characteristics.

¹³⁰ In the two published versions there is no indication of the names of the respective narrators.

Kayapo myth (in Wilbert 1978:105):

“Long ago all men live in sky as stars. Once, hunter sees hunted armadillo disappear into the ground. Through hole he sees earth below. Many people make long rope and descend to earth where they are still living. Others afraid to follow, cut off rope, and stay in sky as stars”.

In another version of the same Gê myth, it is a small boy who cuts the rope (ibid.108). Despite their differences in terms of idiosyncratic detail – e.g. the motive for the Kayapo’s descent, the diverse peoples listed by the Angaité, the cutter of the rope – the Angaité and Kayapo myths are similar in general terms. Both, moreover, closely resemble yet another myth, told by the Wichí of the Argentine Chaco (who, geographically speaking, are closer to the Angaité). According to the Wichí’s “Arrival of Women”:

At the beginning of time women lived in the sky, amongst the stars. The earth was inhabited by men in the form of birds or animals. The only person of human appearance was “Mischievous Uncle”. The women used to come down to earth by means of a long rope that they lowered from the sky. They always stole the men’s store of meat and climbed back to the sky before the latter returned from hunting. One day Hawk cut the rope, and the women were left stranded on earth, where they became men’s wives. In order to make sexual intercourse possible, Mischievous Uncle copulated with all the women, using a stone penis to destroy their *vagina dentata*.¹³¹

Palmer explains that this myth is complementary with another Wichí myth – the “Origin of the rivers” – and that together they define the cosmos as “a projection of female sexuality” (ibid.91). Without underestimating the specificities of all the myths here referred to – Angaité, Gê and Wichí – and without neglecting the time span over which the different versions we have of those myths were generated and recorded, they share a common element that facilitates their comparison and analysis. All the myths under consideration establish a vertical axis between the earth and the sky and a mediatory element between the two – the rope. How does this relate to the “Arrival of Paraguayans”?

¹³¹ Cf. Palmer, 2005:88-89, who mentions that a more complete version of the myth, narrated by Yilis of Hoktek T’oi, is published in Pérez-Diez (1983).

I suggest that, in merging that narrative with the “Origin of Peoples”, Agapito transformed the vertical, cosmological axis (earth-sky) and its mediatory means (the rope) into a horizontal, sociogeographic axis (near-far) with its corresponding means of mediation – the canoe/steamboat.

Lévi-Strauss (1978), in Volume III of his *Mythologiques*, analyses two parallel series of myths related to the origin of cooking fire, on the one hand, and man’s mortality, on the other. He reaches the conclusion that the myths:

“conceive of the relationship between the sky and the earth in two ways: either in the form of a vertical and spatial conjunction, terminated by the discovery of cooking, which interposes domestic fire between sky and earth; or... in the form of a horizontal and temporal conjunction, which is brought to an end by the introduction of the regular alternation between life and death, and between day and night”. [ibid.181]

He also postulates “the equivalence between the canoe and domestic fire as respective mediators between the near and the far on the horizontal level, or between the low and the high on the vertical level” (ibid.185). However, the series of myths which concern us here deal with the origin of (differentiated) peoples – in the case of the Angaité and Kayapo myths – and of (differentiated) reproductive sexes in the case of the Wichí myth. In addition, the mediator of the vertical axis (earth/sky, low/high) is, in most of the versions, a rope, not domestic fire. It is transformed into the canoe/steamboat on the horizontal axis only when Agapito merges two different myths into one. Nonetheless, it is possible, despite the differences, to extrapolate from the myths common principles by which we can interpret several opposed terms. Thus, the sky/earth opposition on the cosmic level can be correlated with other opposed categories on other levels, such as the geographical (near/far), the biological (male/female) and the sociological (kin/foreign). The procedure leads to a “more complex opposition affecting two [or more] modes in which the first opposition can be expressed” (ibid.190). The mediator – be it the hearth/rope or the canoe/steamboat “serves in the myths as vector of a medium solution between the two extreme forms of an opposition which, for lack of an intermediary term, would be abolished by the conjunction or disjunction of its poles” (ibid.189-190). For instance, in the journey of the Sun and the Moon – analysed by Lévi-Strauss in the series of myths related to man’s mortality – the canoe serves to keep them “at the *right distance* in

relation to each other, together and separate at one and the same time, as the sun and the moon must be in order to avoid excessive daylight or excessive darkness which would scorch or rot the earth” (ibid.189; original italics).

Let us start with the rope. In the beginning, it allowed the conjunction of earth and sky, and later – on being cut – disjoined them. The rope connected a sky-world populated, according to the case, with undifferentiated (endogamous) or unproductive (female-only) people to an uninhabited or unproductive earth (populated only with men). By climbing down the rope, people started to differentiate themselves – in exogamous or ethnic groups, on the one hand, and according to gender, on the other. With the cutting of the rope, sky-people and earth-people became distinct, dissociated beings: the former, stars; the latter, humans. Without the initial conjunction of sky and earth by means of the rope, the earth would not be populated with differentiated (or reproductive) people. Without their subsequent disjunction, the worlds of undifferentiated and differentiated peoples (or of unproductive and reproductive people) would be confused.

Lévi-Strauss argues that “poles of the vertical axis can be plotted on the reduced scale of the human body, limbs and organs of which are then divided between the high and the low” (ibid.186). I suggest that a further analogy can be established between the cosmic and biological levels. The rope symbolizes the umbilical cord, which conjoins the mother and the foetus until it is cut in order to allow the differentiation of its poles, mother and child.¹³² From a temporal perspective, there is an original stage – equivalent to the pregnancy period – followed by a process of individuation and differentiation after birth (and the cutting of the umbilical cord). This analogy between the broader cosmic process of the origin of peoples (and sexes) and the biological micro-process of the origin of sexually differentiated persons is consolidated by various elements found in the mythology of diverse ethnic groups. The idea that the sky is a symbolic female womb derives both from its image as a self-contained world (in the Kayapo myth: Wilbert, 1978:107) and from its implicitly being likened to a beehive or ant-hill (Kayapo and

¹³² The rope is made of a variety of materials, such as beeswax (Angaité), plant fibres (Kayapo, Wichí), “anklets, belts, bracelets, and bowstrings” (Kayapo), cotton (Kayapo, Sanapaná), cobwebs (Wichí) or arrows (Wichí): Wilbert, 1978:105, 106, 108; Neueswander and Hiter et al., 1999:62-65; Palmer 2005: 80, 80n., 283-284. The evocation of the umbilical cord – an idea which I owe to my colleague Margherita Margiotti – is often inverted, as the rope serves as a means both of descent and of escalation. Such is the case in a Sanapaná myth in which the hero climbs to the upper world by means of a cotton rope in order to go and see his mother and take revenge on his wizard father (Neueswander and Hiter et al., loc.cit.).

Angaité). The people descend from the sky-world through a hole, i.e. the vagina (Kayapo and Angaité), by means of a rope, i.e. the umbilical cord (Kayapo, Angaité and Wichí). The rope is later cut and the different peoples start to wander on the earth – walking like toddlers, as it is expressively stated in one Angaité version (Biedermann and Zanardini, 2001:144).¹³³

With regard to the canoe/steamboat, they are mediators of the horizontal axis and the opposition between near and far, an opposition which is “determined by social, instead of cosmic [or physiological] coordinates” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978:190). The sociological frame of reference “gives rise in its turn to the opposition *within a group/outside a group*, from which, by means of further bifurcations, we arrive at endogamy, exogamy or war” (ibid.187). Together, the steamboat and the canoe allowed the Paraguayans to come from the furthest extreme on the horizontal axis – the Paraguayan capital, Asunción (*Yelhvasa Yetemema*) – to the closest extreme, the Angaité village of *Yelhvasa Lhepop*. The mediatory canoe/steamboat thus operates a conjunction, the confluence of distant ethnic groups at a common geographical point. At the same time, however, it is a relative conjunction, for the exchange between the Angaité and the Paraguayans failed to unite them. The two terms therefore remain disjointed, thus **unequal and socially separated**. Time also operates along the horizontal axis – the time of the boat journey and its associated transition from an initial state of mutual anonymity (as between the two social and geographical poles) to one of distant coexistence.

It should be borne in mind that it is an analytical abstraction to consider the horizontal and vertical axes in isolation. As we have seen, their inseparable complementarity is made clear by Agapito’s merging of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” and the “Origin of Peoples”, whereby the mediatory functions of the canoe/steamboat and the rope, respectively, are conflated. Nevertheless, I propose that, as we move from the vertical to the horizontal axis

¹³³ In Enlhet and Sanapaná mythology, the sky is replaced by the underworld as the place of origin from which differentiated peoples appeared on earth. In the Sanapaná myth, undifferentiated primordial people dug themselves into the underworld in order to nurture themselves. They covered up the entrance holes and later reappeared on earth as different peoples (cf. Biedermann and Zanardini 2001:106, 130-132). Here the cosmic origin of peoples is linked to insemination and procreation. Similarly, in the Wichí’s “Origin of ethnic groups”, a demiurge makes a wooden trough out of a *yuchan* tree (*Chorisia Sarmientoi*) into which he pours the blood of different animals. He then covers the trough and, after a while, the different ethnic groups appear (Palmer, 2005:296-297). The connexion with procreation is supported by the Wichi theory that the foetus is created by the accumulation of the father’s semen, who during couvade also transfers his blood to the foetus (ibid.190-191). Cf. Grant (2006:43), who reports that, for the Nivacle, “The foetus is formed from semen, which gradually transforms into blood”.

– from the “Origin of Peoples” to the “Arrival of Paraguayans” – we also move from the theme of socially differentiated reproduction to that of socially differentiated production.

2.9 On the mythical “genealogy of misfortune”

In *Society against the State*, Clastres (1987[1975]) discusses at length the philosophical meaning of the discourse of a Guarani *oporaiva*.¹³⁴ At one point in his speech, the shaman refers to *Tupä* as the god who “wanted the new earth to be an imperfect earth, an evil earth, yet one capable of welcoming the little beings [the men] destined to stay there” (ibid.169). Clastres adds that *Tupä* was a “mischievous” god (ibid.170).

There is one remarkable commentary in the *oporaiva*’s discourse whose meaning Clastres goes to great pains to elucidate: “Things in their totality are one; and for us who did not desire it to be so, they are evil” (ibid.170). Despite the complexity both of this shamanic revelation and of Clastres’ explanation, the crux of the matter is that the “One” is *everything corruptible, mortal, ephemeral, finite*. Thus, in Clastres’ own words, “each of the ‘things’ that make up of the world – earth and sky, water and fire, animals and plants, and lastly men – is marked, graven with the seal of the One” (ibid.172). This Guarani *genealogy of misfortune* is correlated with their eschatology of liberation, as articulated in their representation of the Land Without Evil (*Yvy marane’y*). As Clastres explains, this final destination “shelters neither men nor gods: only equals, divine man, human gods, so that none of them can be named according to the One” (ibid.173). Without stopping to dwell on such a beautiful land, it remains to highlight the resonances that the *oporaiva*’s commentary has, in terms of the origin and nature of misfortune, with Agapito’s “Arrival of Paraguayans”.

What do the *oporaiva*’s discourse and Agapito’s narrative have in common? Mainly, they establish the origin of human misfortune in an *arbitrary* first cause. The Guarani account refers to the imperfect, evil earth inhabited by the Last Men, as the Guarani “choose to call themselves” (Clastres 1987[1975]:170). The Angaité narrative refers to their own poverty and inequality in relation to Paraguayans. In both cases the misfortune is arbitrary because it was caused by a capricious event or action, the consequences of which are out of all

¹³⁴ *Oporaiva* is the word for “shaman” in Mby’a Guarani and the Ava Guarani languages of Eastern Paraguay.

proportion. Why, for the Guarani, is the earth imperfect and the human condition limited and corruptible? Clastres tells us that *Tupã* created the “little things” because he was bored of being alone and wanted playmates who were “imperfect”. *Tupã* was a mischievous god indeed. The moral consequence of such an arbitrary act of creation is the Guarani’s realization that, as Clastres points out, “Men are not to blame if existence is unjust” (ibid.171). Men are not responsible for their own involuntary imperfection.

In the case of the Angaité, men’s imperfect, corruptible condition is also attributed to an arbitrary cause, for men were condemned to be “mortal” by the vengeful mythological Moon (*Pelhten*: see pertinent footnote). From their imperfect condition follow other consequences, such as the human propensity to make mistakes owing to a lack of knowledge. That is why the Angaité are poor and do not have access to the Paraguayans’ wealth – because, being imperfect and, therefore, lacking in knowledge, the grandparents did not know Guarani and were afraid of “Paraguayan food”.

The realization that men are not to blame for their fallible condition, although they have to suffer its consequences, is brought into sharper relief by comparing that premiss with the idea of “original sin”. In Christian thought, men – and women – lost their quasi divine condition because they chose to; in contrast, in Amerindian thought, broadly speaking, men and women became what they are independently of their own free will and despite their good intentions.¹³⁵ Thus, however much the Guarani “did not desire it to be so”, and for all the Angaité ancestors’ trepidation and speechlessness, both peoples have nevertheless to put up with the consequences. Their present conditions are a function, not of absolute wrongdoing on the part of the ancestors, but of circumstances beyond their control. Without altogether denying that human action can cause misfortune – as it did in the case of the Angaité grandparents’ refusal to exchange with the Paraguayans – the *fons et origo* of the problem is defined in a way that diminishes “our” responsibility for the fact

¹³⁵ The Nivacle of the central Paraguayan Chaco have adopted Christianity, but they do not consider their ancestors to have been affected by (original) “sin”, which they see as a recent idea that has been introduced by missionaries: “People described their current life as ‘New Life’ (*apislh-manlha jayash*). In the old life, the ancient people (*pa’alhaa*) had no sin, whereas now that the new people are Christians, there is sin. My interpretation of this comment is that with the coming of the missionaries, people became aware of the practices that constituted sin in their eyes. The ancient people had no knowledge of what constituted sin and so could be understood as being free from it” (Grant 2006:40). As in the case, then, of the Angaité’s mythological “grandparents”, the “ancient people” are not seen by the new Christian Nivacle as *morally* wrong – i.e. as sinners, in accordance with Christian orthodoxy – but, rather, as lacking in knowledge, or simply put, naive.

that “we” human beings are made vulnerable, limited and fallible. Amerindian philosophy, that is, often ascribes a *cosmic responsibility* to the imperfection of the human condition.

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It is in this sense that the Angaité trace the source of their predicament to their ancestors’ lack of knowledge, just as the Guarani maintain that “this is what we are whether we wanted it to be or not”. However, theirs is not simply an ideology of resignation in the face of an unjust existence. However arbitrary the genealogy of misfortune may be, Amerindian eschatology is equally resourceful. Evil can be reversed in the same paradoxical way that it came into existence. Clastres remarks that for the Guarani, in their search for the Land without Evil, “the heaviness of failure, the silence of the sky, the repetition of misfortune, are never taken as final” (ibid.174).

As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, the sense of social failure and inequality that is expressed in one Angaité myth is subverted by the optimism of another. By the same token, shamanic practices that fall into decline may resuscitate in other forms, which goes to show that bad beginnings and their tragic consequences are always subject to modification.

2.10 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter I showed the performative aspects of the *Nanek Anya*, their scenarios and social effects. I illustrated how storytelling bonds generations and entertains communal life, representing the knowledge born both of personal life histories and of the intergenerational trajectory of life. I also showed how, over time and in different contexts, Agapito narrated the *Nanek Anya* of the “Arrival of Paraguayans”. Rather than a fixed narrative, the myth changed in response to the circumstances in which it was performed. At times, Agapito’s different versions were an entertaining pedagogic response to my curiosity and doubts about the distant past of the Angaité. But, in alluding to the mutual misunderstanding that marked the first encounter between *Enlhet* and *valayo*, the narrative was also a lesson in how to avoid such misunderstanding in our own relationship.

¹³⁶ Peter Gow, personal communication.

However, I was not the only recipient of the multiple messages contained in the story and its various versions. For instance, during a visit to the Angaité village of 12 de Junio, Agapito's narration of the story had almost the tone of a political discourse – addressed to our hosts – emphasizing how the Angaité are now poor, eat white food, speak Guarani and have almost abandoned their own language.

Certainly, it seems disproportionate to attribute such drastic consequences to the ancestors' ignorance of Guarani and *valayo* food. However, we see here in operation the mythological logic that unfolds in the elaboration of an arbitrary genealogy of misfortune and the subsequent acknowledgment of cosmic responsibility. This, I propose, is the Angaité perception on which our interpretation of the story should be based. I have tried to identify coincidences between the events of the narrative and the process of colonization, in order to make the former more intelligible. However, the evaluation of the mythological account in historical terms *strictu sensu* proves to be mistaken. History, as we understand it, is the objective description of events that tell us about the past. For the Angaité, on the other hand, it is the socio-moral significance of an incident that makes it worthy of being consigned to their oral narrative tradition. This difference in terms of methodology and rationale that distinguishes the two epistemological approaches to the past is exemplified by the way in which certain events are remembered and others forgotten. For instance, official accounts emphasize colonist enterprises such as the construction of tannin factories and ports on the banks of the Paraguay River (see pertinent footnote). The emphasis is on exerting dominion over nature with the economic power of human civilization. The *Nanek Anya*, on the other hand, register such episodes as, at most, minor incidents, for the power of the Paraguayans that interests the Angaité is not their mechanical paraphernalia, but those of their products – in particular, food and tools – that the Angaité consider to be conducive to “living well” and, in turn, the reproduction of people. Ultimately, of course, the differences in emphasis are culturally determined.

To what extent is Agapito's gloss on the narrative common to other Angaité narrators of similar stories? In the collection compiled by Franco and Imaz (2006) there are more stories related to the arrival of the Paraguayans, which share the ancestors' misgivings about, and rejection of, non-indigenous food and the resulting alienation of Angaité

land.¹³⁷ Apparently, some narrators, like Agapito, elaborate more than others on the present-day consequences of the episode. There is no single, simple reading of the text, such as Agapito's (or that which I have given). As indicated above, Angaité storytelling transmits a kind of knowledge that comes from a lived experience, in the sense that, in contrast to personal eye-witness accounts of events, the *Nanek Anya* relate what the narrator has "heard" or been "taught" in his/her social environment. The transmission of that knowledge implies ties – usually inter-generational – of kinship and/or co-residence (which ties also apply to well-disposed non-indigenous co-residents). In so far as the truth-value of the narratives is concerned, the knowledge they convey is not necessarily considered a form of ultimate truth. It is the kind of knowledge characterized in chapter 1 as relational: that is to say, contingent in content and performance on the relationship between narrator and audience and on the circumstances of their respective life histories.

Accordingly, different narrators place a different slant on the narratives here analysed. Some, for instance, mention the ancestors' ignorance of Guarani and their dumping of the unknown food but do not hold these to be of any consequence in terms of the present. Instead, they maintain that the Paraguayans took advantage of what they saw as a good deal. Thus, the narrator of the second story underscores the fact that the Paraguayans took the "grandparents" by surprise by hurrying to build a corral. In another version, the teller blames the leader of the village for the disadvantageous deal with the Paraguayans, as he gave away the land in exchange for cows without informing his people.¹³⁸ Yet others relate that the Paraguayans came with their cows, food and money and took possession of indigenous land without paying for it – "they just took it".¹³⁹ It should be added that the present state of affairs – i.e. indigenous poverty and territorial dispossession – is not always explained in the mythological terms of the *Nanek Anya*. Contemporary leaders speak of the "500 hundred years of domination", adopting the style of discourse to which their involvement in indigenous and social movements at the national level introduces them.

¹³⁷ The idea that the ancestors' lack of knowledge caused the present asymmetry between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples is found elsewhere in Chaco mythology. In the "origin of Nivaclé poverty", the hero – or antihero – repeatedly refuses to receive western goods from God. The same goods are then offered to Paraguayans and to German missionaries, who accept them. The final sentence of the myth comments: "It is a pity that this original Nivaclé was so stupid" (Chase Sardi and Zanardini, 1999:213-214).

¹³⁸ See the story entitled "They change our land for cows" (Franco and Imaz, 2006:59).

¹³⁹ See the stories entitled "Money" and "When Paraguayans arrived" (idid.57, 61).

The richness of the Angaité myth of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” rests, I believe, on the ambivalent and even contradictory nature of its elements. On the one hand, the *Enyatau* (“grandparents”) were independent and self-sufficient; on the other hand, they were lacking in knowledge, owing to which they neglected a primordial exchange and the establishment of a social relationship. Ambiguity also attaches to the *valayo*: they were good and kind, but also powerful and dangerous. Taking these various attributes into account, the cause of the failed primordial exchange oscillates between the Angaité’s lack of knowledge, at one extreme, to the Paraguayans’ perfidy, at the other. From a restricted historical perspective, the latter interpretation sounds more – as well as being more familiar – since, after all, the Paraguayans invaded the Chaco and seized indigenous land. Needless to say, official accounts of how that land-appropriation took place differ greatly from the Angaité’s. A middle-ground solution to these oscillating extremes may consist in ascribing the asymmetrical positions now occupied by Enlhet and *valayo* to their reciprocal failure to enter into an exchange relationship.

Consistently, the different versions of the narrative pinpoint a series of elements – land, language, food, cattle and cultural identity – that mediated the initial encounter between the Angaité and Paraguayans. The same elements still mediate their relationship but under conditions that almost completely invert the conditions that operated in the past. The different narrators single out conspicuous aspects of their lives (and those of their listeners) which mark a contrast between the present and the past. The arrival of Paraguayans in the villages of the Angaité set in motion a series of transformations that condition the world of the Angaité as it is today. In the past, land was freely occupied and utilized by the Angaité; at present it is owned and controlled mostly by Paraguayans. In the past, the Angaité spoke their own language and had no knowledge of Guarani; nowadays they have almost entirely lost the use of their own language and speak mostly Guarani. In the past, the “grandparents” ate their own food and ignored “Paraguayan food”; today people rely heavily on the latter and eat indigenous food only as a supplement. In the past, cattle was almost non-existent;¹⁴⁰ today it is ubiquitous and owned mostly by Paraguayans. In the past, Paraguayans approached the Angaité with respect; today the Angaité tend to be victims of Paraguayan domination. In short, the “Arrival of Paraguayans” expresses the Angaité’s perception of their changing relationship

¹⁴⁰ The detail of the cattle introduced in the second narrative is discussed in chapter 3.

with those who have colonized their lands. An underlying leitmotif is the intimation that the Angaité themselves played a part in bringing about the changes which that relationship has undergone. That is to say, this *Nanek Anya* presents the Angaité as protagonists in the process of forging what have come to be the conditions of their present-day existence.

CHAPTER 3: THE “TWO SHAMANS AND THE OWNER OF CATTLE”

The first time I heard Agapito narrate the myth of the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle”, I did not record it.¹⁴¹ In order to do so, I asked him to recite it again the following evening. On that occasion, his narration went as follows:¹⁴²

“There were two shamans. One night they were drinking ‘chicha’ together. It is said they were like brothers [holding each other’s shoulders, as drinking partners do]. ‘*Ah la puta*,’¹⁴³ said one of them, ‘I want to smoke. I know a place where there is tobacco, I have seen it’. ‘*Evakha!* Go and get it!’ That is what our people say when they want to smoke. ‘I’ll go and fetch the tobacco from the place where I saw it.’

Supporting each other as those who are drunk usually do, they went to the *alvata* [small river]. They did not go to get tobacco; they went and did something else under the water. Maybe there was something under the water, a house like a Paraguayan’s [in *Kovalhok*: *malha tegma valay lhangkok*]. Under the water was the Paraguayan’s house (*Valay lhangkok*).¹⁴⁴

Then the drunken shamans told their people: ‘We want to go and see ... we want to bring the cattle out, we will bring out the cattle’. ‘Let’s go, then, to the *alvata*,’ they said to each other. ‘Come back safely,’ their people told them.

One of the shamans plunged into the water. He went down and down until he disappeared, leaving the water bubbling like a whirlpool.¹⁴⁵ He was a shaman. The other one watched and waited for the water to stop bubbling, as the bubbles meant that his partner had not yet gone deep enough. When the water stopped bubbling at the surface, that was the sign for the second

¹⁴¹ Agapito referred to the auxiliary spirit of the myth both as *Vaka Aveske* (“Owner/chief of cattle”) and as *Valay Veske* (“Chief of the Paraguayans”). The use of the possessive prefix in *vaka* (female noun) *aveske* (literally, “cow her chief”) is dropped in the phrase *Valay Veske*.

¹⁴² Agapito narrated the myth mostly in Guaraní. Those words and phrases that he expressed in *Kovalhok* are included in my translation in order to convey as much as possible the emphasis and narrative techniques he used.

¹⁴³ The expression is an expletive (in Spanish: “the whore!”). It is used by Guaraní-speakers, including indigenous people (who may not always be aware of the literal meaning of the expression, as they appear to use it in imitation of non-indigenous speech habits).

¹⁴⁴ Sometimes the word *Valayo* (“Paraguayan”) is shortened to *Valay* when qualified by a dependent noun (*Valay lhangkok*, “the Paraguayan’s house”). The rule does not always apply, as we see later on in the myth (*Valayo aphapa’ok*). The names of auxiliary spirits are here indicated with capital initials.

¹⁴⁵ Agapito used the word *molino*, which I interpret as *remolino* (in Spanish: “whirlpool”).

shaman to plunge into the water. He went down and down and down, and the water bubbled and bubbled and bubbled, until he also disappeared.

There were two other people watching, waiting to see if it was true that the shamans were going to bring something out of the water. They waited for an hour and then, it is said, one of them saw a cow coming out of the water, a nice one: 'That must be what they are bringing out of the water'. A lot of cattle came out. The shamans brought out a lot, around **700**, and there was also a cowboy leading them with his equipment, his hat and his rifle.¹⁴⁶ The two who were watching saw that it was true and they went to tell their people.

The cattle were of the kind that scare easily. It so happened that a young man who had recently married had been nearby and had sex [with his wife]. The cows smelled the stench. They had a keen sense of smell and, when they smelled the strong odour of the place where the couple had sex, they all immediately went back into the water. Not one was left. The shaman who had been given the paper [certifying his ownership of the cattle] was thrown off his horse, but the two shamans held on to the paper.¹⁴⁷

The two shamans who brought out the cattle were angry. They came back [to their village] and asked the people: 'Why did you go out wandering?' 'How should we have known?', the people answered; 'You did not say anything to us. Had you done so, we would not have gone out.' It is said they spoke *Nempaivoma* [in *Kovalhok*: "our language"], they spoke in *idioma* [in Chaco Guarani: "indigenous language"]. 'I did not want you to go out,' said one of the shamans, angrily;¹⁴⁸ 'it is bad for you to go out wandering' [in *Kovalhok*: *Malhke nekhe otau eyiahama lhengkak*]. 'We did not know,' they responded; 'you did not let us know [in *Kovalhok*: *Omonyese malhsenko lhengkak*]. We did not expect this to happen.'

They [the shamans] had brought the cattle out [of the water], but the

¹⁴⁶ I stress the number "700" because Agapito was using it loosely to signify not an exact figure, but "many" head of cattle. When discussing money affairs, it became apparent that his knowledge of numbers beyond certain figures, i.e. hundreds, was uncertain.

¹⁴⁷ The word for "paper" (in Guarani: *kuatia*) refers in certain contexts to legal documents and official papers such as birth certificates and land titles. The *kuatia* to which Agapito refers is the *guía de traslado*, with which a cattle-owner certifies before the national authorities that the cattle are his/hers and that he/she can legally transport and sell them. Another legal requirement is the *marca de ganado*, which is the brand that identifies the owner of the cattle. Cast on the end of an iron bar, the brand is heated until it is red hot in order to mark the cattle by singeing their hide.

¹⁴⁸ From here on Agapito tells the narrative with only one of the two shamans speaking.

cows became scared of the odour that remained where the couple had sex. That's how it was. The cows smelled the odour because they were highly sensitive to it. So the two shamans stayed [in the village]. They did not go back to the *alvata*. At the place where the cows re-entered [the stream], the water rose and boiled with the sound *cuhcoh, cuhcoh, cuhcoh*.¹⁴⁹ It took a while for the water to calm down. It seems that the *Arandu* [“wise person”] in the water was very angry.¹⁵⁰

The shamans did not re-enter the water and told their people: ‘I will not go again because the owner must be angry. He gave me the animals on good terms’. It is true that the owner gave the animals on good terms, they were escorted by *valayo* horsemen working as cowboys do [in *Kovalhok: malha aktemo enanak estanciero*].¹⁵¹ *Ko!, ko!, ko!*, they went. *Hoo!, hoo!, hoo!*, sounded the cows.¹⁵² *Moo!, moo!, ko!, ko!* The horsemen wanted to take the cattle to a big *espartillar* [grassland] so the shamans could tame the animals, but it did not happen. The animals that were going to be the shamans' cattle got scared too soon. They sensed what had happened where they were being taken. A *casamiento* had taken place there.¹⁵³ The fact is that the young couple made love where the cows were going. We say, ‘the cows did not want to listen’ (*antehakke nemaimes vaka*). They were too sensitive. They may have been ‘cows of the water’ (*naa konaimen vaka*), but they were cows all the same.

The shamans took them but the cows ran away, they returned to the water. That is what happened. And the shamans picked up the paper [the ownership document] that one of them dropped: ‘This was given to me by the owner’, it is said that he told his people; ‘but I am going to give it back to the owner, it is no use keeping it’. The owner had prepared everything: the brand for the cattle, the papers ... everything that goes with using cattle.

But the shamans were going to go another day, after a while, not

¹⁴⁹149 Agapito imitated the sound of water boiling.

¹⁵⁰ The Guarani word *arandu* means both “knowledge” (noun) and “wise” (adjective). The choice of the term for naming the auxiliary spirit of the narrative has implications that are discussed in the last chapter.

¹⁵¹ See chapter 1 for a description of ranch ranks.

¹⁵² The onomatopoeic expressions are Agapito's imitations of the sounds made by cowboys when escorting cattle and the mooing of the cows, respectively.

¹⁵³ The term *casamiento* (in Spanish: “wedding”) means in Guarani “sexual intercourse”.

immediately. They wanted the owner to calm down first. The shamans knew that the owner was upset (*apiasenkoe shaman aklaugelhaik Vaka Aveske angkok*)¹⁵⁴ because they took his cattle in vain. ‘It is pointless for me to go and bother the owner, he will kill me. Let’s wait until he calms down and then I will go back to see him’. The shamans were going to take all the papers back, so they waited one week, fifteen days, and then they entered the water again and gave the papers back to the owner.

When it was all over, nothing happened until, one day, the shamans wanted to try to bring out sheep. After about two months [of the first event], they said: ‘Let’s go back and try to bring out sheep’.

They went like drunken brothers [with their arms round each other’s shoulders], as they had done before. They went back to the *alvata* and re-entered the water. They found plenty of things there. There was an *almacen* full of things. Every day they made a living and came away with things. There used to be shamans who dressed themselves, though they were not many. They dressed their people, they brought them strings of *caraguata* [*Deinacanthon urbanianum*], the ones that are made rounded. One of the shamans told his people: ‘Make strings of *caraguata* for us. I will take them and try to exchange them for Paraguayan clothes [in *Kovalhok*: *Valayo aphapa’ok*, *oyekonkeskahata Valayo aphapa’ok*]. He will buy the string from us.’ Then they started drinking again. That was [the effect of] ‘chicha’...’.¹⁵⁵

It was not until I had left Karova Guasu that I returned to this *Nanek Anya* and, with hindsight, began to discover the insights it provides and the connections it establishes with other Angaité and Amerindian narratives. An initial observation is that Agapito does not mention any of his kin as protagonists of the narrative. The events of the myth seem to be located in the remote past. Nor is a specific source identified for the story, other than in terms of the indeterminate expression “it is said”. Given these mythical characteristics – particularly the remoteness in time of the events described – it is appropriate to analyse the narrative in terms of the historical method propounded by Lévi-Strauss and Gow.

¹⁵⁴ The word *shaman* is used both in Spanish (usually written as *chamán*) and in Guaraní. Here Agapito introduces it in a phrase spoken in *Kovalhok*.

¹⁵⁵ Agapito’s narrative continued, in response to a question that I raised, with an explanation of how mead *chicha* (in *Kovalhok*: *Kelhtoma Anmen*) was made in the past.

Secondly, in the light of Gow's approach, I will expand on the significance of the context in which Agapito told me this myth (among others). I will argue that Agapito wanted not only to inform me about what the *Nanek Anya* say about Angaité shamanism, but also to reflect on the opposition between the shamanic ability to provide for their people and Paraguayan power, as embodied in their wealth.

Thirdly, I intend to show that this Angaité myth is a good example of Lévi-Strauss's contention (1970:16, 1981), followed by Gow (1991:12f), that myths are historical objects that aim to obliterate time. In so doing, as we saw in chapter 2, they explain the present paradoxically, establishing an anti-causal explanation which disrupts historical causality.

The myth of the "Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle" introduces elements – e.g. newcomers, ranches and associated auxiliary beings – that came into existence through historical processes and transformations that affected the Angaité and their environment. However, by situating those elements in the remote past, the myth somehow erases the historical processes and transformations in which they originated. Thus, the myth encapsulates the contingencies of a particular historical turning-point in the lives of the Angaité, but at the cost of the processes that led up to that turning-point.

One of the elements that the myth introduces is the theme of innovation in shamanic practice. It presents the shamans' response to the arrival of Paraguayans – and other outsiders – and the new social, economic and political arrangements imposed by the latter. The two shamans of the narrative were using their own skills in order – with the help of auxiliary spirits associated with the newcomers, such as *Valay Veske* – to assert their own authority among their people and to subvert the unbalanced conditions creating by the new arrangements. The introduction of this auxiliary being is a sign of the historicity of the myth, as the "Owner of Cattle" clearly draws on the figure of the Paraguayan President, whom the Angaité thought was the owner of the IPC Company.¹⁵⁶ By the same token, *Valay Veske*'s possessions – his "Paraguayan [ranch-]house", his plentiful cattle (with legal papers), the cowboys, the store, and so on – are modern-day elements which frame the contemporary life of the Angaité.

¹⁵⁶ For some Angaité elders, the owner was President Higinio Morínigo (1940-1948) and, for others, President Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989). I discuss this detail below.

The myth, then, shows how, according to mythological causation, the relation between Angaité shamans and *Valay Veske*, Chief of the Paraguayans, has been restricted by the primordial violation of a taboo. That restricted relation metonymically represents the restrictions lived by the Angaité under the influence of the IPC Company, which encroached upon their territory and subsequently constrained their livelihood and freedom.

The obliteration of time and, particularly, of the conditions which led to the existential transformation experienced by the Angaité operates in several ways. One form of obliteration is the replacement and/or transformation of auxiliary spirits linked to the surrounding subsistence environment (the forest, the rivers, the animals) into ones linked to the newcomers. Likewise, traditional exchanges between the Angaité's ancestors and other indigenous Chaco peoples are replaced in the narrative with the new exchanges established with the Paraguayans. Here again time is obliterated by the silence maintained regarding an initial period in which the Angaité people hunted the cattle which roamed their territory and the unfenced lands of the IPC Company. During the first sixty years of colonization (1880-1940), the Angaité's approach to the newcomers, both foreign missionaries and Paraguayan colonists, swung from cattle-hunting and retaliations to trading and bartering. The exchanges subsequently became asymmetrical owing to the control over land exerted by the colonists (see chapter 1).

My interpretation of the myth includes the comparative analysis of a similar Enxet version (section 3.4). By means of a Lévi-Straussian analysis of mythological transformations, I examine the divergences between the two versions and argue that they are based on the differentiated historical circumstances and contextual intentions of the respective narrators.

Finally in this chapter, I address the question of the role of cattle in the everyday life of the Angaité, using past and present examples to expose the complexity of an apparently simple question (section 3.5).

3.1 The methodological approach

In claiming that Agapito's myth of the "Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle" endorses the theory that Amerindian myths are the product of complex historical processes which

they seek, precisely, to obliterate, I did not realize what deep waters I was entering – deeper, perhaps, than the water into which the two shamans submerged themselves. Unlike the proponents of the theory (Lévi-Strauss and Gow), whose comparative analyses draw on a wide range of data, my own ethnographic material is limited to a few Angaité myths, supplemented by others found in the literature. The available canon also includes myths of neighbouring peoples who form part of the Enlhet-Enenlhet language family, as well as of other indigenous peoples of the Chaco. To mention only the Enlhet-Enenlhet linguistic group, the earliest references to their mythology date back 80 to 100 years (Grubb, 1911:59-71; Pittini, 1924:75-82). Further references appeared between 50 and 70 years ago (Métraux, 1963[1944]:364-369; Susnik, 1953:3). And more recent recordings were made in the last three decades of the 20th century (Cordeu, 1973; Susnik, 1977; Arenas, 1981; Bogado, 1991; Hiter and Neueschwander *et al*, 1999). It can therefore be said with confidence that the available ethnographic and historical material is adequate to the task of giving insights into the meanings of Angaité mythology and the historical processes it reveals and/or obliterates.

To that end, let us remember how Lévi-Strauss defines his methodology in the opening volume of *Mythologiques* (1970:1):

“I shall take as my starting point one myth, originating from one community, and shall analyse it, referring first of all to the ethnographic context and then to other myths belonging to the same community. Gradually broadening the field of inquiry, I shall then move on to myths from neighbouring societies, after previously placing them, too, in their particular ethnographic context. Step by step, I shall proceed to more remote communities but only after authentic links of a historical or a geographic nature have been established with them or can reasonably be assumed to exist.”

Lévi-Strauss’s methodological journey takes him from the Bororo of Central Brazil to the First Peoples of North America. His interest lies not in the particularity of specific myths, but in the “common significance” of the unconscious formulations “which are the work of [Amerindian] minds, societies, and civilizations” (ibid.12). For him, “each myth taken separately exists as the limited application of a pattern, which is gradually revealed by the relations of reciprocal intelligibility discerned between several myths” (ibid.13). An

enterprise which aims to build up an interpretative system for Amerindian mythology based on its common patterns greatly exceeds the remit of my own project, but it nonetheless provides a useful methodological platform and heuristic insights.

Gow (2001:1), for his part, states with regard to his book about the history of a Piro myth:

“[it] explores the possibility of uniting two of the most important projects in European Anthropology. The first is Malinowski’s development of methods for the collection of ethnographic data through fieldwork by participant observation, and for the analysis of such data in order to elucidate the hold which life has for the people so studied. The second is Lévi-Strauss’s reassertion of the importance of historical methods in anthropology, developed in his analysis of indigenous American mythology.”

Gow goes on to argue for the proper use of historical methods in anthropology, particularly in relation to myth analysis. He criticizes, for instance, Turner (1988) for his interpretation of a Kayapo myth of the arrival of Europeans. In historical terms, Turner’s interpretation is not completely successful, according to Gow, because he fails to show evidence of how the myth has been transformed from previous versions.

In the case at hand, there are other recorded versions of the myth, narrated by members of the Enxet people. The most complete is the “The first appearance of cows and horses”, narrated by Félix Bogado and published by the Anglican Church in 1991. Susnik (1977:168) mentions another Enxet version, whose narrator(s) is(are) unknown for she cites as her source only “the tradition of the elders”. When exactly she gathered that “tradition” is also unknown, although we know from her publications and observations that she carried out field research amongst the Enxet in 1952, 1954, 1963 and 1976 (ibid.271). Despite this being a relatively short span of time – fifty years at most – the historical changes registered during that period are significant. By relating both the Angaité and the Enxet narratives to historical circumstances and events – some of which have already been presented in the previous chapter – it will become apparent how the obliteration of time operates through them.

3.2 The context and the intentions of telling the myth

As I have already mentioned, Agapito narrated the myth of the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” on the same evening that he related the “Arrival of Paraguayans” and other myths. The conversation began that evening with a comparison of past and present shamanism, in the course of which Agapito criticized one shaman, whom we both knew, as being inauthentic and undeservedly favoured by the NGO for which I used to work (see chapter 2). He also criticized a language promoter involved in the Angaité revitalization programme who used to bring provisions in order to gather people from different villages. His technique, Agapito assured, was of no use as “he does not properly learn the language but just writes down the words” (Fieldnotes, 18/1/2005). Agapito went on to refer to the powers, deeds and perils of traditional shamanism, starting with a description of the shaman’s ability to throw darts at game animals in order to hunt them down and feed the community. From my knowledge of the literature on the subject, I commented that some shamans were jaguars, to which Agapito replied by telling me about the shaman who converted himself into a jaguar to go hunting capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) to feed his people and eventually ended up killing his own two sons.¹⁵⁷ There followed several *Nanek Anya*, most of which made reference to shamans and/or Paraguayans. Agapito’s inclusion of the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” follows, therefore, from the fact that the conversation started with the issue of shamans and their relationship with powerful outsiders (the members of a Paraguayan NGO). What better case in point for a conversation about past and present shamanic practices than a *Nanek Anya* related to shamans and their Paraguayan auxiliary spirit *Valay Veske*, Chief of the Paraguayans? The point is self-evident. The conversation also alluded to the misleading attempts of a Paraguayan to learn the Angaité language.

What is not obvious – nor explicitly mentioned in our conversation – is that Agapito himself is a shaman and that, from his point of view, I was a powerful Paraguayan. He initiated the conversation by explicitly stating what he considered to be improper types of

¹⁵⁷ Clastres (1987[1975]:140ff.) discusses the transformation of shamans into jaguars and vice versa. The transformation, however, seems not to be restricted to male shamans. Palmer (2005:94) tells that, amongst the Wichí of the Argentine Chaco, women *in extremis* “assume the characteristics of the jaguar” and also mentions the existence of a narrative in which a woman transforms into a jaguar. Grubb (1914:61-62) refers to a similar, ancient version of Agapito’s myth of the jaguar-shaman in which a man wanted to marry the human wife of a male Jaguar and killed the offspring of the jaguar-human couple.

attitude in relations between shamans and powerful Paraguayans, and between Paraguayans and Angaité storytellers. Then he expanded on the *Nanek Anya* in which the agency of shamans and/or Paraguayans – singly or in relation to each other – is problematic and complex. I said from the beginning that I wanted to learn the Angaité language and everything about the past, but what I did not realize beforehand was that, for Agapito, such apprenticeship was not restricted to acquiring linguistic capabilities – far less, to simply writing down Angaité words. As we will see in the following chapter, learning the Angaité language implied, for Agapito, my acquisition of a sort of shamanic knowledge. Another issue that was central to the conversation – as well as cutting across our entire relationship and the broader framework of past and present relations between the Angaité people and Paraguayans – is the provision of subsistence, among the means for which the abilities of shamans and the wealth of Paraguayans stand out.

I believe, then, that the main problem posed in the conversation – and expounded in most of the *Nanek Anya* told that night – is how the two terms, i.e. shamanic power and Paraguayan wealth, succeed (or not) in supplying the needs of the community, thereby allowing the members to “live well”. The posing of the problem did not owe itself to a premeditated agenda on Agapito’s part or to calculated interventions on the part of the ethnographer, but rather arose as a result of a meandering sequence of discussion topics and narratives. None the less, Agapito ostensibly wanted to make sure that I was well informed about the operation of shamanic powers in the past and about the disastrous consequences ensuing from their mismanagement, where by mismanagement is understood lack of control and disregard for proper social behaviour.¹⁵⁸ He then linked shamanic power to the issue of Paraguayan wealth, both in the “Arrival of Paraguayans” and in the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle”. Both myths ratify the impossibility for the Angaité of achieving such wealth, and in both cases this is attributed to their own actions: in one case, it is apparently a shaman who tells the people not to eat the *valayo* food, thereby wasting an empowering opportunity; in the other, two members of the community interfere in the shamanic endeavours, again to the detriment of social well-being. In both myths the interference is produced by a negative sensory element: poisonous food and a disturbing sexual odour, respectively.

¹⁵⁸ Agapito also referred that night to the saga of *Pelhten*, Moon (see chapter 2, and Appendix 1), who, when he was still human, was a great sorcerer and *Apmovana anya* (“capable of telling/making up stories”). In so doing, he added the talent of storytelling to the ancient shaman’s abilities.

For reasons that will become clear in chapter 4, the Paraguayans' wealth is not understood in Agapito's narratives as a physical property but as a generative faculty comparable to shamanic power and, as such, linked to auxiliary beings in their capacity as owners of specific goods. The core theme, therefore, of our conversation that night, and the associated storytelling, was the misunderstanding between different agents such as shamans and Paraguayans, and the mismatching of their respective agencies and abilities. It is a theme that reflected the predicament faced by Agapito and myself, in our respective capacities as shaman and Paraguayan, at that early stage in our relationship. As already mentioned, the problem was not manifestly expressed. It was suggested by exposing the difficulties that our reciprocal agencies could bring into being. As human agents ethnically and historically constituted in different ways, our respective agencies could and would be mutually transformative by virtue of the relational knowledge referred to in chapter 1. That is, the knowledge acquired through engaging with others is not neutral but, rather, implies a transformation of the self in terms of the other. As the narratives unfold, it emerges that the abuse or misuse of the knowledge derived from that engagement may have a negative transformative impact, as well as affecting the relationship between the terms involved, as in the case of the two shamans and *Valay Veske*.

In sum, Agapito's narration of the myth can be understood on a variety of levels: as a lesson in ancient Angaité shamanism, in the negative aspects of the relation between shamans and Paraguayans, and in the problems associated with their respective generative powers, each of which provides for the subsistence needs of society. At the same time, on a personal level, Agapito was reflecting on the possibility that our own relationship might be affected by our respective agencies.

3.3 The historicity of the myth and the obliteration of time

The "Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle" incorporates elements that date back, at most, to the arrival of Paraguayans and cattle in the first two decades of the 20th century. It should be noted that the myth talks not only about Paraguayans and cattle, but also about idiosyncratic features of contemporary ranches, such as stores, cowboys and the legal niceties of cattle-ownership (branding and transportation licences). The myth, then,

is a historical object in the sense that it represents the dilemmas and predicaments encountered by the Angaité as ranches encroached on their territory. As such, it transforms or re-elaborates unknown pre-existing narratives – or perhaps the earlier Enxet version – in such a way as to explain how the Angaité’s present-day circumstances came into being. A crucial aspect of Angaité history to be borne in mind is that, although they now form part of the La Patria communities, they were once enclosed by the western ranches of the IPC Company.

3.3.1 Enlhet/Enenlhet cosmology and “ancient shamans”

The “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” introduces elements belonging to a critical period in time. By examining the myth we can account for changes that affected both shamans as providers and their auxiliary spirits, the powerful owners of things. As a backdrop to the analysis, I shall give here a brief account of the cosmology of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, relying mainly for this purpose on the literature as my own fieldwork data relates more to specific shamanic practices than to overarching cosmological systems.

To begin with, it is important to stress that the cosmology of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples is not limited to shamanic auxiliary spirits. Apart from the latter, there are other metaphysical beings – like ghosts and maleficent beings – all of which, under normal circumstances, are invisible for most people, except shamans (cf. Albert and Kopenawa, cited by Viveiros de Castro, 2006:324). It is appropriate to refer to these beings as “spirits”. Kidd (1992:39, 1999b:34-35) observes that, in the multilayered universe of the Enxet, some spirits are classified as *énxet* (people) – and they become angry if called otherwise – in contrast to others classified as *askok* (things).¹⁵⁹

This idiosyncratic distinction makes it difficult in this case to fully consent with Viveiros de Castro’s (2006:326-327) arguments on the matter of the Amerindian ontology of spirits, which I transcribe here at length:

“But if Amazonian concepts of ‘spirit’ are not rigorously speaking taxonomic entities,

¹⁵⁹ Kidd (1992:39) added ghosts (*eghag’ak*) as a third category of *énxet* spirits. In his later works (Kidd, 1999a, 1999b), however, they are not included as a distinctive category, suggesting that ghosts, whether of people or of animals, fall within in one of the two already mentioned categories.

but names of relations, movements and events, then it is probably just as improbable that notions such as ‘animal’ and ‘human’ are elements of a static typology of genres of being or categorical macro-forms of an ‘ethnobiological’ classification. I am led to imagine, on the contrary, a single cosmic domain of transductivity (Simondon 1995), a basal animic field within which the living, the dead, the whites, the animals and the other ‘forest beings,’ the anthropomorphic and terionymic mythic personae, and the *xapiripë* shamanic images [of the Yanomami people] are only so many different intensive vibrations or modulations. The ‘human mode’ can be imagined, then, as the fundamental frequency of this animic field we can call meta-human — given that human form (internal and external) is the aperceptive reference of this domain, since every entity situated in a subject position perceives itself *sub specie humanitatis* —; living species and other natural kinds (including our own species) can be imagined to inhabit this field’s domain of visibility; while ‘spirits,’ in contrast, can be imagined as vibrational modes or frequencies of the animic field found both below (granular tininess, diminutive size) and above (anomalism, excess) the perceptual limits of the naked, i.e. non-medicated, human eye.”

This is not exactly applicable to the Enxet, who, as indicated above, have a specific taxonomy of metaphysical beings. Furthermore, as Kidd (1999b:35) remarks:

“The Enxet differ from many South American indigenous peoples in that they do not conceive of animals as people. They understand animals to be nothing more than animals - literally ‘wild things’ (*askok nawhak*) - even though the animals of mythic time are described as if they were human”.¹⁶⁰

Grant (2006:42) makes the same point for the Nivacle, for whom animals are not people “but nothing more than ‘wild animals’ (*yaquisetes*)”. In the cosmologies of the Enxet and other Chaco peoples, therefore, the “human mode” – i.e. person/people/*énxet* – occupies the referential position as subject. Such a position clearly distinguishes “non-human” modes – animals, plants and *askok*-type spirits – and arguably also the “not so human” and “meta-human” modes of foreigners and *énxet*-type spirits, respectively. There is, then, a difference between humans and non-human beings which is not simply one of degree, but more categorical. The difference is stressed with regard to the relationship between certain

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of Amazonian notions of “animals”, see Viveiros de Castro, 2006:327-329; on Amerindian perspectivism, see Viveiros de Castro, 1998.

terms, e.g. humans and animals, while being less categorical as regards other terms, e.g. humans and “human” spirits. Thus, Viveiros de Castro’s “basal animic field” is partially, but not entirely, dismissed by Enlhet-Enenlhet cosmology, the terms of which move within and beyond that “animic field”, ranging from humans at the pivotal point to lesser human modes, such as spirits, and the non-human mode of “things” (*askok*), e.g. plants, animals and other spirits.

The Angaité’s representation of spirits includes both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic markers. The spirits classified as *énxet/enlhet* share several human features: they live like people, according to shamans (cf. Arenas, 1981:48); they look like certain types of people (e.g. the wild women spirits, *kelána nawhak*, and the blond children spirits, *hémopey*, of the Enxet: Kidd, 1999b:35); they behave like people (e.g. the *chóneygmen* of the Enxet or *Valay Veske* of the Angaité); and they perceive themselves as people.

The *askok*-type spirits more closely resemble animals (e.g. *yamyátayem*, “similar to an alligator”) or monstrous humans, e.g. *Tomoyauhan* (Fieldnotes, 19/1/2005; see chapter 2, Appendix 1), equivalent to the Enxet’s hairy honey-eating beast *Tamayawhan* (Kidd, 1999b:36).¹⁶¹ Other spirits, mostly malevolent, are the Enxet’s skeleton-like *kelyekhama* (Kidd, *ibid.*:33-34), the Enlhet’s ugly-faced *Yaawi* (Arenas, 1981:32-35) and the Angaité’s *Yekok* spirit (Franco and Imaz, 2006:90). Ghosts may appear as people or as animals, e.g. jaguar, horse or rhea (Kidd, *ibid.*; Arenas, 1981:42).

The Enlhet-Enenlhet speak of several contiguous cosmic layers/sections (see for the Nivacle Grant, 2006:37): an underworld, the earth, and one or two upper worlds, as well as other layers or sections to the west or to the east (see, for example, the Angaité myths in Biedermann and Zanardini, 2001:146ff). However, people usually disagree as to the number of contiguous layers/sections that compose the cosmos (cf. Kidd, 1999b:35). By the same token, the location of the aforementioned spirits in the multiple cosmic layers varies according to the speaker, as does the description of those spirits and, indeed, their inclusion in or omission from the pantheon of metaphysical beings.

¹⁶¹ In the Chaco, transformation into this type of spirit (cf. the black ogre *ts’samtaj* of the Nivacle: Grant 2006:38) seems commonly to result from violating food taboos: e.g. eating meat and honey during either male or female transformational states such as pregnancy, menstruation and shamanic initiation.

It should also be stressed that interactions between human and non-human beings are not confined to shamans alone. As Viveiros de Castro (2006:322) argues following Campbell (1989), the difference between shamans and “lay-people is a question of degree, not nature [for the words] we translate as ‘shaman’ do not designate something which one ‘is,’ but something which one ‘has’ – an adjectival and relational quality or capacity rather than a substantive attribute”. Such capacities or attributes in the mediation with spirits inhere not only in artefacts, e.g. talismans, but also in persons other than those properly called shamans, e.g. midwives (cf. Franco and Imaz, 2006:71-72).

Another important element of Enlhet-Enenlhet cosmology is the “soul/dream” – in Angaité: *vanmongkoma* (cf. Franco and Imaz, 2006:93); in Enxet: *-wanmagko* (Kidd, 1999b:33; Susnik, 1977:255) – which concept “encapsulates the twin notions of dreaming and vitality” (Kidd, *ibid.*).¹⁶² The number of *vanmongkoma* varies, with some shamans mentioning up to twelve per person (Kidd, *ibid.*39). While a person sleeps – or a shaman is in trance and/or singing – his/her *vanmongkoma* travels through the different layers of reality and meets with the spirits. In the case of the shaman, the encounter is voluntary; in the case of the non-shaman, it is involuntary and generally inauspicious.

The spiritual owners of plants, animals and/or things are the auxiliary spirits of shamans. They are referred to in various ways. The Enxet generally call them “owners” – *-ykxa* (Kidd, *ibid.*35) or *otip* (Susnik, 1977:168) – while shamans refer to them as *[-Jásenneykha*, “those one tells what to do” (Kidd, 1999b:39). Both the Enxet and the Angaité also refer to a shaman’s auxiliary spirit as his (or her) “ability” (*apmowána* and *apmovana* respectively).¹⁶³ The Angaité shaman’s auxiliary spirit is the “chief” (*Veske*) or “father” (*apyapong/anyapong*) of what it owns: for example, *Vaka Aveske* and *yengmen anyapong kama yetapeyem anyapong* (“the father of the water and the caimans”: Franco and Imaz, 2006:99).¹⁶⁴ The auxiliary spirits can belong either to the *énxet/enlhet* or to the *askok* categories (Kidd, 1999b:36, 1992:39). In Guarani, both auxiliary spirit and shaman

¹⁶² The term is always used with a possessive prefix, as in *asvanmongkoma* (“my *vanmongkoma*”).

¹⁶³ The word derives from the verb *[-]wanche* (Enxet) or *[-]vanke* (Angaité), meaning to “be able”. Kidd (1999b:40) notes that the term approximates to our idea of “power”, though it is always used in a concrete, personal sense. The Nivacle terms for shaman (*Tôiyeej*) and his/her auxiliary spirits and curing songs (*tôijes*) derive from the word *tôi*, meaning both “knowledge” and “ability” (Grant, 2006:37). See below for an analysis of equivalent terms in the Enlhet-Enenlhet languages.

¹⁶⁴ The terms *apyapong* and *anyapong* are male and female nouns, respectively. For the Nivacle, these “father” spirits of animals, fish and plants are called *tatac* (Grant, 2006:42).

are sometimes referred to as “wise man” (*Arandu*).

Let us now turn to the past shamanic practices of the Angaité. I am aware that the expression “past practices” is problematic, as it covers a wide variety of practices that include those that were recorded at the beginning of colonization, those that are said by the Angaité themselves to belong to the past and are no longer performed (at least, not conspicuously) and, additionally, those that are still carried out. In this sense, the expression is a diachronic concept with certain synchronic connotations. It should be emphasized that the past/present division is not mine alone, but rather is based on the Angaité’s own references to the “ancient shamans” (*nanoye kelyaholhma*) and on the comparisons they make with contemporary shamanism. However precarious the characterization may be, it allows us to observe certain changes that Angaité shamanism has undergone during the period of time studied, i.e. 1880 to the present. It also reveals that, despite its transformations over time, Angaité shamanism is and always was an essentially transformative practice, both at a symbolic and at a phenomenological level.

Certain features of traditional Angaité shamanism can be gleaned from available documentary sources such as the general literature on the indigenous peoples of the Chaco (Métraux, 1963[1944]:360-365), travellers’ accounts (see for instance Cominges, 1882) and the *Nanek Anya* of the Enlhet and the Enxet, as reproduced in historical reports (Grubb, 1904, 1911, 1914; Hunt, 1933; Craig, 1935) and ethnographic observation (Kidd, 1992, 1999a, 1999b; Arenas, 1981). Kidd’s description (1999a:6) of Enxet ancient shamanism is consonant with that given by Arenas (1981) for the Enlhet, and it also concurs with the information provided by contemporary Angaité shamans and apprentices (cf. Amarilla 2006; Franco and Imaz 2006):

Indigenous leaders - the *wese* - were, essentially, men of power who used this power to generate and protect their communities. The source of their power was the “outside” and was derived from links that they maintained with the many dangerous and often malevolent spiritual beings that inhabited their cosmos. In effect, the *wese* were shamans although it needs to be pointed out that not all shamans were *wese*. To achieve a relationship with a spiritual being a shaman had to pass through a series of initiation rites that involved taking plants, placing them in containers of water and leaving them to ferment. Once the mixture had putrefied

it would be drunk by the initiate who would fast until, in his dream, he had an encounter with the spiritual “owner” of the plant who would teach him its song and become his auxiliary spirit. Whenever the shaman sang the song, he could command the spirit to do his bidding, either to generate life - for example, by healing the sick or assisting in the production of food - or to destroy it by sending his spirits to attack and harm his enemies.

Shamans only became *wese* by fulfilling two essential criteria. First of all, they needed to be sufficiently powerful to be capable of protecting their community.¹⁶⁵ Secondly, they had to use their power legitimately by actively taking care of their co-residents. This involved, on the one hand, risking their lives in the battlefields of the cosmos to save those members of their communities who were being attacked by malevolent shamans and, on the other, demonstrating their generosity to their community by providing them with food and other material benefits.

As was mentioned above, the Angaité term *veske* is equivalent to Enxet *wese*, which was used in the past for the shaman/leader. Bearing in mind that, as Kidd points out, not all shamans were leaders (cf. Kalish, 2008:3), it follows that the term primarily refers to the chief/leader. Indeed, the Angaité use a specific category for shamans: *apyoholhma* (in Enxet: *-yohoxma*).¹⁶⁶

The fermented plant brews used by the Angaité in shamanic training are generically called *panaktema*, “remedies”/“medicines”. Each of the different plants used as sources of knowledge has a specific name: for instance, the Enlhet’s *Koonasàngayk yaamît*, “plant of the owner of the lagoon” (*Limnocharis flava*, Arenas, 1981:111) or the Angaité’s *Lhema Paikok*, “one ear” (an unidentified species which I tried in the course of my shamanic training attempts under the scrutiny of Agapito, see chapter 4). Traditionally, the fermented mixture could also include a wide variety of ingredients, apart from plants (Arenas, 1981:28), including dead animals or their parts (Grubb, 1911:90). The fasting

¹⁶⁵ Original footnote: Grubb (1911:145, 161).

¹⁶⁶ Kalish (2008) analyses the semantic origin of the word in Enlhet-Enenlhet languages. He explains that it originates from a verbal descriptive phrase to which is attached a prefix that indicates both a first-person singular or plural speaker and a second- or third-person singular referent or addressee (male). By a process of conventionalization, the verbal descriptive phrase becomes a noun (ibid.1-2). Kalish states that the semantic origin of the term can be traced in some but not all Enlhet-Enenlhet languages. The Guaná variant (*apyahaalhma*), for example, is a combination of the subjunctive form of the verb to “know” (*apyaha*) and the noun *alhma*, “space” (or “forest”). Thus, the phrase originally and literally means “he who knows space” (ibid.2). The Enlhet equivalent (*apyoholhma*) means, approximately, “person with power” (ibid.1), which meaning applies also to the corresponding Angaité term.

stage would be followed by the ingestion of plants or other non-foods such as toads, snakes or birds (Métraux, 1963[1944]:360), according to the capacities with which they were credited and the specific master spirit the apprentice wanted as an auxiliary. The contemporary transformation of former shamanic techniques is marked by the addition of the new foreign objects to the ritual foods: e.g. gunpowder consumption affords protection against bullets (Simon Duarte of Urunday village, La Patria, interview of 22/4/2005; see also chapter 4).

Kidd's account presents the basic elements and stages of traditional shamanic initiation: the shaman fasts and drinks a fermented mixture of plants and additional items. He/she then dreams about the owner of the plant/object used and learns its song, whereby the owner becomes his/her auxiliary spirit. With the latter's help, he/she can cure, kill and provide for his/her people.¹⁶⁷ In their dreams, or while singing and travelling in trance to the place of the owners of things, shamans recognize the spirits as people and are themselves recognised as such by them. Mita Puku, one of the shamans interviewed by Arenas (1981:29), explains this clearly:

"I study the snake, the jaguar as well. I saw the jaguar as people, and also the snake. I saw them in my dreams. Like us, the snakes have their gardens, I saw the snake women eating sweet potatoes together. A lot of snake people. Those people are the real owners of the snake. They talked to me in my dream. There was a huge snake I was afraid of, and they told me not to be afraid. It was through the big one that I got to learn about the snake ... Thus, when a snake bites me there is no danger because I know the owner of snakes ... I also studied the jaguar and I have seen him in my dreams. I went in my dream to the real owner of the jaguar. He talked to me, he was a very angry person ... the sky of the jaguar is in the direction of the rising sun; the owner of snakes lives in the sky towards where the sun sets". [my translation]

¹⁶⁷ The *Nanek Anya* repeatedly tell how in the past shamans provided for their people, particularly through the provision of food. A case in point is Agapito's story about the shaman who transformed himself into a jaguar to hunt capybara for his people (see also Amarilla, 2006:715; Franco and Imaz, 2006:109,112; with reference to the Enlhet, see Arenas, 1981:43-70).

It is in this sense that Angaité shamanism and cosmology (and those of the Enlhet-Enenlhet in general) reflect Amerindian “perspectivism” (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 1998), as some (but not all) beings are perceived by shamans in dreams and in trance – and perceive themselves – as human.

Above all, though, it should be stressed that Angaité cosmology, whether in its past or present form, does not emerge as a homogeneously structured conceptual system. Rather, it is learned, lived and interpreted experientially and, therefore, it is diversely explained by different shamans and non-shamans. There is variation in terms both of the cosmic layers and of the dwellings of auxiliary spirits and other beings, e.g. the sky of the snakes, the spirits of the forest, the underwater inhabitants of rivers, swamps, and so on. There is also variation as regards the ways in which access is gained to other cosmic layers in order to perceive – and be perceived by – the beings that inhabit them.

3.3.2 Reshaping auxiliary beings in and beyond the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle”

The myth of the “Two shamans” opens with the apparently comic detail of the “chicha” (*Kelhtoma anmen*) that the protagonists were drinking before their encounter with *Valay Veske*. Why were the shamans drunk when they embarked on their apparently hazardous trans-worldly journey? Their condition cannot be understood as a means of explaining their subsequent failure to secure the cattle obtained from *Valay Veske* because, as it is hinted at the end of the narrative, they were also drunk on the second occasion on which they went to the *alvata*, when (as on subsequent occasions) they were successful in acquiring sheep and other foreign goods.

A useful clue to the interpretation of the “chicha” detail is found in Mita Puku’s description of Enlhet shamanic practices (Arenas 1981:53, 65-66):

To be cultivators, they [the shamans] study and drink a fermented brew made from a variety of fruits or from the roots of sweet potato or manioc, etc. Then, **when they drink *chicha*, they sing and say: “Well, I am going to make the gardens plentiful”**. And it is true, because good harvests come: big roots, good squash fruits. **The drunken shaman**

speaks with the *ahangauk* (soul-spirit) of the plants. The *ahangauk*, of course, speaks to him. [my emphasis]

Likewise, the Enlhet shaman Lasto tells that a “chicha” feast was propitiatory of the gardening season: “when they finish preparing the land and planting, they organize a feast and call the wise man ... who gets drunk and starts to sing ... he causes it to rain throughout the night” (Arenas 1981:53).

Whether to make it rain or to make gardens grow, the shamans’ ingestion of “chicha” – during the gardening season, by definition – was the means of achieving affluence. Once drunk, the shamans sang, contacted their auxiliary spirits and provided their people with the benefits. The detail of the two drunken shamans was not incidental, therefore, but a depiction of how the Angaité understand that it is possible to obtain things. The enhancing nature of the “chicha” ensures a generous yield. Singing is a related shamanic activity for, by means of their chanting, shamans contact their auxiliary spirits and speak to them.

In the course of their drinking, the two shamans decide to go and fetch tobacco. At first sight, this apparently anecdotal detail reflects the predilection of most adult Angaité men and women – whether sober or drunk – for chewing tobacco.¹⁶⁸ Many elders comment that, when they do not have tobacco to chew or *yerba mate* to drink, they suffer headaches. An alternative interpretation is that tobacco, despite its being an indigenous produce (Grubb, 1911:73) of mythological origin (Pittini, 1924; Arenas, 1981), has long been a trading commodity acquired from the Paraguayans (Susnik, 1953:5).¹⁶⁹ Therefore,

¹⁶⁸ Smoking tobacco in pipes was very common amongst the Angaité and other indigenous peoples of the Chaco (Craig, 1935:224; Grubb, 1911:194; Susnik, 1953:1). The practice is referred to in several narratives that were related to me by e.g. Andres Tome (interviewed 23/5/2005), Agapito and Agustina Aguilera. I used to carry around a pipe given to me in the Nahua community of Serjali of the Bajo Urumbamba, Peru. On seeing it, Angaité elders, both male and female, would instantly smile and laugh, saying: *Lhepop!* (in *Kovalhok*: “pipe”). Pipes are no longer common, and male and female adults and elders just chew tobacco leaf, a custom also widespread among Paraguayans.

¹⁶⁹ Arenas (1981:299-301) recorded two broadly similar versions of the myth of the origin of tobacco (narrated by Vyato and Pablo Saavedra). Briefly the myth tells of a man converted into an ant, *Maa Yamok*, who killed his wife. From her remains (head lice) grew the tobacco plant. *Maa Yamok* secretly smoked the tobacco leaves in his pipe at night but, once discovered, he was forced to share them with his people. I read the two narratives to Agapito and he responded by telling me a different but, nonetheless, quite similar version (Fieldnotes 25/10/2005). Pittini (1924:82) transcribed a version of the same myth – told at least 49 years before those registered by Arenas and 81 years before the version related by Agapito – whose protagonist is called *Maiyukuruk*, a name not dissimilar to *Maa Yamok*. Pittini’s version differs from Arenas’ inasmuch as the tobacco grew from the ashes of the dead body of *Maiyukuruk*’s wife and his secret indulgence was discovered by the owl.

the shamans of the myth were going to obtain it from the Paraguayans – or, better said, from the “Chief of the Paraguayans”, *Valay Veske*, the owner of all things Paraguayan. Last but not least, as we will see, the underwater world is mentioned – by, for example, the Enlhet (Arenas, 1981:54) – as the dwelling-place of the spirit “owner” of tobacco.

In the narrative, the house of *Valay Veske* is underwater, in the *alvata*, and it looks like a Paraguayan house (*malha tegma Valay lhangkok*). Why is the house located in the *alvata* rather than in the *vatsom*, the River Paraguay? As we saw in chapter 2, the myth of the “Arrival of Paraguayans” indicates that the latter came up the Paraguay River in a steamboat. As we will see from a comparison with the Enxet version, the detail of the *alvata* represents an adaptation of the myth to the geographical (and ethnic) context in which it was told.

Despite contextual variations, two constant features that emerge are, on the one hand, the association between spiritual beings and water and, on the other, their resemblance to Paraguayans. The underwater world provides an adequate milieu for the ontological transformation of (human) reality, as the dark waters of the swamps and rivers of the Chaco mostly disable the human sense of sight. It is a medium in which the reality of other beings prevails, a reality to which humans can have access only as shamans. Non-shamans occasionally encounter those beings when fishing, swimming or bathing, but such encounters are largely considered to be potential sources of misfortune for the person(s) involved.¹⁷⁰ Among the Enxet, the *Choneygmen* (“From the water”) are “the ‘owners’ of many of the plants in the swamps” (Kidd, 1999b:36):

“Contemporary Enxet describe these water spirits as similar in appearance to Paraguayan soldiers, except for the fact that they are short in stature, and they inhabit the swamps of the Chaco in houses that are similar to those of Concepcion. They are the most common auxiliary spirits to be used by shamans”.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Agapito commented that the spirit “owners” of fish can take a fisherman’s catch away from him (Fieldnotes, 27/7/2006; cf. Arenas, 1981:55). Other spirits are dangerous, such as *Yegmen askok*, *Akyeva Anyapong*, *Yamweike* or *Yamyatayem*, some of which have the appearance of a giant serpent which swallows people (Craig, 1935:281, Kidd, 1999b:34).

¹⁷¹ Kidd, 1999a:9-10. The *Choneygmen* also cultivate gardens (Kidd, 1992:39). For this reason Kidd argues that these spirits may be the same as the *Koonaśangayk* of the Enlhet, for both are owners of cultivated plants that apparently grow wild in the forest but are actually the produce of the spirits themselves.

In the drier areas of Enxet territory, further to the west, are found the spirits of *Walé Apyepmeyk* (“Father of Paraguayans”), who also look like Paraguayan soldiers and are said by some to be the ghosts of those who died in the Chaco War (Kidd, 1999b:36). Kidd (1999a:9) also mentions the *Egyá pam* (“Our father”) spirits, a category of spirits pertaining to a shamanic cult linked to Anglican missionary influence (see chapter 4) but which closely resemble the *Choneygmen* inasmuch as they are both of short stature.¹⁷²

For analytical purposes, a series of correlations can be established among Enlhet-Enenlhet Owner/Master auxiliary spirits. Their features vary conspicuously according to geographical area, historical period, ethnic context and the kind of “other” with whom they are associated – or in whom they originate. Starting with the Enlhet’s *Koonašangayk* (“Father of the lagoon”) – master of fish and certain (underwater, garden and wild) plants – Arenas (1981:55) associates this powerful being with *Koonalwaata* (“From the *alvata*/small river”), an underwater master of fish that looks like a Mennonite.¹⁷³ The aforementioned *Choneygmen* of the Enxet share in common with the Angaité’s *Valay Veske* their underwater abode, their Paraguayan-style houses and their Paraguayan appearance. They differ in that the *Choneygmen* live in the swamps and *Valay Veske* in the *alvata*, in which respect the latter is similar to *Koonalwata*. As “Chief of the Paraguayans”, *Valay Veske* is close in name to the Enxet’s *Walé Apyepmeyk*, “Father of Paraguayans”, though their respective domains correspond to different sociohistorical situations: i.e. Paraguayan ranches, in the case of *Valay Veske*, and Paraguayan battlefields in the case of *Walé Apyepmeyk*.

Without venturing to establish a hard-and-fast causal link, it is clear that the particular level of reality occupied by each type of spirit corresponds to the origin, circumstances and behaviour of the outsiders with whom it is associated. The fluvial arrival of

¹⁷² The *Choneygmen*, *Walé Apyepmeyk* and *Egyá pam* spirits of the Enxet are comparable in terms of their origin and features to the *chivosis* spirits of the Nivacle. The latter are similar, in particular, to the *Choneygmen*, inasmuch as they are said to be “the spirits of dead and aborted children” and are described as being “short and squat with round stomachs” (Grant, 2006:37-38). A further similarity consists in the fact that cartoon characters – on television or in print – are classified as *chivosis* by the Nivacle (Grant, *ibid.*) and, for Enxet shamans, they are a means of access to *Walé Apyepmeyk* spirits (Kidd, 1999b:38). The shortness of all these Chaco spirits recalls the “granular tininess, diminutive size” which Viveiros de Castro (2006:327) discusses in relation to Yanomami spirits (see above). An additional comparison can be made between *xapiripë* luminosity (*ibid.*320ff) and the *Egyá pam*, whose home is said to be “full of light” (Kidd, 1999a:10).

¹⁷³ The master of fish (*Koonašangayk*) seems to have more than one name for the Enlhet. According to Arenas (1981:54-55), the spirit is also referred to as *Yap’mok*, which Arenas translates as “Mother of the fish”, and as *Kílašmangyap* (“Father of the fish”). It is described as “a huge fish with big whiskers” (*ibid.*).

Paraguayans and Mennonites locates the *Choneygmen*, *Koonalwaata* and *Valay Veske* in swamps and rivers; the deaths of Paraguayan soldiers locates *Walé Apyepmeyk* in the drier, western areas; the prayers directed to heaven by missionaries locate *Egyápam* in the above level. All these superempirical beings, whether or not they are related to outsiders, are masters of things, be it garden plants, water plants and/or fish (*Koonaśangayk*, *Koonalwaata*, *Choneygmen*) or cattle and Paraguayan/foreign goods (*Valay Veske*, *Egyápam*, *Walé Apketkok*).¹⁷⁴

Table 2. Auxiliary spirits of Enlhet-Enenlhet shamans

AUXILIARY SPIRIT	ETHNICITY	APPEARANCE OR ORIGIN	MASTER/OWNER OF	LOCATION
<i>Choneygmen</i>	Enxet	Short, dressed like Paraguayan soldiers	Cultivated plants	Underwater (swamps)
<i>Walé Apyemeyk</i>	Enxet	Short, ghosts of dead Paraguayan soldiers	n.d.	Dry western area
<i>Egyápam</i> or <i>Pense Ekyepma</i>	Enxet	Like <i>Choneygmen</i> but with a short skirt	Manufactured goods	Sky
<i>Walé Apketkok</i>	Enxet	Short, like a small Paraguayan	Cattle and horses	Underwater (Paraguay River)
<i>Koonaśangayk</i> or <i>Yap'mok</i> or <i>Kílaśmangyap</i> or <i>Yengmen Aśkok</i>	Enlhet	Like a big fish	Cultivated plants and fish	Underwater (lagoons)
<i>Koonalwaata</i>	Enlhet	Blond and fair-skinned like the Mennonites	Fish	Underwater (streams)
<i>Valay Veske</i>	Angaité	Like a Paraguayan	Cattle, manufactured goods	Underwater (streams)
<i>Kelasma Veske</i> or <i>Yengmen Askok</i>	Angaité	n.d.	Fish	Underwater (streams)

¹⁷⁴ Kidd (1999b:39) does not specify the things to which the *Walé Apyepmeyk* are related as “masters”. However, his remark that “the use, for example, of cartoon characters will give the shaman access to the *Walé Apyepmeyk*” suggests that they are shamanic auxiliary spirits and, therefore, the masters of certain things.

Table 2 presents a schematic outline of Enlhet-Enenlhet auxiliary spirits, but it is far from exhaustive. There are, for example, other underwater beings: the Angaité's *Akyeva Anyapong*, "Father of the snake" (Franco and Imaz, 2006:99), and the Enxet's *Yamweyke*, "similar to a cow", and *Yamyatayem*, "similar to an alligator" (Kidd, 1999b:37). It bears repeating, then, that in Enlhet-Enenlhet cosmology the different levels of reality are populated by a multifarious variety of beings. It is arguable whether we are dealing with a variety of different beings or with a variety of names for the same beings (or both), but it can safely be said, following Kidd (ibid.), that the body of spirits of the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples is "both flexible and prone to innovations".

Such flexibility and innovation are evinced, precisely, by the spirits associated with the newcomers (in order to deal with whom indigenous shamanism underwent a process of transformation). The spirits that populated the space of the forest – e.g. the Enxet's *Kilyikhama* (Grubb, 1911:71) and the Angaité's *Yetephapkie* (Amarilla, 2006:568) – and those that inhabited the swamps and riachos – e.g. the *Yengmen Askok* - were up to a certain point replaced by spirits linked to the newcomers. In this manner, spirits of foreign appearance partially reshaped those of zoomorphic features, both in shamanic discourse and in storytelling. The replacement of *askok* (non-human) auxiliary spirits by foreign (meta-human) ones has the effect of reshaping previous practices and, thus, of erasing time. According to Viveiros's "animic field" concept, this historical process in which certain spirits disappear as a result of being reshaped by new ones is to be understood in terms of their relative "vibrational modes or frequencies": the "vibrations or modulations" of one set of spirits decrease in intensity while those of the other set increase.

Returning to the association between spiritual beings and water, a possible explanation for the association lies in the fact that

3.3.3 "New" auxiliary spirits and new things to master

The narrative continues with a warning from the people to the two shamans: "Come back safely". Obtaining cattle from *Valay Veske* was understood, then, to be a potentially hazardous task. The shamans submerge themselves beneath the surface of the *alvata*, leaving the water "bubbling". After a while, the two witnesses observe cattle coming on to the land. However, what emerge from the *alvata* are not merely cattle but a proper *tropa* –

a herd of cattle on the move, such as is found on a ranch – and with all the necessary means to take care of it: namely, fully equipped cowboy escorts and proof of ownership (in the form of a brand and legal papers).

There is a considerable difference between the legitimate (shamanic) acquisition of a *tropa* and an asymmetric exchange which, at most, yields only one or two head of cattle (as in the “Arrival of Paraguayans”). It also contrasts with the chance discovery (and hunting) of wild cattle (in Guaraní: *sagua’á*) in the forest. Through their possession of the requisite documents, the shamans and their people are in the same position as any ranchowner, in the latter’s legal terms. This emphasis on the *legal* aspects of cattle-ownership introduces a further historical feature, at the same time as it erases the cattle-hunting/trading period. It were as though present-day conditions – where the Angaité are without cattle and Paraguayans possess them in abundance – date back to the mythological incident of the two shamans’ failed attempt to acquire cattle for their people. The present, for the Angaité, is not, then, the result of successive, sequential stages. It is known, for example, that in pre-colonial times they traded for cattle with other indigenous peoples, as well as having resorted to cattle-rustling. With the massive introduction of cattle resulting from colonization, the Angaité and other Chaco peoples took to hunting the animals, for which they were progressively punished by the Paraguayans. This led to the situation in which the cattle were concentrated on ranches which, by dispossessing the Angaité of their territory, forcibly converted them into a workforce at the disposal of the ranchowners (principally, in the case of the Angaité, the IPC Company). Let us see, then, what can be gathered from the historical records with regard to the pre-colonial and early colonial periods in the Chaco.

3.3.4 The historical records of cattle and trading

Livestock on the American continent is of European origin. Although from as early as 1568 it was brought in large quantities to the Province of Paraguay from the Viceroyalty of Peru (Arad, 1973:185), it was not massively introduced into the Chaco before colonization of the area (circa 1890) and, therefore, was never of great importance to the subsistence economy of the indigenous peoples (Kidd, 1992:44). Early reports by Anglican missionaries noted the possession of cattle by southern (Enxet) neighbours of the

Angaité.¹⁷⁵ As for the Angaité themselves, Cominges (1882) did not mention the presence of cattle in the riverbank village of Cacique Michi – only horses – and contemporary accounts corroborate that, before the arrival of Paraguayans, cattle was also absent in hinterland Angaité villages. According to Andres Tome of the village of La Leona, in La Patria, who lived in his childhood both in *Yave Sage* and in *Maskoykaha* (Campo Flores Mission, see map 6):

We did not know Guarani. We did not see Paraguayans. We **did not have cows** and horses. We did have **sheep and goats**; we had lots of them. My father and my grandfather had them. Others among us had up to two thousand animals each. Everyone marked their animals in order to avoid confusion. [Fieldnotes, 5/5/2006]

Despite Cominges' and Tome's reports, it is not possible to know for certain whether or not other inland Angaité villages already had cattle at the time of the arrival of colonists, as is reported for the Enxet by the Anglicans. What we can know for sure is that, between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, cattle was massively introduced into the Chaco by companies and ranches (see chapter 2, Table 1). The cattle came from the eastern region, mainly from Concepción (Kleinpenning, 1991:152), but some companies imported livestock – particularly breeding specimens – directly from Argentina, Brazil and Britain (ibid.160; Craig, 1935:19). It is worth noting that, at the end of the Triple Alliance War (1865-1870), the Brazilians drove some 8,000 head of cattle – the entire cattle population of the San Salvador district of the department of Concepción – to the state of Matto Grosso do Sul (Kleinpenning, 1991:154). In order to do so:

“the *Matogroseños* supplied a hundred Mbayas and Caduveos with arms, which quickly allowed these Indians to terrorise the remaining population of northern Paraguay.¹⁷⁶ They killed as many men as they could, carried off the women they wanted, stole everything they could take with them and rounded up all the cattle they could find. About fifteen years later the *estancias* which had thus been created

¹⁷⁵ For instance, the missionaries “described a village with seventeen cattle, five horses and forty sheep and goats” (Kidd, 1992:44, citing Freund in SAMS Magazine 1893).

¹⁷⁶ The Mbaya, as they were traditionally known in Paraguay, where they maintained a relation of enmity with the Guarani and the Spaniards (Métraux, 1963[1944]:215), later moved to Brazil, where they are named Caduveo.

in Mato Grosso were to supply the animals needed to restore the cattle population in Concepción [Paraguay]". [Decoud, cited by Kleinpenning, *ibid.*]

Métraux (1963[1944]:216) corroborates this observation, remarking that "the Mbaya-Caduveo fought with the Brazilians in the Paraguayan War and raided the region of the Apa River, destroying the town of San Salvador". Grubb (1904:2-3) sheds light on the issue with the following first-hand testimony:

"From what we can gather from native accounts, the [Enxet] Indians do not seem to have taken part in the [Triple Alliance] war, but rather to have enjoyed it, as they profited by the confusion to cross the river and steal as many cattle as they could. An old Indian tells the story of the war thus: 'We heard firing and knew war was going on. We could not understand Christians killing each other – we only kill enemies; we never fight with members of our own tribe. We crossed over in our canoes at night to see what was the matter. We saw corpses in great numbers –we looked all round– no Christian near. We entered a house –no one there– we saw some cattle –no one in charge. We took all we could carry. The cattle we could not get to cross the river, so we killed all we could and took the meat. We continued to do this night after night. By day we feasted, by night we robbed. What a fine time we had! We wish the Christians would fight again!'"

Elsewhere Grubb (1911:115-116) adds that:

It is an acknowledged fact that many of them [Enxet] joined with other northern tribes in making incursions into Paraguay proper, after that country had become enfeebled by its five years struggle against the united forces of the Argentine and Uruguayan Republics, and the then-existing Empire of Brazil. The Indians had sacked several settlements and some small towns in Paraguay.

Kidd (1992:37) suggests that the Paraguayan towns to which Grubb was alluding in the above quotations were San Pedro and San Salvador, the latter located on the left bank of the Paraguay River, opposite the overlapping territories of the Enxet and the Angaité (cf. Cominges, 1882. Kemmerich, 1903/1904). There is no mention of the "northern tribes" (such as the Angaité and the Enxet) having joined the Mbaya-Caduveo in their "incursions

into Paraguay proper [Eastern Paraguay]”, though it is clear from the “old Indian’s” testimony that the Enxet at least were stealing cattle in the same area and during the same period.

During the post-war period, cattle undoubtedly formed part of the political economy of exchange and conflict between indigenous peoples and “Christians”. We have already mentioned that the Angaité traded with Paraguayans through the riverbank village of Cacique Michi, opposite Apa Colony. Cominges (1882:154) also tells of their relations with their indigenous neighbours:

“Today [the Angaité population] is not so numerous as it used to be a century ago, due, it seems, to an act of robbery they committed against the Guana. The latter joined the Mbaya, who at the time were their friends, and attacked the thieves by water and land with such promptitude, reserve and violence that it can be said they annihilated them. The few tribes which remain extend from Port Michi up to a dozen leagues to the south, almost all of them close to the riverbank. This, however, does not mean that there are not others in the interior of the Chaco, at a distance of up to fifteen or twenty leagues”.

Cominges’ account adds the detail that the Guana despised the Angaité. The same author also described a skirmish that occurred at the time of his expedition, on the eastern bank of the Paraguay River, in which the Guana – with the Angaité as occasional allies and with the help of Cominges himself – fought against the Mbaya (*ibid.*).

If the preceding reports are accurate, it seems that ethnic amities and rivalries changed quickly in the riverbank areas, which were populated both by different indigenous groups and by Paraguayans. The reports also indicate the movement of ethnic groups across what the authors imagined to be territorial boundaries, including the Paraguay River itself. A picture emerges of peaceful interethnic trade relations – both among indigenous peoples and with Paraguayans – which become conflictual in the event of horses or cattle being stolen. The cattle that Anglican missionaries observed some years later in Enxet villages probably originated in the aforementioned post-war raids on San Pedro and San Salvador, a fact which, as we shall see (section 3.4), coincides with the Enxet versions of the myth about cattle. Conversely, the Angaité myth of the “Two Shamans and the Owner of Cattle”

correlates with the fact that they did not take part in those raids – despite their inhabiting the area opposite San Salvador – and did not have access to cattle before colonization. If, then, historical events are taken as being *inspirational* to mythological narratives, the difference between the Angaité and Enxet versions of the myth can be interpreted in terms of the fact that the Enxet obtained cattle from the Paraguayans in the post-war period, whereas the Angaité did not (nor did they acquire the animals from other people such as the Guana).

It should be added that the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples may also have had access to cattle prior to colonization through trading with, or stealing from, the western Nivacle (formerly known as Ashluslay or Chulupi) of the Pilcomayo River basin. Métraux (1963[1944]:236) mentions that “Early in this [20th] century *Ashluslay* bands began to migrate every winter to the sugarcane plantations of the Argentine. Thus they obtained horses, cattle and many European goods”. He adds that one of the “Ashluslay” villages visited by the Swedish anthropologist Nordenskiöld in 1909 “had also about 200 cows and the same number of horses” (ibid.265). Bearing in mind that the Enlhet-Enxet traded “shell disks for blankets or domesticated animals” from the Manjuy (ibid.301), it seems reasonable to suppose that the Enxet – if not also the Angaité – acquired their few head of cattle from trading and/or stealing at both the western and the eastern extremes of their territory.

The existence of traditional indigenous exchange relations is indicated in the narrative by the exchange that the shamans make with their auxiliary spirit. Strings of *caraguata* (*Deinacanthon urbanianum*) – used to make shell necklaces and as trade items in their own right (cf. Alvarsson, 1988:216) – are exchanged with *Valay Veske* for sheep and *valayo* clothes (*aphapaok*). Thus, the traditional exchange of fibre string for domesticated animals appears in the myth as the basis of the Angaité’s relation with their new, non-indigenous trading partners.

3.3.4.1 Cattle-hunting: crime and punishment

What the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” erases is the early period of colonization, when cattle was massively introduced into the Chaco by outsiders (see table 1). At that time the Angaité still had unrestricted mobility in the open space of their territory and they occasionally relied on cattle-hunting, as herds – tame or wild – ran

freely in the vast but as yet unfenced lands appropriated by the big companies. Their engagement with the ranches, logging camps and tannin industry was loosely based on mostly transitory labour relations, which they were at liberty to discontinue once they had obtained what they were looking for or when problems arose. With the possibility existing of their retreating to the hinterland, it was more difficult for ranchowners and the military to control and punish cattle-thieving – though, as we shall see, such steps were nonetheless taken. For some years, the physical and symbolic boundaries placed by the outsiders on the land and its resources remained undetermined. For that reason, cattle on which ownership was not effectively exerted were probably considered by the Angaité to be no man's cattle. By the same token, the legitimacy of an activity such as cattle-hunting depended on its being carried out without retaliation.

Thurlow Craig (1935:319), one of the foreign foremen of the IPC Company in the early 1930s, wrote about that period in the following terms:

“I was in perhaps the last place in the world where cattle were being herded on such a vast expanse of open range, where there was no fence for ten leagues to the south of us, no one for a hundred leagues to the west.¹⁷⁷ A hundred leagues, three hundred miles in a straight line, country of the Indians, a land that is still a hundred years behind the rest of the world, and none the worse for that”.

He also mentioned that “in those days robbery was going on all the while ... Indians accounted for two or three hundred [head of company cattle] every year but it was very hard to catch them at it” (ibid.317-318). However, the “Indians” sometimes were caught and heavily punished by the military. The Anglican missionaries reported on an incident that occurred in 1925:

“The arrival of the Sanapanas at Naktetowis [Anglican outpost] was caused by trouble in their district between military and a village of Indians, owing to alleged cattle stealing, the report giving the number of people killed as four.” [SAMS Magazine, 1925:23]

¹⁷⁷ Elsewhere Craig mentioned that, in the western area of the IPC's landholding, it was very difficult to manage “12000 head particularly when there is no fence to restrain them” (ibid.311).

Such incidents abound in Anglican reports: in 1929, “Two soldiers and a Paraguayan trader were killed by the Indians, and two, if not more, Indians [were] killed [by] the soldiers”. In this incident the military asked the missionaries to mediate and recover “horses and equipment stolen” (SAMS Magazine, 1929:139). In June 1930, William Sanderson wrote that:

“I got word that a cow had been killed in one of the farthest paddocks, so next morning, early, I went off with Benito and Cacique Ramon to see if we could find and have a talk with the culprits. We found the encampment where they feasted, but the people had gone and we had no means of telling which direction they had gone in. We got back to Laguna Rey late in the afternoon and came on here next morning; though we have made one or two attempts to get in touch with these thieves we have so far been unsuccessful ...The [IPC] Company is kindly disposed towards the Indians and has no desire to use harsh methods, so if we can settle it peaceably it will be best for all concerned.” [SAMS Magazine, 1930:128]

Sanderson reported a similar incident, a few months later, in which “a cow belonging to the Company” was killed: “we...were able eventually to track the [indigenous] culprits down and bring home to them their guilt” (cited in SAMS Magazine 1931:8).¹⁷⁸ The IPC Company rented out a square league for the establishment of the Anglican mission of Campo Flores (*Maskoykaha*: see Map 6), with the aim, as Pride (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1930:115) acknowledged, of controlling southern Sanapaná and western Angaité groups:

“The destruction and harrying of cattle has been of great annoyance to the Company and if the mission can get the Indians under control and provide them with work and regular food, the annoyance will largely cease and be to the credit of the workers. The Company is in a position to provide a good amount of work for the Indians, and this can be supervised by the missionaries”. [ibid.]

However, the missionaries’ controlling, peace-making role was not that successful, in view of the fact that the IPC Company also resorted to the Paraguayan military, which

¹⁷⁸ Later on the Anglicans reported other incidents related to cattle-stealing: “two converts ... were found to be the ringleaders in the killing of a year-old calf left here by the Military with other animals” (SAMS Magazine, 1942:6).

used harsh methods against the indigenous people. Jack Sanderson, son of the aforementioned missionary, in a letter dated 7 November 1940 addressed to another missionary, wrote: “I have heard that another village has been shot up, making three all told. The soldiers seem to be keen on continuing till they wipe out all the neighbouring villages, so Suter[sic] told Rechery[sic] who told me”.¹⁷⁹ He subsequently brought these incidents to public attention in a report dated 21 January 1941: “While things have been peaceful enough here, we were saddened by the ‘shooting up’ of three Indian villages a few leagues away. Women and children have suffered chiefly in these raids by Paraguayan soldiers” (SAMS Magazine, 1941:28).¹⁸⁰

The Anglicans themselves owned cattle at Campo Flores (and others missions), and this also was a matter of dispute with the indigenous residents: “at Campo Flores at the beginning of the quarter several youths asked for baptism, but since then there has been stealing and cattle killing and these boys do not come and stand out against it” (J. Ruddle, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1938:17-18).¹⁸¹

Although the mission cattle were more available to the indigenous residents, either because they were distributed in one way or another by the missionaries or because they could be stolen with relative impunity, the *Nanek Anya* seem to reverse the historical record.¹⁸² The “Two Shamans and the Owner of Cattle” talks not of how cattle were

¹⁷⁹ Unpublished ms. I am grateful to Jacob Kopas for digging out this letter from the NGO Tierraviva’s archives.

¹⁸⁰ If accurately reported, these incidents, of which there are no known survivors or living witnesses, represent acts of genocide.

¹⁸¹ In relation to the founding of Campo Flores mission, W. Sanderson told that “The site we chose for the station is in the north-east corner of the [square] League, where there is ample high ground for building and for Indian gardens, also a suitable place for a paddock wherein to keep our work animals and milk cows when we get them” (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1930:127). Later on, the missionary J. Ruddle reported that “The cattle branding has been completed for the year and some new repairs effected to the main corrals, and sheep shearing is in progress. Some fresh bullocks have been trained and two colts broken in for work” (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1932:8). Alec Sanderson, another son of William Sanderson, added to the record that “Advantage has been taken of rainfalls for the planting of Bermuda grass. The clearing of the paddock is now finished, leaving plenty of high ground for cattle in flood-time” (ibid.9).

¹⁸² The missionaries periodically slaughtered cattle and distributed the meat and other parts of the animals (SAMS Magazine 1937:45). J. Sanderson, for instance, makes a point of the fact that in Campo Flores “Christmas Day was a happy day of fellowship with the people. A packed Church in the morning started the day well; then followed meat and yerba distributions” (cited in SAMS Magazine 1940:58). At a later date, the same missionary reports that “we were pleased to welcome another convert to the Baptism class – one of the ring-leaders in the recent calf killing” (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1942:30). According to Kidd (1992:115), cattle-thieving became increasingly dangerous for the Enxet “as colonization progressed”. Nevertheless, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, “at the same time as the Indians were abandoning the practice elsewhere, it began to reach almost epidemic proportions on the [mission] stations”. He adds that the Enxet could easily get away with these deeds by “showing a suitable degree of contrition” (ibid.).

hunted but of how they were acquired “legally” – though their possession was short-lived. And whereas the consequences of cattle-hunting were historically fatal, in the narrative it is the Angaité’s failure to make good their acquisition of cattle that provokes *Valay Veske*’s life-threatening anger.

Four months after his narration of the “Two shamans”, Agapito recounted a *Nanek Anya* which I call the “The revengeful missionary”. That evening, after a day in which various domestic quarrels had arisen in the community, we were resting in the precarious hammocks slung in front of his house. Agapito was telling me how people used to hunt in the past and how at present the Angaité have access to a piece of land in La Patria where they can lead a “tranquil” life. He then began telling the *Nanek Anya* in question. Some Angaité stole the cattle of a missionary. The missionary was a powerful *apyolhma* (shaman), and he told the people that he would pray to avenge the crime. He did so and killed around “one hundred people”.¹⁸³ I asked Agapito if the events of the story had taken place in Campo Flores. With hindsight, the question can be seen to have been a leading one, and Agapito politely replied that that perhaps was the place, adding, almost apologetically, that he had not asked the name of the missionary (see also chapter 4).

The narrative lends itself to a series of connected – or disjunctive – interpretations. One possible reading is that the massacres perpetrated by Paraguayan soldiers in Angaité villages neighbouring Campo Flores mission, as reported by Jack Sanderson, were understood by the Angaité as resulting from shamanic prayers articulated by the missionaries in revenge for the theft of their cattle. Alternatively, the missionaries’ shamanic retaliation may have been understood as operating through the medium of the periodic epidemics – e.g. of measles, smallpox, typhoid – that caused indigenous deaths in and around Campo Flores.¹⁸⁴ A further strand to the riddle dates back to 1995, when I

¹⁸³ Kidd (1999a:12), writing about the Anglican missionaries as leaders/shamans, tells of a similar episode and its interpretation by the Enxet: “when the Anglicans first obtained cattle for the residents of their mission stations, they established a rule that they could not be butchered without prior permission. This rule was transgressed on only two occasions and both times the culprits suffered serious injuries (Grubb 1911:245). These were regarded as manifestations of the missionaries’ mystical power and, as a consequence, for many years no cow was killed without missionary approval”.

¹⁸⁴ The missionaries report for instance that “In May, measles in epidemic form visited the village, and several children paid the toll with their lives, and afterwards one party of Indians left us to work with the Pinasco company” (SAMS Magazine, 1934:100). After Ruddle’s report of cattle-stealing between July-September 1937 (see above), he tells that in October-December of that year “Mrs. Train has been busy at Campo Flores helping to stay a measles epidemic amongst the children” (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1938:45).

began work with the Angaité community of Cora'i. Being already familiar with J. Sanderson's aforementioned letter, I sought for testimonies of the events to which he referred. However, interviews with a number of the oldest members of the community proved fruitless. For example, Santiago Riquelme – who, by virtue of his age and his childhood place of residence, was a potential eyewitness to, and survivor of, the massacres – commented only that he did not know much about the matter.¹⁸⁵

What do we make of all this? On the hand, the narrative of “The revengeful missionary” openly acknowledges the theft of the missionary's cattle as a past crime (which is not one incident but a series of episodes), but its punishment – reinterpreted in the light of shamanic causality – is severe. On the other hand, in the “Two shamans and Owner of Cattle”, there is an attempt to obtain cattle legally, and the failure of the attempt incurs only potential retaliation.¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the potential spiritual retaliation has the same disciplinary effect as the punitive actions to which the Angaité were historically subject, for the two shamans, fearing death, did not subsequently make further attempts to obtain cattle. Both narratives, then, explain the present in a consistent manner, albeit one that is elusive or paradoxical from the point of view of non-indigenous historical logic. Today the Angaité have few or no cattle because in the past – according to Agapito's narratives – they mishandled relations with cattle-owning outsiders: on the one hand, they involuntarily neglected the generative powers of *Valay Veske*, Chief of the Paraguayans, and on the other they voluntarily provoked the destructive powers of a missionary *apyoholhma*.

3.3.4.2 Trading with Anglicans and Paraguayans and the vanished shell necklaces

Going back to the first half of the colonization period, the Angaité probably traded with the Anglicans and Paraguayans as much as (if not more than) they stole their cattle.

¹⁸⁵ Such apparent ignorance or unwillingness to tell me about these dramatic events may have been due to the fact that the subject would not be an easy one to talk about with a young stranger. When interviewing old Angaité witnesses of the Chaco War, some would be very vague about their personal experiences, though I was assured by their relatives who sent me to them that they were *ex-combatientes* (“war veterans”) and had a vivid personal experience of the war.

¹⁸⁶ In January 1999 I recorded a long narrative recounted by Juan Mendoza, of the Angaité community (and ex-New Tribes mission) of San Carlos. In his narration, Juan recounted how cattle were brought by Paraguayans to Port Pinasco. A great number of animals – along with horses – were freely given by the Paraguayans to inland Angaité villages. However, the Paraguayans later changed their mind and claimed back the cattle. This caused a dispute, with the Paraguayans finally taking back the cattle by force and killing the Angaité. The parallels with Agapito's narrative (and others) are many, but space does not allow for their analysis here.

Besides Cacique Michi, the Anglicans make numerous references to this trade. In the short-lived mission of Laguna Rey (1928-1929), “The people had been accustomed to bringing vegetables and other things and getting an exchange for them” (Alec Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1929:55). A little over ten years later, in Campo Flores mission, “A number of Kilyapmuk Indians came in from the west to barter hides, and feathers, and as our custom is, we gave them food and pointed out a place in which to pass the night” (Jack Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine 1940:3). Such visits “have all been in numbers” (ibid., 1941:28). In the letter of 7/11/1940 in which he wrote about the massacres (see above), Jack Sanderson listed a number of points aimed at dissuading the military camped at *Yave Sage* from making further attacks on Angaité villages. One compelling argument was the fact that “As hunters they [the Angaité] have to make a living, provide a living for others (ourselves in a considerable way) by selling skins (for all uses), feathers, ponchos, horse blankets, belts, **string** and hammocks, etc. etc. which is always in demand everywhere” (unpublished ms.; my emphasis).

The items listed as indigenous trade goods were exchanged, as the same missionary source indicates, for “powder, shot and cloth” (J. Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1944:56).

¹⁸⁷ Likewise, the late Cacho Lima of the village Puente Kaigue, La Patria community, commented that Sanapaná and Angaité went to the central Anglican mission of *Makhave* (Makxawaya) “to get provisions, rifles and powder, ammunition ... the missionaries gave them [rifles] to go and get rhea feathers ... they [the Indians] wanted to kill animals and exchange them for the shotguns” (Fieldnotes, 26/5/2005).

During the early colonization period, the Sanapaná and Angaité sometimes travelled great distances in order to trade and/or obtain temporary work. The leader Kambara’i and his people – whom Alec Sanderson (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1929:55) indicated to be from Laguna Rey, 120 kilometres west of the Paraguay River– met with Thurlow Craig at the IPC ranch, 14 kilometres to the west of the said river. With Craig’s permission as ranch foreman, Kambara’i and his people stayed “to trade skins of wild animals for tobacco,

¹⁸⁷ In relation to this trade there is a *Nanek Anya* which explains the origin of the Angaité name for the village of Karova Guasu. It relates that an old woman encountered a young shaman transformed into a jaguar. She killed him by hitting his neck with her wooden axe, which caused his neck to become white. The place is therefore named *Mopay Enyetek* (“white neck”). The story, also told by Agapito (18/1/2005), goes on to say that the relatives of the old woman skinned the young shaman-jaguar and celebrated with chicha. Finally, they went to the house of a *lenko* named Venakta Kausa. In the narrative, the house is located, strangely, not in Campo Flores mission, but near to Riacho Gonzalez ranch.

yerba mate and gunpowder”, later returning to their western village (Craig 1935:206,264-265). As the number of ranches increased around the missions, and both on and around IPC land, indigenous trading shifted to closer, neighbouring ranches, as the missionaries noted: “Very seldom now do Indians visit the Mission, they prefer to sell their hides nearer home” (J. Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1944:56).

It is to such trade, particularly with Paraguayans, that the myth refers, though the reference is elusive. It says that the shamans were of the kind who “dressed themselves” and “dressed their people”, and that they told the people to bring strings of *caraguata* which they would exchange for Paraguayan clothes with *Valay Veske*, for he “will buy the string from us”. Effectively it was during this period, i.e. 1880-1940s, that western Angaité started to dress like Paraguayans. As J. Sanderson (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1929:55) noted: “They have come into contact with Paraguayans, and have adopted European clothes”. The riverine people, meanwhile, “who have been long in contact with Christians”, were described by the IPC foreman as “wearing filthy clothes, never washing” (Craig, 1935:206).

Why in the narrative is *caraguata* string the only indigenous exchange item, and not also the other aforementioned products, such as feathers and hides? ¹⁸⁸ We see here a transformation of the exchange practices that formerly operated among indigenous peoples and, subsequently, between indigenous peoples and Paraguayans. As we know from the ethnographic references cited above (Alvarsson, 1988:216; Métraux 1963[1944]:301), *caraguata* string is a product that features in traditional interethnic exchange relations. That it was also used by the Angaité in their trade relations with Paraguayans transpires both from Agapito’s narrative and from the cited missionary sources. In the past, however, a more valuable exchange item – partly made of *caraguata* string – were shell necklaces, which, as we know from Métraux (1963[1944]:301), were the means of obtaining other indigenous peoples’ domestic animals. These shell necklaces “disappear” in Agapito’s myth, though the kind of exchange described looks very much like the type referred to by Métraux. In other words, the final part of the myth describes an exchange with the “Chief of the Paraguayans” which is not a fully stereotypical example of the items involved in trading with Paraguayans, which were garden produce, hides and

¹⁸⁸ We have seen how tobacco, an item obtained in exchange from the Paraguayans, is mentioned at the beginning of the narrative.

feathers in exchange for yerba, tobacco, shotguns, gunpowder and clothes. Instead, the objects exchanged partly evoke traditional indigenous exchanges (*caraguata* string for domestic animals), while omitting other items like shell necklaces. In this sense, the myth does not accurately depict either original or colonial types of exchange. I shall attempt to explain this anomaly by drawing on other Amerindian myths that evoke the exchange of precious items.

One of the series of myths that Lévi-Strauss (1995) analyses in *The Story of Lynx* concerns “Dentalia thieves”. Dentalium (genus *Dentalium*) is a tooth or tusk shell that – as in the case of shell necklaces among Chaco peoples – some North American peoples regarded as a precious jewel and even as money (ibid.39). In an Okanagan version of the series, Eagle – father of two daughters – asks his people for the bones of the game they have eaten. He tells his daughters “to make a hole in the ice covering the river and to throw in the bones without looking”. Having disobediently discovered that the bones transform into dentalia (plural) in the water, the daughters build a cabin where they pile up the shells and thread them “on strings made up of vegetable fiber” (ibid.35). Then:

“One of the sisters, pretending to act on behalf of her father, the chief, has enormous quantities of this fiber given to her by each household. Becoming suspicious the father spies on them. When he discovers their scheme, he summons the whole of the population: ‘Not for my own, but for your sake, I asked you to bring me the bones. Now my own children have stolen them’.” [ibid.]

Finally, the disobedient sisters are abandoned and they lose all their shells, their subsequent adventures occupying the remainder of the narrative.

Like one of the shamans in the Angaité myth, one of the Eagle sisters asked her people for vegetable fibres. The detail may be coincidental, since many indigenous peoples in the Americas use (or used) vegetable fibres – though not always to make string on which to thread shells. More significant is the parallel sequence in both narratives in which valuable objects like shells or cattle (and sheep, foreign clothes, tools, tobacco and so on) are obtained by means of a shamanic transformation that occurs underwater: in the *alvata* and in the river. In both myths, the shaman’s people provide the materials necessary for this transformation: namely, bones – or pine needles (ibid.30) – and vegetable-fibre string.

In both cases, furthermore, there is an act of indiscretion or disobedience on the part of young people: i.e. the young couple mating in the Angaité myth and the sisters disobeying (or spying on) their father in the Okanagan narrative.¹⁸⁹ These taboo-violations – i.e. the irritation of supernatural beings with sexual odours and the incestuous participation in shamanic training (ibid.38) – provoke the loss of the wealth items (cattle and dentalia shells, respectively). The correspondence between the two Eagle sisters and the two Angaité shamans will be dealt with below, in relation to the general issue of twinning in Amerindian mythology.

What concerns us here is the missing reference in the Angaité myth to shell necklaces as valuable trade items. As we know from the ethnography of the Chaco, *caraguata* string – as well as being an accessory trading item in its own right – was used to thread the shell disks that were exchanged for blankets and domesticated animals. In the narrative, Agapito referred to the fact that “There used to be shamans who dressed themselves, though they were not many. They dressed their people”. If we interpret this expression as meaning that the shamans *adorned* themselves, we are led to the missing shell necklaces, because the *caraguata* string that the shamans requested can be understood as being for adornment as well as for trade.

Lévi-Strauss remarks that the Okanagan myth places “adornments and food in a relation of correlation and opposition”, and he shows that the relation is applicable to other Amerindian myths (ibid.142-145). In the case of the Angaité myth, food and adornments are correlated inasmuch as both undergo a transformation into materials of the same genre: food is transformed into food (*chicha* becomes cattle and sheep), and adornments are transformed into adornments (*caraguata* string becomes Paraguayan clothes). On the other hand, an opposition between food and adornments is also established: the *chicha*, as a transformative substance in its own right, is a means of obtaining Paraguayan clothes.

¹⁸⁹ In another group of myths, which resemble the Okanagan myth, the sisters spy on their brother as he bathes (ibid.38)

3.3.4.3. New conditions under *Valay Veske*: the turning-point in Angaité history

Trading with Paraguayans and with Anglican missionaries progressively led the Angaité to work for them, with the aim of obtaining foreign goods. It also prompted other changes, such as the introduction of Guarani and, over time, its predominance over the vernacular. In the case of Kambara'i and his people, whom Alec Sanderson met in the short-lived mission of Laguna Rey, the missionary commented: "Both men and women can, as a rule, speak Guarani, in fact at some nearby estancias the boys and men spoke only Guarani, whether because they had forgotten their own language, or did not want to use it, which is more likely, I do not know" (SAMS Magazine, 1929:55).

The missionaries of Campo Flores employed local indigenous manpower for their own projects, as well as providing indigenous labour on IPC (and other) ranches. According to one Anglican report, people who used to live around the *Yave Sanga* mission came to live at Campo Flores: "we took on some 24 of the most serviceable [men]... about a fortnight ago, Indians from other quarters have come in, and at present we are employing some fifty workers, mostly on work for the Company" (SAMS Magazine, 1931:8). Elsewhere the missionary Ruddle told that "We were fortunate in securing a three-league fencing contract from a neighbouring *estanciero*¹⁹⁰ which provided work for forty men for some weeks, together with the wherewithal to feed and pay them" (SAMS Magazine, 1932:8). There are several other reports on the issue, including the abuses of the *patrones*, like the following:

"A neighbour made a request for the services of eight Indians at his farm, but the offer was not taken up with eagerness, which was surprising as the Indians previously had worked at the farm [and] taken their wives and families with them. A member of the Baptism Class threw light on this change of behaviour when he said 'They make us work every day, and also on Sunday and this we don't like doing. It is God's day!'"¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ The word *estanciero*, both in this quotation and in general for Spanish speaking colonists, means ranchowner. However, for Guarani speaking *Chaqueños* and Indians it means cowboy (see chapter 1). Bonifacio (2009:37) suggests that the use of this word by the Indians (and by the *Chaqueños* as well) "could be seen as a valorisation of their working position".

¹⁹¹ Train, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1940:21. See also SAMS Magazine 1936:55, 1938:45, 1940:3, 1941:28.

In the early years of colonization, the indigenous workforce had greater freedom of movement and could come, stay and leave according to the circumstances. Elders tell how their people moved from their original villages to ranches and missions in search of work. As Dolo Benitez, for instance, recalls: “We lived in *Yave Saga* and arrived at another place, *Yeknapanat aphak*, there was a lagoon at Riacho Gonzalez [ranch], we looked for work with the Paraguayans, we exchanged parrots with them” (Fieldnotes, 22/4/2005).¹⁹² Much depended on the goods and work offered, whether by missionaries, ranchowners or the IPC Company (SAMS Magazine, 1935:26). However, internal rivalry also affected labour relations, as the missionaries discovered: “the original Indians amongst whom this work was started have taken a dislike to the Indians of other tribes sharing in the services and other advantages of the mission, and one by one have left to work for the Pinasco [IPC] company” (ibid.1943:100).

Taking into account the hierarchical social organization of the Paraguayans for whom the Angaité increasingly started to work, with whom might the latter have associated the powerful being they name as “Chief of the Paraguayans”? Cacho Lima gives an important clue about the connexion between the Angaité’s mythological and historical perceptions of *Vaka Veske/Valay Veske*. Following his account of the Chaco War, Cacho commented that:

The Paraguayans came and saw that this place was quite nice. They came and found the land was good. Our president from that time knew it, our president from long time ago, **President Stroessner** ... The Paraguayans saw that the place was beautiful and the Bolivians came to fight them. After the war, they [the Paraguayans] went to the President and told him that this was a beautiful place. The Paraguayans arrived and made houses ... Did you see the house of the *patrón* made of bricks?¹⁹³ That is an old house. It was made when the Paraguayans came ... The chief ordered it to be built.

¹⁹² Many Angaité individuals tell *Nanek Anya* about how and when they started to work on ranches, in lumber camps and at tannin ports: for instance, Capata’i Segura on 14 de Mayo ranch (interviewed 31/9/2005); Cacho Lima on Riacho Gonzalez ranch (interviewed 29/5/2005); Pedro Alarcon in Curupaity lumber camp (Amarilla, 2006:668).

¹⁹³ Cacho was referring to an old house in the main compound of Riacho Gonzalez ranch, which neighbours La Patria. His account coincides with that of Thurlow Craig, the English IPC cattleman subsequently foreman, who wrote that the manager of the company, a Canadian nicknamed Puku (in Guarani: “Long”), promised Robert Eaton (father), foreman of the said ranch at the time (circa 1930), that he would build for him there “a house of bricks if he got married” (1935:236).

And the President arrived, the President came, he had a lot of cattle ... There were no Paraguayans. Because of the war they came to fight the Bolivians. After the Bolivians' anger ended, the Paraguayans went to tell President Stroessner that the place was good. Stroessner told them: "Go and stay there". He sent the Paraguayans, saying: "Go there, I am going to send you cows" ... Afterwards the Paraguayans came, we mixed with them and started to work with [for] them. We worked and IPC came. With them I rode a horse for the first time, rounding up cattle with other *estancieros*, here in La Paciencia, which belonged to IPC. There was an old corral in Riacho, on Sundays we had to mark the cattle. **The cattle belonged to President Stroessner, he had a lot of cattle, so much so that the ground [where the cattle stood] was already white** (Fieldnotes, 29/5/2005).

Cacho's narrative is not just an account of historical events but an Angaité interpretation of the arrival of Paraguayans, the Chaco War and the establishment of IPC ranches in their territory. The Chaco War is understood as having been caused by a desire to secure the "good" and "beautiful" land the Angaité inhabited. Once the conflict finished (in the Paraguayans' favour), President Stroessner told his people to stay there, as he was going to send them cattle. The Chaco War lasted three years (June 1932 till September 1935), a period which is considerably extended – to cover the years 1927-1940, approximately – if we include the previous mobilization of troops and their subsequent permanence in the area. Nonetheless, the regime of General Alfredo Stroessner began much later, in May 1954, and lasted until February 1989. What seems to be a mistaken historical account on the part of Cacho and some of his fellow Angaité is in fact a perfectly reasonable *ex post facto* reading of what – unexpectedly and terribly – had occurred before their eyes.¹⁹⁴

If Agapito's narrative of the "Arrival of Paraguayans" centres on the consequences of the invasion – namely, land-dispossession and poverty – Cacho's account focuses on the reasons that motivated the occupation of the Angaité's territory: the Paraguayans wanted to fight the Bolivians, because they realized that Angaité land was a worthwhile gain. Up

¹⁹⁴ Apart from Cacho, others like Agapito and Capata'i Segura also said that IPC had belonged to the former dictator Alfredo Stroessner. On the other hand, Santiago Riquelme (interviewed 28/3/2008) understood that the owner of IPC had been President Morínigo (1940-1948).

to a point the narratives in question provide a complementary vision of the causes of the present state of affairs. Nonetheless, there are discordances. For instance, who sent the first Paraguayans in Agapito's narrative? Did the Paraguayans take the Angaité's land after a failed exchange or after winning the Chaco War? Such discrepancies should not overly concern us for, as was explained in chapter 2, *Nanek Anya* are valued, not as sources of absolute truth, but as sources of information based on first- or second-hand personal experience.

Let us keep track of Cacho's reasoning. What would be the reason for two peoples such as the Paraguayans and the Bolivians to fight each other on lands in which their presence was almost non-existent? In the eyes of the Angaité, the answer is that those lands were "good" and "beautiful". The Paraguayan "victor" secured the land and brought in cattle, but for whom? As was mentioned in chapter 2, almost the entire pre-colonial Angaité territory was in the hands of the IPC Company, a fact of which, as Cacho shows, the Angaité were aware. (It should be pointed out that the company was the second- or third-hand titleholder, but its activities were far more noticeable on the ground than those of the previous owners.)¹⁹⁵ At its inception, the company's principal shareholders were "the North American entrepreneur Percival Farquhar and other businessmen who made their fortunes in Latin America, such as Minor C. Keith and Theodore Vail" (Abente, 1989:70). Apparently, Farquhar was the main owner of the company until 1942.¹⁹⁶ I have been unable to gather information pertaining to the period following IPC's apparent dissolution and withdrawal from the country around the year 1973, but I have not come across either official information or even gossip about the dictator Stroessner's involvement with the company. How, then, have some Angaité come to identify the Paraguayan president (Stroessner for most narrators, Morinigo for at least one of them) as owner of the IPC Company? And what is the relation between President Stroessner and *Valay Veske*?

¹⁹⁵ Over the years IPC expanded to the point where it owned "approximately 2 million acres of land in Paraguay and leases another 177,000 acres of land for its ranching operation" – a total of over 881,000 hectares – with "a herd of approximately 80,000 head of livestock on the ranches" (Loomba and others, 1968:696).

¹⁹⁶ See in H:\World Association of International Studies » Blog Archive » BRAZIL Percival Farquhar papers, Yale University.htm. Since that year there is not much information available about who owned IPC until July 1966, when "The Company was acquired by Ogden Corporation – a large American firm" (Loomba, Turban and Cohen, 1968:695).

Despite the inconsistencies of time and the company's foreign ownership, it is important to show the feasibility of the link drawn by the Angaité. For a start, the names of the IPC owners – whether Farquhar or the Ogden Corporation – probably remained unknown not only to the Angaité but also to the majority of people who worked for the company¹⁹⁷ in Paraguay, particularly in view of the company's foreign, corporate status. IPC did not follow the example of companies that were named after their proprietors, such as Carlos Casado or Mihanovich. Its known authorities were based in Puerto Pinasco, like the manager referred to by Craig as Puku. The latter accompanied “the President” on a visit to Campo Flores mission: “The President and the Manager of the Company paid us a visit a few weeks ago and were very pleased with all they saw, the former was particularly happy when I got the Indians to stand for some photographs” (William Sanderson, cited in SAMS Magazine, 1930:128). To confuse the figure of the IPC president with the Paraguayan president is not beyond the bounds of possibility. Considering that both are commonly referred to by non-indigenous speakers as “el presidente”, it follows that they could easily be taken by the Angaité (and other indigenous peoples) to be one and the same person.

From the end of the Chaco War until 1954, several presidents headed the Paraguayan government.¹⁹⁸ Some of them lasted years in power, others just a few months. It is unlikely that all the changes were known to the inland indigenous villages of the Chaco. During that period (1935-1954), the longest-lasting president was Morinigo (1940-1948). Both he and the dictator General Stroessner, who, from 1954, persevered in power far longer than any of the preceding post-Chaco-War presidents, exerted authoritarian rule and marked the country's historical memory in a way that is not dissimilar to the Angaité's perception of Paraguayan history.

During his reign, Stroessner not only presided over the Government, but was also Head of the Army and honorary President of the dominant Colorado Party. Due to this concentration of power, he appeared to be everywhere and to exercise control over all the country's affairs, as well as having his hands on all the profitable businesses. The fact that

¹⁹⁷ It is also a sheer fact that the ownership of most international or multinational companies is shared, diffused and practically (and legally) anonymous.

¹⁹⁸ Eusebio Ayala (1932-1936), Colonel Rafael Franco (1936-1937), Félix Paiva (1937-1940), José Félix Estigarribia (1940), Higinio Morínigo (1940-1948), Juan Manuel Frutos (1948), Natalicio González (1948-49), Felipe Molas López (1949), Federico Chávez (1949-54) and Tomás Romero Pereira (1954).

Santiago Riquelme identified President Morinigo as IPC president is at least partly explained by the former's age: being older than the other speakers (i.e. Agapito, Cacho, Capata'i), Morinigo is likely to have been the first presidential name with which he was familiar. For the rest, however, Stroessner's name would undoubtedly have resonated as that of the most powerful character in the country and, as such, the most likely owner of such a wealthy and geographically extensive company as the IPC, over and above the flurry of gringo personnel, military officials and local *patrones*. It was, after all, common for Stroessner to be referred to among both the civilian and military population over which he conjointly presided as "Our Great Chief" (in Guaraní: *Ñande Mburuvicha Guasu*).¹⁹⁹ If, therefore, "Stroessner's company" owned cattle so numerous that they "whitened the ground", with which powerful being might such a person be associated? Clearly, it is the same being as provided the two shamans with 700 head of livestock: namely, *Valay Veske*, "Chief of the Paraguayans".

I am not arguing that, for certain Angaité, *Valay Veske* and Stroessner are necessarily the same persona. Rather, my point is that *Valay Veske* is the cosmological projection of the historical character. That is to say, certain features of the latter's long-lasting authority are projected onto other spheres of the reality perceived by the Angaité and other indigenous peoples of the Chaco. Thus, the Angaité attribute to Stroessner deeds that pre-date his government and capacities that go beyond his wealth and real estate. Such an interpretation is a coherent way of making sense of the conditions experienced by the Angaité since their lands were colonized by outsiders.

It should also be stressed that powerful people – whether fellow indigenous shamans and leaders or foreigners supported by the Church, the State or private finances – are thought to generate their powers through their connection with specific auxiliary spirits. Just as shamans/leaders who bring rain in order to make gardens grow and missionaries who cure the sick operate by means of their auxiliary spirits, so too a person with the capacity to own a large number of cattle is cosmologically assisted. That is to say, he/she is related to a spiritual master of mythical origin: specifically, *Valay Veske*. From an Angaité

¹⁹⁹ I remember how, while I was doing military service, officials of all ranks would refer to Stroessner as *Ñande Mburuvicha Guasu*. Having lived half of my life under the dictator's rule, my own experience coincides to some extent with that of the Angaité. I remember how rumours of Stroessner's uncountable properties circulated and how none of those rumours could be totally discarded, for the very possibility of knowing what was true was constructed by his almost absolute power.

perspective, an alliance between Stroessner and *Valay Veske* is as certain as that between the Anglican missionaries and the “our father” spirits, from the point of view of the Enxet. What Agapito’s narrative of the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” demonstrates is a (failed) attempt to forge an alliance with a non-indigenous auxiliary spirit in order to acquire the benefits enjoyed by the Angaité’s foreign counterparts.

What is at issue, therefore, is not an equivalence between Stroessner and *Valay Veske*, but an association in which the layers of everyday reality and the cosmological realm, both in the past and in the present, are inseparably entwined in a holistic universe.

3.3.5 The breach of a taboo: “mythological” logic replacing historical rationale

The shamans’ success in securing from *Valay Veske* a herd of cattle with which to feed their people was reversed by the breach of a taboo. What the taboo proscribes is not sexual intercourse on the part of a young couple, but contact with sexual fluids on the part of shamans while they are studying or practicing (see chapter 4). In the myth, the scent remaining from the young couple’s sexual intercourse upset the cattle, for they were “delicate”. Besides being empirically grounded in the acute sense of smell of cattle,²⁰⁰ the sensibility of *Valay Veske*’s “cows of the water” (*vaka konaimen*) finds a correspondence in the general irritation that sexual odours provoke in powerful beings. For instance, among the Piro of Peruvian Amazonia, “Menstruating women and people who have recently had sex should not drink *ayahuasca*, because their smell offends the powerful beings, who either refuse to come to them or send only terrifying visions” (Gow, 2001:246).²⁰¹

The shamans’ lack of success in securing the cattle is not, therefore, a failure on their part, or proof of their lack of ability, for they did indeed “bring out” the cattle, and they subsequently acquired other goods from *Valay Veske*. But their work suffered an

²⁰⁰ Susnik (1953:2) relates an incident which occurred during a field trip she made to a ranch known as *Estancia Lota*. A Sanapaná village was scared of Susnik’s presence (because, according to her, they thought she was a powerful foreign sorcerer) and moved to an area of grassland reserved for milk cows. Soon afterwards they had to move back to their original village site because some cattle grew furious and began digging the ground after sensing the blood of a cow that had been slaughtered the previous day.

²⁰¹ A further correspondence between the sense of smell and the spirits is established, for instance, by the Nahua of Peruvian Amazonia, for whom spirits have a particular smell that may cause illness or even death to humans (Conrad Feather, personal communication).

unfortunate interference, in the form of a transgression of the code of conduct with regard to dealings with powerful beings. Thereafter, the two shamans were unable to fulfil their original objective – that of providing cattle for their people – and could only acquire other things from *Valay Veske*. In this sense, the myth is a charter of the historical circumstances that led to the Angaité’s being forbidden to possess cattle on IPC ranches.

By 1940, IPC had completed the fencing of its properties and had subdivided them into more than the original number of ranches. As a result, the Angaité were no longer free to live in their territory without being subject to the control and authority of company employees. One consequence of their enclosure was that the Angaité were discouraged – and prevented – from keeping cattle and horses, in order not to compete with the company’s herds. Numerous witness statements testify to how the Indians were obliged either to sell their horses and other animals to Paraguayan *peones* – for next to nothing – or keep them in distant “paddocks” (*potreros*), which resulted in the animals being lost or stolen.²⁰² In some cases, the animals were simply taken by ranchowners or their employees.²⁰³

As we saw in chapter 2, the Angaité’s present state of affairs is presented in Agapito’s narrative of the “Two shamans” in terms of a paradoxical mythological causation which obliterates the historical processes that prompted present-day conditions. According to that mythological causation, certain foreign things cannot be obtained (or possessed) by the Angaité – specifically, cattle *a la Paraguaya*, or legal cattle – whereas other objects, such as sheep and Paraguayan clothes are still available to them. Both situations – deprivation and possession – accurately reflect the Angaité’s living conditions under the rule of the IPC Company and other Paraguayan ranches.

²⁰² Kidd (1992:67) describes a similar situation for the Enxet.

²⁰³ In the Sanapaná/Enxet village of Xakmok Kásek, the Anglicans established in 1939 an outpost of Campo Flores mission (SAMS Magazine, 1939:87). In the same place, the military had established Fort Salazar during the Chaco War and, later on (circa 1950), Robert Eaton (father) – former foreman of the IPC’s Riacho Gonzalez ranch – founded his own ranch, *Estancia Salazar*. Xakmok Kásek was located a little to the west of the land acquired by the IPC Company. According to Juan Dermott, the community’s current shaman (interviewed in May 1995), Eaton told the community, after establishing his ranch, to take their horses and few cattle to a paddock located 20 kilometres from the village. Eventually, Juand added, Eaton simply re-branded the community’s animals as his own.

As regards sheep and goats, we have already seen that they were adopted by the Angaité prior to colonization, a fact corroborated by the missionaries.²⁰⁴ To this day, indigenous villages in the immediacy of ranches are allowed by the *patrones* to keep their flocks of sheep. For instance, Isabelino Landi of Karova Guasu declared that his family possessed “170 head” of sheep on Los Lapachos ranch (Fieldnotes, 22/1/2005), and I have observed indigenous flocks of sheep on the former ranches of Laguna Pato and Santa Juanita. Such “concessions” on the part of some ranchowners are due to the fact that, on large ranches, sheep and goats do not compete with cattle for grassland.

Agapito’s narrative of the “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” illustrates an unsuccessful indigenous attempt to gain legal ownership of cattle, an attribute which is the exclusive prerogative of non-indigenous outsiders and, as such, characterizes the asymmetry between the Angaité and Paraguayans. The narrative locates the origin of that asymmetry in a remote past, and it skips or obliterates other events and processes which belong to a “historical” explanation of how things came to be the way they now are for the Angaité. However, Agapito’s is not the only available explanation, if we bear in mind the alternative versions given by Cacho Lima and Juan Mendoza (the latter of which I have not analysed here). Nonetheless, despite minor differences, the underlying theme remains the same: i.e. cattle are owned by Paraguayans and *Valay Veske* (alias the Paraguayan President), and their legal possession is denied to the Angaité, sometimes with terrible consequences. Let us now turn to an Enxet myth which replicates the structure of Agapito’s narrative but paradoxically reverses the consequences of the events described.

3.4. Two Enxet variants

Félix Bogado was a prominent Enxet pastor who played a leading role in the resettlement of indigenous communities in La Patria. Félix visited indigenous dwellings scattered among several ranches in the northern part of the department of Presidente Hayes, prior to their moving to their respective villages within the 22,500 hectares bought by the Anglican Church in 1983. In 1991 the Paraguayan Anglican Church published an Enxet-language

²⁰⁴ In referring to the incident in which two soldiers and a trader were allegedly killed, and some of their property stolen, by unidentified Angaité (see above), the missionaries reported that “Two of the stolen horses were returned and payment taken, in the shape of sheep and goats, for the equipment which had been destroyed, and a promise made to let the matter drop” (SAMS Magazine, 1929:139).

collection of narratives recounted by Félix which includes a myth entitled “The first appearance of cows and horses”. The myth goes as follows:

They always used to go to other places and they arrived (for the first time ever) at a place where cows appeared with a Paraguayan. The Paraguayan could not catch the cattle because they always jumped into the Paraguay River. Then someone like a little Paraguayan was seen with his boat, which was like a little canoe. Then the Enxet, the companion of the Paraguayan, spoke to him “Give us the cattle”, he said, and the Paraguayan said to the Enxet “It would be good if we made a corral next to the river and a gate to close it. Then we can wait for night-time”. He saw the cows approaching in the water in the Paraguay River. They went onto land. He caught five and then a horse and this was when it started. And there used to be Enxet with power who could make things appear in the water and the land, like small deer, rhea, big deer, and rain.²⁰⁵

A short version of the same Enxet myth was also published by Susnik (1977), who does not single out the narrator and cites only “the tradition of the elders...” as her source:

A shaman discovered the place of the cows by the riverbank. He seized the owner of the cattle (*ôŕp*) and took him to the open (*yôkŕtsma* [“open field”, “mainland”]): *abwŕta abyohôtsma ŕñamâktla waitk'é kârñ yŕngmin nâwatson, apkŕlamâsnâkyi ooŕp* (sic.) [“A shaman saw the cows which were in the water in the Paraguay River, and he seized the *spiritual* owner”]. [My translation]

²⁰⁵ Bogado, 1991:7. As far I know, Félix was helped with the transcription of the myths by Anibal Lopez, an Enxet teacher from the community of El Estribo. The translation presented here owes largely to the contributions of Hannes Kalish and Stephen Kidd. Kalish, who is an Enlhet expert (a language closely related to Enxet), produced a Spanish translation. I then showed the material to Stephen Kidd, an Enxet speaker, who corrected my English version and added some changes to the Spanish translation. It is debatable whether it was the Paraguayan or the Enxet who suggested building the corral. For the sake of the logic of the myth, and in support of my interpretation of its asymmetrical twinnedness in relation to Agapito’s myth, it would be more coherent to attribute the suggestion to the Enxet, as it is consistent with his active role (in contrast to the passive role of the Paraguayan). However, I follow Kidd’s interpretation.

3.4.1 Comparative analysis of the Angaité and Enxet narratives

For the purposes of comparative analysis with Agapito's narrative, Félix's version is better suited than the anonymous Enxet version, which falls short in detail. The similarities between the two narratives are as follows: the protagonists in both instances are two companions, at least one of whom is a shaman; they obtain cattle that are of underwater origin and belong to an aquatic auxiliary spirit that resembles a Paraguayan. In terms of their structure, then, the two narratives are similar. They differ in the following respects: the companions are both indigenous in Agapito's version, whereas one of them is Paraguayan in Félix's; many elements of the former are omitted in the latter – the drinking of *chicha*, the search for tobacco, the whirlpool in the water, the two spies, the cowboys escorting the cattle and so on – though these elements are incidental and can be attributed to the concision of Félix's narrative, itself probably due to its written form, in contrast to Agapito's longer, richer and more entertaining oral text. From a comparative perspective, greater significance lies in the following divergences: the two versions attribute different features to the auxiliary spirits: *Valay Veske* dwells in a Paraguayan house in the depths of an (inland) *alvata* (Agapito), while the Enxet "Owner of Cattle", who is similar to "a little Paraguayan", lives in Paraguay River (*watsan*) and travels in a canoe (Félix);²⁰⁶ in Agapito's narrative, 700 head of cattle emerge from the water (plus cowboys and cattle papers), in contrast to the five cows (plus one horse) indicated by Félix; on the one hand, the mating of the young couple causes the return of the cattle to the water (and the shamans' subsequent admonition of their people) and, on other hand, the cattle is safely kept in a corral; last but not least, one narrative ends with a reference to further exchanges with *Valay Veske* (sheep and Paraguayan clothes), and the other concludes with an allusion to the powers of traditional shamans.

The anonymous Enxet version is essentially the same as Félix's version: the shaman finds the cows underwater (in the Paraguay River) and obtains them by seizure (represented in terms of the seizure of the animals' spiritual owner). Several details are omitted – the (Paraguayan) companion, the canoe of the auxiliary spirit, the horse and so on – and, instead of being kept in a corral, the cattle are taken to an open field. Susnik does not translate the final sentence, which is written in Enxet (with her own particular spelling),

²⁰⁶ *Watsan* is the Enxet name of the "Paraguay River". The Angaité equivalent is *vatsom*.

but it more or less restates what is expressed in the preceding sentences. On the whole, the outcome is the same in both Enxet versions (and the opposite of the outcome reached in Agapito's narrative): the shaman acquires cattle by means of his shamanic power and his association with the river-dwelling, auxiliary-spirit owner of the cattle.

3.4.1.1 Circumstantial differences

The differences between the two versions of the myth, as narrated by Félix and by Agapito, can be understood in terms of the personal circumstances of the narrators and the wider social context in which their respective narratives arise.

As we have said, Félix played an important role as an evangelist for the Anglican Church. Like other Enxet evangelists before him – e.g. Benito, Kyelaiam and Lorenzo (SAMS Magazine, 1930:127) – he paid pastoral visits to mixed communities of Sanapaná and Angaité, such as the community located on Santa Juanita ranch.²⁰⁷ In later life, one of his roles was to be a guiding leader in the selection of the lands bought by the Anglicans for Angaité, Sanapaná and Enxet groups, both those scattered among former IPC ranches and also other distant villages (see Map 6, end of the chapter).²⁰⁸ I did not know him personally but I frequently heard his name mentioned while working for the NGO Tierraviva with Enxet communities. Around the year 1987, Félix moved to the mainly Enxet community of El Estribo (Tito La Haye, personal communication), where, if I am not mistaken, he died in the early 1990s.

Félix's Enxet ethnicity partly explains why, in his narrative, the auxiliary spirit looks like a "little Paraguayan" (in Enxet: *Walé Apketkok*). As we have seen, the auxiliary spirits of Enxet shamans, such as the *Choneygmen* and *Walé Apyepmeyk*, look like Paraguayans and are short (as also were the *Egyápam*). *Valay Veske* bears a resemblance to the latter, inasmuch as his underwater house is similar to a Paraguayan's – like those of the *Choneygmen* (see Kidd 1999a:10) – and his name is semantically close to that of *Walé Apyepmeyk*, i.e. Chief and Father, respectively, of Paraguayans. In spite of the resemblances, however, *Walé Apketkok* and *Valay Veske* have distinctive features which

²⁰⁷ Stephen Kidd, personal communication.

²⁰⁸ In the early and mid-1980s the Anglicans also purchased land for the settlement of the Enxet: Sombrero Piri (9,500 hectares) and El Estribo (9,474 hectares). In addition, they had already acquired ownership of Makxawaya (3,769 hectares) in the early colonization period (Kidd, 1999b:28).

derive from their geographical location: one lives in the *watsan* (Paraguay River), and the other in the *alvata*. It should be emphasized that the location is not merely anecdotal, for it identifies the narrator's ethnic origin and geographical situation. The events of the narratives, that is, are located according to the situational perspective of the storyteller.

The Enxet were trading with Paraguayans on the west bank of the Paraguay River as early as 1853 (Kidd 1999b:27, following Susnik, 1981), much earlier than the Angaité, who were first mentioned doing so by Cominges (1882). Since the mid-19th century, therefore, according also to what we can gather from Grubb (1904, 1911, 1914) and other missionary accounts (e.g. Hunt, 1935), the Paraguay River was a shared frontier between the Enxet and the Paraguayans, sometimes marked by peaceful interaction between them and at other times by conflict. It is not strange, then, that Félix's narrative (and the anonymous version) registers this historical circumstance.

As we have seen, Grubb (1904:2-3) reported that, during the Triple Alliance War, the Enxet crossed the Paraguay River and profited from the cattle abandoned in a Paraguayan town massacred by the Brazilian army. If there is any historical episode that could have inspired the mythological events of Félix's narrative (and, to a certain extent, those of the anonymous version), it is the pillaging of this Paraguayan town, for the two instances exhibit a series of correlations: the location is the Paraguay River; the origin of cattle to which the myth refers coincides with the historical event (circa 1870); the cattle is Paraguayan (or possessed by a little Paraguayan-like spirit); and the Paraguayans are unable to seize the cattle, unlike the Enxet, who do so by killing and eating the animals or by keeping them. According to the Enxet elder quoted by Grubb, the historical episode ("By day we feasted, by night we robbed") is, like Félix's myth (and the shorter version), an assertion of the Enxet's ability to obtain cattle from the Paraguayans, by whatever means. It is this assertion, precisely, that Agapito's narrative reverses by introducing the breach of a taboo, which converts the acquisition of legal cattle into a fiasco.

A further correspondence between the ethnicity of the narrators and their narratives consists in the fact that the Enxet – unlike the Angaité, as far as we know – did possess cattle (and horses) prior to colonization (Kidd, 1992:44, following Freund 1893). They perhaps did not have as many as 700 head of cattle, but enough to confirm the humble figure of five given in Félix's narrative.

How, then, are we to explain the transformations that the Enxet and Angaité narratives produce in relation to each other, where structurally related narratives lead to opposite outcomes? The anonymous Enxet version appeared on paper twenty-five years before Félix's narrative was published. Félix's narrative, in turn, was told some twenty years before Agapito's. It would be misleading, though, to assume that there is a direct line of transmission between the three versions we have examined. Félix may have lived in Makxawayá, where Susnik probably heard the short version told by "the elders", such that his narrative may be an expanded version of the latter. Furthermore, if we suppose that Félix and Agapito were coresident at some point in La Patria, then Agapito may have heard his narrative from Félix, adapting it to his own particular perspective. However, the fact that we are familiar with a sequence of three versions narrated over a given period of time does not mean that we have exhausted all the versions and all the narrators that ever existed. Nor can we prove a direct, "hereditary" transmission of the myth from the "elders" to Félix to Agapito. We should recall, for instance, that Agapito's knowledge of *Nanek Anya* stemmed mostly from his father Florencio. Rather, then, than a singular phenomenon which changes throughout its instantiations, a myth is a multiple phenomenon which becomes singular in each of its instantiations. In the case in hand, we know at least three different versions of the myth belonging to three different periods of time and recounted by three (or more) different narrators, who may or may not be even loosely connected. The sample shows the historical transformations undergone by the myth in the course of its telling over a considerable span of time – around 40 years – and those transformations themselves tell a lot about the narrators' historical contingencies and contexts.

I have already explained Agapito's probable reasons for telling me his narrative: i.e. to inform me about ancient shamanism, to present the tension between shamanic power and Paraguayan wealth and, by extension, to explain the historical restrictions which came into force for the Angaité with the establishment of the IPC Company and other Paraguayan ranches. In the case of Félix, I can only speculate about his motives for narrating his version of the myth. However, this is not a helpless task, for we know about his leading role in the resettlement of La Patria and his close relationship with the Anglican missionaries, who, whether or not they listened to his narrative, at least published it.

In the acts of the *Junta Directiva Indígena* (JDI) from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, we find clues to the answer to our questions. The JDI was an Indigenous Management Board established by the Anglican Church in Paraguay. It was composed of several leaders and pastors from different Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná communities, in addition to a number of missionaries. The Board used to meet mostly in Makxawaya, but meetings were also convened in other communities, such as Sombrero Piri and La Patria. One of the main affairs discussed at that time was the search for land for the resettlement of the different villages living on private ranches.

Félix Bogado was both a pastor and secretary of the JDI. He formed part of the group of indigenous JDI members who visited communities in order to gather information about the people willing to move to the land to be bought (JDI Act 2 of 12/4/1979). Once the land for La Patria had been chosen, Félix “supported David [another JDI member] in mentioning the possibility of not having missionaries living there, as well as the possibility of having their own animals” (cited in JDI Act 24 of 22/5/1983).²⁰⁹ Later on Félix asked for “two horses for his own use and for the use of visitors to the new colony” (cited in JDI Act 30, n.d.), seeking at the same time to resign from his post as secretary as “he was already living in the new colony” (ibid.). On a subsequent occasion, “Pastor Félix starts the meeting with a speech about La Patria and what malicious people apparently say about it. He has heard that a lot of people are afraid to come to live in La Patria for many reasons. They say that there is no clinic and **they are afraid of the witch-doctors**. They also say that it is far away, that there is not enough land and that the place is bad” (cited in Act 38, n.d.; my emphasis). In the next meeting, “Pastor Félix speaks about La Patria. He gives a summary of the history of the Chaco and tells how it was in the past, when the Enxet were the sole inhabitants, before the Paraguayans came and started to fence the land. Now things are changing” (cited in JDI Act 39 of 14/12/1985). Finally, on the matter of the corral, “Pastor Félix says that he wants cows in La Patria but Sanchez says that they do not have barbed wire to finish the border fence with IPC. He asks whether IPC could provide food, in which case they would build the fence. They have posts but not barbed wire” (cited in JDI Act 40 of 1/2/1986).²¹⁰ My hypothesis is that Félix’s mythological narrative was part of his political discourse aimed at influencing the Anglicans by

²⁰⁹ The translation of the minutes from Spanish into English is my own.

²¹⁰ The identity of Sanchez is not indicated in the minutes. He is not listed as a JDI member.

convincing them of the Enxet's ability to own and manage cattle (and horses) since remote, mythical times. Indeed, the missionaries agreed to buy animals for the new "colony" and finally handed over more than 500 head of cattle to La Patria's leaders.²¹¹

Taking the foregoing references into account, it is natural that Félix's narrative should reinforce the precepts of Enxet ownership of cattle and their ability (and entitlement) to catch *sagua'a* animals. The myth asserts the Enxet's advantage over the Paraguayans in this matter, which would, in turn, strengthen the morale of the people in the process of resettlement, with its associated appeal to the Anglicans for their trust and help with a donation of cattle. Observe that the expectation of IPC help in the form of provisions and barbed wire with which to facilitate the building of a fence is matched in the narrative by the fact that the Paraguayan companion comes up with the idea of building a corral.

There is another interesting parallel between Félix's narrative and the circumstances of resettlement in La Patria. In one of the JDI meetings it is mentioned that members of a village of La Patria:

"... were accused of killing in their own paddock an IPC cow branded as *sagua'a* [wild cattle]. Cristobal [a missionary] has to see where there is a break in the fence close to Riacho Gonzalez ranch. He is going to talk with the *patrones* to sort out the problem we have with the Paraguayans, as they are still entering our land to hunt *sagua'a*". [JDI Act 29, 10/5/1984]

In the narrative, the Paraguayan companion's failure to catch the (wild) cattle, the Enxet's ability to do so and the building of the corral convey a message along the lines: 'the Paraguayans have already had the opportunity to catch the *sagua'a*, but now it is our land. Let us build a common fence and the remaining *sagua'a* should be ours'. In the context of the resettlement of La Patria, the hunting of cattle (particularly *sagua'a*) was both a Paraguayan and an indigenous practice. Kidd (1992:115) interpreted Félix's narrative as a mythological justification for the "killing of the white man's cattle". It should be stressed, though, that the narrative justification of indigenous cattle-hunting (and indigenous cattle-management) belongs in the context of La Patria's resettlement, in which such activities were legitimate for the indigenous community. Susnik (1976:168) gives an alternative

²¹¹ Tito La Haye, personal communication.

interpretation of the short anonymous version. She considers that it reflects the Enxet's mental adjustment to new times and the massive invasion of their territory by cattle, providing "reassurance of shamanic power over the 'unpredictable-new' and over non-indigenous livestock, 'pomaap' [pig] or 'waitk'é' [cow]" (my translation). She is right in pointing out the transformational character both of storytelling and of shamanism in the confrontation with ever-changing historical circumstances – a point more or less coherent with the theory underpinning my analysis of these myths as historical objects. However, the transformations reflected in a given myth are also predicated on the specific context in which and for which the myth was told. In other words, mythical narratives – and shamanic practices – change, but they do so grounded in the particular contingencies and intentions of the tellers/shamans.

A final point to be made in connection with Félix's circumstances is that, among the objections he mentioned in the JDI meetings as having been raised with regard to moving to La Patria, he listed the fear of sorcerers. Such awareness of the opinion of others in this regard could be understood as indicative of Félix's desire, in his character as a shaman, to defend himself against witchcraft accusations. In other words, he presents himself – like the protagonist of the myth – as a benevolent shaman.

Returning to Agapito's narrative – which reverses the positive outcome to Félix's version by establishing the Angaité's unsuccessful attempt to acquire *legal* cattle from the owner, *Valay Veske* (alias Stroessner and the IPC Company) – it is relevant here to introduce Agapito's personal circumstances and experience in La Patria. As with Félix's story, those circumstances influence the narrative's content.

I once held a long interview with Agapito in order to register his life history (Fieldnotes, 22/3/2005). His *Koeteves* father, Florencio – stepson of Pablito Yryndey – had worked for the IPC Company in Port Pinasco. Agapito's mother, Magdalena Pablino, was Enxet, as were his maternal grandparents, of whom Agapito remembered his mother's father, Pablito Cabañas. Agapito grew up in villages which had already become enclaves within IPC property. As an adolescent, Agapito moved with his parents from Tuparenda ranch to Curupaity lumber camp, where, in his own words "I got a temporary job (In Guarani: "añeconchava"). It was there that he saw a train for the first time. From Curupaity they moved to another ranch – 14 de Mayo – where all his maternal kin were

residing. After a while, they returned to Tuparenda ranch, because Florencio missed his mother, i.e. Agapito's paternal grandmother. Later on, they heard that the ranch was about to close down or change hands, and Agapito and his family went to Buena Vista ranch, where "Stroessner still ruled", meaning that it was still IPC property. Agapito added that Stroessner "ruled everywhere, as well as in [Port] Pinasco". From Buena Vista, Agapito and his parents – and parents-in-law – went to what was then Ceibo lumber camp. From there, successively, back to 14 the Mayo and Tuparenda.

When the IPC Company was about to wind up its activities in Paraguay, in the early 1970s, it gave 3,750 hectares by the Paraguay River to the protestant New Tribes missionaries for the resettlement of the Angaité people of Tuparenda ranch. The majority of the people moved there, in 1973, but Agapito and many of his relatives (including his already married children) went to Carmelita ranch, which had formerly belonged to IPC. In the year 1984, Agapito and his family moved to La Patria. He mentioned that, when La Patria was resettled, "700 head of cattle were given to each village". I have already said that Agapito's numeracy was limited, and the number 700 seemed to be fixed in his mind as a figure indicating a large quantity rather than the actual number. He later added that "the cattle were given by the Menno to each community, but Alarcon [former leader of Karova Guasu] did not want to give them to us, to each family, he just kept the cattle for himself..."²¹² He explained that all the members of his extended family were angered by Alarcon's alleged greed and left Karova Guasu for Tuparenda. There they worked for a few years, until finally returning to Karova Guasu.

Agapito's myth parallels, then, his experience in La Patria, particularly in so far as his having been unable to benefit from the cattle legally given by the Anglicans is concerned. It goes without saying that he and his family (like the rest of his co-villagers) would have had access to IPC cattle. Agapito's is a quite different situation compared with that of

²¹² Such disputes were probably endemic to the distribution of cattle in the villages. The minutes of a JDI meeting (number 40 of 1/2/1986) record a discussion about cattle in the community of Makxawaya. The question was whether "the JDI should take care of cattle [on behalf of the whole community], or the people should take care of them individually. There is a danger that in handing them out one by one they [the members of the community] will kill their animals. It is agreed that each person may have their own cow and that the first calf should be returned". The JDI had the dilemma of whether to assume responsibility for the cattle – thereby pleasing the missionaries but displeasing some of the community, for whom it would seem that the JDI members were intent on keeping the cattle for themselves – or give the cattle to each family/person, as the latter probably demanded (as in Agapito's case), and thereby arouse the missionaries' disapproval. Agapito refers to the Anglicans as "Menno" – and elsewhere as *Lenko* ("Mennonite") – using the term in the general sense of "gringo".

Félix, who benefited from the Anglican's cattle-giving but eventually left La Patria and moved to El Estribo. In short, Agapito lived most of his life under the rule of the IPC Company – and under the Stroessner dictatorship – and, when he and his family later moved to La Patria, his initial experience was no improvement.

My proposition is that Agapito's and Félix's narratives give expression to their respective personal (and ethnic) histories. Félix's narrative relates to his successful leadership, as displayed in his acquiring goods (i.e. land, cattle, and horses) through his dealings with Anglican and Paraguayan outsiders. This, in turn, ensured his position as a main leader and shaman in La Patria during the settlement period. Agapito's narrative, on the other hand, reflects his (and his family's) life experience as long-term residents on IPC land and as occasional employees of the company. There is also a parallel between the events of the story and the frustrated attempts of shamans like himself to overcome the foreign power. Moreover, it echoes Agapito's own life experiences in the way it shows how internal circumstances act as an impediment to indigenous cattle-ownership: in this sense, the mythological breaking of a taboo by a young indigenous couple matches Agapito's personal disagreement and dispute with his village leader. The narratives thus reflect the relative success or failure of the narrators as shamans and as leaders (in the sense of community representatives *vis-à-vis* outsiders). Félix's narrative – like its anonymous precursor – reasserts the power of ancient (Enxet) shamans, indirectly associated with Félix's mediating powers. Agapito's story, in contrast, is a metaphor for the limitations imposed by internal causes on his well-meaning attempts to provide for his people.

3.4.2 The bipartite ideology of Amerindians

Agapito's and Félix's narratives – “Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle” and “The first appearance of cows and horses” – corroborate Lévi-Strauss's proposition that, in Amerindian mythology, “companions who are either twins or not and who have unequal physical or moral qualities cooperate and share the same adventures. The more intelligent or the stronger fixes the blunders of the other” (1995:227). In point of fact, it was Métraux (1946:114) who first put forward the argument “A pair of brothers, generally twins, are among the most important protagonists of South American”.

In Agapito's narrative, the sign of twinning is suggested by the expression "they were like brothers" (in Guarani: *oñoermano*). As indicated above, the expression has connotations of the two shamans holding each other's shoulders, like drinking partners (as indicated by Agapito's gesture on telling the myth). At the same time, it could also imply a stronger bond between the two shamans, as between brothers or twins. In Félix's narrative, the first line is in plural ("They always used to go to other places") and indicates not merely the particular companionship between the Enxet and the Paraguayan in the episode that follows, but the frequency with which they shared the "same adventures". We see this motif in Agapito's myth when the two shamans begin again to drink *chicha* together, as a prelude to further adventures. The cooperation displayed by each pair of protagonists is also clear in both narratives: in Félix's story, both companions cooperate in building the corral; in Agapito's, both shamans dive into the water and later return together to the *riacho*.

The unequal capacities of the two companions are also portrayed in the narratives. By Félix's account, each of the two companions tries in turn to catch the cattle, but only the Enxet is successful, fixing the blunders of his companion by mediating with the little Paraguayan spirit. He is, then, the stronger or more capable character of the pair. In Agapito's story, we soon realize that only one of the two shamans leads, the one who speaks while his companion remains silent. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that one of the shamans is thrown off his horse as he escorts the cattle. The talkative shaman then repairs his partner's mistake by returning to the *riacho* to give the cattle-papers back to *Valay Veske*. Again, then, one of the shamans has greater social and shamanic skills than his partner.

Lévi-Strauss expands on the subject of this bipartite ideology: "In Amerindian thought, a sort of philosophical bias seems to make it necessary for things in any sector of the cosmos of society to not remain in their initial state and for an unstable dualism to always yield another unstable dualism, regardless of the level at which it might be apprehended" (ibid.231). This is what transpires from the two narratives in question, which give mythological expression to social and historical dualisms. In Félix's story, the original state of not having cattle (a state shared equally by the Paraguayan-Enxet pair) develops to the advantage of the Enxet shaman with his possession of a few cattle – a mythological

asymmetry aimed at reinforcing the position of the narrator and his people in their political claim before their contemporary counterparts: the Paraguayans and the Anglicans.

The second narrative reverses this advantage. From an original indigenous attempt to establish a symmetrical relationship with the powerful others, the Paraguayans, the superiority switches in favour of the latter, thereafter constraining the possibilities of the former. Significantly, it is an *internal* dualism – the opposition between the courageous shamans and the careless young couple – that yields the disparity and asymmetry that mark the relations between the Angaité and Paraguayans. Both narratives thus illustrate the fateful principle expressed in Amerindian mythology: namely, the principle of “the impossible twinness: that of the Indians and the Whites” (Lévi-Strauss 1995:231).

It should be stressed that the concept of “unstable dualism”, or twinness, particularly with regard to non-indigenous outsiders, is not simply an abstract mythological principle, but – at least in the two cases under study – a response to concrete historical circumstances and social experience. Nevertheless, the principle operates at all levels of the indigenous socio-historical cosmos – as Lévi-Strauss puts it, “regardless of the level at which it might be apprehended”. During the process of resettlement in La Patria, Félix wanted to convince the missionaries of Enxet superiority over the Paraguayans (in socio-cosmological terms). The enterprise seemed to be possible as, largely through Félix’s political and shamanic leadership, the Enxet were recovering land and, with missionary support, they were acquiring cattle, horses and other resources. Paraguayan domination seemed to be coming to an end: in Félix’s own words, “things are changing now”. He and his fellow JDI leaders were thinking of establishing a ranch in La Patria.²¹³

From Agapito’s perspective, in contrast, things were not so good. Like the two shamans of his narrative, he and his extended family could not secure possession of the cattle which was potentially available, and internal disagreement ensued. The cattle seemed to be the exclusive property of the (former) village leader, so Agapito and his family left the community and went back to work for the Paraguayans. Paraguayan supremacy was thus reinforced: ranches – i.e. the legal possession of large quantities of cattle – continued to be

²¹³ In one JDI meeting, several leaders suggested that “the JDI could take care of the animals”, and they asked the missionaries “if there will be ranch-owned cows in La Patria. They [the JDI] want to make the paddocks. There is good grazing land and they ask about the possibility of building *tajamares* [reservoirs]” (Act 38 of 14/12/1985, p. 4).

an exclusively Paraguayan attribute.

Owing to its being intrinsic to mythological thought, the principle of unstable dualism – entailing both similarity and disparity – is a powerful conceptual device with which to represent and explain historical and contextual transformations. Already during the process of resettlement in La Patria – a process happily welcomed and celebrated by people like Félix – others were foreseeing real or potential dangers (i.e. the faraway land, sorcery). What promised to be the means of overcoming Paraguayan (and Anglican) domination was already sown with the seeds of internal division as a result of the empowerment of certain indigenous leaders. Separated by a gap of two decades, the two narratives, although structurally similar, reflect – at least allegorically – the spirit of their times and the changing circumstances in which their respective narrators were involved. Agapito’s narrative, by adding the incident of the breach of a taboo, transforms the positive outcome of the earlier version into a negative conclusion, in keeping with the “unstable dualism” formula of Amerindian mythological rationale.

3.5 The importance of cattle in everyday life

It seems that I have obliterated an important question, on the assumption that the answer is self-evident: why, after all, are cattle important to the Angaité? What are the practical and symbolic reasons for their significance? A simple answer to the question is that cattle provide a lot of meat, meat is a culturally valued food and a lot of meat and food allows for a greater degree of commensality – i.e. the sharing of food in the company of a greater number and mixture of people – which in turn involves socio-political and cosmological mediations. A further reason is that cattle are equivalent to capital in the Chaco. Let us see, then, how the significant role played by cattle impinges on everyday Angaité life.

It has been remarked that the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco efficiently adopted the horse at an early stage during the Spanish Colonial period (i.e. during the 16th and 17th centuries), and that this was one of the reasons why they were able to resist the Guarani-Spanish alliance pitted against them (Chase Sardi and Susnik, 1995:88ff). Later on, the Chaco environment itself efficiently adopted the cattle which were massively

introduced at the turn of the 19th century. As most of the cattle roamed free, a large proportion became *sagua'a* (wild).

For the Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, whose subsistence relied a good deal on hunting, cattle became an important additional source of meat – in addition to other big game animals such as tapir, rhea, deer, peccary and so on – particularly for the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná located towards the Paraguay River. The availability of greater amounts of food, as at garden harvesting time, provided the conditions for feasts and initiation rituals such as *Vaingka*, *Yamma* and *Kaya* (In *Kovalhok: Maraca*)²¹⁴. A case in point is the Enxet elder's testimony gathered by Grubb: "By day we feasted, by night we robbed". That the slaughtering of a cow provided the means and justification for such occasions was a view shared by outsiders. Craig (1935:214-215), for instance, tells that as payment to a shaman from Kamarai's group who cured his horse of a spider-bite, he gave a "fat barren cow ... They were delighted with the cow, killed her then and there, and danced all night long ...". (With surprising candour, Craig added approvingly that "It could be said of their music that anyone who has danced their dances, *yanmana*, *wainkya* (sic) and others, will want to dance them again".) The Anglican missionaries' awareness of the value placed on feasting by the indigenous people resulted in their making such events conditional on a system of rewards and punishments. Thus, after an incident in which the mission house in *Yave Sanga* was damaged during the missionaries' absence, "as a lesson to the people, the animal, which we had taken up, intending to give them a feast, was withheld" (Bevis, cited in *SAMS Magazine*, 1924:19). Over time, the missionaries' attitude became increasingly disparaging: "The craving for meat amongst all the Chaco Indians can be compared to the desire for drink, and it is often the cause of scandal and much ill feeling in the village" (Sanderson, cited in *SAMS Magazine*, 1941:6).

Cattle, in short, became a means of maximizing commensality and, as such, of bolstering sociality. But, at the same time, their social and economic value can easily revert to

²¹⁴ In a long description of a *Vaingka* feast, the missionary Price (cited in *SAMS Magazine*, 1930:131-132) tells that, the morning after the first night of continuous drumming, "the women ... made their way, in single file, towards the garden. One hundred and five were counted and before the sun was high we saw them returning, each carrying a heavy load of maize cobs, pumpkins, or sweet potatoes, which were very soon boiled, or roasted, in readiness for the feast". Similar testimonies abound among elders in *La Patria*: "the next day the women looked for their sweet potatoes, the gardens were big" (Andres Tome, interviewed 23/5/2005). Elsewhere Ruddle relates "A week's break from station routine gave us an opportunity of seeing a *Kyaiya*(sic) feast which lasted for two days" (*SAMS Magazine*, 1938:17). See also the narrative *Nayvekamaha ato peheya* [In Angaité: "We ate sweet potato at dances"] (Franco and Imaz, 2006:145).

asociality and conflict.

Due to their particular characteristics – i.e. their large size, their relatively slow rate of reproduction (compared with other domestic animals) and the conditions required in order to raise them (fenced pastures, water, corrals, papers, and so on) – cattle are conspicuous to the point that their branding is social as much as physical. Everybody in a village manages the information about whose animals are roaming – apparently loose – in the surrounding environment. An important issue is the question of who possesses the cattle and how many. An individual owner in an indigenous village is subject to various pressures, which may force him/her to sell or slaughter his/her cattle, or move elsewhere in order to avoid the pressures. Community ownership of cattle is also complicated, by virtue of its being embedded in the social, political and economic fluctuations of the village. Far from asserting a cultural determinism of the sort that maintains that the long-term tenure of cattle (wealth) among Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples is made impossible by the levelling mechanism inherent in their egalitarian ethos, I propose an alternative explanation.

We have examined at length the processes by which the Angaité lost control over their land (including access to and possession of cattle and other animals) and, conversely, the control over land and cattle exercised by the colonists. The recovery of certain areas of land, proportionally much smaller than what the Angaité used to occupy (Villagra, 1998), does not facilitate the tenure of large herds of cattle.²¹⁵ The problem is exemplified by Agapito's request for barbed wire with which to enlarge the communal paddock of Karova Guasu. In other cases, people who were compensated with cattle by their *patrones* when they left their job on a ranch could not keep the animals for long as they did not find enough infrastructure to raise them in their original villages in La Patria (Fieldnotes, 7/6/2006). Such an enterprise requires investing in mending or renewing fences, in order not to let the cattle enter other people's cultivated gardens. Certain villages have kept herds of cattle for long periods, using a mixed system of individual and communal ownership: for example, the village of Korralon Kue (in La Patria) had a herd which, at its peak, numbered over 200 head; the community of San Carlos had over 300 head of cattle (Fieldnotes 19/2/1999). In both cases, however, the herds were drastically reduced over

²¹⁵ Kidd (1999b:125) estimates that a herd of 1,700 head of cattle is the most that the Enxet community of El Estribo could maintain.

the years, in one case because people from neighbouring villages – without cattle – would steal and slaughter even the breeding cows; in San Carlos, internal pressure obliged the leaders to sell the animals or distribute them amongst families.

Returning to the issue of who possesses the cattle, and bearing in mind that individual possession is widely accepted and linked to personal autonomy, the owner is always exposed to his/her own desires to share with beloved ones and, the same time, avoid “demands” to share with those whom he/she may not love much or is not willing to help (see chapter 1). Kidd (1999b) discusses at length how the balance between love and generosity, on the one hand, and, on the other, demanding and persuasion operates in the emotion discourse of the Enxet. The same principles apply to the Angaité, but it should be stressed that the market and the scarcity of food – particularly the most desirable food: game and domestic meat – play a role in this balance. For instance, if we look at the moment when an animal is slaughtered, hardly ever will it be totally destined to the owner’s extended family for consumption; even less will it be shared at large with fellow villagers and distant relatives. The different parts will be distributed for practical reasons, for there is a limit to the amount of meat that can be eaten or stored in the form of *charque* (sun-dried strings of meat). The distribution of the most valuable or desirable parts – as gifts or as exchange items – is an indication of the emotion and the relationships involved. On different occasions, I was offered – for money or for free – meat coming from an indigenous-owned animal. The offer to buy meat came from a woman from the village of La Paciencia, married to a Paraguayan. She was travelling on horseback to other villages to do her selling, and the cut she offered was the leg (the cut known in Paraguayan Spanish as *carnaza de segunda*). The gift of meat was received during a visit to Riacho Gonzalez ranch, where the wife of an Angaité employee – one of Lito Padron’s daughters – gave me a piece of fat probably coming from the rib of the animal. Dried meat (*charque*) is a convenient gift, as a small quantity, mixed with pasta or rice, makes a meal for a family. The Paraguayan teacher at Karova Guasu received gifts of dried meat from Paraguayan employees of neighbouring *estancias* and also made them gifts of the same food to people within Karova Guasu. On ranches, where an old animal is sometimes slaughtered weekly (depending on the ranch and the number of its cattle and employees), there is a marked difference between the parts received by Paraguayan employees and those allocated to indigenous employees. The latter receive the less valuable parts, such as the innards (liver, heart and so on).

As cattle have become a commodity which replaces (the saving of) money in the Chaco, animals are often exchanged for valuable foreign items such as motorbikes, chainsaws and so on, or they are used to acquire commercial provisions with which to open a store (see Kidd, 1999b:253). Because the scarcity of food seems to be endemic these days, it is difficult for a leader voluntarily to slaughter one of his few animals for a communal celebration. If an animal is slaughtered by the owner, rather than being disposed of by selling, part of the meat is usually used for his/her family consumption, another part is distributed amongst relatives and friends, and the rest is sold or exchanged for foreign goods. As a case in point, Tato from the community of Paraiso, from whom I bought a cow for Agapito, used part of the money he received to buy provisions for the Easter celebrations in his village. Even though he was willing to give a large amount to his community (with the idea in mind of becoming a leader there), he could not afford, as a first option, to dedicate all his gains to that purpose. Cattle, then, are mediations between and within relationships. Just as their disposal can bolster sociality, as a sign of love and generosity, so too can it cause anger and disputes.

Those whose have not received meat, or who have received too little or poor-quality meat, may be discontented and hold grudges against the donor(s). It is a common complaint against Paraguayans on ranches, where ranking is reflected in how much and what type of meat an employee receives – if he receives any at all. When a celebration is held without inviting the indigenous residents and employees, the latter remark that “they are having a barbecue while we are starving” (in Guarani: *hae kuéra ho’u asado ore ape ore vare’a*). But the same situation can arise – less commonly – within the community. If, for instance, a family decides to slaughter a cow to celebrate the birthday or marriage of one of its members – along generally similar lines to Paraguayan practice – without including everyone in the village, those who are excluded complain in exactly the same manner as above. Nowadays, communal celebrations rely mainly on provisions – both of meat and of the complementary rice or pasta – obtained from ranchowners, politicians or outside donors²¹⁶. At such times, there is a concerted effort to allow that everyone receives the

²¹⁶ For the celebrations one New Year’s Eve in the village of Karova Guasu, I bought provisions and donated half a cow purchased from a neighbouring ranch. With the agreement of Felix Navarro and Agapito, neighbouring villages – particularly drummers and singers – were invited to hold a *Vaingka*. The celebrations went well, but the elderly drummers performed with restraint. Over one year later, a reprise – held in conjunction with the leader of Karovai, Damacio Flores, the organization Sunu (which included the

same amount of food. If a communal hearth has not been designated for the cooking – to which the women generally attend – groups coming from different villages cook separately, having been given meat and provisions by the host leader (or by those delegated to do so on his behalf). The giving-out is a difficult task, for it implies good distributing skills and, more often than not, there is not enough to go round. Additionally, the bias of the distributor can lead him/her to keep some of the meat and provisions for his/her own family, which, if noticed, would generate a great deal of irritation among the rest of the participants.

Although it has become almost impossible to steal cattle from ranchowners – owing to the severity of the retaliations, in the past and at present – it has not been uncommon between different villages (in La Patria and elsewhere).²¹⁷ The bigger the herd, the more chances there are of animals being stolen in the course of time. The slaughtering of the animals may be skilfully concealed, but not sufficiently to avoid suspicions and the singling-out of the culprits, who almost always leave traces of the deed. On one occasion, for example, in which an animal was stolen in La Patria, the culprit was identified and consequently suffered shamanic retaliation from the owner that, according to third-party testimonies, led to his death.

A case in point regarding the issue of collective ownership of cattle is that of the small herd that the village of Karova Guasu received, as part of a development-support project, from the NGO Pro Comunidades Indigenas (PCI: “For Indigenous Communities”). In 2004, PCI bought five animals from 4 Cunhas ranch. They were of the Holland breed – good producers of milk – and in good condition. Félix Navarro (not to be confused with the Enxet storyteller Félix Bogado), mediated between PCI and the original owner and, along with others, brought the animals on foot from their original location (30 miles west

myth-recorders Mariana Franco and Gladys Imaz) and CEADUC (sponsors of the language-revitalization programme) – was more successful, and the *Vaingka* took place with a gathering of nearly 500 people from different villages (see chapter 2 and 4).

²¹⁷ Paraguayan criminal law is highly biased in favour of the interests of landowners, for it directly imposes prison sentences on those whose are caught stealing cattle, with no alternative disciplinary measures or fines (as in the case of other offences). In La Patria, a constant source of unrest are the police raids carried out – most of the time without due observance of the legal guarantees – in response to accusations made by neighbouring ranches. In some cases the accusations may be justified but, judging by the advocacy experience of the NGO Tierraviva, which handles several legal cases in La Patria, the indigenous people are scapegoats of a system that is biased to protect privileges – which are not in themselves rights – in favour of landowners and colonists. It can safely be said, in the light of several cases, that, if an indigenous person is killed in circumstances involving the participation of landowners or even colonists, the likelihood of clarifying the facts and seeing justice done is far less than when a ranch animal is stolen or killed.

of La Patria), escorting them on donkeys. When I arrived in La Patria, there was one bull and three milk cows, one of which had recently a calf. The families of the village took turns to milk the cows each day at dawn, and the milk was for their own use (some women would make cheese with it). The carers of the herd were variously Agapito, Lito Padron (Agapito's elderly brother-in-law) and Gregorio (Agapito's son and leader of La Patria). They used to lead the animals to graze in an enclosed 10-hectare paddock, where there was a old water reservoir (*tajamar*) that had been dug with the help of the Anglican missionaries. In the evening, any of the three men, or else Mario (Agapito's grandson) or Miguel (Lito's grandson), would go to the paddock to bring the animals to sleep in the small corral in the centre of the village.

On various occasions, I heard Félix Navarro referring to the herd as his own, as he credited himself with having acquired the cattle through his mediation with PCI. Agapito, in turn, would point out that he was the main carer of the herd. But both of them – and their fellow villagers – knew that the herd was owned communally. After buying a cow for Agapito, he mentioned to me that he was having difficulty caring for the animal (which differed from the others in being a Cebu) because it did not follow the rest of the herd and wanted to go back to the village of Paraiso. On more than one occasion Agapito pointedly remarked that his son Felix had suggested that he should sell the animals and distribute the money between them. In 2006 one of the calves disappeared. The people of Karova Guasu suspected that the thieves were members of the neighbouring community of Puente Kaigue, but the deed did not result in further investigation or confirmation of the suspicions. After I left the field I was informed that, owing to a dispute regarding the management of the communal herd, Félix Navarro left Karova Guasu with his family and founded, close by, the village of 6 de Marzo (see chapter 2). Eventually the whole herd was sold, including Agapito's cow, and the money was distributed equally amongst the different families and members of Karova Guasu.

As the evidence shows, cattle can directly or indirectly provide an important source of commensality and thus be a means of achieving the ideal of communal contentment and tranquillity. By virtue of that same potential, however, cattle can inevitably also cause social and individual discomfort amongst fellow villagers and/or with other villages and outsiders.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has been a long journey which began with Agapito Navarro's narration of the myth of the "Two shamans and the Owner of Cattle". Both because of what the myth expresses and because of what it suppresses, and the manner in which it does so, it has been shown to be a meaningful explanation, however paradoxical, of how certain of the Angaité's current conditions of existence have come into being.

The Angaité's oral *Nanek Anya* are not fixed objects but, rather, a form of historical discourse that reflects the particular socio-historical circumstances of the narrator. They are also instantiations of previous or comparable narratives told by other Amerindian peoples and, as such, attest to the existence of a pattern – or series of patterns – of transformations in Amerindian mythology at large.

The processes whereby the colonization of the Chaco impinged on the life of the Angaité, such as the massive introduction of cattle and subordination to the colonists, were not primordial agents of transformation that eroded a formerly unchanging state. As the narratives show, shamanism and exchange provided the Angaité (and the Enxet) with the means to cope with transformation, by interpreting it in a way in which they themselves are not merely victims or observers. When necessary, the narratives incorporate new elements and erase others, in order to present a history which keeps pace with the changes taking place on the ground. A common theme of Amerindian mythology seems to be at work here, which is the principle of impossible twinning. Located in the distant, almost primordial past of the narratives, as the outcome of the protagonists' past adventures, that principle becomes a valid explanation for the present.

Finally, the importance of cattle in contemporary Angaité culture is implicit in the fact that they merit a myth about their original loss (or, in Enxet terms, their original gain). The cultural importance of cattle derives from their high potential as a means of maximizing commensality and, therefore, of making possible the desired state of contentment and tranquillity. However, that potential is always ambivalent, as it can equally provoke the negative antithesis: namely, internal dispute within villages and interethnic conflict between indigenous people and Paraguayans.

In the next and final chapter, we look at historical transformations in shamanic practices in the Chaco and their repercussions on the contemporary role of shamans and leaders. These two roles, which in the past were combined in the person of the shaman-leader, nowadays seem increasingly to diverge, in a similar way to the impossible twins. However, the divergence may not be that great if we consider that at present the roles of shaman and leader are both about learning transformative skills in order to gain the generative powers of the “others”.

4. TRANSFORMATION OF SHAMANISM AND LEADERSHIP IN THE CHACO: CONSTANT INNOVATIONS?

In this last chapter I will discuss how historical transformations of shamanism and leadership which in the past, concentrated largely on the figure of the indigenous *veske* (see previous chapter, cf. Kidd, 1999a:6) has led to a current situation of predominant non-shaman leaders, fewer and/or inconspicuous shamans, pastor-shamans and privileged non-indigenous *veske*, by showing varied and innovative abilities and practices through which current shamans and leaders continue to deal with meta-human and human “others” and their powers/capacities – both material (e.g. wealth) and non-material (e.g. healing). I argue that what these abilities have in common, despite their diversity, novelty and/or diachronically changing features, is their personal, relational and transformative character and the undetermined possibility to be a means to social-moral ends or destructive and asocial purposes and consequences.

4.1. The related capacities/powers of *Apyoholhma* and *Veske*

Although in the past, shaman and leader largely collided in the person of the *veske*. As we can deduce from indigenous narratives and some written sources, (cf. Craig, 1935:209,225) not all the shamans/*apyoholhma* were *veske* (cf. Kidd, 1999a:6, Kalish, 2008:5) and apparently not all the *veske* were manifestly shamans.²¹⁸ By and large, the *veske* were male individuals with only a few female shamans being noticed (cf. Susnik, 1952). What differentiated *veske* from other *apyoholhma* and *apyoholhma* from lay-people was not a differentiation in roles or in nature (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 2006:322). The Angaité *apyoholhma* and *veske* acquired and developed his/her “powers/capacities” through personal efforts and specific training, along with their auxiliary spirits.

Additionally, it is important to note that in the past there was not a clear-cut role distinction among different kinds of shamans. Métraux (1963[1944]:360) observes that:

“Every Chaco band has many individuals who are capable of treating a sick person or

²¹⁸ Craig (1935:209,225,230) in describing a series of incidents, distinctively explains the figures of a leader, a “witch doctor” and warrior. The latter was Kambara’i, whom the missionary William Sanderson (cited in SAMS Magazine, 1929:55) referred to as “Cacique Cambarai (sic)” that is, the chief of his group.

chanting to avert some impending disaster. It is, therefore, sometimes difficult to distinguish between a person with a smattering of magical arts and a professional shaman" (ibid.).

Thus he suggested that, without fully realizing the implications of this observation, that the abundance of "capable" individuals may speak of differences of degree and personal capabilities but not of segregated and separated social roles. Among the Enxet, Susnik (1953:7) also attempted to distinguish the role of a "witchdoctor/seer"/ *pijozma* (sic) [*apyohoxma*] from that of the "healer", *panakte angjaapim* (sic).²¹⁹ However, such terminological or phenomenological differentiation did not entail fixed role distribution or social ranking, as Susnik and Métraux would have it. It established a range of terms which emphasised certain capacities (e.g. *veske* for socio-political leadership or *apyoholhma* for knowledge and providing curing/killing powers; see discussion below) or which described particular capacities of the individuals in question (e.g. "healer"/*kelaaney pook* (in Enlhet), */panakte angjaapim* (in Enxet) "rainmaker" */tengyey' yegmen* (in Enxet), "singer"/n.d.). These were, rather than separate or segregate figures from the *apyoholhma*, differentiated "forms of the *apyoholhma*" (Kalish, 2008:5).

A further examination of related terms and their usage, which I have already presented, illustrate how concepts of power, knowledge and personal abilities are interconnected with shamanism for the Angaité. To begin with, we have already seen how the word *apyoholhma* that the Angaité (therefore I) use more frequently for "shaman" means in its original semantic construction, as Kalish (ibid.2) demonstrates, "he who knows the space/forest", and in its most recent and current use, a "person with power" (see chapter 3). He notes that nowadays among the Enlhet, the term *apyoholhma* might have a negative meaning, depending on the age of the speaker and the context of its use (ibid.5). Under the heavy Christianized influence of the Mennonite, people affirm, judging retrospectively, that all the ancient *apyoholhma* were evil sorcerers. Enlhet still refer to and value a "person with powers" but in order to avoid *a priori* negative associations use alternative names to *apyoholhma* such as *kelaaney' pook*/ "healer" or *apvaanyam*/ "old man" (ibid.).

²¹⁹ I cannot fully decipher Susnik's translation of these two terms. *Panakte* or the cognate Angaité term *panaktema* means "plant/remedy", which suggests that Susnik referred to a botanic specialist.

The original semantic of the term *apyoholhma* as “he who knows the space” or a “person with power” still holds in current discourses of the Angaité. Such meanings are germane to the way a shaman might refer to his auxiliary spirits as *apmovana* (In Angaité: “his abilities”). This word derives from the verb *vanke* “to be able to”, which according to Kidd (1999b:40) is the nearest to our idea of power. Let us remember that Agapito in his narrative, (see chapter 3) alternatively called the auxiliary spirit *Valay Veske* and *Arandu* (In Guarani: “wise man”), and if we were to verbalise this word, it would read as “he who has knowledge”. Such a translation also suggests that the spirit *Valay Veske* was himself a shaman. However Agapito never used the Angaité term *apyoholhma* to refer to any auxiliary spirit.

In the case of the previously mentioned Nivacle, the semantic relation is clearer between, on the one hand, the concept of knowledge and ability, and on the other, the terms for shamans, auxiliary spirits and their songs. The terms *Tôiyeej* “shamans” and *tôijes* “auxiliary spirits” and “shamanic songs,” derive from the verb *tôï* “knowledge/ability” (Grant, 2006:37). This takes us back to Viveiros de Castro’s (2006) observation on “the reverberation between the positions of shaman and spirit” and his argument that for Amerindians the word for “shaman” designates:

“An adjectival and relational quality or capacity rather than a substantive attribute, something which can be intensely present in many non-human entities; which abounds, needless to say, in ‘spirits’; and which may even constitute itself as a generic potential of being” (ibid.321).

I previously paraphrased Viveiros de Castro, as I intended to emphasize the pervasiveness among non-shaman indigenous individuals of shamanic elements and/or capacities. Here, I complete the argument in order to emphasize the pervasiveness of shamanic capacities amongst “others” and in the process of becoming other, e.g. Paraguayan. Therefore qualities such “knowledge” and “ability/power” are epitomized in the figure of the *apyoholhma* but are also distributed among and attributed to specialized shamans, non-shamans, spirits and foreigners. As Kidd (1999b:40) argues, these abilities and powers are personalised and concrete, therefore they are different in form and intensity according to who has or executes them. This is how we will see that certain kinds of knowledge and abilities, such as the foreign capacities of writing and having funds/projects, can be

considered shamanic abilities to a certain extent. Shamanic (or shamanic like) capacities are relational, i.e. they establish a relationship between terms and at times within the self; accumulative and specific, so an individual can study a particular capacity or train him/herself in many; transformative: they imply certain inter-specific mutations; or they are generative, in which they can induce something into being.

In keeping with the preceding reasoning, I argue that present indigenous leaders and shamans differentiate themselves from each other and from their people, in terms of their aggregation or combination of *capacities* rather than a demarcation of a specific function and/or social role. The shamanic and shamanic like capacities are relational as they require mediations with others, whether the “meta-human” spirits or the “no so human” foreigners. In other words, the shaman/leader derive or execute their own powers through their relationships with powerful others. These are relational capacities in the sense that they are obtained through powerful others in so far as they circulate and/or interfere through the shamans to establish further relations between themselves and the non shaman/leader individuals. Some of these capacities are transformative *par excellence* for they imply adopting the other’s point of view, spirit or foreign, which is necessary to a certain extent and in certain situations. Thus they are able to look and behave (act, talk, and so on) like the “other” in its/his respective milieu. They are also able to come back to or display the initial state or resume a familiar disposition (e.g. one’s own human body after a dream/trance in the case of a shaman or to adopt his own social milieu in the case of leaders). This is the “inter-specific mutation” capability of the shamans (cf. Viveiros de Castro, *ibid.*) which we will see, partly applies to leaders in their dealings with outsiders and the outside world. Trance, chanting and dreaming are experiences of self-transformation which require the displacement of the “soul-dream”/*vanmongkoma* to other dimensions of reality, therefore they require a journey. Current leaders, in their dealings with the outside, also need to resort to frequent journeys. In this sense, I propose that the acquisition of foreign knowledge/experiences by current leaders, to a certain extent, resemble or evoke the shamanic transformation which unfolds by means of travelling. The generative aspect of shamanic capacities is that they can generate things or states of being, through their mediation with their powerful allies, or rather; they can cause “things” to appear, multiply, intensify (e.g. garden products, game animals, money, and diseases) or annul their effects. Thus they intervene in the “normal” course of material processes and human actions and decisions. In this sense, certain means and resources connected to

foreigners (e.g. writing, development projects) and which the leaders (and shamans) crave to acquire or have access to and control over, are considered or suspected in certain contexts to be of a “generative” quality.

However, shamanic and shamanic like capacities are also undetermined in socio-moral terms, as they imply powers that manifest or have both positive and negative consequences, such as healing/killing, providing for others/greediness. The *positive* use of the shaman/leader’s capacities should be, as Kidd points out (1999a:6), a means to socio-moral ends: spiritually and physically protecting their people, and providing them with food and other material benefits.²²⁰ In this sense, if the shamanic abilities are particular and specific in terms of means, techniques and cosmic inter-connexions with spirits, they have further links to other capacities of the material and social orders, which also serve the aforementioned ends.

I have suggested elsewhere (Villagra, 2008b) some past and present features of Enlhet-Enenlhet’s leadership and should mention here those which represent personal abilities or qualities: no coercive consensual authority; extensive kinship ties or relatedness represented by the number of followers; persuasive speaking (including additional knowledge of foreign languages for trading/negotiation); care, generosity and initiative; courage in warfare; and, it goes without saying, shamanic powers (cf. see also Braunstein, 2005). All these capacities are highly relational in character and they stand for indexes of leadership rather than for its exclusive or formal “requirements”. It should be noted that these abilities are also ambivalent, i.e. positive or negative, depending on the proportion and context of enactment, and potential contradiction, such as a leader’s great following could lead to divisions, or his exaggerated eloquence to suspicion of lying.

4.2. On the historical transformation and the shamanic potency

A prime objective of the above assertion is to examine the continuities between current shamans and leaders, taking into account the apparent segregation of their different roles within the communities. If former *veske/wese*, whose main task was to provide materially

²²⁰ In relation to this Kalish (2008:6) adds that the Enlhet “judged the ‘persons with power’ according to whether they controlled themselves or not, and they were aware that the community should help them to control themselves” (my translation).

and protect spiritually their people, could aggregate several relational capacities (spiritual, moral, political, material) this position, dynamic and fluid has been somehow subjected and dissected by the process of colonization. Nowadays leaders and shamans exhibit clearly distinguished, roles with shamans being rare/scarce and leaders more predominant and socially conspicuous. This is because leadership is forcefully legitimized by the State, and more so since it is legally prescribed for its recognition.²²¹ Therefore, this establishes a kind of division of labour and hierarchy of value between shamans and leaders. The “spiritual” role and its “representative”, the shaman, is confined to more stereotypical and less sanitary religious tasks, i.e. sporadic “cultural” and healing rituals; in comparison to the more significant “political” representation exerted by the leaders through their public actions. Additionally, some shamans are being replaced in their “spiritual role” by pastors (although we will see that both figures can and often collide). Thus the current picture is not one of the correlated capacities of different and interconnected dimensions (spiritual, political, moral, and social) but of a hierarchical order in which the capacity of leading a community resides in externally recognised political representation. This is fostered by the way the non-indigenous relate to and understand indigenous social functioning. In this sense, it is a practice that somehow facilitates its own perception. The fading of ritual and shamanic visibility is understood as a process of acculturation and Christianisation, which in its turn is promoted by acculturating practices such as institutions relating to leaders and shamans as segregated roles.

A more complex panorama appears when considering that powerful outsiders, missionaries, *patrones*, were called *veske/wese* almost since the beginning of colonization. Additionally, missionaries and certain Paraguayans were perceived as shamans, which is not particularly strange considering the former’s behaviour, the “generative” wealth of outsiders and the type of links they established with the Indians. On the other hand, the term has transmuted in meaning and today only applies to foreigners, whose powers are displayed in a very different manner in comparison with past indigenous *veske*. Unlike these *veske*, foreigners were and are more driven to values and practices related to hierarchy and coercion. However, they can also act, as we have seen in the first chapter, depending on the particular relationship, more or less in tune with the “right” social values

²²¹ The national Law 904/81 establishes in articles 7 to 11 the procedure for recognition of communitarian leadership and legal personhood before the Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INDI, Spanish acronym).

such as care, and generosity, and indigenous expectations. The outcome of the semantic and historical transformation of the term *veske* makes it more difficult to grasp a common logic behind leadership and shamanism. At first glance, it seems that the term *veske* did not only change the subject of reference but also the idiosyncratic features associated with it such as generosity, consensus and so on. However, we can find room for explanation if we consider that the “powers/abilities” of the *veske* have the potential for and are means of valuable moral actions yet they have plenty of room for transgression. In other words they are not morally predetermined, as good or bad *per se*, but contextually and relationally evaluated as they are set into actions.

My general point here is the incidence of the shamanic symbolic and practical potency in the figures of shaman and leader, which depart from a common point, the *veske*, to gradually more diverse and distinguished terms in sociological, historical and ethnographical aspects. If I previously used the term *pervasive*, to describe such shamanic potency beyond the figure of the shaman, here I would rectify this argument by saying that more than pervasive, it seems to be a discontinuous potency by which people operate their understanding and actions; a potency which recedes from sight in many instances to appear later on to others with intensity. The shamanic potency, in the current lives of the Angaité (and *mutatis mutandi* of other indigenous people of the Chaco) seems to be a kind of default potency.

Here we confront a question: should not this shamanic potency and practice have vanished subsequent to the progressive decrease of shamans in number and social visibility among the indigenous people of the Chaco? At first glance, at least according to my observations on the Angaité and Enxet, there are indeed fewer and/or less conspicuous shamans than were reported in the past. Such a phenomenon can be explained as the result of evangelization in the Chaco but also as a consequence of particular historical events. For instance, Miller (1979) describes how, during the mid 1920s, in the indigenous village of Napali in the Argentinean Chaco, the attempts of rebel Toba shamans and leaders to subvert the non-indigenous domination led to a massacre perpetrated by the colonists (see below). As a tragic outcome of this campaign the “traditional” Toba shamans were rewarded with general disbelief and the loss of both social prestige and fewer apprentices among forthcoming generations. In addition to this, the missionaries renewed and continued their efforts through their teachings at church and school, aiming to provoke

“disenchantment” (as Miller points out in a Weberian sense) with the Toba’s own perspectives, and thus they were driven towards more *secular* thinking (ibid.90). Then, according to Miller, not only did shamans decline in their power but the Toba confronted the “disintegration of their fundamental ideology” (ibid.191). The Toba are just one example, but similar events and processes occurred throughout the Chaco. How then does secular logic and shamanic potency coexist? Can we assume that the former overrides the latter in a contemporary world of “disenchanted” shamanism? We will turn to these questions below.

Other authors, such as Gordillo and Porini (2001), come from a different position, questioning the efficacy and relevance of a shamanic perspective over current practical considerations determined by the present difficult subsistence conditions. They remark (ibid.341) that to understand the cultural meaning for Argentinean Toba of, for instance, practices such as hunting and dealing with the spirit “owners of the animals”, one has to look for the *subjectivity* of such practices under the concrete everyday conditions such as poverty, scarcity of animals, and marginalization in which they are carried out. With this proposal Gordillo and Porini dismiss, and in my opinion, devalue any indigenous explanations of social practices that may look “metaphysical” by calling them “subjective”. They argue and exemplify how, when the Toba go hunting-fishing their “practical” aims and worries like making more money, and maximizing the alimentary benefits of a meagre catch, are those which prevail over “subjective” considerations such as whether the abusive exploitation of game or the uncorrected disposition of their leftovers may upset the spiritual “owner” of animals.²²²

Here I have a few objections which favour my argument that the current, however discontinuous or contradictory it might look, presence of shamanic understanding in particular contexts goes beyond the particular figure of the shaman/*apyoholhma*. At one level, the symbolic perceptions are not necessarily in contradiction to more “objective”, “pragmatic” or “*secular*” explanations: the overt fact that there are less animals due to environmental depletion, indigenous land alienation and colonist encroachment and the indigenous practical dispositions to adjust to such a situation (i.e. to hunt more to make a

²²² Gordillo and Porini also suggest that, due to the Anglican influence, Christian symbols have been incorporated in representations of hunting “where the figure of the *payák* [the owner of the animals] is replaced by the one of God” (ibid.342)

profit or a meal) does not remove from the picture, the “owners” of animals/plants (and other meta-physical manifestations). The latter have a domain of existence, action and interaction with humans and animals that is not necessarily synchronically fitted with the human action and space-time domain: the intersections and interactions of the “owner of animals” and spirits with humans are erratic and unpredictable rather than subjected to strict cause and effect principles and one-sided interpretations.

Indeed, shamanic symbolic potency can easily elude *Reductio ad absurdum* examinations and change conclusions and explanations of “facts” that, according to our secular point of view, would prove them to be false. For instance, if a person dies despite being treated by a powerful shaman, it is explained alternatively as that particular shaman’s inability, due to an interfering third force, as well or inasmuch as a lack of non-indigenous remedies or treatment. Nonetheless, this incident will not necessarily prove the non-practical and futile character of shamanic healing itself or of *a priori* predominance of “objective” explanations. Those indigenous explanations Gordillo and Porini choose and value as more objective than others seems to me, more a matter of their particular epistemological approach than an overall evaluation of the explanations the Indians might make for themselves.

Furthermore, that indigenous cosmology and shamanism have innovated and likewise incorporated foreign auxiliary spirits and new techniques, as noticed by Gordillo and Porini themselves for the Toba (ibid.), allows for the possibility of adjusting the explanatory force of such practices under the everyday conditions in which the Chaco Indians live now. For instance, some Enxet elders who worked with Susnik (1977) asserted that the “owner of the animals” have reacted *themselves* to the new historical and ecological conditions. They told her (ibid.167) that the changes brought into the Chaco such as the massive introduction of cattle and the “noise” produced (probably referring to deforestation), upset the animals and their spiritual “owners”, henceforth the former have gone into the deep forest where they are hidden by their “owners”.

On another level, Gordillo and Porini (ibid.) suggest that the violations of hunting taboos (e.g. the careless disposition of the leftover of a catch) can be a breach of the “principle of reciprocity” between the hunter and the spiritual owner of the animal. Such a particular reciprocal relationship is “an expression of the socio-cultural force of reciprocity within

the whole of the indigenous social relations” (ibid.340). Here I would rectify their argument by saying that the idea of reciprocity he suggests between the hunter and the “owner of animals” seems to be slightly mechanical. Such a relationship is inserted into wider more complex relational field where third parties also influence the outcomes. Gordillo and Porini also notice that some Toba say that the low prices paid by colonist for their meat or furs offend the spiritual owners, who then hide their animals (ibid.342). In other words, the instances, the prospects and outcomes of successful or unfortunate hunting are not only described as the observance or violations of taboo by the hunters alone, included are his close relatives and the interference of third parties.²²³ Also, to determine the point where either the interference of the “owner of the animals”, the violation of a specific hunting taboo or the use of a talisman, the broken rifle or the missed shot are alternatively the relevant aspects of the outcome of a hunt, all depends on the perspective of each actor.

Shamanic explanations do not operate in terms of the laws of necessity and rigid formalism and verification, which render such explanations consistent whenever they are used. People provide explanations that contradict with their own previous explanations or other people’s explanations. What I am arguing here is not the prominence of shamanic potency over the “objective” or the secular, or their happy combination or an easy distinction between them. Rather I suggest a range of alternative and multiple indigenous explanations that incorporate many elements, not without inconsistencies, ambiguities and flaws. I would agree here with what Kidd (1999b:17) has noticed:

“Indigenous philosophies are, pre-eminently, social philosophies and their importance lies, not in their coherence, but, rather, in their workability and pragmatic value. If, for example, someone is ill, what is important is the attaining of an understanding of both the nature of the illness and its cure. Indeed, indigenous people are more concerned with finding a cure rather than any abstract logic pertaining to the cure. It is irrelevant that, by gaining this understanding, certain ideas may be expressed that do not logically fit in with others that may be articulated in another context and time. Nor is it significant that people in neighbouring houses or communities may explain things quite differently” (ibid.).

²²³ Arenas (1981:50) explains that if the hunter’s wife is menstruating and eats meat, this causes the animal he shot to bleed but not to die. The hunter must then cure his rifle with the juice of *pa’ang* (in Lat. *Thrithrinax biflabellata*). He should also treat and train his dogs for a more successful hunt with different plants (ibid.).

From this reasoning it follows that the shamanic aspects (apprenticeship, transmutation, trance/dream/chant travelling, relationships with a powerful other) and features (relational, transformative, generative) that might inform the predominant non-shamanic leadership, are not to be taken as the only (or consistent) explanatory and operational means of such leadership, either for us or for the Angaité themselves.

I will turn now to the literature and my ethnographic examples to show how shamanic potency has been transformed under new historical circumstances and how it retains its meaningfulness, without denying the existence of secularization and Christianisation processes, within the present array of the multiple, diverse and apparently segregated figures of the shaman, leaders, pastors and non-indigenous *veske*, following my earlier arguments of the aggregation of capacities.

4.3 Rise and fall of the indigenous *veske* and the appearance of non indigenous *veske* and indigenous pastors

In the Chaco, shamanism has proved to be a phenomenon in constant transformation; at least as far as we can learn from what has been registered since the colonization process began. Although I do not attempt here to exhaustively describe these multiple transformations in their wider extensions, I would like to compare some phenomena observed in other peoples of the Paraguayan and Argentinean Chaco with the Angaité case. By doing this we would be able to see some common patterns and tendencies and the particularities of the transformations. The changes and innovations that I include here are understood in a broad sense, to comprise new and incorporated shamanic practices such as adopting biblical discourses; using new bullet-proof talismans, Christian stamp-cards and new cosmological and auxiliary spirits (e.g. “our father’s” spirit), and new kinds of shamans like missionaries, Paraguayans and indigenous pastors. The myth “Two shamans and the Chief of the Paraguayans” from my perspective, exposes one notorious type of transformation experienced among the Angaité (i.e. alike foreign auxiliary spirits) and one instantiation of the general and/or analogous transformations undergone by shamanism in the Chaco region.

Since it began, colonization provoked innovations in shamanic practices and artefacts. Grubb, the pioneer Anglican missionary, noticed early on that “the indigenous sorcery it is not rigidly conservative but it advances with the time” (1992[1911]:95). He observed that the Enxet made amulets with manuscript and printed paper to protect themselves from their original owners, the missionaries (ibid.84). Shamans asked the missionaries for metal needles which would later be found and extracted from their patients’ bodies (ibid.95). The aggravation of the consequences of colonization on the life of the Indians fuelled remarkable transformations, and precisely, those innovations that intended to challenge the new imposed order. Again, in the case of the Enxet at the beginning of the 20th century the innovations did not simply relate to new shamanic artefacts but also with new spirits incorporated into their cosmology, such as the *Egyápam* (Kidd, 1999b:34, Kidd 1999a). Such innovations and flexibility in the Enxet’s body of spirits has been a constant feature for them as Kidd notes (1999b, ibid.).

Although the Anglican missionaries were struggling against the Enxet shamans and contesting their influence among their people in favour of the Christianization enterprise, as Grubb repeatedly describes (1992[1911]:8,10,96, 98,180ff), this did not lead the way to the disappearance of shamanism. Rather the Enxet interpreted the efforts of the missionaries and much of their Christianity as proof of the latter’s shamanic attributes. Grubb himself was considered a great shaman and a leader, as he acknowledged himself (ibid.96, 104,185). Missionary behaviour and teachings, which in the later case was based on misleading translations and manipulations of indigenous cosmology, enhanced the perception that the missionaries were idiosyncratic shamans with their own techniques and auxiliary spirits. Out of this perception, and prompted by critical circumstances like widespread epidemics, circa 1900, the Enxet developed the *Egyápam* cult (Kidd, 1992:91). Mimicking The Lord’s Prayer which the missionaries recited under their mosquito nets, the Enxet started to gather in groups on their own and sing. At some point during the gathering a voice from under a mosquito net would announce the presence of the *egyápam* (ibid.92). The leaders of the cult, who were shamans, could also receive and interpret written messages from these spirits (ibid.). Around the 1910’s the Anglicans realised that the cult had deviated from Christian practices and beliefs so the Indians were prohibited from using it and they were forced by the missionaries to abandon it. However by this time the practice was already quite widespread and beyond the missionaries’ control. The missionaries were considered territorial *wese*; and as such they “could be

viewed as either good or bad and this depended on socio-geographical distance: one's own *wese* would always be regarded as good while the *wese* of another community would always be potentially dangerous" (Kidd, 1999a:7,19). Therefore, those Enxet whose communities were far enough from the missions kept on practising the cult independently and "no longer accepted the missionaries as their own *wese*" (ibid.26), teaching their followers to oppose the foreigners. However, in their own missions, the missionary offensive provoked a wave of baptisms and those who were baptised, "created a facade of orthodox Anglicanism" (Kidd 1999a:26) and kept practising shamanism beyond the missionaries' gaze and control.

The Angaité, in their turn were less affected by the Anglican influence due to fewer short-lived missions among them. Nonetheless, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Enxet also considered the missionaries. Consider for instance Agapito's narrative "The revengeful missionary" (see chapter 3) and a related testimony of the late Cacho Lima who said that in the mission of *Maskoykaha*:

"There was the house of an Englishman. He was called *Tenvuiak'a* [in the vernacular: He felt down], there was also his brother *Pook Napaat* [in the vernacular: Another face], **they were shamans**" (Interviewed 27/5/2005).

Such a view amongst the Angaité, similar to the Enxet, was enhanced by several correlated circumstances: the missionaries' distribution of wealth in the form of trade or gifts; the spreading of epidemics simultaneous with their presence, which was taken as a sign, depending on the context, alternatively as either their evil or healing/protective powers; the intermediary role these missionaries played in relation to the IPC company and other *patrones*; and the shelter the missions provided, especially during the Chaco War. Andres Tome, of the village of La Leona, La Patria, explains this latter role:

"The missionary came to where we were, in Laguna Misión, *Yave Saga* and he told us that the [Chaco] war was coming and that we should go to Campo Flores and we should leave our things...The gringo saved us... The *gringo* [the missionary] saved us, they had already upset the *Kempohakme* [In Angaité: "the angry ones", referring both to Bolivian and Paraguayan military] he wanted us to go to *Maskoykaha*, we got to the Englishman's place in time... We left

our garden where there was a lot of food, we dug out some sweet potato to eat on our way. The soldiers were coming, we heard that they had killed other people: the *Konhongnava*, the *Kelyakmok* of Salazar...Thanks to the gringo we were saved" (transcribed by Villagra, 2008a:82-83).

Later on during the Paraguayan civil revolution of 1947 which saw several Paraguayan political parties confront each other, the missionaries again played a protective role, telling people from different communities to move and take shelter in the central mission of Makxawayá (cf. testimony of Ricardo Jimenez in Amarilla, 2006:595-600). Nonetheless, even when the missionaries were considered shamans by the Angaité who happened to live in their missions or nearby, this did not grant the missionaries absolute moral or political authority, as we can deduce from the names the Indians gave them, which sometimes have a burlesque nuance, e.g. *Tenvuak'ia*/"He felt down". On the whole, the effects the Anglicans had on the history and lives of the Angaité was more limited than that of the Paraguayans, and other foreign agents such as the IPC Company and their employees, which covered most of the Angaité territory.

The increasing pressure of colonization and the appearance of other powerful outsiders apart from the missionaries, the *patrones* (Kidd 1999a:26-27) foreign or Paraguayan and their sometimes less "benevolent" character, along with epidemics, the Chaco War and other localized violent episodes, all contributed to proving that the indigenous *veske*, as shamans, could no longer protect their people and provide for them alone. Since then, the Indians have gradually realised that the non-indigenous *veske* advantaged their own, to the point where Paraguayans/outsideers alone were named as protectors (ibid.29-30). From this realization grew the indigenous attempts to incorporate and learn the power of the outsiders by means of their own idiosyncratic practices and techniques. The Enxet's *egyápam* cult exemplifies this process, at first as an independent cult which later resulted in conversions, as well as other sorts of appropriation in a Christian fashion but with a shamanic potency.

Regehr (1979,1981) studied the charismatic movements which, at first took place among the Nivacle and extended to the Enxet and Maka peoples (cf. Braunstein, 1982) during the 1950's. Regehr labels this movement as a "crisis cult" which was propelled by the hard subsistence conditions imposed by colonization. One of the leaders of this movement was

Avojés (also known as Duarte and Eduardo, Kidd, 1992:104), a Nivacle shaman who used to work in the sugar cane plantation in Salta, Argentina, and was in contact with the Anglican Church there. Avojes left his traditional shamanism and preached with reference to Noah and the deluge from the Old Testament, as a means to heal people and have access to the mythically originated material wealth of the whites (Regehr, 1979:109,112). The Enxet also claimed part of this movement which they called *Yannenpaewa*/"similar to evangelical Christianity" (Kidd, 1992:103ff). Generally, it can be argued that this cult "was a further attempt to gain control over the unseen beings of the white man" (ibid.108). Regehr also mentions another movement previous to that of the Nivaclé, as registered amongst the Sanapaná (cf. Hunt, 1933), the Yshyro (cf. Susnik, 1969) and the Toba-Pilagá (cf. Métraux, 1933). In fact, Métraux, was the first author who studied these movements and thus they are labelled *Millenarian*.²²⁴

These movements were not limited to the Paraguayan Chaco. I have already mentioned the example of the Toba of Argentina, as discussed by Miller (1970). The cult was centred in a place called Napalpi, a Toba and Mocovi Indian village. Around the year 1924, after several abuses by the colonists, including the assassination of an indigenous leader, other leaders and shamans from that village, started to preach messages they claimed were received from the dead (ibid.100). Succinctly, those messages were to kill the whites and steal their cattle while at the same time embracing certain *criollo* idiosyncratic practices such as the dance *Chamame* (a North-Argentinean folk dance) and play football (ibid.101-106). The movement was eventually heavily repressed by the Police and colonists, and its followers were massacred. According to Miller (ibid.113), this dealt a mortal blow against the credibility of the shamans and their ability to lead the people to a better life independent from the whites and to abolish white oppression. Shamanism, or Christianized shamanic practices, found a better form in the Pentecostal movement of the Toba, from the 1960s onwards. These new movements were not against the whites but showed a willingness to accept Christian preaching and help, while maintaining a semblance of typical shamanic practices such as the ecstatic trance and spirit invocation that they performed (ibid.126-127). Nowadays, Pentecostal churches and cults are popular not only in the Argentine (Salamanca, 2007) but also in the Paraguayan

²²⁴ There are other movements, posterior in time, which arguably could be labelled as Millenarian, such as the one observed by Susnik (1954:4) among the Maka and Manjuy in 1954, who were awaiting the coming of a "salvation airplane" driven by an *arriero*/ "a mounted merchant".

Chaco. I have come across too many Pentecostal cults or suchlike, with weak or strong external links in Enxet communities such as Yanekyaha and El Estribo and in Angaité communities such as San Carlos or even in several villages of La Patria including Karova Guasu, and finally in the Toba Qom community of Cerrito.²²⁵

I am sketching here some of the primordial and most notorious events that fuelled and led to the coexistence of Christian and shamanic practices in present times, and I am doing so by skipping detailed ethnographic description and historical sequences. However, I prefer not to label such phenomena as syncretism for it may give the misleading idea of a synthesis between the aforementioned terms as considering both as *religions*. Instead, we have practices that occur and merge in a compatible fashion but which have incommensurable spaces. Let us, nonetheless, focus on the agents and the events referred to so far. As the indigenous shamans were increasingly challenged by the missionaries, perceived as non-indigenous *veske*; they, in different contexts and time periods, led movements which caused reaction such as the Millenarian cults. These somehow failed whether through direct colonist repression or on their own, as they could not deliver indigenous independence and liberation from the colonist. As colonization increased its grip, and missionary endeavours continued, in all forms and of multiple origin, the Indians appropriated and incorporated the former ritual practices and means, such as preaching, singing, services, churches, bibles, and schooling, and they joined Christian organizations

²²⁵ My former Tierraviva colleagues have informed me of the latest news (February 2009) in La Patria community, which has a dramatic and spectacular connection to this phenomenon. Ricardo Morínigo and Santiago Bobadilla told me that some members of the villages of Las Flores and Karova Guasu, among who are Félix and Paraguayan employees of ranch Riacho Gonzalez, have publicly denounced the increase of Pentecostal cults and their extreme practices across several villages. These are promoted by a Korean Church which indoctrinates and sends young Angaité to preach in their villages. According to these versions, these cults basically promote extreme exorcism rituals which include day preaching, night fasting and the occasional beating up of demonised people. The denouncers affirm that such exorcism rituals have already caused the deaths of three people, two of whom were children and a fifteen year old boy. What my ex-colleagues heard was that the two children were tied up to a table by his co-villagers because they thought to be “demonised” and were left there to die of starvation and thirst for it was in the hands of God whether or not to set them free. The young boy, also believed to be demonised, was beaten to death by his folk. The deaths are not confirmed but there is an outside witness to the beating up of people reputed to be possessed, who endure such treatment in order to defeat and expel their “strong devil” who has intruded into them. This witness said that he spoke with the leader of one of the villages where the cult takes place, and the latter said that the Devil took over his village because of the presence of shamans. A day after I was informed of these events, (26/2/2009) a member of the Ethnic Affair department of the General Attorney’s Office was on its way to La Patria to intervene and investigate (including the latest affair that affected Agapito, see below). Due to the lack of data (and on going nature of the events) I can only notice the existence of “versions” of facts. I believe nonetheless (even if they were *just* a matter of exaggerated appreciations on the part of the denouncers) that they confirm my observation that shamanic or shamanic like phenomena in the recent past and in the present lives of the Angaité, lapses between languished low profile periods and moments of unpredictable and explosive vitality.

and ranks; i.e. as pastors, aides, followers, church council members. They also introduced missionary figures into the already open indigenous cosmology, e.g. God, Jesus, Angels who could just as well act as auxiliary spirits; and last but not least, shamans become pastors. All of this occurred in a less antagonist and more conciliatory fashion than the early Millenarian movements. As a result, we can, follow Kidd's (1992:132) conclusion on the study of religious change amongst the Enxet that "many of the pastors are - *yohoxma* [shamans], and even those who are not still function within a world view that is structurally shamanic".

Rather than focusing here on the study and exemplification of shaman-pastors or pastors acting in shamanic terms, i.e. healing and mediating with powerful outsiders, human and meta-human, I want to take into account the existence of this phenomenon, and to push the idea that there are individuals whose concentrated capacities are either stereotypically shamanic (and therefore the individuals in questions are identified as shamans) or else are, so to speak, *qualitatively* shamanic.

4.4. Other foreigners and Paraguayans as shamans and *veske*

The missionaries were not the only ones to whom the Indians, particularly Enlhet-Enenlhet peoples, attributed shamanic capacities. By the time the Slovenian anthropologist Branislava Susnik (1953) first visited Sanapaná and Angaité communities in the 1950s, they had already been encroached within the estancias. On one occasion she was taken to be a sorcerer and a "*gringa* killer of children" (ibid.8), and the Indians ran away from her (ibid.1), subjected her to a purification ritual (ibid.2) and considered her presence a bad omen (ibid.4). They took her presence, actions and words as an indication of her association with spirits (Ibid.8-9) or alternatively, they asked her to heal or cure them (ibid.7).²²⁶

Not only were foreigners taken as shamans, but the Enlhet-Enenlhet also turned to shamans of other indigenous people. Susnik observed further that young Enxet who worked on *estancias* were keen on adopting foreign and new habits like speaking Guarani

²²⁶ Susnik said that the Indians gave her that nickname because they connected her presence with the rumours about a gringo's campaign in the Chaco to hunt indigenous children and sell them as meat in the United States.

and usually referred to the old female Paĩ Tavyterá shaman to be baptised.²²⁷ According to the same author:

“When the indigenous Lengua [Enxet] live among the whites or work for them, they need a spiritual protector. Experience has taught them that their spirits cannot fight against whites, thus they conclude that baptism can help and convert them into whites, not in Christians” (ibid.4). [My translation]

This practice was apparently extended along with the acquisition of Catholic stamp-cards of saints, and Susnik gives the example of Indians who come from 30 leagues inland to Puerto Colon, on the right bank of the Paraguay River, to be baptised by the Catholic priest B. Stella and to obtain saint medals from him. They also bought the saint stamp-cards from the Guaraní female shaman paying for it with one kilogram of bird feathers. Susnik (ibid.4-5) goes on to say that the Indians of the riverbanks also asked for a Christian name for themselves and for their fellow workers who were Paraguayan protectors, or analogously to receive military grades from their Paraguayan military superiors. Such name/rank giving created a potential material reciprocity as well as a spiritual bond that, if the Paraguayan protector did not act properly towards his godson, could cause anger in the latter and a spiritual revenge by using their common name for an attack of sorcery (ibid.5).

Kidd (1999a:28) has argued that “while the ranchowners may not have been regarded as shamans, they were believed to be powerful because of their knowledge of and links with the outside, most importantly the Paraguayan State”. Although this observation seems to be true at a first glance, it should be revised in the view of our aforementioned examples. For historical and practical reasons and from the indigenous perspective, it seems easier that the Indians considered the missionaries to be idiosyncratic shamans and not so much so, or at all, the ranchowners and their Paraguayan employees. Taking into account the fact that the missionaries not only lived with the Indians, no minor factor, but also claimed relationships with non-visible spirits as well as displaying “shamanic” like rituals, it is evident that they were more likely to be taken as shamans. The ranch owners, who generally did not cohabit with their indigenous employees, were less “socially” devoted

²²⁷ Guaraní groups who inhabit the department of Concepción, in the Eastern Region of Paraguay and on the opposite side of the Paraguay River to the Chaco, and particularly the Enxet and Angaité territory.

and more secularly oriented in their activities, all of which would contribute towards avoiding clear reminiscence of the indigenous shaman. Nonetheless, the Paraguayan employees and other foreigners on the ground who were more engaged with Indians did evoke to the latter some resemblance to their own shamans. All in all, missionaries, ranch owners, ranch employees and militaries were “powerful outsiders”, and as such they displayed diverse and different degrees of capacities and kind such as social authority, actual wealth, healing powers and material means.

Susnik (1953) illustrates the above point with an example of a Paraguayan foreman who was considered to be a shaman. When she visited the *Estancia Lota*, the Sanapaná Indians who lived there ran away from her as they thought she was a witch, and moved their palm huts to another place where dairy cows grazed. This upset the Paraguayan *capataz* (foreman) “but he did not dare to throw them [the Sanapaná] out of that place since he had two children with a Sanapaná Indian and the others **considered him a ‘jaguar’, which symbolise the protector of the Indian camp**” (ibid.2).²²⁸ Certainly, in general the role of the Paraguayans in the colonization process was much more antagonistic than that of the missionaries’. A position such as this would probably have diminished a more pervasive indigenous perception of Paraguayans as potential *veske*. Personal observation may support my argument that the Indians regard some Paraguayan *Chaqueños* as having shamanic abilities and how this view is supported by common practices between the former and the latter. During the night of the Indian’s national day of the 19th of April 2006 (see chapter 2), in which Angaité drummers and singers of different villages of La Patria were performing *Vaingka* at the host village of Karova’i, a visiting member of the village Carpincho fainted and remained shivering in a semi-conscious state. My colleague Mariana Franco and I were urged by his relatives to go and fetch the shaman of his village (as the other shamans present at the event were busying themselves singing, drumming, drinking and/or dancing). But as it was already late and at the height of the celebration, and the village of Carpincho was relatively distant, we attempted to give some kind of comfort to the quivering man. After our attempt, a young Paraguayan cowboy, the son of one of the foreman of the neighbouring ranch Riacho Gonzalez, came and performed a

²²⁸We have already mentioned that the idea that shamans can be conversely jaguars and vice versa in the Chaco (see chapter 3) and throughout its mythology. Particularly interesting and related to this argument is the myth collected among the Toba Qom of the Paraguayan Chaco about the hero Sarapi, who is a powerful shaman and transforms himself at will into a jaguar – and he is subsequently the master of the jaguars - and he also possesses numerous head of cattle (cf. Biedermann and Zanardini, 2001:166-167).

body massage on the suffering man. Once he had finished his healing session, the young cowboy recommended the patient be given an infusion of a plant similar to *Perdurilla* (*Gomphrena celosioides*) by his relatives. I could not identify the plant.

Conversely to the aforementioned examples, some powerful indigenous *veske* in the past seem to have enjoyed some credit (sorcery powers included) among the Paraguayans *Chaqueños*, as Otaliana Otazu, Cacho Lima's widow, tell us: "My grandfather was a leader, a shaman, he had two women, the Paraguayans used to be afraid of him. His name was Martin" (Villagra, 2008:85). This credit - and fear - is still present among at least some Paraguayan *Chaqueños* who distinguish renowned indigenous shamans and speak of their deeds - particularly their shamanic killings - in everyday conversations.²²⁹ Furthermore, some *Chaqueños* also refer to indigenous shamans for curing sessions. Agapito himself informed me of a patient of his, a Paraguayan foreman from the nearby ranch Kuarahy, who he had diagnosed with a disease: an object had been introduced into his stomach by another indigenous shaman. Subsequently Agapito cured the man by "extracting" the object (Fieldnotes 20/12/2006). Both Agapito's diagnosis and prognosis were corroborated (and thus appeared successful) by parallel medical treatment the man in question was given at a hospital in Asunción around the same time. Maria, who was present when Agapito told me about this episode, said that the medical analysis showed some kind of problem in the sick man's stomach and at a second consultation, after Agapito had treated him, the problem had disappeared. All in all, whether these above examples recorded by Susnik and myself are isolated incidents of Paraguayan *Chaqueños* and cowboys acting as shamans, and reciprocally believing in and/or referring to indigenous shamans, or whether they are a more widespread phenomenon it is hard to establish without further enquiry and comparative ethnography. Nonetheless, it hints at a greater cultural and symbolic commonality and reciprocal influence between Indians and Paraguayans beyond their enacted ethnic differentiation.

Hence, it can be proved to a certain extent and in historical terms that those Paraguayans who supervised the indigenous workers at the *estancias* or the military who commanded indigenous individuals or groups before, during and after the Chaco War, seemed to be perceived as protectors and providers by the Indians. Among the Angaité, as I discuss

²²⁹ Eulogia Ruiz, personal communication.

elsewhere (Villagra, *ibid.*) there are several testimonies which confirm this. Capata'i Segura, for instance, explains that:

“The Cacique Manuel Agüero told the Cacique Pablino Roa ‘go and look for someone who could come here with us and give us clothes’. Then Pablino was the one who brought the Paraguayans here” (Fieldnotes 28/3/2005).

Capata'i went on telling me how he related to the military and *estancias* employees and how he was spared from going to the war. Others like him were also spared, but many Angaité did go and fight. I cannot expand here on these testimonies or analyse the events and the effects the war had on the Angaité (cf. *ibid.*). However it is worth noticing those Angaité (and Enxet) who directly participated and survived the war, mainly attribute the fact to two related aspects: the protective comradeship of their military superiors and/or the acquired capacity to protect themselves by shamanic means, i.e. having ingested gunpowder as a bullet-proof defence power and/or the use of a talisman/prayers for the same aims (cf. Simon Duarte's and Tomas Kilwaia's testimonies, *ibid.*79,86). After the war and when they returned to their villages, many of these indigenous soldiers and *baqueanos*, guides, were to become leaders, precisely due to the prestige attained through their survival skills and associations with the military. Capata'i Segura, once again, illustrates this point:

“Then José González arrived, an Indian, his beard was long. He went to the war and received meat afterwards; he brought meat in a truck. He went to the *almacen*, took provisions, money, he used to order. He used to carry meat to the front lines” (*ibid.*80).

To sum up, we see how similar to Viveiros de Castro's point (2006) of the echo between indigenous shamans and spirits, there is, in these cases, a reverberation between the position of the shamans and the foreigners/Paraguayans. In other words, for an Indian, given the circumstances brought about in the Chaco through colonization, i.e. *estancias* and military occupation, a close relationship with a powerful Paraguayan gives them certain powers which are differentiated in type and degree and according to the context. This did not imply the automatic designation of “shaman” to those involved in such

relations whether Indian or Paraguayan. However, it granted the reference as *veske* to some Paraguayans, missionaries, *patrones* and army officials. Finally in this argument, I acknowledge that the assertion that an indigenous person is powerful because he/she has a close relationship with powerful outsiders sounds too obvious. However, this assertion grows in complexity if we realize that such relationship, from the indigenous perspective, implies elements that are typically shamanic, i.e. transmutability, spiritually endowed artefacts and agencies, but that may it not be so from a non-indigenous one.

4.5. Non-shaman leaders (or hidden shamans?)

I have already noted that one of present effects of the colonization process and the contemporary policies for indigenous people of the Paraguayan nation-state, leaders and shamans are largely regarded as segregated figures and/or that leadership is valued in term of its secular attributes, such as political representation, rather than or in spite of its shamanic aspects. Such effect is in tune with the state and development agencies' modernist ideas of how the indigenous society operates as Blaser (forthcoming:91-101) discusses at length. The modern paradigm applied to the understanding of shamanism and leadership as separated roles, i.e. the former being religious and the latter being political, obliterates the diverse and interconnected capacities of both terms beyond their prefigured spheres and roles. I cannot extend in detail how this separation has come to exist and operate currently in the life of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco and of the Angaité in particular. If it is not illustrative enough to mention the legal mechanisms (i.e. Law 904/81 articles) and Blaser's work which refers to a wider analysis, but centred on the case of the Yshyro people, of the modernist paradigm, it should be fruitful to give some examples on the point.

Let start by saying that due to my long commitment to Tierraviva I have had the opportunity to observe how this phenomenon operates and part of the argument here ought to demonstrate a reflexive turn and increased awareness of my own actions and thoughts – and by extension those of Tierraviva's.²³⁰ Until recently, I did not question the premise

²³⁰ The following account, however, is personal and thus does not intend or entirely reflect Tierraviva's institutional position or those of my colleagues, but my interpretation of how we have acted and thought collectively about the relationship with indigenous leaders and Organizations. Subsequently, it does not constitute an official account nor does it represent liability to Tierraviva's work. Nonetheless, I intend to portray - as accurately and objectively as possible - my experiences as an *insider*. Likewise, my description

that leaders were mostly political representatives acting and thinking under stereotypical political prescriptions and practices, thus they were elected by the community and recognised by the state to deal with socio-political and economical matters. Therefore I understood that such leaders were naturally on the whole non-shamans. I did observe that some leaders were also shamans at the same time, but did not read much into it. On the other hand, I met some shamans, but not too many that were manifestly so and among them only a few were not leaders. In fact, for the most part my relationships and I believe those of many NGOs and/or state functionaries, were and are mainly established with leaders and, if not with them alone, through them to other members of the communities.

Outsiders, in a broad sense, understand as a shared semantic field of communication with the indigenous peoples, that their reciprocal interactions are predominantly restricted to the “secular” political and socio-economical levels, and that these levels are detached from other cosmic or “religious” aspects which form part of the indigenous lived world. Thus, what shamans are and do, and the metaphysical relations which implicate them and others, are not (or should not be) relevant or present in such outside-inside interaction. A very brief illustration of this could be the following typical scene. If any outsider shows up in an indigenous community, for example an NGO worker, politician, developer and even merchants, in order to pursue his/her purpose and business, the first thing he/she will ask is: Where and/or who is/are the leader(s)? On the other hand, the same visitor will not ask or wonder who the shaman is in order to discuss “serious” matters. A shaman, in the view of an outsider, plays a spiritual and/or cultural role; as such his public presence is required or tolerated by outsiders under more specific circumstances such as the blessing of a community or leaders’ assembly, the discussion/treatment of a person’s illness, or the performance of “cultural” rituals such as *Vaingka*. It follows that a leader, who also happens to be shaman, would act *qua* shaman only when engaged in such specific activities.

and arguments which referred to the CLIBCH can be rightly disputed by its members. I have decided in general not to use pseudonyms because they would not effectively protect the identity of the protagonists – for those who know the area in which I work could easily identify some of the actors mentioned. Nonetheless I will discredit any illegitimate use of my arguments that could be intentionally detrimental to the rights of the persons, people and organizations referred to.

However in recent times, the state, NGOs and even state functionaries have re-evaluated the position of the shamans.²³¹ In many cases shamans are now seen as necessary in activities and projects which expect a higher indigenous participation according to their own “culture”. Shamans are invited to take part, for instance, in indigenous health programmes and organizations, cultural recovery programmes (such CEADUC’s, see introduction and chapter 1) and even in the newly born indigenous political organization such as the *Consejo Político y Religioso* (Political and Religious Council) of the “Movimiento 19 de Abril” (Indigenous Movement 19th of April”) in which Agapito and Félix Narravo took part. In spite of these new trends, in general outsiders consider indigenous leadership as a separate political domain in which shamanic implications do not have much relevance. In the same vein, outsiders assume that leaders, shamans, pastors, teachers, midwives are separate, established social roles which are, more or less fixed in each respective field of expertise and responsibility. In so doing they also view and partially reproduce the indigenous society as reflecting the way the national society is organised at a micro-level. The fact that the Indians themselves respond to this and distinguish particular individuals in each role/field of activity as expected and understood from the outside, does not diminish the way in which any of these individuals act in their everyday situations through more flexible and interconnected ways. For instance, a non-shaman leader is expected to benefit the “whole community” (e.g. to be an impartial and fair leader) while at the same time he is also expected to benefit his close relatives and loved ones more (this may or may not include all the members of his community). Additionally, the leader (even if not a shaman) should also consider the “metaphysical” implications that his and others’ actions have within the community. For instance, he could and is more than often than not drawn into disputes, even among third parties have, which originated through sorcery and witchcraft accusations.²³²

²³¹ On the other hand and from an indigenous perspective, Kidd (1995) has argued that as a consequence of the political struggle where the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná have attempted to recover their traditional land since the beginning of the 1990s there is a “renewed belief that the shamans are once again effective against the white man” (ibid.60).

²³² During my fieldwork I personally observed the eruption of such disputes. Once in the community of Xakmok Kásek, a man dropped in shock after he had been drinking. While he was in this state he quivered and shouted that his own father, who happened to be a well known shaman, had bewitched him. This created great havoc in the community as many people were surrounding him and some were trying to help him recover with a young friend of mine giving him body massages to allow him to throw up everything he had drunk but also to “heal” him. The accused father refuted the accusation and mocked his son drunkenness. After a while the man recovered and started to relate how his father had no compassion for him when he was ill and how he had sent a little evil spirit into his dreams who would appear at the side of his bed and laugh at him. The leaders intervened in the episode and tried to calm the man in question and dissipate the tension among the spectators (Xakmok Kásek, fieldnotes 23/10/2005). I witnessed similar

Therefore, my task here will be to demonstrate and enhance the commonality of practices and perspectives within apparently different roles and spheres of activity. Particularly, the manner in which shamans and leaders engage in and understand their position *vis á vis* powerful Paraguayans, so as to provide welfare for their people. In this vein, the notion of knowledge and capacities that shamans learn and acquire to manipulate powerful beings and others it is not, I intend to prove, that different from the notion of knowledge and capacities community leaders try to gain and use in their dealings with these powerful outsiders.

As we have seen above, presently among the Angaité only some particular powerful outsiders are referred as *veske* and fewer or less visible individuals as *apyoholhma*, what then are non-shaman leaders in both the vernacular and Guaraní called? In the case of the Enxet, Kidd (1999a:29) tells us that leaders are known as “*akkemhaphmomye* – ‘he who stands in front’ - a term that is associated with taking the initiative in community affairs and representing the community to the outside”. To the best of my knowledge there is not an equivalent term in Angaité. Leaders are simply known in Guaraní, borrowing from Spanish, as “Líder/lideres” and rarely as “cacique”, an expression more frequently used by non-indigenous people.

I will now show some examples of *lideres* and their interactions with the outsiders, and how these are embedded within aspects of shamanism as argued above. I have selected firsthand cases and facts, and will arrange them diachronically but in mixed fashion for the sake of my argument, thus it is not intended as a historical and/or exhaustive analysis. Whether the examples refer to an individual leader, such as Félix Navarro or to a collective actor such as the *Coordinadora de Lideres Indígenas del Bajo Chaco* (CLIBCH, Spanish acronym), they also involve elements of my relationship with those leaders both as a member of Tierraviva and as an anthropologist.

Félix, along with his father Agapito and his brother Gregorio, was elected leader of the community Karova Guasu around 1998 (Fieldnotes 9/6/2006). A couple of years later I noticed Félix among the many Enxet and Angaité leaders who would come to Asunción

episode in the community of Karanday Puku which I will narrate below (Fieldnotes 8-9/8/2009).

and Tierraviva's office. During the first period of Tierraviva's work during the years 1995/1997, most of the visitors were leaders and they came in order to deal with the administrative and political procedures of their land claims as well as to present and follow up particular criminal and labour cases affecting members of their communities.²³³ From the year 2000 onwards Félix, as well as Gregorio and Agapito, took part more frequently at the periodical leaders' meetings held in the community of Makxawayá which were arranged by Tierraviva in order to coordinate common actions and the follow up of land claims and other legal cases of both land-entitled and landless communities. But let us leave Félix's case for a while.

Parallel to these meetings but in a similar and related organizational process, the leaders of the indigenous communities of the *departemento* of Presidente Hayes, mostly Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité but also Nivacle and Toba Qom, started to meet with the support of the Catholic Church in the Chaquean town of Benjamin Aceval in order to discuss their common problems and claims before the state. Out of these meetings (Villagra, 1998:89) the CLIBCH was founded in 1993. The community leaders who take part in the CLIBCH's assemblies and meetings elect among themselves ten leaders who comprise their directive board, the *Comisión Directiva* (CD).

The CLIBCH deserve greater space than this to discuss its significance in both anthropological and political terms. My analysis here partly relates to those of Kidd (1995, 1997, 1999a) and Villalba (2006) on indigenous organizations and outsiders in the lower Chaco, but it focuses on the ideological and symbolic fields in which the interaction between some of these leaders and organizations and the outsiders take place.²³⁴ It

²³³ However, as time passed such leaders' visits to Asunción at Tierraviva's office and indigenous accomodation as well as to the nearby Chaquean town of Villa Hayes (capital of the *Departamento* of *Presidente Hayes*) and Benjamin Aceval, increasingly included the leaders' relatives and fellow community members. These links extended to further social networks (e.g. politicians, functionaries, indigenous leaders of other organizations and ethnic groups, commercial partners, *patrones*, non indigenous friends) and to matters beyond the legal scope of the NGO's tasks. Individuals and families would come in search of health services and shopping in the public markets of Asunción; school teachers to carry out their training and administrative obligations at the Ministry of Education; indigenous businessmen to get paid, close deals or to look for buyers of their products (e.g. honey, *quebracho* posts), and many people simply to wonder around.

²³⁴ I have just referred marginally to Kidd's analysis on "Land, Politics and Benevolent Shamanism" (1995) which focuses on the beginning of the political struggle of the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná to recover their traditional land at the outset of the Paraguayan democratic transition - from 1989 onwards. Elsewhere Kidd has also analysed his own participation in such a socio political struggle in the article "Indigenous Organizations and Invisible Whitemen" (1997b). Apart from Kidd's articles, there is a study of two indigenous political Organizations by Mabel Villalba (2006), which includes the case of the "Movimiento 19 de Abril". These analyses focus on the new indigenous political movement and organizations and their

concentrates on the actions of some specific members of the CLIBCH, such as Félix and previous members of the CD, over a period that was not thoroughly examined between, the years 2003-2007, and regarding some specific interactions such as the common agreements and socio-political and economical cooperation with Tierraviva and myself; and finally the leaders' political performance inside and outside the communities.

It should be taken into account that the CLIBCH, after its foundation shifted or combined their outside alliances between different private institutions. At its beginning the CLIBCH was closer to a NGO named CIMI which had links with the Catholic bishop of the city Benjamin Aceval. By the year 2003, Vidal Acevedo, a young Enxet leader was elected as the coordinator of the CLIBCH; a position which he took over by showing great enthusiasm and seriousness as well as a strong disapproval of the internal management of the Organization by his predecessor. Around that time Vidal's community, Kemha Yaksepo, were also starting legal procedures to set a land claim with the support of Tierraviva. At that time Vidal believed in the necessity and pushed for a stronger alliance and cooperation between the CLIBCH and Tierraviva. However, Vidal understood that such an alliance should lead to greater empowerment of the CLIBCH as an indigenous Organization, and that this should be achieved by managing its own funding project (separated from Tierraviva's central budget). In other words, Vidal understood that the CLIBCH should profit from Tierraviva's legal support and expertise but move towards its independence and autonomy. Vidal and others clashed in these views, and these were voiced as concrete demands and claims towards the employees of Tierraviva, whom they accused of not sharing and offering the organization's resources and knowledge to the leaders.

On the other hand, at Tierraviva we understood that the CLIBCH was both the means and the end towards the organizational and political self-determination of the indigenous communities and we also believed that the organization could achieve that by strengthening the political struggle of the land claims and other indigenous rights before the state. There was a great deal of internal discussion as to how such aims should be practically achieved and what Tierraviva was supposed to contribute towards it. We

strategies as they participate, over the last two decades, in the national political arena. Additionally, they also examine the role and influence of different outsiders (e.g. politicians, anthropologists, NGOs) in such processes.

evaluated the permanent relationship with the leaders and the CLIBCH and we were confronted by a contrast of theoretical objectives and practical problems encountered in everyday work. The leaders' criticisms were certainly based on legitimate concerns and we as a team sometimes lacked a clear and consistent response to such concerns. However, we had experienced in our turn, several difficulties with the CLIBCH and had concerns about the general functioning of the organization. From our perspective, the members of the organization sometimes did not have a clear idea of what the political agenda of the organization should be (whether to be a mediator for development projects, a sort of indigenous NGO or a political actor which would demand and force better policies from the state). We also experienced that some of the leaders were not sufficiently accountable for certain actions and responsibilities, particularly when managing small funds. Additionally, we sensed that there was a sort of double standard in the discourses of the CLIBCH by claiming both total autonomy and independence while at the same time asking for our close assistance in terms of human and financial resources in such processes. Along same lines, we were aware, as were some of the leaders, that many of them had less than adequate literacy and accountancy competence, which were *sine qua non* conditions to independently manage larger projects in terms of the requirements of foreign donors. For us then, in a certain way, to simply give in to the exact terms of the demands of the CLIBCH was viewed with certain scepticism for it seemed to be something that could not be achieved at the pace and extent that either the leaders or ourselves wanted.

At the beginning of 2003, both the CD and the CLIBCH, under the leadership of Vidal, and Tierraviva sat down to formally discuss a mutually cooperative agenda through a series of negotiations and plan-making workshops. During these sessions it was agreed that a lawyer from Tierraviva would be present at all the CD's meetings, held every two or three months at the CLIBCH's headquarters, (rented in Villa Hayes with Tierraviva's support). Further, a series of training/*capacitación* workshops would be given by Tierraviva staff and other external professionals, for the CD's members both as discussion and training in legal, organizational and managerial matters.²³⁵ Tierraviva also proposed the idea for a determined sum of its own budget to be allocated for the exclusive use of the CLIBCH with the CD members determining how such funds would be expended

²³⁵ The Spanish term *capacitación* is also used in Guarani, therefore by the leaders. This is also the case with the word *proyecto*/ "project".

according to the usual activities and costs of the organization. This included assemblies, CD members' meetings, travel and allowance expenses while being in Villa Hayes, Asunción and visiting communities, and the renting of the organization's headquarters. Although the sum was considerably large, Vidal insisted that they wanted their own *proyecto*/"project". To his and our frustration (I was present at this meeting) we repeated that this practically was their own project as Tierraviva was not going to interfere with how the money was to be expended. Vidal's claim for their own *proyecto* and the refusal of our proposal created the suspicion that his intentions, observed in the light of Tierraviva's previous bad experiences in similar situations, were simply a way to use the money to benefit him and his fellow CD members. On the other hand, it seemed that Tierraviva was trying to keep everything under control by not allowing the CLIBCH and its directive any real independence. Additionally, particular leaders claimed that only Paraguayans were employed by Tierraviva and thus they were the only ones who could benefit from the salaries and the resources of the institution, therefore our unsatisfactory proposal was proof of our bad faith.

It is necessary to notice here, however obvious, that how the money of any project should be used is pretty much embedded in cultural assumptions and practicalities, which in many cases only consider those of the external planners. Therefore, the usual flaws in projects for the self-determination of indigenous organizations, such as the one examined, is how, when and to whom the project should benefit. On many occasions is imposed by the acceptance of standards and conditions that do not consider the predicaments of the people – i.e. Leaders – who are supposed to implement the project on behalf and to the benefit of others. The more general project is, i.e. involving many communities, and the more long standing its aims and methods, the more likely that the leaders associated with it would be criticized. Communities expect more direct and immediate benefits from the organization. Certain positive results such as the working of the organization or its success, for instance, while enforcing better state policies might look too abstract, indirect and diffused for the people living in the communities. On several occasions we corroborated that members of communities whose leaders were part of the CLIBCH and the CD did not consider themselves as belonging to the organization; instead they identified the CLIBCH exclusively by its CD members. In the same vein, non-leaders criticized CD members because they spent too much time in Asunción or Villa Hayes and in their meetings they complained that they did not visit their communities. Indeed, the CD members were

sometimes suspected of being better off simply due to their position and links with Tierraviva. Hence, those leaders were (and still are) in a delicate position and permanent dilemma as they have to provide for their own families as well as their original communities (showing efficacy as intermediary of outside gains); while at the same time, they must commit to the somehow geographically and conceptually distant activities and aims of the organization.

Taking into account that worries about the personal subsistence of the leaders and their families could put the discussion at stake, we asked Vidal and his fellow leaders if they wanted the project to contemplate salaries for them. This was a conflicting issue not only for us (due to what it would entail to pay salaries to representative leaders) but for the leaders as well as criticisms coming from the communities would be confirmed. Furthermore, had the CD members received salaries they would be privileged in relation to the rest of the leaders, and the latter would have criticised all the more and/or created further competition for their positions. Vidal and the others responded that they did not want salaries. Finally, some kind of agreement was established and it was decided that there would be higher allowances for the CD members while in Asunción or visiting other communities in order to make up for the inconveniences they and their families experienced during the absence. It was also agreed that according to the results and execution of the common agenda (which included the free disposal by the CD of the funding allocated to the CLIBCH) in a year's time both the CLIBCH and Tierraviva would evaluate and consider the preparation of a separate project for the former. Despite such transitory compromises, the whole affair haunted me. With further situations and observations of this kind I realised that the disagreement between the CD leaders and ourselves was not a simple matter of bitterness and mutual mistrust of bargaining power and money or a mismatch between indigenous expectations and information and our own administrative and political standards. I came to the conclusion that the discussion was further trapped by the different assumptions the leaders and ourselves respectively hold about power and knowledge, and how these concepts manifest and operate within relationships.

For Vidal and his fellow leaders the project they were seeking was not for particular financial support for determined objectives and actions (to be given by a foreign donor upon a formal, written request backed up by Tierraviva). Instead, they wanted to obtain

and learn the capacity or agency which seemed to entail a project of producing and reproducing resources continuously. Their own *proyecto* seemed to entail not just the actual material resources but also the capacity to *generate* and/or obtain it at will, which they came to visualize as our *distinctive capacity* as NGO members. Then by transferring *just* the specific means of a determined project we were not yet transferring the capacities and agencies which produced or generated projects. It is likely, they were frustrated because they were given something but not the “real thing”: our particular knowledge and capacities of generating projects. Vidal and the other CD members also seemed to understand that other specific capacities such as writing, computing skills, and legal knowledge were related to such a distinctive capacity.²³⁶

Such indigenous perception will become clear with more examples. I left Paraguay in September 2003 in order to start the first year of my PhD in St Andrews. When I returned to Paraguay in November 2004, more than a year later, to carry out my fieldwork I occasionally accompanied staff from Tierraviva to meetings with the leaders and members of the CLIBCH. Although I was no longer part of the NGO, I remain part of its assembly. The words of Celso Aquino, leader of the Sanapaná community of La Palmera, who had replaced Vidal as coordinator of the organization, are quite illustrative of the state of affairs at that period of time:

“I am tired of this relation with Tierraviva. There isn’t an exclusive lawyer for us, we don’t plan together visits to the communities together, there isn’t autonomous funding for the CLIBCH” (Fieldnotes 9/12/2004).

²³⁶ We can misleadingly assume that for the leaders, projects were only a facade for their own material wealth contrary to Tierraviva’s more supposedly altruistic intentions, for which projects would be a means subjected in its success and potential reproduction to the accomplishment of certain requirements and socio-political objectives. Or alternatively - and rather cynically - it could be argued that the leaders actually have a “disenchanted” idea of what projects are – as part of the industry of development - while Tierraviva holds a naive and uncritical conception on the matter: the leaders trying to gain access to benefits which others enjoy on their behalf, while Tierraviva’s employees masquerade their own benefit, e.g. in the form of salaries, by the discourse of benefiting the Indians. However, if the leaders consider the capacities endowed to projects to generate resources and Tierraviva’s employees make a living through the institution’s general budget, these facts do not deny that the resources in neither case were and are thought of and used merely for personal or individual gain. Leaders concern about their families, beloved ones, relatives and communities (and are indeed demanded by them) and so Tierraviva’s staff and members worry about the welfare of the communities – leaving aside that it the institution is accountable for its actions by the indigenous communities, the general public and its foreign donors in terms of its efficacy and transparency.

To this statement Carlos Marecos, a leader of the Enxet community of Sawhoyamaxa, added “you study [to Tierraviva’s functionaries], you don’t tell us what for and as professionals you know more than us, but we want to know how you are planning to share your knowledge with us for the benefit of the [land] struggle” (ibid.). I do not know the exact events and incidents that led to Celso’s criticism of my absence; however these were familiar to my ears. The following year (2005), a similar agreement to the previous one was put into practice between Tierraviva and the CLIBCH. This time the CD members made specific demands in relation to what kind of *capacitación* they wanted. First at all, following an avalanche of individual requests made by parents and their respective leaders to provide a scholarship for the completion of secondary school studies for their children, it was arranged that ten of these youngsters would reside in the CLIBCH’s rented headquarters in Villa Hayes in order to register and study at local high schools of Villa Hayes.²³⁷ Thus, they were going to secure accommodation and small allowances for their living and study expenses from Tierraviva. This group of students was part of the wider aim of the CD of the CLIBCH to give *capacitación* and space within the organization to young people and women, as its membership comprised mainly grown up male individuals. During 2006 and 2007 individual members of the CD asked to receive driving and computing lessons. Among the drivers-to-be was Félix Navarro.

Looking at the whole process it has become clear to me that the dynamic discussions, agreements and discordances perilously close to the point of rupture, between Tierraviva and the CLIBCH was not a simple negotiation of give and take over common but controversial matters. If we were to simplify such a winding and rich common history by two concepts that I have already mentioned they would be *proyecto* and *capacitación*. On the one hand, Vidal and other ideas of a *proyecto* were related to the acquisition of a permanent capacity to obtain resources from the outside, which could be used for multiple purposes, including those of the Organization. But the Organization was embodied, primarily by the CD members, and as such it was inseparable from their respective familiar and communitarian relationships. For us in Tierraviva, a project of an indigenous organization such as the CLIBCH was mainly a means to an arguably more general and

²³⁷ Throughout the *departamento* of President Hayes the indigenous peoples have access at best to 6th year of primary school, if there is a school available at the community or village, which is not always the case, as most indigenous schools are poorly equipped and their teachers are indigenous and non-indigenous and also badly assisted by the State. Those few individuals who have had access to some years of secondary schooling owe their luck to personal circumstances and links to private sponsors (e.g. churches).

long lasting objective in nature such as the improvement of the life conditions of the indigenous peoples through their organizational and political empowerment. On the other hand, *capacitación* for them was understood as process of *apprenticeship* of our distinctive knowledge and ways of operating through certain contents (e.g. laws and accountancy), techniques (e.g. writing, computing, driving); material means (e.g. money, 4x4 vehicles, offices); symbols (e.g. Paraguayan dress and speech codes) and outside relationships (e.g. foreign donors). These capacities were considered personal and embodied capacities of ours and the NGO workers. Alternatively, for Tierraviva, the training would allow them to have a greater responsibility, political consciousness and political empowerment as indigenous representatives and organization as a whole.²³⁸ Therefore, their particular types and requests of *capacitación* did not properly fit in with what we understood were the best options to accomplish these aims. Nonetheless, we assumed that it was absolutely necessary to discuss and compromise with the leaders both the methodology and aims of a cooperative agenda.

The leaders and the young students of the CLIBCH expected that with the right *capacitación*, they could not just learn laws, accountancy, computing, writing and/or driving skills but they would transform themselves virtually into lawyers, accountants and drivers, in other words, they would become like us: NGO Paraguayan employees. They seemingly expected those capacities to be transferable and transformative by means of a fast-track personal teaching-apprenticeship process. Such assumptions can be attributed to the leaders' little or partial information about the complex and long term nation-state educational arrangement (for instance, the academic and institutional requirements to become a lawyer). However, even if we were to consider these assumptions as "naive" they are not imagined ex-nihilo but by the rationale that seeks common references between the different processes of acquiring knowledge. Let us consider, for instance, Kidd's assertion (1995) that "They [Enxet] understand it [power] to be derived from both outside knowledge and relationships with outside beings. The paradigmatic power relationship is that of the shaman with his auxiliary spirits" (ibid.61-62). Were the leaders and young

²³⁸ For us the claims of the leaders should be directed towards the state and the government (not towards a NGO) which according to a human rights legal and practical perspective, were accountable for the indigenous plight. From such a perspective Tierraviva would be an ally of the indigenous movement not an impediment or opposite party to it, as the criticism of some leaders seemed to indicate. However, it seemed to be the case that for the leaders Tierraviva's members were just another type of external actors – as were missionaries, state agents, anthropologists, landowners and Paraguayans – nonetheless with the particularity of having a friendlier, juridically-allied relationship with them.

members of the CLIBCH by trying to learn and acquire the particular agencies of the powerful NGO members, in a way evoking, however indirectly, such a paradigmatic relationship of the shaman and his *apmovana*?

There are, however, further details to add about the attempts of the CD and the CLIBCH members to gain outside knowledge and capacities. Once Vidal became the coordinator of the CLIBCH he ostensibly dressed differently, not just buying new clothes but also adding particular items to his permanent outfit such as a fancy document bag, sunglasses, brand new watch and mobile phone. He also opened an email account and started to speak as much Spanish as he could with us (eventually he managed to do a Spanish course in Cuzco, Peru), even though the common language between us and the leaders was Guarani (and Vidal's mother tongue was Guarani as his elders dropped Enxet as a main language during their residence in the *estancias*). It should be stressed that neither the Chaco Indians nor I have a particular nostalgia for the *authentic* indigenous attire. As time has passed the former cowboys' regalia which could well be considered typical indigenous dress etiquette from former decades, with which male Angaité and other Indians embellished themselves, have partially given way to more "modern" outfits such as jeans, baseball-caps and brightly coloured shirts. I am not talking here of general processes which could be explained by diverse interpretations: acculturation, assimilation or, better, by the dynamic indigenous taste for fashion (nothing new and exclusive to the colonisation process). Vidal and other *aggiornamento* to the powerful outsiders' ways, outfits and paraphernalia, is a particular phenomenon which can also be observed in speech and symbols. Leaders often referred to words and utterances from Spanish using them with loose pertinence rather than for ostentatious effect, especially on front of others. I can recall Félix using the expression "*Koape Rodrigo orepytyvôta antropologicamente*" (In Guarani/Spanish: "Here Rodrigo is going to help us anthropologically"). I could not know exactly what Félix meant by "anthropologically" (other than I would help them as an anthropologist) but it certainly showed his fellow villagers that he knew that I was of some potential use. Likewise, Vidal and other leaders were full of such idiosyncratic use of Spanish utterances repeated, and sometimes altered, many times in their public speeches, e.g. *con toda conversación*/ "with all conversation" but meaning in this case "with regards to the issue"; *qui latima as que lastima*/ "what a pity".

During 2006, while I was still carrying out my fieldwork, Félix Navarro was elected vice coordinator of the CLIBCH. Coincidentally, I was elected president of Tierraviva's assembly. Later on that same year, Gabriel Fernández, the coordinator of the CLIBCH elected at the same time as Félix and other CD members, temporarily resigned his position and Félix stepped in as coordinator according to the statutes of the organization. At every public opportunity Félix reminded his fellow villagers of his position within the organization by stressing and demonstrating his association with powerful outsiders like me or politicians. In a meeting held in Karova Guasu in which the CLIBCH's specific plans to incorporate women within the Organization was discussed and in which both the young and older women and their respective leaders of nine of La Patria's villages participated, Félix remarked throughout the meeting "I am the coordinator of the CLIBCH and Rodrigo is the president of Tierraviva" (Fieldnotes 12/5/2006). It is particularly interesting that such an emphasis on our respective institutional roles was contextually used by Félix in meetings and in front of other leaders and villagers, to whom he tried to convince that by virtue of such a connection he could get things approved or given by Tierraviva. Conversely, in other everyday occasions Félix would stress our familiarity saying to me and others that I have become almost like a brother to him due to our father-son like relationship with Agapito (Fieldnotes 1/10/2005). But the claims of particular individuals gaining power or capacities through their foreign allies were not just part of Félix's rhetoric alone. In the aforementioned meeting people pointed out the fact that Felicita Villalba, an Enxet women of the community El Estribo, was literally "international" in that she had been abroad and thus had foreign links. It was Felicita who originally called the meeting in order to present a small project and *capacitación* proposal to the women of La Patria, which in turn was going to be mediated by the CLIBCH, but eventually she could not make the occasion to La Patria. Paraguayan residents of La Patria also discussed about the degree of power held by the leaders of the community on the grounds of the associations that the latter had with external allies. Once I participated in a conversation between the female school teachers of Karova Guasu, Eulogia and Haydee, who happened to be sisters, and Eulogia's husband Enrique, all Paraguayans from Ceibo. They were discussing who was the most influential and better politician among the indigenous leaders of La Patria. Enrique said that it was Lino Rolón, leader of the village of Laguna Hu, due to his links with the influential Chaquean politicians of the time like the neighbouring landowner, Senator Bader Rachid and also with the governor of Presidente Hayes. Enrique added that Lino could get everything he wanted as Rachid's

ranch foreman everything he wanted. According to Eulogia it was Ruben Fernández, leader of Korrallon Kue, due to his strong charisma and links with the lawyers of Tierraviva, adding that Félix was also a skilful politician.

It is certainly notorious, not only for us but surely for leaders as well, that the processes and associations in acquiring the knowledge and the capacities from powerful outsiders such NGO's workers and Paraguayan politicians are different from the ones the shamans and their apprentices experience when dealing with spiritual beings. There are obvious differences between the kinds of paraphernalia and means that each type of process respectively requires. Additionally for us, the relationship between a leader and NGO's worker is a physical one and thus an "actual" one, contrary to that between a shaman and his auxiliary spirit, which is a "metaphysical". However, what for us is an incommensurable ontological difference, for the leaders and their fellow villagers may be a more relative and thus soluble difference between types of relationships. The leaders' associations and the search for the knowledge/capacities of powerful outsiders are indeed perceived as transformative, personally transferable, outside oriented and relational in nature, in analogy with the shamans' quest for the agencies that their relationship with spiritual allies provide.

Finally on this point, I stress here the fact that the leaders of the CD and CLIBCH are mostly non-shamans, but I do so in order to highlight the outside perception in contrast to what we may encounter with further examination. Nonetheless, I have come to know that many of these leaders did undertake shamanic studies in their youth. Some of them recognised that they did not go too far in this endeavour, as Félix or Gregorio Navarro told me (Fieldnotes 6-14/5/2006). Additionally, many of them are *Weingke néten* and *Vaingka* drummer and singers although they do not claim to be shamans nor are they identified as such by other people – taking us back to the point of differences of degree and not in nature between the *apyoholhma* and lay people.²³⁹

²³⁹ *Weingke Néten* is the Enxet name of an indigenous traditional dance of the area which consists of a main drummer-singer in the centre of an open area. Using a wooden stick he plays a drum made from a hollowed palm tree (with a bit of water inside) and usually with a stretched deer skin for the drum. As he starts singing an initial round of men holding each other by the waist, dance around him echoing his chant. Old and young women may join the male round once it has already started. Particularly for young single women it is an opportunity to initiate a potential affair or relationship, for it is they who choose freely when and beside whom they enter to dance.

4.6 On the fading and less visible *apyoholhma*

The conviction that shamans have yielded to the powers of colonization and thus become fewer in number and visibility has been a constant matter of evaluation both by missionaries and anthropologists, and there is controversy as to what extent this occurred (cf. Grubb, 1991; Kidd, 1992, 1995, 1999a).²⁴⁰ Take for instance, Susnik's observation on her first visit to the Enxet, upon which she concludes that "the profession of witch-healer is in **full decline**" (1953:5). However, she goes on to say that "even today, among the indigenous Enxet, prepare the candidates with an animistic proof that lasts just one week with a fasting and continues eating half rotten frogs, Chaquean rats, snakes" (ibid.).²⁴¹ Her impression, which was until recently also mine is somehow biased by a particular understanding of the phenomenon. If we understand shamanism as a prescriptive set of techniques such the one cited above, practiced only by "professional" indigenous shamans *à la Métraux* and if we compare the present situation with the historical images of collective and/or frequent ritual performances of a good number of individuals who the outsiders encountered at the beginning of colonisation, we would also conclude that shamanism is declining. However, I argue that instead we ought to consider shamanism as an underlying principle of inside-outside relationships of a wide range of figures overlapping or beyond the character of shamans e.g. leaders, pastors, outsiders and even midwives. In the same vein, the shaman's techniques are experimental and innovative rather than prescriptive, and the notoriety, or actual existence, of shamans is an opportunistic, contextual and historically contingent phenomenon, i.e. shamans appear and assert themselves or otherwise disappear and deny their condition according to historical circumstances and contexts. I have shown examples of how such an underlying principle works for inside-outside relationships and how this entails capacities/agencies that are sought after and enacted by both indigenous and non-indigenous individuals. Nonetheless, if we look for those particular individuals known by others or declared by themselves as *apyoholhma* and for their *traditional* apprenticeship methods: fasting and ingestion of plants; techniques: chants, trance, healing sessions; and allies: auxiliary spirits

²⁴⁰ For instance, Kidd (1999b:33) argues that amongst the Enxet "despite over one hundred years of missionary activity [shamanism] is widely practised".

²⁴¹ In this particular article, Susnik seems to contradict her conclusion with her own observations. She recalls twenty two events and episodes where shamans (male and female) appeared or shamanic practises were enacted, told or discussed by the Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité she visited, and pretty much in the same way such practises are described by Grubb or Arenas, e.g. in ritual social occasions such as male initiation, dances, burial, healings, chants performances.

are we indeed to corroborate that they are few and declining? Do *apyoholhma* experiment with new techniques? Are *apyoholhma* alternatively visible or non-visible according to both specific contexts and general historical trends? In order to answer these questions I will present some examples, which are based largely in Agapito's interventions in and beyond his village.

4.7. Experimental (and failing) apprenticeship and old and new techniques

Due to the partial secrecy of the process it is difficult to see how new apprentices learn their respective *apmovana* under senior *apyoholhma* guidance. I cannot but illustrate the point referring to my own experience with Agapito. When I started my fieldwork, I suggested to him on a few occasions that I was interested in learning the ways of the shamans, and Agapito in his turn said that he was open to the possibility, but for a long period we did not go any further than casual conversations on the issue.

One night after the usual dinner and evening chat at Agapito's, I was lying in my hammock on the veranda of my accommodation, the school's spare room, enjoying myself as there were very few mosquitoes. There was some moonlight which allowed me to see a short snake at two paces from me. The snake was moving parallel to my position and made its way into the holes of the palm-trunk wall of the opposite church building. The next day I commented on this curious sight to Agapito. To my surprise he said that was a sign that through my studies of the language, particularly writing in my note book, I was increasing my *knowledge*. Agapito added that had I followed the snake, she would have taken me and shown me "where there is a pile of money" (Fieldnotes 26/3/2005). On another occasion he compared the knowledge and work of his "*py'a/valhok*" (in Guarani/Angaité: stomach and also cognitive/emotive centre, cf. Kidd, 1999b:48; Grant, 2006:47) with the knowledge I was acquiring by means of writing and studying Angaité.²⁴² Also, he and other senior members of other villages (I was tape-recording them) said that they were *giving* their words to me, e.g. "*heta ame'êma ndeve che ñe'e*" (in Guarani: I gave you many of my words); as if words were not just said to someone or listened to by someone, but were also transferable personal capacities. Agapito's comparison and ideas had then several implications: that the learning process of a certain

²⁴² See Gow (2001:191-218) and Viveiros de Castro (2006:322) for other Amerindians' similar ideas on writing as the white peoples' distinctive shamanic skill.

skill could have “metaphysical” aspects and thus were similar or - in this case – part of shamanic apprenticeship; that such a skill was transferred through words and thus writing was the technique – primarily used by outsiders like me, which allowed for a connection to the auxiliary beings “owner of things”, e.g. like the snake who could have shown me a pile of money. Furthermore, Agapito’s remarks suggest that he speculated that my interest of learning Angaité was attached to material gain.²⁴³ Indeed, Agapito told me while we were discussing about “*Plata Yvyguy*” (see below) that he tried to study the “owner” of money by ingesting some 100 Guarani notes. I did not ask what the outcomes of his study were.

My shamanic lessons were not restricted to language and writing. Occasionally, Agapito would make a reference to things that shamans should do or should avoid doing. For example, on one occasion while we were both observing a sheep bought by the Paraguayan workers (see chapter 1) that was tied to a tree and was shortly going be slaughtered, he told me that we [him and I] should not witness the slaughtering as the ghost of the sheep will easily hunt and harm us (Fieldnotes 4/2005).

Eventually, we agreed to set a day for a proper shamanic lesson, that is, to fast and take a particular plant under his observation and supervision as a senior shaman. It is upon this set and agreed shamanic lesson to which I disposed myself with the spirit of participant observation, but also with simple and pure personal curiosity that I gathered first hand information on shamanic apprenticeship.²⁴⁴ The plant Agapito chose for my initiation is

²⁴³ The association of a “sign” of a spiritual being that shows to whom he/she appears a source of wealth or where treasure can be found widely in Paraguayan oral narrative. It goes back to the Triple Alliance War (1865-1870) during which families buried their few sterling coins or jewellery to avoid the invaders booty, and it is called “*Plata Yvyguy*” (“buried money”). Generally a light, a fire, or a ghost – the owner of the treasure – will appear to the persons to whom he/she/it wants to show the site of the burial. I could go on speculating about differences and resemblances between the indigenous and Paraguayan versions of the phenomenon, though the point here it is not its archaeology but its existence.

²⁴⁴ I admit that I indulged myself in such experience *as well* with psychological and esoterically oriented expectations, a bit *a la Castaneda*, but I honestly wanted to know if even with a different cultural background I could have or undergo a similar cognitive and perceptive experience (to see similar images, feelings, emotions, sensations) that the indigenous Angaité and Enxet shamans and initiates claim to experience (e.g. to see a particular “owner” of the plant). Particularly, taking into account that there is little “scientific” knowledge on the psychological-neurological-physical effects of the plants –and other objects - randomly and experimentally used by the Chaco peoples (apart from the Cebil (*Anadenanthera colubrina*), which is a hallucinogenic plant used by the Ayoreo; Braunstein, personal communication) and/or the potential delirious state that the fasting might provoke. This is unlike the much better “studied” cases of the effects of hallucinogenic plants in the human body and psyche e.g. *Ayahuasca* (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) and the *Yopo* (Snuff made of the seeds of *Anadenanthera peregrina tree* and occasionally combined with *Ayahuasca*) both of which I respectively tried while visiting the Nahua community of Serjali, Peru and the Piaroa and Jivi communities of the Municipality of Manapiare, Venezuela.

called *Lhema Paikok* (In Angaité: “one ear”). I could not find the Latin or common name for this plant. On the morning of Monday 8th May 2006 we went to the high forest situated to the south of the village to look for the plant along with Gregorio. We were (they actually) looking for the plant along the clearings and the path opened by the company which did the *tajamar*. Agapito said that the plant “*okañy kua’a*” (In Guarani: “she knew how to hide herself”) and eventually Gregorio found it (Fieldnotes 8/5/2006). Agapito told me that he received shamanic lessons in this specific plant from both his grandfather and his father Florencio, and the latter and him -in their turn- taught Gregorio about it. Gregorio, however, confessed to me that despite having been initiated he did not follow further shamanic lessons. He recalled what his grandfather Florencio had asked him, before fasting and trying the plant, he requested specifically to know if Gregorio saw “a beautiful woman”.

Agapito also said that this time we would try just a bit of the plant and that she was going to show us her “owner”. Agapito, once we had picked the plant, replanted it in front of his hut. I did not want to start the lesson right away, without preparing myself physically and psychologically for the one day fasting as I was scared of the fact to not drink water for the whole day while being exposed to the Chaco heat. The next day (Tuesday) Agapito told me that I should not drink *Tereré* with the Paraguayan female teachers, as they would not let me know if they were menstruating. He said on front of Agustina that while he was fasting and studying a plant she always let him know if she was having her period in order to avoid any risk to him (see chapter 3 for menstrual taboo). Agustina nodded affirmatively to his remark. He added that throughout the day I was taking the plant I could smoke or bath but I should not eat or drink anything. He warned me with the example of Nenito Fernández, also member of Karova Guasu, who once, while he was training with a plant, broke his fast and ate, and he subsequently fell ill and their family rushed him to Agapito’s to ask him for help. Finally, Agapito explained to me how we were going to proceed the next day. He said that once I tried the plant I would “have” it and other shamans would know it but that I should not tell anyone about the fasting and its result (a recommendation that I obviously did not follow).

The following morning (Wednesday) I woke up early and went to Agapito’s. He had replanted the *Lhema Paikok* in front of his hut. It was a very small plant with a single stem and leaf (thus its name “one ear”). Agapito took it from the ground, smashed it with

his hands and put a small amount in his mouth, passing the rest to me. He said that we had to chew the smashed plant for a short while without swallowing it and then spit it back into our hand. Once we did this (the plant was almost tasteless) he replanted both our chewed bits back into the soil. Then he said that apart from what he had admonished the day before I could carry out my normal activities during the journey. I went to sleep for a little longer and I had a couple of random dreams. Once I woke up I went to Agapito's for my usual Angaité lesson. I told him my dreams and he said they were a sign of a sickness that was happening somewhere else in La Patria. Time had slowed as I did not have the usual meals that established my daily routine. After wandering for a while by the *tajamar* and the stream, I went to see Agapito in the afternoon. By then I had a slight headache which was accompanied later by strong nausea. I asked Agapito if I could vomit and he said yes, so I did and the taste of the plant had become surprisingly strong and bitter and as I had not eaten anything I threw up water of a greenish colour. Then I went back to my hammock and later on to my room to lie down. As the headache was utterly intolerable I stayed there throughout the afternoon and the evening until I felt sleep. The next morning my headache was gone and I commented to Agapito, and later on to Félix, about my unsuccessful experience. He said that the plant did not like me and that is why I vomited, therefore I was not able to learn her "polca", i.e. chant.²⁴⁵ Agapito talked about other plants that I could try to study later on providing that I stay longer in the community in order to prepare for the whole process and complete a longer fasting period (Fielnotes 8-11/5/2006). The names of the plants were *Alyesvuasa Auhavok*, *Kotiaveaan* and *Mopay Havok*. Agapito did not know the Guarani names of these plants nor could I find them among the taxonomy of plants which Arenas (1981) gathered from the Enlhet.

The above is just one example of actual apprenticeship that I know from my own experience. Apart from Gregorio and Nenito, whose apprenticeship or training attempts I learnt by being told about them, Félix also told me that he had once tried to study but he did not succeed. He said that after my training with *Lhema Paikok* I was going to be able to see if someone wanted to harm me. Apart from the four people mentioned of Karova Guasu, including myself and excluding Agapito, who were initiated to shamanic lessons although not with great success, I know another example of a potential initiate. In

²⁴⁵ Polca is a type of Paraguayan folk music. Apparently, the term is common and metaphorically used as synonymous of the shamanic chant taught by an auxiliary spirit (cf. Bonifacio's thesis and film "Casado's Legacy", 2008).

one of our usual evening chats and rounds of *Tereré* in front of Agapito's hut where Feliciano was also present. Agapito said that Feliciano who was in his early 20's, was a good candidate for a shaman because he knew Angaité and the "culture", and that he was willing to train him as such, stressing at the same time that Feliciano was like a grandson to him (In Angaité: "malha etavana koo", Fieldnotes 22/1/2005).

We have seen actual examples of shamanic apprenticeship as an experimental and personal process which is usually supervised by a senior shaman. Such processes use, among other objects, the ingestion of plants in order to see their "owner", namely an auxiliary spirit that teaches the initiated its chant, providing the training is successful (which did not seem to be the case in any of the examples referred to above). It is also shown in these cases, that in order to acquire a superior knowledge and power – adding several auxiliary spirits allies – a candidate relies a great deal on his personal decision and interests. The success in becoming a shaman – or in being a powerful one – depends on one's own endurance, discipline, persistence and experimentation. It also depends on the "owner" of the object in question, and how much he likes the candidate and therefore he is willing to teach his powers.

Lastly, what are the personal motivations required to train oneself and to become a shaman – to cure, to kill, to learn? From my examples, it is hard to provide an answer that could stand as a general explanation. Knowing some past personal episodes of Agapito's life and connecting them to his reactions to some recent circumstances that affected his family, I deduced some clues, however particular, for such a question. Once I asked Agapito about his life. I learned that he had been married before, at a very young age and his first wife died of an unknown illness. Agapito told me that it took a good few years until he found Agustina and married her (she at the time was married to someone else and already had daughter). The second weekend of August 2008, when I last visited Paraguay and Karova Guasu (for the second time in that period) Agustina told me that she had been feeling quite ill for a while. Then she, Agapito and Remigio come back with me to Asunción to find out more about her sickness and get some treatment. She was diagnosis in the INDI's hospital with a gallstone. However, she was too afraid to undergo the operation to have it extracted and she decided to go back to the Chaco. When we were discussing the situation and the alternatives, Agapito explained to me that he was going to cure her and keep her well (In Guarani: "*amanteneta porâta ichupe*") with the good

remedies from his *valhok*, for he did not want to loose her. He described to me how these good remedies were brought to him by his “socio”/partner (meaning his auxiliary spirit) in a helicopter.²⁴⁶ He added that his “socio”/auxiliary spirit was the one he had asked how much he should charge people when healing them. Finally, Agapito’s circumstances suggest that to loose a beloved relative and to save one may be some of the reasons to pursue the search for the knowledge/powers of the owners of the *panaktema*/remedies (cf. Gow, 2001).

4.8. The historical and contextual visibility and non-visibility of the *apyoholhma*: between efficacy and danger

During the first period of my fieldwork in La Patria throughout 2005, I did not have the impression I had met many shamans. Apart from Agapito, I remembered meeting someone in the village of La Paciencia to whom people referred as a shaman, but I met him causally among many other people of his village and thus I did not retain his name. During that time I did visit quite a few villages, however briefly, both out of a curiosity to know their people and in order to carry out interviews and gather elders’ testimonies and narratives. I was not aware at that time that most of the elders I interviewed, whom I have quoted in this work, were shamans or at least had undertaken some kind of shamanic apprenticeship. Two circumstances led me to this wrong impression, the first one was the negative response that I received when I naively asked upon arrival in the village I was visiting if there was a shaman there. The second circumstance was my limited conception of which practices did and did not constituted being a shaman – as *being* one is not a social function but more about doing/having *knowledge* and *capacities*. Basically, I come to realise, virtually upon writing this thesis, that those who were *Weingke néten* and drummers/singers necessarily undertook shamanic training of at least of one particular kind. During the brief visit to the Sanapaná community of Karanday Puku (8-9/8/2008),

²⁴⁶ Agapito’s innovative shamanic explanation was likely to be connected to my previous extravagant trip to La Patria. A week before (3/8/2008) Agustina’s episode, I accompanied an official commission led by the recently elected president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo to the community of Makxawaya and La Patria. The means of transportation were U.S. Army *Choppers* and several 4x4 vehicles. We landed first at the village of La Leona and had a short meeting with President Lugo and the leaders who could make it on time to the commission. The news about the commission’s visit was broadcast just a day before. Then it was decided that the commission should tour through some of the villages of La Patria, and thus it proceeded in a fussy caravan of 4x4s. Among the villages briefly visited was Karova Guasu, but I missed Agapito, Gregorio and Felix and other folks as they were on their way to La Leona. Finally, when the commission came back to this village for the departure, Agapito and I met for a minute, in which we exchanged a few words and cigarettes, before the Chopper I was in took off.

the leader Antonio Esquivel told me, -using his own experience as an example - and after a series of revealing incidents I refer below, that *Weingke Néten* drummers-singers needed to be initiated. In order to learn to sing and perform on the instrument they were told by a senior drummer-singer generally a close male relative, (e.g. father, grandfather, uncle) to go the forest, fast for a while and drink the water contained in the hollowed palm trunk used as the frame of the drum. Then the “owner” of the song would gradually teach the initiate, generally a young boy, his song, which he would practice on its own until reaching a desirable performance level. Certainly, this type of training and subsequent acquired singing capacity did not alone guarantee further capacities associated with more powerful shamans.

In the light of that late personal discovery and despite the initial responses I encountered in La Patria’s villages such as “there is not a shaman here” or “it was *such and such* a person but he died a while ago”, once Félix, Agapito and I started to talk about the possibility of celebrating a *Vaingka* at Karova Guasu for the New Year Eve of 2005/2006, the names of the possible candidates for singing and drumming multiplied. We planned the occasion with Félix, thinking that it should be a joyful celebration with all the necessary means. I was in charge of bringing provisions and providing the money for Félix to buy half a slaughtered cow, and he was responsible of visiting the neighbouring villages and spreading the word about the presentation of the *Vaingka*. Such event was meant to be, according to Félix, a re-enactment of their traditional “cultura”/culture. Félix also had to make sure that the previously identified drummers-singers knew about the event and were willing to perform at the occasion. The day arrived and people from the seven villages of La Patria gathered in Karova Guasu, and amongst them some of the designated drummers. However, we unsuspectingly encountered internal opposition to carrying on with the *Vaingka*. Nino Fernández, the pastor of Karova Guasu, who was affiliated and trained by a church based on the Mennonite town of Loma Plata, was against the celebration. According to Nino, it implied going back to the old ways of the *estancias* in which people danced the *Weingke Néten*, got drunk, fought and both indigenous boys and Paraguayan cowboys harassed the young girls, all of which represented a past sinful life. Despite our attempts to try to convince him that the “religion” and the “culture” were not mutually exclusive and the *Vaingka* performance would not represent the same dangers as the *Weingke Néten* dance it was decided not to go on with the performance but still carry on with the communal gathering. During the discussion, several male and

female elders intervened and declared that they wanted to see the *Vaingka* again. That New Years eve I met most of the drummers-singers in front of Felix's hut, where we chatted and drank *caña* until the first hours of the following year. Our initial efforts were going to be rewarded later on, when the *Vaingka* was finally celebrated and performed on the night of the 19th April of 2006 in the Karovai village. Apart from seeing on that occasion several drummer-singers, it was also revealing to know that there were other shamans around whom at a first impression I did not recognise as such, and who came from villages where I was told there were none. Such was the case of the village of Carpincho, whose shaman I was meant to fetch on the night of the *Vaingka*. After that big event I came to know with a fearful suspicion that to my personal knowledge there was a shaman in every other village of La Patria, amounting to a total of ten individuals. I suspect that there were more but I did not know enough about the people of some of the villages, especially the ones situated on the east side of La Patria. The individuals in question, however, were not too keen to admit this unless a more familiar relationship and/or particular circumstances led to them publically exposing their shamanic capacities. All in all, to know a shaman, to act as such or to declare yourself as one is certainly a matter of degree – i.e. how much knowledge and auxiliary spirits the person has gained, of mutual recognition between them and common concealment to others - i.e. shamans identify each other more likely than non-shamans - and of deception/denial, as it is a matter of opportunity and context as the celebration of the *Vaingka* showed.

Naturally, I was able to see and experience Agapito's interventions as a shaman more closely, and partly so because I showed an earnest disposition to learn from him. He publicly and freely diagnosed, treated and promised to cure the sick persons referred to him by folks and relatives of Karova Guasu. On one occasion, I was present when Agapito treated Mariano Padron, his wife's nephew, who was married with four children and around 30 years old. One day (Fieldnotes 30/9/2009) Mariano, who at the time was working as an *estanciero* on the ranch Riacho Gonzalez, was brought home in the ranch's 4x4 vehicle. He had been feeling ill for a couple of days, with a single pain on his left side. His mother Ña China believed that he could be treated by Agapito and went to fetch him at his hut. Both Agapito and I went to see Mariano at his hut. He was lying down and Agapito looked at him, asked a couple of questions (e.g. when and where the pain started) and told him to rest, assuring him that night was going to "work" for him. Agapito gave these recommendations, sparing his words in a low voice and maintained an assertive

disposition – as if he already knew something about the illness and the cure that was required. He did not touch Mariano or sing. Later Ña China told to me that they trusted Agapito and that he was – literally - their “doctor”. She added that they could not take Mariano to a hospital as they did not have any means of transportation and the health centre was in the village of La Leona which was also distant and there was not a resident doctor or remedies there anyway. I can recall other occasions when Agapito was fetched or asked to cure a person in his community (e.g. his grandson Felipe, Félix’s son, who suffered a urinary problem, Fieldnotes 30/09/2006).

Agapito’s reputation as a shaman, and particularly as a healer, was not limited to the people of his village, or even to La Patria or indigenous people alone, particularly as shown by the episode of healing the Paraguayan on the ranch Kuarahy referred to above.²⁴⁷ Agapito even assumed that people knew about him and should therefore refer to him in the case of necessity as the following episode illustrates. One time, one of the leaders of the neighbouring village of Paraiso, Secundino Torres (known as Tato), was accidentally hit on his left leg by the *quebracho* tree he was chopping in the forest. Luckily, his relatives convinced some passing people to take Tato in their vehicle and asked them to drop him at the nearest nursery, or if possible, at a hospital in Asunción. By chance Agapito and I met Tato’s mother and wife on the road, while we were walking towards the village of La Paciencia. Agapito demanded of the two women, with an almost preaching tone, why they did not look for him after the accident, adding that had they done so he would have been able to treat Tato.

But a good reputation as powerful healer of a shaman could be a “flower of the day” and a mixed blessing at the same time. Such good reputation might accompany general or particular suspicions that he (or less likely she) is just as capable of wrongdoings and terrible deeds. I was told about two different cases of “effective” shamanic revenge. In one case, a man stole and slaughtered a cow belonging to a shaman from other village, and the shaman, once he found out who the culprit was, inflicted him with a disease which caused his death a few months later. In other case, a man ran away with the wife of a

²⁴⁷ Agapito also cured an Enxet leader from Espinillo, Leonardo Ramirez, at a leaders’ meeting in Makxawayaya, according to the latter’s own account. I heard about the episode accidentally while Leonardo was telling other people how he had been suffering for a while with a knee pain which did not allow him to play football, then he referred to Agapito, who cured him by literally “sucking” out the cause of the pain from his knee which was the spine of a palm tree (Fieldnotes, 7/04/2009).

shaman, and the abandoned husband then also inflicted a mortal disease into his rival (Fieldnotes, 7/10/2005). Both cases occurred a few years before I started my fieldwork and I happened to know the shamans in question. The person who told me about them was not indigenous but Paraguayan *Chaqueña*, and I had the opportunity to discuss one of these episodes with one of the shamans, who did not deny the third's party account of the affair.

In the same vein, Agapito himself was quite aware that people not always think well of him and his shamanic powers. Dionisio, who had been living with Maria for a couple of months, started to have sudden attacks which left him quivering and unconscious. He happened to have epilepsy, but neither he nor the rest of us in Karova Guasu knew about it as he had not yet had a medical diagnosis. Agapito and Agustina discussed their worries about Dionisio with me, and told me that he did not want to go back to Puerto Casado, where his family apparently lived. Both said that he was a good son in law and added that he had proved to be a hard worker, helping Agapito to fetch firewood and planting sweet potatoes with Maria. However, Agustina said that she did not want Maria to go away with him to Puerto Casado as they did not know if her mother in law, Dionisio's mother, would like her (and if not Maria would be unhappy there). Agapito then stressed that if something happened to Dionisio in Karova Guasu people could think ill of him as a shaman and believe that "*atantea ichupe*" (in Guarani: "I tried/challenged him"), meaning that people would think that Agapito intentionally caused Dionisio illness (and/or death). Eventually those fears disappeared as Dionisio went to Asunción with Maria, where he was diagnosed with epilepsy and was given remedies (medication) in a hospital, after which he stopped having attacks.²⁴⁸

Additionally, it is not that powerful shamans are notorious that help is requested of them and they are feared as sorcerers at the same time. Furthermore they can also accuse other

²⁴⁸ Unfortunately during my absence a graver incident and actual accusation of sorcery affected Agapito, making his fears come true. During December 2009 a remarkable villager of Karova Guasu, Antonia Trifon, died. She was the grandmother and the visible pillar of her extended family. Their relatives accused Agapito of killing her and the son and the son in law of the late Antonia, assaulted Agapito's house with the intentions of killing him in revenge. I was informed by email of the incident by my former Tierraviva's colleagues. They did not give me all the details – despite my repeated demands and obvious concern for Agapito. At some point it seems that Agapito stayed hidden in the forest, while Félix and Gregorio asked Tierraviva's lawyers to intercede and begin a law suit against Agapito's attackers, Antonia's relatives. Apparently, a bit later on and once the whole family of the late Antonia had moved from Karova Guasu to the neighbouring village of Paraiso, the affair calmed down and Agapito returned home without much danger.

people of sorcery. If their powers and predictions are trusted they can diagnose a particular illness as the result of sorcery from either another shaman or lay people. On a Sunday morning (7/05/2009) Gregorio and Agapito told me about an argument that had taken place the previous night in the village of La Paciencia between Victor, Agapito's second son, and Jorge, a man from the village. Gregorio witnessed and participate indirectly of the arguments, and he assured that he and his brother Victor were not drunk. He did not say how the argument started but said that Jorge was angry with Victor because he was told by the shaman of his village that Victor had **“challenged/trying” [In Guarani: “otantea”] him in his dream**, and this had caused his leg to swell. The argument escalated verbally to the point that Jorge searched for the knife he kept hidden under his *faja* (wide belt), but fortunately Gregorio was fast enough to take the knife from Jorge before he tried anything.²⁴⁹ The incident ended there, and Gregorio and Victor came back home followed at a distance by some young lads from La Paciencia, according to Gregorio. Despite this hostile episode, the following Saturday Victor and Agapito decided to go to La Paciencia to watch the football matches that usually took place there.

A note is necessary here: events and public gatherings of different kinds (Evangelical cults, football tournaments and recently, *Weingke Néten* dances) have no fixed regularity in the life of the villages of La Patria; they sometimes occur in a continuous series that may last for a couple of weeks or every other weekend and hardly ever more than a couple of months. These season matches in La Paciencia were often followed by Paraguayan-style evenings at the ranch Riacho Gonzalez, located just a few hundred meters from the village. There the foreman of the ranch opened his canteen to the villagers, selling sweets, beers and *caña* and additionally hosted, using his loud speakers, “cachaca” dances (similar to North Mexican folk music) and simultaneously screened TV and movies from a battery-charged TV-DVD player. The dances were enjoyed mostly by the impromptu youngsters of La Paciencia, and the beverages mostly by the mature folk. It was getting late in Karova Guasu that Saturday, and as Agustina and Maria were worried about Victor and Agapito, Félix and I decided to go and fetch them at the ranch. When we arrived, Agapito was already sleeping in an improvise bed provided by his sister in law Ña China, meanwhile Victor was talking with great enthusiasm to Jorge. Apparently by then - with

²⁴⁹ The discussion, as Gregorio described, comprised of interesting expressions – which I have never heard before - such as Victor's admonition “*Che ndahaéi kuimba'e este dia guare*” (In Guarani: “I am not a man of just this day”) to which Jorge replied “*Che hae kuimba'e peteicha*” (In Guarani: “I am a man of one piece”) before he searched for his knife.

the help of alcohol – they had already made peace.

All in all and judging from the episodes presented above, the manifestations of shamanic activities, a shaman's presence and shamanic discourse does not appear to be a daily omnipresent phenomenon in the life of the people who I lived with. However, this is an impression that is deceptive, for the absence of manifestations does not imply the eradication of the phenomenon. It appears to be latent and with the potential of returning to a scene at any given moment and will have relevance for either trivial or critical affairs of everyday life.

With further but unexpected observations, I realised that determined personal experiences such as travelling to foreign and unknown places could have shamanic implications. One night (Fieldnotes 24/9/2005) when I had already retired to my accommodation, I heard Agapito begin to *sing* in front of his house. His chant was high pitched, modulated sounds without words, which were repeated in a series of less than one minute sound patterns. It was loud enough to hear from where I was. Félix and Gregorio were with him and they joined in the singing in their own turn. It was the first time during my fieldwork that I had heard them – or anyone – chanting. I did not want to spoil the occasion with my presence although I was quite excited to hear the chanting, which lasted intermittently for a couple of hours until midnight. Before long I had another opportunity to witness the chants (1/10/2009).

However, it is important to mention the incident here in a detail. During June and July 2009 I was totally absent from La Patria life as I went to Venezuela. Around this the same period Félix had also been away. After some trouble with a Paraguayan logger who was resident in La Patria, Félix decided to go to Asunción with his wife and children for a while. From there he managed to find a temporary job with a ranch owner near Puerto Falcon, a frontier town with Argentina some 45 kilometres by road from Asunción. The ranch was apparently located on the Argentinean side of the border. At some point Agapito went to visit Félix for a couple of days and apparently Victor even went to work with Félix on the ranch, although the exact times are unclear to me. I had heard about the trip from their own accounts and also because during that time, they were using Tierraviva as a base to come and go to Puerto Falcon and to pass messages, beside the fact that people's movements are common topics of quotidian conversation. That following

Saturday (1/10/2009) after the first singing session I heard, the usual afternoon football match of the village took place. For those who want to drink there is no need for etiquette, any socializing event can be a good occasion – as far as I observed and experienced. During the match Félix passed around a bottle of *caña* to some of the players and spectators, amongst whom were Agapito, Victor and me. At dinner time, already quite drunk, Agapito, Félix and Victor gathered in front of Agapito's hut. They sat on front of one another and Agapito started to sing, in a similar way to the last time –i.e. reproducing high pitched sound patterns, pausing interchangeably in short or long interludes. I fetched my tape recorder and asked Félix, who was trying to hold his composure, if I could record the singing and he said that this was not a problem. Félix was repeating “Papa, papa...purahei Puerto Falcon” (In Guarani: “Dad, dad, sing Puerto Falcon”) and then he would go speak about the location of this place, how to get there mentioning the whereabouts of the area, such as the nearby Argentinean town of Clorinda. Victor interrupted him saying “*Koa ha'e*” (In Guarani: “This is it”) and added, – this caught my attention - just before starting to sing “*Estriba koare*” (In Guarani: “Step on this”) as if he was offering a metaphorical indication of giving an introduction and an example of how Agapito's chant should follow. He also said, challenging both Agapito and Félix “*Na che rasamoa'i*” (In Guarani: “you won't overtake me”), to which Félix replied “*Rohasase ramo rohasata*” (In Guarani: “I would overtake you if I want it”). Agapito could hardly reply to Victor's teasing, for he was the drunkest of all and quite concentrated on preparing for his next chanting round.

On the whole, it looked to me like this performance was a casual cooperative contest – arranged with similar disposition to the *Vaingka's* storytelling session - in which the individual chants overlap at some point. We can deduce that, the chants alluded to the personal experiences of Agapito, Félix and Victor at Puerto Falcon or better put it represented what they had learnt and achieved, by their exploring endeavour and by travelling to a foreign place. Here one type of experience, such as travelling physically to a foreign place and meeting with foreign people, seems to replicate somehow another kind of experience, such as the shaman's trance or dreaming journeys to the outer levels of reality, where he meets the powerful spirits. And more so in this case if we consider that both types of journeys result in learning a song, which is metonymical of both the journey itself and the capacity acquired.

Hence such an episode confirms that there is potential association and practical connexion for the Angaité between physical and shamanic travel. The geographical trips which evoke the shaman's journey or better said, the physical journeys that are more likely to have some shamanic elements – according to my observations - are the ones linked with new experiences, unknown distant places and peoples. A key element is the perception of danger and/or fear suffered – and overcome - in those experiences. For instance, when Agapito told his family in Karova Guasu about his visit to Puerto Falcon, he said that he was afraid of being killed while he was being taken by Félix's patron to his ranch, as both his destination and the patron were unknown to him. I also observed a similar fear from the part of Agapito in another occasion. In August 2009 I went with him, my father, Fernando Allen, a photographer and friend of my father and myself to the South of the country to see the processing of *Yerba Mate* (in this trip we also visit shortly an Ache community). Agapito recognised when we returned to the Chaco after the trip that during this time on more than one occasion, he had felt quite homesick and afraid of dying. As Agapito himself explained to me (Fieldnotes 25/09/2005), it is known in the Chaco that the apprentices of shamanism must overcome their fears while training (i.e. when fasting and when in a trance) for they may see the auxiliary spirits in their non-human and often terrifying appearance for the first time. The apprenticeship is successful if the auxiliary spirits finally appear to the candidate as people and in turn is seen by them as such - from there it follows that the former teach their songs to the latter.²⁵⁰ During the trip to the South, it was Agapito's constant efforts to overcome his fears (which I did not notice at the time although he seemed to be withdrawn and quiet at times yet always responded positively when I asked him how he was) which led him to gain new *knowledge* during the trip. For instance, at some point we went to visit a small experimental garden which belonged to a German-descended *yerba mate* entrepreneur, and Agapito told the gardener that he would remember the garden as if it were his own garden "in his dreams". Additionally, Agapito picked a flower from the garden at the hotel where we stayed, and kept it. When I asked him why he had taken the flower he said that we could "try" it later. In the same vein, it is not unlikely that the trips non-shaman leaders (or apparently so) take to Asunción might, according to indigenous perception and according to the particular circumstances, evoke the shaman's hazardous learning journey to the outer levels of reality.

²⁵⁰ Testimony of shaman Escalante of the Maskoy (Enlhet-Enenlhet) community of Machete Vaina, in the film "Casado's Legacy" (Bonifacio, doctoral dissertation 2009).

Here I present a last episode that also exposes the futility of arguments that try to define shamanism as a decaying (or not) socio-cultural phenomenon simply in sociological or statistical terms. It happened during my last trip to Paraguay. Almost a week after my visit with the official commission I organised a second trip to the Chaco (7-10/8/2008). This time I was accompanied from Asunción by my girlfriend Astrid Bellamy; a Paraguayan freelancer video maker resident in Canada, Walter Laupichler, and the leader of the Sanapaná community of Karanday Puku (In Guarani: “Long palm tree”) Antonio Esquivel and his wife and unmarried children. Although our main destination was Antonio’s community, I went to fetch Agapito in Karova Guasu on our way there. The trip was to be a recognisance visit to Antonio’s community, in order to gather information for Tierraviva which would be used for the community land claim process. The community already occupied the 6.000 ha of land they claimed as part of their traditional territory with legal title once belonging to the Puerto Casado Company and which was later bought by the Moon Sect in the year 2000. The community had recently split into two villages, the main settlement being Karanday Puku, and the new village was called Karanday Karape (in Guarani: “Short palm tree”), located a few kilometres away. When we arrived at the community it was almost midnight. The following morning we made a trip to the Mennonite Colony of Loma Plata, to buy food stuffs and beverages for Ña Negra’s *almacen*, Antonio’s wife. Antonio wanted to show Walter and Astrid “ore cultura” (in Guarani: “our culture”) and that night organized a *Weingke Néten* dance, a *Vaingka* performance (with three singers but only one drum) and part of the *Yammana* dance (girl’s initiation ritual) and other “staged” rituals which were shortly recorded by Walter.²⁵¹ Although the *Weingke Néten* dance continued, at midnight Astrid, Walter, Agapito and I decided to go to bed in our improvised accommodation, the school room where we put our tents. When I was still outside urinating I heard a loud scream coming from a house around a hundreds meters away towards the North, and I could see someone running towards the centre of the village (South), where the *Weingke Néten* was still going on. It was a young lad in a state of shock and panic. As he passed me I touched him trying to calm him down saying “*Eñetranquiliza*” (“Take it easy”), for until then I feared

²⁵¹ To see this ritual in full please refer to the film “Casado’s Legacy” (Bonifacio, 2009) in which the *Yammana* is fully described. On such nights, the people also performed a post-mortuary ritual for the late father of a young woman of the village, who died a couple of months before. Here, the whole community – men, women, and children - danced and sang in rounds around the mourning woman, to comfort her, and make her forget about the dead man and remind her that they were her relatives, according to what Antonio explained to me.

an accident had happened, as if this had motivated the boy's panic attack. Everybody else heard him shouting and crying and stopped the dance at once and came to meet him with some even crying in their turn in a moment charged with hysteria. He then told his relatives who were surrounding him that a little demon had appeared while he was in bed watching the fire, and the little demon played with the logs at laughed at him. Everyone went towards the house. A man who I was told was his uncle, entered and sat on one of the beds and repeated loudly "*Ejechuka cheve, eñanimaramo*" (In Angaité: "Appear to me, if you dare") as if challenging the little demon, and then he started to sing. Gradually after a while everyone dispersed and Antonio and Agapito started to talk about the episode. Antonio mentioned that a twelve year old girl had died a month earlier in the main settlement, and she had been quite fond of the *Weingke Néten* dance. He asserted that it was the girl's ghost that had appeared to the unfortunate lad. He also said that a series of shamanic attacks had taken place since the community had split into two settlements. The attacks – according to Antonio - were coming from the shaman of the Karanday Karape settlement. He said that he was a shaman himself but he could only see what was going on in the dark and that he could not prevent this from happening as his plants knowledge was limited.

Such a confession was something that would have never occurred to me, for until then Antonio had represented to me (and probably for many of Tierraviva's employees) the "typical" non-shaman leader, that is, a connoisseur of the legal, political and developmental discourses and practices. As a leader Antonio was well connected to a range of different influential outsiders, from Mennonites and Paraguayan merchants, though *estancias* foremen (including those of the Moon Sect), and Tierraviva's lawyers to state functionaries. He recounted other episodes of shamanic attack in which members of his nuclear family and his village had suffered illnesses and sudden, strange aches. Because of that he said this he personally confronted the other's village shaman, and told him that he could see what he was doing and warned him of physical revenge if the attacks harmed his family. Agapito confirmed this and added that during the afternoon before the dances, he controlled what was happening around the village and assured Antonio that later that night he would take the ghost away from the village to the west. Antonio said that he also wanted to bring his uncle, who was a powerful shaman of the Enlhet community of the Enlhet Pozo Amarillo (located some 40 kilometres away). His uncle, according to Antonio, could *see* things from a distance, giving the example that for him it

would be easy to tell what kind of plants/*panaktema* – remedies and source of powers - were in a lagoon situated to the south of the settlement. The senior shaman could also, unlike Antonio who declared his limited capacities, use his powers to annul the aggressor's sorcery and kill him in response. Antonio added that his uncle was so powerful that "*araité opurahéi kuaa ndéve*" (In Guaraní: "he can sing to you at day light") to heal people.

The next day Agapito told Antonio that he worked during the night and had sent the girl's ghost away. After a meeting with most of the members of the village about their land claim, Antonio told Agapito about the case of an old woman who had been sick for nearly a year, lying in bed and scarcely eating. We then went to see the woman, and after observing her for a while Agapito started to sing (at day light). Later he said that she had a "*bicho*"²⁵² (In Guaraní/Spanish: "wild animal") inside her that was playing with her however, the "*bicho*" was also keeping her alive somehow and therefore it extracting it from her was not recommended. The "*bicho*" must be convinced to allow the women to eat. Finally, Astrid, Walter, Agapito and I left Karanday Puku and went to Karova Guasu, where we arrived at night, and left for Asunción the next morning.

4.9. Conclusion

It should not surprise the reader that part of the motivation and inspiration for this chapter was my personal feeling of uncertainty and discomfort when confronted with Susnik's synthetic observation and categorical assertion that the profession of the shaman was "in full decline". The fact that I came to know Susnik's particular statement while writing up this thesis and that it was constructed from observations carried out more than fifty years before my fieldwork make, it more relevant. For even before knowing her conclusion, the question of whether the Angaité were and are an acculturated people and to what extent is unavoidable to me. My pre-fieldwork experiences and knowledge of the literature prepared me to take this issue into account and to position myself in favour of, or with a bit of intellectual challenge, potential discovery and circumstantial luck, against it. The normal expectations would be to confirm acculturation perhaps with the more explicit detail and explanation as to how it came about. Thus, was I to describe the extent of

²⁵² This is likely the Guaraní translation of the Angaité word *askok*.

acculturation in several connected aspects, such as dropping the vernacular language, the reduction of traditional hunting and fishing activities, and of ritual performances, shamanic practices and the decline of shamans themselves. The hidden expectations would be to discover the vigorous endurance of characteristic indigenous practices beyond the outsiders' perception and *contra* to earlier ethnographic accounts.

The result of this chapter is, I hope, none of the above. In the strict sense that Susnik understood shamanism (Métraux as well), as practiced only by ritual specialists – i.e. the “full decline” theory - seems to hold some ground; even from my own observations among similar people – Enxet and Angaité - have not come to ratify - as one might expect 50 years later – the extinction of *apyoholhma* and their crafts. Certainly, by showing that shamanism is not restricted to indigenous shamans but includes a wider set of relationships between Indians and human and meta-human others and their historical and current interactions, I intend to break with certain assumptions about the phenomenon. Those assumptions, as I have shown, have a lot to do with our understanding of how our own society works, represented by the Paraguayan nation-state in this case, in term of political representation and religious functions as separated levels, and how we project such the understandings onto the indigenous society. At the same time, with the examples provided I intend to illustrate how indigenous assumptions of what knowledge and power is and how it is related to inside-outside interactions entails the operation of a shamanic potency, even when those involved in the interactions are not putatively shamans. Additionally, both the operation of such rationale in agents and phenomena which would not strictly fall into our categorisation of indigenous shamans and their practices (e.g. Pentecostalism, foreign shamans, non-shaman leaders and new indigenous organizations) and the innovative techniques and discourse of shamans such Agapito, show the historical and transformational character of shamanic practices while casting doubt on the “full decline” theory. Pentecostal or even Anglican indigenous pastors both heal and provide (and defend from or attack evil or demonised sorcerers); foreign shamans – Paraguayans and Missionaries - have healed and provided (and allegedly killed in some cases) their indigenous friends (and enemies), and non-shaman leaders (or apparently so) learn and acquire new capacities and knowledge such as writing, computing, and driving, from their modern allies – politicians, state and NGO's workers - that are expected to “generate” wealth and pair the former with the latter. Thus the generative, relational, transformative and relational *apmovana*/abilities/powers (and the sometimes metonymical auxiliary

spirits) of the *apyoholhma*, learned and acquired through the fasting-apprenticeship process, evoke similarities to indigenous understandings of other types of processes involving inside-outside interactions.

Agapito's experiences show the openness of *apyoholhma* to new sources of knowledge, capacities and related auxiliary spirits/*apmovana*. These experiences also show the contingent and vulnerable reputation of the shaman to both positive and negative personal and historical circumstances, which may arguably influence in one sense or another, those who would dare to study and/or declare themselves as *apyoholhma* these days. Furthermore, Antonio's case and others such Félix and his folk of the CLIBCH, show that the acquisition and practice of different capacities which apparently entail quite distinctive capacities such as shamanic healing (or seeing) and outside oriented political leadership, work with similar principles and are perfectly compatible from the indigenous point of view.

Finally, the scope to which indigenous shamanism will decline in future years both in terms of number of shamans and socio-cultural significance is unpredictable. It is the contingency of its vitality/decaying nature according to determined historical circumstances that make it difficult to assert anything about the future. If we look at the general past or at the ethnographic present of this thesis, the phenomenon of *apyoholhma* and shamanism by other means – e.g. Pentecostal cults - reappear with great relevance in, sometimes unexpected, particular events, such as the *Vaingka* of 19th of April 2006, and the Pentecostal cult “crisis” in La Patria in February 2009. In other instances such relevance applies to quite specific and less spectacular contexts, e.g. sporadic healings or chanting sessions; or is merely indirect to other phenomena, if we are, for example, to explain the complex interactions between indigenous organizations, non-shaman leaders and state and NGO's agents. What Susnik concluded remains to us more pertinently as an open question, which formulated in Viveiros de Castro's words, goes as follows: Are the elusive and intense reverberations of the *apyoholhma* projecting into the future world of the Angaité and non-Angaité?

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to challenge some general assumptions about the Angaité people. Namely, the nation-state and some anthropologists consider the Angaité to be undergoing a rapid process of acculturation due to the materially impoverishing and culturally alienating conditions that the Chaco colonization process imposed upon them. The most conspicuous index of this process, according to the aforementioned presuppositions, is the Angaité's language shift from vernacular to Guaraní.

Once I gained some familiarity with Angaité individuals and communities through my work in the NGO Tierraviva, and increased my knowledge of one of the Angaité language variants, the *Kovalhok*, my own misconceptions about them become more evident. My prior presuppositions were informed by the general assumption that the Angaité were a homogenous indigenous group – in terms of historical, ethnic and linguistic external criteria – undergoing a process of assimilation.

The only way I could challenge these misleading conjectures—considered hard facts by many—was by carrying out extensive participant observation with the Angaité and trying to understand their own perceptions and explanations of what changes they have experienced in their lives. Simply put, I set out to ask them who they were and how they thought they have come into being as the Angaité. I could only do this by living with them for I knew that I could not rely on the scarce anthropological and historical accounts available concerning the Angaité. Additionally, for background information, as well as for comparative analysis, I had to resort to more recent and reliable literature on related and neighbouring peoples and to other little known sources.

One of the early and crucial discoveries during my stay in the village of Karova Guazu was that the kind of knowledge I wanted to learn about – that of the Angaité's history, ethnic and language differentiation - could only emerge as the product of concrete relationships. As I wanted to learn both about the history of the Angaité and their language, I was referred by Félix Navarro to his father Agapito and I started to work closely with him. I learned through our relationship, and further social networks, that material transactions of diverse nature amongst Angaité individuals, within and between households and families, and those with the former and outsiders do not automatically determine the social closeness or “otherness” of the parts involved. For example, exchange can occur among close relatives. Then ethnographically defined practices such as sharing, pooling or exchanging/bartering (which in this case is idiosyncratically referred to as *apiamongkeskama*) do act as pointers and contextual evaluations for relationships. Such evaluations are complemented with moral and emotional criteria such as love, care, trust/distrust and particularly explained?, the desire of “helping” the other. Thus, a kin for *ego*, referred to as *émok* in vernacular, or an outsider, negatively defined as *athave enlhet* or specifically named as *valayo/lenko/inle* and so on, do not stand out as categorically fixed to *ego*. Instead, they are related contextually according to the types of transactions and socio-moral emotions that occur between the terms. As the closest relationships are referred to and experience in terms of kinship, and some types of transactions are preferred

in such relationships, I was going to become a relative to Agapito, in spite of our ethnic differences and wealth disparities. And, if in other relatively similar situations between Angaité individuals and outsiders things do not turn out to be this way, even when the right material and emotional conditions occur and exist (e.g. commensality, cohabitation, friendship), it is not because the Angaité have an absolutely fixed divide of “we” and “they”. On the contrary, as it has been demonstrated, the social condition of personhood, that is to say, to be individually and collectively *Enlhet* (“person/people”) is better seen as an ‘enunciative’ state rather than a categorical given. Such a state can also be achieved by the right social behaviour (e.g. Paraguayans can live *malha enlhet* “like people” in indigenous villages). It is because Paraguayans do not apply the same consequences to such interactions and emotions in their dealings with the Angaité, in terms of discourse and practice, and also because transactions and things move between different “regimes of value”, that the historical, ethnic, and material separation between the Angaité and the Paraguayans is maintained.

Precisely on the last point, recognition of the origin of historical and asymmetrical separation (or the failure of a balanced relationship) between the *Enlhet* and the *valayo* was another aspect of my increasing knowledge about the Angaité in their own terms. Agapito initiated me into the way of knowledge of the ancient shamans explaining their predicaments to me through the *Nanek Anya*. Such narratives were also introduced to me by Agapito as metaphorical references to our relationship and as a dialogue between him as a shaman/*apyoholhma* and me as a powerful outsider/anthropologist. These narratives also extended to the circumstances of the arrival of the first *valayo*. When the Paraguayans came for the first time to an Angaité village and offered white food in exchange for land, the *Enyata’u*/our grandparents did not know Guaraní and refused to take the food. In such erroneous social behaviour displayed by the *Enyata’u* lies the misfortune of the present Angaité people. Following a paradoxical causality – from our non-indigenous point of view - recurrent in Amerindian mythology, this myth establishes the Angaité’s “cosmic responsibility” for the coming into existence of their own existential drama and thus situates them as the main social actors of it. According to the narrative, the colonist also played a relevant part in the original episodes, but not necessarily the role they perceived themselves as playing (i.e. that of omnipotent and unilateral transformers of the Angaité’s fate whether as guilty invaders or as magnanimous developers). There lies for the Angaité people, in such original and reciprocal misunderstandings, the origin of their present poverty and the subsequent deprivation of the “beautiful land” they once freely inhabited. Since then, such territory was going to be progressively occupied by the Paraguayans sent by “President Stroessner” and governed by his company IPC, whose cattle “whitened the soil”. Additionally, at this time the Angaité started to eat *white food*, work in *estancias* and to speak *valayo apyavoma*, the Guaraní language.

The *Nanek Anya* presented by several storytellers are not prescribed, homogenous and unchanged narratives, but highly contingent in their content and intended message on the context of their telling and the motives of their tellers in relation to their listeners. They are told in the course of every day and often during nightly activities or during communal

celebrations and occasions such as the *Vaingka*. Storytelling follows its way through personal and intergenerational life histories and thus allows creativity and variations – *mythopoeisis* (cf. Gow, 2001) – through the different instantiations and occasions in which the narratives are told. I came to understand this by recording Agapito’s telling of “Arrival of the Paraguayans” many times and thus observing the different versions and innovative elements introduced on each occasion he told the narrative.

Furthermore, other *Nanek Anya* that Agapito helped me understand how the Angaité use mythological explanations to interpret the changes that have occurred to them since colonization. The myth the “Two shamans and the Owner of the Cattle” introduces several historical innovations (e.g. the brief possession of the legal cattle, the dealings of two shamans with a colonist alike auxiliary spirit *Valay Veske* and placed them as originated in the mythical past. In this way, such myth erases previous historical processes (e.g. initial cattle rustling in the yet unfenced territory of the Angaité; the possible previous interethnic trade of valuable indigenous items such as the shell necklaces for domestic animals). Here, in order to interpret the Angaité’s perception of their past narrated in the *Nanek Anya*, I have added information of elements concerning events prior to, during and after the colonization process. Many of these elements are mentioned or alluded to in the narratives such as: pioneer explorers, manufactured goods, legal cattle and *estancias*, the Guaraní language and outstanding Paraguayan figures. These are in most cases historical innovations and actors that have come into the Chaco scenario at particular periods. In the same token, I have explained the meaning of particular details of the narratives both in relation to their specific cultural context and in ethnographic comparative terms (e.g. the drinking of *chicha* by the two shamans).

It should be taken into account that the importance of the foreign elements in the *Nanek Anya* analysed, and therefore their significance in the historical experience and interpretation of the Angaité, speak about a different and distinctive regard in comparison to the official accounts. For the latter, many of the elements mentioned in the *Nanek Anya* are not necessarily relevant and congruent for the colonization process and the transformations that it caused both for the Indians and the colonist. In general terms, for the nation-state it is the legal appropriation of the Chaco land, the assertion of state sovereignty, the “development” and exploitation of natural resources, and the taming of native people through particular industries that caused historical and significant transformations in the Chaco. While for most Angaité storytellers what transformed their past life into what it is now were the particular past episodes - occurring at different levels of the cosmological reality - between their ancestors and the first *valayo* and/or their associated spirits such as the *Valay Veske*.

The *Nanek Anya*, however, do not necessarily disagree in their content and telling with events and episodes which we would take as being historical (e.g. the incursions of pioneer topographers and explorers; the expansion and rule of the IPC Company over the western Angaité territory; the presence of Anglican missionaries). Those indigenous narratives, as I have tried to show, may be *inspired* by events that were also registered by non-indigenous sources. However, the particular socio-cosmic symbolism and relevance

of such events and its protagonists is what marks the Angaité's narratives of the past notably different from the 'official' ones. A *Nanek Anya* that was not witnessed and experienced by its teller does not need to assert or prove veracity, for it relies on an unknown source, which is expressed in the common narrative line "it is said". Its significance lies in its socio-moral contents. It tells something about past sociality, which involves a wide and variously assorted spectrum of actors: the ancestors, the foreigners, the human and non-human alike spirits.

The logic of causality in mythological narratives may seem paradoxical in terms of "our" non-indigenous eyes, but it is not an arbitrary one. The Angaité's myths analysed above present sheer similarities with others of the Chaco region and even of other Amerindian peoples. These similarities can be seen in structural elements and themes that are frequent in wider Amerindian mythology. For instance, the reference in both Agapito's and Félix Bogado's narratives about a pair of companions (two shamans and a shaman and a Paraguayan respectively) who encountered the auxiliary spirit Owner of the Cattle clearly demonstrates similarities to the twin heroes in the Amerindian mythology discovered by Métraux (1933) and later analysed by Lévi-Strauss (1995). That such "unstable dualism" cannot provide permanent sameness between twin companions seems to be the correct metaphor to explain human and meta-human relationships. It also explains ephemeral equilibrium and subsequent disequilibrium between differentiated socio-historical actors. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss's observation (1995:231) that such mythological formulas underlies "the impossible twinness: that of the Indians and the Whites" is also confirmed in both Agapito's and Félix's myths. That both myths present similar structures with different outcomes (either indigenous dispossession of cattle or indigenous acquisition of cattle *vis á vis* Paraguayans) demonstrates that the twinness works for an ephemeral stability that soon falls into instability. Such a formula recognizes possible similarities and differences between two terms, which translated to socio-historical actors, allow explaining their relationship, likely subjected to changes and processes of differentiations. Thus, in allowing (the interchangeability substitution of terms) the change of the terms (i.e. the names of the parts involved and the concomitants of their interactions) myths facilitate subtle innovations and thus explanations of the past in terms of the contingencies of the present. Therefore, those actors referred to in the myth change and adjust correspondingly to the teller's geographic and ethnographic circumstances (and those of its listeners). For Agapito there are two Angaité shamans, for Félix there is an Enxet shaman and his companion is a Paraguayan. Furthermore, the figure of the *Valay Veske* for Agapito is the *Walé Apketkok* for Félix. In the examples mentioned we see the transformations of a similar myth as we move from one society – the Angaité - to the next – the Enxet – and those transformations adjust and are consistent with the particular historical circumstances – individual and collective - experienced by the tellers and their respective ethnic groups. Nothing prevents us from thinking that a different version of this myth would include different protagonists if told by neighbouring people, or else that a previous version might include the relevant social actors of that time, which could presumably have been other indigenous peoples.

One preliminary conclusion is that as new “others” appear on the scene, like the *valayo*, the reflection of the “self” that emanates from that relationship changes the perspective of the self. Then, the historical appearance of the *valayo*, in a way, elicits another emergence: that of the Angaité people. For what is at stake in Agapito’s narrative *contra* ‘official’ accounts, is not the transformational force of the Paraguayans and thus that they have assimilated a traditional indigenous people. Instead it is the relational philosophy of the Angaité that interprets the original socio-ethnic separation as a failure on their part as indigenous people in the production of sameness. In short, the asymmetry of the relationship results from their own agency. Additionally, the aforementioned narratives work through actual contexts and concrete relationships between the tellers and the listeners, and thus are mechanisms both to explain and cope with their historical contingencies. Moreover, they explain reality and justify socio-moral stances both of the tellers and their people. Thus, they expose in act and concept, or in practice and symbol, the relational, philosophical, and moral approach referred in chapter 1, which is common to other indigenous peoples as well. Such an approach includes, again in practice and symbols, both a social and cosmic world, where humans, meta-humans and foreigners interact. This is why shamanism is also vital for such interactions. For shamanism, as I have demonstrated, cannot be reduced to the figure of the indigenous shaman *apyoholhma*, for they may condense both human and cosmic capacities that I precariously called the shamanic potency, which is present elsewhere.

The Angaité seem to understand that different types of knowledge and capacities linked to indigenous shamans, foreigners and meta-humans are not ontologically differentiated, as we non-indigenous people would have it. Instead of establishing categorical differences between social roles according to their social functions, many of the capacities and knowledge shown and acquired by pastors, non-shamans, leaders, and non-indigenous *veske* (patrones, missionaries, politicians, NGO employees) display shamanic-like capacities. In this sense, capacities such as driving a car, reading and writing, using computers, talking on mobile phones, or flying in helicopters, can be acquired through specific types of apprenticeship processes that imply transformative, relational and generative powers, which are often associated with auxiliary spirits. If myths welcome historical innovations, and indigenous cosmology and thus shamanic discourses and paraphernalia are ready to incorporate new figures (e.g. God, *Valay Veske* and so on) and techniques (e.g. money, writing), it is because they were always historically prone to incorporate the outside as a source of social and cosmic vitality. For the Angaité traditions are not important in and of themselves (as we perceive them to be) but are relevant in achieving “tranquil life”.

This is not to say that despite of some of the mechanisms used to cope with historical change —storytelling, shamanic innovations, and efforts to turn the asocial ethnic differentiation into a social co-existence— such changes are less dramatic and the present situation ideal. Far from that, the Angaité themselves recognise the “loss” or rapid diminishment of particular communal rituals, such as the *Vaingka* and the *Yamma*, or the dropping of their vernacular and the “real food”, as well their present poverty *vis á vis*

the Paraguayans. My Angaité interlocutors did not emphasise their dropping of past social distinctions such as those designated in the former groups' names, i.e. *Kovalhok*, *Koeteves* and *Konhongnava*. They certainly recognise that these groups intermingled and mixed through their coming to live together in the *estancias*. At the same time, it also seems that such mixing operated from *within* through the male and female initiation rituals, *Vaingka* and *Yamma* respectively, which did not occur as frequently after the colonization began. Whether such differentiations represented fluid *ad hoc* and overlapping distinctions *à la* Wagner (1974) or more organic and relatively clear social groups (established in ritual, alliance and war) *à la* Braustein (2008), is still to be examined. Again, what this research is partly calling into question is the pertinence and extent to which our common interpretative categories such as “acculturation”, “poverty”, “language shift” and “ethnicity” have been applied to indigenous people such as the Angaité. Certainly, I am not saying that the Angaité people and other indigenous peoples do not face real and difficult challenges under the present circumstances however fluid or fixed we understand their “culture” and “ethnicity” to be. I am hoping that we, non-indigenous people, may be able to see them more closely in their own terms and truly listen to what they have to say about themselves. This is an approach that may require some effort, but it begins simply by discarding our own misconceptions.

As a final point, I want to present a narrative a Toba teacher told me during a visit (2/8/2009) I paid to his community Cerrito, located 50 kilometres north of Asunción. This is the story I was told. The Marshall Francisco Solano López, former president and chief of the Paraguayans during the Triple Alliance War (1865-1870), gathered with most of the indigenous shamans of the time before the war began. They offered him the help of their powers, but López refused and went on to lose the war against Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Much later, the Marshall Jose Félix Estigarribia gathered in his turn with the most powerful indigenous shamans of his time and, unlike Lopez, he accepted their help and won the war against Bolivia (1932-1935). Finally, the opposition candidate to the Paraguayan presidency, Fernando Lugo, just a few days before the general election (20th of April 2008), gathered with shamans coming from most of the indigenous peoples of Paraguay and danced and chanted with them, requesting their help for the coming polls. Lugo won the elections against the candidate of the Colorado Party, which had been in power for more than sixty years. This is one example of the historically fluctuating relationship of Indians, Paraguayans and shamanism inscribed in the indigenous narratives, which is the subject matter of this thesis. I hope President Lugo pays back the shamans' help, which remains to be seen.

APPENDIX 1. List of *Nanek Anya* collected

Teller and community	Listener/Recorder	Who told the narrative to the teller	When	Idioms in the Narrative (e.g. <i>ata avanlha, temakha</i>)	Narrative resources	Content and intentions	Historical account	Myth
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	Not mentioned	Karova Guasu 19 th Jan 2005 Karovai -18 th April 2006 After Dinner	<i>Ymaguare Ñ'e</i> (<i>Nanek Anya</i>)	Mimicking the granny cries of pleasure	In one instance, pedagogic: Discussion about different ways to say "put/ introduce" " <i>Emoingue gol</i> " related with the phrase of the grandmother <i>Enyakes</i> Entertaining		Myth?
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio		Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner	<i>Anmaskema'ok</i> <i>Ymaguare gente</i> / Old time/ ancient people	The sound of the blind men farting	Entertaining? Explanatory: that is how is the red Sania bird got its beak/legs		<i>Hoko</i> and <i>Temonhek</i> and the <i>Talha apyetek</i>
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father, Florencio?	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner (Second time)	<i>Nanoek Anya</i> (final sentence)	The water boiling, <i>estancieros</i> and the cows shouts and muus	Entertaining, explanatory? Followed about explanation how to made chichi anmen with <i>kaya</i>		The two shamans and the chief of the cattle
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father Florencio? <i>Venak</i> <i>Apasyam</i>	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner	<i>Ova arakae la gente</i> /how the people moved, <i>petei tropa</i> ou A lot came here		Explanatory: Question about toponyms, then he said why Karova Guasu is called <i>Mopai Enyetek</i> , how they used to call people with indigenous name e.g. his father, just few wear clothes, the women loin-cloth /axe of karanda, explanations of use of this tool, <i>malha pala</i> , <i>ndoguerkoi la gente</i> / <i>monvetaia enenko</i> 'valayo (nanayahek) The name were they thrown up the white food...	In Riacho Gonzalez a <i>meno</i> used to live called <i>Venakta causa</i>	A old woman ...interrupted by my question
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father Florencio?	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner			Explanation that just 5 Paraguayans use to be, very little or too many		The origin of the Paraguayan
Agapito	Rodrigo Villagra,	His Father	Karova Guasu		huuwa...flying	Explanation of the ways of		The ways of the

Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	Florencio?	19 th of January 2005 After dinner		the dart (like bullet)	the shaman to provide his people (they shouldn't cook the animals with their insides or he would die)		shaman that use to kill animals, throwing darts from his valhok
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father Florencio?	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner	<i>Ymaguare</i> people / ancient people	Roar of a jaguar	Explanation to my questions of the young shaman who became a jaguar, Make fire with <i>laon</i> ...		The young shaman that couldn't stand the fasting and told his wife to go together and get food, with his brothers in law, it didn't do good to him to interrupt his shamanic learning and fasting with plants drinking, drinking <i>ammen</i> of <i>lechiguana</i> - later they went together to hunt capybara, he transformed in jaguar and after that he became <i>Tomoyahuan</i>
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father Florencio?	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 After dinner			Explanation to my questions of the young shaman who became a jaguar, Make fire with <i>laon</i> ...		He was tiring of feeding his brother in law, so he decided to kill his children... Then he told his wife to go wander... He wife left went to tell his people... Then after awhile he became wild
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, Feliciano, Mario, Gregorio	His Father Florencio?	Karova Guasu 19 th of January 2005 (Second time the throwing of the white food but not in full detail and adding the name of the place)	<i>Ymaguare</i> people <i>Eneyatau</i> <i>apnea</i> <i>akelhtenyaska</i> that is the way our grandparents called a place		Dialogue about toponyms	Existing place, some where name after something happened there (e.g. <i>maknaka</i> <i>valayo etkok</i> where a little Paraguayan was killed) Juliokue/Obraje kue, Puerto Casado <i>Venakta kamok</i> (Long swamp?) , Cooper (<i>Napolhen</i> <i>thangkok</i>), Pinasco Venakta Watson	Myth about some of the toponyms, e.g. Mopaia Eneytek

Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina?, Maria,	Not mentioned	Karova Guasu 30th Jan 2005 Morning	<i>Asnak nanek apyhekama temakha Pelhten</i> As it is said in the past used to be/wander Pelhten	Mimicking the cries of <i>Pelhten</i> When he said that <i>Kelemon</i> was lost	My curiosity about Nanek Anya, pedagogic		<i>Pelhten</i> , he used to do piggy bag (he mounted in her wife and used to go hunting with his bother in law) they killed him after they discovered he kill his wife
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina?, Maria,	<i>Che abuelo, che tua, she mama</i>	Karova Guasu 30th of January 2005 Morning	<i>Enyatau apnea</i> Our grandparents, che ndahechai, ndahendui, I didn't hear or see how people scattered nor my grandparent, it already happened	The sound of the blind men farting	My questions about toponyms and an explanation of how the ancient people arrived at the bank of the river and would come and give a name to a place	Like an explanation of how people divided	The origin and dispersion of the ancient people in places with different names, languages, other ethnic groups <i>Kemme melapam, Kemme teves</i> , people gathered together
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra,		Karova Guasu 30th of January 2005 After dinner (Second time)	<i>Enyatau 'a apnea</i>		My curiosity about <i>Nanek Anya</i> , pedagogic		The <i>Pelhten</i> saga in Angaité, Kelemon, was killed, some hunting, the three
Agapito Navarro (Karova Guasu)	Rodrigo Villagra, Agustina, Maria, OTHERS		Karova Guasu 22th of March 2005 Morning			Explanatory: Question about his life history, his parents originst few wear clothes, the women loin-cloth /axe of karanda, explanations of use of this tool, <i>malha pala, ndoguereko!</i> la gente/ <i>monvetaia enenko` valayo (nanayahek)</i>	Life history of Agapito <i>Lhakma Mansook</i> , Toparenda, Curupaity= <i>Mopae Mompehe</i> , obraje <i>Aptoma mase</i> =factory, <i>malha obrajero</i> Florencio= <i>Planchada</i> , the train	

APPENDIX 2: Quebracho and cattle companies, tannin factory ports and estancias on the right bank of the Paraguay River affecting the Angaité											
Companies and Owners/nationality	Main Port/Establishment and Population	Year of foundation	Area of Land	Number of workers and ethnically	Railways Roads	No. Cattle	Ships	Estancias	Loggings camps	Location in relation to the Angaité	
Campes y Quebrachales Puerto Sastre (Argentinian, other foreign interests)	Puerto Sastre (Tannin factory, port) 5,000 inhabitants by 1924	1903	225,000 ha	850 Paraguayans and Indians (Enxet+Enxet and Ysibyro)	40 km west by 1911 69 km west by 1917	10,000	Link to a the shipping Company of the Mihanovich	n.d.	Several	Far North	
Carlos Casado S.A. (Spanish- Argentinian)	Puerto Casado Around 3,000 inhabitant (first decades 19 th century)	1889	5,625,000 ha, by 1910 3,150,000 ha	800-1000 (around 50% Indians of all Enxet-Enxet people)	200 km long	50,000 First decades of 20 th century	2 tugs, 2 steamers 12 sailing vessels	Four	Several (along railway)	North	
Pedro Risso (Uruguayan)	<i>Obraje La Novia</i>	1901	56,250 ha	70-80 by 1910 Paraguayans?	None	10000 by 1910	n.d.	n.d.	1 main one, possible others	Main territory	
<i>Compañía Rosarina de Campos y Bosques</i> (Argentinian)	Puerto Pinasco (port, ranch)	1907	375,000 ha	500	40 km west by 1910	6000 by 1910	2 ships, 1 tug, 2 <i>chatas</i>	1?	Several (along railway)	Main territory	
International Products Corporation (North American, Percival Farquhar)	Puerto Pinasco (Tannin factory, port, ranch) 6,500 inhabitants by 1924	1918 take over from <i>Compañía Rosarina</i> by IPC (construction of the factory) 1921 second factory	Over 700,000 ha	Up to 1,000 (including Sanapaná, Angaité and Enxet)	80 km west (extended by 1918) 1922 Cart road opened to Riachito González Other line of 50 km south west built around 1932	By 1930 42,000	5 tugs, ten chatas and smaller barges	By 1930: Port Ranch 14 km, Main ranch 80 km, Riachito González (20 km South west of Main Ranch) Laguna Tiger Ranch	Several along railways	Main Territory	
Richard Cooper and William Cooper and relatives (English)	Puerto Cooper (ranch)	1905	75,000 ha later 175,000 ha	Enxet and Angaité		5000 (1908) 12000 (1911)	n.d.	Several?		Main Territory, South	
Paraguayan Land and Cattle Co. (Farquhar, Rickard, North American)	Estancia Loma Pora	1988	112,500 ha by 1914	n.d.	Cart-road from port on front. Conception to the west open by SAMS	40,000-45,000	n.d.	Caraya Vuelta Loma Pora Ysamathia, several <i>potreros</i>	n.d.	South (Enxet territory)	
Paraguayan Indian Chaco Indian Association (PCLAI) run by SAMS later took over by Gibson Brothers (1908) (English)	The Pass (later Estancia Maroma)	1901	n.d.	Enxet and Paraguayans	Same road as above	3,500 by 1907	n.d.	Several potreros (subdivision of the range)	None	South (Enxet territory)	
Chico Indian Cooperative Society (IC/S) run by SAMS	Makkawaya	1908	22,500 ha by 1923	150 to 200 workers, mostly Enxet and Paraguayans	Same road as above	n.d.	none	Several potreros?	None	South (Enxet territory)	

territory and neighbouring peoples

Sources: Abente, 1989:69; Casaccia and Vazquez, 1986:17-18, 23-24; Kidd, 1992: 59,61,65,112; Keinplennin, 1992:165-202,251-281; Grubb, 1914:214; Hunt, 1933:53, 210-11, 241,252, 277-78; Magazine Time, 1949; Richard,2005:15.

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