

The Cultural Mutations of Chiloé: myths and legends in the neoliberal modernity of the island

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Abstract: The conflict between cultural tradition and modernity on the islands of Chiloé, Chile, intensified at the beginning of the decade of 1980, when Chiloé became a centre of aquaculture production for large-scale export, it renews, in the early XXI Century, the foundational myth of the islands: Ten-Ten Vilú, the serpent of the land, who defends humans, and Cai-Cai Vilú, the serpent of the seas, who wishes to exterminate them. Chiloé finds itself, if not in a refoundational stage, in one of profound mutations in its identity; a stage in which, once again, as in mythological origins, apparently irreconcilable forces are confronted, tensioning the chilote ways of being, living and dreaming.

Key words: Chiloé mythology, island modernity, cultural mutation, chilote identity.

Resumen: El conflicto entre tradición y modernidad cultural de las islas de Chiloé, Chile, agudizado a partir de la década de 1980 cuando Chiloé se convierte en un centro de producción acuícola para la exportación a gran escala, revive, en los umbrales del siglo XXI, el mito fundacional de las islas: Ten-ten Vilú, la serpiente de la tierra que defiende a los humanos, y Cai-cai Vilú, la serpiente del agua que quiere exterminarlos. Chiloé se halla en una etapa si no refundacional sí de profundas mutaciones de su identidad, etapa en la que, nuevamente, como en los orígenes mitológicos, se enfrentan fuerzas, al parecer irreconciliables, que tensionan el modo de ser, de habitar y de soñar de los chilotes.

Palabras clave: mitología de Chiloé, modernidad isleña, mutación cultural, identidad chilota.

Introduction¹

What can one do when the natural-product exporting industry occupies a territory and a society that has been essentially rural for centuries; occupies a society with an economy based on self-subsistence, with scarce use of money, based on bartering and with a population that has not been educated to operate advantageously on the capitalist relations of production and consumption? What happens if this invasion occurs in an island with a narrative full of isolation (and abandonment), with a strong cultural capital accumulated for centuries which organizes and provides sense to the daily life in its different aspects, a capital that does not necessarily tune with the demands of the industry? I speak of Chiloé, an archipelago whose channels have turned into great marine farms where millions of salmon have been bred in captivity during the last 30 years.²

Not only do such centers for fish farming have changed the marine landscape, they have also determined the change in the social structure of the island: the proletarianization of the citizens, of men and women, moves rapidly forward. Some of the coastal towns which, since Colonial times, hadn't been more than little villages built around old churches of wood, have become at an uncommon pace industrial or service urban centers; cities that are still small but which already experience the benefits and problems derived from speedy processes of industrialization of resources provided by an increasingly invaded nature and from little regulated commercialization of services, including the most basic such as water, health and education.

Truth is that the capitalist way of production has been established in Chiloé under full sail, as it is said in the traditional marine jargon. The first visible effect

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² Chiloé is an archipelago in the south of Chile, between parallels 41° and 44° south latitude. It consists of Isla Grande, the second largest island in Chile after Tierra del fuego, and a series of thirty minor islands located in the inner sea, east from Isla Grande, with the exception of Quilán and Yecouma islands and some small islands that are located at the south of the largest island. The approximate population in the archipelago is 154,766 inhabitants, and it has an area of 9.181 km². The first experiences on salmon breeding for exportation started in Chiloé in 1975, in the locality of Curaco de Vélez. Five years later, fish industry became massive after the arrival of transnational companies mainly with Norwegian capitals. In 2008, the breeding of salmon in the islands was harshly affected by the presence of a lethal virus that causes an infectious anemia (ISA virus, regarded by some as the AIDS for cultivated salmon). That is why; fish industry in Chiloé has increasingly changed to mussel farming.

of this has been the almost completed disappearance of familial agriculture and the nearly complete loss of alimentary autonomy which Chiloé had since pre-Hispanic times until after half the XX century.³ Even if Chiloé had produced and/or recollected by itself food from the generous seas and island forests, never until recent years its population had enough money and credit to enter in the modernity by means of the massive consumption of manufactured products as well as debts with banks and multishops. The long scarcity of cash flow made Chiloé inhabitants create a system of transactions based on the exchange of goods and services and, above all, to create a system of life based on the possibilities provided by nature, by means of small-sized familial agriculture (performed with old techniques inherited from the Spanish colony), fishing and artisanal extraction of seafood, a relative development of the craftsmanship of wool and natural fibers (a work essentially performed by women).

Things are different nowadays. But, to which extent has this happened? Is it time to directly reject the neoliberal way of production in order to defend the opposite old lifestyle that many see as more in tune with nature, more respectful to the familial life, the neighborhood, the morals and customs inherited from the forefathers? Was that world better than the one of industry, now when youth, even by earning the minimum wage, can have access to domestic technology, to communications with mobile phones, to music in MP3 players, well, to have access to the different pleasures that the consumption society provides? Is this the inevitable end of cultures of rural basis such as that from Chiloé? We do not think so. Although more and more youth don't take part in the old non-industrial way of production and its rituals (religious and secular), it is also true that tradition has adapted to the new times, occupying places that see it as cultural practices specialized in the modernity (occupying, for example, the aesthetic field).

³ Until the 60's, food products from industrial origin that were purchased in stores and marts were few so to say: salt, sugar, some vegetables and packed cereals (rice, for instance). Some others were not produced in Chiloé: coffee, fig coffee, malt coffee, some fruits from cool climates, some preserved fruits, wheat meal (only that which the local production of wheat did not manage to supply), chili, powdered dry green pepper, edible oil (only when lard was scarce), powdered milk, cheese, butter. Potatoes, meat (beef, pork, sheep, and poultry), fish and seafood, edible seaweed, most of the flour, some fruits such as apples, plum, pears and most of the products of pork butcher's shop were obtained from self-production and/or familial recollection. Although urban families depended more on food from shops and marts, rarely was their dependence total, because they tended to have orchards in their houses, small farmyards for domestic poultry, and relatives in the farming fields provided them potatoes and meat from older animals.

Such is the case of Chiloé's mythology. Since it is a discursive practice whose origins are lost in a kind of original time, primitive and undeniably previous to contemporary capitalism, why has not it disappeared? What supports it in a moment of history when it seems that these stories are, at the most, residuals of a bygone time? The following notes propose a response that, in contrast to this, contributes to a reflection on the peripheral Third World modernities which are territories where global modernity can seem very invasive and determining – as it is in fact in many aspects –, a modernity that, in spite of this, is also affected in one way or another by the local differentiation. The clash between tradition and modernity becomes, then, a reconfiguration of the, pre-Capitalist, traditional lifestyles and in terms of a differentiation in the way in which the population is specialized; at least in those who take part in the capitalist modernity without any concern on tradition and those who take part in the tradition as residual individuals of the old lifestyle (such as those called 'last cultivators') or as 'cultural entrepreneurs', who make tradition a useful tool to operate with an advantage in the new order of production and consumption.⁴

These reflections shall be understood, on the one hand, as a kind of report – which does not aim to be exhaustive – on a certain state of things in the Chiloé islands with regard to the consequences that fishing industrialization has caused and continues causing in the imaginary of society in Chiloé, and which is limited to a series of stories that are part of the myths and legends of this island. On the other, this is an essay which starts a provisional explanation. An explanation that is open to re-elaborations, a reflection about the fact that Chiloé myths and legends are still absolutely valid, despite the fact that only residuals remain from the old society of farmers and navigator fishers of interior seas – these stories became a privileged object of the daily narrative orality in this society –. These stories continue being valid rather because of the scarcities that are part of the isolation than political will supporting a cultural identity that is different to the one of the industrial modernity.

⁴ I use the expression 'cultural entrepreneurs' to make reference to those who, in one way or another, develop (and offer) a cultural practice that is nurtured on tradition, but which is managed by criteria of modern rationality and competitiveness. The term 'traffickers of minkas' (cooperative work to help a neighbor to sow and harvest or in any other special work) has been coined in Chiloé in recent years to name those who organize, produce and sell shows of minkas to the television and/or tourists. It is a practice in the limits of ethics (the memory of a town enables some people to make business with it), but it clearly demonstrates the fact that certain traditions can become merchandise that provides a profit in the modern market of the cultural goods.

It shall also be mentioned that the textual-cultural field that is part of the island mythology, which is the subject of this elaboration, could give rise to theoretical and critical looks that used categories derived, for instance, from cultural studies, from Eco-criticism or, more specifically, from approaches that aim at crossing, or at least to make come together, thesis from the cultural hybridism with post-Colonial looks that demonstrate the fights for the control of the cultural and symbolic field in the Third World societies altered by the entrance of transnational capitalism, as part of the deployment of the neoliberal model of development. However, for the time being, I limit myself to set a more or less descriptive and interpretative documentation of a cultural and social phenomenon in a territory that, at some time in the past, was considered the last enclave of the Christianity in America by the Spanish Crown.

What is now taking place in Chiloé in terms of cultural mutation could also be seen as a response-proposal that is efficient and viable and in favor of a community-territory that fights for creating a modernity that is locally differentiated. This occurs exactly when the central nation State, beyond the rhetoric in favor of the respect of the ethnic, cultural and territorial diversity, does not promote anything but a policy of extermination of the local cultures in favor of a way of being and living that is functional to the economic neoliberal policies of development. However, and as we shall see in the next section, the realities of the mythological imagination are sometimes more powerful and persistent than the imported models of development and accumulation of wealth.

Myths and legends as a ‘conversation’

The populated landscape of the Chiloé mythology is one of the cultural features that best defines the particular identity of the islands in the Chiloé Archipelago. Mythological beings such as Trauco, the Caleuche, the Pincoya, the Voladora, the sorcerers, by naming only the most known, are part of the system which we will call ‘fictional’ for the time being. In it, nature takes shapes and behaviors that are out of the order of reality of the things of the world.⁵ In the mythological stories, the violation of the physical laws of matter is a common phenomenon, one that occurs in a very natural way. But it is not just casual fantasy.

⁵ For the purpose of these notes, we will not make a technical difference between myth and legend. Both notions will be treated as inseparable components of the system of narrations that are part of the heritage of supernatural beings and situations, also called sometimes magic, that are natural to the culture from the traditional Chiloé. The number of mythological beings from Chiloé changes; it depends on the town, on the researcher who counts them, on the time when the inventory was made. Lotte Weisner, in his extensive

Myths and legends from Chiloé respond to a way of constructing possible worlds, inter-subjective, with value that provides identity; a way that does not match with the need to understand reality in order to achieve an instrumental intervention, that is, for instance, in order to maximize the cost-benefit relationship of human action in nature and to accumulate, in a progressive way, the profits derived from this activity. A way of constructing worlds that, in spite of this, is in fact forced by the need to create symbolic systems of control and of hierarchies of the order of the real world, in the kinds of practices of narration that are collectively shared and that assure the continuity of the social fabric, by means of the consecration of a system of permissions and prohibitions represented in characters and situations that are natural to the myth and legend.

The origin of the mythology and magic in the island – Marino and Osorio tell us – finds its roots in the historical conditions of the groups that inhabited the archipelago and they do not [...] derive from their primitive thinking. It is the material conditions what determines the kinds of thinking and its ideological, social and cultural representations. So that the logic of what can be felt is not developed in a capricious way [...] what is mythological in it is a part of the thinking that the island inhabitant creates from its economic-social and cultural reality, but it is expressed in an analogous way [an ‘inverted analogy’, according to the authors]. The mythology of the wood culture has supernatural beings with characteristics similar to those from the island inhabitant. Furthermore, the supernatural forces that rule the world of nature and culture are expressed by means of hierarchical beings, with powers and consciousness, which are aware of and control phenomena that the island inhabitant itself can neither perceive nor control. Thus, the man interacts with the nature as subjective reality, before establishing objective relations (15-17).

ethnographic study called *Cucao, tierra de soledades*, [Cucao, land of solitudes] carried out in the 60's, lists 48 different mythological beings (pp. 633-634). Jorge Negrón Vera, in his book *Mitos y leyendas de la zona Chanquín y Cucao* [Myths and legends in the Chanquín and Cucao zone] describes and reports cases of thirty mythological beings. Negrón sets his own classification of beings: “*Divinidades y seres fabulosos*” [Divinities and mythical beings], “*Seres fabulosos de las aguas*” [Mythical beings from the waters], “*Seres fabulosos del bosque*” [Mythical beings from the forest], “*Ánimas y apariencias*” [Souls and apparitions], “*Casos de brujos y otros relatos*” [Cases of sorcerers and other tales]. Sonia Montecino, on her side, in *Mitos de Chile. Diccionario de seres, magias y encantos* [Myths from Chile. Dictionary of beings, magic and enchantments], reports 184 entries for several mythological, magical elements and beliefs from Chiloé and from its area of cultural influence (from Valdivia by the north up to Punta Arenas in the South). The Ten-ten Vilú and Cai-cai Vilú cosmogonic myth, briefly mentioned below, is frequently considered a mapuche myth instead of one from Chiloé. However, in Chiloé it is considered a local tale, without it denying its possible mapuche or mapuche-hilliche origin.

It is, in fact, a way to imagine the territory – a way originally established in the orality of language – which cancel the pressure, and maybe the need, to elaborate an ‘objective’ explanation that is capable of being submitted to test from the point of view of the rationalized experience according to criteria that, although not strictly scientific, organize the empirical knowledge adjusting it to positive possibilities of verification. Frequently, as Marino and Osorio argue, this non-objective explanation is understood as an incapacity “of the intelligence of primitive man [...] to obtain the explanation of the phenomena that occurred around them” (Oreste Plath, quoted by Marino and Osorio, w/d: 13); so that the myth, from this perspective, is seen as irrational, pre-scientific, a ‘fantasy’ that would not be supported by the reality of the natural or social facts.

What encourages these reflections, however, is not the defense of Chiloé’s mythology by providing a referential value to the stories about supernatural beings and sorcerers on the naïve assumption that what is told has ‘in fact’ occurred as it is said in Chiloé. The mythology in the archipelago has worked and continues doing so despite the advance of the industrial modernity and its rationalist and media culture (or probably because of it), as a ‘conversation’ – a strict discursive performance – which deliberately unshape the limits of the reality and fiction in the most basic sense, so that it acts as an ambivalent and theatrical discoursiveness, inasmuch as the narrator takes a scenic role.

The result is that the experiences lived in the daily natural scenery and in the imaginary characters and facts which narrate the ‘other side’ of this daily life itself become indistinguishable to a certain extent, at least for those who are not familiar with these games of language. Thus, myths and legends from Chiloé as discursive practice produce a destabilizing effect on the epistemological certainties of the western rationality and on the image of reality that it shows and legitimizes. So that the narrative system of the myths and legends from Chiloé cannot be understood nowadays as a speech of cognitive kind with the purpose of creating certain believable intelligibilization of the nature and the communitarian life, but as a strategy of defense of the cultural difference by creating a kind of ‘conversation’ to which only those who know the most hidden codes of the cultural dialogue from Chiloé can feel truly integrated.

The slow capitalist modernization of Chiloé throughout the XX century, slightly accelerated since 1960 and violently rapid from the 1975-1980 quinquennium, sustained in the emergence of the fish industry in a very deregulated neoliberal context, has disregarded – and continues disregarding, by the way – these stories completely. When it does not do so, it makes them reified merchandise, useful for tourism and media inasmuch as it can be used as registered brand of a territory and

a 'modernized' culture that would keep safe its traditional aura of magic and mystery. In fact, the profuse touristic brochures about Chiloé remarks, *ad nauseam*, the auratic image of a land where the daily reality could take, unexpectedly, mysterious forms. It is not rare, then, to find foreigners who tend to visit the archipelago, and even live in the islands, attracted by this aura of magic and mystery, as if this territory was a privileged and unique space to live the 'new age' of the bourgeoisie spirit, which, fed up with the city, looks for contacting with the forces of land and the elements:

For me, cities encarnate the hell of our days, just as Nature is Paradise on this planet [...], those bombs that frequently exploit polluting the sea, the land and damaging the Solar System (*sic*) are the most absurd example of the worst ignorance. No thanks! I prefer to live the rest of my days in communion with beasts, in the country, the smell of sea and that abounding vegetation (Laitec, April 22nd 1988).

I have no right to cast doubt on the authenticity of Ismael Aldunate Clark's attitude when he wrote the afore quoted words. His desire to change his system of metropolitan life for a farming, poor life, similar to that of the native inhabitants from Laitec, an island located in the southern limit of the archipelago that has a rainy, very cold weather, seems to be completely genuine. But, judging by what he himself wrote in his diary, his experience, after one year, was not much more than a reactive escape from the city, apparently caused by love annoyances; an escape that takes the nature of self-isolation and sacrifice from someone who, in last instance, is neither interested in being a native nor understanding the profound nature of the culture of that island; his objective is to transmit (and transmit himself) a certain pseudomystical message that imitates the partice of the poverty vow, of retreat and of religious meditation. It is, in any case, an example that shows the fetishist relation that can result between Chiloé and certain metropolitan professional bourgeoisie supersaturated of modern life.⁶

⁶ By 1988, native inhabitants from Laitec were basically fishers and small agricultural farmers that lived badly with the little amount of products that they produced. Aldunate Clark himself—who was, among other things, musician—takes on his residence in Laitec as a time in which he obtained new knowledge and skills, and makes himself conscious about the difference between living in Santiago and living in the island: "All the practical things from this place would never be taught either at school or at home [in Santiago]. Nobody taught me how to work the land and produce food" (Laitec, June 16th). However, his relationship with the island world from Laitec was never easy: "Sometimes I wonder: what do I do here?" (Laitec, June 18th). And this ambivalence contributes to the suspicion of the native neighbors who integrate him only partially; a fact that affects him and that he does not fully understand. His diary contains only a year of experiences in the island, and he does not mention if he returns to the capital city or if he remains in Laitec definitely.

Chiloé, however, is not pure pre-Modern nature. Modernity knocked long time ago the doors of the archipelago (despite the fact that modernity is still far from being a model of the cultural identity in Chiloé to the full satisfaction of the industry of the urban capitalist consumption).⁷ Based on this, we will understand why most of the foreigners who emigrate to Chiloé do not achieve a connection with God and nature, renouncing to the comfort of the city; they in fact arrive to work in the fish industry and in the services that it requires, as well as to work in many other occupations related to emergence of a monetized society. Since 1975 up to date, crowds of engineers and technicians in aquaculture, qualified workers of the construction, divers, real-estate speculators, different liberal professionals, sex and entertainment traders, millionaire ecologists, among others, have arrived to Chiloé lands and have managed to be part of the 'original accumulation' that Chiloé experiences nowadays.⁸ An entrepreneurial and professional bourgeoisie

⁷ In this, there are also different degrees depending on the place. The most important industrial centers nowadays in Isla Grande are Dalcahue and Quellón. In the former, living practices natural to an over-exploited urban proletariat, especially in the case of working women coexist with those of farmers, fishers and artisans who enter and leave the wage system. Quellón, in contrast, is a town mainly sustained upon the fish industry (farming and processing of salmons) with an almost total loss of the life practices of the traditional Chiloé life, with the exception of the indigenous community from Chadmo, few kilometers away from Quellón, which has stubbornly maintained and even increased cultural and productive practices different to industrialization. I owe these remarks to Sandra Hernández Sandoval, a History and Geography student from Universidad de los Lagos, Chile, who recently performed fieldwork on the advance of industrialization and its effects on the Chiloé society in these towns.

⁸ This is undoubtedly a questionable point of view. Although it is a topic that deserves special attention, I am more and more convinced that Chiloé, since the 70's and on, is experiencing a stage of its history in which several socioeconomic processes overlap: the accumulation of capital at large scale, so industry, as a whole, creates more money than what can be spent in Chiloé. In spite of this, this wealth is distributed in a very unequal way, which in turn gives rise to the emergence and fast consolidation of a bourgeoisie elite who controls the money (and the power associated to it) and a immense proletariat-farmer poor mass, scarcely educated, and increasingly dependant on selling of their labor force for a salary that is most of the times minimal, i.e., more proletarian and less farming. The middle class is, up to present, relative scarce, however it is increasing more and more by means of liberal professionals who have access to unstable income or to labor contracts of uncertain length. The farming segment has been reduced to older generations and to the few youths who remain in their islands of origin or who return to them after some time abroad.

has hence been created and it controls the capitalist processes of production and consumption, whose concerns in deed tend to be very far from the maintenance of the cultural traditional identity of the islands.

Although – it is also fair to say – from some time to present, especially in Isla Grande, a small but influential professional class has been created, its origin is not Chiloé and has not been attracted to it by its industrial development but by the cultural uniqueness of the territory. These professional intellectuals from foreign origin, along with a sector of the native *intelligentzia*, a group educated in continental university centers and owner of high consciousness on the conflicts between modernity and tradition, have become, in fact, the representatives of the esthetical and cultural vanguard of modern Chiloé, above all in architecture, music, plastic arts, literature, photography and certain handicraft directed to a public with high purchasing power. Despite significant differences in points of view among them, they are, above all, determined defenders of the cultural traditions from Chiloé inasmuch as they see them as a component that cannot and should not be ignored at the moment of thinking about the cultural identity of the modern Chiloé; this occurs even in the case of those who regard tradition as synonym of a pre-industrial time in full process of extinction.⁹

⁹ I have more than twenty in-depth interviews made to artists and intellectuals from Chiloé, both native and non native, in them, I research their visions and stances with regard to Chiloé's modernity. There are some people who see an opportunity to reinvent Chiloé in the industrialization process occurring in a delicate balance between tradition and modernity. Others, in contrast, feel that a way of being and living that was a characteristic in Chiloé since the foundation of the Republic up to the 60's is definitively declining. They make of this feeling of loss the quarry from which they obtain the materials for an esthetics created according to a elegiac and painful memory. Should the reader want to have a complete look on the topic, I recommend the reader my works "Chiloé y los dilemas de su identidad cultural ante el modelo neoliberal chileno: la visión de los artistas e intelectuales" [Chiloé and the dilemmas of its cultural identity before the view of the Chilean Neoliberal model: the vision of artists and intellectuals], Revista *Alpha*, num. 23 (2006), and "Caminando por la cornisa de este planeta llamado Chiloé. Testimonio de Edward Rojas, arquitecto" [Walking on the cornice of this planet called Chiloé. A testimonial by Edward Rojas, architect], Revista *Alpha*, num. 25 (2007).

Sorcerers and caleuches in the times of internet: myth as the reservoir of identity

In view of this, is Chiloé's mythology sonner or later condemned to oblivion? What can the Caluche do in the channels crowded with raft-cells full of salmon that end up in Japanese or North American dishes? Has the Pincoya still anything to say to the artisanal seafood cooks and fishers from today, when seafood and free available fish are more and more scarce? Does the flying sorcerers from macuñ still happen to exist and continue being as powerful as in the old days when they could decide on the life and death of the people, with the exception of those who able to 'stand against them'?¹⁰ Recently, Chilean media of regional and national coverage (including Televisión Nacional de Chile) have published reports about 15 allegations of sorcery made in the last three years to the judges of Castro City.¹¹

¹⁰ "Macuñ": "An object similar to a bodice, made of human skin, that helped sorcerers fly, light up and recognize human presence" (Cárdenas and Trujillo, *Apuntes para un diccionario de Chiloé*). "Hacer la contra" (*stand against them*): an expression meaning actions that neutralize the magic ('magic' –mysterious art – in Chiloé jargon) of the sorcerers.

¹¹ Previous data in this regard can be found in the chronicle "Fiscalía de Chiloé acumula 15 denuncias por brujería en los últimos tres años" [*Chiloé attorney's office has 15 denounces on sorcery in the last three years*], signed by J.R. Maldonado and G. Rodrigo. La Tercera newspaper, Santiago de Chile, April 29th 2007. Available at: <http://www.jesus.cl/iglesia/paso_iglesia/recortes/recorte.php?id=5674> [May 29th 2007]. Around the same date, a short report was broadcasted in the central news "24 horas" of Televisión Nacional de Chile (TVN). The report was focused on two specific cases, one in the Quinchao island and another one in Queilen. In these cases the denouncers expressed their conviction that people indicted for sorcery were the direct responsible of certain physical and mental diseases that affected some of the members of their families, among them some children who lived most part of the year in a boarding school. It seemed as if the journalists from TVN did not know if taking seriously or not what the people on the interview said; they insisted on the denouncers and accusers telling them if they really believed in the actual existence of sorcerers. Since they did not receive a fully satisfactory response, they decided to present the facts as the peculiarity of some islands where daily life can suddenly become mysterious and unexplainable. In any case, it is important not to disregard the remark that is found in the aforementioned newspaper report in which the historian and ethnologist Renato Cárdenas arguments: "if there are people who formally accuse another of sorcery, it is because there are people who believe that sorcerers exist".

We are not going to elaborate here on the real or unreal foundations of the allegations (up to present, courts have not processed them as they consider that accusations lack legal foundation). Could these accusations be the result of ignorance? Would it be possible to argue that many people from Chiloé, in XXI century, despite the undeniable advance of Capitalist modernization, formal education, have not yet ‘overcome’ the magical thinking stage? Maybe there is a bit of truth in this perspective. According to La Tercera newspaper, “Most [of the people involved in the 15 allegations] come from rural zones of Chiloé and the accusers belong to the oldest population group”, which would give room to think that the belief on sorcery is nowadays only natural to people who live the residuals of the old rural pre-Industrial culture.

We do believe that if there are people who truly believe that the supernatural beings and powers described in the local mythological stories exist in as much as any other being of the community does; they ought to be very few nowadays in Chiloé. Most probably they are people who because of their age and schooling still live the rural culture of the times of the firebox. There is no doubt that in the past, the credibility of myths and legends was much more present than at present with internet and satellite television available. But it is not less of a truth that the mythical and legendary story, as we have already suggested before, does not necessarily has as an objective to install as a positive reality the narrated facts and situations. The narrators and recipients of these stories assume a kind of conversational contract that is materialized in the display of a programmed attitude to suspend the difference between fiction from non-fiction. Such attitude, in the context of the current modernity in Chiloé, is understood as a way of being that moves the other person from their center, not the person from Chiloé. It moves the urban continental Chilean and it also opens the door to a play of language which plots time and its evolution inasmuch as it is an experience of lived reality. We shall mention that life in Chiloé has never been easy; rainy and cold weather, uneven geography, isolation, institutional political abandonment, lack of mineral resources are all factors that have worked against the capitalist western ‘progress’ since colonial times.

Unlike modern literary fiction narrative, whose contract of credibility between the author and reader lies on the acceptance from one another that the narrated world exists only as a probable tale creation, sustained by the language and imagination of the author (a fact that does not invalidate, of course, the efficiency of literature as a document of reality), the modern narrative of the myths and legends from Chiloé works as a plot of stories and characters that is sustained on the dialogue practice in which the discourse passes, without restrictions, from making

reference to real experiences from the narrator or by third parties to those whose existence occurs only in the fabulous reality of the stories. Stories that, apart from that, respond to a finite repertoire of possibilities of narration that are available and legitimized in collective memory. In other words, the stories of myths and legends are a conversation about beings and situations that come and go through different worlds that are part of the human order of things. In Popper's terms, we would argue that myths and legends are a narrative practice that crosses, without distinctions, worlds 1, 2 and 3; although this border crossing occurs not due to the incapacity to establish differences, but as the consequence of a logic directed precisely to violate the differences of those worlds.¹²

In our understanding, this is one of the most rooted cultural practices in the Chiloé society in the times of industrial modernity (although this 'conversation' does not occur anymore – or rarely occurs – only in the oral register of the farmers, as in the old days). To such extent does this occur that in the eyes of those who are not from Chiloé and who by chance take part in said 'conversations' which overlap what has been personally lived and collectively (re)invented, Chiloé appears as a world where 'everything is possible'; however, this view of the territory of the island is nothing more than a common place. But even as a common place, Chiloé has an effect on what can be said or not about it at the moment of describing its identity in its most essential aspects: after all, the possibility of destabilizing the modern rationality on the islands, by means of narrations that do not differentiate what is natural or supernatural in a programmed way, is a just around the corner.¹³

¹² Nelson Vergara, in a very enlightening paper, comments and systematizes Karl Popper's theory on the plurality of worlds. We could say, having Popper in mind, that myths and legends are part of the state of the things that is consubstantial to World 3; myths that could be the inhabitants of something that we could call an 'analogical province' of such worlds (we shall recall that Popper makes the distinction between a 'logical province' in World 3, "which essentially comprises thinking and language" (Vergara, 1997: 117). This 'analogical province' would have as a characteristic being a state of transit between worlds. Further hermeneutic study of myths and legends can be developed from Popper's the theory of plurality of worlds.

¹³ I have witnessed, more than once, situations in which people alien to Chiloé complain that the islanders are "liars by nature". This is not a *sensu stricto* accusation, but a way to express that conversations, at least those with certain Chiloé inhabitants, become soon tales in which it would seem as if reality and fiction intermingle in a way which makes it impossible to determine certain limits between one and another.

Native Chiloé inhabitants, on their side, tend to live – to different extents, of course – the ‘conversation’ of the myths and legends at least in two registers: as a game of language that explains, entertains and, above all, recreates pleasantly lived/invented experiences taking the form of fantasy stories that describe characters and narrative patterns inherited precisely from that collective capital of narrations known as ‘myths and legends’. The other register is more pragmatical, as we previously mentioned, the conversation of the myths and legends operates as a discourse system of cultural defense that has contained, thus far with success we believe (relative however), the attack from a modern rationality which tends to fully separate reality from fiction. It disregards fiction given its uselessness to solve practical problems and situations in terms of efficient productivity. The immediate consequence of this ‘defensive effect’ is a frequently subtle but effective way of excluding those who are not familiar with the rules of speech that regulate the come-and-go game that occurs between the memory of what has been experienced in the world of natural life and what has been lived in the other world of supernatural beings. It is not, then, uncommon for a foreigner who is not familiar with the narrative twists and turns of the culture in Chiloé to end up confused, without determining if what they are being told is truth or not or end up taking as truth facts that are not or vice versa. In any case, the final effect is that the old stereotype of Chiloé as a land where “everything that is incredible occurs” continues being passed on (Urbina, 2002: 20-21).¹⁴

In any case, the validity of the myths and legends at present does not occur in the same way as in the past. In the Chiloé of the times of the firebox the conversation occurred in the quotidian orality of labor and resting times, in the religious and profane rituals. To talk next to the firebox was, nothing but telling stories: stories about travelling and travelers from Chiloé to Patagonia, stories of sorcerers, of encounters with the Caleuche or with the Fiura, cases of souls that suffered along the roads, stories about families, about sows and harvests, illnesses, births and deaths, among many others. The arrival first of the radio at the beginning of the 60’s and the T.V. ten years later has been a decisive factor which explains why the daily oral founding and recreational story of mythological local stories has

¹⁴ Urbina describes the stereotyped and fictitious image of Chiloé at the beginning of the XX century. In Santiago, the capital, there was the idea that Chiloé was a kind of ‘upside down world’, “a limit to the imaginary where [...] every incredible facts took place” (p. 21). Still in the 30’s curious ideas about Chiloé abounded. Dr. Waldo Brüning, who in 1932 asked his friends from Santiago about Chiloé, “they told him [...] that due to political arguments people killed each other and that corpses remained unburied for days on the streets in both Ancud and Castro” (Urbina, 2002: 20).

been substituted by that of the media which has other stories: those which media provide in order to entertain and inform and that, with some rare exceptions, are far from the local realities. If we add the increasing consolidation of an industrial economic and consumption order, which has been imposed since the beginning of the 80's with advantage over the old rural order of the recent past that is almost autarkic and not based on money, it is easy to understand that the daily life of people in Chiloé is nowadays neither regulated by the natural cycles nor by the order of the year seasons; cycles that allowed (and required, we believe) a huge number of stories to be exchanged in long conversations around the fire to make the copious and festive winter meals more enjoyable, such as the *carneos de chancho* and the following "*reitimientos*"*, the *curantos en boyo* or the celebration of certain important saint's days of the old Chiloé culture: St. John, St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Louis, St. Rose or, simply, for the workers who carry out farm work in exchange of food to feel grateful and happy after a labor day.¹⁵

New times have almost put an end to these practices of life. However, Chiloé myths and legends resist in time. Furthermore, in the last years they have come back with surprising strength; although the plot of myths and legends nowadays takes on forms that 40 or 50 years ago would not have been conceived: referents and esthetical and cultural symbols have taken a place in poetry, plastic arts, music (folk, from folk roots, rock, pop and those similar), in the sculpture and craftsmanship, in readings for children of the island, in books and brochures for tourists, even in publicity of industrial products. We dare to say that the discursive performance of the magical and mythological has to a great extent left the traditional orality and has entered, stronger, in the field of writing, music and visual and auditive images, creating a dense semiotic plot of esthetical and cultural value that works as a powerful call for the identity difference.

One could, hence, state that the system of mythological narrations has become more a heritage of the modern *intelligentzia* of Chiloé and less of the farmer, the fisher or the worker of fish farming centers. And that, in this frame of mind, such narrative repertoire has passed from being a conversational capital of farmers and fishers to a reservoir of images and increasingly esthetical symbols, available as

¹⁵ '*Carneo de chancho*': the process to obtain the meat from one or more fattened pigs in order to be consumed by a family. It was done (it is still made, but much less frequently than before) in winter. '*Reitimiento*' is the process to cook the cracklings and to extract lard from them. It is made in large pans or in big cauldrons in the firebox. '*Carneo*' also refers to a fest of friendship among relatives and friend neighbors. The celebration of a saints' day was up to 30 years ago of the utmost significance for families in Chiloé; especially in San Juan, San Luis, Santa Rosa, San Pedro and San Pablo. It is nowadays an almost extinct custom.

material that is part of the art, literatura and media messages. And when it does not happen that way, they become symbolic merchandise moved as commercial offer of identity difference in a kind of imaginary that can be used in craftwork, in tour packages or in offer for urban relaxation. Only in exceptional cases do myths and legends continue being a system of beliefs that regulate social relations, exclusively founded on the primary orality; a system that, as it has been said, is not limited to the modern western rationality, at least not to the legal criteria on which the Chilean laws are based (as it is the case with the allegations of sorcery that were mentioned above).

It would seem, hence, useful to make a distinction between the mythological story inasmuch as it is an enunciation susceptible to the judgement of truth (for instance, to revise whether there is a certain “burying” – a buried treasure – in a specific place, based on the signs that the corresponding story provides) and the mythological story, as discursive practice that sets in interdiction that western way of verbalizing the reality that categorically separates what is concret from abstract, what is real from fictitious, the historical fact from the mythological. If in the first dimensión the mythological story could be understood as a “primitive” and fantasizing way to narrate certain problematic human situation of communitarian interest, in the second dimensión the idea is not to ask (oneself) if the content of this “conversation” of myths and legends is true or false. It would be better to see this second dimensión as a kind of empowerment of the society and culture of Chiloé– and especially of its emerging intelectual class –, inasmuch as it becomes an efficient strategy in the defense of its own culture at the moment of making evident the ignorance of the foreigner, who is unable to have access and understand the encrypted codes of the culture in the island, instead of demonstrating the ignorance of the fisher who supposedly believes in the Caleuche. In the same way, such practice becomes a strategy to reaffirm the cultural identity, as it reinforces and legitimizes tradition: Chiloé is indeed a land of myths and legends, but it is not so, in the stereotyped and deliverately exotic sense in which the Chilean continental dominant culture has been setting, by means of the media and comercial offer, to perform transactions of symbolic merchandise. The continuity of myths and legends, beyond their change from orality to writing and image, is the proof that the conflict between the neoliberal global modernity and the local island tradition in Chiloé is far from finishing, and that the final word on the cultural mutations of the archipelago has not been said yet.

The weak shell of memory

The persistence of myths and legends, however, it is not *a priori* assured. In fact, the contrary occurs. The change made in nature from the old condition of a home that provides food to achieve communitarian self-subsistence to the condition of “natural resource” destined for industrial production of marine products at great scale for export, has moved out the common Chiloé inhabitant from their self-subsistence space and has made them a subject that increasingly depends on selling their labor force. It is not any more a subject that depends on which sea and land provided, as in the past.¹⁶ Even though a salary has enabled Chiloé farmers to have more access to industrial goods, a fact that has contributed to a significant increase of the daily comfort, it has also made them more and more dependant on food of industrial origin with the consequential loss of old Chiloé culinary practices, which assured the consumption of organic food. The almost complete loss of food autonomy is part of the cultural change implied in the severance of the human individual from its house-nature. To such extent does this occur that man becomes a simple tenant with limited interest in the environment and develops a more or less forgetful memory. If one does not live on the sea but from a wage received from a company that has turned the sea into a commercial privatized space, there are in fact not many reasons to have interest and care about something which is not own anymore. And the company, on its side, isn't compelled to be a guardian of any myth, but to maximize profits and to assure, as much as possible, the continuity of the business. Thus, one will understand that the *Caleuche*, if still navigating, will not do so on the channels full of raft-cells, but in the imaginary sea of the stories of those who make an effort to keep Chiloé's identity going, based on the inherited endogenous tradition, stories that are not told any longer as plausible explanations of the fast and unexplainable enrichment of a neighbor or the mysterious disappearance of a fisher, but as a call to the profound Chiloé from a historized consciousness of the identity and the difference. In this regard, Chiloé's mythology is now more a ‘culturized’ heritage than a narrative expression of experiences told as authentic in the daily coastal life of the farmers and fishers.

¹⁶ The waging of Chiloé farmers has, however, different levels. In the most distant island – in comparison with the urban and industrial centers in Isla Grande – current daily life is not too different from life long ago, with the exception of the access, partial at times, to electricity, telecommunications and State services (health and basic education) in better conditions than 25 or 30 years ago. In any case, youth, mainly women, emigrate to Isla Grande in search for remunerated employment. There is, then, a worrying ageing in the population of the small islands.

In any case, and as it has been said above, the conversation of myths and legends has not lost validity in Chiloé's society. Its aestheticizing and its change to make it an identity patrimony cultivated by the cultural creators and operators make it evident a tenacious persistence of tradition in a modernity that, in one way or another, is forced to negotiate with the meaning of a culture that has learnt to 'chilotize' the global. It is the emergence of that which Marcos Uribe calls "Neocultura chilota" (neo-Chiloé culture) (personal interview, 12/09/2005): a new Chiloé in process, colonized by industry, but at the same time one that has managed to keep a personal cultural imaginary, among those the imaginary of mythology, however this imaginary, in one aspect at least, has the appearance of being a weak shell of the cultural memory in the island.

I reckon, however, that mythology is, in this case, more than a weak shell of the cultural memory. It continues being a narrative reservoir that provides tools to grasp reality and, even more important, they are stories that have the promise of a previous time of fullness that is there, the just around the corner, and that it is only a question of letting nature take control of humans again in order for the myth and legend to take their own metaphysical undeniable truth. Thus, for a person from Chiloé, who knows the island myths, it is almost impossible not to associate the earthquake that occurred in the Aysen fiord,¹⁷ which caused a tsunami of medium magnitude, which rushed into the breeding fields of salmons established in the fiord, with the old foundational story of the battle between Ten-ten Vilú and Cai-cai Vilú, the serpents of the land and the water, respectively. The archipelago itself would be a consequence of this endless battle, with occasional truces, and furious violent encounters that, from time to time, change the landscape of the islands. While Ten-ten defends humans by raising the lands for its inhabitants not to drown in the furious waters of Cai-cai, this last one is determined to cover everything with the sea every time it can. Nevertheless if men became covered by salt water, they would not drown, they would become marine wolves, mammals who breathe, as humans, the air of the earth and that break – as the angry fishers who cannot fish in the seas franchised to transnational companies – raft-cells of the salmons eating some fish in captivity and freeing the others, as if these wolves, as Quijotes at the service of honor and the republic, would fight to reestablish the principle of a democratic and egalitarian nature for everyone.

¹⁷ The Aisén earthquake in 2007 occurred on April, 21st at 17:53 UTC (13:53 local time). Its epicenter was in the nearby Puerto Aisén City, Chile, and it was of a magnitude of 6,2 Richter scale. The earthquake was accompanied by swells with waves that were more than six meters high. This information was taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terremoto_de_Ais%C3%A9n_de_2007 (August 20th 2007).

José Santos Lincomán, in his story “*Cómo se dividió Chiloé*” (“*cuento muy antiguo de los huilliches*” [How Chiloé was divided (a very old story of the huilliches)]) tells a not well known version of the original classical battle between land and sea (Ten-ten Vilú *versus* Cai-cai Vilú). A great earthquake takes place; the sea increases its level to the extent that it covers the land. At the end, calmness makes its room in the situation and a man remains with his family in an island, without food, “and started to starve and die from cold” (p. 84). This story has an allegory to sacrifice: in order to restore a destroyed order it is necessary that humans sacrifice; in this case, that a father gives his children, his family, to the apparently homicide of the nature. But in fact it is aimed at fulling the beaches and estuaries with “a great number of different clases of fish and seafood” (p. 85), so that the death of the members of the family is a collective birth: nature is prodigal again after the cataclysmic earthquake. It is the tale of a story with close relation and interdependence between man and nature. And if there is any imbalance between both, it is restored with a new agreement of unity which does imply a sacrificial cost for humans, who at some time forgot that they were precisely nature and not proprietors of the elements.

Beyond the different versions, the cosmogonic tale of Ten-ten and Cai-cai states clearly that both, the inhabitants of the sea and of land need air and light (from fire) in order to survive; that in fact these serpents represent an antagonism that is necessary to secure the complement and equilibrium of the natural order of the world. It is not humans who control (although they might try to) these serpents, but it is them which, of their own accord, determine when and how to show up. The setting up of the fish industry has resulted, we could say, in a kind of third serpent: the serpent of Capitalism that takes possession of water and land and whose interest in ordering and controlling the natural order is, in fact, the most dangerous threat against the millennial Cai-cai and Ten-ten serpents, which may have then to join their forces.

Myths and contra-myths

Just as there is a mythology that has been created by several generations that have lived subject to the possibilities provided by nature; one that has not been changed or has changed in a very slight degree, we could suppose that the new productive order of capitalist kind, which makes nature an exploitable resource for industry, creates, at the same time, another “mythology”, although this is nothing more than a justification to its productive practices based on the rethoric of development and progress. And it is that way in fact. The already old Chilean exporting model has always been based on a conception of nature that reduces it to a “profitable resource” for the great capitals, whose industries – it is insisted constantly – provide

labor posts to people and create wealth for the country. Studies on feasibility and environmental impact are performed on the base of variables considered in the Chilean legislation, whose criteria to safeguard the natural are not sustained precisely on mythological traditional tales. In this scenario, apparently such tales would not have any relationship: they would be, by far, a sample of folklore that does not match whatsoever with the technical design of the productive chain. But it is here where the clash of cultural orders occurs: if the mythological tales are ways that inhabitants from Chiloé have to make subjective the natural order of the world establishing an analogic relation between the daily ordinary experience and the extraordinary and mysterious experiences (Marino and Osorio, w/d), the invasion of an instrumental imperialist rationality, which despise and does not recognize mythical forms of thinking and feeling, makes this process an exercise of cultural colonialization of the subjectivity, at least in that regarding the relation between society and nature.

Under these conditions, it is not unusual to see the rising of resistance attitudes that are shown as discourses that aim at dismanteling the rationalist and instrumental discourse of economic modernity, so that if it is not in the daily conversation of farmers, it will be in art and literature where a symbolic system can be created. And its meanings are not exactly celebrations to the 'modern invasion'. It is also logical that that resistance occurs, above all, among those who work with signs and symbols and whose meanings change, in one way or another, the cultural landscape of the islands; people who, on account of their education and ideological convictions, are not aligned to the industry in the sense that they are not operative agents of the ideological apparatus of the neoliberal order set up in the islands. Keeping the myths and legends, either as subject of disciplinary study or as material of collective imagination at the service of artistic creation (I include here architecture and craftsmanship), is an intellectual operation that requires, in order to be performed successfully, certain specialized education and, above all, to have the living conditions that allow a distant, modern look in the critical sense of the term, on the collective identity or identities in process of change. The worker at the farming centers or female workers of the fish and seafood processing plants, under pressure by the urgent need of surviving by means of selling – always poorly paid – their labor, do not have, but in rare cases, real possibilities of creating a solid counterculture based on tradition in order to build a barrier against the capitalist colonialization of the subjectivity. The progressive waging of farmers from Chiloé has worked, in this regard, as a kind of re-education and as a way to impose a discipline to a significant sector of the population, with the purpose of creating a practical and symbolic order to the industry and to the consumption of industrial products.

But there is neither perfect re-education nor disciplining; nor an original cultural tradition as powerful as that from Chiloé which can be eliminated after some years. Myths and legends are just there, just as religiosity, typical food, folk music, the earth and sea, the rain, and the long winters are. They are elements of a cultural identity that, in spite of the demolishing invasion of the fish industry in the islands since the beginning of the 80's, it would seem as though it was far from forgetting the cultural pre-Capitalist inheritance. Although it has been moving from orality to the field of marketing the symbolic goods that are culturally 'different',¹⁸ it is also true that it has settled and taken value from the use and the change in the written and graphic culture as well as in audiovisual messages, in lyrics, in pieces of craftsmanship and ornamentation, in references and significations that feed a political discourse that works to set the cultural difference as an alternative and viable path of (the inevitable) societal transformation. This proves for some the corruption of a pre-Capitalist culture built on the base of a communitarian solidarity, in a time that is not far when money was not the regulator of services between people and much beyond from the exploitation of nature up to its exhaustion, as it occurs nowadays in the framework of industrial capitalism, whose logic is, in fact, closer to a logic of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution than to that of the late post-industrial Capitalism. For some other people, in contrast, it proves the necessary and inevitable modernization of Chiloé, whose cultural losses are compensated with the improvement of the levels of life of the population by means of more democratic access to industrial goods. The archipelago, since Colonial times, has been a land in which money has not abounded, and many men and women during the XIX and XX centuries were forced to emigrate mainly to the Argentinian and Chilean Patagonia and to the agricultural fields in Osorno, causing a persisting demographic bleeding that was only stopped 25 or 30 years ago, precisely as a result of fish industrialization.

Truth is that mythology, in this context, should not be seen, in any way, as a sign of a 'golden' pre-Modern time; one in which the social and natural life would have been in a supposed harmony. In any case, the current scheme of myths and legends from Chiloé, beyond the fact that for some up to the present they have become a heritage from the enlightened class of the island, shows a way of imagining

¹⁸ It is common to find in squares, in the hotel halls, in yards of houses that provide accommodation to tourists during summer, sculptures in stone or wood in shape of mythological beings. That is the case of the square and small hotel of Ancud in the small square of Quenac, for instance. In the same way, in several restaurants in Ancud and Castro one can see paintings and reproductions of paintings that allude to Chiloé's mythology.

the territory that does not disregard the fact that, as a last resort, human beings, much as they might want, cannot control the facts that enable the possible life and death. In the mythology of Chiloé even beings with supernatural powers, such as sorcerers, the Caleuche, the Fiura, the Camahueto, the Trauco, have limitations and weaknesses that they cannot counteract in any way; to such extent does this occur that any human, lacking any supernatural power, with patience, courage and knowledge of certain practices, can defeat them however not completely destroy them. Just as any human being can defeat the ‘magic’ of the sorcerers or the Caleuche, it is also true that without the necessary knowledge, prudence and courage, they can be easily caught by the arts of these beings obtaining potentially mortal results (just as the evils cast by sorcerers). There, at the bottom of this, equilibrium between the natural and supernatural and it cannot and shall not be destroyed. If one crosses the line, death at its time asks for what is hers, and order is restored again. Not even the fishing transnational companies are as powerful to sink the Caleuche forever; much less if it is transformed into will. The perpetual party continues and will continue in the foggy sea of memory.

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Glossary of mythological beings mentioned in the text²⁰

Sorcerer: A man with magical powers that enable him to fly and transform into any animal at will. A sorcerer is a ‘Christian evil’ which obtains its power (art or ‘magic’) from the devil. In spite of this, the sorcerer is subject to a rigorous hierarchy, so that it cannot do any harm without authorization of the majority, a kind of ‘higher’ Superior Council of Sorcerers which arguably live in Quicavi cave (and/or in any other unknown cave). The sorcerer can also do good on command, but it has to be in opposition to an evil casted towards a person by another sorcerer. If a sorcerer is discovered at the moment of acting as such (as an animal or flying, for instance), he will lose its power and will die one year later.

Cai-cai Vilú: Serpent of the waters. It is an apparently homicidal force from the sea that appears as a violent tsunami or flooding of low lands which destroys earthly life. Its real power seems to be used more to transform than to destroy. Humans caught by Cai-cai become marine mammals.

Caleuche: Ship of (magical) art. A ghost ship, with the form of a sailing ship, whose most significant characteristic is the ability to transform into animal or inert beings (stone, flotsam, etc.); it can sail fast on and under the sea; it sails

¹⁹ Although the book does not provide the date of edition, I have managed to determine that it was published in 1983.

²⁰ Descriptions are, to a great extent, based on *Apuntes para un diccionario de Chiloé* (see bibliography); with the exception of *sorcerer*, *Ten-ten* and *Cai-cai*. A significant amount of information, however, especially about *Caleuche* and sorcerers, is familiar to me since my childhood in rural Chiloé.

illuminated; the crew members do not die and there is a perpetual party on board. Music can be enchanting for the human being who listens to it. It appears at nights when there is fog. There are humans who pact with the Calueche to obtain wealth. In return, they themselves or a member of their family have to be at some point taken by the Calueche forever. The crew of the ship, on its side, can be authorized by their commander to visit their human families on land; if so, it will be only for a night and a single time. However, the Calueche can also have undercover agents on land for a long time, usually in order to recruit new members by means of secret pacts with people eager for wealth and material goods.

Camahueto: A kind of unicorn calf. It comes from the marshes; when it gets old, it can move its body fast and powerfully making noises in the direction of the sea, leaving a trail of death and destruction. At this stage, it can be caught with a rope made out of sargassum. This seaweed is supposed to have the characteristic of taking away all its power and strength. With grates from the horn of camahueto one can produce an infusion which provides extraordinary fertility and strength to the drinker.

Fiura: A mythological anthropoid being, feminine, extremely ugly and abhorrent, which twists (distorts) and bewitches (make a sane person lose its capacity for reasoning) male humans with its breath and glance.

Pincoya: A kind of goddess of fertility from the beaches and sea with extraordinary beauty (a European phenotype). She dances naked at the shore or over the waves. When she dances looking in the direction of the coast, there will be abounding fish and seafood; if she looks in the opposite direction, there will be scarcity.

Ten-ten Vilú: Also known as *Tren-tren* (with a fricative pronunciation). It is a serpent of the land; defender and friend of humans. When she confronted Cai-cai, the serpent of the water, she raised the land to create hills so that humans managed to escape from the sea which increased its level and threatened to drown them. Islands would have been created that way. Many humans could not escape from water, but did not drown, they became marine wolves. Cárdenas and Trujillo (1984) assert that this story does not come from the islands. It is supposed to be part of the mythology from Chiloé from publications made during 1970-1980. However, *Ten-ten* and *Cai-cai* do exist as old characters in old Huilliche tales. And there have been Huilliches in Chiloé at least since Colonial times. *Ten-ten* is, apart from that, a very old name in Chiloé.

Trauco: Its most general description presents it as a satyr who harasses young women and who has a prolific trade with them. It supposedly lives in the wild; it is a dwarf of no more than 90 cm tall, with coarse and rough features; it uses a

loincloth made of *quilineja**; some people describe it using a kind of Chinese cap; it would have a stone axe on one hand, although some others argue that it has a walking stick, called *pabuelde*. In the past, *Trauco* was the apology that a female youth offered to her family when pregnant without being married. However, it is also a spirit that protects the forest making reckless intruders lose their direction in native forests.

Voladora: A witch, she has the capacity to transform into a bird, especially into a *banda* or a *cututa***. In order to achieve this transformation she vomits its intestine in a fountain, and reinstalls them in her female body. She is a messenger for the sorcerers.

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* A climber plant used to make ropes [T. N.]

** Common birds from Chile [T. N.]